



WRP

Wetland Reserve Program

New Jersey Wetland Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.



A restored wetland in a former crop field.

Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetland functions and values;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas; and
- Having incentives to develop wildlife recreational opportunities on their land.

Wetlands benefit New Jersey by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; as well as providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

Eligibility

To offer a conservation easement, the landowner must have owned the land for at least 12 months prior to enrolling it in the program, except in certain circumstances. To participate in a restoration cost-share agreement, the landowner must show evidence of ownership. To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and be suitable for wildlife benefits. This includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands;
- Pasture or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long term protection.

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Enrollment Options Include:

Permanent Easement: Easement payments equal the lowest of the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.

30-Year Easement: Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays 75 percent of restoration costs.

For both permanent and 30-year easements, USDA pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office.



Enhanced shallow water area.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement: This is a minimum 10-year agreement to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity.

NRCS and its partners continue to provide assistance to landowners after completion of restoration activities. This assistance may be in the form of reviewing restoration measures, clarifying technical and administrative aspects of the easement and project management needs, and providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for wetland dependent species.

Uses of WRP Land

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land, but retain private ownership. On acreage subject to a WRP easement, participants control access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities.

NRCS Service Centers

Freehold – (732) 462-0075
Serving Mercer, Middlesex & Monmouth

Frenchtown – (908) 782-4614
Serving Hunterdon, Somerset & Union

Hackettstown – (908) 852-2576
Serving Morris, Sussex & Warren
(Bergen, Hudson, Essex & Passaic for
Agriculture only)

Hainesport – (609) 267-0811
Serving Burlington, Camden & Ocean

Vineland – (856) 205-1225
Serving Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland

Woodstown – (856) 769-1126
Serving Gloucester & Salem

At any time, a participant may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

How to Apply

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or a cost-share restoration agreement through a continuous sign-up process. Applications are available at any USDA Service Center office or online at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp. Contact your local USDA Service Center for more details, or visit the NJ program web page at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/index.html> for more details.