



NRCS

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

Conservation Assistance in Connecticut Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans

What is a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan?

A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is a whole farm, progressive document. A CNMP contains records of the current activities on a livestock operation, an evaluation of the existing environmental risks, and proposals to reduce the risk of negative impacts to the environment. The objective is to ensure both farm production and environmental goals (clean water, clean air, and healthy soils) are achieved on the farm.

Who Should Have a CNMP?

Anyone working with animals or applying manure to cropland could benefit. In Connecticut, large operations may be required to have a CNMP by the Connecticut State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to be in compliance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. In addition, livestock farm owners who have been notified by DEEP of environmental concerns on the farm may be asked to have a CNMP.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requires a CNMP before providing financial assistance on any practice related to the storage, management, or field application of agricultural wastes.

Livestock producers applying for guaranteed loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) may also be required to have a CNMP.

What is Included in a CNMP?

A CNMP documents the steps you have already taken to protect the environment; as well as identifying opportunities to further reduce risks to the quality of water, air, and soil resources. The objective is to balance the nutrients coming onto the farm with the nutrients leaving the farm. The plan documents agricultural wastes

produced such as manure from livestock, milk room waste water, runoff from contaminated surfaces, animal mortalities, and seepage from silage piles.

If needed, the plan will provide a list of structural practices, such as waste storage facilities, which contain or treat agricultural wastes until they may be properly used on cropland. Practices to reduce contaminated runoff such as roof gutters and surface water diversions are common components of CNMPs. CNMPs also cover farmstead safety and security.

A CNMP includes an erosion control plan for the fields that receive manure. The main objective of this plan is to reduce the risk of manure being washed off the fields by rain. The erosion and runoff control criteria for fields in a CNMP may be more demanding than the criteria used to develop your current conservation plan.

Reducing odors associated with the storage and application of wastes is another part of a CNMP. Practices that reduce odors may help reduce complaints from neighbors.

A nutrient management plan is part of a CNMP. The nutrient management plan documents all crop nutrient needs, soil test results, and application of all nutrients (including manure) to the fields. Soil testing and record keeping of everything going onto and everything coming off of the fields are essential activities related to this part of the plan.

Livestock operations without enough land to spread manure according to soil test results and crop needs may need a strategy to export manure. In Connecticut, individuals and businesses may be interested in composted manure for their fields or to use as potting media. In addition to exporting manure, feed

management and waste treatment are additional steps farmers may consider to reduce nutrients.

Why Should I Get a CNMP?

Having a CNMP developed for your farming operation provides you a strategy for managing your farm's soils and nutrients. Having and following a CNMP may protect you from regulatory actions in case of an accidental manure spill or complaints about odors and other nuisances associated with the management and spreading of manure.

In the case of a large manure spill or catastrophic livestock mortality, a CNMP will provide the information needed to properly respond to these situations.

How Do I Get a CNMP?

NRCS has staff certified to prepare CNMPs; some private sector agronomists and engineers are certified by NRCS as Technical Service Providers (TSP) to prepare CNMPs. NRCS can provide you with contact information for TSPs certified to practice in your area. Producers may develop a CNMP on their own, as long as it meets the requirements of EPA regulations.

NRCS can provide financial assistance for the development of a CNMP by a Technical Service Provider. The development of a CNMP may take several months. Depending on NRCS workload, choosing a TSP may be a quicker way for a producer to obtain a CNMP.

How Often Should I Revise My CNMP?

Like any good plan, a CNMP should be reviewed regularly to ensure it still applies to the farm's current conditions. Updates are needed any time there are significant changes to the operation (such as animal numbers or new facilities). NRCS recommends updating at least every five years to ensure the plan is current with standards and regulatory requirements.

What Are My Responsibilities?

The CNMP belongs to the producer. Therefore, the producer needs to be actively involved in its development and implementation. Producer responsibilities include:

- Determining cropping sequence and realistic yield goals for the crops produced.
- Providing information about planned field operations for each crop.
- Managing field operations to ensure soil loss from erosion is below established levels.
- Testing soils for nutrient needs at least every three years and applying all nutrients (including compost, manures, and other organic products) in accordance with the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory recommendations.
- Providing soil test results for plan development.
- Providing a nutrient analysis of all agricultural wastes and other soil amendments containing Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium.
- Reviewing soil test and nutrient analysis results and participating in nutrient management plan development with NRCS or other certified nutrient management specialists prior to fertilizer applications.
- Calibrating application equipment to ensure agricultural wastes and other soil amendments are applied at the intended rate.
- Observing all requirements for buffers and setbacks.
- Providing records of all nutrient, mulch, or animal waste applications by field and amount applied.

How Do I Get Started?

Your local NRCS office has experienced conservationists who can assist you in planning and implementing a CNMP. For more information contact:

Hartford/Tolland Counties - (860) 688-7725

Windham County - (860) 779-0557

Fairfield/New Haven Counties - (203) 287-8038

Litchfield County - (860) 626-8258

Middlesex/New London Counties - (860) 887-3604