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## **2012 Wetlands Project Applications due February 15**

More than \$30 million available for wetlands conservation in California, including the Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot Program

DAVIS, Calif., Jan. 11, 2012 – Private landowners interested in enhancing, restoring or protecting their wetlands with this year’s funding may want to get their applications in soon. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California has set Feb. 15, 2012, as the deadline for considering projects for 2012 Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) funding.

This year, WRP will again include the Grazing Reserve Pilot Program that allows livestock grazing on enrolled land as part of a wetlands conservation and grazing management plan. California NRCS is offering the pilot program in three geographic areas: Coastal Pastures & Wetlands of the North Coast, California Vernal Pools, and Intermountain Wetlands of Northeastern California.

“WRP can provide agricultural producers an alternative to the difficulties of farming and ranching wet, marginal land,” said Ed Burton, NRCS California state conservationist. “We’re excited to work closely with local landowners on wetland restoration and conservation to benefit wildlife and the overall landscape.”

WRP is a voluntary program that provides farmers, ranchers and other private landowners compensation for land placed in conservation easements, and cost-share funding for restoring and enhancing wetlands. The NRCS in California has received \$30 million in WRP funding for 2012.

While NRCS accepts WRP applications throughout the year, the agency plans to make 2012 funding decisions from the pool of applications received by February 15.

WRP includes permanent easements that pay 100 percent of the easement value and restoration costs, and 30-year easements that pay up to 75 percent of the easement value and restoration costs. WRP also offers a 10-year restoration-only option without an easement.

The Grazing Reserve Pilot Program offers the same permanent and 30-year easement options as WRP. However, the easement value is adjusted according to the amount of grazing right that remains unencumbered by the easement. This value is determined each year by the NRCS Chief. For 2012, the grazing pilot value will be 75% of the permanent or 30-year easement under WRP.



As with all NRCS easements, the landowner retains the title to the land, and the right to control access and recreational use. The land remains on the tax rolls.

To date, more than 266 private landowners in California have voluntarily enrolled more than 120,000 acres into WRP. Overall, wetlands improve water quality, prevent flooding and soil erosion, recharge groundwater and provide critical wildlife habitat.

For more information on WRP and the Grazing Reserve Pilot Program, landowners can contact their local NRCS Service Center or visit [www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs).

Since its inception in 1935, NRCS has worked in partnership with private landowners and a variety of local, state and federal conservation partners to deliver conservation based on specific, local needs.

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