

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

Agricultural Land Easements



Protecting and Enhancing Our Natural Resources

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers easement programs to landowners who want to maintain or enhance their land in a way beneficial to agriculture and the environment. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands, wetlands, and their related benefits.

Agricultural Land Easements

NRCS provides cost-share assistance to eligible partners (cooperating entity) for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and shrubland.

NRCS may contribute up to 50% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement to the cooperating entity. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. The cooperating entity acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Eligible partners include Indian tribes, state and local government and non-governmental organizations, such as Land Trusts.

Landowner Eligibility

All persons listed on the ownership deed must be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions. They must also meet adjusted gross income limitations of the Food Security Act of 1985.

Land Eligibility

To be eligible for ALE, land must meet each of the following criteria:

- private or tribal agricultural land on a farm or ranch;
- pending easement offer from eligible entity;
- land type is either prime, unique or productive soil; contains historical or archaeological resources; protects grazing uses and conservation values; will further a state or local preservation policy;
- land use is either cropland; rangeland; grassland, forbs or shrubland used for grazing; area historically dominated by grasslands, forbs or shrubland; pastureland; non industrial private forest with economic viability or buffer to protect such land from development;
- in an area that has access to agricultural markets for its products and support services; and
- faces development pressures from nonagricultural use.

NRCS will prioritize ALE 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.

How to Apply

Landowners may apply by contacting the eligible partner where the land is located.

A list of eligible partners in Wisconsin can be found at: www.gatheringwaters.org.

ALE eligible partners may submit proposals directly to the WI State Office. For more information visit www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov.



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