

Release No. 0244.10

Contact:

George Johnson 386-985-4037 ex 3

USDA Urges Producers to Sign Up Now for Conservation Stewardship Program

Applications Will Be Accepted Through June 11, 2010

GAINESVILLE, May 10, 2010 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that producers nationwide are invited to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland. The deadline to be considered for the next ranking and funding period is June 11, 2010.

"Voluntary conservation practices by producers are an essential part of our effort to improve soil and water quality," said Vilsack. "Broad and diverse participation in the CSP program will provide producers with many benefits such as enhancing wildlife habitat and helping to mitigate the impact of climate change."

Carlos Suarez, Florida NRCS State Conservationist says, "This program will benefit Florida agricultural producers for implementing conservation practices in the past as well as the future. It is also important to visit a local field office and get signed up before the deadline."

Congress limited enrollment for CSP nationally at 12.7 million acres per year. Applicants will compete within state-identified ranking pools. CSP is offered in all 50 states, District of Columbia, and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups with announced cut-off application dates for ranking periods.

Under the interim final rule published July 29, 2009, eligible producers may submit an application to enroll eligible land in CSP on a continuous basis. Producers are encouraged to apply for CSP now to ensure their applications will be considered during the next funding and ranking period. However, they can make their final decision to participate in the program once the CSP final rule is issued. The final rule will establish the policies and procedures for the program.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine if the new program is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments. It is available from local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices or on the NRCS Web site at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

CSP offers payments for adding conservation practices and maintaining and managing existing conservation practices.

For more information about CSP, please visit
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

NRCS is celebrating 75 years helping people help the land in 2010. Since 1935, the NRCS conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and producers delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests. President Franklin Roosevelt created the Soil Conservation Service, now known as NRCS, in 1935 to help farmers and ranchers overcome the devastating effects of drought, especially in the Midwest and Northern Plains regions.

#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202-720-6382 (TDD).