

February 2015

ACEP



Overview

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE) provides financial and technical assistance to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of wetland reserve easements

Enrolling Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Tree practices into ACEP-WRE

Lands established to trees under CRP can be eligible for ACEP-WRE when enrollment into WRE would further the purposes of the ACEP-WRE program. Criteria for determining how these lands would further the purpose of the program are enclosed in this factsheet.



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.



Helping People Help the Land

Applicant and Application acres must meet the ACEP-WRE program eligibility requirements

- Applicant must be the landowner and have owned the land for at least 24 months, or obtain a waiver.
- Landowner(s) must have a current AD-1026 on file with the Farm Services Agency (FSA) and meet the Adjusted Gross Income requirements.
- Landowner must be in compliance with the Highly Erodible and wetland compliance provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act.
- Landowner must have legal access to the offered acres.
- Other ACEP-WRE landowner requirements must also be met.

The application area must meet all of the following ACEP-WRE land eligibility criteria:

- Farmed Wetland (FW), Prior Converted (PC), Farmed Wetland Pasture (FWP), wetlands farmed under natural conditions, or lands substantially altered by flooding. This type of land is typically considered tillable, agricultural, hydric soil.
- Riparian areas along streams and other waterways, that link protected wetlands or would become protected wetlands less than 1 mile apart.
- Wetlands restored under a local, state, or federal program.
- Adjacent lands that contribute to the functions and values of the easement.

The established cover must conform to ACEP-WRE restoration requirements including:

- Maximizing wildlife habitat.
- Being comprised of vegetation appropriate for the land and its landscape position.

Program ranking priority will be given to sites where hydrologic restoration can be performed to enhance the wetland functionality of the site.

If the CRP contract is active, upon closing of the ACEP-WRE easement, the CRP contract for the property would be terminated or otherwise modified, subject to such terms and conditions as are mutually agreed upon by FSA and the landowner.

- CRP contracts are terminated the day the ACEP-WRE easement is recorded. Any annual payments under CRP are pro-rated up to the day the ACEP-WRE Warranty Easement Deed is recorded.
- A CRP contract successfully established to trees would be considered as non-cropland when the CRP contract is terminated or expires.

Easement compensation would be the “Wooded” or “Non-Cropland” value of the Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC).

Illinois has established additional criteria that identifies CRP acres that would not be eligible for enrollment into ACEP-WRE:

- Acres planted to trees that are not native to Illinois or are exotic in nature.
- Tree species that are not appropriate for the site or not consistent with establishment of “historic” habitat conditions.
- Tree plantings infested with noxious or invasive weeds (Reed Canary grass, Johnson grass, etc.) that would make future maintenance or management of the easement difficult.

CRP acres that were planted to trees or allowed to naturally regenerate under the following CRP practices are eligible for enrollment into ACEP-WRE as long as previously outlined requirements are met:

- CP-3 Tree Planting (softwoods)
- CP-3A Hardwood Tree Planting
- CP-22 Riparian Forest Buffer (hardwoods)
- CP-31 Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands
- CP-23 and 23A Wetland Restoration

More Information or to Find your local USDA Service Center

For more information, visit your local USDA Service Center or the NRCS Farm Bill website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill.

What's New in ACEP?
The ACEP is a new program that consolidates three former programs -- the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service