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**Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District**

652 South Main Street - Virginia, Illinois 62691 - Phone: (217) 452-3535 - Fax (217) 452-3553

February 26, 2004

Mr. David McKay  
Attention: Conservation Security Program  
Conservation Planning Team Leader  
Conservation Operations Division  
USDA NRCS  
P.O. Box 2890  
Washington, DC 20013-2890

Dear Mr. McKay:

We are pleased to submit comments on the proposed rule to implement the 2002 Farm Bill Conservation Security Program. First, we applaud NRCS for developing a proposed rule in the face of the number of legislative changes that were made to the program following its enactment.

We have several concerns relative to the proposed rule. We understand that during the development of the proposed rule changes were made to the statute that altered it from an uncapped entitlement program to a "capped entitlement" to be funded at approximately \$3.8 billion over 10 years. Given that change, NRCS proposed a much more limited program that would be available only to a relatively small number of producers in highly targeted watersheds. The proposed rule also placed significantly lower limits on cost-share rates and base payments than were allowed in the statute; restricted the number and types of practices that would be eligible for payment; and required producers to address resource concerns prior to enrolling in the program.

The enactment of the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Bill, however, restored the CSP to an uncapped entitlement as it was originally written. Given that fact, we strongly urge NRCS to prepare a rule to implement the program as originally intended and without the severe restrictions in the currently proposed rule. The principal issues that need to be addressed in the supplement to properly implement the CSP as an uncapped entitlement include:

- allowing open enrollment to all eligible producers nationwide with no preference for producers in targeted watersheds;
- providing the full cost-share, maintenance and base payments as provided for in the statute;
- removing the limitation on the types of practices eligible for payment; and
- making the CSP a true rewards program by allowing producers to use CSP to address resource concerns after enrollment.
- Make payments to producer or producers with risk in crop or livestock in operation
- Set rental rates on a district by district basis' through a local working group with final OK by state committee
- Implement the CSP as soon as possible, considering the need for such a program.

Sincerely,

*Amy Hardwick, BSM*  
Cass County SWCD Board of Directors

Amy Hardwick, Chairperson  
William Welch, Vice-Chairperson  
Brian Anderson - Treasurer

Lew Korsmeyer - Secretary  
John Winkelman - Legislative Liaison

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Janet Napolitano  
Governor

Arizona  
State Land Department



Mark Winkleman  
State Land  
Commissioner

1616 West Adams Street Phoenix, AZ 85007 www.land.state.az.us

01 March 2004

David McKay  
Conservation Operations Division  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
PO Box 2890  
Washington DC 20013

Dear Mr. McKay:

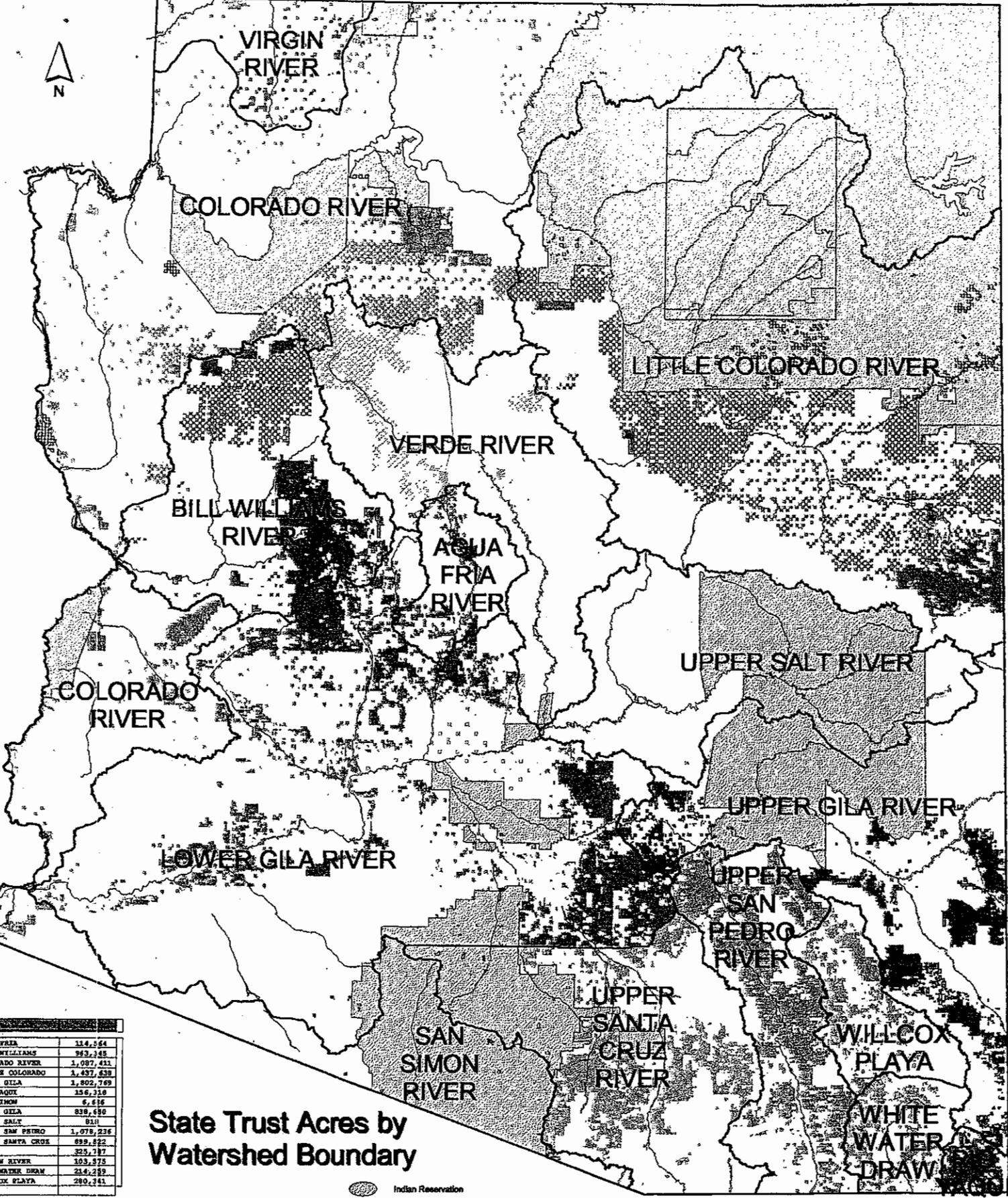
Please include public and state lands in the Conservation Security Program. Thirteen percent of Arizona is State Trust Land (STL). Arizona has conserved a greater percentage of its original federal land grant (88%) than any of the other 22 states receiving such grants. These lands are not public lands, but subject of a public Trust to support education.

The Arizona Enabling Act of 1910 set aside the Trust Lands, decades after Arizona was settled, and lands granted, sold, or otherwise transferred into tribal, private or public ownership. As a result, distribution of State Trust Land varies tremendously. Some of our watersheds are over 65% STL. Other watersheds are checkerboarded, with alternate sections of land private and STL that eliminate substantial portions of the watershed under the proposed rule. The majority of ranching operations in Arizona include STL and/or National Forest or BLM lands.

A map depicting State Trust Acres by Watershed Boundary is enclosed for your review and consideration. It does not depict the lands under the control of the federal government - 42% of the State.

Sincerely,

Jody Latimer, Manager  
Natural Resource Conservation Section



**State Trust Acres by Watershed Boundary**

FREE	114,564
WILLIAMS	992,745
COLO RIVER	1,097,411
W COLORADO	1,437,638
L GILA	1,802,769
AGUQ	156,318
WIMON	6,616
L GILA	838,690
L SALT	811
L SAN PEDRO	1,078,236
L SANTA CRUZ	899,822
L	225,787
W RIVER	103,375
WATER DRAW	214,289
WILCOX PLAYA	290,141

 Indian Reservation

The Arizona State Land Department makes no warranty, implied or expressed, regarding the accuracy of information displayed.  
Created - January 2002

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# South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



John E. Frampton  
Director

February 27, 2004

Mr. David McKay  
Conservation Planning Team Leader  
Conservation Operations Division, NRCS  
P.O. Box 2890  
Washington, DC 20013-2890

Dear Mr. McKay:

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the public agency charged with the protection and management of natural resources in the state. Our agency partners with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Technical Service Provider Program. DNR recognizes the contribution to our nation's resources provided through farm bill programs and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Conservation Security Program (CSP) Draft Rule 7 CFR Part 1469 (RIN:0578-AA36).

DNR acknowledges the importance and the opportunity of CSP and that it is a unique opportunity to connect agriculture programs with conservation thereby benefiting everyone through environmental enhancement. Therefore, DNR supports the CSP's broad conservation approach in recognizing all natural resource concerns of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life and other conservation purposes determined by the Secretary. We support and agree that all these categories must be considered of equal importance in national rules set forth by NRCS.

NRCS states "The benefit analysis is limited to certain resource concerns for which we have reliable estimates of the benefits that accrue with the application of conservation practices." There are reliable estimates for the expenditure for fish and wildlife-associated recreation available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During 2001, hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers brought \$1.1 billion into South Carolina! Though a lot of these activities occurred on our public lands, a majority occurred on private lands in the state. CSP holds the potential to significantly improve habitat for fish and wildlife and provide an additional income for landowners. These economic and societal benefits should be carefully considered when crafting and implementing the CSP program.

DNR is adamantly opposed to requiring an eligibility standard that requires applicants address only soil and water quality for tier I and tier II levels program enrollment. We recommend all resource concerns be met. If all resource concerns were met at minimum

Mr. David McKay

February 27, 2004

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levels, then we are truly rewarding the very best landowners who are presently meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management. DNR believes every producer should have an opportunity to be evaluated and all resource concerns are met at a minimum level established for tier I. We also support the concept of tier III high achievers meeting all resource concerns at the sustainable levels, and that ultimately, producers who achieve these levels receive the highest payments. DNR recommends adding all resource concerns listed in the law (air, energy, wildlife, plant,) on part(s) of the agricultural operation for tier I. We further recommend adding all resource concerns to a minimum level of treatment for the entire agricultural operation for tier II. For tier III, we concur that all resource concerns be treated to a sustainable level on all parts of the operation.

DNR is very concerned that the proposed rule does not require consensus with state fish and wildlife agencies, state environmental and soil agencies especially when they have statutory responsibilities for fish, forest, wildlife, plant and water quality resources. We would like to see collaborative efforts with these agencies as stated in the proposed rule.

In summary, we believe the draft rule: 1) does not consider wildlife as a coequal objective of conservation enhancements but only focuses on water and soil; 2) is not open to all private landowners and therefore seriously compromises opportunities for producers that may in fact be model conservationists; and 3) greatly restricts collaborative development and cooperative conservation team building by providing no method of a meaningful ranking system or input by State Agencies or Conservation Partners at the State Level.

Thank you for your consideration of the comments submitted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John E. Frampton", with the word "for" written below it.

John E. Frampton  
Director

CC: Billy McTeer  
Judy Barnes



CLAY COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Phone (618) 665-3327 Route 3 Box 41-C Louisville, IL 62858

February 27, 2003

Mr. David McKay  
Conservation Planning Team Leader  
Conservation Operations Division  
USDA NRCS  
P.O. Box 2890  
Washington, DC 20013-2890

Dear Mr. McKay:

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The enactment of the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Bill, however, restored the CSP to an uncapped entitlement as it was originally written. Given that fact, we strongly urge NRCS to prepare a rule to implement the program as originally intended and without the severe restrictions in the currently proposed rule. The principal issues that need to be addressed in regards to the CSP include:

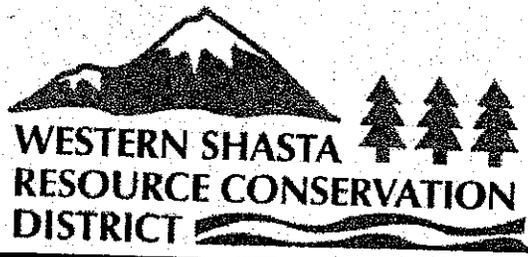
- allowing open enrollment to all eligible producers nationwide with no preference for producers in targeted watersheds;
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- removing the limitation on the types of practices eligible for payment; and
- making the CSP a true rewards program by allowing producers to use CSP to address resource concerns after enrollment.
- Make payments to producer or producers with risk in crop or livestock in operation

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

*Jake Klein*  
Jake Klein, Chairman

Clay County S.W.C.D.



6270 Parallel Road – Anderson, CA 96007-4833 – Phone: (530) 365-7332 – Fax: (530) 365-7271  
<http://www.westernshastarc.org>

February 23, 2004

Mr. David McKay  
 Attention: Conservation Security Program  
 Conservation Planning Team Leader  
 Conservation Operations Division  
 USDA NRCS  
 P.O. Box 2890  
 Washington, DC 20013-2890

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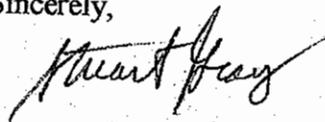
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- removing the limitation on the types of practices eligible for payment; and
- making the CSP a true rewards program by allowing producers to use CSP to address resource concerns after enrollment.

We look forward to working with our local NRCS staff on this great opportunity to expand and improve conservation practices in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stuart Gray".

Stuart Gray, President  
Board of Directors