

USDA Increases Funding for Partnerships to Safeguard, Restore Wetland Ecosystems

DOVER, Del., July 5, 2024 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$50 million in fiscal 2024 to help conservation partners nationwide protect and restore critical wetlands through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is prioritizing proposals that provide outreach to new customers, support acquisition activities, and assist with planning and implementing restoration practices on new enrollments or existing easements associated with funded WREP proposals. In addition, proposals with significant and detailed outreach and support plans to encourage enrollment of historically underserved landowners will be prioritized. Proposals from partners are due August 16, 2024.

“Partnerships are an essential part of restoring and protecting wetlands, which can improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and help address climate change,” said Jena Moore, Acting NRCS State Conservationist in Delaware. “These partnerships are vital to reaching historically underserved communities in Delaware and across the nation. Together with our partners, we can also expand equity in conservation opportunities through these projects.”

Restored wetlands help to improve water quality downstream, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce impacts from flooding and provide recreational benefits. The most sought-after lands for the WREP program are referred to as “marginal,” meaning they do not produce to their full capacity due to repeat flooding or standing water. Removing marginal lands from production can provide economic benefits for agricultural landowners while also restoring the wetlands to accomplish their full functions and values.

Through WREP projects, eligible conservation partners protect, restore and enhance high-priority wetlands on agricultural lands. WREP enables effective integration of wetland restoration on working agricultural landscapes, providing meaningful benefits to farmers and ranchers who enroll in the program and to the communities where the wetlands exist.

WREP will continue to prioritize enrollment of historically underserved landowners in its ranking of proposals. This includes proposals that:

- Target places with historically underserved producers.
- Focus outreach to historically underserved producers.
 - Provide assistance with application materials and helping resolve heirs' property and title issues.

Partners target outreach and enrollment priorities supported by NRCS, including places impacted by natural disasters. Eligible partners include Tribes, state and local governments and non-government organizations. WREP partners are required to contribute a financial or technical assistance fund match.

How to Apply

Partners must submit proposals to Elena Stewart via email at elena.stewart@usda.gov and courtesy copy to NRCS.ProgramAgreements@usda.gov by August 16, 2024.

Partners looking to learn more about opportunities for WREP funding for fiscal year 2024 are encouraged to watch the recording of the [virtual WREP workshop](#) from June 20, 2024.

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