



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Kentucky Fact Sheet

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EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM in KENTUCKY

What is the Emergency Watershed Protection Program?

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program was authorized by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and wildfires. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides technical and financial assistance to preserve life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Each EWP project requires a local sponsor who applies for the assistance. A sponsor can be any legal subdivision of State or local government, including local officials of city, county, or State governments, soil conservation districts, U.S. Forest Service, and watershed authorities. Sponsors are needed to provide legal authority to do repair work, obtain necessary permits, contribute funds or in-kind services, and maintain the completed emergency measures.

What Financial Assistance is Available?

NRCS can request Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program funding to assist local sponsors with eligible emergency needs in a timely manner. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction costs of authorized emergency measures installed. The remaining 25 percent of costs come from the sponsors. All EWP work must reduce threats to life and property plus be economically and environmentally defensible. The work must be of benefit to more than one person, sound from an engineering standpoint, and be the least-cost alternative.

What Kind of Work Can Be Done?

NRCS assistance under EWP is limited to the removal of debris (broken, hanging and undercut trees) or impending debris along streams, creeks, or bridges that pose a threat to life or property. Assistance can also be provided for severe erosion along stream banks that poses an immediate danger to houses, non-federal roads and other infrastructure. Examples include debris piles upstream of bridges, fallen trees impeding the flow of water and/or causing flooding or erosion, and bank erosion that threatens homes, local roads and bridges, etc. Assistance is also available to stabilize landslides that threaten life or property.

What Does A Sponsor Have to Do?

Sponsors are responsible for providing land rights to do the repair work and acquiring any needed permits. Sponsors are also responsible for furnishing the local cost share and for facilitating the installation of work. EWP project work must be conducted under an agreement with NRCS and under very specific timeframes. For example, projects conducted under exigent situations must be completed within 10 days from the time the site is accessible and funding is approved.

What Can't EWP Do?

EWP funds cannot be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster or to improve the level of protection above that which existed prior to the disaster. Funds can not be used for operation and maintenance work or to repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities. EWP projects cannot adversely affect downstream water rights, and EWP funds cannot be used to install measures not essential to the reduction of hazards. Lastly, EWP funds cannot be used to perform work on measures installed by another federal agency or completed by the applicant before a contract agreement is executed.

How Do I Get Assistance?

If your area has suffered damage from a storm event, you may qualify for assistance under the EWP Program. Interested parties are encouraged to contact your local soil and water conservation district or local NRCS office. The sponsor's application should be in the form of a letter signed by an official of the sponsoring organization. The letter must include the nature, location and scope of the problem for which assistance is requested. Assistance in applying for EWP is available from your local NRCS office. USDA Service center addresses, phone numbers, and facsimile numbers can be obtained at: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>. Letters from sponsors requesting EWP assistance and containing the information listed above should be faxed to the USDA NRCS State Office or the NRCS Service Center in your county for immediate consideration.

For more information on the EWP program, please contact your local NRCS district conservationist or Keith Reed, NRCS EWP Program Manager, (859)-224-7383.

NOTE: If an NRCS field office is not operational due to lack of power, you may forward your request through the Kentucky Emergency Management office (to find your local office go to <https://kyem.ky.gov/>), requesting "EWP" assistance or directly to the NRCS state office in Lexington.