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USDA CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM (CSP) LISTENING FORUM

LOCATION:

TIME;

LEADER:

PANEL:

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY **11**, 2004

tory

GREENWOOD CIVIC CENTER, HIGHWAY 7 NORTH,

GREENWOOD, **MISSISSIPPI**

1:30 -3:30 P.M.

HOMER WILKES

BRUCE KNIGHT

STEVE MELTON

CRAIG DERICKSON

DWIGHT HOLMAN

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APPEARANCES:

FOR THE PLAINTIFFS

HONORABLE HAROLD BARKLEY,
Attorney at Law
P.O. Box 662
West Point, MS 39773

FOR THE DEFENDANTS, Kuhlman Corporation and Borg-Warner, Inc.

III

HONORABLE J. GORDON FLOWERS HONORABLE SCOTT F. SINGLEY Gholston, Hicks & Nichols P.O.
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For the Deponent

HONORABLE LEE ABRAHAM
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Greenwood, MS 38930

VIDEOGRAPHER

Mr. Robert L. Ford P.O. Box 22921 Jackson, MS 39225

COURT REPORT

Betty Jean Sykes, CSR #1125 1101 Rose Drive
Indianola, MS 38751
(662) 887-4458

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BY MR. WILKES:

Let's go ahead and get
started.

What a wonderful day to actually have

folks to come in and provide some input as far as

public policy is concerned.

A couple of housekeeping items I would like

to square away early on.

First of all, do we have

anyone here that actually needs a Spanish

interpreter?

If

you

would

identify yourself,

we'll make sure you have that.

(SPANISH INTERPRETER SPOKE.

(NO ONE PRESENT INDICATED AN INTERPRETER WAS

NEEDED.)

BY MR. WILKES:

And

also

we

have

an

interpreter here for the hearing impaired, and

if anyone needs that assistance, I would ask for

you to raise your hand so we can make sure we

provide those services.

(SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SIGNED ABOVE BY

MR. WILKES, AND NO ONE INDICATED AN INTERPRETER

WAS NEEDED.

BY MR. WILKES:

move forward.

Being none, I guess we'!!

All right, my name is Homer Wilkes.

I'm

the State Conservationist for the State of

Mississippi, and I would like to take this

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opportunity

to

welcome

you

here

to

our

Conservation Security Program Listening Forum.

I am pleased that Mississippi, Chief, was one of

the sites that was actually designated to hold one

of these listening forums here,

because I think

what the folks will have here this afternoon will

add value to what we're trying to do as far as

this program, and that is actually hear from the

public as far as what type of things that we

need to have in order to make these rules

available and accessible to them.

I want to stop and introduce and identify

--do we have anyone from Senator Cochran's

office here?

(NONE INDICATED)

BY MR. WILKES:

I know Joan was going to

be here.

And do we have a representative from

Congressman's Bennie Thompson's office?

(HAND RAISED)

BY MR. WILKES:

Okay, thank you for coming.

Would you state your name?

BY MR. STOCKSFIELD:

Elmus Stockstill from

Congressman Thompson's office.

BY MR. WILKES:

Okay,

thank you for coming.

And there are some other folks I want to take

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this opportunity to adhere to and actually

recognize.

And I'll start -first of all, we have with

us the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation

Services,

Chief Bruce Knight.

We have Dwight Holman,

the Deputy Chief of

Management of the Natural Resources Conservation

Services.

We have Craig Derickson here that's from the

Natural Resources Conservation Services.

hear from him a little later on.

You'll

And we have Steve Melton,

who are our

partners from the FSA.

The Director could not be

here today, but Steve is here representing Mr.

Black.

And I also would like to recognize some of

my counterparts

I saw Mr. Charles Adams here

from the National Employee Development staff.

James Ford from the State of Tennessee.

Mr.

Mr.

Calvin Price from the State of Arkansas.

And do

we have anyone here from the State of Louisiana?

I know they wanted to have some participation

here.

I don't see Don yet.

(NONE INDICATED)

BY MR. WILKES:

Thank you all for coming.





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I hope you have brought your partners here so we can hear from them also.

Let's talk about our real purpose here today.

Our real purpose for us being here today is to hear from the public about proposed rules, and Craig will come later on, and he will actually rollout how the program is intended to work and we'll be listening to comments from you later on.

But before I do that, I want to tell you, as *you* go out the door to the left, Ladies Room is on the left-hand side.

Men's Room on the right-
hand side.

It may be necessary that you have to get up and attend to some of those types of

businesses before we end here today.

At this time I'm going to ask the Chief if

he would make some comments, and then we'll

proceed with the rest of the program.

BY MR. KNIGHT:

Thank you, Homer.

It's a

real pleasure being with you all here today.

I've been looking forward to this stage of our

rule-making process for a long time.

We are

here for what is one of the more exciting

conservation programs that we're going to have the

ability and the opportunity to deliver, and that's

the Conservation Security Program.

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Now,

with this program,

it's the first

time around.

This program has a different

approach to conservation than we've had in our

experience at the Natural Resources Conservation

Services.

It's a different program than you,

our customers as farmers and ranchers, have had

experience **with** as well.

And so it's very

important that this rule-making process be as

dynamic as it possibly can be.

Now,

the official rule-making process

consists of a fairly straightforward but a very

structured matter.

Before publishing something

in the "Public Register," the public has a certain amount of days to comment on that, and then we review those comments.

Now, how many of you get the "Federal Register" at home?

(NO HANDS RAISED)

BY MR. KNIGHT:

Not a one of you.

This is

why we're out here today, because while you have access to the "Federal Register" from our website, or you can gain access to it from the library of one of our County offices, we wanted a much more dynamic process.

We wanted to be able to come

into the countryside and listen to what you have

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to

say

about

this

proposed

Conservation Security Program.

Now,

this is a proposed rule.

rule

of

the

It is just

that, a proposal.

Before we go on and proceed

with the final rule,

we need to hear comments

from the public that we intend to serve as to how

best structure the rule, how to make improvements,
how to make modifications, and, quite frankly,
which things folks like the most.

Now I what I s the Conservation Security Program
about?

As I mentioned before, it's new approach
to conservation.

This is really something that
is intended not to replace farm programs or to
replace conservation programs, but to augment
and fully complete the conservation program which
we have.

So, it needs to really be able to round
out those tools in our toolbox to augment and
support what we've got **in** conservation services
programs.

And then in that nature many farmers
and many conservation leaders have for decades
in my conversations with them told me that we
really need a program that helps conservation
leaders.

The folks who are really on the leading
edge of conservation.

And CSP provides **that**
opportunity.

And so this is a program that not

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everyone

In

your

community,

as

the

rule

designed today,

will necessarily get in, but

is

everybody will have an opportunity to get in and

be able to participate in based on the historical

environmental performance and willingness to

commit to additional environmental performance in

that aspect.

This is summed up best by a phrase that

Secretary Ann Veneman uses,

which is that

"CSP will reward the best and motivate the

rest."

Now,

there are a few things about the **CSP**

and where we've headed with this since the roll-

out of this rule itself that I want to mention.

First off,

with the passage of the Ominous

Spending Package Bill, we now know exactly how

much will be available in this first year.

That's 41 million dollars.

We have made a

decision within the Department of Agriculture

on how to manage this.

It was at first the

ability to get somewhere in the neighborhood of

300 to 3,000 contracts in the first year with

41 million dollars.

We have chosen to use the

path that allows us to write 3,000 contracts in

this first year of implementation.

That's between

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now and October 1 of this year.

Now,

the President also recently announced

the '05 budget submission and the '05 budget

proposal, which offered about 209 million dollars

for the Conservation Security Program.

Because

of the fact that that only reflects next year's

expenditures for CSP,

virtually keep in mind

that that actually represents a billion dollar

commitment to **CSP**.

Because we're talking about

a program that will be managed financially the

same way as **CRP**.

You sign up in the first year

and receive payments over a seven or ten-year

period.

And so this represents a very,

significant fact.

As a matter of fact,

very

this

will represent nearly 12,000 contracts nationwide

because they signed up through the Conservation

Security Program.

So, when folks talk to you about this

program needs to be modified so that everybody

can get in, the fact of the matter is all

farmers and ranchers will eventually be eligible

to go into the program as we roll it out over

several years.

With that *l've* had a chance to kind of give

folks an update on the Conservation Security

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Program.

I really appreciate the ability to be

able to come here and listen to you all.

Now, once Mr. Derickson goes through his

explanation, he'll be able to do a few questions

and answers.

Then, we're going to go into a

listening mode.

Several of you may find that a

little more structured than you would like,

because you want us to react or enter into

dialogue.

And because this is an official

listening part of the rule-making process, we as

special officials are empowered to do that.

And

so I wanted you to know that in very **simple** terms

when we enter into that aspect of the process.

But with that,

I'll turn things back to

Homer for his introduction.

Thank you.

BY MR. WILKES:

Thank you,

Chief.

I just

want to reiterate what the Chief has just stated.

That when Craig makes his presentation, you see

what is programmed in and proposed to be rolled

out,

there will be an opportunity for you to

have some exchange of questions and answers at

that particular time.

And we'll take **up** a few

minutes to try to explain those things that you

may have some concerns about.

But once we get

into the listening forum, I want to give you

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ample time to actually make your comment, but in

the --I want to make sure everyone can get a

chance to make any statement they want to,

we'll be limiting those comments to five

minutes.

so

But I also want to say that if *you* have

written comments, we'll give you a name and

address or place where you can actually send those

comments to us.

There will be people in the

audience here that will have a blue tag.

Give

those to them, or someone here from the Natural

Resources Conservation Services **will** get those

comments from you.

So, I just wanted you to have

that in your mind so when Craig finishes his

presentation, ask your questions, and then we'll

get into the comment period.

Having said that,

Craig, I'm going to ask if you would come forward

now.

BY MR. DERICKSON:

thank you, Chief Knight.

Thank you, Homer, and

We're going to have

some help here getting the lights down just a

bit so we can take the shine off the screen.

(LIGHTS WERE DIMMED.)

BY MR. DERICKSON:

Okay,

I think that will

work for everyone.

Again, welcome, and with some

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help here, we're going to go through the power

plan.

(SHOWN ON SCREEN)

BY MR. DERICKSON:

This represents a sunrise, and it's

a new day in conservation history.

And as the Chief lightly

touched on, no other program recognizes and rewards farmers

and

ranchers

stewardship.

for

All

ongoing

high-levels

of

the

other

conservation

environmental

programs

are

designed with a specific purpose in mind.

A good number

of them fixed resource problems.

They helped people get to

a level where they have a system installed, or like CRP or

WRP, they might retire land or provide for easements.

CSP is a different kind of program.

It rewards people

who are already at a high-level of stewardship and they're

willing to go further.

that

high

level

of

And CSP helps producers maintain

stewardship

and

further

their

conservation commitment.

As the Chief also noted, we helped the Secretary craft

this statement over a year ago.

"CSP will reward the best

and motivate the rest."

And that says quite a bit just by

that being the slogan for this program, because we want to

focus on those people who are conservation leaders and help

that be an inspiration for others to obtain that level of

stewardship

And we will do that by recognizing producers

who are stewardship leaders and who provide the

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environmental

benefits wanted by

society.

CSP

provides

strong incentives for others to follow that example.

We believe that

CSP will provide

some demonstrative

environmental benefits.

And what I mean by that, as a part

of

the NRCS planning process we will

develop a resource

inventory that,

in fact,

takes a snapshot at the beginning

of the contract period, and we will establish a base line,

a benchmark condition, of their natural resources and the

producer's

management

of

resources

used,

such as

these.

Some are organic matter, carbon, nutrients, pesticides, and

grazing lands.

Any **of the**

issues they're addressing on

their farm or range, we will note their beginning condition

as a **part**

of working with

Security Program.

them through

the Conservation

CSP is all about enhancing resource conditions.

said earlier,

it's not about fixing resource problems.

As I

We

have other conservation programs that are designed to do

that.

farms

CSP will improve the condition of America's working

and

ranches

and

enhance natural

resources

for the

public as a whole.

And the emphasis there, on working farms

and ranches,

is meant to be just that.

That it is not a

program that retires or puts land away in easements.

to

improve

the

resource

condition

on

working

farms

ranches.

It's

and

Now, beginning with the fiscal year 2004, funding will



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limit participation the first year.

As Chief Knight said,

we have 41 million dollars available for the fiscal year

'04, and so CSP will be offered to relatively few producers

demonstrating

watersheds.

high

levels

of

stewardship

in

selected

And I will

tell you a little bit more about

those watersheds **in** just a moment.

So,

in 2004,

that 41 million is likely to result in

about 3,000 total contracts for the entire nation in those

selected watersheds.

And, as you know,

that would be less

than about one per county.

So,

that's the prospective you

need to have in mind for beginning in '94, but also, as the

Chief noted, in the out years as the program funds wrap up,

there were be substantial more people able to participate in

the program.

Probably more than 12,000 in the fiscal year

'05 and then in increasing amounts thereafter.

Okay,

let's

talk

a

little

bit

about

some

of

the

eligibility requirements for the program.

must be on privately owned or tribal land,

which must be in that priority watershed.

First of all, it

the majority of

So,

what that

means is that Federal, State, or other public lands are not

eligible.

Only private lands or tribal lands are eligible

for the program.

The applicants to the program must be in compliance

with other requirements, such as high erodible land and the

wetland provisions.

So, they must be in good standing with

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Sod Buster and Swamp Buster.

Also,

the third bullet there.

The producers who are

involved in a contract must have an active interest in the

operation,

management.

and

they

And

I

must

will

be

a

part

include

information on that as we go on.

of

the

a

little

day-to-day

bit

more

In addition,

we must have some evidence of control of

the land for the contract period so we have some assurance

that

as

we're

working with

that

individual

and putting

financial resources into that land that's some likelihood

that those benefits will be in place over time.

have a little more on that also.

And we'll

a

The applicant must share in the risk and be entitled to

share

in

the

crops

or

livestock

produced

on

that

operation,

and

they must

meet

specific

Tier

requirements that I'll discuss in a moment.

eligibility

Because of

the number of

people

that

we **anticipate**

having an interest in this program and potentially applying

for it,

it becomes critical

for NRCS that we manage the

technical assistance that is required to help people with

their application.

The Statute itself contains a limit that

says not more than 15% can be spent for NRCS and technical

service provider -technical assistance to service people in

their applications.

So,

to address that concern,

we are

working on what we're calling a self-screening process,

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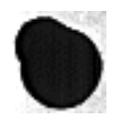
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from

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slide,

that

agricultural

lands,

vineyards,

pastures,

regardless

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producers

including

and range

on

nearly

all

crop

land,

types

of

orchards,

lands may

Size,

regardless

of

operation, or the crops that they produce.

apply **for** CSP,

the

type

of

Now,

the last bullet

is sort of

a disclaimer.

first one is meant to be no double-dipping clause.

The
Land
that
is
already
involved
in
the
Conservation
Reserve
Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program, or the new Grassland
Reserve Program is not eligible for a CSP payment, because
they're already getting a per-acre land payment
programs.

in those

And then there's a sod buster clause that says that
land must have been planted in crops for the last six years
in order for them to be eligible.

That is for crop land.

That's so that people aren't sod busting and converting land
just to get it into the program at a higher payment rate.

And generally forest land is not eligible.

a

statement

that

said,

only

small

The Statute had

private,

non-

industrialized forest lands are eligible that are incidental

to the operation.

That doesn't really define well enough

what can be in and what can be out.

So,

in the proposed

rule we provided for a couple of definitions, and you'll see

it at the end,

and we're asking for ideas and comments on

this.

But forest land by our definition is a land cover or

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used category that's not included in CSP by Statute.

The

minimum area as classification for forest land is one acre,

and

that

acre

Additionally,

must

be

in

order

at

for
eligible for a CSP contract,
least
a
hundred
a
tree-covered
feet
area
wide.
to
be
it must be stocked with less
than ten percent single stand trees that will reach a mature
height of at least thirteen feet and have a tree canopy of
less than twenty-five percent for that management area.
So,
as I said,
we're seeking ideas and input on how we should
work with this issue of what amount of a forester's land
that's small and incidental can be inappropriate, because

the Statute did not specify that.

that on our own.

So,

we're forced to do

Okay, NRCS also seeks guidance on those tree-covered

areas that are going to go into the contract.

What level of

treatment should be required on those if they're going to be

included as small

incidental

land **for the contract.**

And

we're seeking input on whether forestry land should meet the

same quality criteria as other specified types or land that

we're working on in **CSP.**

Okay, the next screening area is producer eligibility.

And there's a couple of definitions here that are really

critical

going

to

to the way the Conservation Security Program is

work.

One

is

the

definition

of,

who

is

the

producer, and the other *is* the definition of, what *is* their

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agricultural

operation.

So,

producer was defined as such:

in the Statute agricultural

Producer means an owner,

operator,

landlord,

tenant,

or

sharecropper that,

number

one, shares in the risk of producing any crops or livestock,

and,

secondly,

is entitled

to

share

in

the

crop or the

livestock available for marketing from that farm or ranch,

or

would

produced.

have

been

had

those

crops

or

livestock

been

The second definition is that of an ag operation, and

this term is significant because it defines the land area

that both can be enrolled and that must be enrolled as a

condition

of

participation.

the

Tiers

under

the

three

Tiers

of
NRCS believes the approach that we've laid

out

in

the rule

to defining

ag operation

cohesive

management

unit

over **which**

these

will

create a

achieved.

In particular,

benefits

are

that definition is critical for

determining what separates a person from Tier **I**,

II, and from Tier III.

So, let's take a look at the definition now.

of

wordy,

but

it

says

that

ag

operation

from Tier

It's kind

means

all

agricultural land and other lands determined by the Chief,

whether contiguous or non-contiguous,

under the control of

the participant and constituting a cohesive management unit

where the participant provides active personal management of

the operation on a day-to-day basis on the date of





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enrollment.

So,

what this is meaning to say is that this

program is going to consider one ag operation all of the

agricultural

land

in

that

farm or

person is operating and managing.

that

ranch

that

that

based

on

farm **numbers**,

or

tract

It's not going to be

numbers,

or

some

other

system that is used in other USDA programs.

take a look at

the **aggregate**

total of all

It's going to

the land that

you're involved in, in terms of an operation, and that will

be one contract for CSP.

Okay,

the next area to take a look at is the use of

priority watersheds.

And, as I said earlier, CSP will first

be offered to watersheds with the greatest potential for
improving some important research conditions, such as these:
water quality, both surface and ground water, soil quality,
and
grazing
watersheds
land
conditions.
as
those
watersheds
environmental
concerns.
NRCS
We're
with
defining
the
most
is
proposing

watersheds be these eight digit hydrologic unit

defined

by

the

u.s.

Geological

Service

and

priority

pressing

that

the

codes as

that

the

prioritization

process

will

consider

factors

that

have
science based nationwide data available from our Natural
Resources Inventory, which we call the NRI.

And, again, it

would include

ground

water

such data

as vulnerability **of**

surface and

quality,

the

potential

for

excessive

soil

quality degradation, and a condition of grazing land in the

20.





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watershed.

We are asking for comments on this in the rule,

we're

asking

for

ideas

on

other

approaches

on

how

and

to

prioritize these watersheds.

Because I said initially this

will be a key to where we offer the program in this year '04

with just that 4 **million**.

Homer and his staff have provided
some of these easels that show this map, and I also have one
that I'll put up here.

Maybe after the meeting you'll want
to walk around and take a look at that, and there is staff
here to help you understand that.

So, looking at this map I start off by saying that it
probably looks kind of scary,
because

there are so many
lines on it, but what I want you to see here is that there
is 2119 watersheds total in the U.S.

But now, let's take a
look at
what
that
looks
like
for Mississippi.

I
don't

recall the number of total eight-digit --I guess I forgot
to ask.

BY SOMEONE IN AUDIENCE:

som~thing.

BY MR. DERICKSON:

Sixty something.

There are sixty

But you can see by

looking at that that some of them are as little as about a
county in general,

and I see some **that** cover two or more
counties.

So, that gives *you* some idea of how they would be

-how the program would be implemented on a watershed basis

here in Mississippi.

21.

22.





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Okay,

the next area are

the treatment requirements.

Let's look at that.

All CSP producers must meet the minimum

treatment criteria for both soil quality and water quality.

Now, this is an important point, because that means that for

all Tiers participation that eligible CSP applicants will

have already met both soil quality and water quality to the

minimum

quality

criteria

on

those

acres

that

they're

providing to enroll.

And, as you know,

the techniques to

achieve these soil and water criteria will vary depending

upon your

farm or

ranch's

location

slope,

climate,

type

of

soils,

type

and

of

others.

But

they might

include managing,

factors

such as

vegetation,

nutrients,

and

and

pesticides.

They might include erosion control techniques.

Might be management of grasslands or pasture.

Now,

let's take a look at this area called Enrollment

Categories.

And as we go down through

these steps,

the

picture of the filter over here on this side is important,

because it lets you see how as we take this total pool, the

number of people that are potentially eligible out there, in

our trying to result in the right number to use that 41

million this first year without breaking the budget.

We

have data that shows that potentially there are as many as

1.8 million producers who might be eligible for the program.

And so this is important in having this screening process so

we can fairly get down to the number of people who are going

23.



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to pass through these different requirements that actually result in getting a contract.

Okay, let's take a look at this.

The applications will

be prioritized based

on

some of

these

conditions.

The historical and environmental performance that they have for that land that they're operating and their willingness to undertake additional conservation activities.

The applications will be placed in the highest category for which they qualify based on those criteria I just mentioned above.

And the categories will be funded in priority order until the CSP appropriation is exhausted.

That last point is also important because if you've had a chance to look at the rule, you'll see that we explained that we borrowed this concept from the Veteran's Administration.

It's how they deal with an entitlement program for Veteran health care.

And what it essentially provides is a sort of a back stop

that says when the money is available is gone,

the sign-up

is finished for that year.

The allocation is exhausted.

So,

that's why the use of categories is included in CSP,

because

program,

it

and

was

we

originally

written

need

to

have

a

way

on

of

the

entitlement

cutting

off

the

program for that sign-up when those dollars are exhausted

for that year.

Okay,

a **little** more

information about

what

some of

these categories might be made up of.

It will be resource

24.



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information such as these:

The soil conditioning index, the
existence of water quality practices and systems in place on
the land, grazing land conditions, possibly at-risk feeding
habitat, and a emphasis on limited resource, and beginning
farmers and ranchers.

cross

section

of

the

That will allow us to have a good

type

of

contracts,

the

kind

of

participants, and the kind of resources issues that we would

be trying to fund for that year.

Okay, th~ last screening process is Contract Selection.

The Conservation Security Plan that we would develop with

you

would

address

these

needs.

It

would

schedule

the

activities to be carried out

schedule practice maintenance.

in the contract.

It would

practices

or

activities

to be

Watershed schedule of new

completed.

And it

would

document your payment for those activities.

That's what all

would be in the Conservation Security Plan.

Now,

a little refresher on the three Tiers that are

involved in CSp.

As

I

eligibility

requirement

said,

would

looking under Tier I,

the

be

addressed water quality **and** soil

that

you

have

quality on part

already

of the

operation.

So,

that requirement now is true of all three

Tiers.

One of the differences is the extent.

The number of

acres that you've done that on.

So, Tier I is meeting those

criteria on part of your operation.

Tier II is meeting that criteria on your whole



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operation,

plus being willing to address another resource

concern through the contract period.

And

Tier

III

means

addressing

all

the

appropriate

resource concerns for the entire operation, plus additional

conservation activities, mainly through the enhancement part

of the program, and I'll go into that in a little bit more

detail in a moment.

But you can see the asterisk there at

the bottom of the slide, is that all participants agree to

address any additional sign-up requirements.

The Statute also provides for four types of payments to

producers through the program.

The first two are annual

payments,

and the others are --it can be for one year or

more.

So, let's take a look at these.

The

first

one

is

an annual

base

component

for

the

business part condition on the number of acres that you are

eligible to enroll.

The

second

one

is

an

annual

component

for
the
maintenance of the existing conservation system that you
have that met that eligibility criteria when you came into
the program.

The third one is the possibility for a new practice

installation,

what

we're

calling

a

one-time

practice

payment, because we at least have the potential to install

an

additional

practice

through

CSP,

although

we

would

largely be looking to some of the other conservation

25.



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programs,

such

installation.

as

EQUIP

or

WHIP,

to

do

new

practice

Now, the last item there is the one that I want to draw

your

attention

significant

area

to

because

for

CSP,

it

and

is

probably

that's

the

the

most

enhancement

component of the program, where we will reward and encourage

exceptional conservation effort.

That is where most of the performance *in CSP is*, and that is also where most of the potential payments are for contract holders.

As you can see by this slide, the white area and the short yellow bar are meant to represent those first couple of items that I described.

They are the smaller components of the contract and they're rather astatic in that you're going to get a practice payment and a base payment in all three programs.

green

sail

is

Or Tiers.

meant

to

This area here.

be

an

additional

This sweeping

conservation

performance, as well as the potential for payments through the enhancement provisions.

And that is where most of your

interest and where most of the performance will be.

Now, we've provided for a little summary of some of the limitations here on this slide.

By Statute,

Tier I

18 a

five-year contract that is capped at \$20,000.00 per year.

Tier II and Tier III can be five to ten-year contracts, and they're capped at \$35,000.00 and \$45,000.00 respectfully.

The five types of enhancements that are described in

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the Statute are these:

And although there are five of them,

I

like to break them into two groups to try to give you

clarity about this.

condition

of

the

The first two deal with improving the

resource,

and

we

will

do

this

mainly

through our intensive management activities.

But the first

one

18

meant

to

say,

improving

a

significant

resource

concern beyond the minimum requirements.

The second one is

approving

a

priority

minimum requirement.

local

resource

concern

beyond

the

The next three then are the more interventive and new ideas.

The third one would allow us to make payments on on-farm demonstrations.

The fourth one is the potential for enhancement activities as cooperative watershed projects.

And the fifth one is assessment and evaluation activities.

And I have a little brief example of these last --well, of these.

Let's take a look at those.

In this example that's explained as the How, What and Why.

In this example we're showing how we would install riparian buffers.

And we would do that through the program to

improve a priority local quality

and

wildlife.

And

resource

condition of water

why we would

do

that

is

to

provide shade and cool-surface water temperatures to restore critical salmon habitat.

So, that gives you an idea of the

way we're going to be working with our States to focus in on some really critical resource issues that the CSP program



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can address, and then we will develop specific activities on

how to accomplish that.

Let's take a look at another one.

This one is talking

about on-farm demonstrations, and this is where we might do

something like work with field trials of different types of

cover crops,

trying to build soil organic matter,

working

with mulches, and land management practices to improve that

soil quality

As far as watershed projects,

we **might be**

able to do something with producers in an area to control

erosion.

Again, boost that soil organic matter and reduce

surface water contamination.

The

last

example.

In

terms

of
assessment
and
evaluation activities, we can be involved in activities such
as water quality testing at field edges.

We could possibly

drill monitoring wells,
and we could collect and analyze
data.

This is a pretty exciting area for us and some of our
key partners, because it would give us a chance to take a
look at what
type of conservation activities work in an
area,
which ones don't work,
and what does **it** depend on.

So,
we can actually gather some data here that not only
would benefit the CSP program,
but would probably provide
better direction for some of our other conservation programs

also.

Okay,

just a couple more slides here in closing.

In

terms of how you apply.

The Secretary will announce a sign-

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up period, and we will distribute that information and make
sure everyone knows when the sign-up is going to be.

The
producers will be asked to determine if their farm or ranch
is

in a selected
watershed and

if

eligibility

requirement

of

having

quality

and

water

quality

on

that

they meet

that basic

already

farm or

treated

ranch.

soil

The

producer will then complete a benchmark inventory of their

existing conservation conditions,

and all applicants must

meet

those

minimum

Tier

requirements,

as

well

as

any

additional contract requirements that the sign-up analysis

provides for.

And then at that point NRCS will determine eligibility.

We will

conduct a follow-up interview with the person to

validate any information that we need to.

We will place the

application in a

Tier,

an enrollment

category,

and then

select the successful applicants.

And then NCRS or an Agent

Service Provider will complete a Conservation Security **Plan**

with that producer.

So, in closing, again, we're in the middle of a sixty-

day comment period on the CSP proposed rule.

Comments will

be accepted through March 2,

and there's a number of ways

that you can provide those comments.

with us here today if you have them.

You can leave them

We're going to be

taking your oral testimony.

You can send them in to that

address.

And the rule is available in a number **of** places

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from NRCS or on the web, and your comments can be submitted

directly on the web at a prompt, or you can just simply e-

mail them to that address of david.mckay@usda.com.

80,

with that, Homer,

I think this would be a time to

take a few comments --

there's something

that

I'm sorry.

I

explained

A few **questions.**

If
there
that you
don't
understand or that we need to clarify that, now is the time
to do that, because once we get into the listening session,
we'll mainly just be taking your ideas and suggestions.

We
won't be debating or answering questions about what's in the
rule.

So, let's start with the questions.

BY MR. WILKES:

As David stated, if you have
a question about the program that you want to ask,
now is the time to ask it.

BY MR. DERICKSON:

And please come to the
microphone,
if you would, so everyone can hear
you.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:

BY MAN IN AUDIENCE:

I just wanted to know **if** there's
going to be enough money to fund everybody in the nation who
signs up for it?

BY MR. QERICKSON:

His question is,
would
there be
enough money to fund everyone in the nation if they signed
up for **it**.

And, no, in the fiscal year 2004 there's only 41
million available.

And, as the Chief said,
that will fund

31.



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about 3,000 contracts.

We're going to ramp up next year.

We'll have about 209 million.

We estimate that will fund

about 12,000.00.

So, by the end of next year,

to have 15,000 people in the program probably.

we're **going**

But keep in

mind,

you know,

we know that there's at least a half or

three-quarters of a million people who potentially would be

good candidates for the program.

So,

like

a

lot

of

conservation

programs

stories,

we have to start out with what we have.

success

If you

think back to where CRP and the Wetlands Reserve Programs

were,

you start out small,

and as **the public** demand grows

and as we see evidence of the success of the program,

we

just hope that those needs will be met.

So, we just have to

work our way up incrementally from where we're at.

But I

think it would be misleading to say that all applicants that

are ever going to apply would be funded.

Yes,

sJ.r.

BY A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE:

How **will**

these **priority**

watersheds be selected,

expanded,

or

will

they

and IN future years will

remain

In

these

same

watersheds that you start with?

they be

priority

BY MR. D~RICKSON:

No.

That's a good question.

What

I tried to show here is that for this year we will use some

data such as potentials for contamination to surface and

ground water, condition of grazing land, condition of the

32.



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soil quality.

There are seven or eight types of data like

that that we can use from our nationwide Natural Resources

Inventory, and we will score all twenty-one hundred of those

watersheds, and we will put them in a priority order.

Those

will be the ones that we start with to fund this year, and

once they're funded,

their contract will be good for the

next few years, but the next year we will move to another

group of watersheds.

And what the Chief has described is

that we hope over say like an eight-year period that we can

rotate those watersheds that are going to be selected to

most

or

depends

all

on,

of

the watersheds

In

the nation.

you know,

the

funding that

we have

That

all

things work out,

but that's our intent,

and how

is that we start

with a priority selection.

that

they

were

signed

up

Those are funded for the period

for,

but

then

we

move

those

watersheds to cover most all of them in the country.

This person here.

BY A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE:

Yes.

My **question is this.**

You said private owned land or tribal

land was **eligible.**

What about if some institution or administration wants to

work with someone of private owned land or tribal

would they be eligible?

lands,

BY MR. D\$RICKSON:

Okay, his question is, recognizing

that I said private land or tribal land is eligible for the

program, he was asking if another institution, like a public

MOUIN

MMR

MMMB



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BY MAN

BY MR. DERICKSON

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BY A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE
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BY MR. DERICKSON
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BY SAME PERSON IN AUDIENCE

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BY MR. DERICKSON

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BY MR. KNIGHT

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contracts.

As a matter of fact, the ten years expenditures

for CSP reflected in the President's budget is a 10 billion

dollar

commitment

towards

CSP.

This

assumptions of

taking the entitlement

proposed by the Ominous Bill.

just

reflects

the

cap off

that were

BY MR. DH;RICKSON:

microphone.

Sir, would you mind stepping to the

BY A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE:

I don't know where I heard

anything

about

believe I did.

the

small

timber

in

that

That it was covered in that.

amount,

but

I

And I believe

you said the majority of them already had the CRP program or

drawing money on it.

Some of us fell through the crack.

I

was a timber farmer -I mean a cattle farmer, and of course

I had quite a bit of land that was in timber.

was

highly erodible

land,

and

when I

cut

the

Well,

mine

timber,

I

decided I had done got a little old anyhow and I would just
put it all in pine timber.

And at the time they said there

was a program that probably would help me on this high land,
but there was no funds for it.

And I went ahead and I got

a little help out of the Forestry Commission in planting it,
and so I planted it all back.

And, therefore, I don't have

anything

Security

Really.

on

is

this

land

to

getting

kind

help

of
me
thin
out,
on
and
all
this
that
Social
upkeep.
Because you've got to keep up your roads and your
fire lanes, and all this.

That's what the Forestry



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Commission asks *you* to do, *you* know.

And also they let me

leave out a certain amount for my wildlife,

which I don't

have

anything

other

than

upkeep my wildlife program.

that

Social

Security

check

to

And I was wondering if there's

a possibility that we might come up with a little something

for the small farmers under these conditions.

BY MR. D\$RICKSON:

Well, and one of the reasons that we

included that bit about forestry land in this overview is

because we specifically asked for some ideas on how we might

supplement what is currently in the proposed rules which
address **that**.

What

I meant

to say earlier was that

the

Statute says that only small incidental areas were eligible.

Well, that doesn't clearly tell us what's in and what's out.

So, we have proposed what we did that's in the rule, but we

would like your ideas on what that should say, and whether

you deliver those comments today or you send them in,

writing,

we would like all your ideas about them.

in

BY SAME PERSON:

=

I'm going

to

send

them in,

because I've got some more.

BY MR. D;ij;RICKSON:

Okay.

too,

BY MR. WILKES:

I want to make sure that the

comment period is a question about the various

parts of the program, and you may be doing some

of that now.

But I would hope that if you have

some particular comments on the rules that you

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would like to see incorporated into the proposed

rule that you would wait until that time.

Because

what I really would like to get from you now is

just general questions about this program.

But I

think I would like to get with you a little later

on, sir, with the rest of your comments, if that's

okay.

If you have *any* particular comments about

the program itself right now,

if you need some

cla~ification of some of the things that was said,

we'll take those now.

But later on we want to

hear what your concerns are.

So, if we could hold

those comments about how the program should work

until a little later,

I would appreciate that.

BY MR. DERICKSON:

sir.

We have one **in the back.**

Go ahead,

BY MAN IN AUDIENCE: Yes, sir.

How will you determine -

will it be on the State level or on a county level as who

will decide if you're eligible and how you can qualify?

I

BY MR. DiJRICKSON:

As part of that sign-up process that

described

where

people

do

that

initially see if they meet criteria,

self

assessment

to

then that will be a

part of an actual application to the program.

And NRCS will

determine which people meet those eligibility requirements

and select th~ final contract holders.

BY SAME MAN:

Will that be each county NRCS

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individually?

BY MR. DERICKSON:

You mean where a

across State or county lines?

watershed goes

BY SAME MAN:

ever

change

the

Well,

rules

I'm just wondering if they will

to

apply

to

each

county.

will

everybody have the same guidelines?

BY MR. DiJRICKSON:

Yes.

BY SAME MAN:

Okay,

thank you.

BY ANOTHER MAN IN AUDIENCE:

You've used a lot of terms

now that I'm sure you don't even have a grasp of what you

mean by them right now, but there are a couple --give me a

feel

on you've

used

the

term water

quality

and

limited

resource.

Give me some idea of what your concept of that

is, **please.**

BY MR. DgRICKSON:

Okay.

When we're

talking about

meeting the criteria for water quality, that would be having

in

place

practices

that

ensure

that

the

water

quality

resource concern is being met; such as, nutrient management

planning,

pesticide

strips

and

buffers.

management,

the

presence

Both

practices

and

of

filter

management

activities that you would do as a farmer or a rancher to

ensure that th~ nutrients, and pesticides, and the sediment

from your

operation

stay in place.

And

those

would be

typical field office technical conservation practices.

BY SAME MAN:

And **limited** resources?



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BY MR. DERICKSON:

 ~ ~

Limited

beginning farmers and ranchers are

resource

producer

terms

that we use

and
In
other USDA programs where we give preference to people who
have
certain
levels
of
income
and
available resources at their disposal.

certain
amounts
of

And I can't recite
for you right now what all
of those terms and conditions
are,
but I think if you have an interest in that, some of
the USDA people in our offices can help you take a look at
what that specific criteria are.
anything **else** on that?

Homer, do you want to say

BY MR. WILKES:

Well, let me make sure *you*

know what I would like to see happen.

And **that is**

we will have folks in all the counties of

Mississippi and all the counties probably

throughout the United States that will have a feel

for those kinds of questions you may want to ask

here.

And I'm going to ask you if you would

actually look on the home page that I'm going to

give you, and that is NRCS.USDA.gov and, you know,

read the comments and really sit down and see

what's in those particular rules as they are now.

And then upon reading that, contact your local

service center, NRCS or FSA and maybe talk to

those local folks about some of these general

questions that we have here.

I **think** you would

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probably get a little bit more out of this.

I

know we could go on and on with the questions -

the general questions, but in the interest of time

or 'trying to make sure that we get the comments in

order to get good rules out there, I'm going to

just maybe take one more question, and then we'll

get into the comment period.

But I would

encourage you to actually make sure that you look

at what these proposed rules are, discuss them,

visit with your local folks **in** your local county

offices out there, and call upon those folks and

say, what does this mean.

And if they can't get

you an answer, they'll send you on up to folks

like myself, and we'll make sure that we get the

answer to the questions that you ask.

And having

said that, Frank, I'm going to take your question,

and then we'll get to the comment period.

BY MAN IN AUDIENCE:

I would like for you to define a

little bit better the size of the watersheds that you're

speaking **of**.

Are they Mississippi River size or creek size?

BY MR. DERICKSON:

Well, the acreage of the watersheds

vary across **the** country.

BY MR. WILKES:

Let me see **if** I can answer

thatt.

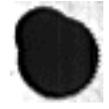
The bottom line is that the actual size of

the watershed will vary.

But in the State of

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Mississippi we have maps that will primarily

identify them.

We have some sixty watersheds.

And one of the things that

--this will be at a

minimum eight digit hydrologic unit watershed

that we'll be dealing with.

So, you know, based

on that, that's a minimum, but the normal size

watershed that we'll be dealing with.

But in

each State those watersheds have been identified

based on those hydrologic units, so they will

vary from State to State.

I saw Joan Fox come in from Senator Cochran's

office.

I

would

like

to

Joan,

thank you for coming.

recognize

Craig,

thank you very much.

her here.

Okay, now we're going to get into the part

of the program that I think is going to be very,

very interesting to all that's involved.

And

what I want to say is that the Conversation

Security Program is one of the most exciting

provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill.

So,

these are

exciting times.

And you folks that are actually

here today, we hope that you will begin to provide

public input, and out of public input, I hope from

that input that we can come out with good public

policy.

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A couple of things I want you to do.

We have

a comment sheet here, and if *you* have not filled
this out and you want to make comments and you're
not going to come to the mike to speak, if you'll
fill this out, as Craig stated, you can give your
comments to anyone here.

that are actually here.

Any of the USDA folks

Or give it to me.

We'll

make sure it's in the hands of the right folks.

Or anyone that's got those little blue stickers
on them.

Make sure they get it.

The second thing I'm going to ask you to do

is that when you come to the mike,

if you will,

state your name, your organization that you're
representing, and your location.

Because we want

to

make

sure

that

the

information, because, again,

Recorder

gets

that

it's going to be

very, very important that that person get and take

down the things that you're actually saying so

we can actually in put that into the policy once

it comes out.

Having said that,

I'm going to ask Mr.

Grady Carpenter to come forward and make his

comments.

Now, Mr. Carpenter.

COMMENTS BY GRADY CARPENTER:

I think *I've* done made most of them.

But another thing

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that

I

was

very

interested

in

is

we

don't

insurance, as I understand,

for small people.

have

any

BY MR. WILKES:

Excuse me.

I've **got your**

name here, but if you'll state your name so the

Recorder can get your name.

BY MR. CARPENTER:

It's

Grady

interested in

we have a very **small**

Carpenter.

I

was

amount

in Carroll

County.

I understand about three percent.

But when that

three percent

is used,

that's a hundred percent.

And I

don't know of any insurance that, you know, but we probably

couldn't

afford

it

if

we

did.

And

I

was

wondering

if

there's a possibility of my getting something through the -

through your program to see after that.

And I was -had down here to talk about kudzu.

But if

you'll give me some money,

I'll take care of the kudzu.

I

mean,

really.

That there is just a small thing.

I have

thirty acres of kudzu that they tell me will really go over

I've got 933 acres of pine -planted pines.

And they

tell me that thirty acres of kudzu is going to cover quite

a bit of timber land if it's not, you know,

took care of.

If there's a possibility.

I ain't going out of business

whether you do or don't, but if it's a possibility I would

appreciate a little help in some sort of form to help me

over -to raise this crop of timber.

Because I'm planning

on raising it whether you do or not, but it certainly would

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be appreciated, and it would be a lot easier to handle with

a little help.

Thank you.

BY MR. WILKES:

Thank you, Mr. Carpenter.

Okay,

the next person that I have on my list

that's signed up is Mr. John Kimbrough.

COMMENTS BY MR. JOHN KIMBROUGH:

I'm John Kimbrough,

Holmes County,

representing our

Soil Water Conservation District.

I'm a private land owner

and farmer.

Also do contract consulting work with farmers.

And one of the concerns that I have with this program, and

EQUIP, and some other programs is the funding of TSP.

And

I see from dealing with farmers, as well as talking to ag

consultants who may be involved in TSP,

that

the **funding**

levels for TSPs are so ridiculously low that I can see that

many of my cohorts are not commenting on the minimum/maximum

or

whatever

rate

that

is

being

complete interest in the program.

posted,

and

BY MR. WILKES:

Thank you, sir,

comments.

Mr. Jack Winstead.

have

lost

for your

BY MR. WINSTEAD:

Mr.

Wilkes,

I'm going to

pass at this time and let other districts go

ahead.

BY MR. WILKES:

COMMENTS BY HAROLD FITTS:

Mr. Harold Fitts.

F-I-T-T-S.