Emergency Watershed Protection Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** administers the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is not necessary for a national emergency to be declared for an area to be eligible for assistance.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. All projects undertaken, with the exception of the purchase of floodplain easements, must have a project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. Funding for the program is provided through congressional appropriations.

Type of Work Authorized

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard lives and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- debris-clogged stream channels,
- undermined and unstable streambanks,
- jeopardized water control structures and public infrastructures,
- wind-borne debris removal, and
- damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

The program can include purchasing floodplain easements. These easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions and values of the floodplain, including associated wetlands and riparian areas. They also conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge, as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the results of erosion.

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. NRCS completes a Damage Survey Report which provides a case-by-case investigation of the work necessary to repair or protect a site. NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats. Should sponsors want to increase the level of protection, the sponsor will be responsible for paying 100 percent of the costs of the upgrade and additional work.

Eligibility

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but must be represented by a project sponsor.

Sponsors include legal subdivisions of the State, such as a city, county, general improvement district, conservation district, or any Native American tribe or tribal organization as defined in section 4 of the Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Sponsor's Obligations

Sponsors are responsible for:

- providing land rights to do repair work,
- securing the necessary permits,
- furnishing the local cost share,
- accomplishing the installation of work, and
- performing any necessary operation and maintenance.

EWP in Action

An October 2005 storm in Cheshire County, New Hampshire, left this house overhanging the stream bank (above). All trees and vegetation were scoured away. Proposed action included a stone toe – earth fill with geotextiles to the top of the bank and rock bank (below).

Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information or:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp

Criteria for Assistance

All EWP work must reduce threat to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; and be sound from a technical standpoint.

How Do I Get Assistance?

If your land has suffered severe damage that may qualify for the EWP Program, you should contact your local authorities and request assistance. City and county governments, flood and water control districts, and soil and water conservation districts are the most common sponsors of EWP projects. More information is available from NRCS offices throughout the United States and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands areas.

NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PA-1905 January 2007

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Implementing emergency measures to relieve imminent hazards to life and property created by natural disasters.

Helping People Help the Land