

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.