



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture \* Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*For Immediate Release*

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**USDA- NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)  
ANNOUNCES THE SELECTION OF THE HONDO WATERSHED AND THE  
PUNTA DE AGUA WATERSHED IN TEXAS FOR 2004 CONSERVATION  
SECURITY PROGRAM (CSP) SIGN-UP**

Temple, TX, May 19, 2004— The Hondo Watershed in the Edwards Plateau Region of south west Texas and the Punta De Agua Watershed, crossing state boundaries within northeastern New Mexico and western panhandle of Texas were selected as two of the nation's 18 priority watersheds that will be used in the fiscal year 2004 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up to be held this summer, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced today..

“The selection of the Hondo Watershed, encompassing 704,000 acres and the Punta De Agua Watershed, encompassing over 998,000 acres in this first sign-up represents a balance of resource needs, historic stewardship, potential producer eligibility, and the technology and adequate staff needed to successfully implement the program,” said NRCS State Conservationist Dr. Larry D. Butler. “Nationally, the selected watersheds reflect a cross-section of land uses, crop regions and landscapes that will test the basic concepts in NRCS' newest conservation program,” he said.

In order to implement CSP this fiscal year, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will begin to train employees within the priority watersheds immediately on the basics of the program; detailed training will occur once the interim final rule is published in early summer.

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“A sign-up announcement will be published along with the interim final rule that will detail the specific program requirements within the priority watersheds,” Butler said.

Nationally, the fiscal year 2004 CSP budget of \$41.4 million will allow NRCS to write 3,000 to 5,000 contracts. The contracts will be determined in a national selection process that will be described in the sign-up notice.

According to Butler all CSP applications that meet the sign-up criteria will be placed in an enrollment category and considered regardless of available funding.

“Agricultural producers in the Hondo Creek Watershed and the Punta De Agua Watershed have been protecting our soil and water resources for years,” he said. “Now they will be rewarded for that stewardship, and will become the models for future CSP participants. It’s a bright new day for conservation and I’m delighted we’re a part of this exciting first sign-up,” Butler said.

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America’s natural resources. Additional information on CSP, including the *Federal Register* notices, public comments and frequently asked questions, is at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

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