

Emergency Watershed Protection Program



Implementing emergency recovery measures to relieve imminent hazards to life or property created by a natural disaster.

Disaster Assistance
Programs and services available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) 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.



The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters. All projects undertaken, except for the purchase of floodplain easements, must have a project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. Funding for the program is provided through congressional appropriations.

Type of Work Authorized

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life 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 waterways,
- unstable streambanks,
- severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure
- 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 site-by-site investigation of the work necessary to repair or protect a site and protect life and property. 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 implement repair work,
- securing all necessary permits,
- furnishing the local cost share,
- accomplishing the installation of work, and
- performing any necessary operation and maintenance.

Criteria for Assistance

All EWP work must reduce threat to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; and be technically sound.



Stabilized streambank along main access road in Charleston, Mississippi.

Due to extreme rainfall on December 28, 2019, Tillatoba Creek in the Town of Charleston, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, had extensive flood flows which caused bank sloughing that endangered the main access road to the local hospital and other associated infrastructure.

After EWP repairs, the road shoulder was restored and the streambank stabilized to prevent further sloughing and danger to the traveling public on the hospital road.

How Do I Obtain Assistance?

If your land has suffered severe damage that may qualify for the EWP Program, you should contact your local authorities and request assistance. City, county, state and 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.

Contact Information

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