



South Dakota Fact Sheet
April 2012

*East Dakota Water
Development District*

Riparian Area and Wetland Restoration and Protection Project Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) is a voluntary program available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). WREP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, riparian area, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resources concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial benefits to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and riparian areas in exchange for placing marginal land in a conservation easement.

Goals

To restore and protect wetlands and riparian areas for the benefit of water quality and wildlife within the East Dakota Water Development District.

Benefits

WREP participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetlands and riparian areas;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming wet areas, and;
- Maintaining private ownership and wildlife recreation opportunities on their land.



Protection and restoration of wetlands and riparian areas benefit all South Dakotans by improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; providing fish and wildlife habitat; reducing flooding; recharging ground water; protecting biological diversity; and providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities

How WREP Works

This program prioritizes wetland and riparian area restoration and protection in locations which are in close proximity to the major rivers and tributaries within the East Dakota Water Development District. The District consists of the following counties in eastern SD: Grant; Deuel; Codington; Hamlin; Kingsbury; Brookings; Moody; Lake; Minnehaha; and portions of Miner.

The program offers two enrollment options:

1. **Permanent Easement.** This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments are based on the South Dakota Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARCs) for the county. In addition to paying for the easement, up to 100 percent of the restoration cost will be covered.
2. **30 – Year Easement.** Easement payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. Restoration costs are also paid at 75 percent.

Sign-Up and Eligibility

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Landowners can obtain applications from the following sources: local NRCS field offices; conservation district offices; Northern Prairies Land Trust (605) 882-5250 or jimmadsen@iw.net or info@northernprairies.org).

Wetlands and riparian areas must be located within the East Dakota Water Development District as listed above. Applications must meet the same criteria as the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). In addition, applications will be screened and evaluated for proximity to the main channel or major tributaries of the Minnesota, Big Sioux or Vermillion Rivers. Additional factors include proximity to existing protected areas and whether the application is for a permanent or 30- year easement.

To offer a conservation easement, the land owner must:

- Be eligible to participate in Farm Bill Programs,
- File Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) and Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance (HEL/WC);
- Have owned offered land seven years prior to enrollment unless at least one of the following apply:
 - Land was inherited;
 - Landowner exercised landowners right of redemption before a foreclosure, and/or;
 - Landowner can provide adequate assurance that the land was not obtained for purpose of WREP enrollment.

To be eligible for this WREP, land must be restorable and be suitable for wildlife benefits, which include:

- Farmed wetlands;
- Converted wetlands (prior to Dec. 23, 1985);
- Lands substantially altered by flooding, and;
- Other lands:
 - Riparian areas;
 - Certain restored wetlands;
 - Certain Conservation Preserve Program (CRP) land, and;
 - Adjacent lands.

Uses of WREP Land

On acres subject to WREP easement, the landowner controls access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities. At any time, a landowner may request that additional activities be evaluated by NRCS to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include permission to cut hay or harvest wood products. Grazing livestock may be allowed under a habitat management plan. Compatible uses are allowed if they are consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland or riparian area.

For More Information

For more information about WREP or WRP, please contact your local NRCS office; conservation district offices; or the Northern Prairies Land Trust.

SD 2012 GARC Values

| County | Cropland | Noncropland |
|-----------|----------|-------------|
| Grant | \$2,313 | \$1,021 |
| Codington | \$2,816 | \$1,269 |
| Hamlin | \$2,816 | \$1,269 |
| Deuel | \$2,816 | \$1,269 |
| Brookings | \$3,084 | \$1,428 |
| Kingsbury | \$2,579 | \$1,442 |
| Moody | \$4,516 | \$2,158 |
| Minnehaha | \$4,516 | \$2,158 |
| Miner | \$2,579 | \$1,442 |
| Lake | \$3,084 | \$1,428 |