

Wetland Reserve Program Fact Sheet

Vermont- 2013

(Subject to change with the passage of the 2013 Farm Bill)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking applications from landowners for its Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from active agriculture. Restoration methods can include the installation of ditch plugs, water control structures, and/or tree plantings along river banks. Fields that are frequently flooded and/or are difficult to produce crops on because of wet conditions are good candidates for WRP. Other examples of eligible land include areas along rivers that link protected wetlands, and lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute to wetland functions and values.



Program Focus

This program focuses on wetlands because of all of the benefits they provide. Wetlands can provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species and waterfowl; improve water quality by filtering sediments, nutrients and chemicals; reduce flooding; recharge groundwater; protect biological

diversity; and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities such as hiking and nature photography.



Enrollment Options

WRP offers three enrollment options:

1. A *Permanent Easement* is a conservation easement in perpetuity. USDA pays 100 percent of the easement value and up to 100 percent of the restoration costs. In exchange for this easement, the landowner agrees to sell the development and agricultural rights from the land.
2. A *30-Year Easement* is an easement that expires after 30 years. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the easement value and up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.

In most cases the per acre value of an easement is based on a region-wide estimate of market values for different types of land. For both permanent and 30-year easements, USDA and/or conservation partners pay all costs associated

with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, costs associated with a survey, any appraisal fees, and title insurance.

3. A *Restoration Cost-Share Agreement* is a 10 year agreement to restore or enhance the wetland functions and values without placing an easement on the enrolled acres. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs. Additional assistance may be available from conservation partners, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Recent Changes to the Program

There have been some changes to WRP with the passage of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). They include:

- Payments for easements valued at \$500,000 or more will be made in at least five annual payments.
- For restoration cost-share agreements, annual payments may not exceed \$50,000 per year.
- No easement shall be created on land that has changed ownership during the preceding 7 years, unless a waiver is granted by NRCS, and
- Eligible acres are limited to private lands.

More Information

Sign-up for this program is on a continuous basis. Ducks Unlimited, through a grant from the State of Vermont, is assisting the NRCS with sign-ups for this program in the Lake Champlain Basin. Wetland protection and restoration is a priority for both the State and Ducks Unlimited.

Landowners who are interested in this program can apply at their local county USDA Service Center or by contacting Ducks Unlimited representative, April Moulart at (802) 864-2989 or april@waterscapesvt.com. Vermont NRCS County office locations can be found at: <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/> and then by clicking on 'Find a Service Center' at the bottom, left side of the web page



Wetland Functions and Values Restored