

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
**Maine**



967 Illinois Avenue, Suite #3  
Bangor, ME 04401  
[www.me.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov)  
[www.twitter.com/NRCSMaine](https://www.twitter.com/NRCSMaine)

Contact:  
Thomas Kielbasa: (207) 990-9569  
[thomas.kielbasa@me.usda.gov](mailto:thomas.kielbasa@me.usda.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Feb. 17 application deadline approaching for USDA funding**

*Private landowners and eligible entities encouraged to apply for funding to  
protect and restore agricultural working lands and wetlands*

**BANGOR, Maine (Jan. 13, 2017)** – Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available \$500 million in financial and technical assistance through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Conservation easements are an important tool to help landowners and partners voluntarily provide long-term protection of our nation's farmland, rangeland, wetlands and grasslands for future generations.

**While applications for ACEP funding may be submitted at any time through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), applications for the current funding round must be submitted on or before Feb. 17, 2017.**

"Our agricultural and wetland resources are vital parts of Maine communities, and ACEP funds help private Maine landowners protect those resources," NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez said. "In the past NRCS has helped protect thousands of acres of agriculture soils which will remain available for farming forever. With this 2017 funding we are looking to accomplish even more for Maine."

ACEP's agricultural land easements not only protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses, but they also support environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat, and protection of open space. State and local

governments, and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs, are eligible to partner with NRCS to purchase conservation easements.

Wetland reserve easements allow landowners to successfully restore degraded wetlands, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife, reduce impacts from flooding, recharge groundwater, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private and tribal landowners to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of these easements. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS conservation programs, visit [Get Started with NRCS](#) or visit your local [USDA Service Center](#) conveniently located throughout Maine.

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