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and incentives, and since we're not getting in, there's little reason to make any changes now."

### **Jim Andrew | Greene County**

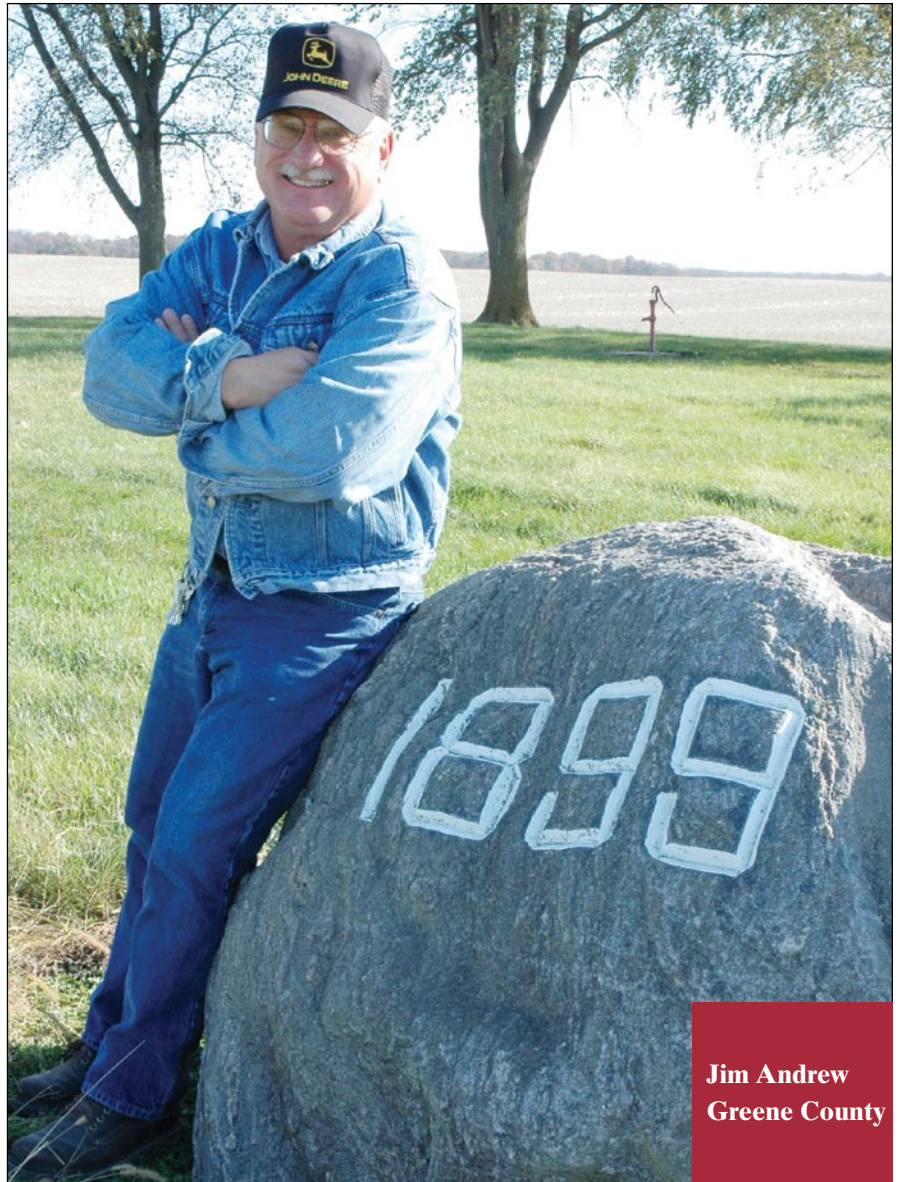
Jim Andrew, a Tier III CSP contract recipient, farms near Jefferson, in Greene County, on land that's been in his family for more than a century.

"I'm a fifth-generation farmer, a product of a lot of people's efforts to hold things together through good times and bad. So I take a 'long view' of my farming operation. Short-term gain doesn't interest me as much as the long-term. And I think that's the attitude of a lot of families," he says. That attitude helped Andrew earn the first Tier III CSP contract awarded in the nation.

"But the trend for CSP is a little frustrating. Funding levels and rules for program participation leave farmers with no certainty that they will be able to participate. In fact, about \$1 billion was removed from CSP this year, primarily due to Hurricane Katrina relief and the war in Iraq. Both are good reasons, but as a result, only about 60% of the originally intended watersheds are eligible nationwide. And overall, \$3 billion has been removed from the original CSP appropriation since 2002," he notes.

"As time goes on and budgets shrink, the program does not resemble the one presented in the early years. The 'selected watershed' concept has led to rules and regulations that vary greatly from watershed-to-watershed and state-to-state. This is particularly hard to justify to farmers who are used to rules that are fairly and consistently implemented nationwide. It appears to many farmers that these rules were developed mainly to restrict farmer eligibility due to the limited program funding."

"And though we recognize the enormous task of defining and implementing a new program such as CSP, many farmers are becoming disillusioned and frustrated with the slow pace of program implementation. The ever-changing rules and budgetary constraints differ greatly from the way the program was originally explained to the U.S.



**Jim Andrew  
Greene County**

farmer, and are causing some farmers to give up even before they enroll."

Andrew feels that conservation is an issue that everyone should get behind. "I think farmers are changing their views of how they farm. And that's a good thing – it's really scary to give up everything that your father and grandfather did and start something new. But we do need programs in place that support and build momentum toward the goal of 'rewarding the best' and 'motivating the rest.'"

### **Conclusion | Policy Concerns**

Many farmers want to see more crop consultants and Technical Service Providers trained to help farmers get ready for CSP. Farmers are given an applica-

tion window of a few weeks, and have few hints of what to do beforehand. Often one or two things could make a big difference and farmers would do them, if they knew what they were.

An example is soil sampling. One of the CSP questions is: "Have you soil sampled in the past five years?" Answering "no" could be a determining factor in kicking a farmer out of the program. Many farmers want to know why the specific practices and qualifying activities are not promoted beforehand.

Many agree that CSP should continue being the centerpiece conservation program of the Farm Bill. But farmers are hoping for greater clarity, and a higher level of funding from the program.