

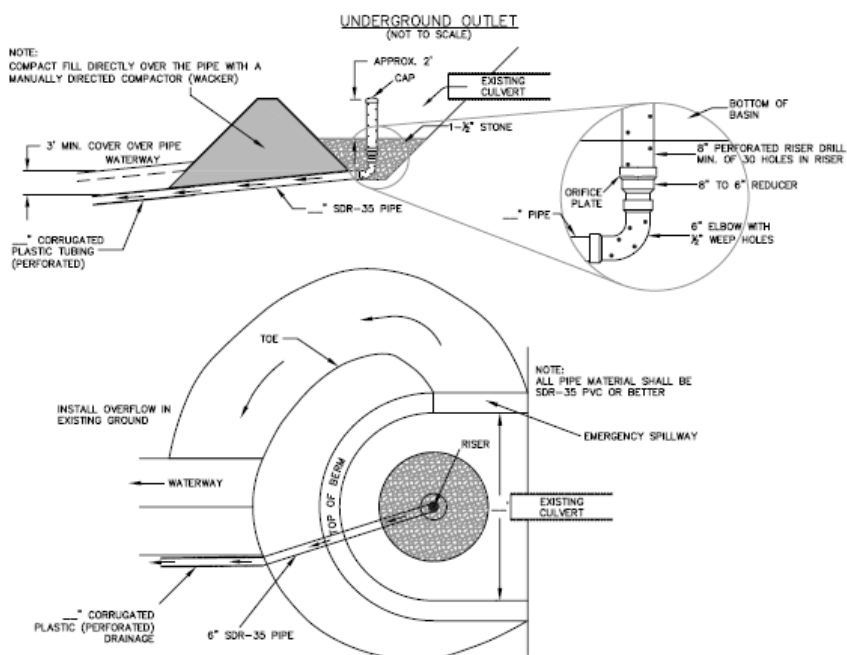
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
SFY 2011 Vermont Agricultural Buffer Program Grants

Request for Proposals

As part of the State of Vermont's on-going efforts to reduce the amount of phosphorous and sediment entering surface water, the 2010 legislative session has authorized the use of the Agency of Agriculture capital funds to support projects that include water and sediment control basins and grassed buffers along ditches. The Agency of Agriculture is currently seeking proposals to implement these practices in the northern Lake Champlain watershed, which is considered to include all of the land that drains to Missisquoi Bay, St. Albans Bay, and the Northeast Arm (also known as the Inland Sea). Eligible respondents include Vermont municipalities, local or regional governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, or citizen groups. Individuals and state and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly, but may partner with an eligible project sponsor. Budgets for these proposals are expected to be between \$5,000 and \$50,000, including the costs of materials and labor.

The goal of this grant is to provide financial and technical assistance for water quality improvements that minimize nutrient and sediment losses through ditch systems. Two practices are included in this grant; grassed filter strips on ditches and water and sediment control basins (wascobs). Both practices are intended to treat runoff from adjacent annual croplands and therefore are not eligible on perennial crop fields that do not normally rotate into annual crop production. Each practice will be expected to be maintained for a period of five years by the landowner via an operation and maintenance agreement. The expectation of this grant is that costs for materials and the labor to install the practices will be covered, with the exception that the labor of performing the field work to seed the filter strips will be the responsibility of the landowner. The minimum requirement associated with the perennial grassed buffers is 10 feet from the top of the ditch and a maximum width of 50 feet, and plantings must meet the pure live seed rates established in the filter strip guidance by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The wascobs can be installed either in low spots on the landscape where water from an annual crop field can be intercepted before entering a ditch, or directly in the ditch as illustrated below. The design of the wascobs should account for watershed drainage size to ensure that agricultural fields and neighboring properties are not flooded during normal high flow storm runoff events. Additionally the outflows and overflows of the wascobs should be designed to minimize erosion.

Example Wascob Design:



The selected grant recipient will be responsible for the following:

1. Identifying farms interested in implementing practices outlined in this grant,
2. Developing a project plan outlining practices to be installed including appropriate design documentation and spatially referencing the project location on a map,
3. Performing the necessary mathematical calculations to design wascobs to allow enough retention to adequately remove sediments and nutrients from water leaving the wascobs, while preventing flooding of fields during typical rain events (including normal high flow events),
4. Obtaining landowner signature(s) on a 5-year operation and maintenance agreement for implemented practices (agreement template will be provided by the Agency),
5. Signing off that practices were implemented as planned and making modifications to the recorded plan if necessary,
6. Providing photo documentation of the project area before and after the practices are implemented,
7. Issuing payments upon receipt of invoices and ensuring all costs are reasonable and necessary,
8. Providing to the Agency the project plans as implemented, signed operation and maintenance agreements and copies of all receipts on financial transactions for paid practices.

From the proposals received, an internal Agency Project Review Committee will select the successful applicant(s). Selected applicants will enter into a grant agreement with the Agency to perform the work within the 2011 fiscal year which ends on June 30, 2011.

Vermont Agricultural Buffer Program Grants Selection Criteria

Proposals are to be no more than two pages in length. Projects are limited to the northern Lake Champlain watershed. Proposed projects must meet all of the initial eligibility tests provided below.

Initial Eligibility Tests for VABP Grant proposals:

- Project must be located in the northern Lake Champlain watershed (considered to include all of the land that drains to Missisquoi Bay, St. Albans Bay, and the Northeast Arm.
- Applicant must be a Vermont municipality, local or regional governmental agency, non-profit organization, or a citizen group. Individuals and state and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly, but may partner with an eligible project sponsor.
- Projects cannot be implemented on farms that are under Final Order on an enforcement action with the Agency of Agriculture to perform the same practice.
- All projects must be completed by June 30, 2011 unless otherwise authorized by the Agency.

Proposals shall address the anticipated number of farms and the general geographic or watershed location where the project will be promoted and therefore implementation is expected to occur, a detailed description of project development methods and associated costs, and identify persons who will be involved in the project and their respective roles and/or functions. Prior to signing any operation and maintenance agreement and implementing a project on an individual farm, the project will be reviewed by the Agency to ensure the deliverables and expectations of the grant are being met.

Application review criteria used to evaluate eligible projects submitted for funding. Please answer each of the following questions in narrative form:

- Demonstrate the level of experience necessary to manage and implement these projects including the necessary hydrologic calculations, similar design concepts, and construction oversight.
- Demonstrate knowledge of other available funding mechanisms, including but not limited to programs available such as CREP, EQIP, WRP, etc.
- Show experience managing and reporting financial transactions similar to those expected in this grant.
- Describe your proposed method for farm identification, project planning, and implementation; please be detailed.

- Provide a list of potential farms that could benefit from the practices in this grant that you intend to contact if awarded the grant. This list does not need to be exhaustive or complete, but will provide an understanding of how prepared you are to identify potential farms.
- Describe how the practice plan will be developed and documented (ie. autoCAD, GIS, hand drawn on printed map).
- Describe how the practice implementation will be checked against the practice plan and how confirmation of practice completion for payments will be made.
- Although match is not required for this grant, please list all source(s) and amounts of financial match to this grant. The value of the match can consist of cash, donation, and in-kind contributions.

Proposal Submission

Proposals must be clearly marked and emailed to Laura DiPietro (laura.dipietro@state.vt.us). The deadline for submission is 4:00 pm on Friday, August 27, 2010.

For additional information or questions regarding the pre-proposal process or to discuss potential projects, please contact Laura DiPietro at: 828-1289.