APPENDIX F - USDA PROGRAMS THAT MAY BE APPLICABLE TO URBAN OR URBANIZING AREAS

INTRODUCTION

This appendix contains information on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs approved under the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) regarding the bill's conservation provisions. Although tailored for agricultural lands, these programs may complement local initiatives in urban or urbanizing areas regarding environmentally-sensitive areas and storm water management, floodplain preservation, ground water recharge, wildlife habitat, open space, recreation, and the preservation of rural character. Opportunities may exist for utilizing these programs as land is converted from agricultural to urban land uses. These programs could also be useful in meeting requirements of the Non-point Source Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) phase II. Developers and municipal planners can conceivably take advantage of USDA programs and become a program participant as long as the land associated with the program continues to meet USDA criteria. Crucial issues affecting USDA criteria includes having the land registered with a valid farm tract number and insuring that participation in the USDA program(s) is initiated prior to changes in agricultural land use.

The following is a summary of programs that could possibly assist conservation activities in an urban or urbanizing areas:

<u>Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)</u> The CRP is a voluntary program for eligible producers that offers incentive and maintenance payments for specified conservation activities on eligible crop or pasture lands. The program's purpose is to encourage the planting of ground covers that improve soil, water and wildlife resources. CRP makes available federal cost-share assistance of up to 50% of the participant's cost in installing approved conservation practices. Contract duration may last from ten to fifteen years. CRP could potentially be used in steep-sloped areas that would otherwise prohibit development. CRP could also be utilized for tree or native grass plantings in conjunction with required buffers between development and sensitive water bodies.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) EQIP is a voluntary program for eligible producers, on eligible land, that offers incentive payments of up to 90% of the costs on eligible conservation practices. Soon to be available under the EQIP program are Conservation Innovation Grants. These grants, after their draft provisions have been finalized, are anticipated to be available for use by the broader public to leverage federal investment, stimulate innovative approaches, and accelerate technology transfer. Any development proposal that could incorporate conservation best management practices could potentially be eligible under this program. Developers who need to meet local development requirements mandating groundwater protection, buffers and storm water detention, could utilize this program to help offset implementation costs. Some types of practices that could qualify under EQIP include riparian forest buffers, rock chutes, wetland enhancement, filter strips, diversions, water and sediment control basins, and grassed waterways. One example in Illinois of the use of EQIP funds in an urbanizing area includes a site near East Peoria, where EQIP funds were used prior to site development for the construction of two ponds to include spillway construction, seeding, and mulching.

Farmland Protection Program/Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FPP/FRPP) The purpose of the FPP/FRPP is to encourage topsoil protection by limiting nonagricultural uses of the land. Under the program, the federal government may contribute up to 50% of the cost for the purchase of development rights regarding a qualifying parcel. At the time of this writing, the FRPP rules were in draft form and open for public comment. The FRPP is anticipated to be similar in many ways to the FPP program, which has been repealed. The FRPP program could potentially be used in conjunction with community development or agricultural land subdivision. The FRPP could be useful for development requirements that encourage open space set-asides which maximizes land remaining on the tax rolls. FRPP would also be useful for planned unit developments or conservation subdivision designs that permit the agreedupon density, yet allow larger areas of contiguous open space. Land under FRPP could also be used for other than row-crop production. Tree farms, specialty crops, gardens, and nurseries are all potential land uses under the program that could continue to generate revenues for both the land owner and the community while providing open space, aesthetic features, and passive storm water management.

<u>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)</u> Through this program, NRCS provides technical expertise and funding needed for practices that enhance wildlife habitat on private land. Landowners may enter into five to ten year agreements to implement an approved habitat enhancement plan. Longer agreements may be available for landowners that are willing to create long-lasting habitat for especially vulnerable species. This program is unique in that a farm tract number is not a requirement for enrollment. Any privately owned land can be eligible under WHIP as long as it enhances wildlife habitat. Examples of where this program could be utilized in site planning and development include odd lots or land contiguous to streams, lakes, or storm water detention/retention areas where native plantings that enhance wildlife habitat are desirable.

<u>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)</u> WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetlands, wildlife habitat, and other soil and water natural resource concerns. Through this program, eligible landowners must file an application for either a permanent conservation easement, a 30-year easement, or a minimum 10-year restoration agreement. The federal government may pay up to 100% for wetland restoration and permanent easement costs; 75% of restoration and 75% of the permanent easement costs on a 30-year easement; and 75% of restoration costs for a restoration cost-share agreement.

One example of a development that has taken advantage of the wetland reserve program has been the Hidden Creek development in Ohio, where 232 acres were set aside in perpetuity to protect wildlife habitat along a nearby creek. The developer, working in cooperation with the NRCS and the local soil and water conservation district, desired to maintain the environmentally-sensitive areas of the property in a natural state and made the decision to qualify and participate. Prior to development, the environmentally-sensitive lands were set aside and the USDA-NRCS, in accordance with WRP program criteria, designed the wetlands and were awarded a permanent conservation easement. The developer was eligible for cost-share money and technical assistance and the wetlands thereafter will provide wetland functions that can be used in conjunction with development: passive storm water detention, ground water filtering, and natural open space.

Included as part of this appendix are fact sheets regarding each of the above mentioned programs.

The intent here is to provide the reader with examples of concepts, incentives and resources from the USDA that could potentially be incorporated into community-based conservation projects. While an effort has been made to provide an accurate listing of program information, this information is constantly changing to better meet the public's needs. For the most up-to-date information regarding programs, please contact your local USDA service center or visit the national USDA-NRCS website at http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov

This section was updated in November 2002.

NRCS IL November 2002

urbapp_F.doc

(This page was intentionally left blank)

Farm Service Agency

January 2002

Fact Sheet

USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Reserve Program

Authorization

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorized the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which is implemented through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). The program is also governed by the regulations published in 7 CFR part 1410.

Overview

The CRP is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments, incentive payments, and annual maintenance payments for certain activities, and cost-share assistance to establish approved cover on eligible cropland.

The program encourages farmers to plant long-term resourceconserving covers to improve soil, water, and wildlife resources. CCC makes available cost-share assistance in an amount equal to not more than 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved practices. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP is administered by FSA. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cooperative State Research and Education Extension Service, state forestry agencies, and local soil and water conservation districts provide technical support. Private sector technical assistance vendors may also be available.

Eligible Land

To be eligible for placement in the CRP land must be:

- Cropland that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 2 of the 5 most recent crop years (including field margins) and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Marginal pastureland that is either:
 - Certain acreage enrolled in the Water Bank Program; or
 - Suitable for use as a riparian buffer to be planted to trees.

Additional Requirements for Cropland

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following:

- Have a weighted average Erosion Index (EI) of 8 or higher or be considered highly erodible land according to the conservation compliance provisions;
- 2. Be considered a cropped wetland;

- Be devoted to any of a number of highly beneficial environmental practices, such as filter strips, riparian buffers, grass waterways, shelterbelts, wellhead protection areas, and other similar practices;
- 4. Be subject to scour erosion;
- 5. Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area;
- Be cropland associated with or surrounding noncropped wetlands.

Ranking Criteria

Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI).

The designated technical agency collects data for each of the EBI factors, based upon the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all others and selections made from that ranking.

EBI factors include:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching;
- On-farm benefits of reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;

- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion;
- Benefits of enrollment in conservation priority areas where enrollment would contribute to the improvement of identified adverse water quality, wildlife habitat, or air quality; and
- Cost.

Producer Eligibility Requirements

A producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the signup period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land as a result of death of the previous owner;
- The only ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right or redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to CCC that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

Rental Rates

The CCC bases rental rates on the relative productivity of soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent or the cash-rent equivalent.

The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or may offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

In addition, CCC offers additional financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the annual payment for certain continuous signup practices.

Other Payments

The CCC encourages restoration of wetlands by offering a one-time incentive payment equal to 25 percent of the cost of restoring the hydrology of the site. This is in addition to the 50-percent cost share provided to establish approved cover.

Continuous Signup

Eligible acreage devoted to certain special conservation practices, such as riparian buffers, filter strips, grass waterways, shelterbelts, living snow fences, contour grass strips, salt tolerant vegetation, and shallow water areas for wildlife. may be enrolled at any time under the CCC's continuous signup and are not subject to competitive bidding. In addition, land within a designated public wellhead area may be eligible to be enrolled on a continuous basis. (See FSA Fact Sheet: "Continuous Signup for High-Priority Practices" for further details.)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



June 2002

Farm Bill 2002

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Overview The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible National goals. Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers EQIP. Funding for EQIP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

How EQIP Works

EQIP activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer. Contracts for confined livestock feeding operations require development and implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). This plan is approved by the local conservation district. Practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use an approved third-party provider for technical assistance.

EQIP applications are accepted throughout the year. NRCS evaluates each application using a state and locally developed evaluation process. Higher priorities are given to applications that encourage the use of cost-effective conservation practices, address National conservation priorities, and optimize environmental benefits. State Technical Committees, Tribal representatives, and local working groups convened by the conservation district advise NRCS on implementation of the program to address identified resource needs and concerns.

EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices important to improving and maintaining the health of natural resources in the area. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a producer to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, irrigation water management, and wildlife habitat management, or to develop a CNMP and components of a CNMP. Limited resource farmers and beginning farmers may be eligible for up to 90 percent of the cost of conservation practices.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term of one year after implementation of the last scheduled practice and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost share payments for implementing conservation practices.

Total cost-share and incentive payments are limited to \$450,000 per individual over the period of the 2002 Farm Bill, regardless of the number of farms or contracts. Starting in fiscal year 2003, no individual or entity may receive EQIP payments in any crop year in which the individual or entity's average adjusted gross income for the preceding three years exceeds \$2.5 million, unless 75 percent of that income is from farming, ranching, or forestry interests.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Conservation Innovation Grants

EQIP provides opportunities for Conservation Innovation Grants, which are competitive grant awards to stimulate innovative approaches to environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to use EQIP funds each fiscal year from 2003 to 2007 to award grants to government or nongovernment organizations or individuals that leverage Federal funds to implement innovative approaches to conservation. Grant amounts may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of each project.

Conservation Innovation Grants provide the opportunity for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to work with other public and private entities to accelerate technology transfer and implementation of promising technologies to address the Nation's most pressing agricultural related natural resource problems. Agricultural producers, particularly those facing the most difficult challenges, will benefit by having more options for enhancing the environment and meeting Federal, State, and local regulations.

Ground and Surface Water Conservation

EQIP provides for additional funding specifically to promote ground and surface water conservation activities to improve irrigation systems; convert to the production of less water intensive agricultural commodities; improve water storage through measures such as water banking and groundwater recharge; or institute other measures that improve groundwater and surface water conservation, as determined by the Secretary.

Assistance to a producer may be provided only to facilitate a conservation measure that results in a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources in the agricultural operation of the producer. This provision is funded for fiscal years 2002 through 2007.

Eligibility

Producers engaged in livestock or crop production on eligible land may apply for the program. Eligible land includes cropland; rangeland; pasture; private non-industrial forestland; and other farm or ranch lands, as determined by the Secretary.

For More Information

If you need more information about EQIP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/ 2002/



Visit USDA on the Web at: http://www.usda.gov/farmbill



May 2002

Overview

The Farmland Protection Program (FPP) is a voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program provides matching funds to State, Tribal, or local governments and nongovernmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in land. FPP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the program.

Benefit/Accomplishments

Through 2001, more than 108,000 acres have been protected in 28 states.

How FPP Works

USDA works through State, Tribal, and local governments and non-governmental organizations to conduct the FPP. These entities acquire conservation easements from landowners. Participating landowners agree not to convert their land to non-agricultural uses and to develop and implement a conservation plan for any highly erodible land. All highly erodible lands enrolled must have a conservation plan developed based on the standards in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and approved by the local conservation district. Landowners retain all rights to use the property for agriculture.

To participate, a landowner submits an application to an entity—a State, Tribal, or local government or a non-governmental organization—that has an existing farmland protection program. The NRCS State

Farm Bill 2002

Farmland Protection Program

conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Committee, awards funds to qualified entities to conduct their farmland protection programs. Although a minimum of 30 years is required for conservation easements, priority is given to applications with perpetual easements.

Eligibility

To qualify for FPP, the land offered must be part or all of a farm or ranch and must:

- Contain prime, unique, or other productive soil or historical or archaeological resources;
- Be included in a pending offer from a State, Tribal, or local government or nongovernmental organization's farmland protection program;
- Be privately owned;
- Be covered by a conservation plan for any highly erodible land;
- Be large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- Be accessible to markets for what the land produces; and
- Be surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

If the land cannot be converted to nonagricultural uses because of existing deed restrictions or other legal constraints, it is ineligible for FPP.

Funding

FPP is funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation. The FPP share of the easement cost must not exceed 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement or other interest in the land. A State,

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Tribal, or local government or nongovernmental organization may supplement its share of the easement cost through a landowner's donation, not to exceed 25 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement.

For More Information

If you need more information about FPP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/ 2002/



Visit USDA on the Web at: http://www.usda.gov/farmbill



May 2002

Overview

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

WHIP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). Through WHIP, NRCS works with private landowners and operators; conservation districts; and Federal, State, and Tribal agencies to develop wildlife habitat on their property. Funding for WHIP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Benefits

Since WHIP began in 1998, nearly 11,000 participants have enrolled more than 1.6 million acres into the program. Most efforts have concentrated on improving upland wildlife habitat, such as native prairie, but there is an increasing emphasis on improving riparian and aquatic areas. The 2002 Farm Bill greatly expands the available tools for improving wildlife habitat conditions across the Nation.

Species that have benefited from WHIP activities include the grasshopper sparrow, bobwhite quail, swift fox, short-eared owl, Karner-blue butterfly, gopher tortoise, Louisiana black bear, Eastern collared lizard, Bachman's sparrow, ovenbird, and acorn woodpecker.

How WHIP Works

Program

Conservation districts convene local work groups to identify local wildlife habitat priorities. The local work groups then provide input to the State Technical Committee that advises the State conservationist in the development of a State WHIP plan. The State WHIP plan serves as a guide for the development of the State WHIP ranking criteria.

Persons interested in entering into a cost-share agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop wildlife habitat may file an application at any time. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land for a period of time, but retain private ownership.

NRCS works with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat development plan. This plan becomes the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the practices to be installed.

There are shorter-term agreements to install practices that are needed to meet wildlife emergencies, as approved by the NRCS State conservationist. NRCS also provides greater cost-share assistance to landowners who enter into agreements of 15 years or more for practices on essential plant and animal habitat. NRCS can use up to 15 percent of its available WHIP funds for this purpose.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Farm Bill 2002

Wildlife Habitat Incentives

NRCS does not place limits on the number of acres that can be enrolled in the program or the amount of payment made; however, some States may choose to establish such requirements. NRCS welcomes projects that provide valuable wildlife habitat and does not want to discourage any landowner who desires to implement practices that will improve habitat conditions for declining species.

NRCS continues to provide assistance to landowners after completion of habitat development activities. This assistance may be in the form of monitoring habitat practices, reviewing management guidelines, or providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for targeted species.

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be obtained through USDA's e-gov Internet site at: www.sc.egov.usda.gov. Enter "Natural Resources Conservation Service" in the Agency field, "Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program" in the Program Name field, and "CCC-1250" in the Form Number field. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

Eligibility

Eligible lands under the program are:

- Privately owned land;
- Federal land when the primary benefit is on private or Tribal land;
- State and local government land on a limited basis; and
- Tribal land.

If land is determined eligible, NRCS places emphasis on enrolling:

- Habitat areas for wildlife species experiencing declining or significantly reduced populations;
- Practices beneficial to fish and wildlife that may not otherwise be funded; and
- Wildlife and fishery habitats identified by local and State partners and Indian Tribes in each State.

For More Information

If you need more information about WHIP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/ 2002/



Visit USDA on the Web at: http://www.usda.gov/farmbill



May 2002

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that 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 program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. WRP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program. Funding for WRP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

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

Wetlands benefit the Nation by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; as well as providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

How WRP Works

Landowners and Tribes may file an application for a conservation easement or a cost-share

Farm Bill 2002

Wetlands Reserve Program

restoration agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to restore and protect wetlands. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land, but retain private ownership.

The program offers three enrollment options:

Permanent Easement. This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments for this option equal the lowest of three amounts: the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.

30-Year Easement. Easement payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays 75 percent of restoration costs.

For both permanent and 30-year easements, USDA pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement. This is an agreement (generally for a minimum of 10 years) to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity. This enrollment option does not place an easement on the property. Other agencies, conservation districts, and private conservation organizations may provide additional assistance for easement payments and wetland restoration costs as a way to reduce the landowner's share of the

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

costs. Such special partnership efforts are encouraged.

NRCS and its partners, including conservation districts, continue to provide assistance to landowners after completion of restoration activities. This assistance may be in the form of reviewing restoration measures, clarifying technical and administrative aspects of the easement and project management needs, and providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for wetland dependent species.

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be obtained through USDA's e-gov Internet site at: www.sc.egov.usda.gov. Enter "Natural Resources Conservation Service" in the Agency field, "Wetlands Reserve Program" in the Program Name field, and "CCC-1250" in the Form Number field.

Eligibility

To offer a conservation easement, the landowner must have owned the land for at least 12 months prior to enrolling it in the program, unless the land was inherited, the landowner exercised the landowner's right of redemption after foreclosure, or the landowner can prove the land was not obtained for the purpose of enrolling it in the program. To participate in a restoration cost-share agreement, the landowner must show evidence of ownership.

To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and be suitable for wildlife benefits. This includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;

- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Range land, pasture, or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long-term protection.

Ineligible Land. Ineligible land includes wetlands converted after December 23, 1985; lands with timber stands established under a Conservation Reserve Program contract; Federal lands; and lands where conditions make restoration impossible.

Uses of WRP Land

On acreage subject to a WRP easement, participants control access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities. At any time, a participant may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

For More Information

If you need more information about WRP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/ 2002/

