

# HELPING FARMERS PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN THE ROCK RIVER WATERSHED



*The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and UVM-Extension can assist you in meeting state and federal regulations to protect water quality.*

Fiscal Year 2021

## Why is the Rock River Watershed an area of focus?

- **This watershed received prioritized financial assistance because** it is located within the Lake Champlain Basin and because it was selected as a National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) watershed.
- In 2016, NRCS began implementation of a **strategic planning approach** to water quality improvement for watersheds that were **most impaired and contribute heavy concentrations of agricultural phosphorus runoff**.
- The objective is to work with farmers to provide **one-on-one assistance** to identify areas in need of conservation practices.

## Rock River Watershed Stats

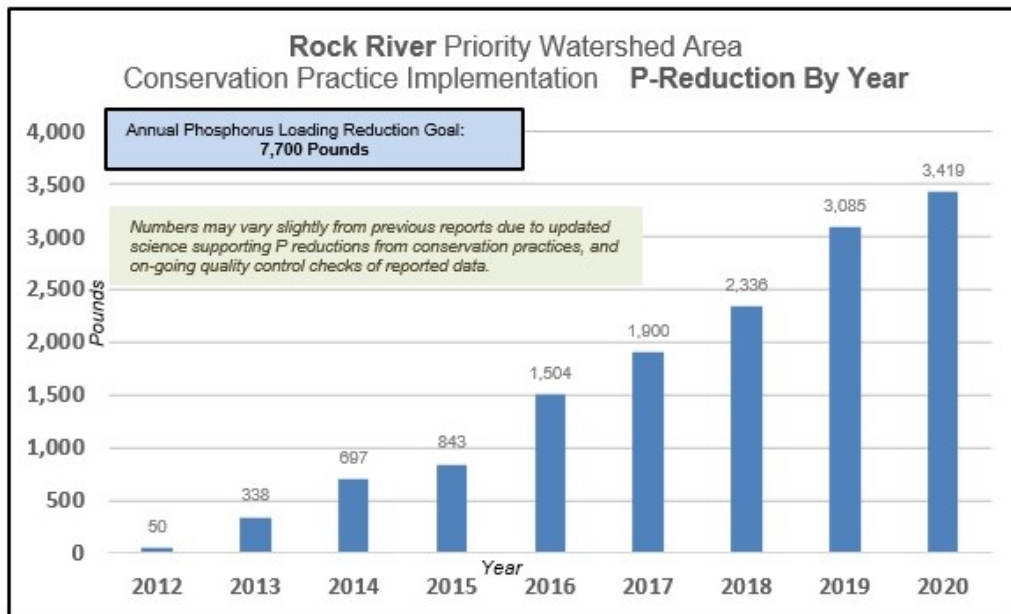
**Watershed Area:** 22,743 acres

**Total Estimated Ag Phosphorus Loading:** 19,248 pounds a year

**EPA TMDL Reduction Goal:** 83 percent

**EPA Estimated TMDL Ag Phosphorus Reduction Goal:** 15,976 pounds per year

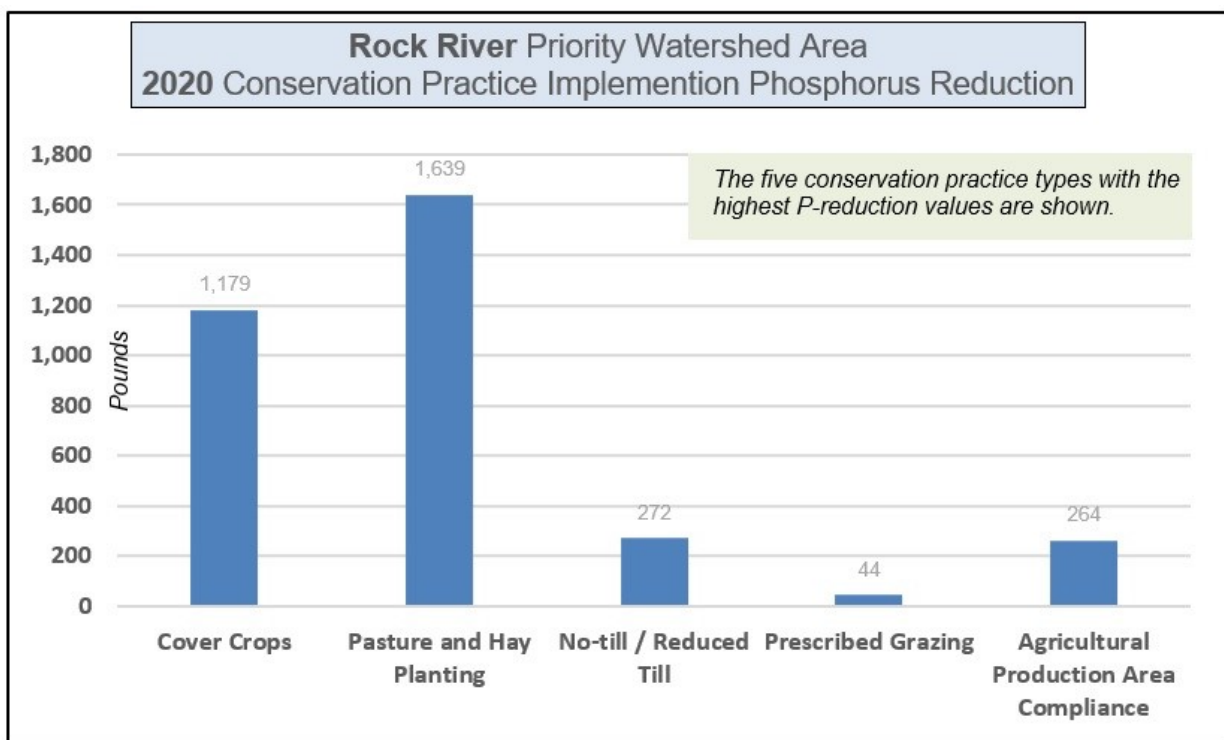
**Local Watershed Team Ag Phosphorus Reduction Goal (2023):** 7,700 pounds annually (48% percent of TMDL goal)



## HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND IN THE ROCK RIVER WATERSHED

### What type of assistance is available for farmers?

- The NRCS **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to address natural resources concerns including water quality and soil health.
- Practice payment rates vary by practice and are flat payment rates (typically, but not always, averaging 75% of the installation costs) to help farmers implement conservation practices including crop rotation, cover crops, grassed waterways, heavy use areas, riparian buffers, waste storage facilities, nutrient management plans, and more.
- Limited resource producers, new and beginning farmers, and veteran farmers may be eligible for up to 90 percent practice payment rates.
- Other entities may also provide financial assistance, including the Vermont Agency of Ag, Food, and Markets and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Contact them for more information.



Graph reflects figures collected in the Partnership Database which includes multiple data sources from the State of Vermont and NRCS and reflects fiscal year data from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Conservation practice implementation data is primarily compiled from federal and state cost-share programs and reflects only a small portion of practices implemented by farmers on their own. A State-led working group is developing efficiencies for additional practices as data and tracking become available. Phosphorus loading reductions from implemented conservation practices were estimated by the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation using a model adapted in collaboration with the EPA for use in the Lake Champlain Basin to determine progress in meeting the established TMDL.

#### For assistance with conservation planning in the Rock River Watershed

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