



# TWRA NEWS

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## **---For Immediate Release:**

### USDA SWEETENS THE POT FOR WETLANDS RESTORATIONS

NASHVILLE --- In the last several months, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made restoring wetlands more attractive for private landowners under several initiatives and programs.

In October, USDA announced additional payment incentives to be provided through several Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) wetlands and bottomland hardwood conservation practices. Under an ongoing (continuous) signup, participants can apply for 10 to 15 year contracts on eligible lands for the CP23 Wetlands Restoration-Floodplain, CP23A Wetlands Restoration-Nonfloodplain, and CP31 Bottomland Timber Restoration on Wetlands practices. In addition to the standard 50 percent cost-share for habitat restoration costs, they can now also receive a 40 percent Practice Incentive Payment on eligible restoration costs, a \$100 per acre up-front Signing Incentive Payment, and an extra 20 percent added to the annual rental payment they receive each year of their CRP contract.

Several months ago, several new State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practices were announced for Tennessee, which included three CP38B "Wetlands for Wildlife" practices. Depending on site suitability, land may be enrolled as SAFE Shallow Water Areas, SAFE Wetlands Restoration, or SAFE Wetlands Restoration (Non-floodplain) practice.

These SAFE wetlands practices have the same incentives as the above-mentioned practices except for the additional 20 percent extra on the annual rental payment. "The previous CP9 Shallow Water Area practice was very popular with duck hunters, and will

likely be even more popular with the added SAFE financial incentives,” Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Wetlands Biologist Chris Hunter notes.

Land eligible for any of the CRP or CRP-SAFE practices must meet certain cropping history criteria. Check with your local USDA Service Center for eligibility.

In the new Farm Bill passed by Congress in May and effective as of Oct. 1, 2008, lands enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) under permanent easements, 30-year easements, or restoration agreements will receive compensation rates that are significantly higher than they were prior to Oct. 1. The WRP also pays for 100% of the restoration costs for permanent easements and 75 percent for 30-year easements and restoration agreements. To be eligible for WRP, the land must have been owned for at least seven years.

“This is a significant move towards achieving wetlands acreage goals set by TWRA for adequate management of the many wildlife species that use wetlands, wetland buffer areas, and bottomland hardwoods,” said TWRA Executive Director Gary Myers. “The USDA and private landowners are essential partners in increasing wildlife habitat on private lands.”

Interested landowners can apply for these programs and find out more information at their local USDA service center. The TWRA has several wildlife biologists that can provide technical assistance to landowners on both wetlands and uplands habitats and assistance on navigating conservation programs. Visit [www.TWRPrivatelands.org](http://www.TWRPrivatelands.org) and click on the county the land is in for their contact information.

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