

# Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

## NOTICE OF 2009 PROGRAM FUNDING



The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) is a voluntary program of Natural Resources Conservation Service whose purpose is to protect agricultural lands by limiting non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with approved state, local and non-profit entities, who arrange for the purchase of development rights through conservation easements on private lands. The entity holds and manages these conservation easements in perpetuity.

### Notice of 2009 Funding Opportunity

NJ NRCS will accept applications of entities and parcels through **May 1, 2009** for fiscal year 2009 funding. The entity must be deemed eligible before any parcels submitted by that entity will be considered. All required parcel data must be included or the parcel will be rejected.

The amount available for this program in 2009 will be approximately \$5.7 million. All funds will be used to reimburse the entities for up to 50% of the purchase price of the conservation easement on approved parcels. All parcels are ranked individually on their own merit. Funds will be awarded to the highest ranked eligible parcels through a statewide competitive process. Funded parcels must close by March 31, 2011.

Applications submitted after May 1 will be held for fiscal year 2010 funding consideration.

### Entity Eligibility Criteria

Any state or local unit of government or non-profit organization can apply for FRPP funds submitting an Application for Federal Funding (SF-424 and SF-424b), and by demonstrating:

- A commitment to long-term conservation of agricultural lands;
- A capability to acquire, manage, and enforce easements;
- Sufficient staff dedicated to monitoring and easement stewardship; and
- The availability of funds.

Eligible entities will be notified by email of their eligibility status and if a 3-year agreement with NRCS will be developed. Within 30-days of agreement signing, the entity is required to submit a draft easement deed for NRCS review and approval.

### Parcel Eligibility

Eligible land must:

- Be privately owned;
- Contain at least 50% prime, unique, statewide, or locally important farmland;
- Be subject of a pending offer;
- Contain cropland, grassland, pasture land, or forest land that contributes to the economic viability of an agricultural operation;
- Not include forest land of greater than two-thirds of the easement; and
- Possess on-site and off-site conditions which will allow the easement to be effective in achieving the purposes of the program.

The eligibility of the land and the landowner for each parcel must be established at the time the parcel is submitted for potential funding.

For each parcel, the landowner's legal name and contact information must be provided. A completed CCC-1200 Application for Program Funding must be signed by the landowner.

The landowner must be compliant with Highly Erodible and Wetland Conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill, as amended. A current AD-1026 must be on file with the Farm Service Agency or submitted with the application.

Landowners also must meet the adjusted gross income limitation, earning less than \$1 million in non-farm income for each of the past three years, unless more than 66% of the total gross income was from farm income. A current CCC-926 must be included with the application.



Forest management plans are required on all parcels with forest cover on greater than 10 acres or 10% of the easement area (whichever is greater). If the parcel requires a forest management plan, a certification by the landowner that such plan will be completed prior to closing is needed.

In addition to the above, the entity must include:

- a copy of the signed easement offer with parcel legal description,
- a listing of funding sources and amounts,
- a current aerial photograph with the easement area and local road network indicated,
- a web soil survey map of the parcel (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>), and
- a completed parcel ranking sheet.

The maps and ranking sheet shall include only those lands for which the FRPP program funds are requested; exception areas located on the farm are not included in the ranking.

The ranking sheet should contain the specific parcel details as well as the resultant score. Details include:

- Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel;
- Percent of cropland, pastureland, and grassland in the parcel;
- Ratio of total acres in the parcel to the average farm size in the county;
- Proximity of the parcel to other preserved farms and military bases;
- Proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and infrastructure;
- Proposed impervious surface cap;
- History of ownership, conservation and soil health improvements on the farm;
- Proximity to category I waters;
- Percent Class I and II soils in the parcel; and
- Percentage of historically farmed prime soils.

A complete checklist and all forms required for applications are available at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp).

## NRCS Parcel Ranking Process

As part of the ranking and eligibility process, NRCS will complete a pre-acquisition database search for hazardous materials on or near the parcel. In addition, NRCS will conduct an on-site visit to determine the condition of the land. NRCS will also interview the landowner to ensure that all FRPP requirements are understood and that any information collected is accurate and complete.

As a condition for participation, NRCS will develop a conservation plan for all Highly Erodible land. To ensure compliance with the plan, the easement shall grant to the United States, through NRCS and its successor or assigns, a right of access to the easement area.

Entities will be notified of parcel funding decisions by June 15, 2009. All funds will be obligated by July 1, 2009.

The entity may submit additional parcels for consideration any time during the three-year agreement period without having to submit their own eligibility qualifications. It is anticipated that the first 2010 funding decisions will be made, pending program fund appropriations, based on an October 31, 2009 application ranking period.

## Application Submissions

All applications for 2009 funding must be received by 3 PM on Friday May 1, 2009. Due to the inclusion of personal and private information, no electronic submittals will be accepted. Applications should be marked "PRIVATE" and be addressed to:

Janice Reid, FRPP Program Manager  
USDA-NRCS  
220 Davidson Ave, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset NJ 08873

For more information about this funding opportunity, please visit the NJ NRCS webpage at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov), or contact Janice Reid, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at [janice.reid@nj.usda.gov](mailto:janice.reid@nj.usda.gov) or (732) 537-6042.



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