

## Emergency Watershed Protection Program



Help in the midst of **DISASTER**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help communities recover from the devastation that can occur following a variety of natural disasters.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program is available to communities whenever a natural disaster occurs and creates a sudden watershed impairment that poses a threat to life and/or property. A watershed impairment exists when the ability of a watershed to carry out its normal function is reduced to the extent of creating an imminent threat to life or property.



### Background Information about the Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Congress established the EWP program and provides funding for recovery projects. Eligibility for the program does not depend upon a presidentially declared emergency, each NRCS State Conservationist is authorized to declare a "Local Disaster" emergency. A local disaster declaration triggers the same assistance from NRCS that would be available through a presidentially declared disaster.

All EWP projects must reduce threats to lives and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; be designed and implemented according to sound technical standards; and conserve natural resources.

### Watershed Impairments

After a watershed has been dramatically effected by a natural disaster to the point where the watershed no longer functions normally, EWP assistance might be available. The typical aftermath left behind following a flood, fire, hurricane, drought, landslide or tornado can be assisted toward recovery through the EWP program.

The EWP program addresses watershed impairments, which include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged river and stream channels,
- Undermined, unstable river and stream banks,
- Jeopardized water control structures and public infrastructures,
- Wind-borne debris removal, and
- Damaged upland watersheds stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

### Sponsors

All projects undertaken through EWP, with the exception of the purchase of floodplain easements, must have a project sponsor. A project sponsor is a legal subdivision of the state, such as a city, town, county, parishes, townships, or soil and water conservation districts and when chartered under state laws, entities such as levee districts, irrigation districts, drainage districts and any Native American tribe or tribal organization. In order to be eligible, a sponsor must have taxing and imminent domain authorities and is required to complete the following:

- Secure all necessary permits and land rights
- Furnish the local cost share,
- Accomplish the installation of work, and
- Perform any necessary operation and maintenance.

### Cost Share

Through EWP program, the NRCS may pay up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the construction costs of eligible recovery projects. Ninety percent (90%) may be paid for projects within limited-resource areas as identified by U.S. Census data. The remaining project costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services and materials, however they cannot be resources or funding from other federal agencies.

### Eligibility

NRCS conducts a site assessment that provides a case-by-case investigation of the work necessary to repair or protect a site. The individual site assessment documents EWP program eligibility. It is important to note NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats. If the threat cannot not be removed, NRCS is prohibited from providing assistance.



### Floodplain Easement Program (FPE)

The Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program (EWP-FPE) provides an alternative measure to traditional EWP recovery, where it is determined that acquiring an easement in lieu of recovery measures is the more economical and prudent approach to reducing a threat to life or property.

The easement area will be restored to the maximum extent practicable to its natural condition. Restoration utilizes structural and nonstructural practices to restore the flood storage and flow, erosion control, and improve the practical management of the easement.

Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of floodplains while conserving their natural values such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion. Structures, including buildings, within the floodplain easement must be demolished and removed, or relocated outside the 100-year floodplain or dam breach inundation area.



### Contact Information

If your land has suffered damage due to flood, fire, drought, windstorm, or other natural occurrence, please contact your local NRCS office to find out if you qualify for the EWP program.

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp)

Property damage due to flood.

**Disaster Assistance**  
Programs and services available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service

