

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

New Jersey Program Details



National Program Eligibility Requirements:

Any individual or entity interested in WHIP must be an eligible applicant and control eligible land for the lifespan of the contract. Applicants are encouraged to read the document "[Applying for Federal Farm Conservation Programs](#)", which details the required forms for determining eligibility.

An eligible applicant must:

- Have an interest in the farming operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment in WHIP; and
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance provisions; and
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements; and
- Be in compliance with annual Adjusted Gross Income requirements; and
- Be in compliance with provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including the provisions for sharing WHIP payments on a fair and equitable basis; and
- Have control of the eligible land for the term of the proposed contract. Applications for structural or vegetative practices must include the written agreement of the landowner at the time the application is filed.

"Eligible land" means land on which agricultural commodities are produced or have the capacity to be produced, and land capable of supporting target wildlife species. This includes:

- Cropland
- Hayland
- Pasture and Rangeland
- Grassland
- Land used for subsistence purposes
- Private, non-industrial forestland
- Other land on which crops or livestock are currently produced, where risk may be mitigated through operation diversification or change in resource conservation practices

Note that no public lands are eligible to participate in WHIP.

Applicants must submit a completed Conservation Programs Worksheet and WHIP Program Application (CCC-1200), available at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WHIP or at any USDA Service Center. They must initiate or update their farm records with the Farm Service Agency **prior to** application submittal.

National Program Requirements:

- No practice can be installed until the final contract document is approved by NRCS, unless a waiver is granted in advance by the State Conservationist.
- At least one practice must be commenced within 12 months of contract signature. If no practice has been started, the contract will be subject to termination.
- Conservation practices must meet the specifications of the Conservation Practice Standard for program payments to be approved.
- Payment rates in the approved conservation program contract are based on practice extent and not cost.

New Jersey Special Requirements:

Practices must fall under a priority habitat area in order to qualify for assistance. The priority areas for 2009 are:

- a. Pollinator habitat
- b. Grasslands habitat
- c. Disturbance-Dependent habitat
- d. Wetland habitat
- e. Bog Turtle habitat
- f. Delaware Bay geographic area

Practices eligible for payment must be necessary to create, maintain, or enhance the appropriate habitat type, as specified in the contract schedule. Practices must be implemented according to the practice schedule unless a contract modification is approved in advance. It is the responsibility of the contract holder to notify NRCS in advance of practice implementation, and to request prompt payment once practices are complete.

Funding:

All eligible applications are grouped for competitive ranking with the highest ranked applications selected for contract development based on available funds. The ranking system addresses how well an application meets state and national priorities, and includes a practice cost efficiency calculation. A copy of the current ranking system can be found at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WHIP or at the local USDA Service Center office.

Payments and Payment Rates:

A copy of the current payments available, by practice, can be found at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WHIP or at the local USDA Service Center office.

Payments listed in the approved contract are based on realistic estimates of the practice amounts needed to achieve the desired resource benefit at the time of contracting. It is the responsibility of the applicant/contract holder to verify practice amounts and the estimated costs to implement.

The approved payment amount is based on the amount of the practice actually required and completed once the system is designed. Payments can not be adjusted for excessive costs related to contractors or materials used, or practice amounts beyond that required to address the resource concern.

Payments are made after the NRCS technical representative has confirmed that the implementation meets the practice standard, and the contract holder has signed a request for payment (CCC-1245) generated by the NRCS office.

Applicants may request higher payment rates at the time of program application by indicating on their application their eligibility for one of the following categories: **beginning farmer**, **limited resource farmer**, or **socially disadvantaged farmer**.

The specific eligibility criteria for each of these groups are found on the website <http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

If one of these special emphasis categories is selected, the applicant must file documentation to support the selection, and is subject to a review of their qualifications at any time during the contract period.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to verify that the increased payment rates are included in the contract prior to signing.

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