

Why should you help preserve wetlands?

Wetlands benefit the Nation by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; and providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.



Unfortunately, most of Ohio's Wetlands were drained and filled to make way for farms, roadways, houses, and other development. Nearly 90% of Ohio's original wetlands have disappeared in the last 200 years. Your participation in the Wetlands Reserve program will help to protect the wetlands that are still remaining today.

If you are interested in enrolling in the Wetlands Reserve Program, or would like more information, please contact the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District or the USDA Service Center, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), at 888-217-3947 or <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmland/2002/>.

The Wetlands Reserve Program is funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation. Program implementation is handled by the Natural Resources Conservation Services with help from local conservation districts.

This brochure was created by the staff of the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District under the authority of the Board of Supervisors and assistance from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Information for this brochure was provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services.



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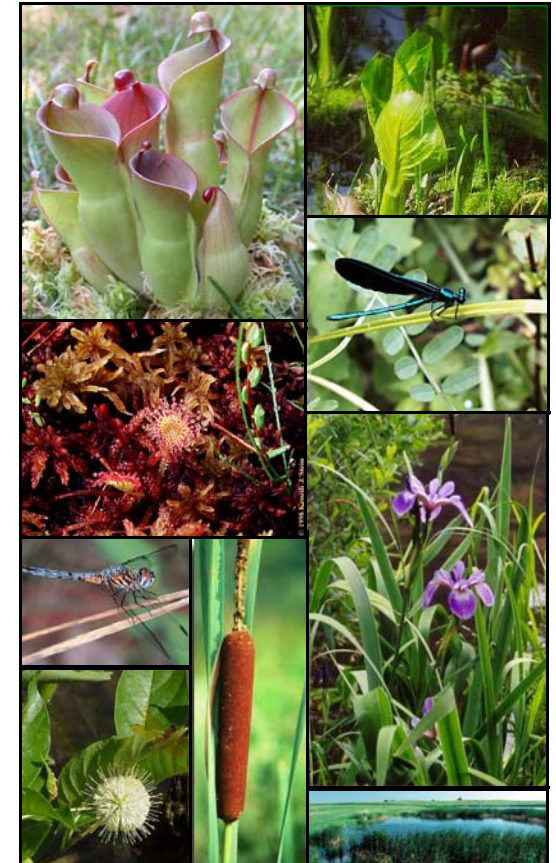
Geauga SWCD Mission:

"To conserve, protect, and enhance the resources of Geauga County by providing leadership, education, and assistance to all."

All services are provided without regard to race, religion, gender, age, physical or mental handicap, nation origin, or politics



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Wetlands Reserve Program

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What is the Wetlands Reserve Program?

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wet-



lands. It allows private landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and natural resource concerns on their land in an environmentally beneficial and cost effective manner.

The goal of WRP is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program.

There are currently 1,074,000 acres enrolled in WRP throughout the United States. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the continuation of the program by enabling the Secretary of Agriculture to enroll up to 250,000 additional acres annually into the program.

How would participating in the Wetlands Reserve Program benefit you?

WRP participants benefit by:

- Receiving technical and financial assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetland functions and values;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas; and
- Having incentives to develop wildlife recreational opportunities on their land.

Are you eligible to enroll in the Wetlands Reserve Program?

To be an eligible WRP landowner you must:

- Have owned the property being enrolled in the program for at least 12 months, unless the land was inherited, or can prove that the land was not obtained specifically for the purpose of enrolling it into the Wetlands Reserve Program;
- Be able to provide clear evidence of ownership; and
- Meet income limitations: Income limitation is 2.5 million dollars if less than 75% comes for agriculture



Is your land eligible for the Wetlands Reserve Program?

To be eligible for the WRP your land must be included under one of the following:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Rangeland, pasture, or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands ;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland function and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long-term protection.

How do you enroll in the Wetlands Reserve Program?

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or cost-share restoration agreement with the



USDA to restore and protect wetlands. Participants voluntarily limit the use of the land, but retain private ownership. Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. They may be obtained and filed at any time with the local USDA Service Center or Soil and Water Conservation District office.

What are your Enrollment Options?

The Wetland Reserve Program offers three options for enrollment:

- *Permanent Easement.* Easement payments for this option equal the lowest of three amounts: the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, the USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.
- *30-Year Easement.* Easement payments through this option are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. The USDA also pays 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- *Restoration Cost-share Agreement.* This is an agreement to re-establish a degraded or lost wetland habitat. The USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of restoration. This enrollment option does not place an easement on the property.