



American Customer Satisfaction Index

Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Security Program Participants Customer Satisfaction Study

Final Report
October 2005



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Chapter I

Introduction & Methodology

a. Introduction

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the national indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of goods and services available to U.S. residents. It is the only uniform, cross-industry/government measure of customer satisfaction. Since 1994, the ACSI has measured satisfaction, its causes, and its effects, for seven economic sectors, 41 industries, more than 200 private sector companies, two types of local government services, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Internal Revenue Service. ACSI has measured more than 100 programs of federal government agencies since 1999. This allows benchmarking between the public and private sectors and provides information unique to each agency on how its activities that interface with the public affect the satisfaction of customers. The effects of satisfaction are estimated, in turn, on specific objectives (such as public trust).

The ACSI is produced through a partnership of the University of Michigan Business School, CFI Group, and the American Society for Quality.

b. Overview of ACSI Methodology

Figure 1 illustrates the multi-equation, cause and effect econometric model that the ACSI uses. Data that is used to run the model comes from surveys of customers of each measured company/agency. For private sector industries, company scores for the satisfaction index and other model components are weighted by company revenues to produce industry indices. Industry indices are weighted by industry revenues to produce economic sector indices. The sector indices, in turn, are weighted by the sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to produce the national ACSI. For the public sector (i.e., the federal government agencies), each agency is weighted by the budget expended on activities for the chosen customer segment to produce a federal government ACSI score. The ACSI for the private sector is updated on a rolling basis, with data collected each quarter from 1-2 sectors to replace data from the prior year. Each company or agency is measured annually.

Every federal government agency serves many segments of the public and interacts with both internal and external users. For the first year of ACSI measurement, each agency was asked to identify a major customer segment central to its mission for which to measure satisfaction and the causes and effects of satisfaction. In the years following the initial measurement, government agencies continue to focus on customer segments of similar importance in their studies of customer satisfaction.

c. Customer Segment Choice

This report covers participants of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Security Program (CSP). This segment consists of agricultural producers located in 2004 Watersheds who were awarded funding from the Conservation Security Program. The Conservation Security Program is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. This is the first measurement for this customer segment.

d. Customer Sample

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provided a list of names and phone numbers of agricultural producers that had been awarded funding in 2004 from the Conservation Security Program. The survey was conducted via phone from September 12 through September 16, 2005. A total of 250 completed surveys were used for this analysis.

e. Questionnaire

The questionnaire used is shown in Appendix A. It was designed to be agency-specific in terms of activities, outcomes, and introductions to the questionnaire and specific question areas. However, it follows a format common to all the federal agency questionnaires that allow cause and effect modeling using the ACSI model.

f. Customer Responses

Component and Attribute score detail is shown in the Attribute Score Table on page 7. Customer responses to open-ended questions in the survey are shown in Appendix B of this report. Customer responses to all closed-ended, scaled questions and the respective means are shown as frequency tables in Appendix C.

g. Benchmarking

Scores and commentary for the most recent ACSI results, published in December 2004, are available at www.customerservice.gov and www.theacsi.org. Benchmarking information and other useful resources, such as opportunities for sharing best practices with other agencies, can be found at www.customerservice.gov as well.

Chapter II

ACSI Results

a. Model Indices

The government agency ACSI model is a variation of the model used to measure private sector companies. Both were developed at the National Quality Research Center of the University of Michigan Business School. Whereas the model for private sector, profit-making companies measures Customer Loyalty as the principal outcome of satisfaction (measured by questions on repurchase intention and price tolerance), each government agency defines the outcomes most important to it for the customer segment measured. Each agency also identifies the principal activities that interface with its customers. The model provides predictions of the impact of these activities on customer satisfaction.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service Program Participants model, illustrated in Figure 1, should be viewed as a cause and effect model that moves from left to right, with satisfaction (ACSI) in the middle. The circles are multi-variable components that are measured by several questions (question topics are shown to the left of the circles). The values associated with the arrows connecting the components in the circles represent the strength of the effect of the component on the left to the one to which the arrow points on the right. These values represent "impacts." The larger the impact value, the more effect the component on the left has on the one on the right. The meanings of the numbers shown in the model are the topic of the rest of this chapter.

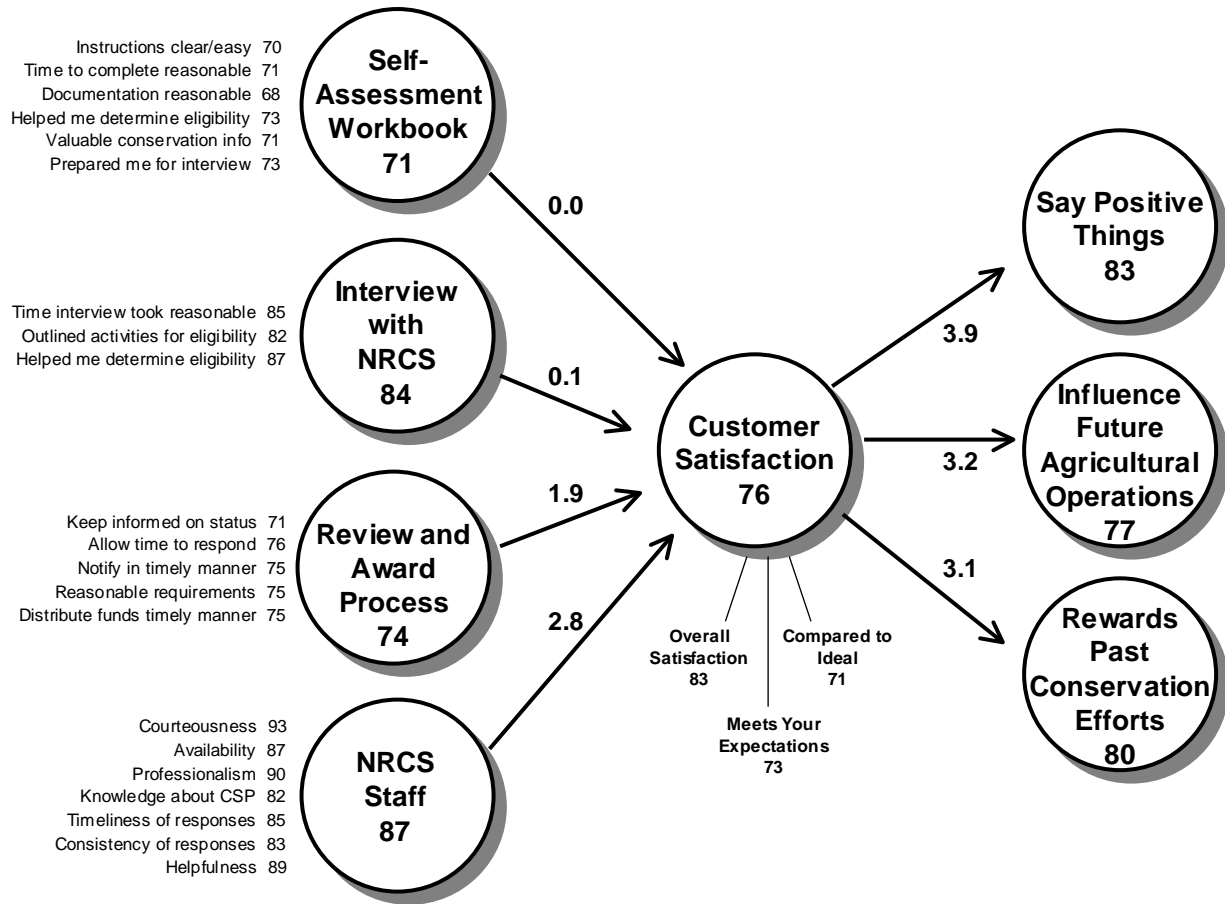
b. Satisfaction: ACSI

The ACSI is a weighted average of three questions. Questions are originally asked on a 1-10 scale, and then converted algebraically to a 0-100 scale for reporting purposes. The questions are:

- *Thinking of your experiences with NRCS Conservation Security Program and using a 10-point scale on which 1 means "Very Dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very Satisfied", how satisfied are you with the services provided by NRCS in the Conservation Security Program?*
- *Using a 10-point scale on which 1 now means "Falls short of your Expectations" and 10 means "Exceeds your Expectations," to what extent have the services provided by NRCS in the Conservation Security Program fallen short of or exceeded your expectations?*
- *Imagine an ideal way of allocating funding. How well do you think the NRCS Conservation Security Program compares to the ideal you just imagined? Use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "Not at all close to the Ideal," and "10" means "Very close to the Ideal."*

The 2005 customer satisfaction index (ACSI) for the Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Security Program Participants segment is 76 on a 0-100 scale. This score is considerably higher than the 2004 national ACSI of 72 for the federal government, and right on par with the 2004 measurements for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (75) and NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (77).

Figure 1



Note: the confidence interval around the CSI score is +/- 2.3 points at the 95% level of confidence.

c. Drivers of Satisfaction

The NRCS Conservation Security Programs drivers of Satisfaction are: Self-Assessment Workbook, Interview with NRCS, Review and Award Process, and NRCS Staff. Each driver is measured by combining a series of questions, or attributes, specific to that particular area of service. The indices, or components, for these activities are the weighted averages of their respective questions. Scores for the drivers and the questions that comprise them are contained in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1: Drivers of Satisfaction—Component and Attribute Scores

	Score
Self-Assessment Workbook	71
Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand	70
Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable	71
Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable	68
Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	73
Provided valuable information about conservation activities	71
Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff	73
Interview with NRCS	84
Amount of time the interview took was reasonable	85
Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility	82
Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	87
Review and Award Process	74
Keeping you informed on the status of your application	71
Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests	76
Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner	75
Having reasonable program requirements	75
Distributing funds in a timely manner	75
NRCS Staff	87
Courteousness	93
Availability	87
Professionalism	90
Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program	82
Timeliness of responses	85
Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member	83
Helpfulness	89

Table 1 above shows the component and attribute scores for each of the drivers of Customer Satisfaction for the NRCS Conservation Security Program 2005 survey.

Chart 1 below displays the scores for the CSP Self-Assessment Workbook. With a score of 71, this component is the lowest-scoring driver of satisfaction for the Conservation Security Program. However, the workbook appears to be adequately serving the purpose for which it was designed: to help applicants determine their eligibility for the program and prepare them for the interview with NRCS. Participants are relatively pleased with the instructions and time it takes to complete the workbook, but less satisfied with the amount of supporting documentation required.

Chart 1: Self-Assessment Workbook - Component and Attribute Scores

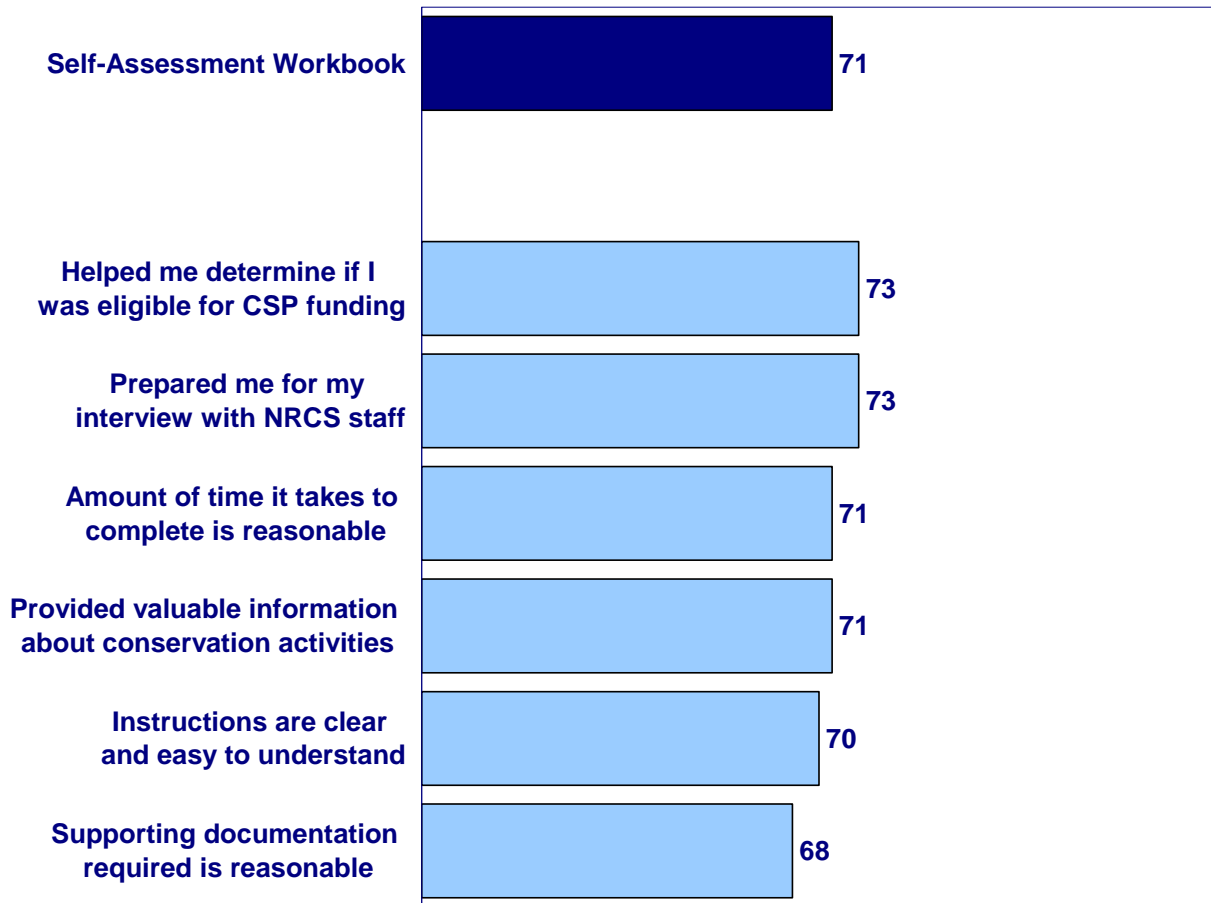


Chart 2 below displays the scores for the second highest-scoring component, the Interview with NRCS. Respondents rated the interview very high for helping them determine their eligibility for the program. It appears that some participants would like additional information regarding the stewardship activities required for eligibility since this attribute received the lowest score of the attributes measured in this area.

Chart 2: Interview with NRCS - Component and Attribute Scores

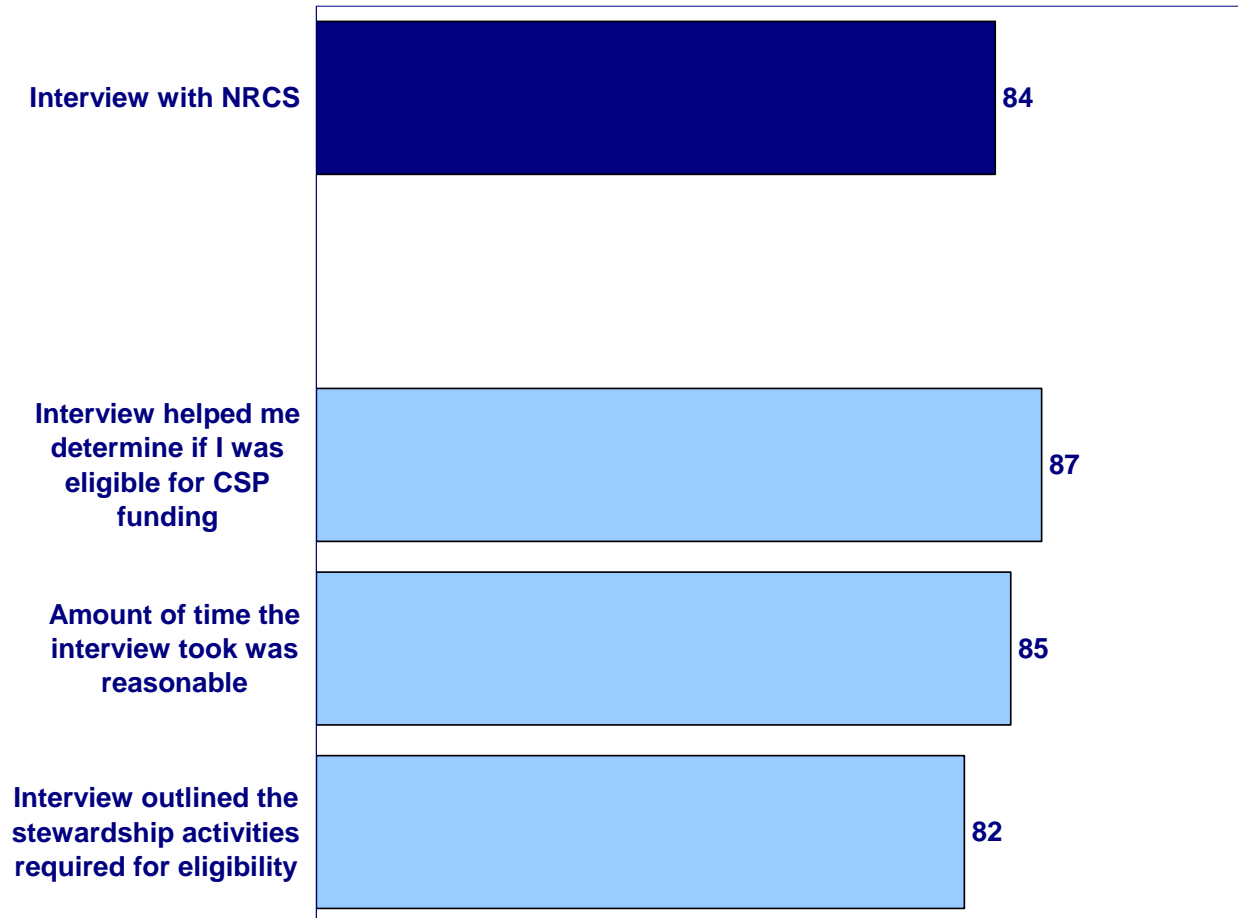
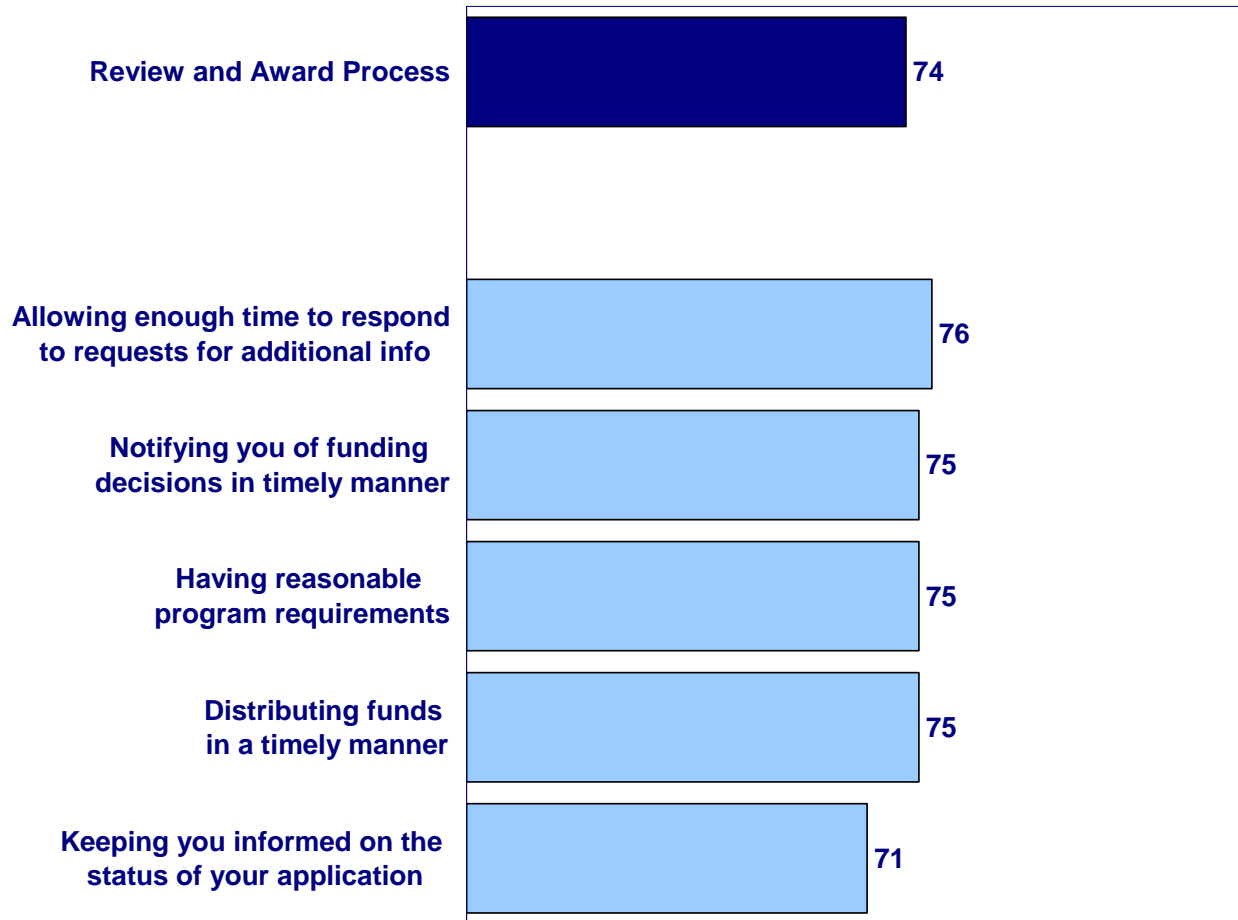


Chart 3 below displays the scores for the Review and Award Process for the Conservation Security Program. This is the second lowest-scoring component for the NRCS. Participants appear to be somewhat satisfied with the time NRCS allows to respond to requests for additional information and NRCS' post-award actions (notification and distribution of funds), but would like more updates on the status of their application.

Chart 3: Review and Award Process - Component and Attribute Scores



NRCS Staff is a strong driver of satisfaction and clearly an area of strength for the NRCS Conservation Security Program. While participants are very pleased with the courtesy, professionalism, helpfulness, and availability of the staff, they are less satisfied with the consistency of responses among staff and their knowledge about the Conservation Security Program.

Chart 4: NRCS Staff - Component and Attribute Scores

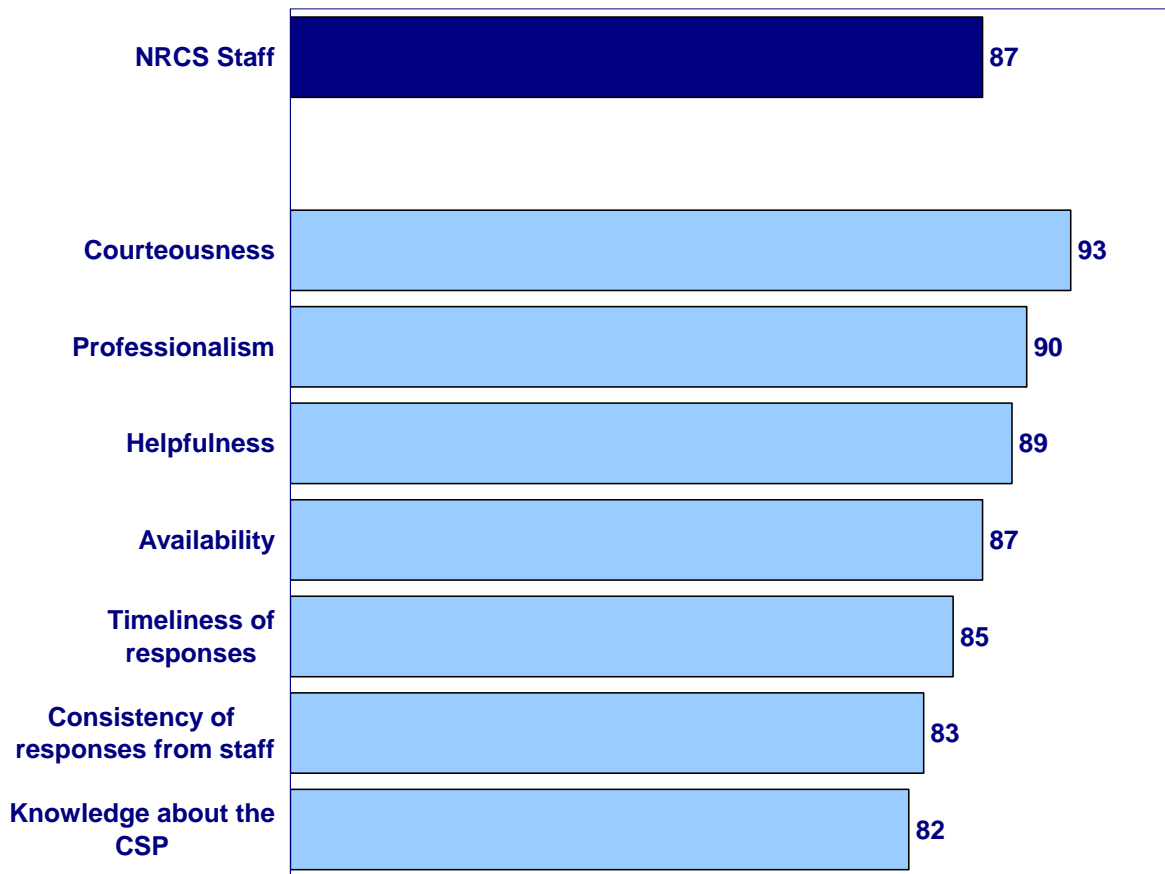


Table 2: Satisfaction and Outcome Scores

	Score
Satisfaction (ACSI)	76
Overall Satisfaction	83
Meets your Expectations	73
Compared to Ideal	71
Willingness to Say Positive Things	83
Willingness to say positive things about CSP	83
Influence on Future Agricultural Operations	77
Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations	77
Reward Past Conservation Efforts	80
How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts	80

d. Outcomes of Customer Satisfaction

The Natural Resources Conservation Service measured three outcomes from satisfied customers: willingness to say positive things about CSP, the CSP’s influence on future agricultural operations, and how well CSP rewards past conservation efforts. Each outcome was measured with a single question.

Willingness to Say Positive Things (Q27)

The index of Willingness to Say Positive Things — how willing participants are to say positive things about the NRCS Conservation Security Program — is 83. This is a relatively high score for a new program.

Influence on Future Agricultural Operations (Q28)

The index of Influence on Future Agricultural Operations — how likely it is that the Conservation Security Program will influence farmers and ranchers to modify their agricultural operations in the future — is 77. This score should increase with the maturity of the program.

Reward Past Conservation Efforts (Q29)

The index of Reward Past Conservation Efforts — how well CSP rewards past conservation efforts — is 80.

e. Using the Model

The Natural Resources Conservation Service can use the scores and impacts from the model shown in Figure 1 to target areas for improvement that will have the greatest leverage on Customer Satisfaction and the desired outcomes.

Attribute scores are the average respondent scores for questions asked in the survey. Questions are originally asked on a 1-10 scale, and then converted algebraically to a 0-100 scale. It is important to differentiate that these scores are averages, not percentages. The score is best thought of as an index, with 0 meaning “poor” and 100 meaning “excellent.”

A **component** score is the weighted average of the individual attribute ratings that comprise a concept. A score is a relative measure of performance for a component. The numbers in the circles in the model in Figure 1 are component scores. The component score for NRCS Staff is 87.

Impact values should be read as the effect on the subsequent component if the initial driver were to be improved by five points. If the driver increases by less than five points, the resulting change in the subsequent component would be a fraction of the original impact. For example, if the score for the component NRCS Staff increased by 5 points (from 87 to 92), Satisfaction would increase by 2.8, the impact of NRCS Staff onto Satisfaction. This would bring the Satisfaction score up to 78.8. The impact of Satisfaction on Willingness to Say Positive Things works in a similar manner. If Satisfaction increased by 5 points (76 to 81), the outcome of Willingness to Say Positive Things would increase by 3.9, the impact of Satisfaction onto Willingness to Say Positive Things.

As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in the other affected component at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially when their scores are lower.

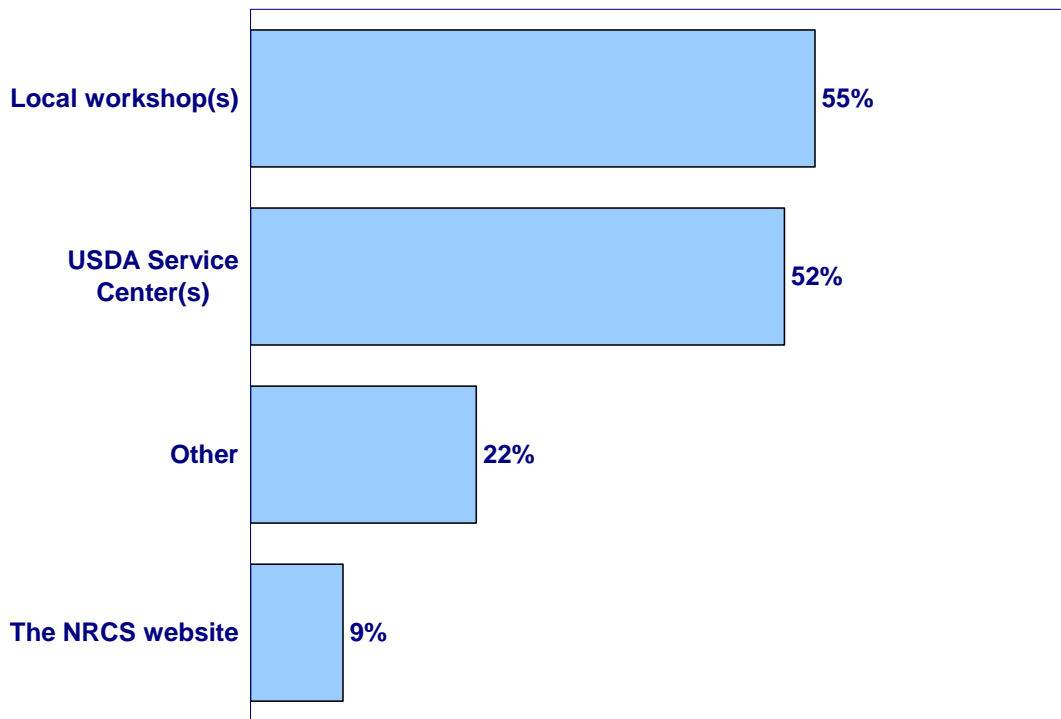
e. Other Questions

Frequencies of responses for all survey questions can be found in Appendix C of this report.

f. Segment Results

In the survey, respondents were asked how they obtained information and application forms for the Conservation Security Program administered by NRCS. Participants received information primarily from local resources, specifically workshops or USDA Service Centers. Only 9% of the respondents indicated using the NRCS website, a surprisingly low percentage. Please note, this question was asked as a multiple response question, respondents could select more than one method used to obtain information. A complete list of customer responses for “Other” methods is included in Appendix B of this report.

Chart 5: Methods Used to Obtain Information on the CSP – Respondent Percentages



Using address information provided in the sample list, respondents were allocated into Conservation Security Program 2004 Watersheds. Table 3 below displays the scores for CSP 2004 Watersheds with 8 or more responses. Results are not shown for Lemhi and Little, which each had 1 respondent, Moses Coulee (with 4 respondents), and Punta de Agua (with 2 respondents). While the sample sizes are relatively small and should not be used to draw definitive conclusions, the results can serve as catalysts for further research. NRCS may wish to compare component and attribute scores across the various watersheds to determine if customer experiences vary from watershed to watershed. For example, participants located in the Little River Ditches and Raystown watersheds appear to be very satisfied, while participants located in the East Nishnabotna, Lower Salt Fork Arkansas, and Blue Earth watersheds are significantly less satisfied.

Table 3: 2004 Watersheds - Component and Attribute Scores

	Auglaize	Blue Earth	East Nishnabotna	Kishwaukee
Self-Assessment Workbook	72	66	65	74
Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand	72	71	58	75
Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable	70	69	69	77
Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable	71	56	65	74
Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	76	65	65	75
Provided valuable information about conservation activities	72	65	68	69
Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff	73	69	68	78
Interview with NRCS	85	77	74	88
Amount of time the interview took was reasonable	86	81	76	88
Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility	81	72	69	87
Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	88	80	78	88
Review and Award Process	71	64	68	79
Keeping you informed on the status of your application	68	62	64	74
Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests	71	70	67	83
Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner	71	65	69	76
Having reasonable program requirements	79	62	64	81
Distributing funds in a timely manner	68	62	75	80
NRCS Staff	86	82	85	91
Courteousness	90	91	94	96
Availability	86	79	88	89
Professionalism	89	87	91	94
Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program	82	76	67	86
Timeliness of responses	83	78	85	87
Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member	83	71	69	88
Helpfulness	85	85	85	95
Satisfaction (CSI)	73	69	70	80
Overall Satisfaction	78	79	83	88
Meets your Expectations	69	66	67	75
Compared to Ideal	72	60	59	75
Willingness to Say Positive Things	85	74	80	87
Willingness to say positive things about CSP	85	74	80	87
Influence on Future Agricultural Operations	78	76	66	76
Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations	78	76	66	76
Reward Past Conservation Efforts	84	77	72	78
How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts	84	77	72	78
Number of Respondents	38	25	16	24

Table 3: 2004 Watersheds - Component and Attribute Scores (cont.)

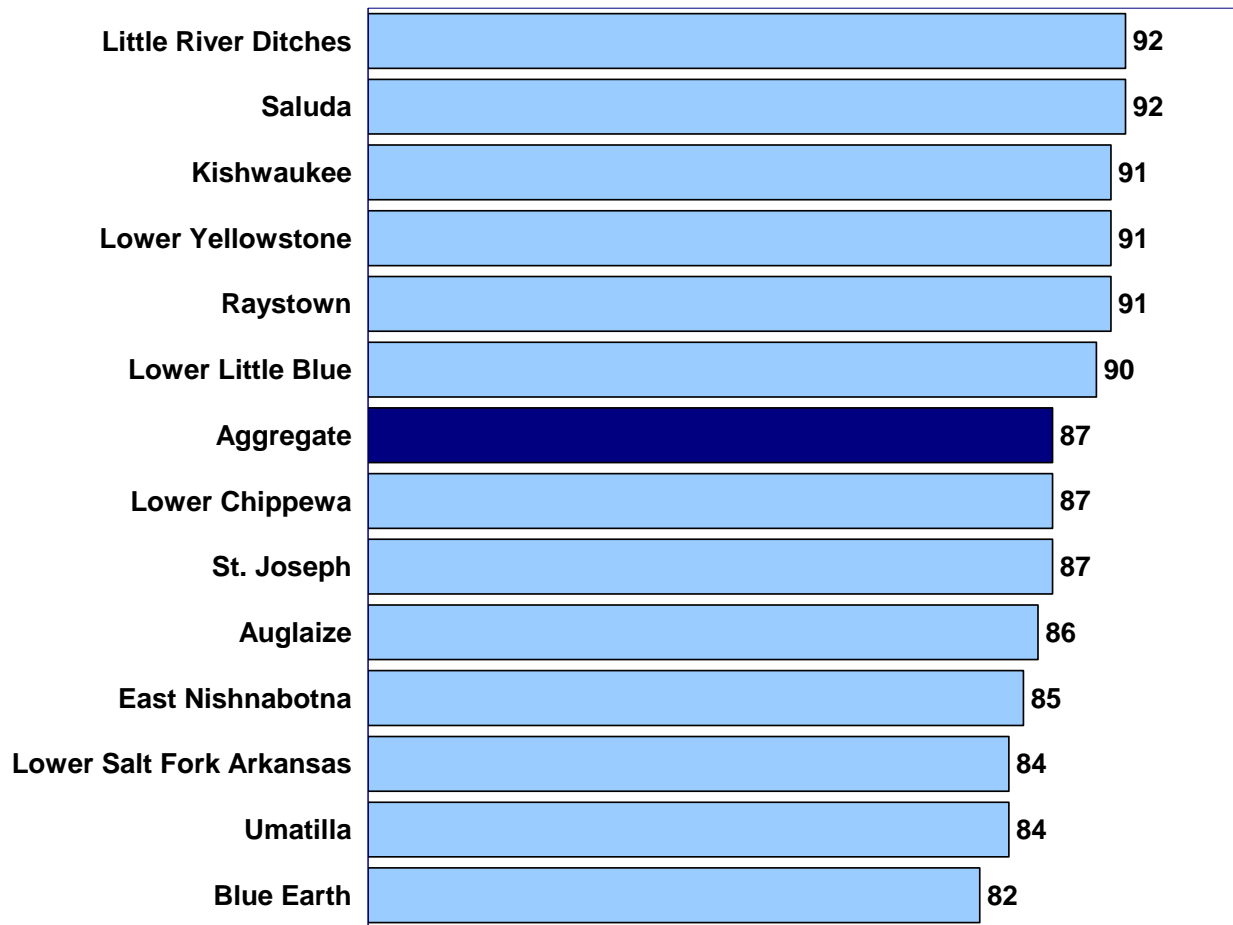
	Little River Ditches	Lower Chippewa	Lower Little Blue	Lower Salt Fork Arkansas
Self-Assessment Workbook	71	70	68	63
Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand	68	70	63	60
Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable	75	70	65	61
Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable	68	69	68	57
Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	84	72	70	56
Provided valuable information about conservation activities	70	70	72	67
Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff	72	72	71	72
Interview with NRCS	87	87	83	78
Amount of time the interview took was reasonable	91	88	82	78
Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility	86	84	79	76
Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	84	90	87	81
Review and Award Process	82	76	76	68
Keeping you informed on the status of your application	83	71	74	64
Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests	81	77	78	77
Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner	81	79	75	65
Having reasonable program requirements	83	75	76	67
Distributing funds in a timely manner	84	78	79	70
NRCS Staff	92	87	90	84
Courteousness	96	94	96	92
Availability	92	87	88	86
Professionalism	96	87	92	87
Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program	83	82	84	81
Timeliness of responses	91	83	86	79
Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member	91	82	90	79
Helpfulness	94	89	95	82
Satisfaction (CSI)	84	75	74	72
Overall Satisfaction	94	80	87	76
Meets your Expectations	82	73	66	69
Compared to Ideal	75	70	67	69
Willingness to Say Positive Things	91	82	86	77
Willingness to say positive things about CSP	91	82	86	77
Influence on Future Agricultural Operations	79	72	84	68
Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations	79	72	84	68
Reward Past Conservation Efforts	82	77	81	71
How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts	82	77	81	71
Number of Respondents	13	24	12	15

Table 3: 2004 Watersheds - Component and Attribute Scores (cont.)

	Lower Yellowstone	Raystown	Saluda	St. Joseph	Umatilla
Self-Assessment Workbook	65	80	74	77	68
Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand	65	82	79	80	64
Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable	64	76	74	79	70
Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable	57	80	68	73	72
Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	65	82	78	80	74
Provided valuable information about conservation activities	65	83	75	75	67
Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff	74	83	77	74	63
Interview with NRCS	79	87	88	87	86
Amount of time the interview took was reasonable	82	88	91	88	83
Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility	81	83	87	86	85
Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	89	89	90	88	91
Review and Award Process	75	83	78	75	78
Keeping you informed on the status of your application	79	84	77	67	77
Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests	79	80	82	79	72
Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner	82	85	80	75	81
Having reasonable program requirements	68	83	75	79	82
Distributing funds in a timely manner	69	87	82	74	81
NRCS Staff	91	91	92	87	84
Courteousness	94	94	96	94	92
Availability	90	92	92	89	81
Professionalism	93	93	96	89	89
Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program	79	85	89	82	82
Timeliness of responses	88	93	90	85	80
Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member	92	92	87	84	73
Helpfulness	97	94	96	86	85
Satisfaction (CSI)	79	84	81	77	77
Overall Satisfaction	83	88	84	81	79
Meets your Expectations	82	86	81	75	74
Compared to Ideal	71	79	78	73	76
Willingness to Say Positive Things	85	90	84	79	88
Willingness to say positive things about CSP	85	90	84	79	88
Influence on Future Agricultural Operations	78	92	77	84	78
Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations	78	92	77	84	78
Reward Past Conservation Efforts	90	87	74	81	86
How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts	90	87	74	81	86
Number of Respondents	8	12	15	24	16

Since respondents obtained information on the CSP mainly from local workshops and USDA Service Centers, reviewing Staff scores for the various watersheds can provide some insight into the level of service they received. Chart 6 below displays the Staff scores for all respondents (Aggregate), and respondents allocated into their 2004 Watersheds, in descending order. Respondents in Little River Ditches, Saluda, Kishwaukee, Lower Yellowstone, Raystown, and Lower Little Blue watersheds rated the NRCS staff considerably higher than Umatilla, Lower Salt Fork Arkansas, and Blue Earth watersheds.

Chart 6: Staff Scores for CSP 2004 Watersheds



Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Security Program and its personnel should be pleased with the results from the first customer satisfaction measurement of this relatively new program. Participants appear to be very satisfied with the CSP program and service provided to them at this time. However, there are some areas in which the NRCS could work to improve customer satisfaction.

NRCS Staff received very high scores from CSP respondents and should be commended for their work. With the highest impact and component score, Staff is a strong driver of Satisfaction. Because this component has the highest impact on Satisfaction, it is important to *maintain* the current level of service, and improve, if possible. The only area of concern among the attributes measured relates to the staff's knowledge about the CSP. NRCS may wish to provide additional training for the program to state and local staff since participants rely on local resources for the majority of their information.

The **Interview with NRCS** is another area of relative strength for the NRCS. Customer ratings and comments in Appendix B indicate that participants rely heavily on the interview to clarify the specifics of the application process and the CSP in general. Since this component has a relatively high score and a low impact, NRCS should *maintain* their current interviewing practices.

NRCS' Review and Award process for the Conservation Security Program is an area that should be *prioritized for improvements*. Since this component has a relatively high impact and relatively low score, improvements here will leverage the most influence on Satisfaction. Respondents rated the NRCS lowest for keeping them updated on the status of their application. NRCS should look for opportunities to increase interactions and/or correspondence with participants throughout the application process to improve in this area.

Although the **Self-Assessment Workbook** is the lowest-scoring component with room for improvement, it is not a strong driver of Satisfaction. Improvements here will yield a minimal increase in customer satisfaction. NRCS should continue to *monitor* feedback on the workbook, look for opportunities to streamline the supporting documentation required, and review customer comments in Appendix B for improvement suggestions from participants.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

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NRCS - Conservation Security Program

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005

Introduction

(Items in BOLD are interviewer instructions, and are not intended to be read to the respondent)

INTRO1. Hello, my name is _____ calling from PGM on behalf of the Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel involved with the Conservation Security Program. May I please speak with _____? **(if NAME available) or “The person who applied for Conservation Security Program funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service at your organization”?**

- 1 Yes **(continue to INTRO2)**
- 2 Person not available **(schedule a callback)**
- 3 No such person “Thank you and have a nice day!”
- 4 Person no longer there **(ask to speak with person who applied for Conservation Security Program funding)**
- 5 Refusal/Hung Up “Thank you and have a nice day!”

(Programmer instructions: Read when the person named in INTRO1 comes to the phone)

INTRO2. Hello, my name is _____ calling from PGM on behalf of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel involved with the Conservation Security Program – also known as “C-S-P”. We are conducting research on how satisfied users are with services provided in partnership with the federal government as part of the American Customer Satisfaction Index. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is committed to premier customer service and is conducting this research to help improve its services to you and others like you. Your answers are voluntary and we will not ask any questions about confidential information. If at any time you do not feel comfortable answering a question, please say so. Your responses will be held completely confidential, and you will never be identified by name. This interview is authorized by Office of Management and Budget Control No. 1505-0191. This interview will take approximately 10 minutes. Is this a good time?

- 1 Yes **(Continue)**
- 2 No “Can we schedule a time that is more convenient for you?”

CSP Information

Q1. What methods did you use to obtain information and application forms for the Conservation Security Program administered by NRCS? **(Please select all that apply)**

- 1 The NRCS website (www.nrcs.usda.gov)
- 2 USDA Service Center(s)
- 3 Local workshop(s)
- 4 Other (please specify): _____

Self-Assessment Workbook

Please think about the Self-Assessment Workbook you completed to apply for Conservation Security Program funding. Using a 1 to 10 scale where 1 is “*Strongly Disagree*” and 10 is “*Strongly Agree*,” please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

- Q2. The instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand
- Q3. The amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable
- Q4. The amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable
- Q5. The Self-Assessment Workbook helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding
- Q6. The Self-Assessment Workbook provided valuable information about conservation activities
- Q7. The Self-Assessment Workbook prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff
- Q8. Do you have any comments you would like to make about the Self-Assessment process and/or Workbook? (**Capture verbatim**)

Interview with NRCS

Please think about the interview you had with NRCS personnel after submitting your application. Using a 1 to 10 scale where 1 is “*Strongly Disagree*” and 10 is “*Strongly Agree*,” please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

- Q9. The amount of time the interview took was reasonable
- Q10. The interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility
- Q11. The interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding

Review and Award Process

Now please think about NRCS’ processes for reviewing applications and awarding funds. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “*Poor*” and 10 means “*Excellent*”, please rate NRCS on the following:

- Q12. Keeping you informed on the status of your application
- Q13. Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests
- Q14. Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner
- Q15. Having reasonable program requirements
- Q16. Distributing funds in a timely manner

NRCS Staff

Please consider the NRCS personnel involved with the Conservation Security Program that you have interacted with via phone, email or in person. Using the same 1 to 10 scale, where 1 means “*Poor*” and 10 means “*Excellent*”, rate the NRCS staff on the following:

- Q17. Courteousness
- Q18. Availability
- Q19. Professionalism
- Q20. Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program
- Q21. Timeliness of responses
- Q22. Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member
- Q23. Helpfulness

ACSI Benchmark Questions

- Q24. Thinking of your experiences with NRCS Conservation Security Program and using a 10-point scale on which 1 means "*Very Dissatisfied*" and 10 means "*Very Satisfied*", how satisfied are you with the services provided by NRCS in the Conservation Security Program?
- Q25. Using a 10-point scale on which 1 now means "*Falls short of your Expectations*" and 10 means "*Exceeds your Expectations*," to what extent have the services provided by NRCS in the Conservation Security Program fallen short of or exceeded your expectations?
- Q26. Imagine an ideal way of allocating funding. How well do you think the NRCS Conservation Security Program compares to the ideal you just imagined? Use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "*Not at all close to the Ideal*," and "10" means "*Very close to the Ideal*."

Outcomes

- Q27. Using a 10-point scale on which 1 means "*Not at all Willing*" and 10 means "*Very Willing*", how willing would you be to say positive things about the Conservation Security Program?
- [RECORD RATING 1-10]
98 Don't Know (**Don't read**)
99 Refusal/Hung up
- Q28. Using a 10 point scale on which 1 means "*Very Unlikely*" and 10 means "*Very Likely*", how likely is it that the Conservation Security Program will influence farmers and ranchers to modify their agricultural operations in the future?
- [RECORD RATING 1-10]
98 Don't Know (**Don't read**)
99 Refusal/Hung up
- Q29. Using a 10 point scale on which 1 means "*Not very Well at all*" and 10 means "*Very Well*", how well does the Conservation Security Program reward past conservation efforts?
- [RECORD RATING 1-10]
98 Don't Know (**Don't read**)
99 Refusal/Hung up
- Q30. What could the NRCS do differently with the Conservation Security Program to better meet your needs? (**Capture verbatim**)

Closing Statement: Thank you for your time. The NRCS personnel in the Conservation Security Program appreciate your input and will use this feedback to better serve its customers. Have a nice day!

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APPENDIX B
RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

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Q1. What methods did you use to obtain information and application forms for the Conservation Security Program administered by NRCS? – “Other” responses

- *A grazing group meeting is where I first heard about it. Also, in a February newspaper.*
- *A local mailer.*
- *A newsletter "SWCD" and word of mouth.*
- *An employee of the soil and water conservation office.*
- *By mail. (9)*
- *By word of mouth. (2)*
- *From county papers and meetings in town.*
- *From local representatives.*
- *From newsletters. (3)*
- *Got the information in the mail.*
- *I also got a call from a director of the program and set up an appointment with her.*
- *I also responded to mailed information.*
- *I got the information in the mail.*
- *I got the information in the newspaper. (2)*
- *I heard about it from my lawyer.*
- *I read about it in the newspaper and that's where I found out about the workshops.*
- *I saw the information in the newsletter.*
- *I was contacted by mail from the NRCS office in my county.*
- *It was in the newspaper.*
- *My co-workers.*
- *My granddaughter told me about the program and I got the forms.*
- *My tenant helped me with it.*
- *Neighbors and the media.*
- *Received some in the mail.*
- *The Baldwin NRCS office.*
- *The farm paper.*
- *The farm service.*
- *The handout they gave at the workshop.*
- *The news.*
- *The NRCS office. (4)*
- *The Soil Conservation office. (2)*

- *They came out to the farm. They did most of the work.*
- *They contacted me and I saw it in the newsletters.*
- *They sent me a flyer on it.*
- *They sent me a letter from the office.*
- *They talked about it in a farm class I take.*
- *Through farm publications and word of mouth.*
- *Usually the newspaper. It would be an agricultural newspaper.*
- *Word of mouth and printed material.*

Q8. Do you have any comments you would like to make about the Self-Assessment process and/or Workbook?

- *A lot of stuff didn't apply and it wasn't what most of us would have.*
- *After they received my responses and my answers I realized I didn't understand what they wanted. I would have answered differently if I had had a better understanding of what they were actually talking about, in terms of expectations. In the end, their criteria wasn't clear on a lot of things.*
- *Basically no. I think it's a good program; it's just a little bit hard to understand. But if you read it through a few times you can get it.*
- *Between the workbook and the people in the office, they helped me get through it.*
- *Continue to expand and use surveys like this to make it as user-friendly as possible.*
- *Each county is different. One is easier to get into than the other. When they started this, people didn't know what they were doing. One let everybody in and the other wouldn't let anybody in. It depends on what county you are in.*
- *Everything is fine. The people in the office were helpful. There were some things I didn't understand and they explained it to me.*
- *Everything was fine.*
- *Everything went smoothly. It was well organized. They knew what they were doing. It was easy to work with.*
- *I applied for this last year. I have 11 acres of clovers. Last year I paid 100 dollars per acre for leaving 11 acres of clovers all summer. My complaint is that this year, we left 30 acres of clover and they haven't paid us yet, and they said now that they may give us only 10% of it. They changed it on me, that's just not right. They really haven't made their mind up. I just talked to them this morning and they haven't heard anything about it.*
- *I did it so long ago. It seems to me it wasn't too difficult to understand or to follow through on what they were wanting.*
- *I did the CD. The only thing was that they did the whole thing during harvesting time. Why not do it in the winter?*

- *I didn't understand what it was all about. It needs to be more person-to-person.*
- *I didn't use a workbook at all. It was two days before the deadline of having to sign up. I went right into the office and just went right to filling out the application as they asked me questions.*
- *I don't have any comments about those two topics.*
- *I don't have anything negative. He was a good guy to work with. It's hard to substitute sitting down and doing it one on one.*
- *I don't think so.*
- *I don't think so. Let's see, it could be better explained to prepare yourself in case you were ever due for spot check or something like that, or what is required on a spot check, put it that way. I'd like to see better clarification as far as the criteria to follow.*
- *I don't think so. No, not right off.*
- *I got more from talking to the people than I did from the workbook.*
- *I guess not really. To be honest with you, I just kind of read through it and then went to the agent and he walked through it with me.*
- *I have no quarrels about it. I'm fine with it.*
- *I have nothing. (17)*
- *I haven't got the funding yet.*
- *I know it's a process you have to go through to get the money. It was worth the effort.*
- *I personally feel that it went a little further then it needed to go because when you got down there, a lot of the stuff wasn't relevant.*
- *I realize that the purpose of the workbook was to not include everyone, but the problem to me was they went back so many years that sometimes we didn't have a record for it. We weren't prepared to document like five years ago, on pesticide and herbicide management. That was the problem with most farmers; they couldn't document that long ago. Three years possibly, but not five years back. It was a lot of work. I didn't think that some of the formulas used to access the enrollment were accurate, for the weather assessment, for the three years we were supposed to use.*
- *I really can't give you any kind of comment on that.*
- *I think everything they are doing to get it through so there are more nesting places for wildlife is great. We own a certain amount of acres and I have knowledge of wildlife and birds; for me it's just wonderful.*
- *I think it's a good program and would be good for the country. We are getting paid for something we are doing as an individual. I think it will make us better operators and record keepers.*
- *I think it's a good thing (if you are honest with yourself with the answers).*
- *I think it's a good thing to assess how much we want to go along with the program. I have been a conservationist for about 10 to 15 years, so I'm in favor of the whole program.*
- *I think it's a real good program. It's helping people who were trying to be good to the land before and now they are getting paid for some of it.*

- *I think it's a very good workbook and it's a very good way for people to take some time to see if they'd like the program or not.*
- *I think people weren't familiar with it and it sounded cumbersome.*
- *I think they did a nice job. I was impressed with how the whole process works. It takes a long time to prepare the documents and fill out worksheets.*
- *I thought it was easy to understand.*
- *I thought it was presented very well.*
- *I thought it was pretty straight forward. My rating of six on the amount of documentation required was because we farm quite a bit and I went in with a stack of paper. So, there's a lot of work involved. The payment has been great. We've been compensated very well. Documentation is detailed; let's just say that.*
- *I thought it was pretty well thought through.*
- *I thought it was understandable and they had a lot of good ideas.*
- *I thought it was well designed and a good workbook.*
- *I thought that it was a lot of hoop-jumping in the process.*
- *I thought they were very thorough.*
- *I used my local people for questions I had.*
- *I was one of the first in community and I was on the board. It's a wonderful program, very worthwhile, and long overdue. This is the type of program I wanted to see established. Our people in NRCS went a long way in getting to this program. In the past they rewarded people for poor management, now they reward people who are trying to be better stewards.*
- *I was one of the first to do the process so it was a learning process.*
- *I was very pleased with it.*
- *I wasn't dissatisfied with the workbook, but the lack of understanding and the overall use of the scoring system, it was difficult to ascertain what type of payments I would get out of the program. The response to a lot of my questions was that the answers required computer configuration. It was never clear what practices were more beneficial or preferential in determining which practices were more desirable in the evaluation stage of the program. There were a lot of things that were contradictory to each other. I don't think anyone could accurately put a dollar amount on those practices.*
- *I went to three different meetings and it appeared Iowa read it more liberal than Minnesota. It's easier to get in Iowa.*
- *I wish it were more individualized. What works on my farm doesn't work for the neighbor.*
- *I would definitely use the workshop.*
- *I would have had a hard time with the process if I hadn't had some help.*
- *I would say that when we signed up there were a lot of questions to be answered, since we were the pilots in that program. It was somewhat more difficult for us. I think it's better now. I want to say that our NRCS rep was really doing a nice job, especially since he was brand new to the job.*

- *I'd just like to see more of the farmers get involved with it because it's really not all that hard to do, if you have good records. I think it's a good program to award farmers for what they do instead of getting punished.*
- *If I hadn't known things about the NRCS, I wouldn't have applied.*
- *I'm finally glad they're recognizing some of us that are still trying to be very good stewards. That's the feeling I have with it. I very much appreciate the recognition.*
- *It doesn't really ask the right questions, because the things that they use to determine whether you actually get into the program or not, are not really addressed in the book.*
- *It needs to be simpler to fill out.*
- *It seemed like when you first looked at it, it seemed hard, but it actually wasn't that bad. The interview wasn't that bad either.*
- *It seemed quite adequate.*
- *It seems like the requirements are still vague. What you need to do to reach a certain criteria is a bit unknown. It's hard to get a clear picture of exactly what's required.*
- *It seems to work okay.*
- *It should have been more thorough. If I knew what I know now, I wouldn't have put in all my farms.*
- *It takes some guidance by other people. We couldn't do it ourselves.*
- *It took a lot of time to go through it, but it worked out.*
- *It took too long. Too many papers to fill out.*
- *It was a good start. The book wasn't that helpful, it was the interview that was the valuable part of it.*
- *It was adequate.*
- *It was clear to an extent. I did have to ask a few questions because I had questions I needed answers to.*
- *It was disorganized and didn't have enough time before the sign up date. It could have been extended and it was rushed.*
- *It was easy to understand and to get information.*
- *It was great.*
- *It was pretty much all right in front of me. You pretty much knew what you were getting into, I guess. You did the self-assessment and then when you got in there it was all about the same thing.*
- *It was pretty simple.*
- *It was the people running it who helped us the most. They got us through it.*
- *It was too cumbersome. You could cut the questions down to probably about five questions.*
- *It was very good. A good workbook and a good experience.*
- *It wasn't a problem.*

- *It wasn't clear to me what it was really trying accomplish. The interview process was a little unclear. The employees should have had better training.*
- *It would be nice if you could do it at the conservation office. I wasn't sure what they were after in some of their questions. They had different ways of figuring fertilizer rates. I had to do it over twice.*
- *It would be nice to have more examples, as far as supplemental information.*
- *It's a nice overview and an important first step. However, there is a great deal of detail that is required to apply for the program.*
- *It's been so long since I filled it out I don't remember.*
- *It's kind of intimidating at first, because when you first receive it, it looks like a large packet. I think that they need to have specialized workbooks for certain things, it wouldn't be so intimidating. They should have a package for the specialized crops. I don't know how you would explain that.*
- *It's kind of nice to be able to feel certified, to be able to figure out if it's going to work.*
- *It's very repetitive. They had all the information and we had to keep providing it.*
- *It's very time-consuming on the interview process. We spent eight hours going through the interview process. But, you've got to understand that we were the first ones, so I'm sure it's gotten a lot quicker since then. It just took a lot of time to put together. They bent over backwards to help us.*
- *Just that I thought, according to the workbook, you'd be able to add additional land. But this is the second year that I've wanted to add land and they said they haven't figured out how to do that yet. I'll just have to wait another year to get it. I don't think they trained the staff at the local level very well, let's put it that way.*
- *Many of the terms used are unclear or are not applicable to they type of operations we use in the Mid West, they are more geared to annual crops. The current work is better, but some of the terms that are used in the book aren't terms users use.*
- *Maybe it could be just a little bit shorter and a little more detailed.*
- *My thought was that it was fine. I got along with it fine.*
- *No comment. (10)*
- *No, everything went all right.*
- *No, I was pleased.*
- *No, it seemed to be effective.*
- *No, it was all pretty good.*
- *No, it went quite well.*
- *No, it's been a while since I filled it out.*
- *No, it's pretty well thought out. It was good. It helped in gathering the backup information I needed to prove that we were eligible and that we're meeting all the criteria that we need to be in compliance.*

- *No, not really. Not on that part of it. It's just that I understand that they had to have the documentation and everything, but it just seems like a lot of papers.*
- *No, not really. The service I received from my local office was very good. Other than that, nothing really.*
- *No. But I have comments about getting paid. I got in last year; this is my second year in the program. It was all pretty easy to do. I guess the guys that signed up this year, it was a little bit harder for them, I heard.*
- *No. But I'd like to see it changed. I think it's too long. Most farmers take a look at it and it's too much work to do. It needs to be shortened.*
- *No. I can't think of anything. (2)*
- *No. I would say it was all fine.*
- *No. It was very easy. No problem.*
- *No. It's pretty self-explanatory.*
- *No. Not on the workbook part. No.*
- *Not necessarily. (2)*
- *Not really, they helped me out at the local office when I had questions.*
- *Not really. (23)*
- *Not really. I guess if it were easy, everybody would've done it. It was not the easiest, but if you had good records, it wasn't quite so bad.*
- *Not really. We were treated very well.*
- *Nothing really. It turned out good because I had help with it.*
- *Nothing. (39)*
- *On some of the eligibility requirements there is some conflicting information.*
- *Our local people were very good to work with. They were very knowledgeable.*
- *Overall it was pretty self-explanatory.*
- *Simplify the workbook and process.*
- *Some of it doesn't apply to our area.*
- *Some of the programs weren't explained as well as they should have been.*
- *Some of the things we were supposed to bring along, as far as documentation, were pretty vague.*
- *Some people out here were overwhelmed by the book, until the second meeting where it got clearer. The people at the office helped a lot too. I am still studying to learn about it myself.*
- *The office was helpful and made it easier to understand.*
- *The only problem is we got in on it when it first started, therefore, these guys were working with five to six e-mails daily with things that had changed, like requirements, what was in the notebook, etc. They may have updated those workbooks, I don't know. They had a lot of requirements that were awfully open-ended, like soil tests. It stated you needed a recent soil test. I hadn't had one in five years. I went and got all my land down and then I was told I didn't*

qualify. There were just a lot of open-ended things in the workbook. And that's not always a bad thing, it just kind of depends.

- *The only thing that I thought could be improved is the range ration. Being practical, sometimes you can't qualify.*
- *The people are excellent to work with.*
- *The people are very helpful and I was treated really nice.*
- *The process in the workbook, they have one page to fill everything out. They should make a whole book for it. People have more than one field or maybe more than one entity and they treat it like somebody's going to sit down and combine all their acres and fields into one page. There's just not enough room.*
- *The process is okay. In my opinion, they require so many hours of documentation and paperwork that it offsets any benefit you would get from it.*
- *The program was so new at the time. We were totally unaccustomed to it, but we had guidance at the meeting.*
- *The self-assessment process was of little value other than a very basic assessment. The local staff was extremely helpful and guided me through the process.*
- *The soil conservation people are wonderful. I went to a meeting and really enjoyed them. They're real intelligent young men. I feel good about it.*
- *The terminology on certain aspects was, well, your definition and my definition are different. What I called pasture or native grass and what they call native grass is different. They said if it had been broke, even 80 years ago, it is not native. I had a bit of a problem with that.*
- *The whole program was brought on too fast. Other than that, it was great.*
- *The whole thing was kind of vague about what all the rules were.*
- *The workbook hard copy was okay, but the CD is worthless. I tried to use it, but it didn't work. The area it gave you to type information in wasn't big enough and when you tried to print it, the hidden windows wouldn't print out a hard copy.*
- *The workbook was helpful to the agency, (Name) presented it. After he explained it, it was clearer.*
- *The workbook was worthless. They passed out a sheet of paper, they told us what we needed and that was worth something.*
- *The workshops helped me fill out the paperwork.*
- *The workshops that were provided were very helpful.*
- *There are a few things I disagree with.*
- *There was a lot of information in there that I didn't know was necessary. I wasn't prepared the first time I went into the office, but after talking to them, I was more aware of what was needed.*
- *There was too much paperwork and it was intense. It could have been simplified and easier. I know there was money connected to it. With all the government programs there is so much paperwork. We were in it the first year and they were still writing it and changing rules.*

- *They are paying so much for the corn; the city people think it's a welfare check. It's the unions that made the prices go up.*
- *They are trying to make it 'one size fits all' for the whole country.*
- *They could make it simpler and get more to the point.*
- *They helped me out real well and they spent the time to help me out with any questions I had. So, it was good.*
- *They need to get the information about programs to the little people in time and not make the eligibility time so short.*
- *They need to simplify the workbook, not so repetitive.*
- *They put out a program they didn't understand and they were unprepared for. You can go in one day and get an answer, go in another day and get another answer, and go in on a different day and get a completely different answer.*
- *They're very cooperative and very good to even suggest things I don't know about; they brought to my attention programs I didn't know about. They're helpful in any area that I need help with.*
- *Through the whole process, the thing that was most helpful was the local people helping me with the information. I got more help from the people than I did from the workbook. The information from the book was not always clear.*
- *Too repetitive, from a farmers point of view. It was written by a tree hugger.*
- *We have always kept good records. It helps them see why they need to keep good records of transactions and what fertilizers and chemicals they use.*
- *We have not received our payment yet on the 2005 program. It was supposed to be received back in May.*
- *We were the first group and the first state to use the workbook. The local leadership here was so intent on making this happen that we all worked hard to get this to the point where we could make this work, and I know a lot of the problems have been fixed. It takes a lot of dedication to get something like this to work and we all gave it all we had and got it working. It was a combination of farmer and Government effort that made it work, I think. Although it was tough, it was more than worth the effort. I don't want to complain, because it has gotten better for people like some of my neighbors who just did it.*
- *When I went to the appointment, I understood the program better than I did when I went through the workbook.*
- *When the payment is issued, I'd like to have verification sent to me when it gets there.*
- *When the workbook first came out it left a lot of questions unanswered. Our local people were untrained. It came about so fast they had to have the information quickly. We had to make our own forms because we were the first group. I spent a lot of time making forms for it. A lot of people didn't want to take the time.*
- *You have me at a little bit of a disadvantage, because I did this all at the very first sign up. We have such a good staff in there. Maybe some of the inaccuracies in the book were made up by the staff, or maybe it was just the book.*

Q30. What could the NRCS do differently with the Conservation Security Program to better meet your needs?

- *A clear outline of all the opportunities of the program, make it available to more farmers and to new farmers.*
- *A little flexibility in their programs.*
- *A little more consistency and better professionalism.*
- *A little more literature on practices that can be done, that would be helpful.*
- *A lot of the fellows signing up for more informational meetings. A lot of them knew about it but in our area it opened up a lot of eyes. Some people take it for granted. It helps to take care of a lot of problems, like erosion and grass waterways.*
- *Allow landowners and tenants to practice jointly for joint watersheds to have more consistent nutrient standards. For those not eligible yet, have a more defined standard to work towards to become eligible.*
- *As far as the watershed program, I don't know of anyway they could do to improve it. Make adjustments to the existing program, like adding more farms as we go along.*
- *As long as the NRCS officer is there, everything is fine.*
- *As the requirements develop they can get information out to the public about what exactly is required to give everyone a goal to work towards.*
- *Base their reward program more on water and wind erosion, which will in turn make better habitat for specific wild life and fowl.*
- *Be better informed, I'm only as good as my worst farm. I shouldn't have put in three of my farms; it knocked me down to a one. I have my fertilizer tanks diked. I tried to get money for it and they told me I had to be close to a creek to get money for that. I don't understand that.*
- *Be more flexible in some of the requirements.*
- *Be more informative. They need to get the program more out there instead of you having to ask.*
- *Better advanced planning. Nothing else, other than they know we participated in the very first program in the state, and from that standpoint, there were a lot of problems getting it established.*
- *By changing the whole field classification. By aiding producers to maintain shelter belts, edge lines, tree groves, rather than taking a cat and pushing them out. Something to do with the contract so that absentee owners do not have to be locked into 5 years with a renter.*
- *Clarity in the direction of the CSP from Washington.*
- *Come up with some new programs. We have had excellent response from people. We finished at the top of the list in our area.*
- *Consider the cost of operations to maintain the conservation. They aren't allowing us enough for fertilizer and feed. The general cost is getting higher everyday. I would like to see them have something to do with the beef prices.*
- *Coordinate with the equipment program. The local people would like to coordinate the two.*

- *Could apply their requirements to their requests.*
- *Don't send field agents from hill country to flat country, bring people from our own area to help us.*
- *Everything has worked so well I can't complain about it.*
- *Everything went fine.*
- *Everything went fine. There isn't anything that could be done differently.*
- *Expand more programs and have more rewards for conservation.*
- *Explain the criteria to better prepare you for a spot check or things like, when it comes to fertilizer recommendations and that sort of things, to better explain how accurate those have to be. If you get spot checked, what are they really looking for?*
- *Fix their workbook and make it a little more understandable. They need a better way to pass the costs to be making a living.*
- *For my needs it works just fine.*
- *For the initial entry to get in the program, some of the questions are kind of hard to work with. Once you are in it, and can improve, that part is easy.*
- *From what I could see for any sort of structure or waterways that need to be built, they could do 100% funding on all the structures.*
- *Get more funding from the government; there is always a need for more money. Money is always a problem.*
- *Get rid of all the paperwork. There's just too much paperwork.*
- *Get the whole nation funded.*
- *Give the county agents more leeway. We had some ground that we felt should qualify and they said no. The local guy should have more say.*
- *Have a quarterly newsletter. Notify when payment is made.*
- *Have all the states being equal. What I have found out is that Iowa State University standards on manure applications are different than other states. In particular, Iowa State applications are available for 100% after you apply. Other states, they're using 60%. I'm being penalized because they're using the 100% instead of the 60%. That'd be all.*
- *Help with the fuel costs, the diesel fuel.*
- *I always have had to approach them. I don't know what you would call it, maybe a little bit closer contact. Maybe just a little more updated information or something like that. If a guy could add some stuff once you're in it before the next go around, that'd be good. That would be about it I guess.*
- *I am a dairy farmer. I think we should be rewarded for keeping hay ground. Because we are HEL ground and we cannot have beans etc., a lot of farmers are going to beans when hay is needed most here. Maybe incentives should be offered to farmers for growing hay in an effort to keep soil erosion down.*
- *I am sure there is but I can't think of anything specific.*
- *I can't think of anything right now, I think they have done it all.*

- *I can't think of anything more that they could offer. It's fairly new to us and we're just getting acquainted with it and I really can't think of anything.*
- *I can't think of anything right off hand. We haven't had any problems at all.*
- *I can't think of anything, it went smooth. They presented it well. They had a good person that presented it. If you had a question, they answered it. I wouldn't want to change it.*
- *I can't think of anything. (2)*
- *I can't think of anything. I've had a very, very good relationship with them. Tell them to keep on doing what they're doing!*
- *I couldn't get soil tests. I went to a lot of work to get the river buffer strip. They wouldn't let me in until I have 2 years of soil tests on the river bottom. I don't think that's fair.*
- *I deal with NRCS and the FSA regularly. I have a large farming operation. The difference between the two organizations is customer service; the willingness to help the farmers meet their goals. The NRCS are not customer-friendly. The FSA is a more positive experience. They are all good people, but the transaction is different from the get go.*
- *I don't believe the office is getting back to us on our questions.*
- *I don't know. (13)*
- *I don't know. Pay more.*
- *I don't agree with some of the price structures on dollars per acre. For example, on some of the practices, we side dress all of our nitrogen and we get paid more, if we put it on in the spring before planting. I disagree with that wholeheartedly. I know I'm a better steward of the land.*
- *I don't have years of experience with it yet, but I hope that they will be flexible and understanding when it comes to extreme situations that we may be in, in the future. They've been happy to work with us in the past, and I'm confident that they'll continue to be. They could just continue to be flexible.*
- *I don't know, it's working for me. If it's not broke, don't fix it.*
- *I don't know; perhaps a little more guidance in the particular practices.*
- *I don't really have any comment on it. I think the workbook and the initial paperwork was probably a lot of expense that wasn't needed. I found out more talking to a guy for two minutes than reading the book. But I guess that's how it goes with everything for the government.*
- *I don't really have too much to say as far as that goes. I was told I could enroll more acres on my contract and I haven't been able to do that yet. As far as the payments, I talked to my local guy. You really don't get much documentation of the payment; it just shows up in your bank account. There's just not much documentation of where the amount comes from really. When I enrolled, I was told I get more for certain things, but I've never been told what I get paid for exactly.*
- *I don't think they could do anything better.*
- *I don't understand what all the services are for cross fencing. It all adds up. What would be some of the other services for cattle and livestock?*
- *I don't want to comment on that.*

- *I guess do a little more soil-agronomy. The benefits of these practices and conservation uses and the long-term benefits need to be more educated maybe. That's a pretty broad statement, but it'll cover a lot of areas here.*
- *I guess I'd like them to let you know when the payments are coming a little bit better.*
- *I guess it'd be nice if the NRCS had more people in the field than in the office. Overall, I've gotten along with them really well. I have no problems. I've signed up and everything's worked well for me.*
- *I guess they could give me more money. No, I don't know! I think they're doing a real good job.*
- *I have no idea. (11)*
- *I have suggestions in two areas: more time needs to be spent on an individual basis with NRCS staff and each individual farmer to more thoroughly explain all available options, practices, or farming methods that could be employed by the farmer to improve his or her score and subsequently the CSP payments; there needs to be a higher level of discretion to producers for fertilizer applications and tillage practices than the general guidelines allow.*
- *I haven't been in it long enough to know. It would be great if they could make it rain.*
- *I just think the local one is super. They have done their homework and really understand what's going on out here.*
- *I only need a certain dollar amount off the land to make it. I'd like more information on what will actually make a difference in crop production. They need to keep up to date on farming practices; they need to know what they are talking about when they tell me to do something.*
- *I really can't comment. The program has worked thus far and at this moment I don't see any changes that I think need to be made. Not really.*
- *I really can't think of anything right now.*
- *I really can't think of anything that they could do better unless they offer a new program, and then I'd be able to tell a lot more. But, they're really good.*
- *I really don't have any comments. For my needs, it's fine.*
- *I signed up in 2004. I think we did the paperwork in the summer and it went to December 31st. I got a sizeable amount of money, which is good for tax buying. But this year, 2005, we were supposed to have it in March or April. I still don't have it yet.*
I think it is fine the way it is.
- *I think it's a total waste of money; the government could use the money in better ways.*
- *I think it's a pretty good program. It's a much better program than a commodity program. Conservation is very important.*
- *I think it's fine; this is the way I farm.*
- *I think it's meeting my needs. I think it's real good. I really am proud of the people doing this thing countywide. We're really happy with the program!*
- *I think just a simple list of what they would pay, so we can understand it better, on each particular item. Whether it is cross fencing, burning, or spraying; just a list with payments listed. It seems our office group just can't get the work done; they need more help but maybe the government just cant afford it.*

- *I think just keep us more informed of changes and things that are going on. I'm in it for the second year and we wondered what the changes were. I'd love to sit down once a year and have an interview with them to let us know what to do: how to keep equipment updated, technology updated, etc. I'd like to see a little more of them letting us know the possibilities of what we can do and then us making a decision. They could just give us some guidance and some help and I can't see why anybody wouldn't want to be a part of it. It just takes some general knowledge.*
- *I think maybe giving a clear-cut description of what is expected after the application is done; it's not very clear.*
- *I think maybe they could have more programs to educate the farmers on what it's all about. I would say more education maybe. A lot of farmers just go ahead and do stuff and they need to be taught.*
- *I think some of the goals are almost unachievable.*
- *I think that they have to probably get out in the general public a little bit deeper. And there are some farmers that don't understand it and I think they need to be there and have a little more promotion. They've done a pretty good job, but there are still some people that haven't gotten into it yet.*
- *I think the government would be better off to back off out of our business. How are we going to be able to fund it if everyone qualifies? It will take a tremendous amount of money and it worries me, especially if it is open to everyone. How are we going to fund it? I think the cost will exceed the value.*
- *I think they are doing fine like it is.*
- *I think they are doing what they can do. We didn't get anymore in this year but we didn't on the watershed.*
- *I think they did a good job. No, I can't think of anything right off. I was pleased.*
- *I think they do a great job.*
- *I think they do a pretty good job. Farmers want to know what to expect in the future, so they don't spend money in a place where it will do no good. They need to know what's in the rumor mill. I'd like to know what long range plans and directions are coming up so I'd have it better in my mind what I need to prepare for. If we could have a better way to educate us in principles and practices. I am in the nursery business. From the nursery organization, we are kept up on the things we need to do and don't get hit with surprises when we least expect them.*
- *I think they need more help. They are overwhelmed. They don't have enough staff to help everyone they contact.*
- *I think they need to improve their paperwork, as far as letting the producers or farmers know what their payments are going to be ahead of time. In my situation I don't know what my payment is until it actually gets deposited in my account. That's about it, other than they just need to stay more in touch with producers and participants in regards to what their payments are going to be. That's been the most aggravating part of the program, not knowing what your payment is going to be until it gets deposited. It's hard to run your cash flow until you know what you're getting. They need to be more responsive in letting us know what our payments are going to be when we ask them ahead of time.*

- *I think they need to make people more aware. Everything was done very quickly and it could have been better prepared.*
- *I think they should have been better prepared in the beginning. When in the program, I think they should have follow-up as I add conservation programs that are listed as benefits under the CSP that we should be able to include them and receive compensation for them. We haven't been able to do that.*
- *I think they should help people who have been helping themselves. I believe the people who have been doing conservation all their lives should get preferred customer treatment. Some of us have been doing it for thirty years at our own expense.*
- *I understand where they're coming from. But, some of the land I thought was eligible was not, and some that I thought wasn't, was. So I don't know what to tell you on that one. I'll leave it up in the air.*
- *I was very pleased.*
- *I would like them to explain the criteria better.*
- *I would say to have them come out and offer you advice on some different things. I guess they need to publicize it a little more, or market it a little more, because in our watershed they had a lot of money left over because people just didn't want to get in it. It'd be great to get more people involved with it.*
- *I'd like to see them better inform their staff so they can be consistent in the requirements they give us. To be consistent in the rules they give the producers.*
- *I'd like to see them come up with more conservation programs other than just the filter strip and the prairie projects here in Iowa that they run. I'd put more of my ground in stuff like that. I would just assume hunt is as farm it.*
- *If they would keep us more informed with a newsletter or something regarding the changes in the program.*
- *If you understand it and do it, everything works.*
- *I'm not absolutely sure on what they could do.*
- *I'm not quite sure. I'm still getting involved with it and learning stuff too, so I don't know.*
- *I'm not really sure. You could always say that they could provide more funding; we'll take all that we can get. I'm pretty satisfied with the program, so I don't have much to say.*
- *I'm satisfied.*
- *Improve communications. Prior to sign up, don't make changes.*
- *Improve the effectiveness.*
- *In regards to cost share, they need to implement an inflation product for the producers. Prices for the cost share have gone up. They need to have some kind of inflationary adjustment and have it be retroactive.*
- *Inform the public more as farmers. Let us know ahead of time what the programs are about.*
- *It all went very smoothly.*
- *It looks pretty good. They need to enforce the rules more. Some things are questionable.*

- *It needs to match the COP program, which is the FSA. There are a lot of programs and there isn't any communication between. There wasn't a 1099 to use at tax time. It's a really good program.*
- *It really met my needs well. I can't think of anything at this point.*
- *It seemed like between the first and second level, anybody could get into it. I was really close to being in the second level, I just needed one or two things and that kept me from going up. I was really close and thought I would be a 3. When I got to the office, I was only a 1. The staff hadn't had a lot of training on the program and it created frustration between them and the grower. They did as good a job as they could.*
- *It worked out pretty good. For a new program, it took a little bit getting things together but, once we knew what we needed, it was very easy.*
- *It's a good program and they reward people for doing things right. That's what I like about it.*
- *It's a very good program. It's a hot topic around here. It's got a lot of people interested in conservation that weren't before. It's helped stimulate a lot of interest in a lot of the people who never participated before.*
- *It's easy and simple.*
- *Just further expansion of goals and ideas.*
- *Keep it consistent throughout the year. That's my big complaint.*
- *Keep the money coming. I like the concept of the program. Just continue that. I think they're on the right track as far as rewarding farmers for the practices they're doing. I agree with that. I guess that's all I can think of right now.*
- *Keep trying to come up practical ways to solve the problems.*
- *Learning the program first. Ours was one of the first in the program. They kept changing rules and regulations. They weren't prepared. Money was just sent out with no notification; it just appeared in your account. It's like a fish out of water; they were unprepared to handle it.*
- *Leave it more up to the states and the local office and the county to make decisions.*
- *Less bookwork. It should be more on the county instead of the state. It needs to be something that will help more people that maybe haven't done a good job, but want to try and do a better job.*
- *Less paperwork.*
- *Let me know when my funds will be available in the bank.*
- *Make all programs open to everyone, regardless of race or size of property.*
- *My one big beef with the program is that documentation on payments made is non-existent. We do not know what we're going to receive until the funds are in place and what makes that especially troublesome for me is that I take care of a number of landlords and acres and I have power of attorney over them. There was no way that I knew what kind of dollar figure these people were going to receive until it actually came into their account. To me, it's just a little software glitch that would be very easy to correct. When they issue a payment, they should also issue a document showing the amount of the money. That would be great. I'd appreciate it.*
- *My particular needs are fairly well met already. If somehow we can get more funding on this program instead of some of the others. This pays up-front as a reward, which we should be*

getting. When the marketplace doesn't pay us, the CSP does, way better than any program I've been in. Conservation is what we should all be doing all over the country. We'd all be better.

- *No change.*
- *No suggestions. The only thing is the funds weren't there when they had the signup for cross-sharing. Another thing, I want to put a pond in but I can't get cross-share on the pond because of the hobby farmers and because it doesn't drain 40 acres. They're cutting everybody out on their little acres. I can't get qualified on it.*
- *No, not really. It covered it pretty well. All in all, it was extremely helpful program.*
- *No. Not that I can think of. I think they're doing a pretty good job with it.*
- *Not charge so much for the soil samples. They could make some things easier for the older farmers. I am 68 and some of the programs are hard for me to handle.*
- *Not right off hand. I would need a day to think about it.*
- *Not that I can think of right now.*
- *Nothing at this time. (8)*
- *One of the biggest issues I have is that they need to put a little more time into proportioning the funds between the farmers. Because we rent our crops out to someone else to farm for us, we need a way to properly divide the funds between the people who own and rent. Some time needs to go into doing that for us. I am just speaking for my area, but it is an issue for us. You have to strive for maximum production, it costs money to do that, the key being to increase production, and control the costs. Ever since this program started, the people here have done a great job working with us on getting the program going.*
- *One of the problems with the program is the slowness of the implementation of it. We were lucky that we were first; it was like inventing the wheel. I don't think it's fair that parts of the country will have to wait 6 or more years to apply. Some how or another this has to be sped up a little, is it fair that your neighbors have to sit back and watch you get a check and they cant even apply? I'm not sure 8 years is a fair amount of time for part of the country to have to wait, although I do understand that it can't be done overnight. Again I do not mean to complain, it has just taken a lot of time and work to get it going.*
- *Personally, the fish and wildlife guys need to take on the task. They don't look at the overall picture, NRCS does. It looked good on paper but not in reality. The NRCS needs to be more flexible with their criteria.*
- *Pretty tough to get into tier two or tier three.*
- *Probably look at the land again so we could put more land into it. I had woodland, but I was missing one species. I had woodpeckers and turkeys, but I didn't have one more animal. Now they have more so I can re-file in 2006.*
- *Provide a better service, the program is good; the people at the NRCS office need to give better service.*
- *Put it more into structured money, disappointed in the amount of funds for the work that had to be done. It looks very political. It sounded like it was being administered unequally across to the nation.*

- *Reduce the paperwork and consolidate fields, instead of requiring information to be given to the NRCS on a field-to-field basis. I think the information should be condensed by crop and that would reduce a lot of paperwork. I think that's sufficient.*
- *Right now I'm happy. It's a wonderful program.*
- *Right off hand, I can't really say. I've been happy with the program and the way it's working out. I don't know what they could do different to make it better.*
- *Send a notice about when the check is in the bank. I have some ground that has been no-tilled; the guy who signed me up says that the ground is still too highly erodible to enter that program. I thought this was supposed to help the no-tillers. What got entered into the program is the ground that got leveled for flood irrigation, it was already non-erodible and the HE land that has been no-tilled was not entered because it was still supposedly highly erodible.*
- *Simplicity is always a good thing. It was information overload, but I learned a lot*
- *Simplify the program.*
- *Some businesses were splitting out so that there could be individuals who could apply individually, and I don't know how I feel about that.*
- *Some of the people that are around it don't understand it. Make it so the common person can understand it.*
- *Some of the requirements they laid out don't fit the areas. Improve the requirements.*
- *Tell me about the funding caps before I sign a contract.*
- *That's a darn good question. I don't really have an answer for that one.*
- *That's a good one. I don't have any suggestions. It's a good program. I just appreciate what they did. It was so different from other farm programs so that's why I liked what they did.*
- *The big mistake that they made, and it's quite a big mistake, is if a man does not qualify, there's no incentive for that person to change their methods because they're not able to apply for it until the watershed has come back to them. And to that extent, the program has tremendously failed. Once a person qualifies, they must be allowed in. That will make them want to change their methods in the short term.*
- *The dairies get all the money and they're just buying up all the ground around here and pushing everybody out. They need to make room for everyone else. The family farm is out when it comes to trying that. It's all the big corporate farms that are in.*
- *The federal government needs to make the program available every year to the people who didn't qualify one year.*
- *The funding is the biggest problem. Telling what our funding actually is. The first year they gave an amount and the 2nd year they said it would be slightly lower and it was less than half. This was not told to us, that we would have that big of a drop, so there is some blank space in what the office knows or what is being told to them. We were one of the first ones to sign up so a lot of the literature hadn't come out until we were already signed up.*
- *The funds are directly deposited, but they do not send us any information as to when it is deposited. So, we had to watch our checking account to see when the deposits happened. The Farm Services Agency always sends us a form to let us know when the funds are deposited.*

- *The main thing would be in the future they say we have to have the landlord sign a ten-year contact and that's impossible. I can't guarantee I will still own it in ten years. They are requesting something that can't be done.*

The only problem I had was when I asked some questions, they didn't have answers, they weren't very knowledgeable. They did check with someone to find the answers though.

- *The only trouble I've had is with the money. I did it with my name and I have a corporation, so I don't know if it's because they have to check things out first or what, but I still don't have the money.*
- *The timeliness of checking the field. I would like to have a time period as to when they're going to check on your field so you can add to them. I'd like to be adding some things to get it put into the security program, but they don't know when they'll be able to do that. I'd like some information on that. And the local offices don't have any information and it's more at the higher levels, they need help from them.*
- *There is one major expense for us that is holding us back from advancing in the program. We are disappointed; we just don't have the funds. It is a great idea to reward for stewardship practices instead of just giving people money to do it. I think the program will accomplish more that way.*
- *There shouldn't be a requirement on acreage.*
- *They are doing a good job.*
- *They are doing fine.*
- *They are doing well. I have nothing.*
- *They are great at meeting my needs. I'll give them a 10 on that. But, I do know some people that don't want to, or haven't been contacted that I think should be in it. Whether that's the farmer's fault or the CSP's, I have no idea.*
- *They can do anything that they're capable of doing to help me.*
- *They can pay the farmer in a timely manner, just as the farmer would be expected to pay for chemicals required by this program. When the price of a bushel of wheat is the same as a gallon of gas, the least the government can do is to pay for the program in a timely manner. We are waiting on one payment that is 3 years old. Senator Smith developed this program, he is from our town and a close friend and he is getting an earful on how delinquent the payments are.*
- *They could better notify the farmers about the program. A lot of the farmers don't know it's available. A lot of them don't have any idea. The help centers are good for people who don't understand. The time for when the applications are due, they need to stress the time between harvest and planting. They need to do it before the season starts, maybe in the winter.*
- *They could get more employees.*
- *They could increase staffing at the local office. I was a part of the first one, the first round in 2004, and for the staff it was learn-as you go. I didn't feel that the federal people educated the staff very well. The staff worked very hard to get answers; they did an excellent job. But somewhere between the federal office and the calling office, things were missing. Just more staffing. That's the most under-staffed office around in this service center and I think it's the most widely used. FSA seems to be over-staffed and NRCS is under-staffed at the Coney level. That about does it.*

- *They could probably supply more funding. A lot of people don't get contract reviews; they have more requests than money.*
- *They could promote it better.*
- *They could take the limits off.*
- *They give you free money for doing what you should do, what else can they do to help me along better than they do?*
- *They have done a good job in the CSP. Several people that signed have different forms; it was rushed and should have been given more time for the sign up. It could have brought in more acres.*
- *They have done well. They have worked well. The staff and the program are doing fine.*
- *They have everything outlined in the bulletins and the different wildlife places. If you provide the information for them, I think everything is pretty clear. I can't think of any ideas. I have land with brush and shrubs; I have that for the turtles and snakes that live in them. We have boxes for the bluebirds. It's all pretty well covered.*
- *They have just picked out little picky things that they want and they're not really rewarding true conservation. Some people have been doing conservation for years. It's not a matter of whether you're a good conservationist. If your land is flat, then you can get in. If you have land that is difficult to farm, then you can't get in. This is from the inside because I know just exactly what happens. The only way you can get land in is if you switch to no-till. They try to do a good job, but the people that are making these things up sure don't know what they're doing.*
- *They have to send receipts for the payments so we can track payments.*
- *They haven't followed through with things to help get us up to the next level, we haven't heard back on it.*
- *They need to be flexible from year to year. To incorporate things like winter kill and the things that are beyond our control. At some time in the year, we have to record what we did or what we plant and make a report for CSP on our conservation practices for the year. That's done actually in July or August. Last year we did it in October and that's not good. If they wanted to do it in April, we would be guessing. It would be better in July and August.*
- *They need to continue what they are doing. They need to keep the customers and growers informed of the things available and the upgrades. We signed up when it first started. Parts of the program are confusing; you don't know for sure what you need to do to move up to a higher tier. That's consistent with some others I've talked to.*
- *They need to designate right up front that the funding goes to the farm operator and not the landlord. We had a real fight over that. That's the key right there. We had to get attorneys to get our share of our money.*
- *They need to find a way to make the documentation and implementation easier.*
- *They need to get better information out prior to the CSP sign-ups. I think that's what I'd like to see.*
- *They need to have a better realization of the needs of small farmers. That's sufficient.*
- *They need to have the local guys do soil test on these CSP plans because they go by payments on the organic matter in the soil. I'm at the point where, it doesn't matter if my ground improves;*

I'm stuck at the same payment. They need to do yearly samples. I think we need to be able yearly to review the organic matter in the soil. Organic matter and "trash" everybody used to call it trash. It's not trash, it's residue.

- *They need to inform the people in the local office of what's going on and how to administer things. Decide on the kind of rules they're going to have and stick to those rules, instead of changing them all the time.*
- *They only put four acres in and that piece didn't have any terraces on it and the rest of my farm had terraces. I'm just waiting for the rest of it to be included.*
- *They review me once a year. I am just satisfied with it.*
- *They rolled out this program and put it in selected areas. They want to use it as a vehicle to distribute the green payments. They had the qualifications screwed down so tight that it didn't matter what you did in the past, but only what you are doing now. I have been asking since last winter how you get more fields in the program. I am 4th generation on this farm and I don't want to see it wash away. I have tried to get more fields and they can't tell me how I can go about that. They ask the state and the state doesn't know. They don't know how I can move from tier 1 to tier 2. I am going to call my congressman.*
- *They should allow more acres in.*
- *They were way under-staffed and over-worked. They did excellent for what they did and it was during a busy time. It came at a bad time. They felt sorry for us, and we felt sorry for them. There was too much paperwork.*
- *They've been pressed for time working with people. A yearly review of the current status of program information about additional practices that a person may try to implement would be valuable.*
- *This is the first time I've done the program. I'm happy with it.*
- *This is the second year and it's been better than the first year. The first year was too fast and the staff didn't know the qualifications. The second year is going a lot smoother.*
- *Timeliness is one thing. Our local office doesn't get their info in time from the state or other government offices. In turn, they may only have 2 weeks to get their information back.*
- *Train your staff better. Also, have an 800 number for a district, like a state overseer, to answer questions that we can't get answered at the local level. I just think they're not trained enough.*
- *Try to be practical and keep it simple while still having conservation in mind.*
- *We got some land signed up and some land was thrown out because of too much potassium use. This year it's not on the work sheet. This year when you farm FSA, you have a payment limit for your spouse and yourself. They need to have a limit for both the husband and wife. They shouldn't have a payment limit. The timeliness in getting signed up is too long. They should open it up to every producer in next two years.*
- *We have been in a drought, so if you hit a bad year, it hurts you. We didn't have cows so it wasn't our fault. It's hard to judge when mother nature is more in control than you are.*
- *We have to show what we do with every field. If they could streamline that process or have a quick worksheet for every field. If things haven't changed much, we should be able to qualify. We*

are rewarded for taking the time to do it and we really appreciate it. We are more aware of what we need to do. The leeching and the runoff are protecting the green areas.

- *We were in on it from the first, so once they got things worked out, it was fine. There was a real learning curve.*
- *We were in the first round, and there are requirements in the CSP that kept me from getting all my farms in. I needed soil tests for every farm in the last 5 years. I have a lot of tests that were more than 5 years and they were too old to qualify. A lot of them were grid samples. So, when I signed up I was supposed to be able to upgrade to tier 3, but I couldn't get upgraded. A lot of people waited too long to sign up and when they found out how much money this would pay them, they wanted to get in. They lobbied to reopen for the watershed. They reopened it and that allowed them to sign up. Previous ones were not allowed to upgrade. It's not right.*
- *Well, I know that a lot of times they're really rushed to try to work with so many people. The funding time and periods need to be spread out. It's hard to pull together all the information needed in such a short period of time. Also, there needs to be field checks and determinations. Again, the workbook is useless.*
- *What I'm frustrated with is that farmers, and most of them grain farmers, have a lot of erosion every year and they got on the highest tier, and some of us that raise an awful lot of hay and have no erosion can't even get to the level of the cash croppers. The program was designed to help people that raised more forage, hay. It was designed to reward those people, but what I've seen is people that play the numbers game are getting the most money.*
- *When I signed on in the first year, I was only a tier 1. I had to do some things to get up to a tier 2. They said they wouldn't modify the contract. They took the information and said they might do it next year. I was under the impression that if I got the minor details lined up, I could go to tier 2 and they wouldn't let me.*
- *When they release the funds they need to send something saying when and how much the deposit is.*
- *When working with the personnel, they are kind of in a haze themselves. A lot of the rules are vague for them. The first year, they had a set group of rules, and the next year, they came in with different rules. I think they were caught behind the eight ball. A lot of this stuff got thrown at them and they had to scramble to make things work.*
- *Work more on an individual farm basis instead of 'one size fits all'. With broad criteria, as long as the goal is being met, they should be more willing to work with you.*

APPENDIX C

FREQUENCIES AND MEANS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

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Statistics

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
q1_1 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: NRCS website	250	0	.0880	.28386
q1_2 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: USDA Service Center(s)	250	0	.5240	.50043
q1_3 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: Local workshop(s)	250	0	.5480	.49869
q1_4 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: Other	250	0	.2240	.41776
q2 Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand	245	5	7.3388	1.86521
q3 Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable	247	3	7.4291	2.03477
q4 Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable	249	1	7.1446	2.10491
q5 Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	246	4	7.5610	2.20998
q6 Provided valuable information about conservation activities	245	5	7.3633	1.98216
q7 Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff	244	6	7.5656	2.02449
q9 Amount of time the interview took was reasonable	247	3	8.6559	1.60252
q10 Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility	248	2	8.3548	1.76192
q11 Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding	246	4	8.8008	1.50813
q12 Keeping you informed on the status of your application	245	5	7.4000	2.44681
q13 Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests	242	8	7.8636	2.23560
q14 Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner	248	2	7.7177	2.30142
q15 Having reasonable program requirements	248	2	7.7944	2.06034
q16 Distributing funds in a timely manner	245	5	7.7755	2.44501
q17 Courteousness	250	0	9.3960	1.10820
q18 Availability	250	0	8.8320	1.63661
q19 Professionalism	250	0	9.1360	1.49077
q20 Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program	250	0	8.3520	1.88316
q21 Timeliness of responses	249	1	8.6104	1.77938
q22 Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member	227	23	8.4405	1.91402
q23 Helpfulness	250	0	9.0160	1.61312
q24 Overall Satisfaction	250	0	8.4440	1.86676
q25 Meets your Expectations	249	1	7.5863	1.93273
q26 Compared to Ideal	247	3	7.3846	2.02471
q27 Willingness to say positive things about CSP	248	2	8.5121	1.76328
q28 Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations	241	9	7.9461	1.85775
q29 How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts	248	2	8.1774	1.96754

Frequency Table

q1_1 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: NRCS website

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	228	91.2	91.2	91.2
	1.00	22	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q1_2 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: USDA Service Center(s)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	119	47.6	47.6	47.6
	1.00	131	52.4	52.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q1_3 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: Local workshop(s)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	113	45.2	45.2	45.2
	1.00	137	54.8	54.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q1_4 Methods used to obtain information and application forms: Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	194	77.6	77.6	77.6
	1.00	56	22.4	22.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q2 Instructions in the workbook are clear and easy to understand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	3.00	10	4.0	4.1	5.3
	4.00	2	.8	.8	6.1
	5.00	29	11.6	11.8	18.0
	6.00	22	8.8	9.0	26.9
	7.00	50	20.0	20.4	47.3
	8.00	70	28.0	28.6	75.9
	9.00	23	9.2	9.4	85.3
	10.00 Strongly Agree	36	14.4	14.7	100.0
	Total	245	98.0	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	5	2.0		
Total		250	100.0		

q3 Amount of time it takes to complete the workbook is reasonable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Strong Disagree	2	.8	.8	.8
	2.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.0
	3.00	9	3.6	3.6	5.7
	4.00	10	4.0	4.0	9.7
	5.00	24	9.6	9.7	19.4
	6.00	17	6.8	6.9	26.3
	7.00	30	12.0	12.1	38.5
	8.00	81	32.4	32.8	71.3
	9.00	30	12.0	12.1	83.4
	10.00 Strongly Agree	41	16.4	16.6	100.0
	Total	247	98.8	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	3	1.2		
Total		250	100.0		

q4 Amount of supporting documentation required is reasonable

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	1	.4	.4	.4
	2.00		6	2.4	2.4	2.8
	3.00		11	4.4	4.4	7.2
	4.00		11	4.4	4.4	11.6
	5.00		32	12.8	12.9	24.5
	6.00		19	7.6	7.6	32.1
	7.00		35	14.0	14.1	46.2
	8.00		70	28.0	28.1	74.3
	9.00		30	12.0	12.0	86.3
	10.00	Strongly Agree	34	13.6	13.7	100.0
	Total		249	99.6	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	1	.4		
Total			250	100.0		

q5 Helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	5	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2.00		5	2.0	2.0	4.1
	3.00		3	1.2	1.2	5.3
	4.00		8	3.2	3.3	8.5
	5.00		28	11.2	11.4	19.9
	6.00		15	6.0	6.1	26.0
	7.00		35	14.0	14.2	40.2
	8.00		52	20.8	21.1	61.4
	9.00		37	14.8	15.0	76.4
	10.00	Strongly Agree	58	23.2	23.6	100.0
	Total		246	98.4	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	4	1.6		
Total			250	100.0		

q6 Provided valuable information about conservation activities

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	2	.8	.8	.8
	2.00		2	.8	.8	1.6
	3.00		9	3.6	3.7	5.3
	4.00		4	1.6	1.6	6.9
	5.00		32	12.8	13.1	20.0
	6.00		23	9.2	9.4	29.4
	7.00		34	13.6	13.9	43.3
	8.00		71	28.4	29.0	72.2
	9.00		29	11.6	11.8	84.1
	10.00	Strongly Agree	39	15.6	15.9	100.0
	Total		245	98.0	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	5	2.0		
Total			250	100.0		

q7 Prepared me for my interview with NRCS staff

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	4	1.6	1.6	1.6
	2.00		3	1.2	1.2	2.9
	3.00		4	1.6	1.6	4.5
	4.00		7	2.8	2.9	7.4
	5.00		22	8.8	9.0	16.4
	6.00		16	6.4	6.6	23.0
	7.00		42	16.8	17.2	40.2
	8.00		65	26.0	26.6	66.8
	9.00		34	13.6	13.9	80.7
	10.00	Strongly Agree	47	18.8	19.3	100.0
	Total		244	97.6	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	6	2.4		
Total			250	100.0		

q9 Amount of time the interview took was reasonable

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	1	.4	.4	.4
	3.00		3	1.2	1.2	1.6
	4.00		1	.4	.4	2.0
	5.00		13	5.2	5.3	7.3
	6.00		2	.8	.8	8.1
	7.00		25	10.0	10.1	18.2
	8.00		42	16.8	17.0	35.2
	9.00		64	25.6	25.9	61.1
	10.00	Strongly Agree	96	38.4	38.9	100.0
	Total		247	98.8	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	3	1.2		
Total			250	100.0		

q10 Interview outlined the stewardship activities required for eligibility

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	1	.4	.4	.4
	3.00		4	1.6	1.6	2.0
	4.00		7	2.8	2.8	4.8
	5.00		10	4.0	4.0	8.9
	6.00		9	3.6	3.6	12.5
	7.00		29	11.6	11.7	24.2
	8.00		49	19.6	19.8	44.0
	9.00		58	23.2	23.4	67.3
	10.00	Strongly Agree	81	32.4	32.7	100.0
	Total		248	99.2	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	2	.8		
Total			250	100.0		

q11 Interview helped me determine if I was eligible for CSP funding

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Strong Disagree	1	.4	.4	.4
	3.00		1	.4	.4	.8
	4.00		3	1.2	1.2	2.0
	5.00		7	2.8	2.8	4.9
	6.00		8	3.2	3.3	8.1
	7.00		14	5.6	5.7	13.8
	8.00		46	18.4	18.7	32.5
	9.00		60	24.0	24.4	56.9
	10.00	Strongly Agree	106	42.4	43.1	100.0
	Total		246	98.4	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	4	1.6		
Total			250	100.0		

q12 Keeping you informed on the status of your application

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	Poor	11	4.4	4.5	4.5
	2.00		4	1.6	1.6	6.1
	3.00		6	2.4	2.4	8.6
	4.00		10	4.0	4.1	12.7
	5.00		22	8.8	9.0	21.6
	6.00		16	6.4	6.5	28.2
	7.00		27	10.8	11.0	39.2
	8.00		59	23.6	24.1	63.3
	9.00		31	12.4	12.7	75.9
	10.00	Excellent	59	23.6	24.1	100.0
	Total		245	98.0	100.0	
Missing	98.00	Don't know	5	2.0		
Total			250	100.0		

q13 Allowing enough time for you to respond to additional informational requests

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	6	2.4	2.5	2.5
	2.00	6	2.4	2.5	5.0
	3.00	3	1.2	1.2	6.2
	4.00	6	2.4	2.5	8.7
	5.00	14	5.6	5.8	14.5
	6.00	14	5.6	5.8	20.2
	7.00	26	10.4	10.7	31.0
	8.00	57	22.8	23.6	54.5
	9.00	40	16.0	16.5	71.1
	10.00 Excellent	70	28.0	28.9	100.0
	Total	242	96.8	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	8	3.2		
Total		250	100.0		

q14 Notifying you of funding decisions in a timely manner

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	8	3.2	3.2	3.2
	2.00	3	1.2	1.2	4.4
	3.00	8	3.2	3.2	7.7
	4.00	5	2.0	2.0	9.7
	5.00	15	6.0	6.0	15.7
	6.00	18	7.2	7.3	23.0
	7.00	29	11.6	11.7	34.7
	8.00	57	22.8	23.0	57.7
	9.00	36	14.4	14.5	72.2
	10.00 Excellent	69	27.6	27.8	100.0
	Total	248	99.2	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	2	.8		
Total		250	100.0		

q15 Having reasonable program requirements

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	4	1.6	1.6	1.6
	2.00	4	1.6	1.6	3.2
	3.00	4	1.6	1.6	4.8
	4.00	7	2.8	2.8	7.7
	5.00	16	6.4	6.5	14.1
	6.00	14	5.6	5.6	19.8
	7.00	34	13.6	13.7	33.5
	8.00	63	25.2	25.4	58.9
	9.00	45	18.0	18.1	77.0
	10.00 Excellent	57	22.8	23.0	100.0
	Total	248	99.2	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	2	.8		
Total		250	100.0		

q16 Distributing funds in a timely manner

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	11	4.4	4.5	4.5
	2.00	5	2.0	2.0	6.5
	3.00	4	1.6	1.6	8.2
	4.00	6	2.4	2.4	10.6
	5.00	15	6.0	6.1	16.7
	6.00	12	4.8	4.9	21.6
	7.00	28	11.2	11.4	33.1
	8.00	47	18.8	19.2	52.2
	9.00	41	16.4	16.7	69.0
	10.00 Excellent	76	30.4	31.0	100.0
	Total	245	98.0	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	5	2.0		
Total		250	100.0		

q17 Courteousness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4.00	2	.8	.8	.8
	5.00	2	.8	.8	1.6
	6.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.8
	7.00	11	4.4	4.4	7.2
	8.00	22	8.8	8.8	16.0
	9.00	40	16.0	16.0	32.0
	10.00 Excellent	170	68.0	68.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q18 Availability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	1	.4	.4	.4
	2.00	1	.4	.4	.8
	3.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.0
	4.00	1	.4	.4	2.4
	5.00	10	4.0	4.0	6.4
	6.00	6	2.4	2.4	8.8
	7.00	13	5.2	5.2	14.0
	8.00	41	16.4	16.4	30.4
	9.00	53	21.2	21.2	51.6
	10.00 Excellent	121	48.4	48.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q19 Professionalism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	2	.8	.8	.8
	2.00	1	.4	.4	1.2
	3.00	1	.4	.4	1.6
	4.00	2	.8	.8	2.4
	5.00	3	1.2	1.2	3.6
	6.00	3	1.2	1.2	4.8
	7.00	11	4.4	4.4	9.2
	8.00	30	12.0	12.0	21.2
	9.00	51	20.4	20.4	41.6
	10.00 Excellent	146	58.4	58.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q20 Knowledge about the Conservation Security Program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	2	.8	.8	.8
	2.00	2	.8	.8	1.6
	3.00	4	1.6	1.6	3.2
	4.00	6	2.4	2.4	5.6
	5.00	10	4.0	4.0	9.6
	6.00	7	2.8	2.8	12.4
	7.00	28	11.2	11.2	23.6
	8.00	47	18.8	18.8	42.4
	9.00	58	23.2	23.2	65.6
	10.00 Excellent	86	34.4	34.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q21 Timeliness of responses

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	5	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2.00	1	.4	.4	2.4
	4.00	2	.8	.8	3.2
	5.00	7	2.8	2.8	6.0
	6.00	9	3.6	3.6	9.6
	7.00	16	6.4	6.4	16.1
	8.00	50	20.0	20.1	36.1
	9.00	62	24.8	24.9	61.0
	10.00 Excellent	97	38.8	39.0	100.0
	Total	249	99.6	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	1	.4		
Total		250	100.0		

q22 Consistency of responses from staff member to staff member

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	4	1.6	1.8	1.8
	2.00	1	.4	.4	2.2
	3.00	1	.4	.4	2.6
	4.00	6	2.4	2.6	5.3
	5.00	9	3.6	4.0	9.3
	6.00	5	2.0	2.2	11.5
	7.00	20	8.0	8.8	20.3
	8.00	50	20.0	22.0	42.3
	9.00	42	16.8	18.5	60.8
	10.00 Excellent	89	35.6	39.2	100.0
	Total	227	90.8	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	23	9.2		
Total		250	100.0		

q23 Helpfulness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Poor	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	2.00	1	.4	.4	1.6
	4.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.8
	5.00	4	1.6	1.6	4.4
	6.00	6	2.4	2.4	6.8
	7.00	11	4.4	4.4	11.2
	8.00	32	12.8	12.8	24.0
	9.00	52	20.8	20.8	44.8
	10.00 Excellent	138	55.2	55.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q24 Overall Satisfaction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Very Dissatisfied	4	1.6	1.6	1.6
	2.00	1	.4	.4	2.0
	3.00	4	1.6	1.6	3.6
	5.00	10	4.0	4.0	7.6
	6.00	11	4.4	4.4	12.0
	7.00	24	9.6	9.6	21.6
	8.00	48	19.2	19.2	40.8
	9.00	55	22.0	22.0	62.8
	10.00 Very Satisfied	93	37.2	37.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

q25 Meets your Expectations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Falls short of Expectations	4	1.6	1.6	1.6
	2.00	2	.8	.8	2.4
	3.00	2	.8	.8	3.2
	4.00	5	2.0	2.0	5.2
	5.00	26	10.4	10.4	15.7
	6.00	21	8.4	8.4	24.1
	7.00	39	15.6	15.7	39.8
	8.00	68	27.2	27.3	67.1
	9.00	38	15.2	15.3	82.3
	10.00 Exceeds Expectations	44	17.6	17.7	100.0
	Total	249	99.6	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	1	.4		
	Total	250	100.0		

q26 Compared to Ideal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Not at all close to the Ideal	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	2.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.4
	3.00	8	3.2	3.2	5.7
	4.00	9	3.6	3.6	9.3
	5.00	24	9.6	9.7	19.0
	6.00	12	4.8	4.9	23.9
	7.00	52	20.8	21.1	44.9
	8.00	63	25.2	25.5	70.4
	9.00	35	14.0	14.2	84.6
	10.00 Very close to the Ideal	38	15.2	15.4	100.0
	Total	247	98.8	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	3	1.2		
Total		250	100.0		

q27 Willingness to say positive things about CSP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Not at all Willing	2	.8	.8	.8
	2.00	3	1.2	1.2	2.0
	3.00	2	.8	.8	2.8
	4.00	2	.8	.8	3.6
	5.00	7	2.8	2.8	6.5
	6.00	6	2.4	2.4	8.9
	7.00	30	12.0	12.1	21.0
	8.00	50	20.0	20.2	41.1
	9.00	52	20.8	21.0	62.1
	10.00 Very Willing	94	37.6	37.9	100.0
	Total	248	99.2	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know System	1	.4		
	Total	2	.8		
Total		250	100.0		

q28 Likelihood CSP will influence farmers/ranchers to modify future operations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Very Unlikely	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	2.00	2	.8	.8	2.1
	3.00	1	.4	.4	2.5
	4.00	2	.8	.8	3.3
	5.00	21	8.4	8.7	12.0
	6.00	15	6.0	6.2	18.3
	7.00	36	14.4	14.9	33.2
	8.00	52	20.8	21.6	54.8
	9.00	56	22.4	23.2	78.0
	10.00 Very Likely	53	21.2	22.0	100.0
	Total	241	96.4	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	9	3.6		
Total		250	100.0		

q29 How well CSP rewards past conservation efforts

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00 Not very Well at all	6	2.4	2.4	2.4
	3.00	2	.8	.8	3.2
	4.00	7	2.8	2.8	6.0
	5.00	12	4.8	4.8	10.9
	6.00	7	2.8	2.8	13.7
	7.00	25	10.0	10.1	23.8
	8.00	64	25.6	25.8	49.6
	9.00	51	20.4	20.6	70.2
	10.00 Very Well	74	29.6	29.8	100.0
	Total	248	99.2	100.0	
Missing	98.00 Don't know	2	.8		
Total		250	100.0		