

News Release

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Signup Deadline Announced for Alabama's Financial Assistance Programs

Auburn, Ala., August 18, 2026 – Alabama State Conservationist, Ben Malone, with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces that the Fiscal Year 2027 Financial Assistance Programs signup deadline is **September 25th, 2026**. Applicable programs include the:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP – Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Program (EQIP-JCLRPP)

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land. More specifically:

ACEP-WRE: easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities. Land eligible for wetland reserve easements include farmed or converted wetland that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. NRCS will prioritize applications based the easement's potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

ACEP-ALE: easements help private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements.

CSP: helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance, the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

EQIP: provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against increasing weather volatility.

EQIP-JCLRPP – “Alabama Chattahoochee Fall Line Restoring Longleaf” project: will provide cost share for prescribed burning, longleaf pine planting, mid-rotation longleaf pine stand timber improvements on private lands in Bullock, Macon, and Russell counties in the Alabama portion of the Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership. The project will support NRCS and Tuskegee National Forest to implement prescribed burning, longleaf pine restoration treatment and planting, and collaboration with private landowners to achieve landscape scale ecosystem restoration, wildfire threat reduction, and to improve timber health while sustaining the local forestry economy.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis; however, selecting applications for funding is completed periodically through batching periods with specific cutoff dates. The first cutoff date is **September 25th, 2026**. Applications received after this date will be held and considered for subsequent funding announcements as available funds permit.

For more information about Alabama NRCS and Programmatic initiatives, priorities and assessment/ranking criteria, visit online at www.al.nrcs.usda.gov. Additionally, visit your local USDA Service Center to determine eligibility; applicants are not eligible for USDA programs until they have ensured all Farm Bill eligibility requirements have been met. You can locate your local Service Center at farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

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