

Wetland Reserve Easements

Financial and Technical Assistance to Restore, Protect and Enhance Wetlands



United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Michigan

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 land.

Why Restore Wetlands?

Wetlands provide a number of conservation benefits by storing water following rain and spring snow melt. By keeping the water in place, wetlands recharge ground water instead of the water being discharged through field tiles and drains. Wetlands help reduce the magnitude and frequency of flooding events. Sediment and chemicals in water held in wetlands have time to be filtered out before the water enters lakes and streams. Wetlands also provide excellent wildlife habitat, particularly for amphibians and waterfowl but also many other plants and animals.

How does the Program Work?

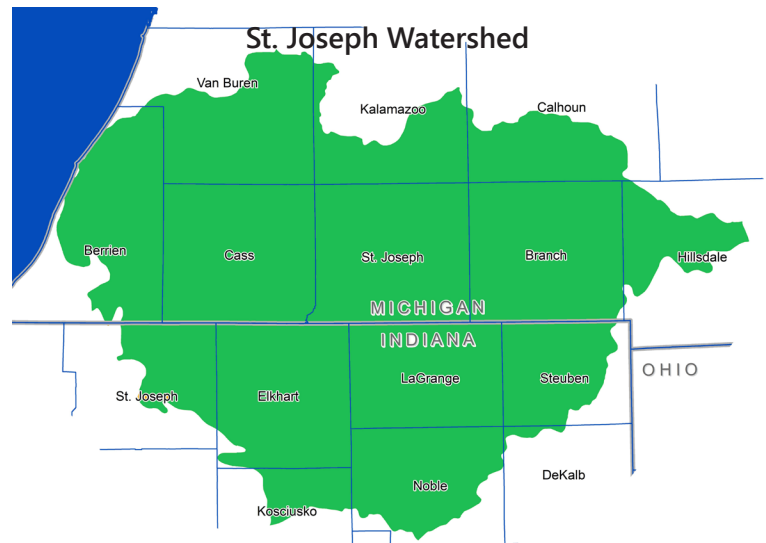
Land eligible for wetland reserve easements include farmed or prior-converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. Landowners who enroll in the program receive an easement payment from NRCS and a portion of the restoration costs. Enrollment options include:

- **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 50 to 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and between 50 to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **30-year Contracts** are only available to enroll acreage owned by Indian tribes. Program payment rates are commensurate with 30-year easements.

NRCS will prioritize applications based on the easement's potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

What Happens after the Restoration?

After the restoration is completed the landowner must maintain the wetland over the life of the contract. 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.



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The USDA has targeted \$816,000 for wetland reserve easements in the St. Joseph Watershed which includes portions of Michigan and Indiana. This funding is available through the St. Joseph River Watershed Conservation Partnership Project, funded through the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program.



Bald eagles on USDA wetland easement in Jackson County

For more information about USDA wetland reserve easements contact your local NRCS office.

Berrien County - Berrien Springs, (269) 471-9111 ext. 3

Branch County - Coldwater, (517) 278-2725 ext. 3

Calhoun County - Marshall, (269) 781-4263 ext. 3

Cass County - Cassopolis, (269) 445-8643 ext. 3

Hillsdale County - Jonesville, (517) 849-9890 ext. 3

Kalamazoo County - Portage, (269) 382-5121 ext. 3

St. Joseph County - Centreville, (269) 467-6336 ext. 3

Van Buren County - Paw Paw, (269) 657-4220 ext. 3

