



**TRI-STATE
CONSERVATION
PARTNERSHIP**

**LA/MS CDN
Winter Meeting
Feb. 10, 2021**

WRE Outreach Working Group



WRE Management Videos

- Wetland Management
- Forest Management



WRE Outreach Working Groups



MS - ACEP Workshop

- 3,500 landowners

2020 Registration NOW OPEN for NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Workshops

WHEN ARE THE WORKSHOPS?

The workshops will be conducted virtually via Zoom on

- Tuesday, October 6 from 10 am – 12 noon
- Thursday, October 8 from 2 pm to 4 pm

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

* Details of ALE and WRE * The application process * Required documentation * What a restored easement will look like * Ranking of offers * How to make the best WRE offer.

You should strongly encourage anyone interested in ACEP to attend one of these meetings, they will be glad they did!

HOW DO I REGISTER?

Any interested landowners in Mississippi are welcome to attend. Anyone planning to attend must register online at <https://lowerdelta.org/workshops/>.

ACEP CONSISTS OF TWO COMPONENTS

Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) assist conservation organizations to protect productive working lands by preventing non-agricultural uses and maximize protection of land devoted to food production (such as land shown at right).



Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands and improve wildlife habitat. Eligible WRE lands include farmed or prior-converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored (such as land shown at left).




In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. *Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. *USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

WRE Outreach Working Groups




LA – WRE Enrollment

- 2,000 landowners



United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service

WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS (WRE) ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS IN LOUISIANA

With the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program, you can:

- Receive up to \$3,950/acre for enrolling in WRE (payment rates vary by zone and land use, and are in review for 2021 rate adjustments).
- Reduce risk of farming flood-prone land.
- Develop highly productive wildlife habitat.
- Retain ownership of your property, as well as access control, hunting and fishing rights, and the ability to sell the property.
- Incur little or no out of pocket cost for habitat restoration such as tree planting and wetland development.
- Enjoy improved opportunities to observe wildlife as well as increase hunting opportunities for waterfowl, deer, and other wildlife.
- Create potential income from leased hunting.
- Make great memories with family and friends.
- Leave a lasting legacy for your children and grandchildren.
- Contribute to wildlife and ecosystem health regionally.

Understanding
Wetland Reserve
Easements
See URL
below!

WRE Eligible Land Types
Ranking and enrollment priority is given to applications that include:

- Farmed Wetlands or Prior Converted Cropland, Pasture, or Hayland

Other eligible lands may include:

- Former or Degraded Wetlands
- Riparian (stream-side) areas
- Some CRP lands

WRE Easement Options


- Permanent: 100% of payment rate and 100% of restoration costs provided
- 30-year: 75% of payment rate, 75% of restoration costs provided with 25% match provided by Landowner

How to Apply for WRE

- Applications for WRE may be submitted at your local NRCS Service Center at any time.
- Landowners are encouraged to apply by September 25, 2020 for funding consideration in 2021.
- Applications submitted after September 25, 2020 will be accepted and considered in the next funding period.

Louisiana Area	Agricultural Land	Other Land
Zone 1	\$2,590	\$1,700
Zone 2	\$2,605	\$1,475
Zone 3	\$2,200	\$1,480
Zone 4	\$3,320	\$1,965
Zone 5	\$3,950	\$3,420


2020 maximum rates listed above.
*In review for 2021 rate adjustments



"If you are interested in creating wildlife habitat this is a way to do it. It's a way to create a conservation habitat without having to bear all the expense yourself, you have a lot of professional resources to get it done. It's a great alternative to marginal agricultural land or something that's already too wet to farm."

-- Bob Bush, WRE owner in the Miss. Alluvial Valley

FIND IT HERE: Local Service Centers- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/contact/local/Understanding-WRE> <https://www.lmvjv.org/s/Understanding-WRE-LA.pdf>



USDA is an equal opportunity lender, provider and employer.

Funding & Project Development



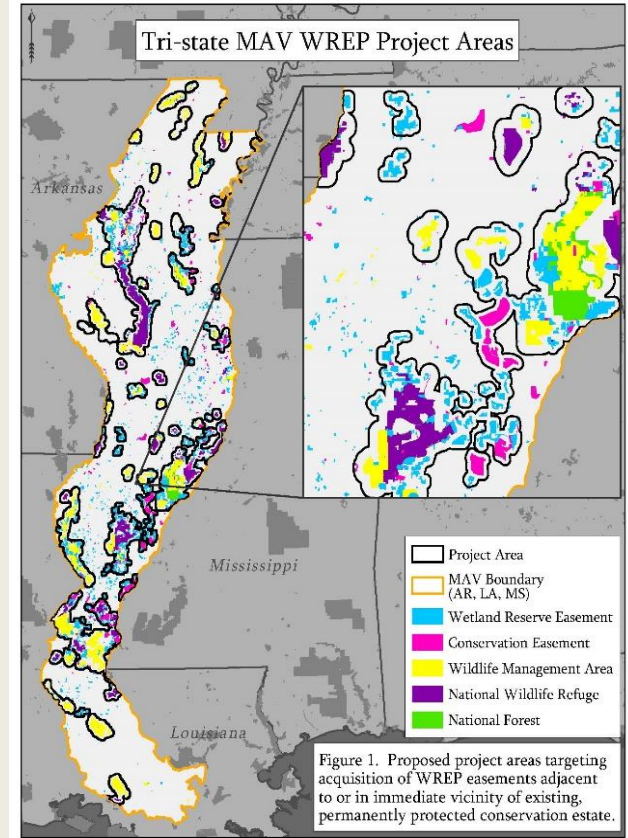
Phase 3 – Tristate WREP

- \$20 M federal request
- 6,000 acres

- \$1 M partner match
 - Walton - \$575,000
 - Arbor Day - \$375,000

NFWF LMAV Restoration Fund

- \$700,000 request



Wetland Conservation Policy Coalition

ACEP-WRE



WRE RECOMMENDATIONS

WETLAND CONSERVATION POLICY COALITION

The United States has lost more than half of its original wetlands; it continues to lose more than 80,000 acres of these valuable resources each year. The U.S. Congress has long recognized the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) as highly effective USDA conservation programs. Originally authorized in the 1991 Farm Bill, and now part of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), the program is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides support to assist landowners with wetlands protection, restoration and enhancement efforts.

ACEP-WRE not only restores previously converted wetlands, but also provides landowners and producers a financially viable alternative to farming land with low or negative profits and still retain property ownership, all while reducing expenditures of commodity and crop insurance programs. In addition to these measurable benefits, ACEP-WRE also creates habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife, which diversifies local, rural economies as sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts recreate on these lands.

Celebrating 25 Years of Wetland Restoration Success

In the 25 years of WRP and ACEP-WRE implementation (1992-2017):

- Almost 3 million acres have been restored and protected.
- Assistance has been provided to over 15,000 WRP/E landowners and producers.
- Demand for WRP/E exceeds funding with less than 25% of eligible applications funded.
- The 2017 backlog of unfunded applications comprises more than 1,000 applications representing 180,000 acres/\$400 million.
- WRP/E is highly popular in the Mississippi River Valley states where more than 50 percent of the program acreage exists.

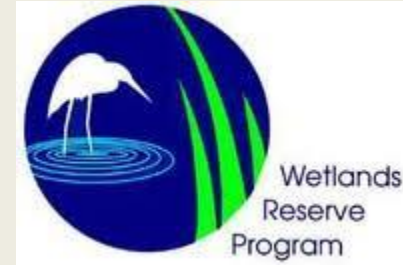
ACEP-WRE Policy Recommendations

The partners of the Wetland Conservation Policy Coalition have collaborated to identify and support the following priorities to significantly strengthen ACEP-WRE:

NRCS staff working with private landowners		1. Provide at least \$500 million annually for ACEP and work toward restoring funding for the program to the historic \$1.6 billion level. During the 2008 Farm Bill (2009 - 2013), funding for programs now under ACEP averaged \$760 million annually.	WRP/E habitat contributes to recovery and delisting of the Indiana Black Bear
Land enrolled in WRP allows for more forested wetlands.		2. As in the 2014 Farm Bill, there should be no mandatory designation of specific percentages of ACEP for agricultural versus wetland assessments. The relative importance and utilization of agricultural and wetland coverages vary throughout the country from state to state. Discretion for use of ACEP funding should remain flexible and continue to be based on landowner demand.	Bird and nightingale and other species documented on WRP/E easements
Hunters and anglers are having a major economic impact in rural America, as WRP/E increases wildlife habitat.		3. Eliminate the 100 county cap on total WRP/E acres, while maintaining the 25% cap on total cropland enrolled.	Planting native tree species restores historical herbaceous and forested wetlands.
WRP/E is having a positive impact on water quality in the Gulf of Mexico where 40% of the nation's seafood is produced.		4. Example WRE conservation payments from the AGI eligibility requirement. The need of farm consolidation is increasing and voluntary conservation by producers should not be restricted by ACEP, which may not reflect the financial status of the landowner or producer and ignore the conservation benefits to enrolling the parcel of land. The current ACEP restriction has had a negative effect on WRE enrollment and conservation is general and should be eliminated.	Many species of shorebirds, songbirds, waterfowl, and waterfowl thrive on WRP/E wetlands.
5. Retain the following ACEP-WRE authorization from the 2014 Farm Bill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland Reserve Enhancement System • Specialized WRE funding on existing easements (WRP and WRE) • 24-month ownership eligibility requirement • County cap exemption for cropland in Land Capability Classes IV - VIII with wetlands or wetland soils • "No Year Funding" • "Wetland Reserve" on the program identity • Eligibility for CRP acres already planted in trees 			



NRCS Easement Program Division



- Tri-state WREP project discussions
- Meet & greet
- ACEP-WRE policy meeting
- Tri-state field trip

Annual Work Plan



2020 Tri-State Partnership Planning					
	OBJECTIVE	Status / Target to Initiate	ACTIONS	LEAD	Additional Comments
WRE Outreach	How WRE Works Brochure	Spring	Develop a distribution strategy for NRCS approval (e.g., Partner outreach, NRCS newsletters, websites)	Seiss/Brock	
		Sept	Follow up with ASC's before end of FY to determine if reprint is warranted.	Seiss/Brock	
	NRCS Easement Holder Newsletter	Aug	MS - Assess interest in developing and distributing newsletter in Fall	Keenan/Nelms	
	Additional New Enrollment Outreach	Jun	Conf. call w/LA to evaluate uncapped parishes and other target areas for Jul 15 mailout	Brock/Seiss	Include link to How WRE Works document on new enrollment outreach flyers
		Jun	Conf. call w/MS to evaluate outreach to South Delta and Tunica County for Jul 15 distribution/mailout	Brock/Seiss	Include link to How WRE Works document on new enrollment outreach flyers
	WRE Management I/E	Ongoing	Continue development of WRE Management video series; targeting completion by end of calendar year	Seiss/Brock	
WRE Forest Management	WRP/E Data Consolidation & Assessment	Jul	Coordinate with prospective vendor on potential remote sensed WRE stand data and schedule for Fall TCP meeting presentation	Brock/Seiss	
		Fall	Revisit status and discuss various state data collection and assessment efforts	Seiss/Brock	Summarize 2019 WG meeting notes
	Landowner Version of Plantation Management Document	Spring	Develop a distribution strategy for NRCS approval (e.g., Partner outreach, NRCS newsletters, websites)	Seiss/Brock	
		Sept.	Evaluate any reprint needs before end of FY	Seiss/Brock	
	Markets	Apr	Coordinate with key industry contacts (e.g., J. Porier) on impact of mill closings on interest in WRE timber	Brock/Seiss	
		Apr	Coordinate with partners on hosting field tour for Mills/Suppliers	Brock/Seiss	
		May	Work with MFA, IP and working group to evaluate need for Fall landowner workshop in MS	Brock/Seiss	
		May	Coordinate with working group and key partners on possible LA landowner workshop	Brock/Seiss	
Funding	Evaluate LMRV Funding Opportunities and Develop Proposals	Ongoing	Stay on top of potential WREP funding and initiate early planning	Seiss/Brock	
		Ongoing	Await RCFP funding announcement and if awarded, coordinate as needed with AR and LA NRCS on implementation	Seiss/Brock	
		Ongoing	Evaluate additional funding opportunities as they develop; collaborate & coordinate proposal development as appropriate	Seiss/Brock	
TCP Outreach & Coordination	Promote TCP	Spring	Coordinate and schedule tri-state tour with NRCS HQ	Tim/Seiss	Consider making TCP ballcaps for tour
		Fall	Coordinate and schedule TCP and WCPC meeting with NRCS HQ	Seiss	
	Harmonize WRCG	Fall	Coordinate meeting to harmonize Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines among the three states	Seiss/Brock	

Steering Committee Meeting March 4th



Thank You Partners!!

