

qualifying as sponsors. All watershed plans shall be sponsored by entities legally organized under State law or by any Indian tribe or tribal organization having the authority to carry out, operate and maintain works of improvement. Those plans that incorporate the use of nonstructural or structural measures shall be sponsored by organizations that, individually or collectively, have:

- (1) The power of eminent domain,
- (2) The authority to levy taxes or use other adequate funding sources, including state, regional, or local appropriations, to finance their share of the project cost and all operation and maintenance costs.

(b) To receive Federal assistance for project installation, sponsors must commit themselves to use their powers and authority to carry out and maintain the project as planned.

§ 622.11 Eligible watershed projects.

(a) To be eligible for Federal assistance, a watershed project must:

- (1) Meet the definition of a watershed area as defined in NRCS's National Watersheds Manual.
- (2) Not exceed 250,000 acres in size.
- (3) Not include any single structure that provides more than 12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity nor more than 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity.
- (4) Have significant land or water management problems that can be solved or alleviated by measures for watershed protection, flood prevention, drainage, irrigation, recreation, fish and wildlife, municipal or industrial water supply, or other water management.
- (5) Produce substantial benefits to the general public, to communities, and to groups of landowners.
- (6) Cannot be installed by individual or collective landowners under alternative cost-sharing assistance.
- (7) Have strong local citizen and sponsor support through agreement to obtain land rights, contribute the local cost of construction, and carry out operation and maintenance.

(b) Works and improvement that may be included in a watershed project are those that:

- (1) Contribute to reducing flood-water, erosion, and sediment damages.
- (2) Further the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and the conservation and proper utilization of land.
- (3) Have the greatest net national economic benefits consistent with protecting the Nation's environment (for structural water resource projects) relative to alternative works, unless an exception is granted by the Secretary.

Subpart C—Application Procedure

§ 622.20 Application.

Sponsors shall follow State developed procedures (based on Executive Order 12372) for coordination of proposed Federal financial assistance and also USDA's 7 CFR part 3015 in applying for Pub. L. 83-566 assistance. Standard forms for Federal assistance or other approved forms may be obtained from NRCS State, area, or field offices. These forms should be submitted to the Single Point of Contact in accordance with the State developed procedures.

§ 622.21 State agency approval.

The governor or designated State agency will approve or disapprove the application. If disapproved, no further action is required of NRCS. If approved or not disapproved within 45 days, the application shall be sent to the NRCS state conservationist. After the state conservationist has determined that the application is legally valid, he will notify the sponsor of receipt of the application. If found not legally valid, the state conservationist will return it to the originator with an opinion.

Subpart D—Planning

§ 622.30 General.

- (a) Watershed projects are to be planned and carried out in a way that will (1) minimize all adverse impacts, and (2) mitigate unavoidable losses to the maximum practicable degree. Projects must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Pub. L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 852) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).
- (b) Fish and Wildlife enhancement measures proposed by Federal or State

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fish and wildlife agencies will be included if they are technically and economically feasible and are acceptable to the sponsors and the NRCS. If additional sponsors are needed to carry out the recommended fish and wildlife measures, NRCS will assist fish and wildlife agencies in attempting to obtain such sponsors.

(c) All planning efforts by NRCS and the sponsors must include well publicized public meetings to obtain public input and views on the project.

§ 622.31 Basic planning efforts.

Upon receipt of an application, the NRCS will make any necessary field studies and develop a report to justify the need for planning effort. Once planning is authorized by the Chief of NRCS, a watershed plan-environmental impact statement (plan-EIS) or a watershed plan-environmental assessment (plan-EA) will be prepared by NRCS to request funding. This effort must be coordinated with other State and Federal agencies.

§ 622.32 Reviews and approvals.

(a) The watershed plan-environmental impact statement (or assessment) will be subject to internal technical reviews, sponsor and other local party review, interagency review by other Federal, state, and concerned groups, and a final review as stated in NRCS's National Watersheds Manual.

(b) After thorough review by NRCS and other agencies, the NRCS and the sponsors shall accept the plan-EIS or plan-EA by signing the watershed agreement. The watershed plan must be approved by the Committees of Congress or the Chief of NRCS. Funding for installation can then be granted by the Chief of NRCS.

PART 623—EMERGENCY WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

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AUTHORITY: 16 U.S.C. 3837-3837f; Pub. L. 103-75, Chapter 1, 107 Stat. 739, 742.

SOURCE: 58 FR 62497, Nov. 29, 1993, unless otherwise noted.

§ 623.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) The regulations in this part set forth the policies, procedures, and requirements for the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP). Under the EWRP, NRCS will make offers to purchase wetland conservation easements from persons owning croplands that were damaged by the 1993 Midwest floods if those lands have the potential for restoration to wetland conditions and if the owner voluntarily agrees to restore and maintain those conditions. The easements are to be purchased to promote the restoration and maintenance of wetland characteristics, such as hydrologic conditions of inundation or saturation of the soil and hydrophytic vegetation. The functions and values of the wetlands for wildlife habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, floodway enhancement, ground water recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education will thus be promoted. The wetland conservation easements will permanently prohibit use of the affected land as cropland. Additionally, the easement shall require permanent maintenance of the wetland conditions, except in the case of natural disaster.

(b) The EWRP is available only in the following States: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Certain cropland areas within these States have been determined to have been inundated by the Midwest floods of 1993. As more fully defined and described in