



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

What is the Emergency Watershed Protection Program?

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program was set up by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, windstorms, fires, and other natural occurrences. The purpose of EWP is to help groups of people with a common problem. It is generally not an individual assistance program. All projects undertaken must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the state, such as a city, town, county, or conservation district. The program is administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides technical and financial assistance to preserve life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding.



Photos 1 and 2: Before and after pictures of streambank stabilization done under EWP.

Is Financial Assistance Available?

NRCS may provide up to 75 percent of the total funds needed to restore the natural function of an impaired watershed. The remaining 25 percent must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

What are some typical projects?

All work must represent the least expensive alternative. Typical type projects include: clearing debris from clogged stream channels, restoring vegetation, stabilizing eroded stream banks, and purchasing floodplain easements.

What are the criteria for receiving assistance?

All EWP work must reduce threats to life and property. Furthermore, it must be economically and environmentally defensible. The project must also be stable from an engineering standpoint. EWP work generally must yield benefits to more than one person.

Who is eligible?

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance but must be represented by a project sponsor. The project sponsor must be a legal unit of government such as a town, city, county, or conservation district.

What does the Sponsor have to do?

Sponsors are responsible for providing landrights to do repair work and securing the necessary permits. Sponsors are also responsible for furnishing the local cost share and for installing the work. The work can be completed either through federal or local contracts.

How do I get Assistance?

If you feel your property has suffered severe damage and may qualify under EWP, you are encouraged to contact your local selectman or public works department and your local county Conservation District and NRCS Office. You also should follow up with a letter requesting assistance after eligibility has been determined. NOTE: All applications must be submitted 10 days from the disaster for exigency and within 60 days for nonexigency situations.

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