Guy Choiniere: The message reached our farm that the lake was having problems with pollution and getting into it somehow. I mean I was very naive on the whole situation, but I knew that erosion was part of it and that the pollution was traveling through the sediment. Well it wasn't hard for me to notice that all my riverbanks were eating up because my cows were allowed to walk the riverbanks as they wished and wherever they could make it they'd go. And I had a lot of erosion happening on my farm. Now I'm blessed with the river going through it, but I've always said that I' been challenged with the riverbanks that I need to deal with on the other side.

They (NRCS) gave me the guidance and the energy to qualify for an EQIP program which directed me in a way in where I would develop a river crossing which would take the cows off the riverbanks and narrow them into a built river crossing that would minimize the amount that they need to play in the river.

We also qualified for nutrient management because we eventually found out that just because you clean up your barnyard doesn't mean that those same nutrients won't bother you out in your crop land if you don't manage it right. So, with the nutrient management plan we were able to measure what fields needed manure and what fields didn't and I think that was a good thing. Now we apply manure on a regulated rate and the ones that need it we know how much, the ones that don't we stay off of those, and if there is any runoff off those fields at least their not carrying excess nutrients off those fields.

They (NRCS) first of all gave me hope. I mean we all know what we need to do, I could see what was happening. But they gave me hope that it could be done. It was a huge project. It's taken me ten years, but they gave me hope and the resources. When I say resources, the engineering, just the engineering of creating a cattle lane on these hills. Because what is Vermont?  We're basically mountain sides and riverbanks and it's hard to deal with; it's not just a nice flat prairie land. So they gave me the hope, the engineering, and they gave me some cost share which helped encourage me to go forward with the project.

I still have manure pit work to do. I have more cattle lanes. But yeah, I was a problem child when they came to me ten years ago, but I'm not done.  I'm not discouraged because I know they're there to help.