

**Rhode Island:
Overview**

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams.

NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and riparian buffers.

For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Rhode Island's Priority Watersheds:

Sakonnet River – 010900040910



The Sakonnet River watershed is approximately 35,761 acres of which 23 percent is forested and 14 percent is agricultural land. About 16 percent of the land is developed.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Upper East Passage – 010900040907

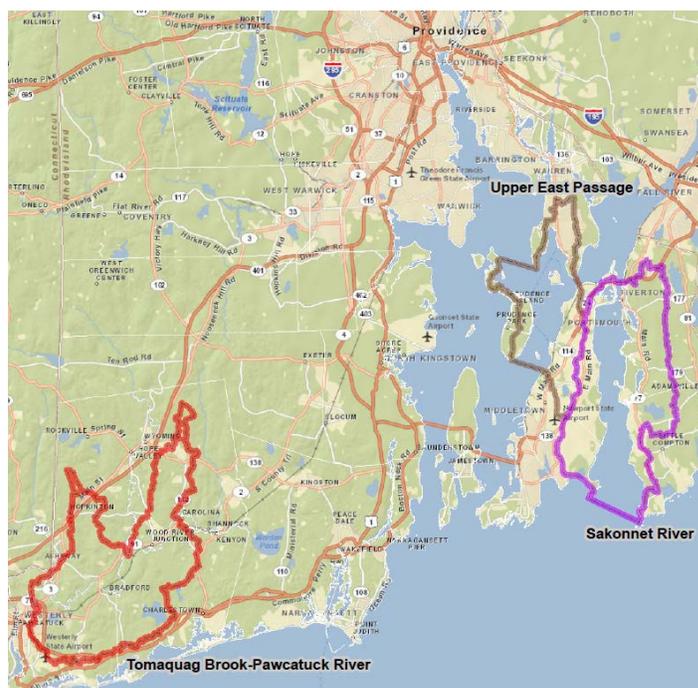
The Upper East Passage watershed is approximately 18,552 acres of which 15 percent is forested and 7 percent is agricultural land. About 17 percent is developed land.

Tomaquag Brook – Pawcatuck River – 010900050205

The Tomaquag Brook-Pawcatuck River watershed is approximately 36,499 acres of which 75 percent is forested, 5 percent is agricultural land, and 11 percent is developed land.

The type of land use in a watershed has a direct effect on water quality. Pollutants, such as nutrients and bacteria from leaking septic systems, oil from automobiles, and sediment from construction, run off impervious surfaces, negatively affecting nearby water bodies. Agricultural materials, such as fertilizer and manure, can also contribute pollutants.

The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers and forest landowners



Conservation Funding and Practices

Improvements in water quality will require participation from the majority of producers in the watershed with a long-term commitment to conservation. NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies such as Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). At times, Partners offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers act to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

As part of a formal agreement between NRCS and EPA, state agencies (RIDEM) are responsible for in stream monitoring to assess whether the water quality and/or biological condition related to nutrients, sediments, or livestock-related pathogens has improved, and if so whether this can be associated with agricultural conservation practices installed using NWQI funding.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands.

Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

To get started, make an appointment at your local NRCS office:

USDA – NRCS, Rhode Island
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886
Phone: (401) 822 - 8848
or visit

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ri/home/?cid=stelprdb10827971> to see if you are located in a selected watershed. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed.



Figure 1 – Online map - type in your address to see if you're located within a selected watershed. Link provided in above website.