

# USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

## Key EWP Program Points

1. **EWP will not reimburse for any work that is accomplished prior to there is an authorized (signed) grant agreement between the Sponsor and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).**
2. EWP requires a **government entity** act as **Sponsor**.
  - NRCS cannot work directly with landowners.
3. Sponsors must submit a written request for EWP assistance **within 60 days of the watershed event**.
  - For Vermont a watershed event is the result of **rainfall/flooding**.
  - Requesting EWP assistance only obligates the potential Sponsor with providing an individual to show the NRCS damage assessment team sites damaged by the watershed event.
4. EWP projects must reduce the threat to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; and be sound from a technical standpoint.
  - NRCS cannot spend more on a protection measure than value of what is being protected.
5. EWP is a grant program.
  - EWP requires an Agreement between NRCS and Sponsor.
  - NRCS does not enter into an agreement until EWP funds are received to implement repair measures.
  - Typically cost share is 75% USDA, 25% Sponsor.
  - EWP agreements state the Sponsor is responsible for project cost not covered by EWP and the operation and maintenance (O&M) for the life of the project.
    - NRCS streambank protection project practice life is 10 years.
6. EWP program is for damage caused by latest event. Sites with known history of problems will not be eligible.
7. **EWP is a protection program** which can fund projects to protect threatened property, i.e. the structure would be damaged should another watershed event occur.
  - Some examples of eligible property are:
    - Buildings
      - Public
      - Private
    - Culverts
    - Bridges
    - Driveways
    - Town Roads
    - Septic Systems
    - Water Wells

EWP cannot be used to repair or replace damaged or destroyed property.

- Some examples of property that is not eligible:
  - Building foundation is undermined.
  - Culvert or bridge is destroyed or washed out, even partially.
  - Leach lines are exposed.
  - Drilled well is in the new channel

EWP does not fund repair of streambank damage when a structure is not threatened.

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## EWP Damage Assessment Considerations

### Did the event significantly increase the risk to the property?

Eligibility Determination examples to help form a perspective of what may or may not be eligible.

- **Buildings** – Public or Private
  - Will another watershed event damage the structure?
    - If the streambank was 25 feet from the building before the event and it is now 20 feet from the building it most likely will not be eligible.
    - If the streambank was 25 feet from the building before the event and it is now 10 feet from the building it has a good chance of meeting the first eligibility criteria.
    - If the streambank was 5 feet from the building before the event and it is now 4 feet from the building it may not be eligible.
  - Some additional factors considered in the initial assessment are:
    - Is the bank material highly erodible?
    - Is the flow of the stream directed at the threatened site?
    - Is debris directing flow towards the threatened site?
    - Did the channel degrade (scour) increasing instability?
    - Did the channel aggrade (filled with sediment)?
- **Roads** – Town or Private
  - Does the road receive Federal Aid?
    - If yes, then it is not eligible.
  - Is the damage due to overland flow?
    - If yes, then it is not eligible.
  - Is road surface damaged?
    - If yes, then it is not eligible.
- **Debris**
  - Does the debris, if mobilized by a future event, pose a threat to structures immediately downstream?
    - If yes, then it may be eligible.
  - Some additional factors considered in the damage assessment:
    - Is the debris large enough to cause an impediment to a downstream culvert or bridge?
    - Is the debris likely to get hung up by downstream vegetation?
    - Is the debris natural or manmade?
    - Is the debris hazardous?
    - Is the debris impacting the stream capacity or flow direction?