

Belfield Drive Floodplain Restoration Project

Johnston, Rhode Island

Overview

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rhode Island received funding for the purchase of floodplain easements on property affected by recurring flooding on Belfield Drive in Johnston.

The federal funding was requested through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. EWP authorizes NRCS to purchase permanent easements on eligible lands and restore the floodplain functions in the easement area to their natural conditions. Participation is voluntary.

NRCS entered into an agreement with the Rhode Island Association of Conservation Districts (RIACD), which accepted the application from an eligible landowner, secured appraisals and acquired the land to be restored.

Why was this project necessary?

Belfield Drive terminates in a cul-de-sac and, therefore, residents have only one means of egress. The roadway experienced recurrent flooding from the Pocasset River that made the road impassible.

What was done?

Restoration included both structural and non-structural measures to bring back floodplain functions such as water storage and flow, control erosion, and establish native vegetation.

Major elements of the project included raising the roadway at Belfield Drive to allow for safe access along the public right-of-way during flood events and demolition of a single-family residence that experienced recurrent flooding. These elements were designed to lessen flood conditions in the future.



Belfield Drive experienced recurrent flooding from the Pocasset River that made the road impassible.



The roadway was raised to allow for safe access during flood events.



A box culvert was installed to allow storm water to flow under the road and back to the Pocasset River.



Native vegetation was planted to control soil erosion.



About the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

The EWP program allows communities to quickly address serious and long-lasting damages to infrastructure and to the land resulting from natural disasters.

EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state government officials for program assistance to begin. The NRCS State Conservationist can declare a local watershed emergency and initiate EWP assistance in cooperation with an eligible sponsor.

Funded projects must demonstrate they reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally and socially sound; and must be designed to acceptable engineering standards, if applicable.

The floodplain easement component of EWP helps restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of floodplains while conserving their natural values such as serving as fish and wildlife habitat, improving water quality, retaining flood water, and recharging groundwater. Structures, including buildings, within the floodplain easement must be removed or relocated outside the affected floodplain.

Rhode Island

**Natural
 Resources
 Conservation
 Service**

ri.nrcs.usda.gov

