

Wetlands Reserve Program



Bill Brixey of Lincoln County says of his WRP land, "...I spend a lot more time now doing wildlife photography than I do hunting..."

Above and right are aerial views of the Grassy Slough WRP project in McCurtain County. The 1,100-acre project includes natural wetlands, and has unique and unusual plants and animals for Oklahoma.

The Red Slough WRP project has become one of the premiere recreational destinations for birders and wildlife enthusiasts in the nation. The roseate spoonbill (center), is rare to Oklahoma and is one of many bird species sighted and documented at the project.



photos: NRCS Oklahoma

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was created as a voluntary land retirement program designed to assist eligible landowners in restoring and protecting wetlands using three options. These options include permanent easements, 30-year easements, or restoration cost-share agreements. The WRP was reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill for an additional one million acres to be enrolled nationwide through 2007. This additional acreage will result in over two million acres of wetland restoration through the WRP during the life of the Farm Bill. As a result of this Farm Bill, Oklahoma received \$5 million in funding for easement acquisition and restoration in 2002.

Focus On Oklahoma

The focus of the Oklahoma WRP is to restore and enhance the hydrology and native vegetation on eligible land. The use of dikes, water control structures and microtopography enhancement (ridge/swale) features are utilized in conjunction with tree plantings, range seeding, and critical area plantings to restore former wetlands and provide habitats for migrating birds and local wildlife species that are dependent on wetland habitat. Oklahoma is in their third year of a cooperative

agreement with Ducks Unlimited to assist with the surveying and contracting of wetland restoration and enhancement.

The Oklahoma WRP currently encompasses 34 counties. The variety of wetland restoration goes from bottomland range sites of the Central Rolling Red Plains in the west that average 27 inches of precipitation annually, to the bottomland hardwoods of the Southern Coastal Plain that average 50 inches of rainfall annually. The WRP easements range in size from 7 acres to 7,800 acres. The average size of a WRP easement in Oklahoma is 310 acres, and the average cost for easement acquisition and restoration is currently \$607 dollars per acre. Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and Ducks Unlimited meet with the NRCS on a monthly basis to provide a team approach to wetland restoration in Oklahoma. This includes schedule restoration activities, review compatible use requests, and evaluating applications.

- ☒ Currently, there are 146 total contracts, equaling 43,959.6 acres in Oklahoma
- ✓ 103 contracts are permanent easements
- ✓ 7 contracts are 30 year easements
- ✓ 36 contracts are 10 year easements

