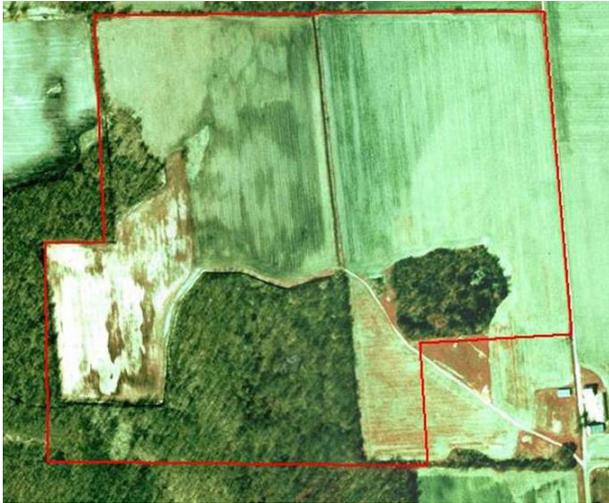


also retains subsurface mineral rights as long as extraction does not violate the terms of the easement.

Some prohibited activities on wetland reserve easements include harvesting plants or trees, building or placing permanent structures within the easement and grazing livestock. Other prohibitions also apply.



Site of a wetland reserve easement before (above) and after restoration (below).



For more information about wetland easements, other USDA conservation programs or technical assistance visit your local NRCS office. A listing of Michigan field offices is available online at www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov.

NRCS helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners conserve the nation's soil, water, air and other natural resources. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment.



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Michigan - October 2017



United States Department of Agriculture

Wetland Reserve Easements

Financial and Technical Assistance to Restore, Protect and Enhance Wetlands



Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov

Wetland Reserve Easements

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has technical and financial assistance available to restore and protect wetlands on privately-owned land.

Through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, landowners receive assistance to restore wetlands that were converted to agricultural use. The USDA purchases a permanent or long-term easement on the land to ensure that the restored wetland is preserved.

Benefits of Restoring Wetlands

Wetlands provide a number of conservation benefits. Wetlands help recharge groundwater by keeping water in place, instead of it being discharged through field tiles and drains. They help reduce the magnitude and frequency of flooding events by holding water before it reaches creeks and rivers. Sediment and chemicals in water held in wetlands have time to be filtered out before the water enters lakes and streams improving water quality.

Wetlands also provide excellent wildlife habitat, particularly for amphibians and waterfowl but also for many other plants and animals.

Wetland Easements

Land eligible for wetland reserve easements include farmed or prior-converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. Landowners who enroll in the program receive an easement payment from NRCS and a portion of the restoration costs. Enrollment options include:

- **Permanent Easements** are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and up to 100 percent of the restoration costs.
- **30-Year Easements** expire after 30 years. Under 30-year easements, NRCS pays 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **30-Year Contracts** are only available to enroll acreage owned by American Indian tribes. Program payment rates are commensurate with 30-year easements.

Eligibility and Selection

Applications for wetland easements are accepted on a continuous basis at local NRCS field offices. Applicants must own the land containing the potential easement for at least two years and meet

USDA program eligibility requirements.

Among the factors NRCS takes into account when deciding to purchase a wetland easement are; estimated cost of restoring wetland habitat, environmental benefits provided by the easement including wildlife habitat, potential for improving water quality by trapping sediments and filtering runoff water, proximity to existing wetlands, and length of easement (30-year or permanent).

Restoration

Wetlands are restored to a condition similar to what existed before the land was converted to farmland. A restoration design plan is completed by NRCS with landowner input.

Owner Use of Restored Wetland

After the restoration is completed the landowner must maintain the wetland over the life of the easement. The land can be transferred to a new owner however the terms of the easement do not change.

The landowner remains the owner of the property and has control over access to the land. The land can be used for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, etc. The owner



These bald eagles were found on a wetland reserve easement in Jackson County.

- photo provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Wetlands help reduce the frequency and severity of flood events by storing water from melting snow and precipitation.



Restored wetland in Dickinson County.