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FUNDING AVAILABLE TO RESTORE WETLANDS

BOISE, Idaho, February 11, 2011 – Landowners wanting to restore wetland areas on their property can apply to the Natural Resources Conservation Service for USDA technical and financial assistance. Wetlands Reserve Program applications for 2011 funding must be received by **March 4, 2011**.

“This is an easement program designed to enhance and safeguard wetland areas benefitting both water quality and wildlife habitat,” said Clint Evans, Assistant Idaho State Conservationist. “Landowners are compensated for retiring their land from agricultural production.”

“Last year in Idaho we enrolled 2,120 acres through seven easements,” said Evans. “The smallest was 44 acres and the largest just under 1,000 acres – but each one positively affects the habitat diversity of the region.”

“Wetlands are characterized by water saturated soil. The plants growing in wetlands are adapted for living in these watery conditions,” said Karen Fullen, Idaho NRCS State Biologist. “Examples of wetlands include swamps, marshes and bogs.”

Wetlands serve multiple functions for the land. They filter nutrients, sediments and pollutants from water flowing to lakes, rivers and streams. Wetlands catch storm runoff and release floodwaters gradually downstream. They also help recharge aquifers.

“Wildlife are attracted to wetlands because the lush plant growth in a wetland makes great food and cover and the saturated soils produce lots of invertebrate foods,” said Fullen. “For example, migratory birds such as northern pintail use wetlands as stopover points; bald eagles may hunt in wetlands. Big game species find water, forage and shelter in wetlands.”

Applications for this initiative are accepted on a continuous basis, but must be received no later than March 4, 2011 to be considered for this year’s funding.

Information about how to apply for the Wetland Reserve Program is available online at www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ or visit your local NRCS office. To find the office nearest you, look for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the government pages of the phonebook or on the NRCS Web page <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> under “Find a Service Center.”

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