

Applications are currently being accepted from landowners interested in restoring wetlands on their property through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Landowners may apply for funding at their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office.

WRP is a voluntary program that helps restore wetlands. NRCS provides farmers and ranchers technical and financial assistance to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on their property. WRP offers payments for wetlands and associated uplands that have been degraded or converted to agricultural uses.

Craig Derickson, NRCS state conservationist said, "Spring is a great time for landowners to determine if there are any wetlands on their property. Often, wetland acres are far less productive cropland, and WRP can help relieve the burden of trying to farm marginal lands by providing an economic gain to the landowner through a conservation easement or agreement."

There are several easement and agreement options available through WRP. Landowners can enroll their land into a permanent or 30-year easement, or a 10-year restoration agreement. Derickson points out that no matter the length of the easement, landowners retain control of access and ownership of the property.

"Landowners can still use the land for hunting, bird watching, and in some cases, grazing. There are several activities allowed if they are consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland," Derickson said.

Nationwide, more than two million acres are enrolled in the program. In Nebraska, over 630 landowners have enrolled more than 87,000 acres into the Wetlands Reserve Program. These wetlands provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and reduce flooding.

"Landowners and operators interested in wetland restoration should visit their local NRCS field office. Applications for WRP are accepted at any time, but funding will be distributed to the highest ranked applications soon," Derickson said.

More information on restoring a wetland through WRP is available at [www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/](http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/) or at an NRCS office in any USDA Service Center.