

Missouri River Floodplain Farmers in Five States Eligible for Wetland Restoration Assistance through USDA and The Nature Conservancy

Kansas state conservationist Eric B. Banks, with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced that Kansas landowners affected by 2011 Missouri River flooding may be eligible for wetland restoration assistance from the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) through a five-state project sponsored by The Nature Conservancy. **Deadline to apply for this assistance is Friday, May 4.**

Farmers in Doniphan, Atchison, Leavenworth, and Wyandotte Counties with areas flooded during the 2011 Missouri River flood may apply to restore wetlands through permanent easements. So can farmers with land within 1,100 yards of the Missouri River, even if their land was not damaged. However, applications received for land that was damaged will be ranked higher. An attached map shows eligible areas and is also available at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp.

“Some farmers near the Missouri River have land that was scoured by the flood or was covered with deep sand deposits once the floodwaters receded,” said Banks. “WREP provides some options for them that could be economically favorable as compared to trying to get the land crop-ready again.

“This WREP provides economic options for flood-impacted agricultural landowners,” said Banks. “The resulting wetlands will also offset societal costs of future floods while providing valuable water quality and wildlife habitat benefits.”

Nearly \$3 million is available for easements and restoration costs to producers in Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota, according to Banks. The Nature Conservancy is providing a five percent cash match for restoration costs on permanent easement and key restoration practices.

“We are pleased to partner with NRCS in this new program and believe it represents part of a proactive approach that landowners and communities along the river can take to restore important habitats and reduce the impacts of future flooding along the Missouri River,” said Rob Manes, state director of The Nature Conservancy in Kansas.

Applications for this WREP project will be ranked based on size of proposed easement, proximity to the river, proximity to conservation land areas greater than 300 acres, percentage of hydric soils, percent damage, and whether the easement area is located where a planned levee breach or levee setback will occur. The per acre payment for WREP easements in Kansas may be found at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp. The current per acre easement purchase price for eligible WREP lands along the Missouri River in Kansas is \$2,342 per acre.

WREP is a voluntary program carried out through partnership agreements with state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and Indian tribes. It is a component of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Landowners participating in WREP retain ownership and access to the land, and may request other compatible uses of the land

consistent with maintaining the wetland and riparian habitat as approved by NRCS. Property owners with land along the Missouri River in Kansas may apply at their local NRCS office (find your nearest Kansas NRCS service center at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=KS>).

Learn more about WREP and other NRCS programs and initiatives at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov.