

2020

# Private Land Program Manual





# Our Mission

In the wetlands of the Rainwater Basin and across Nebraska’s mixed-grass prairies, Rainwater Basin Joint Venture partners achieve habitat conservation through cooperation and sound science. Landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies work together through Joint Venture programs to provide habitat for millions of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife in this highly productive agricultural landscape.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) is a partnership of federal, state, local, and private entities dedicated to enhancement, restoration, and protection of RWB wetlands. The RWBJV uses a strategic, science-based approach to habitat conservation, linking habitat goals directly to the physiological needs of priority wildlife species. Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) reflects technological and philosophical changes in the science and practice of conservation. The four interacting elements of SHC concentrate instead on identifying conservation projects, methods and sites that will provide the greatest benefits relative to cost and to priority bird species:

- Biological Planning
- Conservation Design
- Conservation Delivery
- Monitoring and Research



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The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) partnership promotes and supports wetland conservation programs administered by a variety of conservation agencies and non-governmental organizations to restore and protect wetlands on private land in the Rainwater Basin region.

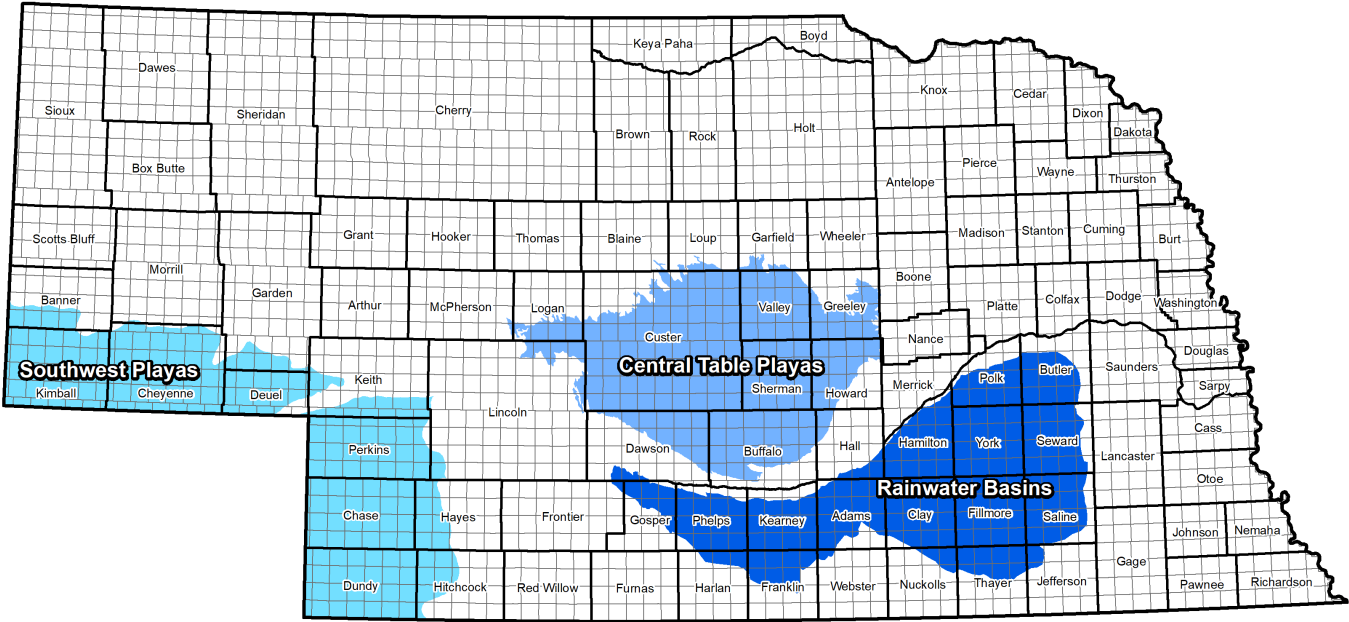
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# MAPS OF NEBRASKA'S WETLANDS AND PLAYAS

# PROGRAMS MANUAL REFERENCE GUIDE

Wetlands And Playas

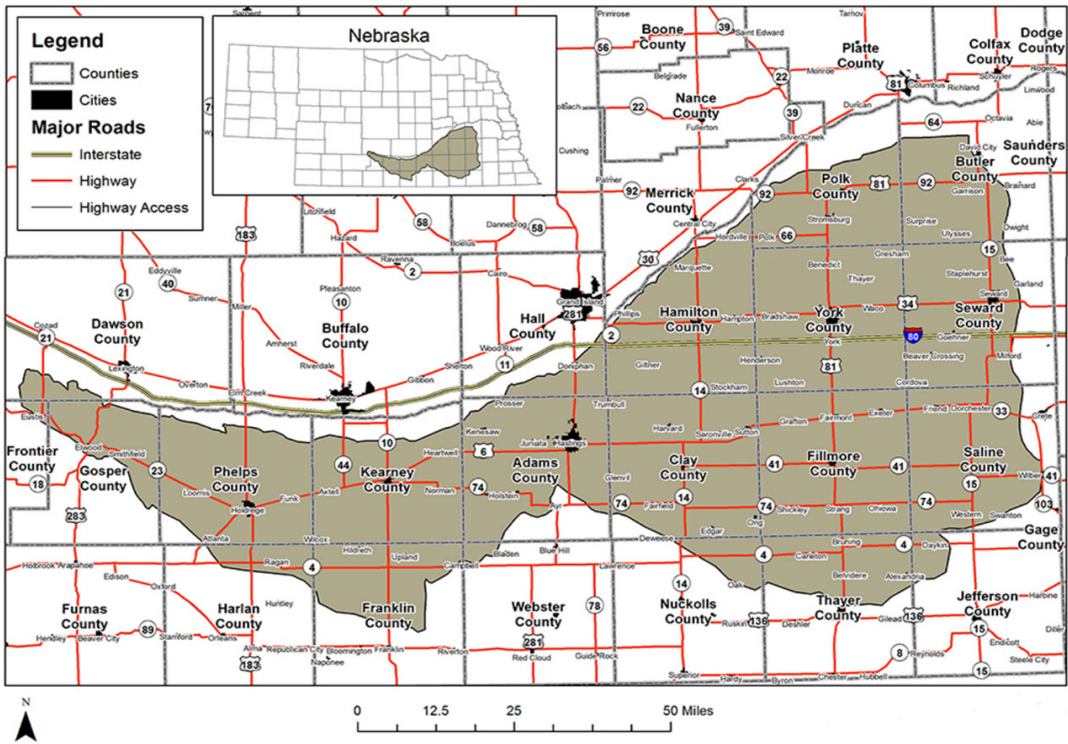


The following guides are a reference for the conservation programs listed in this document. More information and eligibility requirements for each program are contained in the program descriptions.

## PROTECTION PROGRAMS

	WRE/WRP		WREP		RCPP/ALE	USFWS Easements	DU Easement	DU Land Purchase/Trade
Length of Contract	30 years	Permanent	30 years	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent
Minimum Acreage	>10 acres		>10 acres		>30 acres	>40 acres	>40 acres	>40 acres
Region where available	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas		Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas		Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin
Is grazing allowed?	Yes, with approved CUA		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grazing Infrastructure Cost Share?	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program		NRCS pays 75% of the grazing infrastructure	NRCS pays 100% of the grazing infrastructure	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program
Is farming rowcrops still allowed?	No		No, but a pivot is allowed to cross through the easement		Yes	No	No	No
Upgrade a pivot to VRI System?	No		Yes, depending on the site		Yes	No	No	No
Are buildings allowed?	No		No		No	No	No	No
Easement Payment	Receive 56.25% of full payment for 30-year with grazing rights.	Receive 75% of full payment for permanent with grazing rights.	Receive 56.25% of full payment for 30-year with grazing rights.	Receive 75% of full payment for permanent with grazing rights.	NRCS pays 50% and conservation partners pay 35%. The landowner donates 15% of the easement value	Equals value of the land without easement minus value of the land w/ easement	Equals value of the land without easement minus value of the land w/ easement	Appraised value of the property or willing to trade for lands with wetlands on them
Restoration Costs	NRCS pays 75% of restoration costs	NRCS pays 100% of restoration costs	NRCS pays 75% of restoration costs	NRCS pays 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs

Rainwater Basin Region





# Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

## RESTORATION PROGRAMS

	CP23A	CRP SAFE	Restoration and Management Program	Hydrology Restoration Program	Seasonal Habitat Improvement Program	Pit Fills	Restoration Only
Length of Contract	10 years	10-15 years	10 years	10 years	10 years	10 years	10 years
Acreage	<20 acres	2-160 Acres	N/A	<20 acres	N/A	N/A	N/A
Region where available	Only high priority wetlands (as determined by the RWBJV Wetland Prioritization Model) are eligible.	Certain areas of the Rainwater Basin, Central Table Playas and the Southwest Playas	N/A	Only high priority wetlands (as determined by the RWBJV Wetland Prioritization Model) are eligible.	N/A	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin
Is grazing allowed?	Yes	No, but allowed with a reduction in payment	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Grazing Infrastructure Cost Share?	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Yes, if grazing is allowed on site and the project is in the Rainwater Basin or Central Table Playas	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	N/A	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program
Is farming rowcrops still allowed?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No
Upgrade a pivot to VRI System?	No	No	No	No	Yes	N/A	No
Are buildings allowed?	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No
Contract Payment	Annual payments begin once restoration is complete. Payment rates follow the HRP table	Maximum payment: \$300/acre/year	Landowner receives a "land use payment" for wetland management up to \$2,500 annually	Annual payments begin once restoration is complete. Payment rates follow the HRP table	Annual payment of \$50/acre/year for cropland area or \$25/acre/year for grassland and pastureland.	N/A	N/A
Restoration Costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Up to 50% of the restoration costs are paid for by USDA. Up to 50% cost-share on materials and activities and a one-time Practice Incentive Payment.	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs	Conservation partners pay 100% of restoration costs

## ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

	Working Lands	Working Lands Enhancement Program	Pivot Modifications	Short Term Vegetation Management	Private Lands Pumping Program
Length of Contract	10 years	10 years	10 years	Negotiable	N/A
Acreage	>30 acres	>30 acres	>15 acres	N/A	N/A
Region where available	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas	N/A	Playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas	N/A	Wetland is within five miles of a state or federally owned wetland or an existing WRP easement or is part of a complex that has > 30% open water in the fall. RBW within three miles of the Platte River are also eligible.
Is grazing allowed?	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A
Grazing Infrastructure Cost Share?	Up to 85% of grazing infrastructure costs are reimbursable	Up to 85% of grazing infrastructure costs are reimbursable	N/A	Eligible for cost-share through the Working Lands Program	N/A
Is farming rowcrops still allowed?	No	No	Yes	No	No
Upgrade a pivot to VRI System?	No	No	Yes, depending on the site	No	No
Are buildings allowed?	No	No	No	No	No
Contract Payment	N/A	N/A	Up to 85% of flotation pivot tire costs are reimbursable	Financial assistance is limited to reimbursement for treatments only (no incentive payments).	This program will pay a maximum of \$60/acre. Cost-share will be capped at \$1,500/landowner/year.
Restoration Costs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**This program is only eligible in the Rainwater Basin region.**

### Purpose:

- If a landowner enrolls in WREP or ALE, conservation partners will pay 85% cost-share to upgrade their pivot to VRI. Irrigation prescriptions based on soil electrical conductivity map (related to soil moisture) and soil moisture must be implemented for 3 years. Documentation of irrigation water use required over this period.

### Eligibility Restrictions:

- Must enroll 30 acres or more into WRE or enroll a tract with approximately 30 acres or more of wetland into ALE.
  - Exception – fewer acres are required for a roundout to a protected public or private area.
  - To enroll in ALE, a landowner MUST enroll in RCPP.
  - All other terms and restrictions for ALE and WRE apply.
- Also must enroll in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) with NRCS.
  - EQIP provides VRI cost-share from NRCS. The remainder of the 85% cost-share will come from Joint Venture partners.

**Total VRI Cost Estimate (pivot only):** \$35,000 for a ¼ section pivot with no corner system.





# Wetland Reserve Program and Easements



The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) and the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) are the same programs. Prior to 2014, the program name was the Wetlands Reserve Program and since 2014, it is the Wetlands Reserve Easement. WREP allows for certain “reserved rights”. The WREP practice currently being used in the Rainwater Basin is the allowance of center pivot irrigation systems to cross the enrolled wetland. Reserved grazing rights are also available. WRE and WRP are statewide programs whereas WREP can only be applied to playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas regions. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) holds all easements.

**Easement Restrictions:**

- No buildings are allowed, wetland cannot be drained while enrolled and no cropping can occur on enrolled acres.
- Wetland can only be managed (i.e., haying/grazing/chemical treatment) with NRCS permission through a compatible use agreement to benefit wildlife habitat.

**Eligibility/Restrictions:**

- Must enroll at least 10 acres with the exception of sites that are a roundout to a protected public or private area.
- Must own the land for at least 2 years with the exception of land that was inherited or new landowner was a tenant for at least a “few” years.
- Income must be less than \$900,000 annually.
- Must have the wetland restored to the extent feasible.

**Length of Easement:**

- Permanent
- 30 Years

**Easement Payment:**

- Based on easement values established in the year of enrollment.
- Values for permanent easement options on irrigated cropland, dryland cropland and all other land uses vary.
- On 30-year easements there is a 25% reduction in value from the permanent easement rate.
- Reserved grazing rights easements have a 25% reduction in easement value.
  - 1. Receive 75% of full payment for permanent easements with grazing rights.
  - 2. Receive 56.25% of full payment for 30-year easements with grazing rights.

**How Payments Work:**

- NRCS gives a one-time payment or
- Can spread payments over more years for tax reasons if needed (maximum of 10 years with 3 years being the most common time period).

**Restoration Costs:**

- Under a permanent easement, with or without reserved grazing, the NRCS pays 100% of the restoration costs.
- Under the 30-year easement, with or without reserved grazing, NRCS pays 75% of the restoration costs. The landowner is responsible for 25% of the restoration costs. The RWBJV and partners may pay up to the full remaining 25% of the restoration costs if grant funds are available. Occasionally, the landowner may need to pay a portion of the remaining 25%.

**RWBJV Cost-Share Options:**

- Eligible for the Working Lands Program and the Pivot Tire Modification Cost-share Programs if in the Rainwater Basin or Central Table Playas regions.
- Eligible for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) if in the Rainwater Basin region.



# Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program

**Easement Restrictions:**

- No buildings are allowed, wetland cannot be drained while enrolled and no cropping can occur on enrolled acres.
- Wetland can only be managed (i.e., haying/grazing/chemical treatment) with NRCS permission through a compatible use agreement to benefit wildlife habitat.

**Eligibility/Restrictions:**

- Must enroll at least 10 acres with the exception of sites that are a roundout to a protected public or private area.
- Must own the land for at least 2 years with the exception of land that was inherited or new land-owner was a tenant for at least a “few” years.
- Income must be less than \$900,000 annually.
- Must have the wetland restored to the extent feasible.

**Length of Easement:**

- Permanent
- 30 Years

**WREP Reserved Grazing Rights Option:**

- The landowner/tenant reserve the right to graze the site subject to an NRCS grazing plan.
- 100% of the grazing infrastructure is paid for by the NRCS under a permanent easement and 75% is paid for under the 30-year easement.

**WREP Pivot Crossing Option:**

- The landowner/tenant reserves the right to cross the pivot over the easement.
- Eligible to receive cost-share to assist a landowner with passing the pivot over the wetland.



**Easement Payment:**

- Based on easement values established in the year of enrollment.
- Values for permanent easement options on irrigated cropland, dryland cropland and all other land uses vary.
- On 30-year easements there is a 25% reduction in value from the permanent easement rate.
- Reserved grazing rights easements have a 25% reduction in easement value.
  - 1. Receive 75% of full payment for permanent with grazing rights.
  - 2. Receive 56.25% of full payment for 30-year with grazing rights.

**How Payments Work:**

- NRCS gives a one-time payment or
- Can spread payments over more years for tax reasons if needed (maximum of 10 years with 3 years being the most common time period).

**Restoration Costs:**

- Under a permanent easement, with or without reserved grazing, the NRCS pays 100% of the restoration costs.
- Under the 30-year easement, with or without reserved grazing, NRCS pays 75% of the restoration costs. The landowner is responsible for 25% of the restoration costs. The RWBJV and partners may pay up to the full remaining 25% of the restoration costs if grant funds are available. Occasionally, the landowner may need to pay a portion of the remaining 25%.

**RWBJV Cost-Share Options:**

- Eligible for the Working Lands Program and the Pivot Tire Modification Cost-share Programs if in the Rainwater Basin or Central Table Playas regions.
- Eligible for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) if in the Rainwater Basin region.



# Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

This program is only available on playa wetlands in the Rainwater Basin region. The local NRD holds these easements. Other forms of the program are available statewide.

## Eligibility/Restrictions:

- Landowner must enroll the entire tract.
- Tract must contain 30 acres or more of wetland with the exception of sites that are a roundout to a protected public or private area.
- Must have the wetland restored to the extent feasible.
- Must upgrade a center pivot on the tract to a variable rate irrigation system as part of RCPP (see below).
- Landowner income must be less than \$900,000 annually.

## Easement Restrictions:

- No buildings are allowed outside designated building envelopes and the wetland cannot be drained.
- Landowner or tenant can continue to crop, graze and manage the wetland without prior approval.



**Length of Easement:** Permanent

## Easement Payment:

- Payment equals the value of the land without easement minus the value of the land with the easement.
- Based on appraisal.

## How Easement Payments Work:

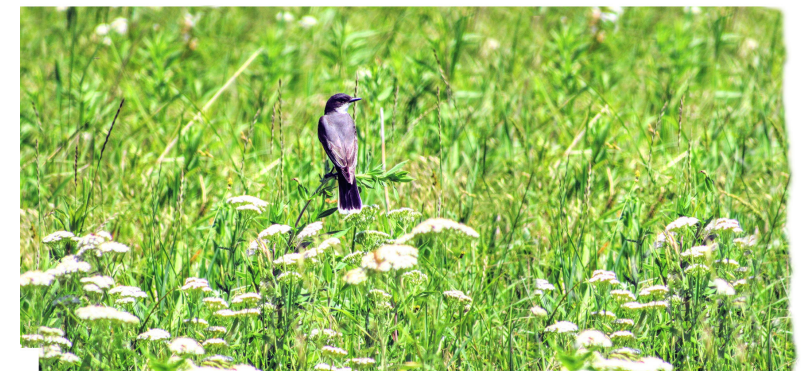
- NRCS pays 50% and conservation partners pay 35%. The landowner donates 15% of the easement value.
- The landowner receives a one-time payment from the NRD.
- NRD is easement holder.

## Restoration Costs:

- 100% of the restoration costs are paid for by the conservation partners.

## RWBJV Cost-Share Options:

- Site is eligible for all cost-share programs.
- MUST upgrade the center pivot to variable rate irrigation (VRI) as part of the RCPP cost-share option.





# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Easement



**Region:** Must be a RWB playa.

## FWS Holds the Easement

**Length of Easement:** Permanent

### Eligibility Restrictions:

- Must have wetland restored to the extent possible.
- Must be approved by the FWS.
- Must control trees on easement acres.

### Easement Restrictions:

- No buildings, no draining of the wetland, no cropping.
- Can continue to graze and/or manage without prior approval.

### Easement Payment:

- Equals value of the land without easement minus value of the land w/ easement.
- Based on appraisal.
- Last appraisal was in 2015 at \$1775/ac, but appraised value was based on landuse and recent sales.

### How Payment Works:

- Conservation partners must obtain a grant after the landowner expresses interest.
- After the grant is awarded, the landowner receives a one-time payment.

**Restoration Costs:** 100% of the restoration costs paid by conservation partners.

### RWBJV Cost-Share Options:

- Eligible for the Working Lands Program and Pivot Tire Modification Cost-share Program.
- Not eligible for RCPP.

## Ducks Unlimited (DU) Easement

Same program as the FWS easement but held by DU instead of FWS.

### DU Land Purchase and Land Trade Options

Ducks Unlimited may buy a property that contains a wetland. They pay no more than appraised value. DU must get approval from the national office to purchase the property. After DU buys the land they usually sell it to NGPC or FWS if it is a roundout to a public wetland, or they may trade it for other ground. If DU has land available for sale, they may be willing to trade it for property with a wetland on it. The trade is based on appraised value of both properties and generally involves some cash transaction to make up a difference in the appraised values of the two properties.







## Private Land Programs

The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture also supports and promotes the following programs and criteria to assist in the delivery and evaluation of Joint Venture (JV) programs on private lands. The proposed programs and criteria were developed with the JV objectives in mind, and will help ensure consistent and effective wetland habitat benefits through Joint Venture offerings. The Private Lands Work Group recognizes that many wetland projects will not fit all of the criteria for a certain program and will evaluate those projects with unique situations and information on a case-by-case basis to determine the program eligibility, applicable practices, and landowner benefits.

## Restoration and Management Program (RAMP)

This is a 10-year program that focuses on restoring and managing quality wetland habitat.

### Wetland Criteria

- Landowner must be willing to restore hydrology to the maximum extent feasible (e.g. pit filling, ditch plugs, water control structures, fill or sediment removal) within the wetland and manage the vegetative community on non-cropped areas (e.g. mechanical and chemical removal of trees and invasive species),
- Landowner enters a 10-year agreement that allows the Joint Venture Partners to work with the landowner to manage the wetland for the duration of the agreement.

### Practices

- Landowner is given the first opportunity to perform actual management on the property.
- The following cost-share incentives may be possible:
  - a) Fencing:
    1. Standard electric
    2. High tensile electric
    3. Permanent barbed-wire
  - b) Water source for cattle.
  - c) Prescribed Fire: \$30/acre or donation to local fire department.
  - d) Disking: \$15/acre/pass with a minimum of 2 passes using a standard farm disk.
  - e) Heavy Disking: \$35/acre/pass with a minimum of 2 passes using a >30" heavy construction disk.
  - f) Chemical Applications: Negotiated based on chemical cost. Labor and equipment rates determined by NRCS docket. Landowner is responsible for noxious weed control.
- Landowner has the right to defer management actions to a private contractor. The Joint Venture will help facilitate hiring the contractor to accomplish the objectives.





## Benefits

- Landowner receives a “land use payment” (based on soil type) for wetland restoration and vegetation management according to the following table:

Current Landuse	Fm, Fo	Sc, Sd	Ma, M	Buffer
Cropped	\$60/A	\$50/A	\$50/A	\$60/A
Non-cropped	\$50/A	\$50/A	\$50/A	\$50/A

Payment is in exchange for the right of Joint Venture partners to restore the wetland and direct management on the project area for the 10-year agreement period. Land use payments are made annually and are not contingent on the amount of management during that year. They are contingent on the landowner’s willingness to participate. Wetland area may be over 50 acres in size; however, land use payment will be capped at \$2,500/year (based on available funding). Management cost share will be available for the entire wetland area.

- Landowner is allowed to continue farming if the area has previously been cropped. Exception: grasslands, pasture, or native prairie may not be brought into production.
- Landowner may perform management on the project area without requesting permission from the JV. Grazing wetlands is encouraged as a way to supplement farm income.
- Landowner controls hunting access. Access payments may be available from other partners.
- Technical assistance from JV partners is available during the agreement period.
- Center pivots are permitted as long as wheel crossing(s) do not interfere with wetland hydrology. Cost-share available for low compression and other flotation solutions.



**The RWBJV offers a one-time signing bonus to promote enrollment and full restoration of wetlands under CRP CP23A. This program differs from the Hydrology Restoration Program in that landowner chooses to not farm the enrolled acres of the property for the duration of the CRP agreement.**

## Wetland Criteria

- Must sign up for CRP CP23A.
- Cropland areas are eligible for incentive if the hydrology is restored (full hydrology restoration on applicant’s property).
- No prioritization needed in order to get as many wetlands restored as possible utilizing USDA funding.
- Bonus payment paid on March 31 following completion of restoration.
- Existing wetlands in the RWB that are currently in CRP are eligible for a one-time bonus payment if the wetland hydrology is restored to the extent feasible and approved by the RWBJV.

## Practices

- JV partners, in conjunction with the USDA, will provide technical and financial assistance necessary to restore the wetland.
- Eligible practices can be found in the CRP contract.

## Benefits

- Bonus payment will not be made until restoration is complete.
- Cost share is available to assist with restoration costs not payable by the USDA.
- Pivot can cross the CRP unless otherwise indicated by the USDA.



# Conservation Reserve Program - Migratory Bird SAFE

This program is only available to playas in certain areas of the Rainwater Basin, Central Table Playas and the Southwest Playas. This program contract is with the FSA.

**Eligibility Restrictions:**

- Area must be cropped four out of six years during the period of 2008-2013.
- Landowner must enroll the entire wetland footprint occurring on the tract.
- The wetland must be restored to the extent feasible even if part of it is not enrolled due to eligibility.
- Minimum buffer size: 120 feet, Maximum: Up to 4 acres for every wetland acre
- Minimum: 2 acres, Maximum: 160 acres.

**Restoration Costs:**

- Up to 37.5% of the restoration costs are paid for by USDA FSA through a Sign-Up Incentives Payment (32.5%) and Practice Incentives Payment (5%).
- The RWBJV and partners may pay the remainder of the restoration costs if grant funds are available. The landowner may incur some out of pocket cost for restoration.

**Contract Payment:**

- Based on a competitive bid process where landowner submits an offer to enroll playa acres for the amount they are willing to accept as an annual payment (higher ranking for lower bids).
- Maximum payment is based on average irrigated rental rates established by National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) within the Rainwater Basin.

**Contract Restrictions:**

- No buildings are allowed on the tract, no wetland drainage and no cropping during the term of the contract.
- Management is not allowed without FSA approval.
- Generally no grazing but can be allowed with a reduction in payment.



**Length of the contract:**

- 10 – 15 years with annual payments.

**RWBJV Cost-Share Options:**

- Eligible for Pivot Tire Modification Cost-Share Program if the project is in the Rainwater Basin or the Central Table Playas.
- Eligible for Working Lands if grazing implemented as mid-contract management and the project is in the Rainwater Basin or Central Table Playas.

# Hydrology Restoration Program (HRP)

The purpose of this program is to restore wetland hydrology to the fullest extent possible targeting temporary and seasonal wetlands. To participate, the landowner would agree to restore wetland hydrology and sign a 10-year agreement in exchange for an annual land use payment.

**Wetland Criteria**

- Only high priority wetlands (as determined by the RWBJV Wetland Prioritization Model) are eligible. If all landowners owning the highest priority wetlands (red) are enrolled and funding still remains, landowners owning wetlands in the second highest priority level (salmon) will be contacted.
- Wetlands that are 20 acres or smaller will be targeted.
- Wetlands with severely altered hydrology (e.g. drains, pits) will be targeted first. These wetlands should have either no functionality or low functionality.
- Hydrology within the wetland must be restored.

**Practices**

- JV partners will provide economic and technical assistance necessary to restore the wetland.

**Benefits**

- Annual payments begin once restoration is complete. Payment rates follow the HRP table below and are broken down by soil type.
- JV partners provide restoration cost-share.
- No use restrictions for the project area.
- Landowner controls hunting access

HRP - Payment Rules

Current Landuse	Fm, Fo	Sc, Sd	Ma, M	Buffer
Irrigated Cropped	\$128/A	\$96/A	\$60/A	\$128/A
Dryland Cropped	\$60/A	\$50/A	\$50/A	\$60/A
Pasture Managed	\$15/A	\$15/A	\$15/A	\$15/A



# Seasonal Habitat Improvement Program (SHIP)

This program targets cropped wetlands and allows the landowner to maintain cropping during the growing season. SHIP takes advantage of an opportunity to provide wetland habitat during times that the producer is not growing a crop. This program provides a financial incentive to landowners who provide at least the opportunity to pond water on cropped areas during the off season.

## Wetland Criteria:

- Wetland or area to be flooded must be drained, but be capable of holding water, utilizing a control structure.
- On cropland, the landowner must allow natural runoff to pond in the area immediately following harvest. Water on the cropped area may be released after March 31 of each year. On pastureland, the landowner must allow natural runoff to pond on the area beginning November 1. Water may then be released after April 30 of each year. In instances where a SHIP occurs on both cropland and pasture, the water control structure can be adjusted on March 31 so that water is not held on the cropland acres.
- The landowner understands that during the duration of this 10-year agreement, there is an inherent risk associated with late rains after March 31 that may prevent him/her from planting during some years.



## Practices:

- Water control structure installation and associated dirt work paid for by Joint Venture Partners.
- Cropland areas should have boards placed in control structure after harvest and remain in place at least until March 31.
- Pastureland should have boards placed in control structure on November 1 and remain in place at least until April 30

## Benefits:

- The landowner, in consultation with the JV Partners, will determine an acceptable pool elevation based on a topographic survey. This establishes an agreed-upon pool elevation.
- Annual payment of \$50/acre/year for cropland area determined by landowner. Annual payment of \$25/acre/year for grassland and pastureland.
- Includes technical assistance and restoration cost-share provided by JV partners during the agreement period.
- Center pivots are permitted.
- Landowner controls hunting access.
- The Private Lands Workgroup can consider and approve any proposals brought to the group.



# No Program - Restoration Assistance Only

- Region:**
- Must be a RWB playa.

**Contract is with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture**

- Eligibility Restrictions:**
- Must have wetland restored to the maximum extent feasible.

- Contract Restrictions:**
- No buildings, no wetland drainage, no cropping during term of contract.
  - Can continue to graze and/or manage without prior approval.

- Length of Contract:**
- Minimum of 10 years.

- Restoration Costs:**
- 100% paid by conservation partners.

- RWBJV Cost-Share Options:**
- Eligible for the Working Lands Program and Pivot Tire Modifications Cost-share Program.
  - Not eligible for RCPP.



# Pit Fill Program



- Regions:**
- Pits in the watershed of a perpetually protected public or private wetland.
  - Must be in the RWB region.

**Contract is with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture**

- Eligibility Restrictions:**
- Water must have a way to flow to the protected wetland.
  - Priority on pits closer to the wetland (further away still eligible).

- Contract Restrictions:**
- Can not re-excavate the pit

**Length of Contract:** 10 Years

- Restoration Costs:**
- 100% paid by the Joint Venture Partners

- Other Cost-Share Options:**
- Landowner can enroll in EQIP and receive additional cost-share for their pit fill.



# General Joint Venture Cost-Share Activities

The Joint Venture partners accept certain practices on their own or in combination with the programs outlined above. Cost share is available for these activities if they provide benefits to wildlife habitat with emphasis on migratory birds, or improve watershed hydrology with direct benefits to a protected wetland.



**Length of Agreement:** 10 years required for cost-share assistance.

**Wetland Improvements:**

- Fencing to encourage long-term grazing in wetlands
- Sediment Control Structures
- Grazing (includes deferments)
- Close and Remove Roads
- Vegetation Management
- Junk Pile Removal
- Water Development (wells, pivots, pipe, livestock)
- Re-size/add/replace culverts
- Water Control Structures
- Wetland Creation
- Wetland Seeding
- Earthwork
  - 1) Pit fills
  - 2) Drain fills
  - 3) Silt/sediment removal
  - 4) Filling road/drainage ditches
  - 5) Power line burial
  - 6) Pipeline burial
  - 7) Dikes/berms
  - 8) Tile drain removal



**Watershed Improvements:**

- Pit fills
- Re-size/add/replace culverts
- Buffers
- Grassland Restoration
- Sediment Control Structures
- Removing Flow Restrictions
- Terrace Removal
- Close and Remove Roads
- Tile Drain Removal



# Short-Term Vegetation Management Program

This program differs from the Restoration Management Program in that it does not require wetland restoration. The Short-Term Vegetation Management Program does not provide an annual land use payment or any type of land access fee. The length of the agreement is negotiable.

**Wetland Criteria:**

- Trees, cattail, reed canarygrass, or river bulrush must be a component of the plant community.
- Landowner allows access to the property for management treatment.
- Landowner signs a negotiated-length agreement that allows the Joint Venture Partners access for treatment.
- Financial assistance is limited to reimbursement for treatments only (no incentive payments).
- Grazing must be concentrated in the wetland with preferred grazing during the growing season.

**Practices:**

- Landowner agrees to allow any or all of the following: disking, chemical application, haying/shredding, prescribed burning, grazing, silt removal, pit filling, and tree removal activities.
- Reimbursement Rates:
  - a. Haying/Shredding: \$10/acre
  - b. Intensive Wetland Grazing: \$10/acre/year
  - c. Prescribed Burning: \$30/acre
  - d. Disking: \$15/acre/pass with minimum of 2 passes using a standard farm disk.
  - e. Heavy Disking: \$35/acre/pass with a minimum of 2 passes using >30" heavy construction disk.
  - f. Chemical Applications: Negotiated based on specific chemical cost, labor and equipment rates determined by NRCS docket.



**Benefits:**

- Will add functional value to the wetland.
- Additional grazing incentives may be possible such as fencing, installation of a water source, or purchase of mineral block(s).





**This program is only eligible in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas regions.**

**Purpose:**

- Conservation partners provide 85% cost-share for grazing infrastructure generally consisting of perimeter fence, livestock well and livestock tank(s). Occasionally, other infrastructure such as a cross fence or access can be covered.

**Eligibility Restrictions:**

- Must have 30 acres or more in a conservation program including the “no program-restoration only” option.

**Total Cost Estimates:**

- Fence: \$2.50/foot
- Well: \$15,000 for a 180 foot deep solar powered livestock well with one 8 foot diameter steel livestock tank and facility guards (to protect watering facility from damage by cattle). Each additional tank estimated to cost \$400.

**This program is only eligible on playas in the Rainwater Basin and Central Table Playas regions.**

**Purpose:**

- Conservation partners provide 85% cost-share to install flotation tires on pivot. Flotation tire options vary by site and pivot brand. eg. (NFTrax, extra tire on the tower, and larger tires)

**Eligibility Restrictions:**

- Must enroll at least 15 acres in a conservation program including the “no program-restoration only” option.

**Total Cost Estimates:**

- Varies by option.
- Most common option is the NFTrax: \$3,500/tower.





# Private Lands Pumping Program

The private lands pumping program offers financial assistance to landowners who would like to pump water into their wetland to benefit migratory waterfowl. The following criteria will be used by BE-Teams to determine landowner eligibility in order to participate in this program. In no particular order, these criteria and standards include the following:

**Contribution to an Existing Wetland Complex:**

- Wetland is within 5 miles of a state or federally owned wetland or an existing WRP easement or is part of a complex that has > 30% open water in the fall.
- Rainwater Basin wetlands within 3 miles of the Platte River are also eligible.

**Ability to Pond Water:**

- Wetland must contain a Rainwater Basin hydric soil.
- Existing hydrologic modifications do not result in net loss of pumped water.
  1. Artificial drains or pits must be blocked to prevent water loss.
  2. If the wetland has a pit that cannot be blocked, the landowner must first pump the pit full using their own funds.

**Winter-Spring Pumping:**

*The goal of pumping is to enhance moist-soil plant production, migration habitat, vegetative diversity, and weed control as well as to “set up” the wetland for natural precipitation events.*

- This program will only pay for pumping during the 5-month period of December 1 - April 30, OR during any month in which the pumping will be a part of a pre-approved, multiple treatment strategy for vegetation management.
- A compatible use authorization must be in place for wetlands under a WRP/WRE/WREP easement.

**Vegetative Cover in the Wetland:**

*After pumping, 50% of the wetland must be open water.*

- 25% of the vegetative cover in the wetland must be comprised of annual, moist-soil plants.
- Lower priority will be given to wetlands that are newly restored.
- Wetlands with invasive or aggressive moist-soil plants such as reed canarygrass and no management will be the lowest priority.

**Cost-Share:**

- This program will pay a maximum of \$60/acre.
- Cost-share will be capped at \$1,500/landowner/year.

*\*This program is subject to all rules and regulations of the local NRD (e.g. limitations on acre feet of water pumped, and pumping onto certified irrigated acres only)*

*\*\*The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture partners assume no liability for flooding activities associated with pumping.*

# Working Lands Enhancement Program (WLEP)

This is a 10-year program that focuses on enhancing and managing quality wetland habitat using managed grazing.

**Program Criteria:**

- Landowner must be willing to manage the wetland through grazing, in conjunction with other management activities, to enhance the vegetation for the benefit of migratory waterbirds and to control invasive vegetation (e.g., reed canarygrass and cattails).
- Landowner enters a 10-year agreement that allows the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Partners to cooperatively manage the wetland for the duration of the agreement.

**Practices:**

*Livestock watering system*

- Solar powered submersible well
- Electric well
- Underground pipeline to an existing well (upland soils only)

*Fencing*

- High tensile electric fence
- Barbed-wire fence







#### Reimbursement Rates:

##### Well Development:

- Submersible Solar Well—Up to 85% of the approved costs of the well including the following components:
  1. Well drilling, casing, submersible pump, and associated submersible pump components.
  2. Solar Panel
  3. Backpack Generator
  4. Solar Panels
  5. 12' Tire Tank on Concrete Pad
- Submersible Electric Well

***Up to 50% of the costs of the electric line. The electric line will not cross through the hydric soil footprint in shallow clay-pan basins. The location of the electric line must be approved by the RWBJV project liaison prior to placement. Additionally, up to 85% of the approved costs of the well, including the following components.***

1. Well drilling, casing, submersible pump, and associated submersible pump components.
2. Solar Panel
3. Backpack Generator
4. Solar Panels
5. 12' Tire Tank

##### Fence Development—Wildlife-Friendly Only:

- High tensile electric fence:
  1. Up to 85% of the approved costs of the fence, including fence, fence installation, pivot gates, and pivot gate components.
- 4-Strand Permanent barbed wire (lower wire barbless):
  1. Up to 85% of the approved costs of the fence according to NRCS wildlife-friendly fencing specifications.

## Conservation Partners







Rainwater Basin Joint Venture



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Pheasants Forever



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Natural Resources Conservation Service



Rainwater Basin Joint Venture



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Nebraska Game and Parks



Pheasants Forever



**Compiled by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Private Lands Work Group.  
Approved by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Management Board.**

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**For more information about the Programs Manual, go to**

**[www.rwbjv.org](http://www.rwbjv.org)**