



**Natural Resources
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News Release

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USDA seeks wetlands project partners in Oklahoma

Project proposals due: May 16, 2016

STILLWATER, Okla., April 25, 2016—USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oklahoma is seeking eligible conservation partners to assist with wetland protection and improvement on private and Tribal agricultural lands. Nationwide, \$15 million is available for the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP).

WREP is one way state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Tribal governments collaborate with NRCS to increase the number of voluntary conservation projects for targeted, high priority wetland protection, restoration and enhancement. Local and regional WREP partners match federal funding and technical assistance to increase the assistance they can provide to eligible private landowners interested in enrolling their agricultural land into conservation wetland easements. WREP is a special enrollment option under USDA’s [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#).

Proposals must be submitted to the NRCS state office in Stillwater, Okla. by May 16, 2016.

More information is available on the NRCS [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) webpage.

“USDA is committed to protecting and enhancing our nation’s wetlands, which are critical to the quality of our nation’s waters, wildlife and landscapes,” Gary O’Neill, NRCS state conservationist in Oklahoma said. “We are looking to our partners for innovative project proposals that will leverage our Farm Bill conservation funding. This will allow us to expand our work on critical wetlands and gain results that will make project participants proud.”

Wetland reserve easements allow 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 former Wetlands Reserve Program nationally, private landowners, tribes and conservation organizations enrolled 2.7 million acres through 14,500 agreements for a total NRCS and partner investment of \$4.3 billion in assistance on private and tribal agricultural lands.

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