



Guide to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program's Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)



What is the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)?

ACEP helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements. The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program focuses on wetlands and the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program focuses on protecting working farms.

What is an Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)?

An ALE is a permanent easement held by an eligible entity, not NRCS. Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) is a certified entity in DE who can hold the easement on the farm or there may be other eligible entities that could hold the easement. The purpose of ALE is to protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses.

If NRCS does not hold the easement, how is NRCS involved? NRCS works with the eligible entity to collect applications. NRCS ranks the applicants and provides up to 50% of the appraised value to the eligible entity for the purchase of the easement.

Are ALEs permanent?

Yes, it's a permanent easement deed that is recorded and stays in effect even if ownership changes. The easement contains deed restrictions that limits non-farm development in order to protect current and future agricultural uses.

Does the landowner still control access?

Yes.

What are the restrictions placed on property under an ALE?

There are certain restrictions related to construction activities and/or dividing up your farm. Before considering any construction or subdivision of land, you will need to contact the eligible entity and/or NRCS.

Please ask for a copy of Minimum Deed Terms for a full list of restrictions.

What are the benefits?

The program is an important source of matching funds to help permanently protect agricultural land for agricultural uses. ALE can also:

- Help facilitate the transfer of agricultural land to the next generation
- Give agricultural landowners capital to implement on-farm conservation practices or make other investments to improve the viability of their operations

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