

EWP Questions & Answers



Top: An original levee erodes into the Kuskokwim River. Bottom: EWP helps protect the levee and community of McGrath.

What is the Emergency Watershed Protection Program?

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) was set up by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, heavy rains, and other natural occurrences. The purpose of EWP is to help groups of people with a common problem. It is generally not an individual assistance program. All projects undertaken must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the state, such as a city, county, tribe, improvement district, or conservation district. The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for administering the program.

Is financial assistance available?

NRCS may cover up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures or up to 90 percent in limited resource areas. The remaining cost must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

What are the criteria for assistance?

All EWP work must reduce threats to life and property. Furthermore, it must be economically and environmentally defensible and sound from an engineering standpoint. EWP work must yield benefits to more than one person. All work must represent the least expensive alternative.



The river creeps towards homes in Kongiganak as the bank washes away prior to the NRCS EWP project.

All applications must be submitted within 60 days of the disaster. Projects must be completed within 10 days in exigency projects and 220 days in nonexigency projects.



Who is eligible?

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance but must be represented by a project sponsor. The project sponsor must be a public agency of state, county, or city government, or a special district or tribal government.

What does the sponsor have to do?

Sponsors are responsible for providing land rights to do repair work and securing the necessary permits. Sponsors are also responsible for furnishing the local cost share and for accomplishing the installation of work. The work can be done either through federal or local contracts.

What kind of work can be done?

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. A case by case investigation of the needed work is made by NRCS. EWP work can include: removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges; reshaping and protecting eroded banks; correcting damaged drainage facilities; repairing levees and structures; reseeding damaged areas; removing environmentally harmful debris, purchasing floodplain easements, and removal of at-risk buildings when cost effective.



An incinerator disposes of hazardous debris in the remote community of Eagle.

What can't EWP do?

EWP funds cannot be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster or to improve the level of protection above that which existed prior to the disaster. EWP cannot fund operation and maintenance work, or repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities. EWP work cannot adversely affect downstream water rights, and EWP funds cannot be used to install measures not essential to the reduction of hazards. In addition, EWP funds cannot be used to perform work on measures installed by another federal agency.

How do I get assistance?

If you feel your area has suffered severe damage and may qualify under the EWP program, you are encouraged to contact your potential sponsor to request assistance. The sponsor's application should be in the form of a letter signed by an official of the sponsoring organization. The letter should include information on the nature, location, and scope of the problem for which assistance is requested. Information is available from NRCS offices to explain the eligibility requirements for the EWP program. For assistance, contact your closest NRCS office. The Alaska NRCS offices and phone numbers are:

Aniak (907) 675-4578
Delta Junction (907) 895-4241
Dillingham (907) 842-3240
Fairbanks (907) 479-3159
Homer (907) 235-8177
Juneau (907) 586-7220
Kenai (907) 283-8732
Kodiak (907) 486-5598
Nome (907) 443-6096
Wasilla (907) 373-6492

Contact information for the offices in Alaska is also available at:
www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/fieldoffices.html