

NRCS NEWS RELEASE

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UPPER WEBER WATERSHED INCLUDED IN USDA'S 2008 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

Farmers and ranchers in the Upper Weber Watershed may now sign up for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Security Program (CSP), which rewards agricultural producers for practicing good conservation on their land. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer recently announced the sign up will begin April 18 and run through May 16. The Upper Weber is one of 51 watersheds nationwide selected to participate this year. The watershed boundaries run along and above Interstate 80 from the community of Francis to Croydon Junction.

This Farm Bill conservation program, administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), represents some significant changes in the way federal conservation programs operate. "In the past we have helped farmers and ranchers correct past conservation problems such as soil erosion," said Travis Thomason, district conservationist for the NRCS office in Coalville. "This program, however, identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who have already taken the initiative to apply higher standards of conservation on their land. Furthermore, this marks a new beginning in NRCS client relationships by giving control of the application process to the landowner," said Thomason.

Furthermore, said Thomason, the program is available on pastureland, rangeland and all types of cropland—including Utah's orchards, vines, vegetables, and dry beans where agricultural programs have not always been available.

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

Thomason said that while the historic application of soil and water conservation measures are the "price of admission" farmers will also have options to improve wildlife habitat, undertake on-farm energy conservation, improve air quality, participate in environmental monitoring, participate in watershed-wide stewardship programs, and improve nutrient and pest management activities.

Two important eligibility requirements will be for farmers to have detailed farm records for two of the last three years, including farm management plans such as nutrient management, grazing and crop rotation.

The NRCS Coalville office will offer local CSP workshops to more fully explain the program and application process to potential participants. The first meeting will be held April 1 at 2:00 p.m. in Coalville and at 7:00 p.m. in Oakley; and the second meeting will be held April 3 at 2:00 p.m. in Oakley and at 7:00 p.m. in Coalville. Additional workshops are being planned for April 15 and 17 at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. in Coalville. In the meantime, anyone can visit or telephone the local NRCS office at the Dearden Building, 30 Main Street in Coalville, (435) 336-5853, to discuss their potential eligibility. For more information on CSP and other NRCS programs see <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.

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