



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Federal program recognizes 11 Massachusetts farmers as conservation stewards**

AMHERST, Mass. – Eleven Massachusetts farms in Berkshire and Essex counties will be rewarded for their conservation stewardship through the new federal Conservation Security Program (CSP), administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The annual contract payments, which will total nearly \$100,000 statewide over five years, are designed to reward producers for historic conservation activities on agricultural lands and to provide enhancement payments for producers who agree to implement additional conservation measures.

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America's natural resources. Nationally, 12,700 contracts will be offered under CSP, covering some 10 million acres of agricultural land, and providing nearly \$145 million to producers participating in the program.

"These farmers understand the environmental needs of their land and have made an investment in good conservation practices," said NRCS State Conservationist Cecil B. Currin. "USDA, in turn, is making a significant investment in the conservation of Massachusetts' natural resources," he said.

CSP is being implemented on a watershed basis throughout the country. The Massachusetts watersheds selected for 2005 were the Housatonic/Farmington watershed in Berkshire County and the Ipswich/Merrimack/North Coastal watershed in Essex County.

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Five Berkshire County farmers and six Essex County farmers have been accepted into the CSP program this year. These farmers are stewards of a total of 894 acres. Annual payments will be made using three tiers of conservation contracts and will last for five years for Tier I and five to 10 years for Tier II and Tier III.

“Anything we can do to conserve natural resources here on the farm, we do,” said George Noble, owner of Tweenbrook Farm in Pittsfield, one of Massachusetts’ first CSP farmers. “The biggest natural resource concern is clean water. My uncle and grandfather before me worked to keep the water supply around here clean.”

Nobel practices strip cropping and minimum tillage on his fields to prevent run-off. He has a management plan developed with the NRCS field office in Pittsfield. Other CSP farmers have implemented conservation practices such as limited pesticide and nutrient applications, total farm energy audits, minimum tillage, and delayed mowing to protect ground nesting birds.

“Over the next seven years, we anticipate that all farmers in Massachusetts will have the opportunity to apply for CSP as their watershed is selected for a signup,” Currin said. USDA announced this week that farmers in the Taunton River watershed in southeastern Massachusetts would be eligible to apply for CSP in 2006.

As a result of this historic investment, Currin expects long-term dividends – in clean air, pure water, abundant fish and wildlife, and a healthier environment for our children. “In addition to the conservation technical assistance that NRCS provides to landowners, CSP is another important contribution to protecting Massachusetts’ working lands,” he said.

For more information on CSP visit the NRCS Massachusetts website at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp).

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