



December 2015

What is an Agricultural Land Easement Plan, and why is it required?

- Under the 2014 Farm Bill, each conservation easement enrolled in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE) Program is required to have an ALE Plan developed prior to easement closing.
- An ALE Plan 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?

- Landowners interested in enrolling, or that have already enrolled in ACEP-ALE, can expect a visit from NRCS staff who will complete a resource inventory and collect landscape level data.
- This information, along with other baseline information the cooperating entity will provide, will assist in the development of an ALE Plan.

What will be included in an Agricultural Land Easement Plan?

- ALE Plans will outline activities and practices that promote the long-term viability of the land to meet the purposes for which the easement was acquired.
- Typically, ACEP-ALE conservation easements are enrolled because they contain prime and/or statewide significant soils.
- Because of the importance of these soils in Connecticut, NRCS has an interest in helping easement holders ensure their long-term viability for future generations.
- In the ALE Plan, NRCS will identify conservation and management practices to protect these soil resources along with other important resources identified on the parcel.
- 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 address purposes and resource concerns for which the parcel was selected – such as preservation of prime and statewide significant soils.
 - ✓ The ALE Plan may include component plans such as a Forest Management Plan, Grassland Management Plan, or Conservation Plan for Highly Erodible Land (HEL), if appropriate. The HEL plan would include:

- ❖ A description of activities and conservation practices that will assist participants in staying in compliance with HEL provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985.
 - ❖ A schedule of implementation for required practices. Implementation of practices needed to meet HEL provisions must be completed within 1 year of closing on the easement.
- The ALE Plan may also incorporate or cross reference practices identified in other plans such as an organic plan, a comprehensive nutrient management plan, etc.

What is the performance period of an agricultural land easement 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 ALE-Plan and to update them within one year of a change in management style or landownership.
- ALE 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.

Where can I get more information about ACEP-ALE?

Contact your local NRCS Service Center

Danielson (860) 779-0557
Hamden (203) 287-8038
Norwich (860) 887-9941
Torrington (860) 626-8258
Windsor (860) 688-7725

Or visit us on the web at

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ct/programs/easements/acep/>