



Get Started with NRCS

Do you farm or ranch and want to make improvements to the land that you own or lease?

Natural Resources Conservation Service offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

1 Planning To get started with NRCS, we recommend you stop by your local NRCS field office. We'll discuss your vision for your land.

NRCS provides landowners with free technical assistance, or advice, for their land. Common technical assistance includes: resource assessment, practice design and resource monitoring. Your conservation planner will help you determine if financial assistance is right for you.

2 Application We'll walk you through the application process. To get started on applying for financial assistance, we'll work with you:

- To fill out an AD 1026, which ensures a conservation plan is in place before lands with highly erodible soils are farmed. It also ensures that identified wetland areas are protected.
- To meet other eligibility certifications.

Once complete, we'll work with you on the application, or CPA 1200.

Applications for most programs are accepted on a continuous basis, but they're considered for funding in different ranking periods. Be sure to ask your local NRCS district conservationist about the deadline for the ranking period to ensure you turn in your application in time.

3 Eligibility As part of the application process, we'll check to see if you are eligible.

To do this, you'll need to bring:

- An official tax ID (Social Security number or an employer ID)
- A property deed or lease agreement to show you have control of the property; and
- A farm tract number.

If you don't have a farm tract number, you can get one from USDA's Farm Service Agency. Typically, the local FSA office is located in the same building as the local NRCS office. You only need a farm tract number if you're interested in financial assistance.

4 Ranking NRCS will take a look at the applications and rank them according to local resource

concerns, the amount of conservation benefits the work will provide and the needs of applicants.

5 Implementing If you're selected, you can choose whether to sign the contract for the work to be done.

Once you sign the contract, you'll be provided standards and specifications for completing the practice or practices, and then you will have a specified amount of time to implement. Once the work is implemented and inspected, you'll be paid the rate of compensation for the work if it meets NRCS standards and specifications.

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To find out more, go to: www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Vermont

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary federal conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance to producers who want to improve and protect soil, water, air, plants and animals on their land.

What's in it for You?

Through EQIP, you can receive financial and technical assistance to plan and install conservation practices designed to benefit the natural resources you depend on as a producer.

When you apply to EQIP, you begin by working with an NRCS conservation professional to develop a conservation plan that identifies natural resource concerns and conservation practices that best address specific conditions with your land.

EQIP funding can help pay for implementing your planning decisions.

Application Process:

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis and should be submitted to local NRCS field offices to be considered for the next available round of funding.

Initially, applicants must complete and sign application form NRCS-CPA-1200. This form can be found on the NRCS website or at your local field office. Applicants need to read and understand the appendix to the contract, as it contains the 'rules' of the contract, and implications for not following these rules.

Once the forms are complete, applicants should contact the local NRCS field office to make an appointment to submit the application and complete the eligibility process. After the applicant and land are determined eligible for the program, NRCS field staff will work closely to create a resource inventory of all the soil, water, air, plant, and animal (both domestic and wildlife) resource concerns on the land.

Using the resource inventory, field staff works with landowners to develop a list of practices that can be included in the contract to address identified resource concerns. In some cases more than one practice could be used to address a specific resource concern.

Landowners decide what practice best fits their operation and management style. The amount of the least cost alternative practice that addresses the resource concern will be used for contracting. Applications are ranked with all other Vermont eligible applications. The applications that achieve the greatest resource benefit at the least cost are ranked the highest.



Helping People Help the Land
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EQIP Eligibility Process:

The EQIP eligibility process has two parts: person eligibility and land eligibility. Applicants must meet both of these requirements to be eligible for the program.

Eligible applicants must be an individual, legal entity, or joint operation and have an interest in the agricultural operation or be engaged in livestock, agricultural or forestry production. The land being offered in the program must be in agriculture, livestock or forestry production or be capable of growing trees.

All agricultural producers must have an interest in the land being offered in the application, have control of this land for the life of the contract, be in compliance with the provisions for protecting the interests of tenants, be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions, be within the \$300,000 payment limitation requirement (unless the applicant has requested a waiver to the state conservationist based on environmental significance) and be in compliance with Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) requirements.

Examples of conservation practices eligible for EQIP funding:



Waste Storage



Nutrient Management



Cover Crops



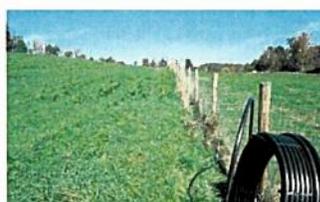
Grazing Management



Stream Crossings



Forest Management



Fence and Pipeline



Habitat Management

Things to know about EQIP:

- Higher payment rates are available for historically underserved customers
- Payments are limited to \$300,000 per participant over a six year period
- There is no minimum acreage requirement, however, projects that address significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding
- You will be reimbursed after the practices have been installed
- Financing may be available through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), or private lending agencies



<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/vt/home/>

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

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Vermont USDA Service Centers & NRCS Offices

Berlin: 802-828-4493

Brattleboro: 802-254-9766

Middlebury: 802-388-6748

Morrisville: 802-888-4935

Newport: 802-334-6090

Rutland: 802-775-8034

St. Albans: 802-524-6505

St. Johnsbury: 802-748-2641

White River Junction: 802-295-7942

Williston: 802-288-8155

2015 EQIP Funding Pools and Anticipated Allocations

| Funding Pool Description | Percentage | | Amount |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Champlaine Dollars | Champlaine Dollar | |
| Lake Champlain Gap Watersheds | 60% of Lake Champlaine Dollars | | \$ 1,623,600.00 |
| | | | \$ 590,400.00 |
| | | | \$ 2,706,000.00 |
| Lake Champlain Non-Gap Watersheds | 40% of Lake Champlaine Dollar | | \$ 1,082,400.00 |
| | | | \$ 393,600.00 |
| | | | \$ 1,804,000.00 |
| Rest of State - Non Lake Champlain Basin Watersheds | | | \$ 412,500.00 |
| | | | \$ 150,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 462,500.00 |
| State Funding Pools | | | \$ 775,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 300,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 225,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 50,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 6,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 6,500.00 |
| | | | \$ 12,500.00 |
| National Funding Pools | | | N/A |
| | | | N/A |
| | | | N/A |
| | | | N/A |
| Other | | | \$ 50,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 50,000.00 |
| | | | \$ 10,800,000.00* |

Updated 1/22/2015

*\$10,800,000 is the amount of EQIP funding that Vermont NRCS anticipates to receive in 2015

2015 NRCS Vermont Programs Schedule

EQIP and AMA General Signup Periods

| | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Round 1 | Application Deadline: October 17, 2014 | |
| | Batching (Selection) Deadline: December 19, 2014 | |
| | Obligation Deadline: February 20, 2015 | |
| | Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| | AMA Cropland Pool | 2015 Certified Organic |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | 2015 Organic Transition |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | 2015 On-Farm Energy |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Cropland | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | |
| LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Farmstead | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| Statewide Forestry and Wildlife | | |
| Statewide Historically Underserved | | |
| Statewide Specialty Crop (Seasonal High Tunnel) | | |
| **FY 2014 EQIP Carryover (Limited Availability)** | | |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Round 2 | Application Deadline: November 21, 2014 | |
| | Batching (Selection) Deadline: January 16, 2015 | |
| | Obligation Deadline: April 17, 2015 | |
| | Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| | AMA Cropland Pool | 2015 Certified Organic |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | 2015 Organic Transition |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | 2015 On-Farm Energy |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Cropland | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | |
| LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Farmstead | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| Statewide Forestry and Wildlife | | |
| Statewide Historically Underserved | | |
| Statewide Specialty Crop (Seasonal High Tunnel) | | |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Round 3 | Application Deadline: February 20, 2015 | |
| | Batching (Selection) Deadline: April 17, 2015 | |
| | Obligation Deadline: June 19, 2015 | |
| | Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| | AMA Cropland Pool | 2015 Certified Organic |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | 2015 Organic Transition |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | 2015 On-Farm Energy |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Cropland | **National Water Quality Initiative |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Farmstead | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | |
| LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Farmstead | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | | |
| ROS Watersheds - Cropland | | |
| Statewide Forestry and Wildlife | | |
| Statewide Historically Underserved | | |
| Statewide Specialty Crop (Seasonal High Tunnel) | | |

| | | |
|----------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Round 4 | Application Deadline: March 20, 2015 | |
| | Batching (Selection) Deadline: May 15, 2015 | |
| | Obligation Deadline: July 17, 2015 | |
| | Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | **National Water Quality Initiative |
| | LC Gap Watersheds - Cropland | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | |
| | LC Non-Gap Watersheds - Cropland | |
| | ROS Watersheds - Perennial Cropland (Grazing) | |
| | ROS Watersheds - Cropland | |

Conservation Activity Plan Monthly Batching Periods

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Application Deadline: October 17, 2014 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: November 21, 2014 | |
| Obligation Deadline: **Update** January 16, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | On-Farm Energy CAPs |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Application Deadline: November 21, 2014 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: December 19, 2014 | |
| Obligation Deadline: January 16, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | On-Farm Energy CAPs |

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Application Deadline: December 19, 2014 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: January 16, 2015 | |
| Obligation Deadline: February 20, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | On-Farm Energy CAPs |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Application Deadline: January 16, 2015 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: February 20, 2015 | |
| Obligation Deadline: March 20, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | On-Farm Energy CAPs |

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Application Deadline: February 20, 2015 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: March 20, 2015 | |
| Obligation Deadline: April 17, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | On-Farm Energy CAPs |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Application Deadline: March 20, 2015 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: April 17, 2015 | |
| Obligation Deadline: May 15, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | None offered |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Application Deadline: April 17, 2015 | |
| Batching (Selection) Deadline: May 15, 2015 | |
| Obligation Deadline: June 19, 2015 | |
| Watershed and State Level Funding Pools | National Pools |
| Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) | None offered |

National Initiatives and Special EQIP Pools with Separate Sign-Up Dates

**2015 National Water Quality Initiative - Rock River - Sign-up and Batching Deadlines will correspond to Round #3 and #4
 2015 Edge of Field Monitoring - Selected Watersheds Only
 2015 Strategic Tool for Environmental Planning - Mud Creek

Updated 1/22/2015

Planning for Accelerated Conservation Planning Implementation in the Lake Champlain Watershed of Vermont and Beyond

Lead partner: Vermont Association of Conservation Districts

This project will serve to accelerate improvements to Vermont's water quality and soil health by expanding technical assistance (TA) to support cropland conservation implementation for small farms in the Lake Champlain watershed. Project partners will address identified gaps in services to help small livestock farm producers develop Land Treatment Plans (LTPs), Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs), and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). This effort will boost the implementation of agronomic and farmstead conservation practices aimed at enhancing soil quality and improving water quality by reducing excessive phosphorus and sediment contamination of surface waters. The project will inform and empower small farm operators to make the most appropriate conservation decisions by helping them develop their own NMPs and by providing extensive one-on-one technical assistance. In addition to the expected environmental benefits, this approach will also help producers realize ongoing economic savings through improved soil health, thereby strengthening farm viability and incentivizing expanded conservation efforts. Technical assistance will be coupled with outreach and education efforts to recruit small dairy and livestock farm operators – many of whom are beginning farmers – in the project area.

Accelerated Implementation of Agricultural and Forestry Conservation Practices in the Lake Champlain Watershed of Vermont and New York

Lead partner: State of Vermont Agencies of Agriculture, Food and Markets, & Natural Resources

This renewed effort among long-standing partnerships to accelerate the impact of private lands conservation on water quality concerns in Lake Champlain uses several innovative tools, including the use of modeling to target conservation practices for optimal environmental benefits, an extensive monitoring network to assess conservation effectiveness, sliding scale cost-share to gain the support of producers, and an incentive-based Environmental Stewardship Program to provide some certainty to producers that they will get credit for the conservation practices they apply.

Long Island Sound Watershed RCPP

Lead partner: Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation

Excess nutrients have been identified as the primary driver of hypoxic conditions in Long Island Sound and are also impacting upland water resources within the watershed, which encompasses areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. This project will develop a comprehensive, whole-farm management certainty program for farmers in the area and use both working lands and easement programs to improve soil health and nutrient management, establish community resiliency areas with a focus on enhancing riparian areas, and institute a land protection program to protect agricultural and forestry areas.

**USDA NRCS Funding Summary for Lake Champlain
January, 2015**

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Lake Champlain Funding Sources | Lake Champlain Initiative Announced by Vilsack | RCPP National – Lake Champlain – Ag, Forestry, Wetlands Restoration and Easements | RCPP State – Nutrient Management Planning |
| Lead Project Partner | None – Funded through NRCS Programs using typical process, in consultation with State Technical Committee | Vermont Agency of Agriculture and Agency of Natural Resources | Vermont Association of Conservation Districts |
| Total Funds Available | \$45 Million – (all Financial Assistance) | \$16 Million (Combined Technical and Financial Assistance) Note: 8-10% of the EQIP funds will be targeted to New York | \$800,000 (Combined FA and TA) |
| Time Frame | FY 2015 - 2019 | FY 2015 - 2019 | FY 2015 - 2018 |
| Programs | EQIP | EQIP, ACEP-ALE, and ACEP- WRE | EQIP |
| Priority Resource Concern | Water Quality | Water Quality, Land Conservation | Water Quality |
| Priority Locations | Flexible each year – will use Strategic Planning Process to identify priorities FY 2015 – basin wide, but with priorities for Missisquoi, St. Albans Bay, and South Lake FY 2016 – basin wide, but will prioritize Rock River, Lake Carmi/Pike River, St. Albans Bay, and Mackenzie Brook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going Forward, NRCS will strategically align resources to complement (not duplicate) RCPP | Small Farms will be Prioritized in the Missisquoi Bay, St. Albans Bay, and South Lake watersheds (both VT and NY); Critical Source Areas will be prioritized in those three priority basins Feed Management – Lake Champlain basin Forestry Operations – Lake Champlain basin Wetlands Restoration – basin wide, based on 2007 mapping by ANR Land Conservation - Lake Champlain basin | Lake Champlain, with an option to expand beyond the watershed |
| Estimated Number of Participants NOTE - RCPP Numbers Subject to Change due to reduced funding | On average – 300 participants/year in the Lake Champlain watershed | Total Estimated Small Farms – 120-140 Forestry – 100 Wetland Restoration – 20-30 Conservation Easements - 35 | Small Farms - 40 per year for a total of 160 |
| Primary Practices | All water quality practices | Cropland – All Agronomic Practices, with limited focus on Farmsteads; Feed Management; Forestry – Forest Trails and Landings, Stream Crossings, Skidder Bridges | Collection of Data Needed to Develop Land Treatment and Nutrient Management Plans |