How do I get assistance?

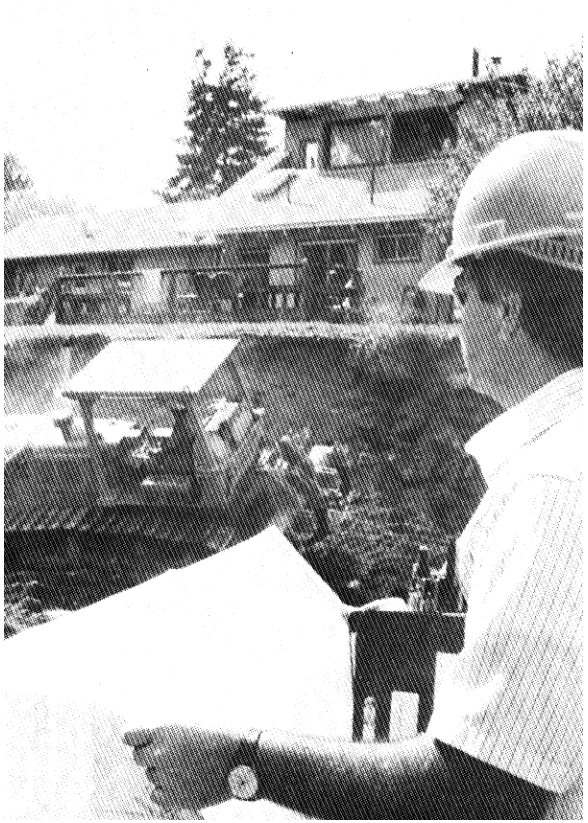
If you feel your area has suffered severe damage and may qualify under the EWP program, you are encouraged to contact your local flood control district or County Supervisor to request assistance. City and county governments and flood control districts are usually the most common sponsors of EWP projects.

The sponsor's application should be in the form of a letter signed by a qualified representative 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 which explains the eligibility requirements for the EWP program.

Send applications for assistance to the local NRCS field office or to the NRCS state headquarters in Davis. The address is:

State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
430 G Street, #4164
Davis, CA 95616-4164



All applications should be submitted as soon as possible after the event.

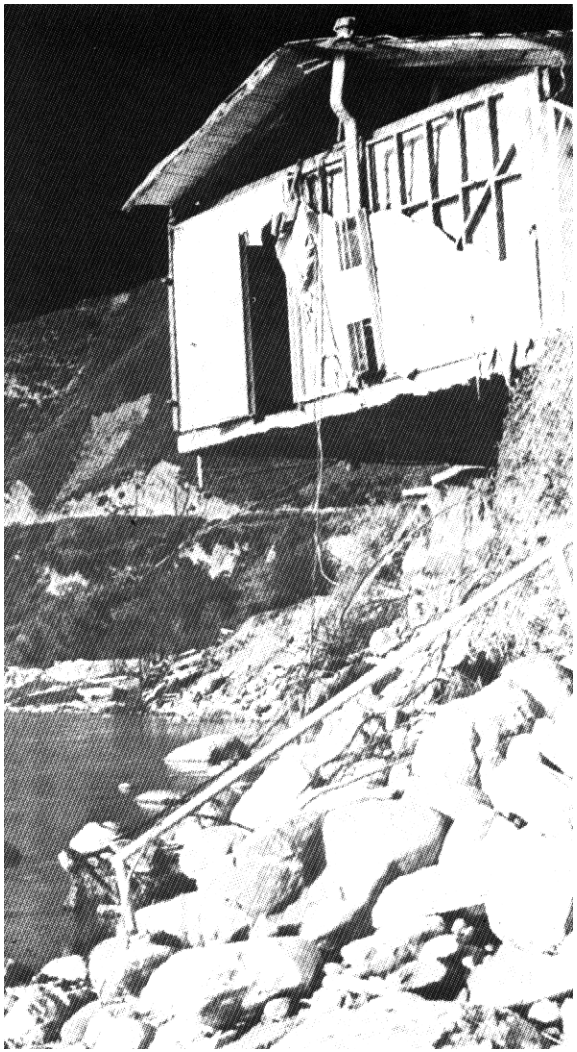
Requests for assistance on exigency measures must be submitted within ten days after the event. Nonexigency measures must be submitted within sixty days after the event.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.

All NRCS programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, marital status or handicap.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Revised 1995



A summary of program requirements and assistance from the USDA/ Natural Resources Conservation Service Davis, California

What is the Emergency Watershed Protection Program?

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program, EWP for short, 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 flooding and erosion.

The purpose of the EWP program 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, or a flood control district.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for administering the program.

What kind of assistance is available?

There are two types of assistance available under EWP:

1. Exigency - an imminent threat to life and property exists and requires immediate federal action.

2. Nonexigency - a situation where damage to life or property is high enough to constitute an emergency, but not high enough to warrant an exigency.

NRCS can pay up to 75 percent of the costs of emergency measures. The remaining 25 percent comes from local sources and can be in the form of 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.

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 a state, county, or city government, or a special district.

What does the sponsor have to do?

Sponsors are responsible for providing landrights to do repair work and securing all 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 a local contract which the sponsor administers, or the sponsor can use their own equipment and personnel.

In nonexigency cases, sponsors must also furnish NRCS copies of the designs, plans and specifications for review and approval before starting work or advertising for bids. Cost of design, preparation of plans and specifications, and construction inspection are reimbursed to the sponsor, as per agreement, after the construction work is funded.

What kind of work can be done?

EWP work is not limited exclusively to any one set of prescribed measures. A case by case investigation of the needed work is made by NRCS. EWP work can generally include:

- debris removal from stream channels, road culverts and bridge abutments;
- reshaping and protection of eroding banks;
- correction of damaged drainage facilities;
- repair of levees and structures; and reseeding of damaged areas.

What EWP cannot do:

EWP funds cannot be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster. Nor can they be used 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.