

National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

Maryland: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and livestock waste. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Maryland Priority Watershed

Maryland has selected the upper, middle, and lower portions of the Catoctin Creek Watershed for the National Water Quality Initiative. The watershed encompasses the southwestern portion of Frederick County and is framed by Catoctin Mountain on the east and South Mountain on the west.

The Catoctin Creek watershed drains an area of 120 square miles, which includes areas of forested mountain slopes, agricultural valleys, and small towns. The area's waters are impaired by sediments, nutrients, impacts to biological communities, and fecal



A grassed waterway prevents erosion and protects water quality on a farm in the Catoctin Creek watershed.

Photo by Jim Meyers,
USDA-NRCS

coliform.

The land use distribution in the watershed is approximately 43% agricultural, 42% forest/herbaceous, and 15% urban, with agricultural land mostly planted in row crops and pasture.

The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve

water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to

help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a **USDA Service Center**. To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2012, must be received by June 15, 2012.

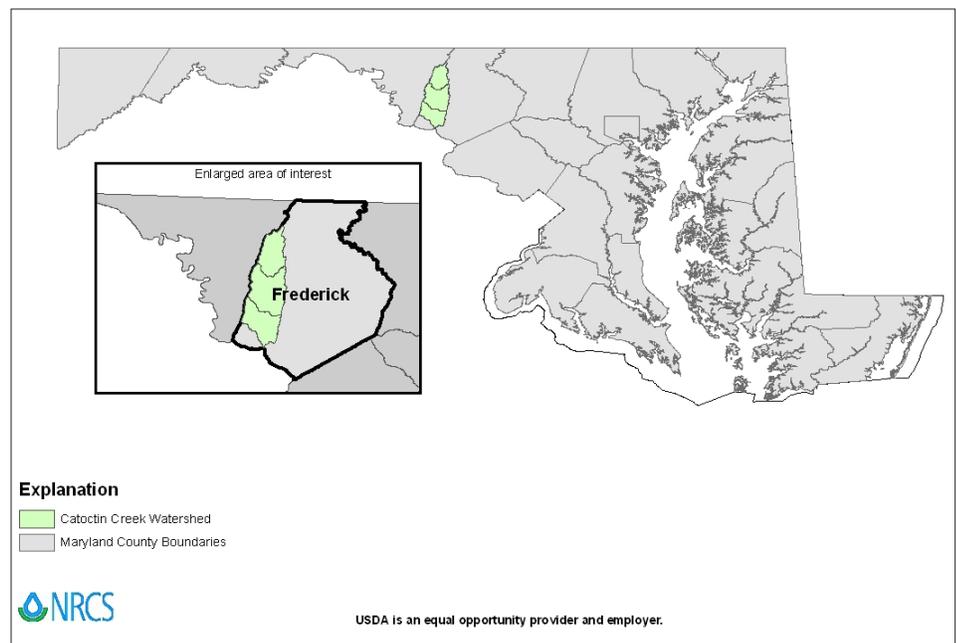
Up to \$315,000 in financial assistance is available to eligible producers in the Catoctin Creek Watershed.

For more Information

If you are interested in applying for the National Water Quality Initiative, visit the Frederick County USDA Service Center.

92 Thomas Johnson Dr., Suite 230
Frederick, MD 21702-4403
301-695-2803

For more information about NRCS programs, initiatives and services in Maryland visit us online at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov.



The Catoctin Creek Watershed is on the western border of Frederick County, Maryland.

Map by Michelle Guck, USDA-NRCS.