

Source Water Protection in Vermont

A Commitment to Conservation



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Working lands can be key to protecting clean drinking water. We can help!

Agriculture is a vital part of our infrastructure and so is water. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is working to prioritize land and water conservation practices on private working lands. These practices provide many benefits, including protecting public and private drinking water supplies. In Vermont there are 1,929 source water protection areas which are associated with intakes for surface water (lakes, reservoirs and rivers) or groundwater wells in aquifers. Surface waters are often more at risk for from pollutants such as excess nutrients, sediment, chemicals, and bacteria. Many towns in Vermont are dependent on surface waters to supply drinking water to their residents.

We can help private landowners

NRCS is focused on improving private working lands and providing assistance to farmers and forest landowners to improve water quality. NRCS often starts by looking at the types of land uses in the watershed.

Agricultural Lands

Installing best management practices on agricultural lands such as: riparian buffers, cover crops, prescribed grazing, nutrient management and manure storage help to reduce runoff and excess nutrients to water supplies.



Forest Lands

Installing best management practices on forested lands such as: forest management planning to help locate woods roads, installing water bars, seeding down steeper areas and using temporary stream crossings minimize erosion from timber harvesting operations.



Conservation Easements

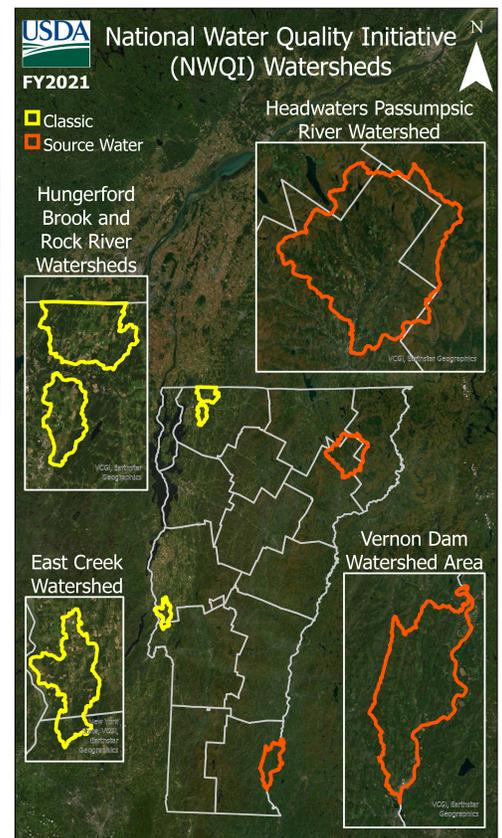
Protecting farmland and forest land are key ways to reduce impervious surfaces and further development. Furthermore, easements require that best management practices are followed to protect water quality. Working with local Land Trusts, NRCS and State partners would like to prioritize easement funding in source water protection areas, wetlands, headwater streams and riparian corridors. Every day, new producers are stepping up to work hand in hand with the NRCS to plan and apply practices that improve water quality and strengthen agricultural operations.

Priority watersheds will increase applicant's likelihood of funding based on a cumulative ranking system with many factors involved.

Financial and Technical Assistance

Increased payment rate is available for the following source water protection practices:

- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crop
- Ground Water Testing
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Filter Strip
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Nutrient Management
- Integrated Pest Management
- Agrichemical Handling Facility
- Well Decommissioning



Our increased-payment-rate practices and how they can help:

Heavy Use Area Protection

If animals spend a lot of time in one area, it sees 'heavy use.' That also means there is a lot of manure and urine deposited there. If there isn't an improved surface where the animals spend a lot of time, then it can be difficult to clean the area and capture the nutrients deposited there. The nutrients can enter ground or surface water. Heavy Use Areas protection enhancement can help make it easier to capture those nutrients.



Cover Crops:

Cover crops are a key component to creating healthy cropland soil. Cover crops capture nutrients, hold soil in place, break up soil compaction and provide habitat for soil microbes. Keeping these 'crops' on the field, even in the off season, help prevent erosion and nutrient loss through runoff.

Let us help keep nutrients on the farm.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), funding is available to help achieve conservation goals and improve agricultural production. Interested applicants who are already USDA customers can submit applications online via farmers.gov. Visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office