



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: Agricultural Land Easement Component Easement Management Plans

What is an Easement Management Plan and why is one required?

For conservation easements enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE) component there is a requirement under Section 1265B(4)(C) of the 2014 Farm Bill requiring each easement enrolled in the program to have an Easement Management Plan developed prior to easement closing. An Easement Management Plan is an overarching plan that serves as a roadmap to guide and inform easement holders on management and conservation activities that promote the long-term viability of the land covered by the easement.

What can landowners expect over the next several months?

Landowners interested in enrolling, or that have already enrolled land in the ACEP-ALE program, can expect a visit from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff. During these visits NRCS staff will complete a resource inventory and collect landscape level data. These data will assist the landowner and NRCS in the development of an Easement Management Plan for the land enrolled in the ACEP-ALE program.

What will be included in an Agricultural Easement Plan?

Easement Management Plans will outline activities and practices that promote the long-term viability of the land through which it was enrolled under the ACEP-ALE program. Typically ACEP-ALE conservation easements in Vermont are enrolled because they contain prime and/or statewide significant soils. Because of the scarcity of these soils in Vermont, NRCS has an interest in helping easement holders ensure their long-term viability for future generations. In the Easement Management Plan NRCS will identify conservation and management practices to protect these soil resources. The plan, at a minimum, will include:

- A description of activities that promote long-term viability of the land; including the identification of conservation practices which will provide for the long-term sustainability of the soil resource while maintaining soil loss at or below tolerable levels (T).
- A description of activities that will assist participants in staying in compliance with current Vermont State Law and provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985.
- A schedule of implementation for those practices. Implementation of practices needed to meet tolerable soil loss levels (T) must be completed within 10 years of closing on the easement.

What is the performance period of an Easement Management Plan?

NRCS recognizes that an ACEP-ALE easement is in perpetuity, therefore a plan developed at the time of closing may not be applicable 30 years down the road. Landowners are encouraged to take ownership of their Easement Management Plan and to update them within one year of a change in management style or landownership. As such, Easement Management Plans are considered "living documents". Under current NRCS Policy landowners can expect an on-site visit from NRCS staff at least once every five years to ensure compliance with the Easement Management Plan and activities described within.

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