

Guide to OCC's Restoring Natural Ecology in Wetlands (ReNEW) Program

Who should apply?

Landowners interested in restoring, enhancing, or creating a wetland on their property should apply. Successful applicants must be willing to contribute some labor or financial capital towards completion of the project and be committed to and interested in improving the wetland to increase environmental benefits.

Which districts are eligible?

This is a statewide program, and all conservation districts are eligible.

Can district directors apply?

Yes, up to 2 directors from each district can apply, depending on district approval.

Who isn't eligible?

Oklahoma Conservation Commission commissioners, employees, conservation district employees and/or the spouse of any of these people mentioned are not eligible for financial assistance.

OCC cannot provide financial assistance to wetland projects where the wetland's hydrology is or would be primarily driven by pumping water.

How long is the program term?

The application period is open from **August 17 to September 30, 2026**. Selected applicants will be notified by **November 2, 2026**. Selected applicants will work with the OCC Wetlands Team and their local conservation district to develop a restoration plan and sign relevant agreements. Once agreements are initiated, the applicant must show implementation progress within 6 months, and projects must be fully completed by **December 31, 2027**.

How much financial assistance is available?

OCC received \$100,000 from the state legislature for the ReNEW Program in Fiscal Year 2027. OCC will reimburse selected landowners for up to 80% of the fair market value for all practices installed. With the FY2027 budget, OCC aims to fund two to three projects.

How does the program work?

1. District boards will formally consider participation in the program. Those districts that choose to participate will:
 - a. Indicate participation by board representative signature and date on the District Declaration of Participation form. Please email form to Maggie Woods.
 - b. Advertise the program and take applications from August 17 to September 30, 2026.
 - i. OCC Wetlands Team will provide advertising materials.
 - c. Assist landowners with application and forward any PDF applications to Maggie Woods.
2. Landowner will apply using the Wetland Assistance Application. Applications must be received by September 30, 2026, to be considered for FY2027 ReNEW funding.
3. The OCC Wetlands Team will score applications and select top applicants for site visits.
4. Once site visits are completed, the OCC Wetlands Team will finish scoring the applications, and select applicants to receive funding for FY2027.
5. Landowners and their districts will be informed of selection outcomes by November 2, 2026.
6. Accepted landowners will work with an OCC Wetlands Team member to create a restoration plan that reaches landowner's goals and improves wetland quality. District staff will be invited to participate in this process.
7. Landowner must demonstrate progress towards implementation within 6 months of signing agreements. All work must be completed by December 31, 2027.
8. Wetlands team member will certify that practices are complete and submit to the district a signed Certificate of Completion & Acceptance along with relevant receipts.
9. Districts will review and endorse the certificate, compile with receipts, and submit a reimbursement claim to the Commission, attention Sarah Gilmer (sarah.gilmer@conservation.ok.gov).
10. District will reimburse landowner.

How do I apply?

The application is available as a Microsoft Form or as a PDF. If submitting a PDF, please email to Maggie Woods. The application and additional information can be found on the OCC Wetlands Website (wetlands.ok.gov). For assistance filling out the application, reach out to your local conservation district or a Wetlands Team member.

How are applicants chosen?

Applications go through a two-part scoring process. In the initial scoring, projects are screened for eligibility and program alignment. In the secondary scoring, projects are ranked based on functional uplift (environmental benefits) and feasibility. Projects that score high but are not feasible within this program may be retained and considered for alternative assistance.

What will the program payments cover?

Program participants may receive financial assistance for Wetland Restoration, Wetland Enhancement, and Wetland Creation, as defined by NRCS. These activities may be accomplished using a variety of ancillary practices including dike and levee construction, water control structure installation, and buffer creation through range planting. Landowners will work with their assigned OCC Wetlands Team member to develop a restoration plan that outlines supported practices.

What are District/Landowner/OCC responsibilities?

District Responsibilities

- Indicate participation in program
- Advertise the program
- Receive and forward applications
- Invoice OCC and reimburse landowner

Landowner Responsibilities

- Work with OCC Wetlands team member to create restoration plan
- Sign all relevant agreements
- Install practices and hire contractors as needed
- Communicate regularly with OCC Wetlands team member and local district

OCC Wetlands Team Responsibilities

- Provide advertising materials for districts
- Review and select applicants
- Work with Landowner to create restoration plan
- Provide technical assistance as needed
- Certify practice completion
- Deliver pay request to District

Who should I contact with questions?

Maggie Woods (405-431-0958; maggie.woods@conservation.ok.gov)

Hattie Largent (572-206-6206; hattie.largent@conservation.ok.gov)