

the affected land as cropland. Additionally, the easement shall require permanent maintenance of the wetland conditions, except in the case of natural disaster.

(b) The EWRP is available only in the following States: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Certain cropland areas within these States have been determined to have been inundated by the Midwest floods of 1993. As more fully defined and described in this part, eligible land may include farmed wetlands or prior converted wetlands (wetlands converted prior to December 23, 1985), together with adjacent lands on which the wetlands are functionally dependent so long as the likelihood of successful restoration of such land and the potential wetland values merit inclusion in the program with reasonable costs.

§ 623.2 Definitions.

The following definitions shall be applicable for the purposes of this part:

(a) *Agricultural commodity* means any crop planted and produced by annual tilling of the soil, or on an annual basis by one trip planters, or alfalfa and other multiyear grasses and legumes in rotation as approved by the Secretary. For purposes of determining crop history, as relevant to eligibility to enroll land in the program, land shall be "considered planted to an agricultural commodity" during a crop year if, as determined by ASCS, as action of the Secretary prevented land from being planted to the commodity during the crop year.

(b) *Applicant* means a person who submits to NRCS an application to participate in the EWRP.

(c) *Commodity Credit Corporation* a wholly owned government corporation within the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(d) *Conservation District (CD)* means a subdivision of a State or local government organized pursuant to applicable State law to promote soil and water conservation practices.

(e) *Conservation Reserve Program* means the program under which long-term payments and cost-share assistance is provided to individuals to establish permanent vegetative cover on

cropland that is highly erodible or environmentally sensitive.

(f) *Prior converted wetland* means 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) prior to December 23, 1985, for the purpose, or that has the effect, of making the production of agricultural commodities possible if such production would not have been possible but for such action.

(g) *Cost-share payment* means the payment made by NRCS to assist program participants in establishing the practices required in a WRPO.

(h) *Chief* means the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, or the Chief's designee.

(i) *Easement* means the real property interest acquired by NRCS under this part for wetland restoration and maintenance and which is properly filed with the appropriate local or State government official.

(j) *Easement area* means the land to which the approved wetland restoration practices and wetland conservation restrictions are to be applied.

(k) *Fair market value (FMV)* means the price that a willing seller would accept and a willing buyer would pay in an open, informed transaction.

(l) *Farmed wetland* means wetland that was drained, dredged, filled, or otherwise manipulated prior to December 23, 1985 to the extent that the production of agricultural commodities was made possible, but which continues to meet wetland criteria [refer to 7 CFR 12.32(a)(3) for descriptions of farmed wetlands].

(m) *Floodwater control systems* means dikes, levees, or other similar structural measures for the protection of cropland from flooding.

(n) *FWS*—means the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior.

(o) *Local NRCS office* means the office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service serving the county or combination of counties in which the landowner's farm or ranch is located.

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(p) *Participant* means a person(s) owning land subject to a perfected easement purchased by the Natural Resources Conservation Service under this part.

(q) *Offer* means the total payment NRCS will make to a landowner to purchase an easement.

(r) *Permanent easement* means an easement in perpetuity.

(s) *Substantially altered lands* means lands which have not been and are not now wetlands but could likely develop wetland characteristics in the future, as a result of the Midwest floods of 1993.

(t) *Practice* means the wetland and easement area development restoration measures agreed to in the WRPO to accomplish the desired program objectives.

(u) *Technical assistance* means the assistance provided to land owners to facilitate implementation of the WRPO.

(v) *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) does support a prevalence of such vegetation under normal circumstances.

§ 623.3 Eligible person.

To be eligible to participate in the EWRP, a person must be the owner of eligible land for which enrollment is sought and must have been the owner of such land for at least the preceding 12 months prior to the time the enrollment offer is declared by NRCS, as provided in this part. The person shall provide to NRCS adequate proof of ownership of the land. NRCS may waive the 12 month ownership requirement if:

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

(b) Adequate assurances have been presented that the new owner of such land did not acquire such land for the purpose of placing it in the EWRP.

§ 623.4 Eligible land.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, land is eligible for enroll-

ment in the EWRP only if NRCS determines that the land:

(1) Was inundated by the Midwest floods of 1993;

(2) If restored to productive condition, would have a fair market value that is less than the estimated costs of restoring the land to productive condition and repairing related floodwater control systems;

(3) Is likely to have its wetland value restored with minimal costs; and

(4) Is wetland farmed under natural conditions, a farmed wetland or prior converted wetland, or substantially altered lands which are cropland; or

(5) Is wetland that has been restored on the land under a CRP contract, or under a Federal or State wetland restoration program with an easement for a period of less than 30 years.

(b) To be eligible for enrollment in the EWRP, land must also:

(1) Be determined by ASCS to have been annually planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity in at least 1 of the 5 previous crop years; or

(2) Be land under a CRP contract, in which case, the land need only to have been planted to an agricultural commodity during 2 of the 1981 through 1985 crop years.

(c) Other lands may be considered eligible if the inclusion of such lands in the EWRP easement would significantly add to the functions and values of the wetlands to be restored under this part, as determined by NRCS.

(d) The criteria and procedures contained in 7 CFR part 12 will be used to identify wetlands, converted wetlands, and farmed wetlands.

§ 623.5 Ineligible land.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this part, the following land is not eligible for enrollment in the EWRP:

(a) Land that contains either timber stands or trees established in connection with a CRP contract;

(b) Lands owned or acquired by an agency of the Federal Government;

(c) Land already subject to a deed restriction prohibiting the production of agricultural commodities or the alteration of existing wetland hydrologic conditions;