



NEWS RELEASE

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JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR 2006 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

Sign-up will be Feb 13, 2006 - March 31, 2006

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31, 2006- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced the 2006 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up will be held Feb. 13, 2006 to March 31, 2006 in 60 watersheds nationwide.

"USDA is committed to providing a fair and equitable program that rewards our nation's leading conservationists," said Johannis. "This year, we're providing applicants the ability to sign-up prior to most planting decisions to encourage more conservation leaders."

USDA announced preliminary selection of 110 watersheds for fiscal year 2006 based on the President's budget request. Based on available funding, CSP will be offered in 60 watersheds across all 50 states, the Caribbean and Guam. The sign-up will only include those producers who do not have an existing CSP contract.

To be eligible for CSP, most of a producer's agricultural operation must fall within the boundaries of a selected watershed. Applications which meet CSP's minimum requirements as set forth in the amendment to the Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register March 25, 2005, will be placed in enrollment categories. Categories will be funded in alphabetical order until funds are exhausted. The CSP amendment to the Interim Final Rule is available for viewing at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.

Producers begin the application process by filling out a self-assessment to determine if they meet the basic qualifications for CSP. Self-assessment workbooks are available in hard copy at USDA Service Centers within the watersheds, and electronically at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>. After completing the self-assessment producers should schedule an appointment to discuss their application with the NRCS local staff to determine if they meet specific CSP eligibility requirements.

2006 marks the third CSP sign-up. The privately-owned land currently enrolled in CSP covers nearly 11 million acres in the 220 eligible watersheds in all 50 states and the Caribbean Area. CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. Payments are made using three tiers of conservation contracts. CSP will be available any year on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information about CSP is available from your local USDA Service Center or at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.