

NRCS NEWS RELEASE

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LOWER BEAR-MALAD WATERSHED INCLUDED IN THE 2006 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

Farmers and ranchers in the Lower Bear-Malad Watershed should be preparing to sign up for the new Conservation Security Program, which rewards producers for practicing good conservation on their land. The sign up dates are expected to be announced later this fall. Only one other Utah watershed—the Upper Weber—was announced for 2006. Other Utah watersheds will be announced in coming years.

This new Farm Bill conservation program, administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), represents some significant changes in the way federal conservation programs operate. “In the past we have helped farmers and ranchers correct past conservation problems such as soil erosion,” said Jeffery Schick, district conservationist for the NRCS office in Tremonton. “This program, however, identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who have already taken the initiative to apply high standards of conservation on their land. Furthermore, this marks a new beginning in NRCS client relationships by giving control of the application process to the landowner,” said Schick.

Furthermore, said Schick, the program is available on pastureland, rangeland and all types of cropland—including Utah’s orchards, vines, vegetables, and dry beans 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.

Schick said that while the historic application of soil and water conservation 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, participate in watershed-wide stewardship programs, and improve nutrient and pest management activities.

Two important eligibility requirements will be for farmers to have a soil test and to have detailed farm records for two of the last three years.

The NRCS Tremonton office will offer local workshops to more fully explain the program and application process to potential participants. In the meantime, anyone can visit or telephone the local NRCS office at 85 S. 100 E. in Tremonton, (435) 257-5403 x1, to discuss their potential eligibility. For more information on CSP and other NRCS programs see <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>.