Emergency Watershed Protection Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is not necessary for a national emergency to be declared for an area to be eligible for assistance.

Type of Work Authorized

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard lives and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- debris-clogged stream channels,
- undermined and unstable streambanks,
- jeopardized water control structures and public infrastructures,
- wind-borne debris removal, and
- damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

The program can include purchasing floodplain easements. These easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions and values of the floodplain, including associated wetlands and riparian areas. They also conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge, as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the results of erosion.

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. NRCS completes a Damage Survey Report which provides a case-by-case investigation of the work necessary to repair or protect a site. NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats. Should sponsors want to increase the level of protection, the sponsor will be responsible for paying 100 percent of the costs of the upgrade and additional work.

Eligibility

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but must be represented by a project sponsor.

Sponsors include legal subdivisions of the State, such as a city, county, general improvement district, conservation district, or any Native American tribe or tribal organization as defined in section 4 of the Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Sponsor’s Obligations

Sponsors are responsible for:

- providing land rights to do repair work,
- securing the necessary permits,
- furnishing the local cost share,
- accomplishing the installation of work, and
- performing any necessary operation and maintenance.
Your local USDA Service Centers are:

Addison County: (802) 388-6748
Bennington County: (802) 775-8034
Caledonia County: (802) 748-2641
Chittenden County: (802) 288-8155
Essex County: (802) 748-2641
Franklin County: (802) 527-1296
Grand Isle County: (802) 527-1296
Lamoille County: (802) 888-4935
Orange County: (802) 334-6090
Orleans County: (802) 334-6090
Rutland County: (802) 775-8034
Washington County: (802) 828-4493
Windham County: (802) 254-9766
Windsor County: (802) 295-7942

Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information or:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp

Criteria for Assistance

All EWP work must reduce threat to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; and be sound from a technical standpoint.

How Do I Get Assistance?

If your property has suffered severe damage that may qualify for the EWP Program, you should contact your local authorities and request assistance. City, town and county governments, flood and water control districts, and soil and water conservation districts are the most common sponsors of EWP projects. More information is available from NRCS offices throughout the United States and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands areas.

NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data).

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