

News in South Carolina

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SALUDA WATERSHED SELECTED FOR 2004 CSP SIGN-UP

Columbia, May 19, 2004— The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced that the Saluda Watershed in South Carolina has been selected as one of the nation's 18 priority watersheds to be used in the 2004 fiscal year Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up to be held this summer.

"The selection of the Saluda Watershed 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," stated South Carolina NRCS State Conservationist, Walter Douglas. "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.

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.

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

According to Douglas, 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 Saluda Watershed have been protecting our soil and water resources for years. Now they will be rewarded for that stewardship, and will become the models for future CSP participants," Douglas stated.

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>.