

February 15, 2005
News Article #1 to Announce Availability of Program
Upper Sabine Watershed

A new conservation program that will financially reward the nations top conservation farmers and ranchers will be implemented soon in portions of _____ and surrounding counties.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP), authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill and administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), rewards farmers and ranchers who implement conservation on America's working lands. CSP, now in its second year, is a voluntary program based on conservation accomplishments that recognizes the contributions of the best land stewards and encourages them to do more.

The Upper Sabine Watershed, located in portions of Hunt, Collin, Kaufman, Rains, Smith, Wood, Van Zandt, and Rockwall Counties in Texas, is one of 202 watersheds nationally selected to offer the CSP in 2005. The Upper Sabine Watershed was selected because of a history of good land stewardship, excellent conservation partnership efforts, high-priority natural resource issues, and the availability of the necessary technical tools to implement the program.

According to Sam Stewart, Watershed Manager located in Greenville, "USDA intends to offer a signup for CSP early in 2005." NRCS personnel in the Upper Sabine Watershed will hold informational meetings for producers in the watershed to review eligibility requirements and the self-assessment tool that farmers and ranchers use to determine their eligibility prior to scheduling office visits with NRCS.

The meetings will be held in March in various locations throughout the watershed. The first of these meetings will be held on March 10, 2005, at 6:30 pm at Texas A&M-Commerce in the Agricultural Sciences Building. As other meetings are scheduled they will be posted on the Watershed website at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov and announced in the media.

"Locally, we are fortunate to have the Upper Sabine Watershed selected for participation in the CSP," says Stewart. "Our producers, with the assistance of NRCS staff, will have an opportunity to get this program implemented within the watershed. Producers outside of the watershed have the opportunity to watch how the program progresses and prepare themselves for future CSP signups."

The CSP is a very competitive program. Producers will compete nationally for funding against the nation's best conservationists. Documentation of conservation activities, such as conservation plans and records or pest and nutrient management, will be required to support the application.

