

- 1) The Environmental Protection Agency has worked with the State of Vermont since 1996 to improve the water quality in the Lake Champlain Basin and the waters of Vermont; however, insufficient progress has been made.
- 2) Vermont has recently received approximately \$60,000,000 from Federal sources to be used over the next five years. The majority of these funds are dedicated to improving the water quality of the Lake Champlain Basin area.
- 3) Although Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs) were adopted in 1995, there is a general lack of awareness in the small farms community about the AAPs and the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets should enlist partners to educate small farm operators concerning these requirements.
- 4) There are 27 Large Farm Operations (LFO) and 139 Medium Farm Operations (MFO) that have been identified to date. There are not accurate data to identify the number of Small Farm Operations (SMO) in Vermont but estimates range from X to X thousand.
- 5) Vermont agriculture has been identified as contributing 40% of the phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain.
- 6) The Vermont agricultural community recognizes that it has a role to play in the future efforts to reduce nutrient loading and improve water quality in the State, but additional State and federal assistance is necessary to fulfill this role successfully, including technical and financial assistance to encourage small farms to adopt and implement nutrient management plans.
- 7) There are many drivers impacting water quality in the state including agriculture, storm water management, river channel stability, forest management, watershed and wetland protection and restoration, shoreland management, and internal phosphorus loading. In an effort to more fully understand the inter-connections between these drivers and their relative impacts on water quality in the state, a six-month systems mapping process could lead to the identification of key leverage points, which if addressed, could lead to high impact change as required in Vermont's TMDL agreement with the EPA.
- 8) Dozens of stakeholder organizations have been working for many years to improve water quality in Vermont's watersheds, each in their own way. Given the complexity of the challenge we face in improving water quality as well as the complexity of natural systems in general, the General Assembly recognizes that a network approach, rather than a silo approach will be critical to addressing these challenges.
- 9) In order for networks to be effective, there needs to be an organization that agrees to serve as a network coordinator. Its core functions are to support collaborative activities that are aligned with our common agenda for improving water quality; establish shared measurement practices; mobilize funding; manage core network communication needs; and build public will (coordinate public/community outreach).