

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program RECOVERY BUYOUTS

## PROPERTY RECOVERY BUYOUT OPTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program that assists sponsors and landowners to protect lives and property from flooding or soil erosion after a natural disaster. In communities impacted by constant flooding or severe erosion due to a natural disaster, a property buyout might be the best solution.

### What is an EWP Recovery Buyout?

EWP Recovery Buyouts provide financial assistance to purchase properties impacted by flooding caused by a natural disaster by removing and relocating people and properties out of flood prone areas. Recovery Buyouts are used where structural solutions to reduce threats from flooding and erosion are not cost-effective and/or beneficial. Once NRCS determines that buying a flood prone property would provide the best option to protect against flooding and erosion, EWP provides financial assistance to a local sponsor to purchase the property and preserve the land for the purpose of restoring the natural environment.

NRCS may provide project sponsors up to 75 percent (*and up to 90 percent for limited resource areas*) of:

- the fair market value based on an appraisal for the property;
- eligible acquisition and relocation costs; and
- site restoration costs.

Sponsors must be a state or political subdivision, a federally-recognized Tribe or Tribal Organization, or unit of local government with a legal or conservation interest in the land.

Project sponsors must be able to:

- obtain all necessary property rights, water rights, and permits.
- provide their share of the restoration costs and cover any unreimbursed expenses.



*Debris damage after a severe rain event in Kentucky.*

- operate and maintain any completed restoration measures.

### [Sponsor Eligibility Guide and Resources](#)

### Eligibility

Properties are potentially eligible if they meet all the following requirements for a buyout:

- be from willing, voluntary sellers;
- contain a structure threatened by additional flooding/erosion;
- adjacent lands that would contribute to the conservation purposes of the program as open space; and,
- restoration is feasible.

Structures may be relocated to an area NOT threatened by flooding or erosion, if it is determined to be an economic and feasible option.

## What is the process?

1. After a qualifying disaster event, **an eligible sponsor must submit a request in writing to their [local NRCS State Conservationist](#) within 60 days.**
2. If approved for funding, NRCS will work with the project sponsor to define the terms of a cooperative agreement and clarify roles and responsibilities.
3. Acquisition is handled by the sponsor, who then purchases the property and becomes the owner. A deed restriction is placed on the title limiting land use to open space and natural resource conservation.
4. Structures will either be demolished or relocated outside of the flood zone.
5. Conservation practices will be installed that restore the natural environment and provide flooding and erosion protection.
6. Continued monitoring and maintenance of the property will be performed by the project sponsor.

## Criteria for Assistance

All EWP work must provide protection from future flooding or soil erosion; reduce threats to life and property; restore the natural function to the watershed; and be economically and environmentally sound.

## How Do I Obtain Assistance?

If property has been damaged by flooding or threatened by severe erosion and meets the eligibility requirements, it may qualify for EWP assistance.

To request assistance, work with a local project sponsor and contact your [NRCS EWP Program Manager](#).

## East Providence, Rhode Island - EWP Recovery Buyout



East Providence, Rhode Island - Flooding from Tropical Storm Ida



Residential area impacted by Tropical Storm Ida flooding.

Photos courtesy of NRCS Rhode Island

East Providence, Rhode Island: The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District received EWP Recovery Buyout assistance to purchase flood prone properties located in the Runnins River corridor. The roads in Luther's Corner neighborhood experienced frequent flooding rendering them impassable and hindering needed emergency response actions. The properties will be reverted back to their natural conditions to increase flood storage capacity along the river corridor.