



January 28, 2004

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK300-4-3**SUBJECT: LTP – Conservation Security Program (CSP) Update****Purpose:** To provide field offices updated information on the CSP proposed rule.**Expiration Date:** September 30, 2004**Immediate Action Required**

The Proposed Rule for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) was published in the Federal Register on January 2, 2004. Authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill, CSP is a new voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America's natural resources. The proposed rule is open for a 60 day public comment concluding on March 2, 2004. Links are provided below to the proposed rule and related materials for your information and for you to provide to interested clients for review, consideration, and comment. Following the comment period, NRCS will summarize the comments and prepare the final rule for review and approval of the USDA and the Office of Management and Budget. The goal is to have the final rule published for program implementation to begin this year. NRCS will not be able to initiate the program until the final rule is published.

Written Comments on Proposed Rule. NRCS Field Offices should provide information to local media outlets regarding the comment period for the proposed rule. The Secretary's press release may be accessed at: <http://intranet.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PAS/NewReleases/CSPComments12-03.doc>, and should be adapted for local use and distribution by all NRCS Field Offices. The proposed rule is also available for those interested in reviewing the information for comment at web link <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/03-31916.pdf>.

A summary of the high points of the proposed rule may also be accessed at the following link: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/pdf/cspsummary.pdf>, along with a fact sheet: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/pdf/cspfact.pdf>, and Questions and Answers (Q&A): <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/pdf/CSPQAs.pdf>, for additional information. These products can assist you and interested clients in understanding the CSP and the proposed rule. I encourage you to review these items and contact interested clients and invite them to review the proposed rule and provide written comments to Conservation Operations Division, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013-2890; or e-mail: david.mckay@usda.gov; Attn: Conservation Security Program. This proposed rule may also be accessed, and comments submitted, via Internet. Users can access the NRCS homepage at www.nrcs.usda.gov to submit comments to farmbillrules@usda.gov. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). The Final Rule, when published will serve as the Federal regulation for implementation and administration of the program. NRCS employees may access the most current updates of all of the above listed information through the My.NRCS web site under Programs.

(MORE)**DIST: AO**

National Listening Forums. As previously announced, the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is conducting ten public forums whereby interested individuals can provide comments and ideas regarding the proposed rule for the Conservation Security Program. Those who wish to speak at any of the remaining forums may make arrangements in advance by calling the state contact or may sign up at the forum. Speakers will be limited to 5 minutes.

The following link: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmland/2002/cspforums.html> provides detailed information on the public forums. USDA is holding the listening sessions to give the public ample opportunity to voice their opinions about the new program. Public input will be important as NRCS develops the final regulations for program implementation. Dates and locations of the 10 forums are:

Jan. 13	Tempe, Arizona	Feb. 11	Ft. Pierce, Florida
Jan. 13	Roanoke, Virginia	Feb. 11	Des Moines, Iowa
Jan. 21	Kerrville, Texas	Feb. 11	Augusta, Maine
Jan. 27	Spokane, Washington	Feb. 11	Greenwood, Mississippi
Feb. 10	Lansing, Michigan	Feb. 26	Madison, Wisconsin

State Listening Forum. An Oklahoma CSP Listening Forum has been set for Tuesday, February 10, 2004, at Metro Tech, 1900 Springlake Drive, Oklahoma City, from 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Carousel Room in the Business Conference Center. NRCS Field personnel will publicize this meeting to persons who are clients, customers, or members of other agencies, associations, or organizations. Assisting in this endeavor will help ensure that our targeted audience of farmers and ranchers will be notified. A news release is also available on the Oklahoma intranet site at the following link: <http://intranet.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PAS/NewReleases/CSP%20Listening%20Sessions%20Release.doc> and should be adapted for local use and distribution by all NRCS field Offices. The NRCS State Office has provided notification to the State Technical Committee members, State Outreach Council, Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, and American Indian Tribes. All Tribal Resource Conservationists and Tribal Liaisons should make a personal contact to ensure the information has reached the appropriate Tribal official.

To allow for as many speakers as possible, each speaker will be limited to five minutes. Written or oral comments will be officially received as part of the public record. Written comments will be accepted at the meeting. The meeting facility is handicap accessible. If individuals require special arrangements, please call 405-742-1238 prior to the meeting. Please contact the Programs staff if you have questions or need more information.

/s/ Leslie R. Conner, Acting For

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State Conservationist