



United States Department of Agriculture

News Release

Natural Resources
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USDA Flood Plain Easement Opportunities Available in North Carolina

Raleigh, N.C., March 11, 2019 — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Carolina has funding available through the Emergency Watershed Protection – Flood Plain Easement (EWP-FPE) program to purchase easements on public or private North Carolina agricultural and residential properties damaged from natural flooding events. Eligible applicants may be awarded the fair market value of land and structures, and NRCS will cover the cost of restoration of the easement, including the demolition or removal of structures present on the property.

EWP-FPE allows NRCS to purchase easements on lands flooded in the past 12 months or at least twice in the previous 10 years. Under the floodplain easement option, a landowner voluntarily sells NRCS a permanent conservation easement that provides the NRCS with the full authority to restore and enhance the floodplain's functions and values. In exchange, a landowner receives the least of one of the three following values as an easement payment: a geographic rate established by the NRCS state conservationist; a value based on a market appraisal analysis for agricultural uses or assessment for agricultural land; or the landowner offer.

EWP-FPE is a coordinated effort between local landowners, a local sponsor and NRCS. Local sponsors include Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have conservation programs. Local sponsors need to identify blocks or groups of landowners within a flood plain who are collectively willing to participate in the easement buy-out. The local sponsor should submit, to NRCS, a letter of interest outlining the project scope and map of the impacted areas.

To be considered, local sponsors are to submit letters of interests and maps by mail to:

USDA - NRCS
State Conservationist
4407 Bland Road, Ste 117
Raleigh, NC 27609

All proposals must be received by close of business on April 19, 2109.

EWP-FPE provides NRCS with the authority to restore and enhance the floodplain's functions and values. NRCS may pay up to 100% of the restoration costs. To the extent practicable, NRCS actively restores the natural features and characteristics of the floodplain through re-creating the topographic diversity, increasing the duration of inundation and saturation, and providing for the re-establishment of native vegetation.

A project sponsor is not required unless residential properties will be enrolled, and, in that case, the sponsor will purchase the property if fee simple title after the easement closes. The landowner is left with no interest in the enrolled property. On the other hand, EWP easements on open or Agricultural lands do not require a sponsor and, in that situation, the owner retains fee simple title and the rights including; quiet enjoyment, the right to control public access, and the right to undeveloped recreational use such as hunting and fishing. At any time, a landowner may obtain authorization from NRCS to engage in other activities, provided that NRCS determines it will further the protection and enhancement of the easement's floodplain functions and values. These compatible uses may include managed timber harvest, periodic haying, or grazing. NRCS determines the amount, method, timing, intensity, and duration of any compatible use that might be authorized. While a landowner can realize economic returns from an activity allowed for on the easement area, a landowner is not assured of any specific level or frequency of such use, and the authorization does not vest any right of any kind to the landowner.

Interested landowners and sponsors can contact their local USDA Service Center for more information about the EWP Program's floodplain easements or Brian Loadholt NRCS Easement Coordinator at 919.873.2160. For more information, visit www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov.

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