



Natural Resources Conservation Service

675 U.S. Courthouse

801 Broadway

Nashville, TN 37205

Contact: Katherine K. Burse, 615-277-2533

Web: <http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov>

NEWS RELEASE

Tennessee NRCS Announces FY 2020 Application Deadline for Eligible Agricultural Entities and Individual Landowners to Apply for ACEP

Deadline to apply is March 25, 2020

NASHVILLE, February 25, 2020 – The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced an application deadline for Tennessee eligible entities to apply for fiscal year 2020 funding for the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP). The deadline to apply is **Wednesday, March 25, 2020**. Tennessee will accept applications for ACEP on a continuous basis, but deadlines must be set to evaluate the applications.

“NRCS may establish additional application cutoff dates based on funding and interest in the ACEP program and, if an additional funding period is approved, a 30-day-minimum application period will be announced,” said Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, Tennessee NRCS.

Applications for the ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) will only be accepted from eligible entities, not individual landowners. Eligible entities include State or local units of government, Indian Tribes or nongovernmental organizations, such as a conservancy or a land trust. ALE is only available as a perpetual easement.

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, they also allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities.

“Tennessee is committed to preserving working agricultural lands to help protect the long-term viability of farming across the landscape as well as to restoring and protecting vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality,” said Hightower.

Qualified individual landowners may also apply for the ACEP – Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) Program. ***Only qualified landowners with a complete application package will be considered for land eligibility determination.***

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WRE can be enrolled as 30-year or perpetual, based on the landowner(s) desired management of the offered property. 30-year easements are valued at 25 percent less than perpetual easements and landowners are responsible for 25 percent of restoration costs whereas perpetual easements are eligible for a 100 percent restoration cost-share. Alternatively, landowners have the option to offer their property at a reduced purchase and/or restoration cost to improve application ranking.

Applications received after the designated cutoff date of **Wednesday, March 25th** will be considered in the next program year or in subsequent application periods. If a landowner is applying for ACEP-WRE on multiple parcels of land, any non-contiguous parcels must be submitted as separate applications. Contiguous multiple parcels may be submitted as one application, provided the ownership is identical for each parcel.

ACEP was re-authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill and authorizes assistance to qualified partners who pursue 'buy-protect-sell' transactions under ACEP-ALE. It also requires a conservation plan for highly erodible land that will be protected by an agricultural land easement and increases flexibility for partners to meet cost-share matching requirements.

Through ACEP-ALE, NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing agricultural easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers keep their land in agriculture.

ACEP-WRE allows landowners to successfully restore, enhance, and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities.

Entities and landowners interested in applying for ACEP-ALE or WRE funding should visit with their [local NRCS Service Center](#).

For more information about the ACEP program, contact Jamie Carpenter, jamie.carpenter@usda.gov, (615) 277-2576 or visit the [Tennessee NRCS website](#).

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“Voluntary Conservation Works!”