

# NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service  
375 Jackson Street • Suite 600 St. Paul, MN 55101-1854 • (651) 602-7900  
Web: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov>

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## **Contact:**

[Julie MacSwain](#), State Public Affairs Specialist, (651) 602-7859

## **USDA Special Wetlands Initiative Batching Period Announced in the Red River Basin**

*Landowners should sign-up at their county office.*

ST. PAUL, MN May 23, 2011 - \$10 million will be available to help eligible landowners in three states reduce flooding, restore wetlands and enhance wildlife habitat in the Red River of the North Basin through the USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Since 1993 the Red River Basin has experienced moderate to severe flooding annually, with record flooding over the last three consecutive years.

“This special initiative funding will emphasize WRP’s ability to mitigate flood damage within the basin by retaining higher levels of flood waters within easement acres,” Don Baloun, State Conservationist said. “Projects funded through this initiative will reduce the costs to our rural private landowners who continue to experience severe damages during these flood events.”

Landowners may sign-up for WRP throughout the year, but the sooner they visit the local county NRCS/SWCD office, the better. Applications accepted by June 17, 2011, will be considered during the first batching period. Additional batching periods will be considered if funding remains after the first period.

USDA is providing the funding for this special WRP initiative in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. These additional funds will allow the three states to accept new applications and fund more WRP easements. Restoring wetlands and associated uplands through this initiative will help retain and slow floodwaters in the Red River Basin, while providing valuable wildlife habitat, water quality benefits and reducing damages from severe flooding.

WRP, administered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, is the federal government’s largest private lands wetlands restoration program. It provides voluntary technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Indian tribes to restore, protect and enhance wetlands that have been degraded or converted to agricultural uses. More than 80 percent of the restorable wetlands in the Red River Basin are privately owned.

The Red River Retention Authority and numerous other partners identified a critical need for targeted technical and financial assistance for eligible landowners in the basin. WRP projects funded through this special initiative will result in long-term benefits to taxpayers by reducing funding spent by local and state governments to repair damaged roads, bridges and public areas.

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Reduced damage to cropland and associated agricultural disaster and crop damage payments will also save taxpayers money in the long term.

For more information about WRP, please visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp).

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