



**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

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# NEWS RELEASE

## **USDA Seeks New Partnerships to Safeguard, Restore Wetland Ecosystems**

**NASHVILLE, October 6, 2020** – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced up to \$30 million is available in technical and financial assistance through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP) to help conservation partners protect and restore critical wetlands on agricultural lands. Restored wetlands help improve water quality downstream, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce impacts from flooding, and provide recreational benefits.

*“This partnership enhances the locally driven process to better address critical wetland functions that progress beyond localities,”* said Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, Tennessee Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). *“WREP works with other NRCS landscape-level conservation efforts to coordinate the delivery of conservation assistance to producers in targeted areas that yield the most impacts for accelerated benefits nationally and regionally. Continuing to leverage these partnerships helps us continue the important work with producers to help recover the health of wetland ecosystems on working lands.”*

Eligible conservation partners in Tennessee will work through WREP to voluntarily execute high priority wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement activities on eligible agriculture lands. WREP enables effective integration of wetland restoration on working agricultural landscapes, providing meaningful benefits to farmers and ranchers who enroll in the program and to the communities where the wetlands exist.

NRCS will review partners’ project proposals and evaluate priority resource concerns, objectives, costs, and expected outcomes for each project and rank proposals based on criteria set forth in the requirements listed on each state’s NRCS website.

Proposals should be emailed to Jamie Carpenter, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at [jamie.carpenter@usda.gov](mailto:jamie.carpenter@usda.gov) by **November 30, 2020**.

### **About the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership**

Funding will be provided through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP), which is part of the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), a Farm Bill conservation program. Through WREP, states, local units of governments, non-

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governmental organizations, and American Indian tribes collaborate with NRCS through cooperative and partnership agreements. These partners work with tribal and private landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their properties.

WREP partners are required to contribute a financial or technical assistance fund match.

Wetland Reserve Easements enable landowners to successfully reduce impacts from flooding, recharge groundwater, enhance and protect wildlife habitat, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Healthy wetlands, including those protected and restored through WREP, contribute to USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture in half by 2050. Earlier this year, Secretary Perdue announced the department-wide initiative to align resources, programs, and research to position American agriculture to better meet future global demands.

Partners benefit from WREP by targeting outreach and enrollment priorities supported by NRCS, including places impacted by natural disasters. Easements enable landowners to adopt a variety of conservation practices that improve the function and condition of wetlands.

Partners looking to learn more about opportunities for WREP funding for fiscal year 2021 are encouraged to attend the **WREP workshop on October 22, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.**

Visit the [WREP webpage](#) for more information on the workshop or this program opportunity.

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