

# USDA Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

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Email flood recovery or FEMA PA program questions to:  
[ADM.2023floods@Vermont.gov](mailto:ADM.2023floods@Vermont.gov)

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## What You Need to Know Now:

- **Municipalities have two options to access this program:**
  - **Submit proposed projects to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR).** ANR submitted a Request for Assistance Letter to NRCS offering to sponsor or co-sponsor any Vermont project. Choosing to submit through ANR may reduce administrative burden for municipalities.
  - **Apply directly to NRCS.** The deadline to submit a Request for Assistance directly to NRCS has passed.
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- **???????Property** is defined by the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) as any artificial structure permanently affixed to the land such as, but not limited to, houses, buildings, roads, utilities, structures, dams.
  - Land alone is not considered property under the EWP program.
  - EWP cannot repair or rebuild damaged or destroyed property.

- There must exist an imminent threat to the property to be eligible for EWP assistance.
- **Imminent threat** means the property will be damaged or destroyed if there is another storm/flood event.
- **Sponsors** include legal subdivisions of the State, such as a city, county, general improvement district, conservation district, or any Native American tribe or tribal organization.
- EWP can assist if you have residents who fear that their home or driveway is in imminent threat of damage or destruction, or if severe erosion or debris is jeopardizing public infrastructure.
- Projects must have a "Sponsor." In Vermont, this has historically been a municipality.
- ~~Sponsors must submit a formal [request for assistance letter](#) within 60 days of the disaster occurrence, or 60 days from the date when access to the sites becomes available.~~ This deadline has passed.
- Municipalities also may submit a project under the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' request for assistance. Submitting potential projects through the Agency still can occur.
- Work **cannot** start until an EWP grant agreement has been executed between NCRS and a Sponsor. Otherwise the work will be ineligible for funding.

## **The Request for Assistance Letter:**

- Must come from entity capable of acting as Sponsor.
- Must be signed by an "official of the requesting entity (Sponsor)" - this would be a member of the municipality's/sponsor's legislative body.
- Must have a **penned or digital signature**. A typed signature will not be accepted
- Begins the [EWP process](#).
- Must be addressed to Travis Thomason, Vermont NRCS State Conservationist.

**Note: Proposed project must be submitted through the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.** Municipalities should not send a Request for Assistance Letter directly to NRCS at this time as the deadline for doing so has passed.

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- [Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Fact Sheet](#)
- [Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Process Overview](#)
- [Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Assistance Request Letter Instructions](#)
- [Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Sample Assistance Request Letter](#)

## **Webinar (prerecorded):**

- [EWP Informational Meeting, July 24, 2023](#)
  - [EWP Informational Meeting, presentation slide deck](#)
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## **For more information about EWP, contact:**

**Michel Lapointe**

**Vermont EWP Program Manager**

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS)**

**[michel.lapointe@usda.gov](mailto:michel.lapointe@usda.gov)**

**802-497-5977**

## **To submit a project under the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Request for Assistance, contact:**

**John Schmeltzer**

**Deputy Commissioner**

**Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**

**[john.schmeltzer@vermont.gov](mailto:john.schmeltzer@vermont.gov)**

**802-249-5620**

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### [Overview](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is not necessary for a national emergency to be declared for an area to be eligible for assistance.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters. All projects must have a project sponsor.

NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

### [Eligibility](#)

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but must be represented by a project sponsor. Sponsors include legal subdivisions of the State, such as a city, county, general improvement district, conservation district, or any Native American tribe or tribal organization.

### [Type of Work Authorized](#)

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged waterways
- Unstable streambanks
- Severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure
- Wind-borne debris removal
- Damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought

The program can include purchasing floodplain easements. These easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions and values of the floodplain, including associated wetlands and riparian areas. They also conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge, as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, and the results of erosion.

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. NRCS completes a Damage Survey Report which provides a site-by-site investigation of the work and measures necessary to protect life and property from additional flooding and soil erosion. **NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats.** Should sponsors want to increase the level of protection, the **sponsor will be responsible for paying 100 percent of the costs of the upgrade and additional work.**

[More Guidance](#)

- [EWP Sponsor Resources page](#)
- [EWPP National Sponsor Guide](#) (October 2021)

Publication Date

12/04/2023