

# Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program

## Description

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program was created by Congress to respond to emergencies caused by natural disasters. EWP is designed to help people reduce imminent hazards to life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by heavy rains, drought, earthquakes, windstorms and other natural disasters.

The purpose of EWP is to help communities with a common problem. All projects undertaken must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the State such as a city, county, or a flood control district.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for administering the program, working through local units of government.

## Assistance Available

There are two types of assistance available:

**Urgent and Compelling** – An imminent threat to life and property exists and requires immediate federal action. Work must generally be completed within 10 days of accessing the site in order to protect life and property.

**Emergency** – A situation where the threat to life and property is high enough to constitute an emergency, but the situation is not considered urgent and compelling. Work in this category does not require immediate action, but should be completed as soon as possible (within 220 days from starting work).

NRCS can pay up to 75 percent of emergency measures. The remaining 25 percent comes from local sources and can be in the form of cash, in-kind services, or a combination of both.

## Criteria for Assistance

All EWP work must reduce threats to life and property. Work must be economically, socially, and environmentally defensible and sound from an engineering standpoint. EWP work must yield benefits to more than one person. All work must represent the least expensive environmentally sound alternative. All projects must be related to a sudden watershed impairment and erosion control.



## Eligibility

The project sponsor must be a public agency of a state, county, city government, or a conservation district. Sponsors are responsible for providing land rights to do repair work and for securing all necessary permits. Sponsors are also responsible for furnishing the local cost share and for implementation of work. The work can be done either through local contracts administered by the sponsor, or the sponsor can use their own equipment and personnel. If sponsors do not have capability to do the work by either of these options, work can also be done by Federal Contract.

## Types of Assistance

EWP funds cannot be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster. Nor can they be used to improve the level of protection above that which existed prior to the disaster. EWP cannot fund operation and maintenance work or repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities.

EWP work cannot adversely affect downstream water rights, and EWP funds cannot be used to install measures not essential to the reduction of hazards. In addition, EWP funds cannot be used to perform work on measures installed by another federal agency.

## Applying for Assistance

If your area has suffered severe damage and may qualify under the EWP program, you are encouraged to contact your County Judge or city official to request assistance. City and county governments and flood control districts are the most common sponsors of EWP projects.

The sponsor's application should be in the form of a letter signed by a qualified representative of the sponsoring organization. The letter should include information on the nature, location, and scope of the problem for which assistance is requested.

Information is available from NRCS offices which explain the eligibility requirements for the EWP program. Send applications for assistance to the local NRCS field office or to the NRCS state headquarters in Temple. All applications should be submitted as soon as possible after the event.

For more information on assistance under the EWP program, contact the local USDA NRCS office serving your county. Your USDA Service Center is listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture. Contact information can also be obtained on the NRCS Texas website at: [www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov)

State Headquarters address is:  
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USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
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