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**Conservation Stewardship Program Open to Texas Rice Producers in Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton counties**

Temple, Texas, *April 23, 2020* — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program efforts supported by the Lower Colorado River Authority and assisted by the [USA Rice – Ducks Unlimited Stewardship Partnership](http://www.ducks.org/ricestewardship?poe=Srrelease).

This special CSP initiative is specifically for Texas rice producers in Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton counties. This project allots approximately $5 million to CSP in 2020 specifically for Texas rice growers.

While NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis, it will evaluate and rank applications received by June 5, 2020, for the next funding cycle. All interested rice producers are encouraged to apply. For general information about CSP, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp>.

“CSP offers agricultural producers and forest landowners payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, irrigation water management, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land,” said Drenda Williams, acting NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil amendments to improve water quality.”

The ongoing CSP assists landowners and rice producers who voluntarily implement conservation and management practices that aim to improve irrigation water management, control sediment and nutrient runoff, and provide waterfowl habitat on rice production lands.

“LCRA encourages the use of smart water-conservation practices such as the ones supported through this program,” said John Hofmann, LCRA executive vice president of water. “We are pleased to work with Texas NRCS, Ducks Unlimited and rice producers to support such practices.”

On a national basis NRCS helps private landowners build their farming businesses while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation. NRCS plans to enroll up to 10 million acres in CSP in 2020.

“NRCS has updated the program to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources,” said Kirby Brown, Texas Rice stewardship coordinator. “Partnership staff can help producers see up-front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives. These tools also enable producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.”

Producers interested in CSP should contact their [local USDA service center](https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs) or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted.](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelprdb1193811) For additional assistance, they can also contact Texas Rice Stewardship staff Kirby Brown at (210) 213-2805 or kbrown2@ducks.org, Dennis Neuman at (512) 373-5736 or dneuman@ducks.org, or Raul Villarreal at (713) 816-0784 or rvillarreal@ducks.org

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