



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

News Release

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"Helping People Help the Land"

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2018 Conservation Easement Applications for Agricultural Lands and Wetlands due by January 19

DAVIS, Calif., December 7, 2017 - USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP offers two easement options, Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). A total of \$4.8 million has initially been made available for ACEP applicants throughout California.

"Easements are important tools for landowners who are trying to conserve their land," said Ray Dotson, acting NRCS state conservationist in California. "ACEP provides a means to keep working land in production, preserve open space, and greatly benefit our state's natural resources and wildlife."

Under the ALE component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement to protect farming and ranching on privately owned cropland, rangeland, nonindustrial forestland, pastureland, and grasslands of special environmental significance. Approved agricultural easements prevent productive working lands from being converted to non-agricultural uses and maximize protection of land devoted to food production. Landowners are encouraged to work with a local or regional eligible entity to apply for the program, such as a land trust or non-governmental organization with an established record of conserving farms and ranches.

WRE compensates farmers, ranchers and other private landowners for land placed in wetland conservation easements, and shares the cost of restoring degraded wetlands. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in a 30-year contract. WRE also includes a Grazing Reserve Rights option which allows participants with an approved wetland and grazing management plan to enroll grazed land. The grazing rights option is available in three geographic areas: coastal pastures and wetlands of the north coast, California vernal pools, and intermountain wetlands of eastern California. Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS field office to apply for the program.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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ACEP applications may be submitted at any time to NRCS. However, **applications must be submitted by January 19, 2018**, to be considered for fiscal year 2018 ACEP funding.

As with all NRCS easements, the landowner retains the title to the land, and the right to control access and recreational use. The land remains on the tax rolls. Learn more about ACEP by visiting www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

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