

NEWS RELEASE

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

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Wetland Reserve Program Offers Competitive Rates

Landowners looking for competitive payment rates to restore wetlands are encouraged to sign up for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) program through May 14.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are now accepting applications for funding to restore wetlands that have been drained and have a history of being used for agricultural production.

"Restoring wetlands on privately owned lands provides many public benefits, such as enhancing wildlife habitat, improving water quality and reducing potential flood damage in targeted areas," said Jenny Heglund, Acting State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

RIM-WRP is a local-state-federal partnership that combines the state's Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve conservation easement program with the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program. Combining these two programs allows state funds to leverage federal funds that are available through the Federal Farm Bill. Funding for this partnership is through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

Over the last two years, Minnesota has been one of the top states in the nation for leveraging federal WRP program dollars. In 2009 Minnesota had the highest number of WRP easements enrolled with 125, and the second-highest number of acres enrolled with 19,793. In 2008, Minnesota received 20 percent of the WRP dollars that were spent nationwide.

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The state dollars for this partnership are expected to be provided from the constitutionally dedicated Outdoor Heritage Fund, based on a recommendation of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

Details of the RIM-WRP Partnership:

- To leverage federal funds that are available until the end of the federal fiscal year, the RIM-WRP signup period is from April 1 to May 14, 2010.
- Interested landowners should contact the Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff at the USDA Service Center located at 122 8th Ave S., Madison, MN. Telephone 320-598-7321, extension 3.
- Eligibility is statewide, but priority is given to areas of Minnesota that have experienced the greatest wetland losses.
- Competitive payment rates have been established for this partnership using township average land values. Contact your local SWCD or NRCS field office to determine your payment rate per acre by township.

The Mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is to provide USDA technical leadership, working in partnership with local, state, and other federal conservation agencies and organizations, to help people conserve, improve and sustain our natural resources.