

January 2013

Nebraska Fact Sheet:

Wetlands Reserve Program

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) 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 voluntary program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.

Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

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

Wetlands benefit all Nebraskans by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging ground water; protecting biological diversity; and providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

How WRP Works

The program offers five enrollment options:

1. *Permanent Easement.* This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments are usually based on the Nebraska Geographical Area Rate Caps (GARCs), *see Figure 1*. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays up to 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.
2. *30-Year Easement.* Easement payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.

3. *Reserved Grazing-Rights: Permanent or 30-Year Easement.* The easement payment is based off of the standard permanent or 30-year easement value that is then reduced by a predetermined amount for the retained grazing rights. USDA pays up to 100 percent of the restoration cost for permanent easements and up to 75 percent of the restoration cost for 30-year easements.
4. *30-Year Tribal Contract.* Contract payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
5. *Restoration Cost-Share Agreement.* This is a 10 year agreement to restore degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration cost, with an annual payment limit of \$50,000. No easement is placed on the property.

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Landowners and Tribes can file an application at any time at their local USDA Service Center. However, applications must be received prior to an announced ranking cut-off date to be eligible for current funding. Eligible applications received after the cut-off date will be considered for funding at a later date. Landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center for an application.



Eligibility

To offer a conservation easement the landowner must:

- Be eligible to participate in Farm Bill Program;
- Have owned offered conservation easement seven years prior to enrollment *unless at least one of the following apply:*
 - Land was inherited;
 - Landowner exercised the landowner’s right of redemption before a foreclosure, and/or;
 - Landowner can provide adequate assurance that the land was not obtained for purpose of WRP enrollment.

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

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

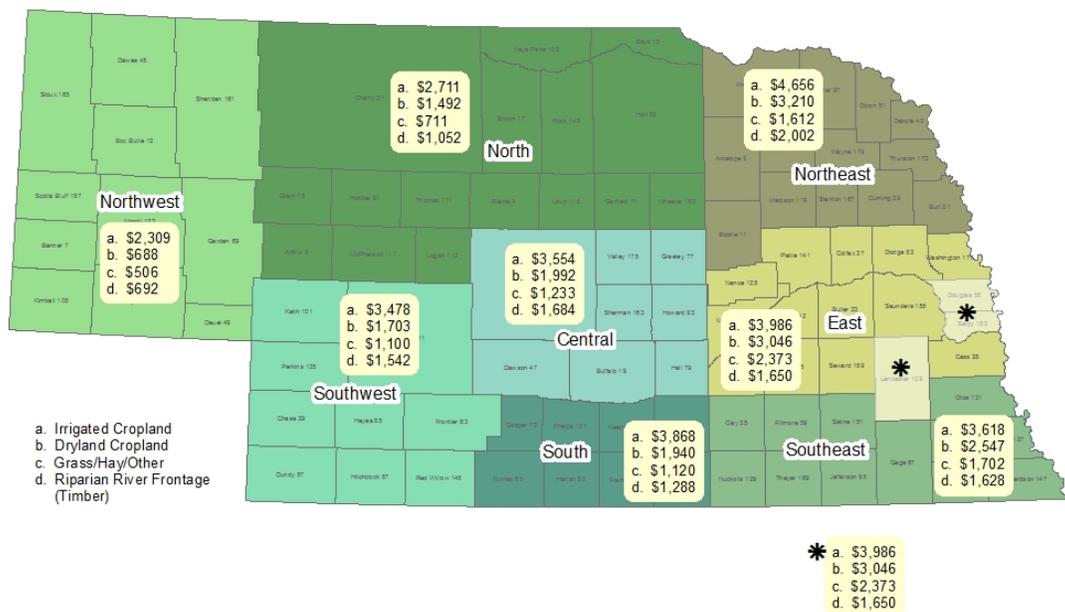
Uses of WRP Land

On acres subject to a WRP 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 such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland. In the case of the Reserved Grazing Rights easement, landowners retain the right to graze the land with an approved grazing plan.

For More Information

For more information about WRP, please contact your local USDA Service Center listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture. Information is also available at: <http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

**Nebraska Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) by land use for FY 2013**



Data Source: Market Analysis, Williams & Associates, September 13, 2012.

S. Bittle 9/2012

Figure 1