

NEWS RELEASE

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

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For Immediate Release

LOWER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED SELECTED FOR 2004 CSP SIGN-UP

Bismarck, ND, May 19, 2004— The Lower Yellowstone Watershed in western North Dakota has been selected as one of the nation's 18 priority watersheds that will be used in the fiscal year 2004 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up to be held this summer, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today.

"The selection of the Lower Yellowstone Watershed in this first sign-up represents a balance of resource needs, historic stewardship, potential producer eligibility, and the technology and adequate staff needed to successfully implement the program," said NRCS State Conservationist J.R. Flores. "Nationally, the selected watersheds reflect a cross-section of land uses, crop regions and landscapes that will test the basic concepts in NRCS' newest conservation program," he said.

In order to implement CSP this fiscal year, the NRCS will begin to train employees within the priority watersheds immediately on the basics of the program; detailed training will occur once the interim final rule is published in early summer.

"A sign-up announcement will be published along with the interim final rule that will detail the specific program requirements within the priority watersheds," Flores said.

Nationally, the fiscal year 2004 CSP budget of \$41.4 million will allow NRCS to write 3,000 to 5,000 contracts. The contracts will be determined in a national selection process that will be described in the sign-up notice.

(more)

According to Flores, all CSP applications that meet the sign-up criteria will be placed in an enrollment category and considered regardless of available funding.

“Agricultural producers in the Lower Yellowstone Watershed have been protecting our soil and water resources for years,” Flores said. “Now they will be rewarded for that stewardship, and will become the models for future CSP participants. It’s a bright new day for conservation and I’m delighted we’re a part of this exciting first sign-up,” he said.

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America’s natural resources. The program will be offered each year, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds are funded. Additional information on CSP, including the *Federal Register* notices, public comments and frequently asked questions, is at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

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