



In celebration of Fulton County Agriculture Week (March 16 through 23, 2019), the Fulton County Farm Bureau treated Fulton County Board members to a supper of fried chicken, roast beef and other food prior to the board's March meeting at the Fulton County Courthouse in Lewistown. From left, Farm Bureau members serving the meal were Bob Vohland, Linda Rock and David Tolley.

Past performance determines USDA's CStP rewards

Rewards in Mason County average \$10 per acre

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) is a voluntary USDA program that encourages agricultural producers to address resource concerns by maintaining, improving and managing existing conservation activities and adopting additional conservation activities or practices.

CStP was recently re-authorized in the new Farm Bill which was passed in December 2018.

CStP rewards participants for past conservation performance—the higher the level of environmental performance, the higher the CStP annual payment rate.

Farm operators enrolled in CStP in Mason County receive an average annual payment of approximately \$10 per acre for all of the acres that they farm.

CStP sign-up is continuous throughout the year. Applications are evaluated and

ranked with ranking points awarded for conservation measures already implemented and new conservation measures they agree to add.

Applicants must be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment and have control of the land for the five-year term of the proposed contract.

One of the requirements of CStP is that applicants select at least one enhancement or conservation measure that they would be willing to adopt.

The enhancement must be something that they are not currently doing but would be willing to implement.

In addition to the annual CStP payments, conservation enhancements and practices also receive flat rates payments to off-set some of the implementation costs.

For example, cereal rye cover crops receive a flat rate payment of \$8.35 per acre.

Popular CStP enhancements used in Mason County include:

- leaving standing grain unharvested to benefit wildlife food sources
- cover crops to minimize soil com-

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