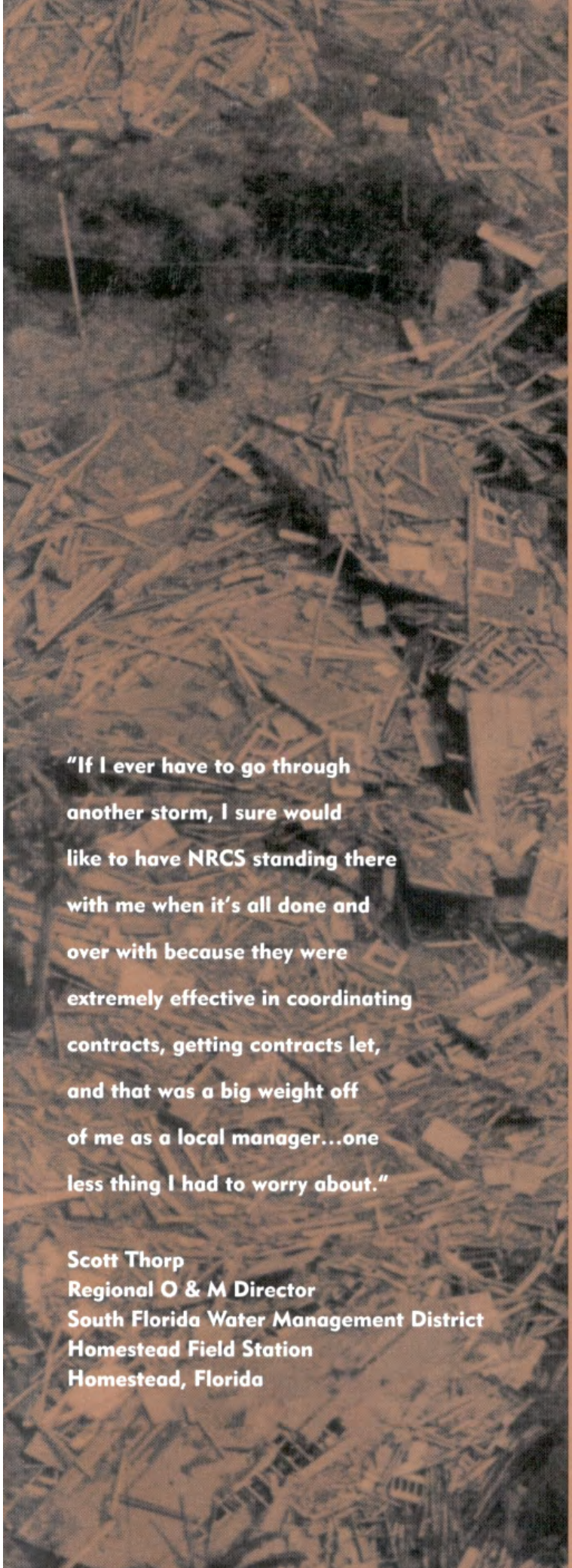
Avoid the Disaster

After the Disaster.

HEALING THE LAND WITH EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION



"If I ever have to go through another storm, I sure would like to have NRCS standing there with me when it's all done and over with because they were extremely effective in coordinating contracts, getting contracts let, and that was a big weight off of me as a local manager...one less thing I had to worry about."

Scott Thorp
Regional O & M Director
South Florida Water Management District
Homestead Field Station
Homestead, Florida

When a natural disaster strikes your community – whether it's fire, flood, hurricane, tornado or earthquake – the after effects of the emergency often times can be just as threatening as the emergency itself. Natural disasters can strip the land, leaving it susceptible to erosion by wind and water, to floods and to other natural disasters. When the land is vulnerable, lives and property are also threatened. Before a threatening situation arises in your community, learn how watersheds can be protected, in the aftermath of a natural disaster, with assistance from the Emergency Watershed Protection program.

EWP Provides the Answers

What is a watershed emergency?

A watershed emergency exists when a natural occurrence causes a sudden watershed impairment, creating an imminent threat to life or property. There are two types of threatening situations – exigency and nonexigency. Exigency involves a clear threat to life and property and requires immediate action. In a nonexigency situation, the damage to life or property is high enough to constitute a continued hazard, but not an immediate threat to life or property.

Who takes leadership to lend assistance in a watershed emergency situation?

Congress has authorized the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to respond to watershed disasters by directing technical assistance to landowners and administering funds through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program.

What does the Emergency Watershed Protection program do?

EWP provides work, installations or repairs necessary to protect lives, land and property from possible floods, drought and erosion.

What type of protection is available?

EWP work is not limited to prescribed measures. Each case will be investigated on its own merit. Examples of NRCS work include: removing debris from stream channels and bridge abutments, reshaping and protecting eroding streambanks, repairing levees and structures and reseeding damaged land areas.

Who applies for the assistance?

Although the EWP program is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Services, individuals in need of emergency assistance can contact a local, city, county, state or watershed authority for sponsorship.

Sponsors apply to the local NRCS office in writing by stating the nature, location and scope of the problem. The request should also suggest the extent and type of work that is needed and include a statement about the sponsor's willingness to assume operation and maintenance responsibilities and the sponsor's intent to provide a portion of installation costs.

Q&A Why is a sponsor needed?

Sponsors provide the legal authority to obtain land and water rights to do repair work and secure necessary permits. Sponsors also furnish local cost sharing, install the work and provide for maintenance of completed emergency measures.

Q&A Who can sponsor an EWP project?

Local officials of city, county and state government; Indian tribes; local conservation districts; federal agencies; watershed authorities and others may sponsor EWP projects.

Q&A What must the sponsor do?

Sponsors must certify that they have the legal authority to apply for federal assistance; certify that they have passed a motion or adopted a similar resolution to apply for the assistance; provide assurance that funds are not available from other sources; and appoint a representative who will work to acquire land rights, provide additional information and obtain funds for nonexigency measures that will involve cost-sharing.

Q&A Who is eligible for the assistance?

Public or private landowners, land managers and land users are eligible for assistance if their watershed area has been impaired by a natural disaster. To be eligible, applicants must lack the funds or resources necessary to provide relief.

Q&A What types of situations are eligible for EWP assistance?

To be eligible for assistance, a measure must retard runoff to prevent soil erosion or flooding; reduce threats to life or property caused by a watershed emergency; and benefit more than one individual, except in an exigency situation where single beneficiaries are permitted.

Q&A Are there any restrictions?

- Applicants must apply through a project sponsor.
- Emergency work is limited to the least costly means of removing the threat.
- EWP funds cannot be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster; they cannot be used to raise the level of protection that existed prior to the emergency; and they cannot be used to work on measures installed by another federal agency.
- EWP work must be economically and environmentally defensible and sound from an engineering standpoint. It cannot adversely affect downstream water rights.
- EWP funds cannot be used for operation and maintenance work or to repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities.

Q&A Who absorbs the cost?

The NRCS will pay 75 percent of the construction costs for EWP measures. Local sources must then provide cash or in-kind services for the remaining 25 percent. Local sponsors are also responsible for any costs associated with land rights acquisition.

10 EASY STEPS TO INITIATE EWP ASSISTANCE WHEN YOU ARE THE SPONSOR

1. Contact your local NRCS office.
2. Apply for EWP assistance as a local sponsor.
3. Allow NRCS to investigate the site.
4. Allow NRCS to determine if the situation qualifies for EWP assistance.
5. Allow NRCS to request funding for the EWP project.
6. Expect notification of funding eligibility.
7. Allow NRCS to coordinate and plan the EWP project.
8. Help secure land right permits.
9. Help implement the EWP work.
10. Provide for maintenance of completed emergency measures.

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"If another city was in the same kind of situation we are, I would highly recommend contacting the Natural Resources Conservation Service. They're a real nice bunch of folks."

Bruce Pyeatt
City Council Member
Fairfax, Missouri

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For more information, contact your local Natural Resource Conservation Service office.
(formerly the Soil Conservation Service)