



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

USDA NRCS in Tennessee encourages qualified private landowners to apply for ACEP-WRE

Deadline to apply is November 3, 2023

NASHVILLE, October 10, 2023 – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has announced an application deadline for fiscal year 2023 funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) which includes special emphasis projects through NRCS partnerships with the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WRE) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Private landowners or entities are encouraged to apply by **Friday, November 3, 2023**.

“Tennessee is committed to preserving working agricultural lands to help protect and restore vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality,” NRCS Tennessee State Conservationist Sheldon Hightower said. *“ACEP-WRE will allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance, and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities.”*

ACEP-WRE can be enrolled as 30-year or perpetual, based on the landowner(s) desired management of the offered property. 30-year easements are valued at 25 percent less than perpetual easements and landowners are responsible for 25 percent of restoration costs whereas perpetual easements are eligible for a 100 percent restoration cost-share. Alternatively, landowners have the option to offer their property at a reduced purchase and/or restoration cost to improve application ranking.

ACEP-Agricultural Land Easements are enrolled for perpetuity to protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Applications for the ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement will only be accepted from eligible sponsoring entities, not individual landowners. Eligible entities include State or local units of government, Indian Tribes, or nongovernmental organizations, such as a conservancy or a land trust.

Through ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement, NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing agricultural easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers keep their land in agriculture.

Applications received after the designated cutoff date of **Friday, November 3** will be considered in the next program year or in subsequent application periods, if announced. If a landowner is applying for ACEP on multiple parcels of land, any non-contiguous parcels must be submitted as separate applications. Contiguous multiple parcels may be submitted as one application, provided the ownership is identical for each parcel. Under the 2018 Farm Bill, ACEP-WRE identifies water quality as a program purpose for enrollment of wetland reserve easements.

Entities and landowners interested in applying for ACEP-WRE funding should visit the [NRCS ACEP webpage](#) or contact their [local NRCS Service Center](#).

Contact Garrett Morris at garrett.morris@usda.gov or 615-277-2576, for more information about the ACEP program in Tennessee.

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