

NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture · Natural Resources Conservation Service
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NEWS

For Immediate Release

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR FLOODED PRAIRIE POTHOLES

March 1 Application Deadline

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS), Huron, S.D., February 9, 2010 – An additional call for applications has been issued for the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Prairie Pothole Special Enrollment Option for Fiscal Year 2010 funding. March 1, 2010, is the deadline by which a landowner must sign an application at their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, according to NRCS State Conservationist Janet Oertly of Huron.

The 2008 Farm Bill expanded the eligible land criteria for the WRP to include 30-year easements for cropland or grassland that was used for agricultural production prior to flooding from the natural overflow of a Prairie Pothole (closed basin). Currently, the Prairie Pothole Region WRP has additional funding for eligible counties including everything east of the Missouri River in South Dakota.

The WRP is a voluntary program with a continuous signup. However, this program funding has a March 1 application deadline to be considered for funding this fiscal year. Interested landowners need to work with their local office as soon as possible to start the application process.

Easement payments are based on an established rate. Eligible land must meet WRP criteria and the four items below. To be eligible for the WRP Prairie Pothole Special Enrollment Option:

1. The land is cropland or grassland that was used for agricultural production prior to flooding by a closed basin or lake.
2. Soils must be hydric. Areas that meet ponding criteria (soils that pond for longer than seven days during the growing season) will be labeled hydric regardless of soil type.
3. The depth of water will be 6.5 feet or less.
4. The size of the parcel offered is a minimum of 20 contiguous acres.

If accepted into this WRP Prairie Pothole Special Enrollment Option, the land can not be farmed but compatible uses such as haying or grazing may occur. Oertly says, “This WRP option also provides wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.”

“Funds are available now,” says Oertly and she encourages any landowner not to wait until the last minute to visit their local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center. “With the past few year’s flooding, now is the time to look at the economic return on those marginal acres. Also, land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) may be eligible if it meets the wetland requirements,” she notes.

For more information about the WRP, please contact your local NRCS office or the NRCS WRP Manager, Sara Thompson, Huron, at (605) 352-1281. For more information about technical assistance and conservation programs go to <http://www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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