

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM



SUMMARY

The USDA NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides technical support and funds for easements to preserve agricultural land or wetlands.

- Created by the federal Farm Bill in 2014; Revised in 2018 Farm Bill
- Administered by USDA NRCS
- Annual program funding (201/22): \$1.5 million in PA
- Total program funding since inception: \$26.6 million
- Funding Source: Federal Budget - Farm Bill

FEATURES

Farmland easements work to preserve existing farm land in areas of high threat of development; enhances wildlife habitat.

This program is a combination of previous agricultural grant programs; includes Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) programs.

In PA, WRP prizes bog turtle habitat to be competitive. Program is not highly used in PA.

ELIGIBILITY

Who is Eligible?

ALE applicants must be a governmental entity, American Indian tribe, or nongovernmental organization partnered with a landowner. WRE applicants must be a landowner or American Indian tribe.

Eligible Costs

ALE: Program pays up to 50% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. On farmland with special environmental considerations, ALE pays 75% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

WRE Permanent Easements: 100% of the easement value for the purchase of the easement and 75 -100% of restoration costs. For 30-year easements, WRE covers 50-75% of easement value and 50-75% of restoration costs.

HELPFUL TIPS

ALE prioritizes conservation value of land. WRE prioritizes water quality improvements. Applications should highlight these impacts.

Priority is given to large contiguous properties; this can be due to proximity to other preserved lands. Most helpful to work with land trust.

Having an established farm succession plan and conservation plan improves application.

See [PA ACEP ranking factors at CWQE Hub](#).

HOW TO APPLY

Apply to an eligible entity for ALE or local USDA Office for WRE:

Lancaster County NRCS: Heather Grove, 717-874-2530

York County NRCS: Eric Samus, 717-894-3001

Hathaway Jones, Easement Coordinator – 717-237-2100.

Deadline: ACEP ALE – August 16, 2022

Link to application: [NRCS-CAP-1200](#)



Last Update: June 2022