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WHAT'S INSIDE . . .

- Frequently Asked Questions: What can I do with my WRP/WRE easement?
- Photos from the field
- What if you've sold your easement?
- Your 6-month easement management calendar!

Partners Celebrate 25 Years & 700,000 Acres of Wetlands Reserve Conservation

Last fall, on October 20, 2017, conservation partners gathered to celebrate a significant milestone: 25 years of highly successful conservation with over 700,000 acres restored and protected through the U.S.D.A. Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) program in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The event was held on an impressive WRE property owned by Perry Pitre in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, with celebration activities on a Spanish moss-draped boat launch on Lake Marydale in Buckhorn Wildlife Management Area (WMA) adjoining the Wiggles family WRE. **As a WRP/WRE easement owner, you are helping to make history and creating a legacy for future generations!**



MISSISSIPPI WETLAND RESERVE News for Easement Owners

Spring 2018



Natural Resources Conservation Service



A message from

JASON KEENAN, MISSISSIPPI NRCS ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST - EASEMENTS

Hello Easement owner!

We welcome you to the first newsletter developed with you in mind! Since the program started in the early 1990s, we have enrolled over 182,000 acres in easements in Mississippi. Each one of those acres has contributed to the better development of wetlands and wildlife habitat. You as an easement owner should take pride in those accomplishments. The Mississippi USDA-NRCS staff wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation. Since these easements are long term conservation efforts, it is important we keep in constant communication. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Look through this newsletter, and find what you can do to manage your wetland easement. Find our contact information and reach out to us if you have any questions. Lastly, enjoy your piece of conservation. Thank you again for you participation in the Wetlands Easement programs!

- Jason Keenan

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY
WRP/WRE EASEMENT?**

- Q: Can I conduct a timber thinning on my easement and, if possible, sell the timber?**
A: Yes, but before you start, you must get approval from NRCS to determine if it is needed. Contact your local NRCS county office to schedule a biologist visit. A list of county offices is available online here: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ms/contact/local/> or in your local phone book listed under USDA Service Center.
- Q: Can I lease my easement for hunting?**
A: Of course! This is one of the rights you retain as an easement owner.
- Q: How can I manage my shallow water/moist soil habitat areas?**
A: A Compatible Use Authorization issued by NRCS for managing these areas allows for mowing, disking, plowing, prescribed burning, herbicide use, and proper manipulation of water levels. Please ensure your Compatible Use Authorization is up-to-date. A valid Compatible Use Authorization is not past its expiration date and is in the current landowner's name.
- Q: Can I remove trees that have grown up within my moist soil area?**
A: Yes. Managing the unit for moist soil vegetation increases the food production for waterfowl.
- Q: Can I install a well to flood my shallow water areas?**
A: Yes, but you must get approval from NRCS and instruction for proper location.
- Q: Can I install a water control structure on the easement?**
A: No, but you can request a water control structure from your county office; NRCS will determine if it can be allowed.
- Q: I am going to sell my easement, do I need to notify NRCS?**
A: Yes, please. Contact the NRCS state office in Jackson, MS at 601-965-5205 and ask for the easement staff.
- Q: I bought an old easement, can NRCS provide someone to advise me how to manage it?**
A: Yes! We have biologists with the exact knowledge to help get your easement into its best condition.
- Q: Can I build a shed or camp house on my easement?**
A: No buildings or structures are allowed on Wetland Reserve Program easements. Small hunting blinds are allowed if they do not exceed 80 sq. ft. and can easily be removed.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Beautiful late spring/summer response from disking the previous fall.



Moist soil plants hard at work producing seed.



Reaping the rewards of your work!

For any concerns about your easement as well as advice, permissions, or requests referenced above please contact:
Rick Hagar at
richard.hagar@ms.usda.gov

*Want to see your pictures here?
Submit your quality photos to
this guy!*

Have you sold your easement?

**If so, we'd appreciate very much if you could please contact us!
Call 601-965-5205.**

Your 6-month Easement Management Calendar

MARCH

- Continue holding water in hydrology units. Waterfowl are looking for habitat this month as cropland is typically drained.**
- Soil test upland food plots in anticipation of planting.**

APRIL

- Begin drawdowns on some hydrology units by removing one board every 14 days. All units should not be started at the same time in order to develop a diversity of duck food.**
- Plant upland food plots such as dove fields in sunflowers and deer plots in cowpeas or soybeans.**

MAY

- Continue drawdowns of hydrology units to provide a diversity of moist soil waterfowl foods.**
- Monitor moist soil plant development and control any undesirable species using mowing, disking, or herbicide.**
- Plant floodable food plots such as corn and grain sorghum in order to mature before fall flooding.**

JUNE

- Continue drawdowns. A Mississippi State University study on WRP properties in the Delta revealed that late drawdowns in June resulted in the greatest winter duck response.**
- Continue to monitor moist soil and control any undesirable plants.**
- Mow levees and roads for routine maintenance.**

JULY

- Stop drawdowns of any units with remaining water and let evaporation take over. Removing boards in extremely hot temperatures will cause drying to occur too quickly and not give desired results.**
- Continue to monitor moist soil and control any undesirable plants.**

AUGUST

- Continue to monitor moist soil and control any undesirable plants.**
- Disk 1/2 to 1/3 of moist soil units in order to make areas of open water, facilitate good aquatic invertebrate growth, make seed available for dabbling, and apply the required disturbance that will facilitate next year's preferred annual moist soil plants.**
- Disk upland food plots in preparation for fall plantings such as wheat, oats, and clovers.**



Pulling boards on a water control structure Apr/May.



Sometimes pulling boards is a two-person job!



Spring drawdown in a moist soil habitat begins!