

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND FLOOD PREVENTION OPERATIONS PROGRAM

Overview

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program includes the Flood Prevention Operations Program (Watershed Operations) authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534) and the provisions of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83-566). It provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the States and their political subdivisions to address resource concerns due to erosion, floodwater, and sediment and provide for improved utilization of the land and water resources.

The WFPO Program provides technical and financial assistance to States, local governments and Tribes to plan and implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of:

- Flood Prevention
- Watershed Protection
- Public Recreation
- Public Fish and Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Management
- Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- Water Quality Management
- Watershed Structure Rehabilitation (There is a separate program that manages rehabilitation projects)

What is a Watershed

Watersheds are the area of land drained by a particular surface stream system that outlets at a common point. NRCS P.L. 83-566 Watershed projects are developed for watersheds usually 250,000 acres or smaller. Some have flood control dams built on tributaries to larger streams or rivers. Other projects may only have land and water conservation practices.

Local Leadership

Watershed projects are planned and carried out jointly by local, state, and federal agencies with support of community landowners and citizens in the watersheds. Communities identify resource problems to be addressed, practices to be installed, and carry out major portions of a watershed plan, such as obtaining easements, rights of ways, permits and local cost-share funding.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to local project sponsors. Federal assistance is available for engineering and construction costs of flood control measures, conservation practices for water quality and erosion and sediment control, and for agricultural or municipal/industrial water supplies and recreation facilities. Entities of state and local government or a tribe may apply for USDA assistance. Application details are available from NRCS offices or go to the NRCS web site and click on programs: [nrcs.usda.gov](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov).



Conservation Measures

A project can consist of a combination of structures such as flood control dams or levees and conservation practices like terraces, grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures, animal waste stabilization facilities or aquatic species crossings. Measures can also involve the conversion of open channel irrigation canals to pressurized pipelines.

Water Management

Management of both agriculture and non-agricultural water supplies can be a significant component of watershed projects.

Measures to increase or conserve present and future water supplies in rural areas, improve water quality impacted by pollutants, and recharge ground water can be part of a watershed plan.

Management for nonagricultural uses such as municipal and industrial uses, recreational uses and improved fish and wildlife habitat are other opportunities in watershed projects.

Watershed Operations Program Cost Share

Watershed Operations Program Federal Cost-Sharing by Purpose	Engineering / Technical Assistance	Installation / Construction	Real Property Rights
Flood Prevention (Flood Damage Reduction)	100%	100%	0
• Works of Improvement			
Watershed Protection	100%	Variable	0
• Flood Control			
• Erosion and Sedimentation Reduction			
• Water Quality			
• Water Conservation			
• Wildlife Habitat			
• Woodland			
• Energy			
• Recreation Resources			
Public Recreation	100%	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
• Works of Improvement			
• Recreation Minimum Basic Facilities			
Public Fish and Wildlife	100%	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
• Works of Improvement			
Agricultural Water Management	Up to 100%	Up to 75%	0
• Drainage			
• Irrigation			
• Ground Water Recharge			
• Agricultural Water Supply Structure			
• Water Conservation			
• Water Quality			
• Rural Water Supply			
Municipal and Industrial Water Supply	0	Not to exceed 50%	0
• Reservoir Structure			
Water Quality Management	Up to 100%	To be determined	0
• Reservoir Structure			

Source: National Watershed Program Manual, 500.3 – Eligible Purposes and Figure 500-E2

Federal Cost-Sharing Percentage Provisions for Conservation Easements and Mitigation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Losses	Engineering	Engineering / Technical Assistance
Conservation Easements Wetland or Floodplain	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%
Mitigation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Losses	Not to exceed 50%	Not to exceed 50%

Source: National Watershed Program Manual, Figure 500-E1
The above provisions apply to acquisition of real property rights by purchase or easements

More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For more information about the watershed operations program or to find your local USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov.