



## Natural Resources Conservation Service

# The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program's Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

*Financial assistance available to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of wetland reserve easements.*



The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component (WRE), NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

### OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and Indian tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement. For acreage owned by an Indian tribe, there is an additional enrollment option of a 30-year contract.

### BENEFITS

Wetland Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.

### ELIGIBLE LAND

Land eligible for wetland reserve easements includes farmed or prior converted wetland that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. NRCS will prioritize applications based the easement's potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

To enroll land through wetland reserve easements, NRCS enters into purchase agreements with eligible private landowners or Indian tribes that include the right for NRCS to develop and implement a wetland reserve restoration easement plan. This plan restores, protects, and enhances the wetland's functions and values. It is the landowner's responsibility to prove clear title.

Through the wetland reserve enrollment options, NRCS may enroll eligible land through:

- **Permanent Easements** are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and 100 percent of the restoration costs.
- **30-Year Easements** expire after 30 years. Under 30-year easements, NRCS pays 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **Easement values** are based on annually-approved **Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARCs)** on a per acre basis.

### NRCS CONTRIBUTIONS

For wetland reserve easements, NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.

### HOW TO APPLY

Eligible 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 WRE, visit the National NRCS ACEP website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695)

### 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 CONTACT INFORMATION

- Local District Conservationists: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/il/contact/local/>
- Paula Hingson, Illinois Easement Program Specialist, [paula.hingson@usda.gov](mailto:paula.hingson@usda.gov)