



Wetland Reserve Easements In Rhode Island



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March 2025

Funding for Conservation Easements & Wetland Restoration

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What are Wetland Reserve Easements?

Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) offer landowners the opportunity to voluntarily restore and protect wetlands on their property. WRE focuses on restoring hydrology and plants as well as protecting migratory birds and other wildlife. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. Floodplain forests and coastal marshes are among wetlands restored through WRE.

Protecting wetlands provides wildlife habitat and enhances soil, water, plants, and related natural resource concerns. This program enables landowners to establish long-term conservation and protect wildlife and natural resources.

Restoration Projects include:

- Invasive species management
- Installation of water control structures
- Removal of stream blockages
- Early successional habitat development and management

How does WRE work in RI?

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement and cost-share restoration agreement with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to restore and protect wetlands. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land and retain private ownership.

What are the benefits?

WRE participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetland functions and values.
- Retaining outdoor recreational opportunities and receiving technical and financial support to enhance these opportunities on their land.
- Maintaining and enjoying wetlands that provide fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity, and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

What are permanent easements?

Permanent easements are conservation easements in perpetuity – the land is protected from development forever. NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value to purchase the easement property. NRCS also pays between 75 to 100 percent of the restoration costs as well as all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office (recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, title insurance, etc.).

Land eligible for Wetland Reserve Easements includes farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. NRCS will prioritize easement applications based on the property's potential to protect and enhance habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

NRCS enters into purchase agreements with eligible private landowners to develop and implement a Wetland Reserve Easement restoration plan to restore, protect, and enhance the wetland.

Is my land eligible?

To be eligible for WRE, land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. This includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions (no alterations);
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland (drained or otherwise altered);
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farm land that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Range land, pasture, or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored;
- Riparian areas that link protected wetlands;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long-term protection.

