

Commodity Credit Corporation, USDA

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level in determinations of land eligibility and as appropriate throughout the program implementation process. NRCS may consult Federal or State agencies, conservation districts, or other organizations in program administration. No determination by these agencies or organizations shall compel NRCS to take any action which NRCS determines will not serve the purposes of the program established by this part.

(g) The Chief may allocate funds for purposes related to: Encouraging enrollment by historically underserved producers as authorized by 16 U.S.C. 3844; special pilot programs for wetland management and monitoring; acquisition of wetland easements with emergency funding; cooperative agreements with other Federal or State agencies for program implementation; coordination of easement enrollment across State boundaries; coordination of the development of conservation plans; or, for other goals of the WRP found in this part. NRCS may designate areas as conservation priority areas where environmental concerns are especially pronounced and to assist landowners in meeting nonpoint source pollution requirements and other conservation needs.

§ 1467.3 Definitions.

The following definitions are applicable to this part:

30-year Contract means a contract that is for a duration of 30 years and is limited to acreage owned by Indian Tribes.

Acreage Owned by Indian Tribes means lands held in private ownership by an Indian Tribe or individual Tribal member and lands held in trust by a native corporation, Tribe or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Activity means an action other than a conservation practice that is included in the WRPO or restoration cost-share agreement, as applicable, and that has the effect of alleviating problems or improving treatment of the resources, including ensuring proper management or maintenance of the wetland functions and values restored, protected, or enhanced through an easement, contract, or restoration cost-share agreement.

Agreement means the document that specifies the obligations and rights of NRCS and any person or legal entity who is participating in the program.

Agricultural commodity means any agricultural commodity planted and produced in a State by annual tilling of the soil, including tilling by one-trip planters; or sugarcane planted and produced in a State.

Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or legal entity who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of a legal entity, and who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. In the case of an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located. In the case of a legal entity or joint operation, material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Chief means the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service or the person delegated authority to act for the Chief.

Commenced conversion wetland means a wetland or converted wetland for which the Farm Service Agency has determined that the wetland manipulation was contracted for, started, or for which financial obligation was incurred before December 23, 1985.

Conservation district means any district or unit of State or local government formed under State or territorial law for the express purpose of developing and carrying out a local soil and water conservation program. Such district or unit of government may be referred to as a "conservation district," "soil conservation district," "soil and water conservation district," "resource

conservation district,” “natural resource district,” “land conservation committee,” or a similar name.

Conservation practice means a specified treatment, such as a vegetative, structural, or land management practice, that is planned and applied according to NRCS standards and specifications.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) means the program administered by the Commodity Credit Corporation pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 3831-3836.

Contract means the legal document that specifies the obligations and rights of NRCS and any person or legal entity accepted to participate in the program. A WRP contract is an agreement for the transfer of assistance from NRCS to the participant for conducting the prescribed program implementation actions.

Converted wetland means a wetland that has been drained, dredged, filled, leveled, or otherwise manipulated (including any activity that results in impairing or reducing the flow, circulation, or reach of water) for the purpose, or to have the effect of, making the production of an agricultural commodity possible if such production would not have been possible but for such action; and before such action such land was wetland; and such land was neither highly erodible land nor highly erodible cropland.

Cost-share payment means the payment made by NRCS to a participant to carry out conservation practices and to achieve the protection of wetland functions and values, including necessary activities, as set forth in the Wetlands Reserve Plan of Operations (WRPO).

Easement means a reserved interest easement, which is an interest in land defined and delineated in a deed whereby the landowner conveys all rights, title, and interests in a property to the grantee, but the landowner retains those rights, title, and interests in the property which are specifically reserved to the landowner in the easement deed.

Easement area means the land encumbered by an easement.

Easement payment means the consideration paid to a landowner for an easement conveyed to the United

States under the WRP, or the consideration paid to an Indian Tribe or tribal members for entering into 30-year contracts.

Easement Restoration Agreement means the agreement used to implement the Wetland Restoration Plan of Operations for projects enrolled through the permanent easement, 30-year easement, or 30-year contract enrollment options.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is an agency of the United States Department of the Interior.

Historically Underserved Producer means a beginning, limited resource, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher.

Indian Tribe means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688, 43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

Landowner means a person or legal entity having legal ownership of eligible land. Landowner may include all forms of collective ownership including joint tenants, tenants in common, and life tenants. The term landowner includes trust holders of acreage owned by Indian Tribes.

Lands substantially altered by flooding means areas where flooding has created wetland hydrologic conditions which, with a high degree of certainty, will develop wetland soil and vegetation characteristics over time.

Legal entity means an entity that is created under Federal or State law and that owns land or an agricultural commodity; or produces an agricultural commodity.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher means a person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$100,000 in each of the previous two years (to be increased to adjust for inflation using

Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)), and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years (to be determined annually using U.S. Department of Commerce data).

Maintenance means work performed to keep the enrolled area functioning for program purposes for the duration of the enrollment period. Maintenance includes actions and work to manage, prevent deterioration, repair damage, or replace conservation practices on enrolled lands, as approved by NRCS.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, including when NRCS carries out program implementation using the funds, facilities, or authorities of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Option agreement to purchase means the legal document that is the equivalent of a real estate option contract for purchasing land. The landowner signs the option agreement to purchase, which is authorization for NRCS to proceed with the easement acquisition process, and to incur costs for surveys, where applicable, title clearance and closing procedures on the easement. The option becomes a contract for sale and obligates CCC funding after it is executed by NRCS and transmitted to the landowner.

Participant means a person or legal entity who has been accepted into the program and who is receiving payment or who is responsible for implementing the terms and conditions of an option to purchase agreement, 30-year contract, or restoration cost-share agreement, and the associated WRPO.

Permanent easement means an easement that lasts in perpetuity.

Person means a natural person, a legal entity, or an Indian Tribe, but does not include governments or their political subdivisions.

Prairie Pothole Region means the counties designated as part of the Prairie Pothole National Priority Area for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as of June 18, 2008.

Private land means land that is not owned by a governmental entity, and includes acreage owned by Indian Tribes, as defined in this Part.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement means the legal document that describes the rights and obligations of participants who have been accepted to participate in WRP restoration cost-share enrollment option that is used to implement conservation practices and activities to protect, restore, or enhance wetlands values and functions to achieve the purposes of the program. The restoration cost-share agreement is an agreement between NRCS and the participant to share in the costs of implementing the Wetland Restoration Plan of Operations.

Riparian areas means areas of land that occur along streams, channels, rivers, and other water bodies. These areas are normally distinctly different from the surrounding lands because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics, may be identified by distinctive vegetative communities that are reflective of soil conditions normally wetter than adjacent soils, and generally provide a corridor for the movement of wildlife.

Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher means a farmer or rancher who has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

State Technical Committee means a committee established by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a State pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 3861.

Wetland means land that:

- (1) Has a predominance of hydric soils;
- (2) Is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
- (3) Supports a prevalence of such vegetation under normal circumstances.

Wetland functions and values means the hydrological and biological characteristics of wetlands and the socio-economic value placed upon these characteristics, including:

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(1) Habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, in particular at risk species;

(2) Protection and improvement of water quality;

(3) Attenuation of water flows due to flood;

(4) The recharge of ground water;

(5) Protection and enhancement of open space and aesthetic quality;

(6) Protection of flora and fauna which contributes to the Nation's natural heritage; and

(7) Contribution to educational and scientific scholarship.

Wetland restoration means the rehabilitation of degraded or lost habitat in a manner such that:

(1) The original vegetation community and hydrology are, to the extent practical, re-established; or

(2) A community different from what likely existed prior to degradation of the site is established. The hydrology and native self-sustaining vegetation being established will substantially replace original habitat functions and values and does not involve more than 30 percent of the wetland restoration area.

Wetlands Reserve Plan of Operations (WRPO) means the conservation plan that identifies how the wetland functions and values will be restored, improved, and protected and which is approved by NRCS.

§ 1467.4 Program requirements.

(a) *General.* (1) Under the WRP, NRCS may purchase conservation easements from, or enter into 30-year contracts or restoration cost-share agreements with, eligible landowners who voluntarily cooperate to restore, protect, or enhance wetlands on eligible private and Tribal lands. The 30-year contract enrollment option is only available to acreage owned by Indian Tribes.

(2) To participate in WRP, a landowner must agree to the implementation of a WRPO, the effect of which is to restore, protect, enhance, maintain, and manage the hydrologic conditions of inundation or saturation of the soil, native vegetation, and natural topography of eligible lands. NRCS may provide cost-share assistance through a restoration cost-share agreement or an easement restoration agreement for

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the conservation practices and activities that promote the restoration, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management of wetland functions and values. For easement transactions, NRCS may implement such conservation practices and activities through an agreement with the landowner, a contract with a vendor, or a cooperative agreement with a cooperating entity. Specific restoration, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management actions may be undertaken by the landowner, NRCS, or other designee.

(b) *Acreage limitations.* (1) Except for areas devoted to windbreaks or shelterbelts after November 28, 1990, no more than 25 percent of the total cropland in any county, as determined by the FSA, may be enrolled in the CRP and the WRP, and no more than 10 percent of the total cropland in the county may be subject to an easement acquired through the WRP.

(2) NRCS and FSA shall concur before a waiver of the 25 percent limit of this paragraph can be approved for an easement proposed for enrollment in the WRP. Such a waiver will only be approved if the waiver will not adversely affect the local economy, and operators in the county are having difficulties complying with the conservation plans implemented under 16 U.S.C. 3812.

(c) *Landowner eligibility.* To be eligible to enroll in the WRP, a person, legal entity, or Indian Tribe must be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions in 7 CFR part 12. Persons or legal entities must be in compliance with the Adjusted Gross Income Limitation provisions at Subpart G of 7 CFR part 1400, and:

(1) Be the landowner of eligible land for which enrollment is sought;

(2) For easement applications, have been the landowner of such land for the 7-year period prior to the time the land is determined eligible for enrollment unless it is determined by the State Conservationist that:

(i) The land was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous landowner;

(ii) The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure on the land and the