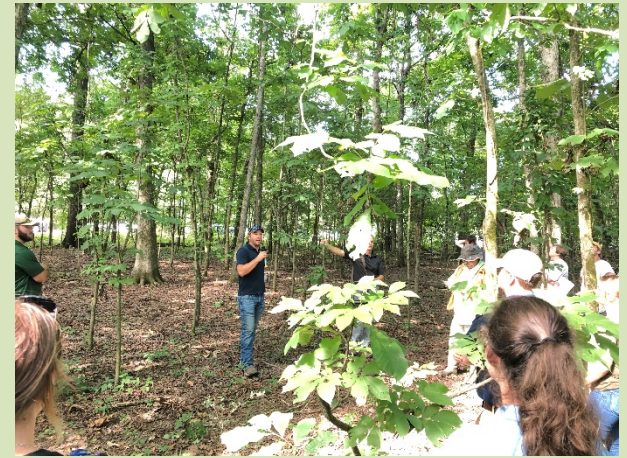


Tri-state Conservation Partnership Highlights



**TRI-STATE
CONSERVATION
PARTNERSHIP**



**LA/MS MAV CDN
Winter Meeting**

Dec 8, 2021

WRE Outreach Working Group



Managing Your Wetland Reserve Easement

7 Video Series

Almost There!!!

- ~3 Year Process
- 35 Participants
- Series Includes:
 - Introduction
 - Wetland Management - 4 Videos
 - Forest Management - 2 Videos
- ~60 Minutes (range 4.5 to 11.5 mins)
- Series Sample:
 - 7 minutes
 - Clips: Intro + 3 Wetlands & 2 Forestry Videos



WRE Outreach Working Group



Entering Distribution Phase

- **Posted to NRCS YouTube AR/LA/MS**
 - Create State Specific Link
 - Plus QR Codes
- **Mail to all WRE Landowners**
 - AR/LA/MS ~ 2700
 - Thumb Drives
 - Inserts - Pg. 147

- **Other Distribution**

- Posted to JV Website
- JV Newsletter
- Partner Distribution



Managing Your Wetland Reserve Easement

Introduction to the WRE Management Video Series



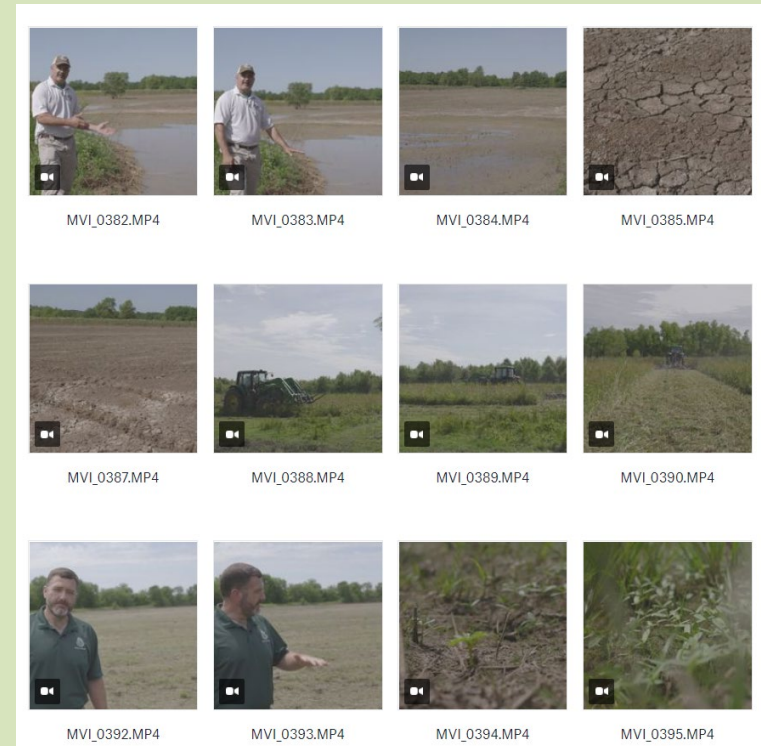
<https://www.youtube.com/user/louisiananrcs/playlist>

WRE Outreach Working Groups



Future Outreach Activities

- Searchable database of raw video footage
- Additional videos
 - e.g., Deeper Dive - Wetland Management



Forest Management Working Group



Future Activities

- Pre-commercial treatment guide for easement owners
- MS – forest markets workshop for landowners

LANDOWNER GUIDE

HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS IN HARDWOOD PLANTATIONS ON WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS

CAN I MANAGE MY WRP/WRE BOTTOMLAND HARDWOOD PLANTATION?

Many landowners with Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easements and/or Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) are interested in improving habitat for wildlife on their property.

Under certain conditions, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may allow treatment of WRP/WRE forest plantations if stands are adequately developed, and planned treatments are compatible with long-term program objectives.

Primary program objectives are to protect, restore, and enhance the functions of wetlands to benefit habitat for migratory birds, other wetland dependent wildlife and threatened and endangered species.

Although the sale of forest products may produce revenue for landowners, any authorization by the NRCS to conduct forest treatments in WRP/WRE plantations will be based on achieving program objectives.

This brochure provides information to assist landowners in conducting a self-evaluation to determine if their plantation is ready for a more in-depth assessment by a natural resource professional, as well as the steps necessary to obtain NRCS approval to carry out prescribed management actions.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
National Resources Conservation Service
PLAN to equalize income, improve conservation, and build

TRI-STATE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Funding & Project Development

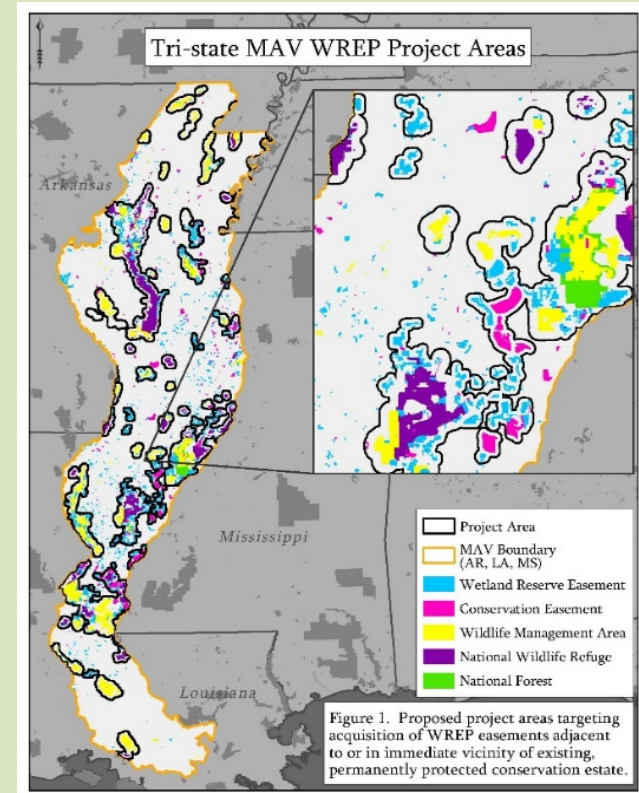


FY22 Tri-state WREP Proposal

- Historically Underserved Producer focused
- \$5 M maximum request

Proposal Targets

- Enroll 1,500 acres total
- Enroll ≥ 750 acres – HU landowners
 - \$2.5 M separate funding pool



NRCS Easement Program Division

- Virtual meet & greet
- Tri-state WREP project discussions
- ACEP-WRE policy meeting
- Tri-state field trip Spring/Summer FY22



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 sportmen 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/5400 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 \$750 million level. During the 2009 Farm Bill (2009 - 2013), funding for programs now under ACEP averaged \$700 million annually.		WRP/E habitat contributes to recovery and delisting of the American Black Bear.
Land enrolled in WRP subject to erosion focused wetlands.		2. When scoring future WRE funding, Congress should ask the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to consider the savings from foregone crop insurance and commodity program payments for cropland that has been enrolled in WRE. Enrollment of cropland in WRE avoids insurance and commodity payment costs at an average savings of \$53 per acre per year. Enrolling 100,000 acres of cropland annually (the historic WRP/E average) over 20 years saves \$262 million.		Land eagle sightings and nests have been documented on WRP/E easements.
Hunters and anglers are having a major economic impact in rural America, as WRP/E increases wildlife habitat.		3. As in the 2014 Farm Bill, there should be no mandatory designation of specific percentages of ACEP for agricultural versus wetland easements. The relative importance and utilization of agricultural and wetland easements 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.		Flattening native tree species restores bottomland hardwood and forested wetlands.
WRP/E is having a positive impact on water quality in the Gulf of Mexico where "60% of the nation's seafood is produced."		4. Eliminate the 10% county cap on total WRP/E acres, while maintaining the 15% county cap for combined acres of WRP/E and Conservation Reserve Program. This exemption would allow more landowners to enroll in WRE without exceeding the 25% cap on total cropland enrolled.		Many species of shorebirds, songbirds, waterfowl, and waterfowl thrive in WRP/E wetlands.
		5. Exempt WRE conservation payments from the AGI eligibility requirement. The trend of farm consolidation is continuing and voluntary conservation by producers should not be restricted by AGI which may not reflect the financial status of the landowner or producer and ignores the conservation benefits to recycling the parcel of land. The current AGI restriction has had a negative effect on WRE enrollment and conservation is general and should be discussed.		
		6. Retain the following ACEP-WRE authorization from the 2014 Farm Bill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland Reserve Enhancement Options • Spending WRE funding on existing easements (WREP and WRE) • 24-month ownership eligibility requirement • County cap exemption for cropland in Land Capability Classes IV - VIII with sublease (Wetland only) • "No Year Funding" • "Wetland Reserve" as the program identity • Eligibility for CRP acres already planted in trees 		

QUESTIONS

