

# Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Approves Six Additional Projects (Including Arkansas)



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The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) announced that it is investing \$28 million in six new Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (“WREP”) projects and four ongoing ones.

NRCS states that the projects:

... enable conservation partners and producers to work together to return critical wetland functions to agricultural landscapes.

The WREP is a voluntary program in which NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners to leverage resources to carry out high priority wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement to improve wildlife habitat. This Farm Bill conservation program is part of the Wetland Reserve Easement component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. State agencies, county and local governments, non-governmental organizations and American Indian tribes are provided the opportunity to submit proposals for priority project areas. If a proposal is accepted for funding, the partners work with the landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on the properties.

NRCS prioritizes applications for projects that:

- Provide maximum partner resources as match
- Supports the goals and objectives of an NRCS Landscape Conservation Initiative
- Protect habitats that benefit migratory birds and wetland-dependent wildlife
- Provides direct benefits to federal and state threatened and endangered species
- Includes targeted outreach to underserved groups in the agricultural community

NRCS states that one of the new projects includes the State of Arkansas. The project is described as:

#### **Tri State: The Nature Conservancy**

This existing project seeks to enroll an additional 2,000 acres per state, totaling 6,000 acres, in Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). The project focuses on restoring forested wetlands within priority portions of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley in Arkansas, Louisiana

and Mississippi, including specifically targeting priority watersheds of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative area. The proposed project is Phase III of a continuing effort that began in 2017. Existing efforts have resulted in more than 3,800 acres of easements that have been acquired or are pending in the project area to date. NRCS will invest \$8.35 million for the first year.

A copy of the news release can be downloaded [here](#).