BRUCE REID

BRUCE REID

TYPES OF LANDS THAT QUALIFY
Wetland, cropland

TYPE OF PROGRAM
Conservation easement

MONETARY BENEFIT
Direct payment

Wetland Reserve Easement

The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) is a voluntary federal program that can help landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and improve wildlife habitat, often on marginal and frequently flooded cropland. It is part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

HOW IT WORKS

A landowner with qualifying land applies for the WRE to the NRCS at the local office, also called a District Office. Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. Through the program, the land can be placed under either a perpetual or 30-year conservation easement that ensures the land is not subdivided or developed and remains wetlands and wildlife habitat for the duration of the easement.

Annually, the NRCS ranks all WRE applications, and the best applications are chosen for approval. The NRCS then checks the title and conducts a land survey to determine the exact number of acres to be placed under easement.

The NRCS then enters into a purchase agreement with the eligible private landowner, including the right for the NRCS to develop and implement a Wetland Reserve Plan of Operations (WRPO). This plan will detail practices to help restore, protect, and enhance the wetland.

The NRCS will pay a percentage of the easement value depending on the enrollment option. The NRCS pays 100% of the easement and restoration costs for perpetual

easements. For 30-year easements, the NRCS pays 75% of the easement and restoration costs. Qualifying landowners receive a one-time, per-acre payment and must agree to cease farming and adhere to the easement terms on the land approved to be enrolled in the WRE. Payments are based on a Geographic Area Rate Cap or an appraisal.

HOW TO APPLY

The NRCS accepts applications for enrollment in the WRE at the District Office. Landowners interested in applying for funding should contact their local NRCS office to begin the application process, which can take up to 2 years to complete (application to approval). Applications are accepted throughout the year.

WRE IN THE BATTURE

Wildlife Mississippi, the Mississippi River Trust (MRT), and the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC) are continuing their partnership with the NRCS to assist them in protecting and restoring bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands in the Lower Mississippi River batture, or the active floodplain between the river and levees or bluffs.

What We Do

The MRT's obligations under the program are to

- conduct outreach to eligible landowners
- help landowners apply for WRE in the batture
- restore the land to bottomland hardwoods

BENEFITS OF WRE

When fully implemented, the program will reduce sediment and nutrients entering waterways and the Gulf of Mexico, decrease flooding and the need for emergency payments, and improve wildlife and fish habitat in the six states of the Lower Mississippi River Valley.

WRE EXAMPLE

Landowners participating in the WRE will be paid approximately 100% of the easement value (based on a Geographic Area Rate Cap or an appraisal) and 100% of the restoration costs for a perpetual easement. For a 30-year easement, those rates are 75%.

NRCS Costs

Expenses that NRCS will pay for include

- survey
- appraisal
- closing cost of the easement
- a percentage of the easement value
- restoration costs

Sample Calculation

The landowner has 100 acres (90 acres of cropland and 10 acres of forestland) that they are interested in placing under an WRE in the Mississippi Delta. The Geographic Area Rate Cap for cropland in the Mississippi Delta is $3,200 per acre, and the rate for forestland is $1,700 per acre.

90 acres × $3,200 per acre = $288,000
10 acres × $1,700 per acre = $17,000

Total easement value ($288,000 + $17,000) = $305,000

HOW ARE WRE PAYMENTS TAXED?

WRE payments are considered capital gains and are taxed at the capital gains rate.

The Mississippi Land Trust works with willing private landowners and government agencies to protect fish and wildlife habitat in Mississippi.
P.O. Box 23 | Stoneville, MS 38776
662.820.9774 | www.misslandtrust.org

The Mississippi River Trust works with willing private landowners and government agencies to protect fish and wildlife habitat in the Lower Mississippi River region.
P.O. Box 15 | Stoneville, MS 38776
662.820.9774 | www.mississippirivertrust.org

Wildlife Mississippi works with willing private landowners and government agencies to conserve fish and wildlife habitat in Mississippi.
P.O. Box 10 | Stoneville, MS 38776
662.686.3375 | www.wildlifemiss.org