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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FIVE MINNESOTA WATERSHEDS INCLUDED IN HISTORIC EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM**

**SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA, Nov 5, 2004** - Five Minnesota watersheds are among the *202 watersheds across the nation* eligible for participation 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 today (or 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 pilot watersheds. 2005 will offer the 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.

"As an agency, the mission of NRCS has been to help farmers and ranchers address conservation problems, such as soil erosion, and improve water conservation," said William Hunt, Minnesota State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "The CSP represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs. CSP will make payments to approved participants for demonstrable long-term stewardship and will reward many of those who undertook conservation on their own initiative to care for the resources we all share."

Approved participants can be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatments 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.

William Hunt, Minnesota State Conservationist said that, "One of the main concepts that make CSP different from other conservation programs is the opportunity for participants to receive payments for enhancement activities, such as improving wildlife habitat, participating in on-farm demonstrations and undertaking on-farm energy conservation."

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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NRCS will offer local workshops in the selected watersheds to more fully explain the program to interested potential participants.

CSP will continue to be offered each year, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds as funding allows. For more information on CSP and other NRCS programs see <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs> or <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/csp.html>.

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