

Wetland Restoration Under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program in Florida

J. Scott Kuipers

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Program History

- **Pilot program in 1992**
- **Nationwide in 1994**
- **Reauthorized in every Farm Bill since 1990**
- **Formerly Wetland Reserve Program**
- **2014 Farm Bill combined NRCS Easement Programs**
- **Now Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-
Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)**
- **Voluntary participation**

Wetlands Reserve Easement Program

Objectives: to protect, restore, and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems to attain:

- Habitat for migratory birds and other wetland-dependent wildlife, including threatened and endangered species and species of concern.
- Protection and improvement of water quality.
- Attenuation of floodwater.
- Recharge of ground water.
- Protection and enhancement of open space and aesthetic quality.
- Protection of native flora and fauna contributing to the Nation's natural heritage.
- Contribution to educational and scientific scholarship.

National: 12,209 easements enrolled on 2,332,762 acres

Florida: 120 easements enrolled on 178,172 acres



Wetlands Reserve Easement Program

Types:

Participation Option	Easement Value	Restoration Cost
Permanent Easement	100%	100%
30- Year Easement	75%	75%

Eligibility:

Land:

- The land must have been a wetland prior to manipulation.
- The land must have been manipulated for production of food or fiber.
- The land must be restorable.
- The land must be under private or tribal ownership

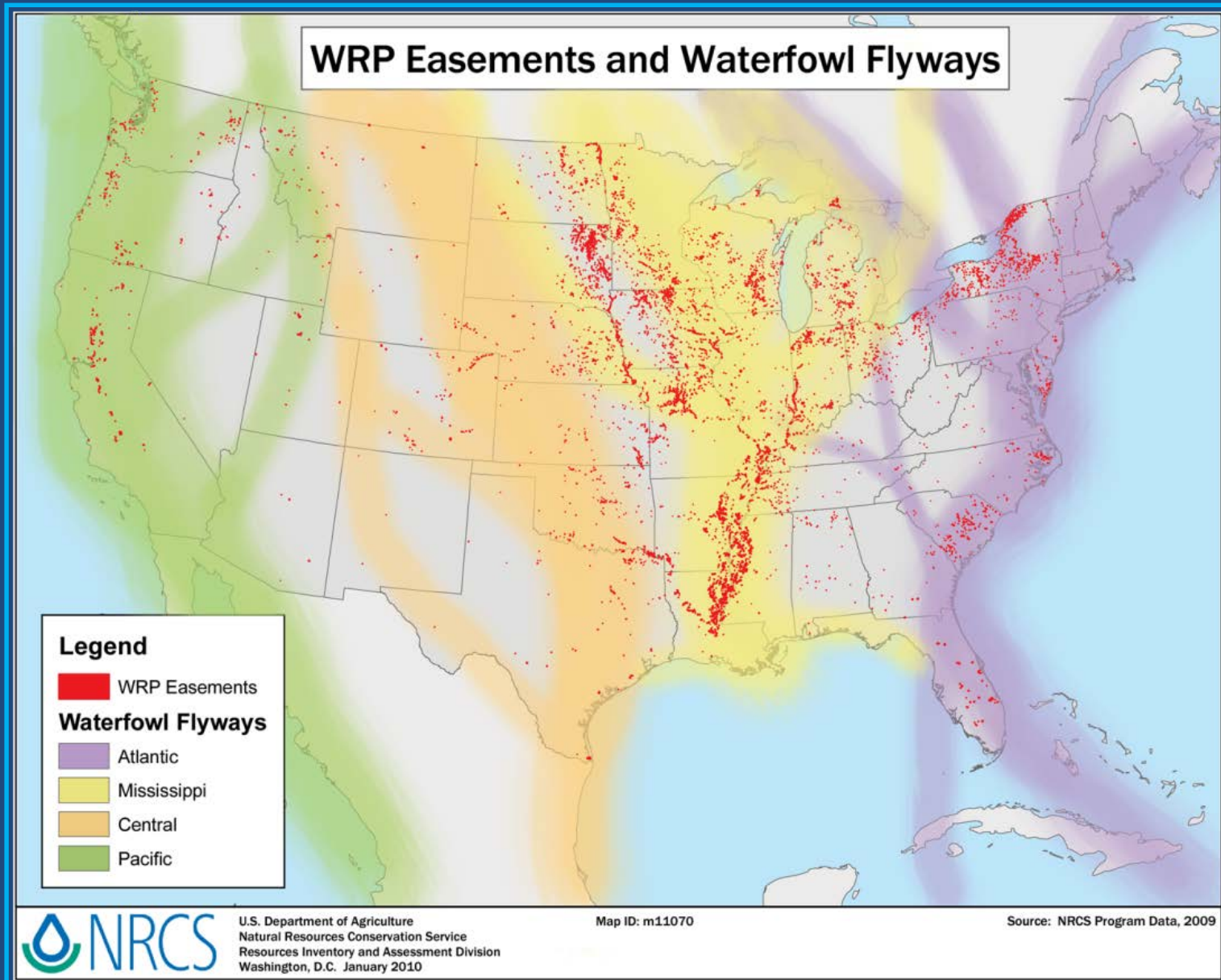
Landowners:

- Compliant with USDA agricultural requirements.
- Possess clear title to the land
- Own the land for 2 years
- Agree to program terms
- Agree to the restoration plan as developed by the NRCS

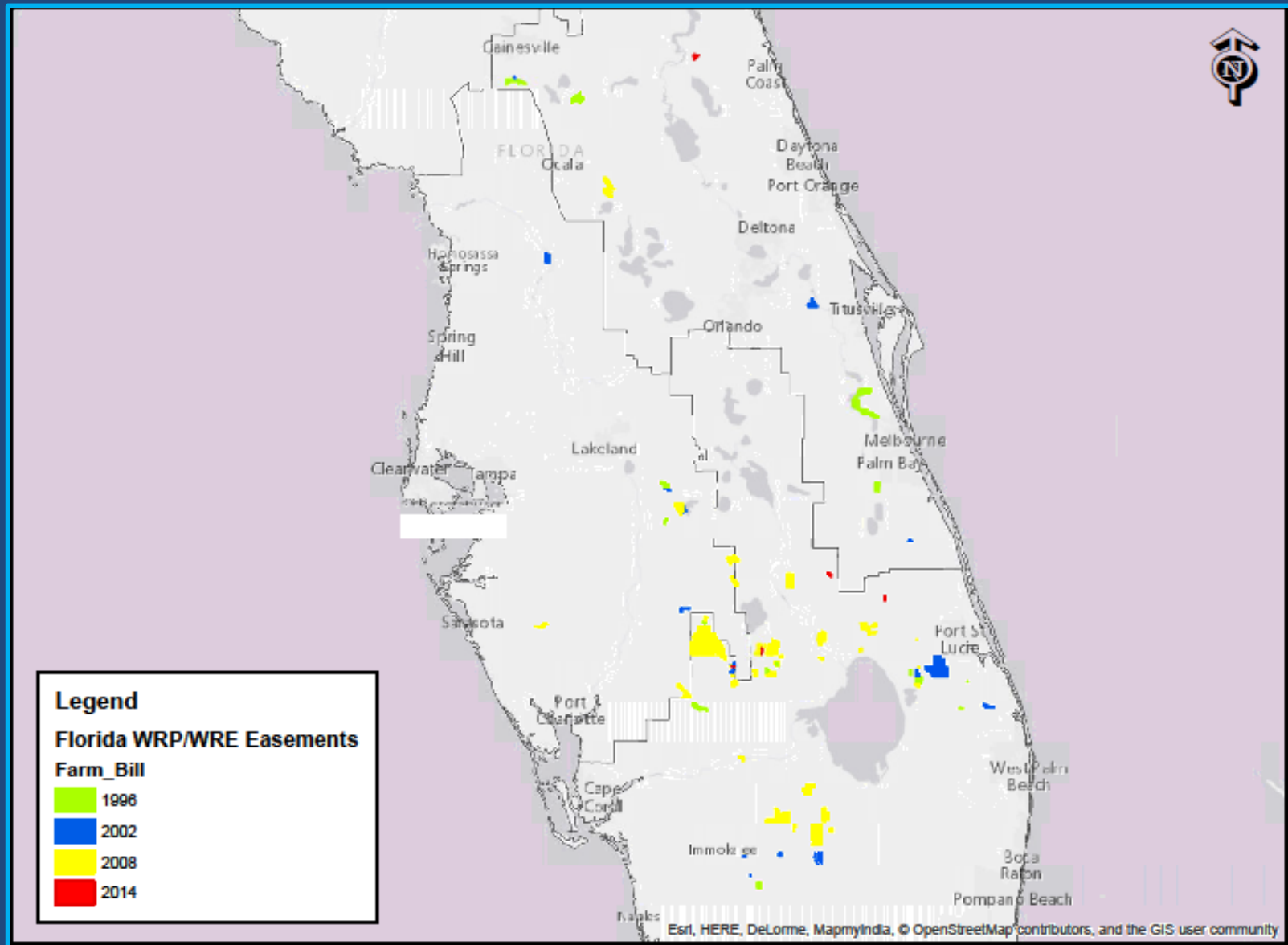
Ranking Criteria

- 50% of points based on hydrology
- Priority based on habitat type
- Cumulative location points
- Economic considerations
- Penalties for high cost, high O&M, and inholdings

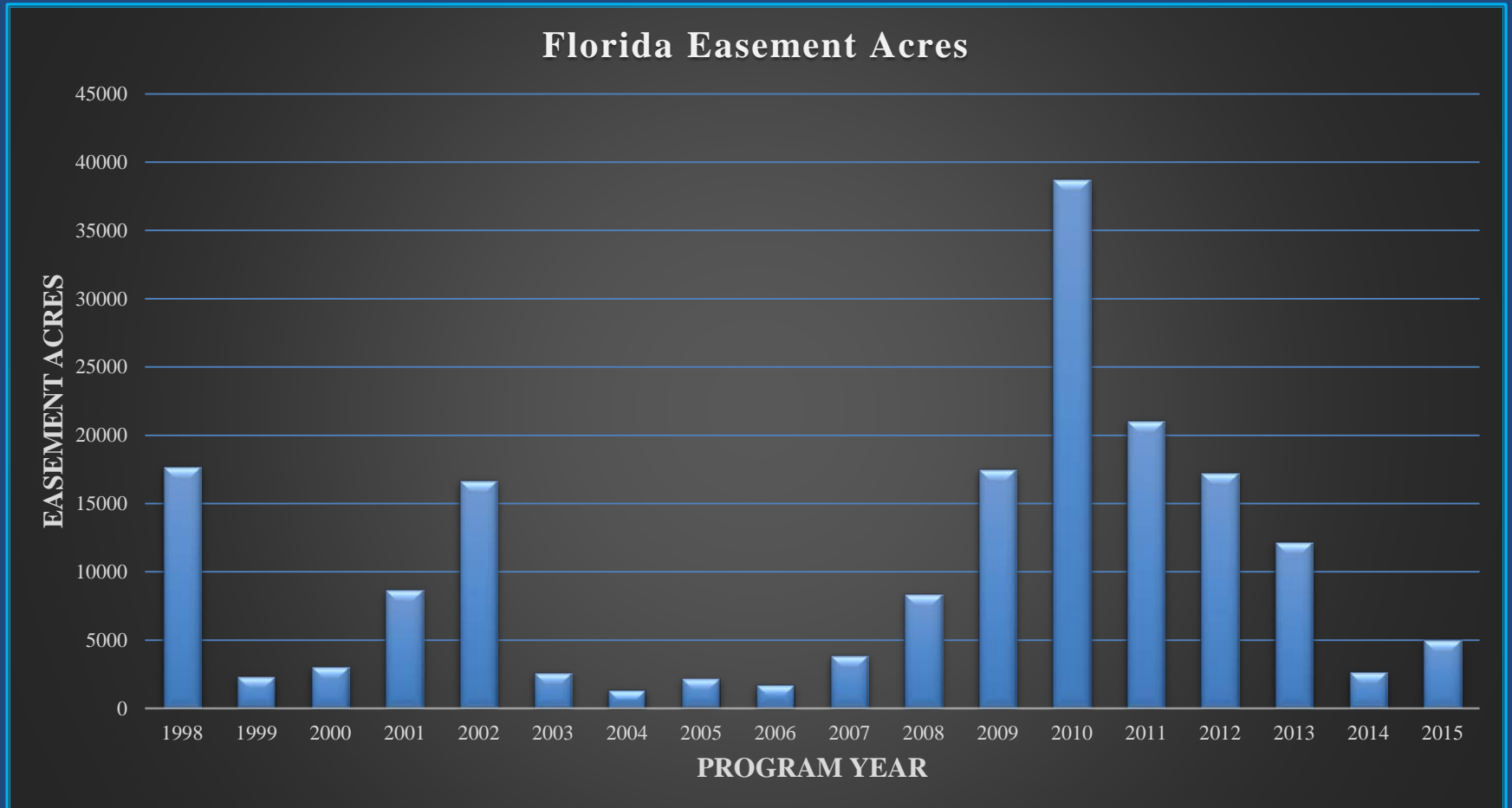
National WRP/E Project Locations



Florida WRP/WRE Easements



Enrollment



Restoration Objectives

Restore, protect, and enhance to the maximum extent practicable

Historic Aerials



Soils Maps



Historic Maps/Accounts



WRE Restoration

Habitat components of the WRP area are restored to the historic condition to the extent practicable.

Alternative habitat types can be restored on up to 30% of the easement area.

Restoration must:

- Reestablish native plant communities.
- Reestablish natural hydrological regimes.
- Maximize habitat for wetland-dependent species.
- Be cost effective.



The Future:

2014 Farm Bill

- 2014 Farm Bill consolidated WRP with other NRCS easement Programs, now Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, WRE.
- NRCS continues to refine project selection criteria to ensure that easements are maximizing wetland and wildlife benefits for the dollars expended.
- Four new easements enrolled in fiscal year 2016.

Restoration

- Over 100,000 acres scheduled for restoration over the next two years.

Monitoring and Management

- Active annual monitoring policy now in place; Remote monitoring process in development.
- Invasive species
- Since the land remains in private hands, NRCS working more closely with the landowners to ensure that easement management is providing quality habitat.

Getting Into Your Work



Questions?

