United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

Program Focus —
In Michigan, the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) provides benefits to both participating landowners and their neighbors. Landowners benefit from the easement payment and from the restored wetlands and uplands on their property. Neighbors benefit because the wetlands restored in their local area provide important functions and values such as attenuation of flood waters, groundwater recharge, filtration of water borne sediment, control of shoreline erosion, and wildlife habitat.

While Michigan's WRP does not have specific "emphasis areas", it does have several focus areas in the state where WRP activity is very high due to intense landowner interest. These areas generally correspond to the areas in the state where wetland loss ranges from 50 to 95 percent. Some of Michigan's "hot beds" for WRP include the Saginaw Bay watershed, the Maple River-Saginaw State Game Area corridor, the Portage River Watershed in Jackson County, and the Rudyard Clay Lake Plain in Eastern Chippewa County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Within these areas the public greatly benefits from improved water quality, increased flood retention, and enhanced wildlife habitat. Some of the wetlands types in Michigan that comprise a fairly high percentage of our total acres in WRP include organic soil flats (peat & muck lands), mineral soil flats (emergent wetlands - cattail marshes) and Great Lake Coastal wetlands.

In Michigan the easement ranking and evaluation process is completed by one of Michigan's four "Wetland Teams. The teams are comprised of biologists, soil scientists, engineers, and Resource Conservationists from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and NRCS.

Michigan Summary

Overview

In Michigan the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) continues to grow in popularity with landowners. WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands and associated, adjacent uplands. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements.

Over 77 new applications, with an estimated easement and restoration value greater than $13.9 million, were received for consideration into WRP during fiscal year (FY) 2002. Currently Michigan's funding backlog list stands at 170 pending offers and over 18,500 acres. More than $22.5 million in WRP funding would be required to fund these pending applications. Two of Michigan's primary goals for WRP are to enroll properties that will have significant positive impacts on water quality and to provide landowners with an economically viable alternative to retire marginal cropland by enrolling these acres and restoring the wetlands and uplands through permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

Accomplishments

During FY2002 nearly $10 million was obligated to secure easements and restore wetlands. 35 Michigan landowners enrolled 22 permanent easements, five 30-year easements, and eight restoration cost-share agreements. A total of 4,075 acres were enrolled in the WRP. In addition, nearly 2,600 acres of wetland and associated upland was restored, including nearly 1,100 acres of emergent fresh water wetland, 90 acres of riparian wetland habitat, 300 upland acres planted to grasses and forbes, and over 110 acres of shallow water wildlife habitat (push-outs).

Program Benefits

There are a number of ways the WRP benefits landowners and society. These include:

LANDOWNER BENEFITS- The voluntary program provides up to 100 percent cost-share to landowners for restoring converted wetlands and payment in exchange for permanent or long-term easements. Restoration only cost-share agreements are also available with a cost-share rate of 75 percent.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS- The program allows some economic use of restored wetlands, including hunting and fishing, grazing or haying during prescribed times, and selective timber harvesting.

PUBLIC BENEFITS- Restored wetlands provide important functions such as attenuation of flood waters, groundwater recharge, filtration of water-borne sediment, control of shoreline erosion, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.

FISH AND WILDLIFE BENEFITS- Restored wetlands and associated upland acres provide important habitat for hundreds of species of fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and plants, some of which are endangered. In Michigan nearly 50 percent of our endangered species are supported by wetlands.

State contact

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Wetlands & Water Quality

Wetlands have a profound positive impact on both water quantity and quality. The host of natural chemical, biological and physical processes that take place in wetlands significantly contribute to the improvement of water quality and quantity. Wetlands store runoff water from upland areas and slowly release this water into streams and lakes, allowing groundwater recharge and reducing the severity of flooding. Wetland plants hold the soil in place with their roots, absorb the energy of waves, and break up the flow of stream or river currents, protecting shorelines and stream banks from erosion. Wetlands in the floodplains along streams and lakes play an especially important role in the health of these surface waters, by removing nutrients and sediments that otherwise might pollute the water, and by providing habitat to fish and other aquatic creatures. The nutrients held by wetlands are utilized by microbial organisms that make up the basis of a rich and diverse ecosystem. Microbes break down organic materials into a rich material called detritus, which in turn becomes a food supply to aquatic insects and other creatures. Frogs, turtles, small fish, waterfowl and a host of other animals find a plentiful food supply in wetland areas. Because of the benefits wetlands provide with respect to flood control, sediment reduction, erosion control and overall water quality, Michigan includes ranking factors such as; the proximity of the WRP easement area to Critical Floodwater Storage Areas; is the perspective WRP easement area within 2 miles of Great Lakes Shoreline; does the perspective WRP easement area provide significant risk reduction for aquatic resources; and finally, is proposed easement area is with in the boundary of an approved watershed management plan that provides flood protection, sediment reduction and wetland restoration (Approved PL566 or 319 Project). These criteria encourage the selection of WRP easement areas that will have positive and profound impacts on the quality of Michigan's water resources.

Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat in Michigan

Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat in Saginaw County, Michigan. Wildflowers and shallow water make awesome habitat for waterfowl and people alike!

Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat in Sanilac County, Michigan. Habitat such as this is critical for waterfowl brood rearing areas. Michigan Department of Natural Resources Biologists reported that over 200 broods of Mallards and Black Ducks came off this area in the spring of 2002.

Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat in Cheboygan County, Michigan. These shallow water areas in conjunction with recently installed Wood Duck boxes provide excellent breeding areas for a growing population of Wood Ducks.

Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat in Presque Isle County, Michigan Open water areas such as these provide much needed loafing and feeding areas for Michigan's abundant waterfowl.

Michigan Dollars and Contracts

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2002 Obligated Dollars	Fiscal Year 2002 Number of Contracts	Cumulative Total (95-02) Obligated Dollars	Cumulative Total (95-02) Number of Contracts
District 1	$2,965,390	22	12,534,946	71
District 2	$409,786	4	$5,710,642	33
District 3	$0	0	$5,710,642	6
District 4	$380,104	4	$799,811	58
District 5	$21,318	2	$6,565,283	22
District 6	$0	0	$6,265,300	2
District 7	$3,876,020	2	$43,107	34
District 8	$0	0	$465,598	8
District 16	$2,096,318	1	$2,096,318	1
State Totals	**$9,748,936**	**35**	**$37,574,327**	**234**