



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE OHIO

Wetland Reserve Easement and Wetland Reserve Program Landowner Newsletter

June 2023

A MESSAGE FROM ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

As we move from spring to summer, I hope you are able to get out and enjoy your United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Wetland Easement and the wildlife they support. The reawakening after the winter is an amazing time on our easements as the vegetation greens up and the wildlife returns. The legacy created by landowners such as yourselves makes a difference in the future of Ohio by returning wetlands to the landscape. These wetlands serve as a valuable resource for wildlife conservation, water quality and flood mitigation. Without your continued dedication to protecting wetlands these habitats would continue to decline.

My staff and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your stewardship of these easements and offer that we are here to assist you with any question or concerns you may have about your easement property. We can help with issues such as getting copies of your easement deed, helping you with management of the habitat or the paperwork for a compatible use authorization. Easements are a long-term commitment by both the landowner and the government, it is our goal to ensure that these easements fulfill the program's mission of providing high quality wildlife habitat for future generations.

Please reach out to myself or my staff with questions.

Barbara

Monitoring 2023

As summer approaches, the easement staff begins monitoring season.

What is monitoring, you ask?

Monitoring is when an NRCS employee or partner visits a site, walks the easement property, and takes note of the easement condition. Monitoring ensures that the goals of the easement are being met. It provides a tracking mechanism for repair needs, invasive species and structure management.

All WRE/WRP easements are monitored at a minimum every 5-years on a rolling basis. Monitors will try to contact the landowner before the site visit. Please be aware that the easement deed allows our staff access for monitoring.



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Ohio Success Story

Kenzie Weisenburger, age 6, is helping her grandparents, Ron and Vickie Weisenburger oversee an important project to convert their old farmland in Putnam County into a wetland, prairie, and wooded area. By utilizing the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [Wetland Reserve Easement \(WRE\)](#) program, they are hoping to enhance the land and provide critical habitat for deer, waterfowl, salamanders and other species that rely on wetland habitat.



“Enrolling my land into the program made economic and environmental sense to me,” Ron said. “My family loves to hunt, and by restoring wetlands, I’m creating wildlife corridors and a place for them to enjoy.”

He’s already enrolled approximately 80 acres in the WRE program, working with NRCS staff to restore the site. Kenzie has been on the front lines with her grandfather, working to ensure that the newly planted native tree saplings and shrubs stay healthy.

“We’ll go out to the site and Kenzie and my other grandkids will get two-gallon buckets to help water the tree saplings,” Ron said. “It’s important to me that my grandkids remember that they helped improve our land, that it was a family effort.”

The family’s hard work is starting to pay off. There are tadpoles in the wetland pools, which Kenzie likes to catch. Ron mentioned that this spring, white-tailed deer and fawns visited the site frequently.

Maintenance Needed!

Are you battling **invasive species**? Does your **water control structure** need some maintenance?

We can help create a plan to address issue on your easement and may be able to provide funding to assist with the work. Keep in mind all work must be within your current easement boundary. If you know of issues that need attention, please submit your name, county of your easement, and any pertinent details to:

easementprogram@usda.gov

We hope to hear from you soon!



Ask About My Wetland

It is our hope to move toward paperless communication to do so, please submit your requests, correspondence, or concerns addressed to:
easementprogram@usda.gov

Avoid the Violation!

Ohio Easement Staff

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Easement stewardship comes in many forms including invasive species/noxious weed control, maintaining proper function of water control structures, and ensuring the functions and values of the easement and the associated habitat are adequately maintained. However, stewardship and maintenance of USDA-NRCS held easements must be a collaborative effort between NRCS and the landowner while keeping in mind the restrictions set forth in the easement deed, specifically in *Part III. Obligations of the Landowner* that outlines prohibited activities within the easement without prior approval from NRCS. However, the list of prohibitions in the easement deed does not mean you can't ever perform any management or maintenance on the property. It simply requires written approval from NRCS prior to implementing practices.

The process of submitting a request to perform management activities is done through a Compatible Use Authorization (CUA) request completed by the landowner, with assistance from the Wetland Team Leader or other NRCS staff. If the request is approved by the State Conservationist, the landowner is then given written authorization to complete the approved activities within the scope of the timing, frequency, intensity, and location prescribed in the CUA approval letter. Activities that may be authorized through a CUA include, but are not limited to, walking trails, food plots, grassland management via mowing or burning, invasive/noxious weed control, and semi-permanent hunting blinds. If you would like to submit a CUA request, to contact the Ohio NRCS State Office at (614)255-2472 or via email at easementprogram@usda.gov. Once we receive your inquiry, we will assist you in completing the CUA request form and creating a solution that meets your goals as well as the goals of the easement program.

We look forward to working with you to maintain and enhance the values of your WRP/WRE easement that can provide wildlife benefits and enjoyment for generations to come.

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