

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND FLOOD PREVENTION OPERATIONS PROGRAM

Overview

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program includes the Flood Prevention Operations Program (Watershed Operations) authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534) and the provisions of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83- 566). It provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the States and their political subdivisions to address resource concerns due to erosion, floodwater, and sediment and provide for improved utilization of the land and water resources.

The WFPO Program provides technical and financial assistance to States, local governments and Tribes to plan and implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of:

- Flood Prevention
- Watershed Protection
- Public Recreation
- Public Fish and Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Management
- Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- Water Quality Management

What is a Watershed

Watersheds are the area of land drained by a particular surface stream system that outlets at a common point. NRCS P.L. 83-566 Watershed projects are developed for watersheds usually 250,000 acres or smaller.

Local Leadership

Watershed projects are planned and carried out jointly by local, state, and federal agencies with support of community landowners and citizens in the watersheds. Communities identify resource problems to be addressed, practices to be installed, and carry out major portions of a watershed plan, such as obtaining easements, rights-of-way, permits and local cost-share funding.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to local project sponsors. Federal assistance is available for engineering and construction costs of flood control measures, conservation practices for water quality and erosion and sediment control, and for agricultural or municipal/industrial water supplies and recreation facilities. Entities of state and local government or a tribe may apply for USDA assistance. Application details are available from NRCS offices or on the NRCS Alaska website at www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov.



Kwigillingok, Alaska, 2017. Photo courtesy Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Conservation Measures

A project can consist of a combination of structures such as flood control dams or levees and conservation practices like terraces, grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures, animal waste facilities or aquatic species crossings.

Water Management

Management of both agriculture and non-agricultural water supplies can be a significant component of watershed projects.

Measures to increase or conserve present and future water supplies in rural areas, improve water quality impacted by pollutants, and recharge ground water can be part of a watershed plan.

Management for nonagricultural uses such as municipal and industrial uses, recreational uses and improved fish and wildlife habitat are other opportunities in watershed projects.

Watershed Operations Program Cost Share

Watershed Operations Program Federal Cost-Sharing by Purpose	Engineering / Technical Assistance	Installation / Construction	Real Property Rights
Flood Prevention (Flood Damage Reduction)	100%	100%	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure elevation, relocation, flood proofing 			
Watershed Protection	100%	Variable	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood Control Erosion and Sedimentation Reduction Water Quality Water Conservation Wildlife Habitat Woodland Energy Recreation Resources 			
Public Recreation	100%	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation Minimum Basic Facilities 			
Public Fish and Wildlife	100%	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
Agricultural Water Management	Up to 100%	Up to 75%	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural Water Supply Structure Water Conservation Water Quality Rural Water Supply 			
Municipal and Industrial Water Supply	0	Not to exceed 50%	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reservoir Structure 			
Water Quality Management	Up to 100%	To be determined	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reservoir Structure 			

Source: National Watershed Program Manual, 500.3 – Eligible Purposes and Figure 500-E2

Federal Cost-Sharing Percentage Provisions for Conservation Easements and Mitigation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Losses	Engineering	Engineering / Technical Assistance
Conservation Easements Wetland or Floodplain	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
Mitigation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Losses	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%

Source: National Watershed Program Manual, Figure 500-E1
The above provisions apply to acquisition of real property rights by purchase or easements

Project Benefits

The WFPO program requires that at least 20% of the project benefits be directly attributable to agriculture including rural communities.

Four phases of WFPO projects:

#1 - Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility Report (PIFR)

Estimated Timeframe: 6 – 12 months.

The purpose of the PIFR is to conduct basic research and investigations to ensure likelihood of project viability prior to expending financial resources and staff time to move forward.

#2 - Watershed Plan Development

Estimated Timeframe: 12 – 24 months.

The watershed plan is a comprehensive plan addressing potential environmental impacts, costs, benefits, planned conservation activities, and the responsibilities of involved parties including an evaluation and analysis of project alternatives with a recommended alternative. The watershed plan includes development of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as mandated in the National Environmental Policy Act. The watershed planning process includes opportunities for the public to review draft plans and provide public comments and input through designated public comment periods.

#3 - Project Design

Estimated Timeframe: 12 – 24 months.

The design phase includes the technical and engineering design and layout of the project based on the alternative selected in the watershed plan.

#4 - Project Construction

Estimated Timeline: 12 – 24 months

Crews and machinery are deployed on the ground and construction activities occur meeting the necessary project design specifications.

More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For more information about the watershed operations program or to find your local USDA Service Center, visit www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov.

Waitlist for WFPO Requests

NRCS Alaska anticipates enormous interest in the WFPO program, as it can be used to assist rural villages with managed retreat and/or village relocation efforts which are some of the most pressing needs in many threatened communities across Alaska.

NRCS Alaska is hoping to deliver watershed projects as quickly as possible recognizing the timely need in many communities, but also recognizing project complexity and challenges can take time.

As we continue to receive more requests for assistance, there will unavoidably be a backlog of requests that will be delegated to a waiting list for future action based on NRCS staffing capacity and funding availability.

NRCS Alaska is hiring additional staff to address the massive influx of workload needed to successfully implement the WFPO program.

Requests for Assistance

NRCS encourages local sponsors to submit requests for funding through their local NRCS Watershed Program Manager.

Contact:

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