

# NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Three North Dakota Watersheds Included in Historic Expansion of the National Conservation Security Program**

Bismarck, ND, November 10, 2004—Three North Dakota watersheds were among 202 across the Nation invited to participate in a historic new program designed to reward farmers for long-term stewardship. U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced the selected watersheds recently and said that sign-ups for the 2005 Conservation Security Program (CSP) would begin this winter.

CSP, part of the 2002 Farm Bill, was introduced last summer in 18 watersheds nationwide. The Lower Yellowstone watershed in western North Dakota and eastern Montana was one of the initial watersheds last summer. In this first opportunity for farmers from each state to participate, about one eighth of the Nation's eligible farmers will be given the chance to apply each year over an eight-year period. The three watersheds in North Dakota are Beaver Creek (Lake Oahe), Apple Creek Long Lake, and Painted Woods Square Butte Creek. The three watersheds overlap significant portions of 10 different counties: Burleigh, Emmons, Kidder, Logan, McLean, McIntosh, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, and Stutsman, and very small areas of Mercer, Ward, and Wells Counties.

“As an agency and as a Nation, we have helped farmers and ranchers fix conservation problems such as soil erosion or water conservation since the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s,” said J.R. Flores, State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) overseeing CSP. This, however, represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs. These payments for demonstrable long-term stewardship will reward many of those who undertook conservation on their own initiative and who care for the resources we all share.” Furthermore the program is available on pastureland, rangeland and all types of cropland—including orchards, vines and vegetables where agricultural programs have not always been available.

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

Flores said that while protecting soil and water quality are the “price of admission” farmers will also have options to: improve wildlife habitat, undertake on-farm energy conservation, improve air quality, participate in environmental monitoring, and improve nutrient and pest management activities. NRCS will offer local workshops in the selected watersheds to more fully explain the program to interested potential participants.

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*All programs and services are available on non-discriminatory basis.*