

# Agricultural Conservation Easements: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces Year 2025 Funding



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The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) issued a September news release announcing funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (“ACEP”) for fiscal year 2025.

The NRCS describes the program as assisting landowners and other eligible entities to conserve, restore, and protect wetlands, productive agricultural lands, and grasslands at risk of conversion to non-grassland uses.

Funding for the program is provided by the Inflation Reduction Act.

An objective of the program is to support climate change mitigation practices through the NRCS conservation programs. The ACEP is one of those programs.

NRCS states that it will accept applications year-round for ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (“ACEP-ALE”) and Wetland Reserve Easements (“ACEP-WRE”). Producers, landowners, and partners are required to apply by what are described as the next two “ranking dates” which are October 4th or December 20th to be considered for the two state-led funding cycles.

NRCS states that for ACEP-ALE, it is prioritizing securing:

- Grasslands and areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores.
- Agricultural lands under threat of conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- State-specific priorities including rice cultivation on subsiding highly organic soils.

For ACEP-WRE, NRCS states it is prioritizing:

- Land with soils high in organic carbon.
- Eligible lands that will be restored to and managed as forest, such as bottomland hardwood forest.
- Eligible lands in existing forest cover that will be managed as forests.
- Several geographically specific priorities (referencing former cranberry bogs, wet meadows, and ephemeral wetlands in grassland ecosystems).

NRCS states that the Inflation Reduction Act included \$1.4 billion in additional funding for ACEP over five years. The fiscal year 2025 authorized amount for Inflation Reduction Act funding is for ACEP is \$500 million.

NRCS states that it is:

...streamlining ACEP to ensure that the program is easier and more convenient to utilize, and to strengthen Inflation Reduction Act implementation.

This is stated to include streamlining ACEP appraisals and land surveys, and certifying eligible entities who help NRCS and producers enroll land into agricultural land easements.

A link to the NRCS news release can be found [here](#).