

Wetland Reserve Program

2010 New Jersey FACT SHEET

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.



A restored wetland in a former crop field.

Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetland functions and values;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas; and
- Having incentives to develop wildlife recreational opportunities on their land.

Wetlands benefit New Jersey by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; as well as providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.



Eligibility

Land is not eligible if it is owned by any governmental entity. Private lands eligible for WRP must have been damaged in the past through filling or draining, and must now be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. To offer a conservation easement, the private landowner must have owned the land for at least 7 years prior to enrolling it in the program, except in certain circumstances. To participate in a restoration cost-share agreement, the private landowner must show evidence of ownership. Eligible land includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands;
- Pasture or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long term protection.

For More Information or to Sign Up, Contact Your Local USDA Service Center:

Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties

Columbus Service Center (1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Rd)

Telephone: (609) 267-1639

Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties

Frenchtown Service Center (687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2)

Telephone: (908) 782-4614

Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties

Vineland Service Center (1317 South Main Rd. Bldg 3)

Telephone: (856) 205-1225

Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties

Freehold Service Center (4000 Kozloski Road)

Telephone: (732) 462-0075

Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties

Hackettstown Service Center (Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Road)

Telephone: (908) 852-2576

Gloucester and Salem counties

Woodstown Service Center (51 Cheney Road, Suite 2)

Telephone: (856) 769-1126

Uses of WRP Land

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land, but retain private ownership. On acreage subject to a WRP easement, participants control access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities.

NRCS and the landowner jointly determine the restoration plan for the wetlands, but the landowner is required to implement the restoration plan with NRCS financial assistance.

Enrollment Options Include:

Permanent Easement: The landowner receives the lowest of the three values as an easement payment: the site value based on a market analysis, a geographic area rate cap established by the NRCS State Conservationist or the landowner offer.

The Geographic Rate Caps for 2010 in New Jersey are:

- Annually tilled dry cropland, pasture land or permanent hay land: \$6,000 per acre
- Specialty cropland or irrigated cropland: \$9,000 per acre
- Woodland: \$2,000 per acre

USDA pays 100 percent of all costs associated with acquiring the easement, and all costs for restoration and future maintenance activities.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement: Agreements are for a minimum 10-year period, but may be longer. USDA provides technical assistance to design, and reimburses 75 percent of the cost of establishing degraded or lost wetland habitat. During the period of the agreement, any maintenance activities may also be reimbursed at the same rate.

Restoration payments are limited to a maximum of \$50,000 per person per year. In addition, landowners must be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill, as amended, on all land they farm and with the Adjusted Gross Income provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Enroll a Portion of Your Land

WRP applicants may enroll their entire land area; however it is far more common to enroll just part of a property. There is no minimum size area required for enrollment. Participants with as little as 2 acres have enrolled to obtain the financial assistance to restore wetland areas where crop failures are common, to enhance aesthetics, wildlife viewing, or hunting opportunities. New Jersey also has had participants enroll as much as 1200 acres in an easement.

Applications must indicate the type of enrollment intended; restoration agreement or easement. After an application is received and the applicant eligibility is established, NRCS will visit the site to determine the eligible acres and complete a site assessment/ranking. Applications are ranked and there is potential funding available throughout the year.

How to Apply

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or a restoration agreement at any time during the year. Applications are grouped for ranking when funds are available, normally once per year. Applications (form AD-1153) are available at any USDA Service Center office or online at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp>. Applicants must indicate if the application is for an easement or restoration agreement. Easement applicants must also provide a copy of the deed when applying.



Enhanced shallow water areas

After Restoration, Then What?

NRCS continues to provide assistance to landowners after completion of restoration activities. This assistance may be in the form of reviewing restoration measures, clarifying technical and administrative aspects of the easement and project management needs, and providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for wetland dependent species.

At any time, a participant may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.