



Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program's

Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)

Financial assistance available for purchasing easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land.



The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. Those partners will assist farmers to permanently protect their agricultural land. Partners may also protect grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including pastureland and shrubland.



BENEFITS

Agricultural Land Easements protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Land protected by agricultural land easements provides additional public benefits, including environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

Eligible partners include entities with a farmland and grassland mission, including state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and Indian tribes that have farmland or grassland protection programs.

ELIGIBLE LAND

Land eligible for agricultural easements includes cropland, grassland, pastureland and nonindustrial private forest land.

NRCS will prioritize applications that protect agricultural uses and related conservation values of the land and those that maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use. Each easement is required to have an agricultural land easement plan that promotes the long-term viability of the land. Individual landowners can not apply directly to NRCS for ALE.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

To enroll land through agricultural land easements, NRCS enters into cooperative agreements with eligible partners.

NRCS OVERVIEW

Private citizens own 60 percent of the land in the United States, making stewardship absolutely critical to the health of our Nation's environment. Farmers and forest landowners are making daily decisions about natural resource use and management that impact soil and water quality. With the Natural Resources Conservation Service's help, many are creating more productive lands while maintaining healthy ecosystems.

NRCS CONTRIBUTIONS

Under the Agricultural Land component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

HOW TO APPLY

Eligible partners may submit proposals to NRCS to acquire conservation easements on eligible land. Landowners may apply at any time by contacting their local District Conservationist: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/il/contact/local/>

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about ALE visit the National NRCS ACEP website at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695>

NRCS CONTACT INFORMATION

- Local District Conservationists: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/il/contact/>
- Paula Hingson, Illinois Easement Program Specialist, paula.hingson@usda.gov