

-Available Resources-

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (Agency) has a variety of resources available to assist the farming community. These resources include both financial assistance and regulatory programs.

Financial Assistance

Best Management Practice (BMP) Program

The BMP program provides cost share payments for installation of conservation practices to address water resource concerns. Commonly funded production area practices include waste storage facilities, silage leachate systems, milkhouse waste systems, and barnyard runoff collection. Production area practices are eligible for up to 80% cost share. Field practices, such as animal trails and walkways, are eligible for 50% cost share. If coupled with federal cost share, Agency cost share is limited to 35%. The yearly maximum payment for a single practice is \$50,000 and \$75,000 for two or more practices.

For more information on the BMP program, contact:

Jeff Cook at 828-3474 or jeff.cook@state.vt.us

Alternative Manure Management (AMM) Program

The AMM program provides funding to farmers interested in implementing new technologies dedicated to enhancing water quality and improving waste management. Projects funded through this program have included solid separation, nutrient removal, and waste treatment systems. Maximum cost share is limited to \$100,000 through the AMM program. Like the BMP program, total Agency payment is limited to 35% if the project is coupled with federal cost share.

For more information on the AMM program, contact:

Rob Achilles at 828-6501 or rob.achilles@state.vt.us

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The CREP program, a partnership with the USDA, encourages the installation of conservation buffers along waterways by providing land owners with a yearly rental payment and by covering the cost of planting the buffer. Additionally, CREP covers the cost of installing fencing and livestock watering systems where animals on pasture are excluded from waterways. Contracts are either 15 or 30 years in length and payment is dependent upon past land use and whether the buffer is comprised of either trees and/or grasses. Minimum buffer widths are 25 feet for grass and 35 feet for tree buffers. Buffers cannot be harvested under this program.

For more information on the CREP program, contact:

Franklin, Grand Isle, and Orleans Counties

Ben Gabos at 524-6505 x122 or ben.gabos@state.vt.us

Statewide

Laura Hanrahan at 828-1289 or laura.hanrahan@state.vt.us

Nutrient Management Plan Incentive Grants (NMPIG) Program

The NMPIG Program provides for the development of a nutrient management plan (NMP) and three additional years of updating the plan. The initial payment to develop the NMP is \$7 per acre plus the cost of soil and waste testing. Up to \$5,000 is available for plan updates for the following three years

(not to exceed \$13,000 total). Plans must meet the state requirements for nutrient management, as explained in detail in the General Permit for Medium Farm Operations, before receiving payment.

For more information on the NMPIG program, contact:
Abbi Pajak at 828-1397 or abbi.pajak@state.vt.us

Farm Agronomic Practices (FAP) Program

The FAP program provides financial assistance for the implementation of soil-based practices that improve soil quality, increase crop production, and reduce erosion. Eligible practices include cover cropping, strip cropping, conservation crop rotation, and cross-slope tillage. These practices are often needed when implementing a nutrient management plan (NMP) and payments for each range from \$10 to \$25 per acre. \$2 per acre is also available for NMP updates where a farm is no longer eligible for the NMPIG program.

For information on the FAP program, contact:
Matt Kittredge at 828-6908 or matt.kittredge@state.vt.us

Land Treatment Planning

Land treatment planning, simply put, is the foundation of a nutrient management plan (NMP). It is a general resource inventory including mapping, a waste production calculation, soil loss estimates, a waste storage assessment, and conservation recommendations, from which a NMP is developed. This program is provided at no cost to farmers and is made available through a partnership between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Conservation Districts, and the Agency.

For more information, a list of planners, and their contact information, visit:
Your county USDA NRCS/Conservation District office or
www.vermontagriculture.com/LTP.htm

Vermont Agricultural Buffers Program (VABP)

The VABP program offers a 5-year maximum rental contract for the installation of conservation grassed buffers on cropland. Unlike the CREP program, VABP consists of planting harvestable grassed buffers. Areas in crop fields that are prone to erosion caused by flood events, which can be classified as flood chutes, are also eligible under this program to be planted into grass and harvested

For more information on the CREP program, contact:
Franklin, Grand Isle, and Orleans Counties
Ben Gabos at 524-6505 x122 or ben.gabos@state.vt.us

Statewide
Laura Hanrahan at 828-1289 or laura.hanrahan@state.vt.us

Technical Assistance

Agricultural Engineering

Agricultural engineers are available to provide the technical know-how to help address water quality concerns. They are able to provide one-on-one consultation to discuss potential regulatory concerns, can suggest site-specific conservation practices to remedy the problem, and can help you seek financial assistance through the BMP or AMM programs.

For more information on Agricultural Engineering, contact:

Rob Achilles at 828-6501 or rob.achilles@state.vt.us
Stephanie Zehler at 828-0384 or stephanie.zehler@state.vt.us

Pesticide and Groundwater Monitoring Program

The Pesticide and Groundwater Monitoring Program provides for testing and monitoring for contamination of drinking water. This service is available to the agricultural community and to those residences near or adjacent to an agricultural operation. This program also provides for investigation of pesticide and nutrient sources in groundwater and suggestions for the remediation of the contamination.

For more information on the Pesticide and Groundwater Monitoring Program, contact:
Jeff Comstock at 828-3473 or jeff.comstock@state.vt.us

Regulatory Programs

Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs)

The AAPs are the base level of management required for all farms in Vermont. They are designed to be easy to implement, low-cost solutions for addressing water resource concerns. In April 2006, a revised AAP Rule was adopted. For example, a 10-foot vegetated buffer is now required along surface water. There are also new provisions for mortality burial and composting and for the management of livestock on pastures where access is given to surface water.

For more information on the AAPs, contact:
Wendy Anderson at 828-3475 or wendy.houston-anderson@state.vt.us

Medium Farm Operations (MFO) Program

All dairies with 200-699 mature animals, whether milking or dry, qualify as a MFO. Other common MFOs include beef operations (300-999 cattle or cow/calf pairs), youngstock and heifer operations (300-999 youngstock or heifers), horse operations (150-499 horses), turkey operations (16,500-54,999 turkeys), and egg facilities (25,000-81,999 laying hens without a liquid manure handling system).

The MFO program provides a common-sense, Vermont-based, cost-effective alternative to a potentially burdensome federal permitting program by allowing medium sized farms to seek coverage under a single Vermont state General Permit. The General Permit prohibits discharges of wastes from a farm's production area to waters of the state and requires manure, compost, and other wastes to be land applied according to a nutrient management plan.

For more information on the MFO Program, contact:
Franklin, Lamoille, and Essex Counties
Matt Kittredge at 828-6908 or matt.kittredge@state.vt.us

Chittenden, Caledonia, Grand Isle, Orange, Orleans, Washington, Windsor, and Windham Counties
Abbi Pajak at 828-1397 or abbi.pajak@state.vt.us

Addison, Bennington, and Rutland Counties
Dave Weber at 828-0459 or david.weber@state.vt.us

Large Farm Operations (LFO) Program

The LFO Program is an individual permitting process for farms with more than 700 mature dairy cows (whether milking or dry), 1,000 beef cattle or cow/calf pairs, 1,000 youngstock or heifers, 500 horses, 55,000 turkeys, or 82,000 laying hens (without a liquid manure handling system).

Like the MFO program, the goal of this program is to provide large farms with a Vermont-based alternative to federal permitting while assisting those farms with maintaining economic viability. A LFO permit prohibits the discharge of wastes from a farm's production area to waters of the state and requires the farm to land apply manure, compost, and other wastes according to a nutrient management plan.

Unlike the MFO Program, LFO permits are individual to each farm and also regulate odor, noise, traffic, insects, flies, and other pests.

For more information on the LFO Program, contact:

Katie Gehr at 828-3476 or katie.gehr@state.vt.us