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2008 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM SIGN-UP ANNOUNCED

INDIANAPOLIS, March 24, 2008 — Last week USDA Secretary Ed Schafer announced a sign-up for the popular Conservation Security Program (CSP) from April 18 to May 16. Farmers in southeast Indiana in the Upper East Fork White River Watershed can apply. The watershed touches seven counties including: Decatur, Bartholomew, Jackson, northern Jennings and small parts of Shelby, Rush and Brown counties. About 519,330 acres make up the watershed, with just over 1,300 farms inside its boundaries.

“We are excited to offer CSP to the farmers in the upper Upper East Fork White River Watershed because of the natural resource concerns of the farmers there. Most of the soils in the watershed have medium to high potential for erosion,” says NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. “Some of the best conservation farmers in the state are in this watershed, and with CSP we’ll be able to reward the best of them for their stewardship efforts.”

“We will soon be hosting CSP public information meetings in the sign-up area. These meetings will help landowners and operators become familiar with the program and learn how they may take advantage of the opportunities CSP provides,” Hardisty said. “We’ll announce the meeting schedule in a few days, along with other information on the program, the sign-up and how to apply.”

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.

“We hoped for an earlier sign-up,” says Hardisty. “But the continuing resolutions in the appropriations process, early in the federal fiscal year, and the uncertainties of the Farm Bill reauthorization process have been obstacles this year.”

“It is clear now that even if the new Farm Bill is enacted in April, there is not enough time to get new program rules written and conduct a sign-up before the end of the 2008 fiscal year (Sept. 30),” said Hardisty. “For that reason, USDA has elected to offer the program now using current program rules to ensure that conservation benefits of the program can be realized this year.”

Producers can find information about the Upper East Fork White Watershed boundaries, the program, how to begin the application process and other details by visiting the NRCS Indiana Web site at www.in.nrcs.usda.gov or an NRCS office in one of the USDA Service Centers in the watershed.

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