

Project Abstract

Applicant Name: Jonathan Winsten Ph.D.

Duration of Project: 12 months

Federal Funds Requested: \$74,784

Non-federal Cost Share Committed: >\$75,000

Project Title: Coordinating Public and Private Funding with a Science-Based and Stakeholder-Driven Pay-for-Performance Conservation Approach

Geographic Location: Vermont with an emphasis in the Lake Champlain Basin

Brief Project Description

The outcomes that emerge from the successful completion of this project will include greatly reduced phosphorus (P) loads from agricultural watersheds, as well as farms with greater financial performance from providing this important ecosystem service. Farmers will incorporate environmental management into their farm management decision-making as a response to performance-based incentives for P loss reduction. Further, interested dairy farmers will have coordinated technical and financial assistance to help them restructure their operations for better financial resilience and long-term environmental performance.

With a focus on pay-for-performance conservation, this project will create incentives for tweaks (i.e. field management changes) and for transformations (i.e. structural changes to the farm operation). These require different kinds of incentives and this project will design, develop, and test recommendations for motivating farmers to make tweaks or transformations, based on their interest and needs.

The project outputs will be created using a science-based and stakeholder-driven process to ensure that the plans created will work for farmers and produce the environmental improvements that we need from our farm sector. Time is of the essence to achieve the TMDL goals and for our struggling dairy farmers; this project will produce two critically important recommendations within 12 months.

State Priorities Addressed: This project directly addresses the Water Quality priority by creating plans for a pay-for-performance conservation system to reduce P loading in Vermont waters. It also addresses the Soil Health priority through its focus on incentives for transforming production systems that result in greater soil organic matter and biological activity.

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