

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Conservation Security Program Informational Meetings Scheduled for Punta De Agua-Tramperos Watershed**

The Punta De Agua-Tramperos Watershed is one of only 18 watersheds in the nation selected this year for USDA's newest program – the Conservation Security Program (CSP). The Punta De Agua-Tramperos Watershed crossing state boundaries from northeastern New Mexico into the western Panhandle of Texas. In New Mexico, the watershed includes portions of Harding, Quay and Union counties, and in Texas, the area covers portions of Dallam, Hartley and Oldham counties. The CSP program is designed to financially reward farmers and ranchers who have already achieved the highest level of management to conserve natural resources on their lands.

CSP is open to all qualified agricultural producers in the Punta De Agua-Tramperos Watershed. To find out if your farm or ranch will qualify for CSP and to receive information about the application process, you are encouraged to attend one of the upcoming CSP Informational Meetings in your area. The meetings are scheduled for:

- July 7 – Hartley Community Center, Hartley, TX, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. CST
- July 8 – Sedan Fire Station, Sedan, NM, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. MST

On June 9, 2004, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the release of an interim final rule to implement the Conservation Security Program. The CSP sign-up

will be available to qualifying farmers and ranchers in the Punta De Agua-Tramperos Watershed July 6 to July 30, 2004.

According to the interim final rule, all CSP applications that meet the sign-up criteria will be placed in an enrollment category. Categories will consider the applicants' current level of stewardship (soil condition and trend and the existence of support practices and activities) and will examine producers' willingness to perform more conservation activities during their CSP contract to provide additional environmental performance.

Payments can include four components: 1) an annual stewardship component for the benchmark conservation treatment, 2) an annual component for maintenance of existing conservation practices, 3) a one-time new practice component for specific additional needed practices, and 4) an enhancement component for exceptional conservation effort. For most producers the enhancement component will be the largest component. Payments will be received under three tiers of conservation contracts. Payments for the three tiers are capped at \$20,000, \$35,000 and \$45,000 annually and will last for five years for Tier I and 5-10 years for Tier II and Tier III. Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman will select the highest ranking applications to be funded. Additional information on the CSP including the interim final rule is available at [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/CSP\\_Interim\\_Final\\_Rule6.14.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/CSP_Interim_Final_Rule6.14.pdf). For more information about the public meetings scheduled for Hartley, TX, contact David Guest at (806) 244-2782; and for Sedan, NM contact Ben Creighton at (505) 374-7262 or visit the Texas web site at [www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP/csp.html](http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP/csp.html).

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