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SCHAFFER ANNOUNCES CONSERVATION

SECURITY PROGRAM SIGN-UP

Sign-Up Begins April 18 in 51 Watersheds Nationwide

WASHINGTON, March, 2008—Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer announced a sign-up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) that will be available starting on April 18 to approximately 64,000 potentially eligible farms and ranches in 51 watersheds covering more than 23.7 million acres.

"As President Bush has said, those who depend on the land to make a living are the best stewards of the land," said Schafer. "Since the first sign-up in 2004, CSP has offered payments for enhancing natural resources, rewarding those farmers and ranchers who are model conservationists, and providing incentives for other producers to achieve those same high standards of conservation in agriculture."

The CSP sign-up is open in the 51 watersheds from April 18 to May 16. The sign-up announcement and specific program requirements are being published in the Federal Register.

CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private, agricultural working lands and rewards those producers who are meeting

the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations.

Payments can include three components: 1) an annual stewardship component for the base level of conservation treatment, 2) an annual component for maintenance of existing conservation practices, and 3) an enhancement component for exceptional conservation effort. Enhancement activities could include limited pesticide applications, renewable energy generation, and widening existing riparian forest buffers for restoring critical stream habitat.

To apply for CSP, NRCS asks potential participants to complete a CSP self-assessment workbook—available on the Web or from local NRCS offices—to find out if their operation meets the requirements of the program and qualifies for program participation. The self-assessment process is completed using a self-screening questionnaire for each land use to be enrolled. When this process is completed, the producer submits the CSP workbook to the local NRCS office during the sign-up period and meets with NRCS personnel to go over any additional needed documentation. NRCS will then determine if eligibility requirements are met and provide options for the producer's decision on enrollment category placement.

NRCS held the first CSP sign-up in 2004. Today's announcement brings the number of watersheds enrolled to 331 across the nation, covering 247.7 million

acres that have been eligible for the program. CSP is offered on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information on CSP, including eligible watersheds and a CSP self-assessment workbook is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

<u>State</u>	<u>Number of Watersheds Selected in State</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Potentially Eligible Farms and Ranches</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Acreage Impacted (does not include CRP Acres)</u>
Alabama	1	1,548	411,239
Alaska	1	4	777
Arizona	1	340	196,370
Arkansas	1	698	348,758
California	1	1,538	1,265,258
Colorado	1	839	1,657,883
Connecticut	1	881	65,261
Delaware	1	781	187,394
Florida	1	1,219	155,529
Georgia	1	2,825	317,483
Hawaii	1	1,864	476,021
Idaho	1	76	44,617
Illinois	1	420	120,805
Indiana	1	1,324	359,847
Iowa	1	2,781	908,299
Kansas	1	1,023	953,574
Kentucky	1	1,384	330,665
Louisiana	1	560	63,869
Maine	1	1,011	165,192
Maryland	1	1,876	207,853
Massachusetts & Rhode Island	1	316	20,310
Massachusetts & New Hampshire	1	372	40,959
Michigan	1	1,143	164,847
Minnesota	1	560	297,775
Mississippi	1	999	187,217
Missouri	1	4,359	1,086,114
Montana	1	493	1,293,308

Nebraska	1	1,152	892,174
Nevada	1	374	310,288
New Jersey	1	881	79,891
New Mexico	1	118	761,410
New York	1	1,277	264,727
North Carolina	1	2,389	321,587
North Dakota	1	605	882,097
Ohio	1	3,300	880,406
Oklahoma	1	3,429	1,745,890
Oregon	1	883	101,615
Pacific Basin	1	67	725
Pennsylvania	1	2,138	302,037
Puerto Rico	1	4,949	131,280
South Carolina	1	614	193,951
South Dakota	1	1,983	2,074,519
Tennessee	1	3,745	493,902
Texas	1	704	666,683
Utah	1	369	257,438
Vermont	1	711	171,740
Virginia	1	317	73,322
Washington	1	504	644,597
West Virginia	1	1,189	165,626
Wisconsin	1	1,538	239,345
Wyoming	1	110	796,851
US Total	51	64,582	23,779,328

Note that in CT, HI, MA & RI, NH and Pacific Basin, the selected sub-watersheds are counted as one (1) watershed. These estimates have been adjusted to reflect the area in the sub-watershed. All other estimates reflect the area of the state portion of the watershed.

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