

Nebraska Fact Sheet:

Wetlands Reserve Program

March 2010

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) 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 voluntary program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.

Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

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

Wetlands benefit all Nebraskans by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging ground water; protecting biological diversity; and providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

How WRP Works

The program offers five enrollment options:

1. *Permanent Easement.* This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments are usually based on the Nebraska Geographical Area Rate Caps (GARCs), *see Figure 1*. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays up to 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.
2. *30-Year Easement.* Easement payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.

3. *Reserved Grazing-Rights: Permanent or 30-Year Easement.* The easement payment is based off of the standard permanent or 30-year easement value that is then reduced by a predetermined amount for the retained grazing rights. USDA pays up to 100 percent of the restoration cost for permanent easements and up to 75 percent of the restoration cost for 30-year easements.
4. *30-Year Tribal Contract.* Contract payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
5. *Restoration Cost-Share Agreement.* This is a 10 year agreement to restore degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration cost, with an annual payment limit of \$50,000. No easement is placed on the property.

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Landowners and Tribes can file an application at any time at their local USDA Service Center. However, applications must be received prior to an announced ranking cut-off date to be eligible for current funding. Eligible applications received after the cut-off date will be considered for funding at a later date. Landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center for an application.



