What is a WRE Easement?

- NRCS WRE easements permanently protect the land by purchasing surface rights from the landowner with a one-time payment for the easement. The easement is legally binding and stays with the land forever.

- After the easement is in place, NRCS owns all surface rights to the land. The surface of the land is permanently protected and becomes wetland wildlife habitat. Mowing, digging, cutting, cropping, harvesting trees, or any other activity that disturbs the surface is strictly prohibited.

- After NRCS purchases the easement, landowners retain ownership to the land and continue to pay property tax. Landowners also retain the right to quiet enjoyment and personal recreational activities that do not disturb the wildlife habitat. This includes personal hunting, rustic camping, fishing, and other non-surface disturbing activities.

What is the WRE Restoration?

- Every WRE easement must include a restoration project that converts the land and soils from agricultural use back into a wetland with wildlife habitat.

- Common WRE restoration project practices include:
  - Hydric soils restoration and creation of seasonal, shallow potholes or impoundments with water less than 18” deep. Water held in these areas fluctuates throughout the year and may become very wet or very dry depending on the season,
  - Native tree and grass plantings; and
  - Treatments to reduce or remove noxious and invasive herbaceous weed species and/or woody brush species.

- It is not unusual to see wildlife returning to the site shortly after restoration has been completed.

- As part of the easement, landowners are required to maintain the easement and restoration project. Landowners are also responsible for controlling noxious weeds within the easement.

The Wetlands Reserve Easement Program (WRE) is a voluntary program that takes marginal, wet soils out of agricultural use and returns them to their natural state as wetlands and wetland wildlife habitat, which is then protected forever with a permanent easement.

WRE sites attract wildlife and provide quality wildlife habitat in areas where access to good habitat is limited. If you enjoy nature and wildlife, and want to preserve your land for the future, the WRE program may be for you!

"Helping people help the land"

Natural Resources Conservation Service

If interested in applying for the WRE program, contact your local NRCS Service Center for more information.

The directory of NRCS service centers in Pennsylvania can be found at: http://offices.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.
Is my land eligible?

- Eligible land has recent crop or grazing activity with wet soils that can be converted/restored back into a wetland.
- The wet soils were cleared or drained for agricultural production before 1985.
- The wet soils can be restored to a wetland with minimal construction, and habitat improvement can be gained by installing tree and grass plantings.
- The land is not already in an easement.
- The land is not an already existing, functioning wetland.

Am I eligible?

- Land must have been owned for at least two years.
- The landowner must provide clear title and access to the land. This includes:
  - Obtaining subordinations for mortgages or oil/gas leases
  - Ensuring no liens or judgments exist against the property
  - Ensuring property taxes are paid and up to date
  - Providing legal and physical access to a public road
- Each landowner on the property deed must obtain Farm Service Agency paperwork for:
  - Adjusted Gross Income
  - HEL and Wetland Compliance

Before Restoration:

- Marginal Cropland
- Marginal Pasture
- Drainage ditches
- Drainage tile
- Moist soils

After Restoration:

- Shallow Water
- Hydric Soils and Natural Vegetation
- Habitat for Wildlife