

For Immediate Release

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Deadline May 13, 2013

USDA-NRCS IS CONDUCTING STATEWIDE SIGN-UP FOR THE WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

ATHENS, GA, April 12, 2013—James E. Tillman, Sr., State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia announced today that the NRCS is calling for applications from landowners interested in restoring or enhancing wetlands on private agricultural/forested land in Georgia through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The application sign-up period for this year's WRP funding ends May 13, 2013.

Interested private landowners are encouraged to visit their local Georgia NRCS field office as soon as possible to begin the application process.

The WRP provides financial incentives to landowners through purchased conservation easements to protect and restore their land to its natural wetland condition with an emphasis on enhancing wildlife habitats and environmental benefits. Participation in this program is voluntary and restoration is accomplished in an environmentally safe and cost-effective manner. As a result, participants in WRP voluntarily limit future use of their land by entering into a conservation easement with NRCS, but retain private ownership.

The program offers three enrollment options:

1. Permanent Easements: a conservation easement for forever.
2. 30-Year Easement: an easement that expires after 30 years.
3. Restoration Cost-Share Agreement: an agreement to restore or enhance the wetland functions and values without placing an easement on the enrolled acres.

Eligible acres are limited to private and Tribal lands, and easements cannot be placed on land that has changed ownership within the last seven years. Easement values are based upon a Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) which is valued each year by an independent contractor who performs a market analysis to estimate values of lands that typically enroll in WRP. NRCS publishes the GARC rates after approval.

NRCS is USDA's lead conservation agency and has worked hand-in-hand with farmers and landowners for 78 years to conserve natural resources on private lands.

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Helping People Help the Land

Georgia landowners can learn more about conserving natural resources by contacting NRCS Georgia through USDA Service Centers or by visiting the NRCS Georgia homepage at www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov.

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