

across State boundaries, or for other goals of the WBP found in this part.

§ 633.4 Program requirements.

(a) *General.* Under the WBP, the NRCS will enter 10-year agreements with eligible persons who voluntarily cooperate in the protection of wetlands and associated lands. To participate in WBP, a person will agree to the implementation of a conservation plan, the effect of which is to protect, enhance, maintain, and manage the hydrologic conditions of inundation or saturation of the soil, native vegetation, and natural topography of eligible lands. The NRCS may provide cost-share assistance for the activities that promote the protection of wetland functions and values. Specific protection actions may be undertaken by the participant or other NRCS designee.

(b) *Participant eligibility.* To be eligible to participate in the WBP, a person must:

(1) Be the landowner of eligible land for which enrollment is sought; or

(2) Have possession of the land by written lease over all designated acreage in the agreement for at least two years preceding the date of the agreement and will have possession over the all designated acreage for the agreement period.

(c) *Eligible land.* (1) The NRCS shall determine whether land is eligible for enrollment and whether, once found eligible, the lands may be included in the program based on the likelihood of successful protection of wetland functions and values when considering the cost of entering the agreement and protection costs. Land placed under an agreement shall be specifically identified and designated for the period of the agreement.

(2) The following land is eligible for enrollment in the WBP:

(i) Privately owned inland fresh wetland areas of types 1 through 7.

(ii) Privately owned inland fresh wetland areas of types 1 through 7 which are under a drainage easement with the U.S. Department of the Interior or with a State government which permits agricultural use; or

(iii) Other privately owned land which is adjacent to or within one quarter mile of designated types 1

through 7 wetlands and which is determined by the State Conservationist to be essential for the nesting, breeding, or feeding of migratory waterfowl, or for the protection of wetland.

(d) *Ineligible land.* The following land is not eligible for enrollment in the WBP:

(1) Converted wetlands if the conversion was in violation of 16 U.S.C. 3821 et seq.;

(2) Lands owned by an agency of the United States;

(3) Land which is set aside or diverted under any other program administered by the Department of Agriculture;

(4) Land which is harvested in the first year of the agreement period prior to being designated, except for land on which timber is harvested in accordance with a Forest Management Plan which is included in the conservation plan and is approved by the State forester or equivalent State official;

(5) Lands where implementation of agreement practices would be futile due to on-site or off-site conditions; and

(6) Land on which the ownership has changed during the 2-year period preceding the first year of the agreement period unless:

(i) The new ownership was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous owner,

(ii) The land was acquired by the owner or operator to replace eligible land from which he was displaced because of its acquisition by any Federal, State, or other agency having the right of eminent domain, or

(iii) The new owner operated the land to be designated for as long as 2 years preceding the first year of the agreement and has control of such land for the agreement period.

§ 633.5 Application procedures.

(a) Application for participation. To apply for enrollment, a person must submit an application for participation in the WBP.

(b) Preliminary agency actions. The NRCS must certify that the designated acreage that would be placed under an agreement constitutes a viable wetland unit, contains sufficient adjacent land

§ 633.6

to protect the wetland, and provides essential habitat for the nesting, breeding or feeding of migratory waterfowl.

(c) Where funds allocated to the State do not permit accepting all requests which are filed, the State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, may establish ranking criteria and limit the approval of requests for agreements in accordance with the ranking scheme. Any ranking scheme shall consider estimated costs of the agreement, costs of protection, availability of matching funds, significance of wetland functions and values, and estimated success of protection measures.

(d) The NRCS may place higher priority on certain geographic regions of the State where the protection of wetlands may better achieve NRCS State and regional goals and objectives.

(e) Notwithstanding any limitation of this part, the State Conservationist may enroll eligible lands at any time in order to encompass total wetland areas subject to multiple ownership or otherwise to achieve program objectives. Similarly, the State Conservationist may, at any time, exclude otherwise eligible lands if the participation of the adjacent landowners is essential to the successful protection of the wetlands and those adjacent landowners are unwilling to participate.

§ 633.6 Program participation requirements.

(a) *WBP Agreement.* An agreement shall be executed for each participating farm. The agreement shall be signed by the owner of the designated acreage and any other person who, as landlord, tenant, or share cropper, will share in the payment or has an interest in the designated acreage. There may be more than one agreement for a farm.

(b) *Agreement period.* The agreement period shall:

(1) Be for a term of 10 years;

(2) Become effective on January 1 of the year in which the agreement is approved except that the agreement shall become effective on January 1 of the next succeeding year in cases where, at the time the agreement is approved, the NRCS determines that the agreement signers will be unable to comply with the provisions of paragraph (c) of

7 CFR Ch. VI (1-1-03 Edition)

this section in the year in which such agreement is approved.

(c) *Agreement terms and conditions.* The acreage designated under an agreement shall:

(1) Be maintained for the agreement period in a manner which will preserve, restore, or improve the wetland character of the land;

(2) Not be drained, burned, filled, or otherwise used in a manner which would destroy the wetland character of the acreage, except that the provisions of this paragraph shall not prohibit the carrying out of management practices which are specified in a conservation plan for the farm;

(3) Not be used as a dumping area for draining other wetlands, except where the State Conservationist determines that such use is consistent with the sound management of wetlands and is specified in the conservation plan;

(4) Not be used as a source of irrigation water;

(5) Not be used for the harvesting of a crop;

(6) Not be hayed except for during periods of severe drought and only under conditions prescribed by the State Conservationist in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior or his designee; and

(7) Not be grazed, except as may be specified in the conservation plan.

§ 633.7 Annual payments.

(a) Person on the farm having an interest in the designated acreage, including tenants and sharecroppers, shall be eligible for an annual payment in the manner agreed upon by them as representing their respective contributions to compliance with the agreement. The State Conservationist shall not approve an agreement if it is determined that the proposed division of payment is not fair and equitable.

(b) The annual per acre payment rates for wetlands and for adjacent land shall be determined for each county by the State Conservationist, based on recommendations of the State Technical Committee.

(c) Maximum payments. In order to ensure that limited program funds are expended to maximize program benefits, the State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical