

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP) Fiscal Year 2010

Program Description:

Authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture. The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and wetland protection.

Wetlands provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species; improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reduce flooding; recharge groundwater; protect biological diversity; and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and limited recreational activities.

WRP Enrollment Options:

1. ***Permanent Easement*** is a conservation easement in perpetuity. USDA pays 100 percent of the easement value and up to 100 percent of the restoration costs.
2. ***30-Year Easement*** is an easement that expires after 30 years. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the easement value and up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
3. ***30-Year Contracts*** is a contract on acreage owned by Indian Tribes only, that expires after 30 years. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the contract value and restoration costs.
4. ***Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot*** – offers either permanent or 30-year easements and reserves a portion of the grazing rights to the landowner based on an agreed to prescribed grazing plan. The easement value is adjusted according to the amount of the grazing right that remains unencumbered by the easement.
 - Easement/contract compensation is based on a series of Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARCs) which are adjustments to the Fair Market Value appraisal or Area-Wide Market Survey appraised values, or the landowner offer, whichever is less.
 - For permanent and 30-year easements/contracts, USDA pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.
5. ***Restoration Cost-Share Agreement*** is an agreement to restore or enhance the wetland functions and values without placing an easement on the enrolled acres. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs, not to exceed \$50,000 per year. Contract is effective for 10 years after the last restoration practice is installed.

Landowner Eligibility: Owners of private or Tribal lands are eligible for WRP. To be eligible for WRP the landowner must submit an application to the local USDA Service Center, along with a copy of a Grant Deed or other evidence of ownership. The landowner must have owned the property for 7 years prior to submitting an application, or submit a written request for a waiver of the 7 year ownership requirement. Landowners must also meet the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) and Highly Erodible Land/Wetland Compliance (HEL/WC) provisions. Please work with the local Field Office to obtain and complete the necessary forms for completing eligibility determinations (see ‘Application materials’ listed below).

Land Eligibility: Eligible land includes areas of historic wetlands that have been degraded or converted to agricultural use, and that have the potential for restoring natural hydrology functions. Also, land that has been substantially altered by human manipulation of the landscape, and where present flooding and inundation make restoration of wetland functions and values likely. WRP targets marginal agricultural land where planned restoration has the potential to maximize wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and aid in the recovery of special status species. Adjacent parcels of non-cropped natural areas, slough channels, and uplands are also eligible if they significantly contribute to the habitat objectives of the project.

Where to Apply: For application assistance or for more information regarding the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and contact your nearest NRCS office, which can be obtained at the NRCS California web site: <http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

Program Application: WRP applications can be submitted and ranked on a continuous basis, with project selection dates set at various times of the year. Eligible landowners have until **February 15, 2010** to submit the required documentation to be considered for currently available funding. Applications will continue to be accepted after this deadline, but project selection will be deferred until the next funding cycle.

Complete Application Must Include:

- **Form NRCS-CPA-1200 Application:** Signed and dated by all the legal owner(s) of record as listed on the Grant Deed, or persons authorized to sign on behalf of the individuals and/or entities listed on the Deed. Depending upon the applicant and existing records, these additional forms and documentation may need to be completed:
- **Form AD-1026:** Highly Erodible Land Conservation - Wetland Conservation Certification.
- **Form CCC-901A:** Entity Member Information, if applicable.
- **Form CCC-926:** Payment Eligibility Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification.
- **Form SF-1199A:** Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form.
- **Land ownership or control:** The applicants required to provide evidence of ownership documents (deeds, etc.)
- **Legal Access:** Landowner must be able to provide legal, insurable right of access to the offered parcel(s).
- **Water Rights:** Landowner must provide proof of ownership of sufficient water rights to successfully restore or maintain the offered acreage.
- **Form FSA-211 or NRCS-CPA-09:** Power of Attorney – if applicable (Entity applicants must submit this form).
- **Signature authority:** If the applicant is an entity, documents such as articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws, partnership agreements, trust agreements, wills and similar legal evidence that provide adequate signature authority for the representative to conduct land title transactions.
- **Proof of Identity:** Authorized persons may be required to show valid state driver's license, passport or other personal identification as well as Social Security or EIN numbers, address and other information.
- **DUNS Number:** All entities/ organizations are required to obtain a DUNS number when submitting a conservation program application greater than \$25,000.

Note: Confidential and private information: Many of the program application forms or documentation requires the applicant to provide sensitive, contact, financial or other confidential information. By law and policy, confidential, private and sensitive information is protected by USDA and employees and agency partners are subject to penalty and disciplinary action for inappropriate or mismanagement of private data.