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# News Release

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## **NRCS Alabama Announces Sign-Up for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**

**AUBURN, December 21, 2016** – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for Alabama, Ben Malone, announced that eligible producers interested in the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#)’s Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) and Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) components should apply for program funds by January 21, 2017 at their [local NRCS service center](#).

Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, \$1,175,000 is available for landowners to enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce impacts from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. The voluntary nature of NRCS' easement programs allows effective integration of wetland restoration on working landscapes, providing benefits to farmers and ranchers who enroll in the program, as well as benefits to their communities.

Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, \$202,000 is available to protect agricultural lands by limiting non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with approved state or local units of government, and certain nongovernmental organizations who arrange for the purchase of development rights through conservation easements on private lands. The entity holds and manages these conservation easements in perpetuity.

“We are looking to work with landowners and partners to help us expand our work on critical wetlands and agricultural land in Alabama and gain results that will showcase how important conservation is for these areas,” said Malone.

Collectively nationwide, NRCS easement programs help productive farm, ranch and grasslands continue in agricultural production and protect the nation’s critical farmland, wetlands and grasslands that are important to water supplies and home to diverse wildlife and plant species. In 2014 and 2015, NRCS invested more than \$600 million through ACEP to help landowners engage in voluntary conservation. Their collective efforts provide long-term protection of an estimated 250,000 acres of farmland, grassland and wetlands through more than 750 new easements.

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