



United States Department of Agriculture



# Natural Resources Conservation Service

**NRCS – Watershed Programs**

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program**

July 2023

Michel Lapointe, EWP Program Manager



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)

# NRCS - Watershed Programs

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program
  - Provides technical and financial assistance to entities of State and local governments and Tribes (project sponsors) for planning and installing watershed projects.
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB)
  - Offers financial and technical assistance to rehabilitate dams constructed through NRCS Watershed Programs. This program extends the service life of dams to meet applicable safety and performance standards or decommissions dams so they no longer pose a threat to life and property.
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)
  - Safeguards lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood or any other natural occurrence is causing or has caused a sudden impairment of the watershed.
- More Information go to:
  - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ewp-emergency-watershed-protection>

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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.

- EWP Program (EWPP) is available to eligible local Sponsors following a Watershed Event which caused an Imminent Threat.
  - A Local Sponsor is defined as a legal subdivision of state or tribal government.
    - Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, flood and water control districts, or any federally-recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization.
- EWP Program offers two assistance options:
  - EWPP Recovery
  - EWPP FPE (Floodplain Easement)

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

## ➤ **EWPP Recovery**

- Recovery assistance is available for threatened public and private property.
- NRCS must work with local Sponsor.
  - NRCS **cannot** work directly with private property owners.
- Sponsors must request assistance within 60 days of the watershed event which caused the imminent threat.
  - EWP Sponsor Guide and EWP Assistance Request letter template are available on the National NRCS website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/ewp-sponsor-resources>

- Or by contacting your local NRCS Field Office:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/vermont>

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- EWP Measure must reduce imminent threat to life or property.
  - Property is defined as **any artificial structure permanently affixed to the land** such as, but not limited to, houses, buildings, roads, utilities, structures, dams.
  - Standing timber, orchards, growing crops, other agronomic crops are **not** considered property under the EWP Program.
- Eligible EWP Measures (Projects) must be:
  - Economically and Environmentally Defensible
    - Cost of EWP Repair  $\leq$  Value of Property Protected
  - Technically Sound
- EWP Assistance **cannot** be used to:
  - Repair, rebuild, or maintain Private or Public Transportation Facilities or Utilities.
  - Repair damaged property or rebuild/replace destroyed property.

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- NRCS can reimburse up to 75% of the construction cost
  - Cost incurred prior to having an executed agreement are **NOT** eligible for reimbursement.
  
- Sponsor is Responsible for the following:
  - obtaining land rights for repairs;
  - securing the necessary permits;
  - furnishing the local cost share (25 percent of the construction costs for recovery measures in the form of cash or in-kind services);
  - accomplishing the installation of work. (Work can be done through federal contracts or local led cooperative agreements); and
  - conducting operation and maintenance (O&M) on completed projects.
  - may be required to contracting A&E Design and Construction Inspection Services
  
- Types of Local Cooperative Agreements
  - Locally Led – Sponsor solicits bids and awards construction contract.
  - Force Account – Sponsor uses own forces and equipment for repair.

# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- NRCS provides financial and technical assistance for the following activities under EWP Program – Recovery:
  - debris removal from stream channels, road culverts and bridges;
  - reshape and protect eroded streambanks;
  - establish vegetative cover on critically eroding lands;
  - repair levees and structures; and
  - repair conservation practices.
  - A&E Design and Inspection Services
  
- Financial Assistance (FA) funds are for construction expenses.
- Technical Assistance (TA) funds are for administrative, design, and inspection expenses.

**Imminent Threat to  
Life or Property?**



**Yes**



**Yes**

**Repair must be Economically  
and Environmentally Defensible  
and Technically Sound**



# Before & After



# Before & After



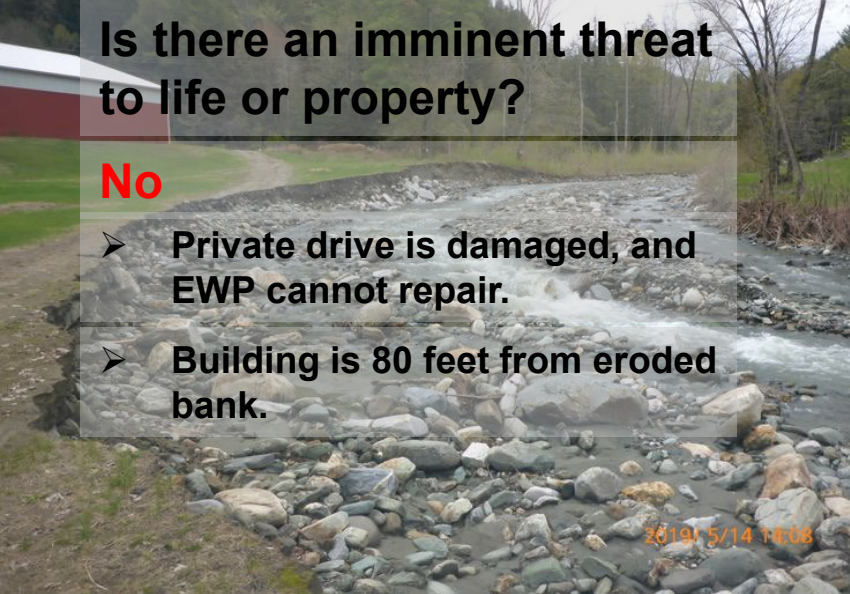
# Before & After



Is there an imminent threat to life or property?

**No**

- Private drive is damaged, and EWP cannot repair.
- Building is 80 feet from eroded bank.



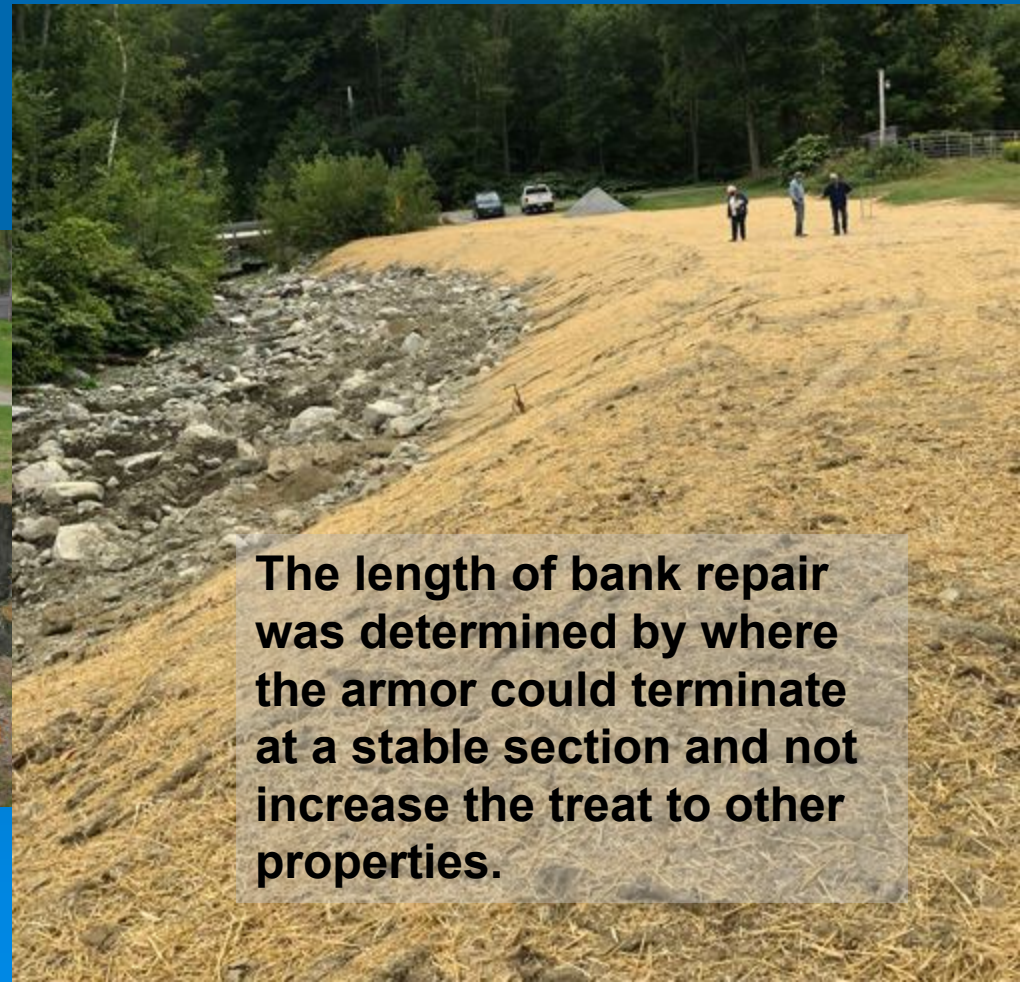
But, looking downstream?



**Yes**, there is an imminent threat to the town bridge.



## Before & After



The length of bank repair was determined by where the armor could terminate at a stable section and not increase the threat to other properties.

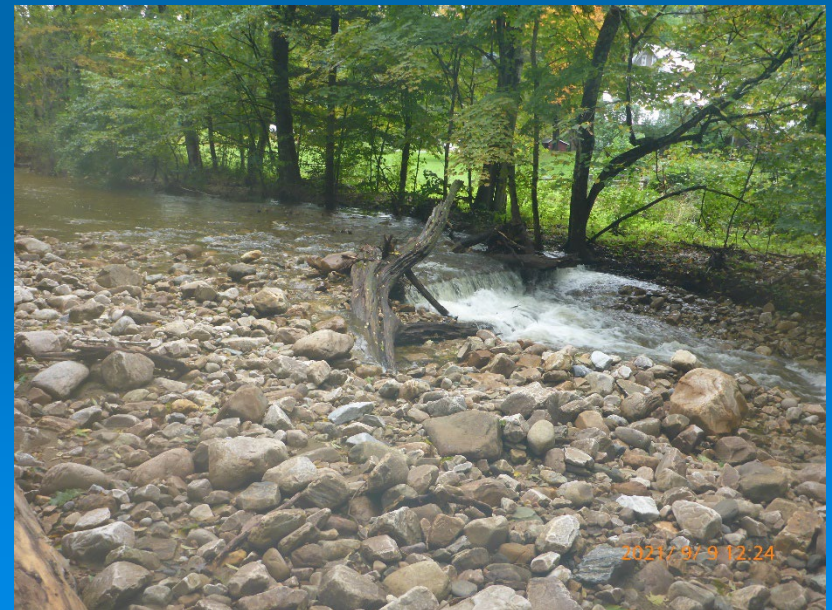
# Debris Removal



**Woody Debris**



**Sediment**



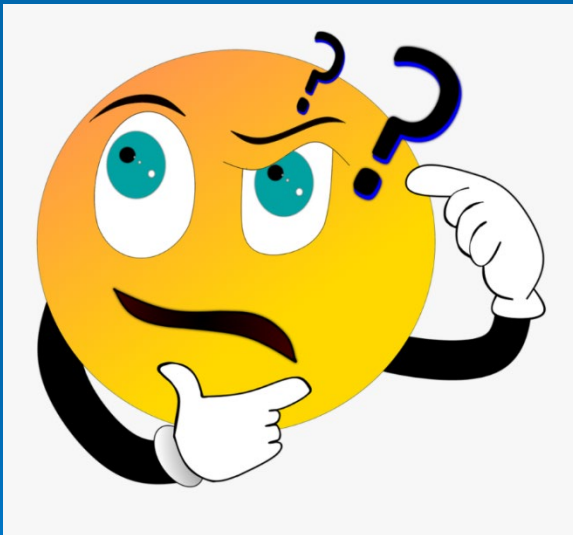
# Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- Flood Easement Program (FPE)
  - Work with sponsor to:
    - Purchase property and land rights and remove houses and other improvements within the floodway.
    - Implement Floodplain Restoration projects to restore floodplain functions and values to the natural conditions to the greatest extent practicable.
  - Contiguous Properties can yield greater benefits to floodplain
- NRCS may determine that land is ineligible if any of the following apply:
  - Implementation of Restoration Practices would be futile due to onsite or offsite conditions.
  - Land is subject to an existing easement or deed restriction that provides sufficient protection or restoration of the floodplain's functions and values.
  - Purchase of an easement would not meet FPE Program purposes.

➤ Emergency Watershed Protection

➤ Additional information available at:

➤ [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/?ss=16&navtype=SUBNAVIGATION&cid=nrcs143\\_008263&navid=100150100000000&pnavid=100000000000000&position=Not%20Yet%20Determined.Html&ttype=detail&pname=Emergency%20Watershed%20Protection%20|%20NRCS](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/?ss=16&navtype=SUBNAVIGATION&cid=nrcs143_008263&navid=100150100000000&pnavid=100000000000000&position=Not%20Yet%20Determined.Html&ttype=detail&pname=Emergency%20Watershed%20Protection%20|%20NRCS)



Questions?

**Michel Lapointe**

**[Michel.Lapointe@usda.gov](mailto:Michel.Lapointe@usda.gov)**

## Other Resources:



- **VT Agency of Agriculture** – <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/flood>
- **ANR Flood Recovery Resources** - <https://anr.vermont.gov/flood>
- **UVM Extension Disaster Resources** – <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/disaster-resources>
- **UVM Extension Environmental Testing** – <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/agricultural-and-environmental-testing-lab>
- **Vermont League of Cities & Towns** – <https://www.vlct.org/news/guidance-vermont-emergency-management-town-officials-recovery-july-9-2023-flooding>
- **USDA Disaster Assistance Programs at Glance** – <https://www.farmers.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/farmersgov-disaster-assistance-brochure-07-21-2022.pdf>