Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. Department of Agriculture

MAINE – ACEP-ALE

Submit Applications to Bill Jones William.Jones1@usda.gov

Apply as early as December 6, 2024

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

Batching Deadlines: Although signup is continuous, funding selections are made at specific times during the fiscal year.
1st Round December 6, 2024, General Ag Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
2nd Round December 20, 2024, Inflation Reduction Act – Ag Conservation Easement Program (IRA-ACEP)
ACEP and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

Read the full announcement here Maine application deadlines

Overview

NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing perpetual Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and shrubland. Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland or grassland protection programs.
Under the ALE component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the ALE. Ensuring the Future of Agriculture

Eligibility

Maine NRCS strongly advises applicant entities (e.g., Land Trusts) to route potential landowner(s) to Farm Service Agency (FSA) immediately to complete their FSA eligibility Forms *(below).* Locate county USDA SERVICE CENTERS near you.

Conservation Compliance
Form-AD1026-Highly-Erodible-Land
Instructions for the AD-1026

Income and Tax Information
CCC-941
Instructions for the CCC-941

Farm Operating Plan
CCC-902
Instructions for the CCC-902

Land eligible for ALE includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland and nonindustrial private forest land. NRCS will prioritize applications that protect agricultural uses and related conservation values of the land and those that maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use. To enroll land in ACEP-ALE, NRCS enters into Program Agreements and Parcel Contracts with eligible partners.

All landowners listed on the deed, being offered for ALE, and entity members down to the individuals, must meet the Adjusted Gross Income, Highly Erodible Land, and Wetland Conservation Compliance requirements and establish required farm records with the FSA by the application deadline. A copy of the current deed showing ownership must also be provided to FSA. Landowners that are corporations, trusts or other entities should consult with FSA on the forms that are required for the entity and members of the entity.

Landowners - How to Apply | Is ACEP right for me?

To enroll land through the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program, landowners must find an eligible partner to submit proposals to NRCS to be considered for a conservation easement on eligible land. Entities interested in using conservation easements to address natural resource concerns can submit applications at any time, although signup is continuous, funding selections are made at specific times during the fiscal year. FIND A LAND TRUST near you. Landowner Eligibility Checklist-ACEP-ALE

Entities - How to Apply ACEP-ALE-FOR ENTITIES | ACEP-ALE-Entity Eligibility Checklist

To offer land for enrollment in an agricultural land easement (ALE) easement, eligible entities must submit the respective application documents (application, proof of access, map) identified below to Bill Jones William.Jones1@usda.gov at the Maine State Office by the deadline specified at the top of the page. The Office of Management and Budget requires entities that do business with the federal government to obtain a DUNS number. How to get a DUNS number. To register with SAM, go to SAM.GOV

1) Application

a) Establish a Program Agreement:
ACEP-ALE - NRCS-CPA-41 Entity Application
INSTRUCTIONS for NRCS CPA-41Establish a Program Agreement

b) Execute an individual Parcel Contract:
NRCS CPA-41A Parcel Sheet for Application Form for Entities
Instruction sheet for NRCS Form CPA-41A - Individual Parcel Contract

2) Map

a) Soils requirement

ACEP-ALE easements must be comprised of at least 50% prime or important soils as determined by a soils map. Web soils survey

3) Proof of Access

a) Access means legal and physical ingress and egress to the entire easement area over adjacent or contiguous lands for the exercise of any rights or interests under the easement for the duration of its term. See Access requirements summary hear
b) Identify access on application map

4) Property Deed Example of an Agricultural Property Deed

Additional information/guidance

Minimum Deed Terms - ACEP-ALE
Options for integrating ACEP-ALE Minimum Deed Terms
ACEP-ALE Buy Protect Sell Process
Buy Protect Sell NRCS-CPA-41A-BPS_Supplement.pdf
Title Exception Guide - NRCS Conservation Easements
Impervious surfaces waiver request
Eligible Entity Certification