

Overview

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides technical and financial assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and grasslands and restore wetlands impacted by agricultural activities.

Through agricultural land easements, NRCS works with eligible entities, such as land trusts, tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations, to voluntarily protect working agricultural lands and limit conversion of these lands to non-agricultural uses.

Through wetlands reserve easements, NRCS works directly with eligible landowners to help restore, protect and enhance wetlands that have been impacted by agricultural usage.

ACEP

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.

Benefits

Agricultural land easements protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. Lands protected by agricultural easements may provide additional public benefits including environmental quality, wildlife habitats and protection of open spaces.

Wetland reserve easements help protect and restore wetlands impacted by agriculture. These easements reestablish habitats for fish and wildlife, improve water quality, reduce impacts of flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity, and may provide opportunities for limited educational and scientific activities.



Agricultural Land Easements

NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible partners to purchase agricultural land easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible lands.

Eligible partners may include land trusts, tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that have farm and rangeland protection programs and the capacity to monitor and enforce easements.

NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement, and the eligible entity certifies cash matching funds at the time of application. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the easement.

Lands eligible for agricultural land easements are cropland, grassland, rangeland, pastureland, and limited acreage as non-industrial private forestland that economically contributes to farm operations and primarily consists of native tree species.

Each easement requires an agricultural land easement plan that promotes the long-term viability of the land and provides for farm or ranch succession.

Wetland Reserve Easements

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and tribes to restore and protect wetlands impacted by agricultural activities through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement. Eligible wetlands must be able to be cost-effectively restored to natural functions and values.

NRCS may enroll eligible wetlands through:

- *Permanent Easements*
NRCS pays the least value of the 1) fair market value, 2) geographic area rate cap, or 3) landowner's offer, and pays up to 75 to 100 percent of the restoration costs.
- *30-Year Easements*
Under 30-year easements, NRCS pays 50 to 75 percent of both the value and restoration costs.
- *Term Easements*
The easement term is the maximum allowed by state law. NRCS pays 50 to 75 percent of the value and restoration costs.
- *30-Year Contracts*
These contracts are available only for acreage owned by Indian tribes. Payments commensurate with 30-year easements.

For wetland reserve easements, NRCS pays all costs associated with closing, including easement boundary surveys, appraisal fees, legal opinion of title, recording fees, and title insurance.

How to apply

- **Agricultural Land Easements**
Eligible partners submit a CPA 41 application and a CPA 41A for each landowner's parcel to the NRCS state office.
- **Wetland Reserve Easements**
Eligible landowners submit a CPA 1200 application to the NRCS state office or local field office.
- **ACEP Program Eligibility**
Partners and landowners must establish farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and meet USDA eligibility criteria including average adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation of \$900,000.

More information

- Contact your USDA Service Center or NRCS state office. Office locations and phone numbers are on the web at: <http://offices.usda.gov>
- Visit the NRCS Alaska ACEP website for more information and forms at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ak/programs/easements/

Contact

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NRCS easement programs restore wetlands and protect farmland.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service