

Source Water Protection

A Commitment to Conservation



Working lands can be key to protecting drinking water: We can help!

Agriculture is a vital part of our infrastructure and so is water. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is working to prioritize land and water conservation practices on private working lands. These practices provide many benefits, including protecting public and private drinking water supplies. In N.H., there are over 700 source water protection areas which are associated with intakes for surface water (lakes, reservoirs and rivers) or groundwater wells in aquifers. Surface waters are often more at risk from pollutants such as excess nutrients, sediment, chemicals, and bacteria. Many towns and cities in N.H. are dependent on surface waters to supply drinking water to their residents.

We can help private landowners:

NRCS is focused on improving private working lands and providing assistance to farmers and forest landowners to improve water quality. NRCS often starts by looking at the types of land uses in the watershed.

Agricultural Lands:

Installing best management practices on agricultural lands such as: riparian buffers, cover crops, prescribed grazing, nutrient management and manure storage help to reduce runoff and excess nutrients to water supplies.

Installing best management practices on

Forest Lands:

forested lands such as: forest management planning to help locate woods roads, installing water bars, seeding down steeper areas and using temporary stream crossings minimize erosion from timber harvesting operations.

Conservation Easements:

Protecting farmland and forest land are key ways to reduce impervious surfaces and further development. Furthermore, easements require that best management practices are followed to protect water quality. Working with local Land Trusts, NRCS and State partners would like to prioritize easement funding in source water protection areas, wetlands, headwater streams and riparian corridors. Every day, new producers are stepping up to work hand in hand with the NRCS to plan and apply practices that improve water quality and strengthen agricultural operations.

Priority watersheds will increase applicant's likelihood of funding based on a cumulative ranking system with many factors involved.

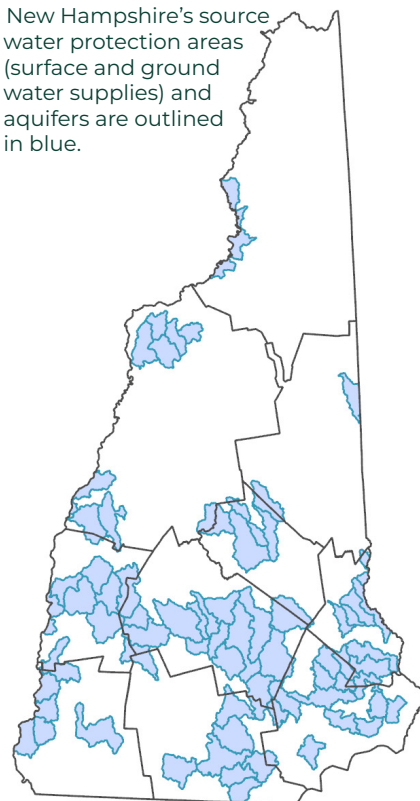


Financial and Technical Assistance

Increased payment rate is available for the following source water protection practices:

- Waste Storage Facility
- Nutrient Management
- Cover Crops
- Reduced Tillage
- Grassed Waterway
- Vegetated Treatment Area
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Filter Strip
- Grassed Waterway
- Vegetated Treatment Area
- Well Water Testing

New Hampshire's source water protection areas (surface and ground water supplies) and aquifers are outlined in blue.



Interactive map available here:
<https://arcg.is/WfCG4>



Our increased-payment-rate practices, and how they can help:

Riparian Buffers:

Buffers work! Between farmland and streams, buffers help to protect bank stability, wildlife, filters agricultural runoff and provides flood protection.

Before:



After

These photos are all of success practices here in New Hampshire



Waste Storage Facility:

Agricultural waste can be a problem. It can cause many problems for water quality when it makes its way off the farm.

But it is also a valuable material on the farm and must be managed carefully to maximize its value. Technical and financial assistance is available to create waste storage facilities that not only protect water quality but help capture and retain maximum value of agricultural waste.



While any one practice assists conservation, combining practices maximizes the effort.



Reduced Till:

Tilling the soil to plant can break up soil structure, which can make the soil vulnerable to compaction and surface crusting. This leads to more runoff and erosion, impacting local water quality. We can help achieve successful plantings with reduced-till practices.



Before:

Heavy Use Area Protection:

If animals spend a lot of time in one area, it sees 'heavy use.' That also means there is a lot of manure and urine deposited there. If there isn't an improved surface where the animals spend a lot of time, then it can be difficult to clean the area and capture the nutrients deposited there. The nutrients can enter ground or surface water. Heavy Use Areas protection enhancement can help make it easier to capture those nutrients.



After





Cover Crops:

Cover crops are a key component to creating healthy cropland soil. Cover crops capture nutrients, hold soil in place, break up soil compaction and provide habitat for soil microbes. Keeping these 'crops' on the field, even in the off season, help prevent erosion and nutrient loss through runoff.

Other practices to consider:

Composting facilities, Nutrient Management, Filter Strips, Vegetated Treatment Areas and Grassed Waterways are other practices that can help keep nutrients on the farm and help protect vital source water aquifers. We can evaluate operations and advise what would be effective for the working lands.



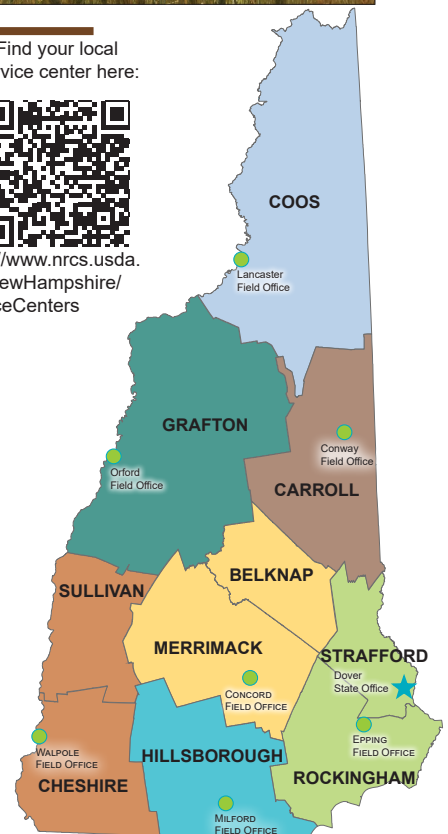
Let us help keep nutrients on the farm.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), funding is available to help achieve conservation goals and improve agricultural production.

Find your local service center here:



<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/NewHampshire/ServiceCenters>



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