

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
March 14, 2019
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



USDA Providing Funds to Protect and Restore Agricultural Working Lands, Grasslands and Wetlands Across Nebraska

Applications due April 12, 2019, at USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Offices.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is now accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). This program provides funding for the purchase of conservation easements to help productive farm and ranch lands remain in agriculture and to restore and protect critical wetlands and grasslands.

Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

Applications can be submitted at any time, but to be considered for 2019 funding opportunities, applications in Nebraska must be received by April 12, 2019. Applications are currently being accepted for both agricultural land and wetland reserve easements. Cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland and nonindustrial private forestland are eligible.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private and tribal landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of conservation easements. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

A key option under the agricultural land easement component is the "grasslands of special environmental significance" that will protect high-quality grasslands that are under threat of conversion to cropping, urban development and other non-grazing uses. To qualify, the application would need to be located in an area meeting the designated criteria.

All applications will be rated according to the easement's potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds, fish and other wildlife. Eligible applicants will be compensated with a payment rate comparable to the local land use value.

For more information about the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the programs and services it provides, visit your local USDA Service Center.



CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Environmental Quality Incentive Program

In Nebraska, during fiscal year 2018, an estimated 450,000 acres were enrolled in this program on over 1,000 contracts.

Over 20% of these contracts were with beginning farmers/ranchers, limited resource, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmer/ranchers.

Examples of what the Papio-Missouri River NRD is seeing on 51 contracts covering 5,368 acres:

- Terrace System including 47 miles of terraces, 15 miles of underground outlet and 46 acres of grassed waterways improving erosion control and water quality.
- Pasture improvements on 643 acres including 2 livestock wells, 2.3 miles of pipeline, 6 tanks, 2.3 miles of fence, 19 acres of seeding, and 50 acres of brush management improving livestock and water distribution.
- 2 seasonal high tunnels
- 1 waste storage facility, 1 comprehensive nutrient management plan and 180 acres of nutrient management
- 1200 acres of cover crops improving soil health and water quality.

The sign up for FY2019 through EQIP is continuous, but the cutoff for 2019 funding is November 16.

Conservation Stewardship Program

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, rotational grazing, pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator habitat on actively producing agricultural land.

In the Papio-Missouri River NRD, 2 contracts were approved covering 1062 acres

- 1026 acres using precision pesticide application techniques to reduce risk of pesticides in surface water.
- 1026 acres using IPM PAMS techniques to reduce ozone precursor emissions.

CONSERVATION

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Our Passion.

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