

## Emergency Watershed Program Helps Communities Cope With Adverse Impacts Resulting From Natural Disasters.



The country has experienced many natural disasters in the last few years from hurricanes, wild fires, tornados, and extreme rainfall events. These disasters often damage or put vital infrastructure such as water treatment plants, sewage plants, roads, bridges, homes, businesses and other structures at risk from erosion or flooding.

Local communities often need both financial and technical assistance to recover from these natural disasters. The Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service allows communities to quickly address serious and long-lasting threats to infrastructure. The EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state officials for program assistance to begin, but partial funding must be provided by the sponsor.



Stream restoration work in Puerto Rico after hurricane damage



A completed sand cement bag riprap wall with rock riprap chutes in Texas protects bridge and road.

NRCS can pay up to 75 percent of the cost for eligible EWP projects. Local sponsors must acquire the remaining 25 percent in cash or in-kind services.

If funding becomes available, all funded projects must demonstrate they provide protection from additional flooding or soil erosion; reduce threats to life and property; restore the hydraulic capacity to the natural environment to the maximum extent practical; and are economically and environmentally defensible and technically sound.

### **EWP Program Assistance**

The EWP Program has two distinct options for assisting local communities and individual landowners — EWP Program-Recovery and EWPP-Floodplain Easements.

### **EWP Program Projects**

NRCS offers financial and technical assistance for various activities under EWP Program – Recovery, including:

- Remove debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges;
- reshape and protect eroded streambanks;
- correct damaged or destroyed drainage facilities;
- establish vegetative cover on critically eroding lands;
- repair levees and structures;
- repair conservation practices.

### **The EWP Program cannot be used:**

- to address problems that existed prior to the disaster;
- to improve the level of protection above the existing level at the time of the disaster;
- for projects' operation and maintenance;
- to repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities;
- to install non-essential restoration work that will not reduce or eliminate adverse impacts from the natural disaster; or
- to restore projects installed by another federal agency.

### **Eligibility**

Recovery projects begin with a local sponsor or legal subdivision of state or tribal government. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally-recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Interested public and private landowners can apply for EWP Program – Recovery assistance through one of those sponsors.

**EWPP-Floodplain Easements**. In addition to recovery projects, NRCS may purchase EWP floodplain easements instead of trying to recover damaged floodplain lands if it proves to be more cost effective than recovery.

Landowner eligibility for EWP-floodplain easements functions differently. Landowners can apply for assistance through the EWP-floodplain easement option directly at the local NRCS office when project funding for floodplain easements become available. States will hold a signup period for the impacted communities and the local NRCS offices will publicize that information in the affected communities. Additional details on this program is available on the NRCS web page:

[https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/?cid=nrcs143\\_008216](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/?cid=nrcs143_008216)

### **Contact Information**

To learn more about NRCS's EWP Program, go to the NRCS web page

at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/>

or contact your state's NRCS EWP Program Manager.

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