

NRCS Announces Ranking Deadline for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program in Kansas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP) to provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements to help productive farm and ranch lands remain in agriculture and protect critical wetlands. Completed application packets must be submitted by **May 17, 2019**, to be considered for 2019 funding.

"Conservation easements provide many public benefits to Kansans, including protection of open spaces, wildlife habitat, and wetland restoration and protection," said Karen A. Woodrich, Kansas State Conservationist. "We encourage private landowners, Indian tribes, and non-governmental organizations to contact their local NRCS office to obtain information on how to apply."

Through the ACEP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to secure easements for both working agricultural lands and for wetlands. The program has two components: one for Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and one for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE).

The ACEP-ALE component protects the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive croplands and grasslands to nonagricultural uses. The ACEP-WRE component restores wetlands to provide habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species; improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reduce flooding; recharge groundwater; and protect biological diversity.

Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

NRCS staff and partners will work with applicants to help them through the application process for ACEP-WRE. Land Trusts and other eligible entities in Kansas will work with landowners to help them through the application process for ACEP-ALE and provide one-on-one assistance to create the conservation easement that works best for their farming or ranching operation.

It is important that applicants provide accurate records of ownership and ensure they have established a record of ownership with USDA's Farm Service Agency. Application information is available at your local USDA Service Center and at www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted.

Completed application packets must be received by May 17, 2019 to be ranked and considered for funding for both ACEP-ALE and ACEP-WRE. There are multiple steps and items that are needed for landowners to complete an application packet. Go to the Kansas NRCS website or stop by the local NRCS office for more information on the ACEP-WRE application process. The local NRCS office can also provide contact information for Land Trusts and other eligible entities for those landowners interested

in ACEP-ALE. Completed application packets submitted after May 17, 2019, for ACEP-WRE or ACEP-ALE will be deferred to the next funding cycle.

For more information, visit the Kansas NRCS website at:

www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. To find a service center near you, check on the Internet at offices.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.