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Colorado Farmers and Ranchers Help Voluntary USDA Conservation Program Reach 50M-Acre Mark *NRCS Celebrates Success of 4-Year-Old Conservation Stewardship Program*

DENVER – In just four years, America’s top conservationists have enrolled 50 million acres in USDA’s Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a program that helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners take conservation to the next level.

CSP is aimed at producers who are already established conservation stewards, helping them to deliver multiple conservation benefits on working lands, including improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat.

The land enrolled in CSP is more than 78,000 square miles, an area larger than Pennsylvania and South Carolina combined, making it one of the top federal programs for private lands offered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. This year, nearly 12.2 million acres across the U.S. were added to the program’s rolls.

From improving soil health to sending cleaner water downstream, this program is improving the environment, including the landscape here in Colorado. Landowners in Colorado have enrolled 2.5 million acres into CSP.

“The Conservation Stewardship Program allows our conservation-minded farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to go that extra mile in conserving natural resources,” NRCS State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps said. *“This program leads to cleaner air and water, enhanced wildlife habitat and healthier soil, among many other benefits. Colorado producers using this program are innovators in conservation and they’re making great contributions to our rural communities.”*

For example, the Dugan family uses rotational grazing systems for their 250 head of cattle, energy-wise conservation practices for wells on their property, and irrigation methods to facilitate emerging wetlands on their 20,000 acres in the San Luis Valley.

Eligible landowners and operators in all states and territories can enroll in CSP. NRCS local offices accept CSP applications year round and evaluate applications during announced ranking periods.

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A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, stewardship threshold requirements and payment types. It is available from local NRCS offices and on the CSP website: <http://go.usa.gov/g9dx>.

Learn more about CSP and other NRCS programs here:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs>.

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