



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLUE EARTH RIVER WATERSHED SELECTED FOR CSP

SAINT PAUL, MN, May 19, 2004--USDA Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced on May 19th which priority watersheds would be used in the Federal fiscal year 2004 for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) signup to be held during the summer of 2004. On May 4, 2004, USDA announced the process that would be used to select watersheds for the fiscal 2004 CSP program rollout.

The Blue Earth River Watershed, 992,034 acres in size located in Minnesota and Iowa, was selected as one of the first 18 watersheds selected nationally for potential enrollment in the fiscal year 2004 CSP. The Blue Earth River Watershed is located in south-central Minnesota and north-central Iowa in portions of Blue Earth, Faribault, Freeborn, Jackson, Martin Counties in Minnesota and portions of Emmet, Kossuth and Winnebago Counties in Iowa. NRCS has estimated that over 3,000 agricultural producers may be eligible in the Blue Earth River Watershed and that over 90 percent of the land is also eligible.

A signup announcement will be published along with the interim final rule which will detail specific program requirements within the selected priority watershed. It is anticipated that producer signups will occur by mid-summer.

All CSP applications that meet the signup criteria will be placed in an enrollment category regardless of available funding. The U.S. Congress capped the fiscal year 2004 CSP budget at \$41.4 million. This funding will allow NRCS to write between 3,000 - 5,000 contracts throughout the United States. Due to the limit placed on the CSP program funding, USDA has chosen to offer the program on a selected priority watershed basis.

CSP will be offered each year, on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information on CSP, including the *Federal Register* notices, public comments and frequently asked questions, at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

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