

Vermont NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting

July 16, 2025 | 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

In-person: USDA State Office, Colchester

Virtual: Microsoft Teams

NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 22, 2025

Attendees (Colchester): Travis Thomason (NRCS), Luis Aponte (NRCS), Bob Thompson (NRCS), Jim Eikenberry (NRCS), Diana Dellinger (NRCS), Phyllicia Moore (NRCS), Cheyanne Rico (NRCS), Angela Hyldborg (NRCS), Wendy Wilton (FSA), Chris E. Smith (USFWS), Lisa Dlugolecki (USFWS), Marli Rupe (VT DEC), Rebecca Ellis (Senator Welch)

Attending (MS Teams): Sarah Larose (NRCS), Olivia Carlson (NRCS), Tate Jeffrey (NRCS), Stephanie Vasilopoulos (NRCS), Geraldine Vega Pizarro (NRCS CT), Eileen Powers (FSA), Kevin Lambert (RD), Katherine MacFarland (USFS), Nina Gage (VAAFM), Rosalie Perkinson (Senator Welch), Dave Adams (VT FWD), Keith Thompson (VT FPR), Laura DiPietro (VAAFM), Emma Eason (VAAFM), Will Eldridge (VFWD), Laura Ranker (VT DEC), Jill Arace (VACD), Emily Nummer (VACD), Ryan Patch (VAAFM), Stacy Cibula (VHCB), Heather Darby (UVM), Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux (UVM), Julie Callahan (UVM Extension), Rachel Stievater (UVM Extension), Nancy LaRowe (NOFA-VT), Kira Jacobs (EPA), Theresa Vander Woude (EPA), Jim Habana Hafner (AFT), Desiree Robertson-Dubois (AFT), Ryan Karb (AFT), Jeffrey Hoodlet (AFT), Erin Rodgers (TU), Sarah Damsell (OCNRCD), Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD), Michael Fernandez (Bennington Co NRCD), Margaret Fowle (Audubon Vermont), Hazel Adams-Shango (Flying Buffalo Farm/Public), and Unknown Caller (802-272-0323).

Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker
9:30 – 9:45 am	State Conservationist Welcome and NRCS Update	Travis Thomason
9:45 – 9:55 am	Farm Service Agency Update	Wendy Wilton
9:55 – 10:05 am	Rural Development Update	Patrick Suprunowicz
10:05 – 10:25 am	Legislative Update	VT Congressional Delegation
10:25 – 11:30 am	FY26 Conservation Delivery Updates Engineering Update Ecological Sciences Update Programs Update	Bob Thompson Jim Eikenberry Diana Dellinger
11:30 – 11:45 am	Questions	
11:45 – 12:00 pm	Wrap-up	Travis Thomason

Welcome and NRCS Updates:

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

Welcome. Review of ground rules for hybrid meetings. Review of the agenda.

NRCS is wrapping up our FY25 obligations. We will provide a report for FY25 at our October meeting. Current funding amounts and obligation percentages for several programs: Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) ~\$16 million (93%); Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) ~\$3 million (100% obligated); Agricultural Marketing Assistance program (AMA) ~\$180k-\$200k (100%); Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) ~\$6 million (95%). Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) ~\$1 million (93%). Our fiscal year ends in September, so these figures will change slightly. We had historic demand this year and this is the earliest we have completed obligations. As you may remember, we made some very strategic decisions last year (moving up our application deadline to August), which put us in a very good place to be successful this year. As you will hear from our Chief, all decisions are about putting “Farmers First”. And that is what we are doing in Vermont. Review of Gantt chart of our entire Conservation Process and how the work of NRCS programs align with the work of the State Technical Committee and the subcommittees. Today you will hear a summary of all the recommendations that came from the subcommittees and this committee and how we are going to invest for FY2026.

Farm Service Update:

Wendy Wilton, State Executive Director, FSA Vermont *(See presentation slides for details)*

- Served in the first Trump administration and glad to be back in this role.
- Current focus is on cleaning up disaster funding.
- In a pause for other work, as we await the reorg plan for USDA and what our ceiling levels will be for staffing. Many staff were lost to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) nationwide.
- We're also waiting to see the final rules on the bill that passed recently which has a lot of policy information in it.
- The Farm Loan portfolio in Vermont continues to be the largest in New England with over \$122 million in current and proposed loans.
- Disaster Program Payments – *See attached presentation*
- There is a new Block Grant that the State of Vermont is applying for, with \$220 million to be shared by six states: all of New England and Hawaii (Alaska backed out). Four states applying (not including VT) have selected to cover crop losses with their block grant, as a result these states will not be accepting applications for Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP). The VT FSA team has worked closely with our national office and the state so the block grants do not conflict with SDRP, so we can go forward with both, to maximize support to VT producers.

Comments/Questions:

Question: CRP – there was a limited window for sign-ups. Any update on what came in or the projects that signed up?

Response: As contracts come in, I (Wendy) am signing off on them and sending them to headquarters. Headquarters has a rolling process and approves them in tranches. The deadline was recent, so we haven't heard back yet but we submitted 10-12 new offers. ECP, still working through the 2024 backlog.

Response: (Eileen) FSA SED Wilton just shared with me that someone had asked about our CREP enrollment offers for this project year 2026. Our county offices submitted 12 projects to the 1st Batching Period, all of which are Riparian Forest Buffer projects. We were notified on or around July 8th that all 12 of those projects were accepted (10 new and 2 re-enrollments) and they are now moving through the planning process towards final approval. National Office did announce a 2nd batching period, and we have 2 new projects entered in that batch right now and are hoping to get another re-enrollment into it as well. That 2nd batching period closes this Friday, 7/18. All projects are Continuous CRP offers. Folks can contact me for more details.

Rural Development Update:

Kevin Lambert, Public Affairs Specialist, RD Vermont & New Hampshire

- Secretary Rollins announced on Earth Day (April 22nd) a big number in disaster relief funding for areas affected by any kind of natural disaster. In Vermont we are expecting \$31 million in total.
 - DR 4720 (July 2023) and DR 4810 (July 2024 flood) - \$4 million (\$2 million each) in Community Facilities; \$23 million in Water and Waste direct loan and grants
 - DR 4762 (Dec 2022) - \$4 million in Electric Infrastructure Loan Program
- Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Grant remains suspended (as it was last quarter). October 1st with the start of the new fiscal year, we'll see what the forward look will be. IRA funding increased our application intake for REAP by ~ 180% (VT & NH). We are working on a "relief" stands to get through those applications.
- We do not have any funding levels yet, so we don't know if we'll have any discretionary funding grant money for the next round of community facilities.

Comments/Questions: None

Legislative Updates

Senator Sander's Office

No update

Senator Welch's Office

Rebecca Ellis, State Director, rebecca_ellis@welch.senate.gov

- Travis indicated that everyone would like to know what NRCS funding is in the OBBB. One update says that any unobligated funds were rescinded and put in the Farm Bill baseline for NRCS programs, but there is more related to agriculture and crop insurance so we will work to get you more information.
- No further update, but I'm happy to be here.

Congresswoman Balint's Office

No update

Shared by Travis Thomason after the legislative updates:

The One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) rescinded unobligated IRA funding and repurposed those funds into general Farm Bill programs (EQIP, CSP/ACEP/RCPP) and extended the authority for those programs for the next ten years. This comes from the Arkansas Farm Bureau, and as stated by Rebecca Ellis and shared by Ryan McLaren. The good news is there remains an increase in conservation funding for the next few years.

In a draft of the NRCS Chief's priorities, one shift is moving to mobile platforms so the team can spend more time with producers, with a focus on "Farmers First". Hoping to share the official NRCS priorities in October.

Additionally, we hope to "lean into" precision agriculture. One positive advantage of moving up our application date to August is it allowed us to be one of the first states to request additional funding during the February national reassessment of funds data call. We were able to double our EQIP and CSP funding for FY25 (EQIP - \$8mil to \$16mil; CSP - \$1.5mil to \$3mil) because we knew our needs early and were one of the first states to request additional funding.

The Farm Bill authorizes the agency to use the Locally Led Conservation Process to drive how states invest. It also gives us autonomy to "Vermonticize" our programs, so they fit Vermont.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Keith Thompson (VT FPR) – The Continuing Resolution may cut the forestry funding in half or entirely for FY25. This will impact funding for County Foresters, who are the major communicators and facilitators of engagement for private landowners with NRCS. The 2026 President's budget has it zeroed out, but it is being kept whole in the appropriations budget. FPRs budget is 30% federal and this could lead to a "year-sized" hole for funding.

Response: Rebecca Ellis (Senator Welch) - Our DC Office was trying to track down the money for the Community and Urban Forestry Program. As of Friday, our understanding was that OMB had already apportioned the funds to USDA. So, we're now following up with the Forestry Service to see where those funds are at, and we are working to figure out why those funds are being held.

Comment: Wendy Wilton (FSA) – It is a goal of the FSA Administrator, a long time crop farmer in Pennsylvania, for FSA to go forward with technology and precision agriculture so that in the future, producers will be able to do their crop reports online from home and not have to come into the office.

NRCS Engineering Updates *(See slides for details)*

Bob Thompson, State Conservation Engineer

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans

- CNMP Policy
- Required Agricultural Practices (RAP)
- What is a CNMP – NMP, LTP, M&WHS
- CPA-DIA-CEMA: 9 Steps of Conservation, Payment Rates, Practice Codes

Comments/Questions:

Question: Are the payment rates high enough to hire a TSP?

Answer: Yes

Question: Is there a communications plan, outreach effort to deliver this information to the industry folks or is it the hope that partners will share this information?

Answer: Both. I've asked Bob to figure out how we can get with the existing TSPs and also recruit additional folks into the system. We're working on that outreach plan. We also recognize partners play a vital role in this too. We're trying to maximize opportunities for producers to get projects done and recognize we can't do this on our own, but we have vehicles to get that right together.

Comment: There appears to be an issue with the TSP registry.

Response: Yes, NRCS is going through some changes, and the TSP registry system is down. If you have questions about becoming a TSP, Tom Akin is our TSP Specialist. Or reach out to Bob Thompson. Once the TSP registry is back up, the Partnerships and Resource teams plan to hold a training session/webinar.

NRCS Resources Team Updates *(See slides for details)*

Jim Eikenbery, State Resource Conservationist (acting)

Threatened & Endangered Species Guidance - Updated guidance coming out to revoke outdated, state level procedures; share new guidance from USFWS on utilization of their IPaC website, instructions to conduct reviews for state-listed rare, threatened, endangered species and species of greatest conservation need.

Cultural Resources State Instruction - Updated guidance coming out; review of the “why” for the updates.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Chris Smith (USFWS) - To help clarify, the USFWS New England Field Office in Concord, NH, takes care of all ESA consultations for New England. One year ago, they had 22 staff and today they have 7 staff. This is why USFWS is trying to utilize systems to facilitate this work.

Question: Can you explain more on Grazing Mechanical Treatment practice?

Response: Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment (Code 548): Grazing land mechanical treatment involves treating or modifying soil and plant conditions using mechanical tools to meet the desired purpose.

Question: Does the “plow zone” have any further definition? No depth?

Response: Plow zones will be determined by the archaeologist on a case by case, site by site basis because it can vary. But it's the historical depth at which plowing occurred. In Vermont it is typically 6 to 8 inches. The archaeologist will do some quick auguring and tell you what it is at your site. Then you will know the constraint you are working with at that site.

Comment: Deep tillage and grazing mechanical treatment are two practices recommended by our local working group. It was my understanding that only deep tillage was adopted. We do recommend it, so I'm not sure what to do with the advice that it is “to be avoided”.

Response: There are other practices that are scientifically proven to deal with the resource concerns that a lot of people are seeking to address with deep tillage, and they do not create the huge cultural resources workload that deep tillage creates. Travis - I made the decision after reviewing the math and the state requirements. The deep tillage incentive payment is about \$50 an acre, paid to the producer. Because of the depth of disturbance and because of this state's requirements for a review, it would have cost my team almost \$20,000.00 an acre in time to do such an exhaustive review. I made the decision to active the practice but not put financial assistance towards it. If a producer wants to pay for the cost themselves for the Cultural Resources review, we can discuss it. I'm hoping that we can move the needle in the future.

NRCS Programs Updates *(See slides for details)*

Diana Dellinger, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

STC and Subcommittee Feedback

- THANK YOU for your participation in State Tech, Subcommittees and State Tech Surveys

EQIP Priority Practices (Top 10)

- These are the practices identified to get a priority payment rate
- FY2025 actual and FY2026 proposed (5 remain and 5 change)
- Review of why some changes were recommended: Some practices lead to larger contracts that cap-out at \$450k (Waste Storage Facilities & Nutrient Management). Discussion was around what other practices support Farmsteads (including smaller farms), encourage grazing practices, support water quality and get more producers interested. This is how the new practices were chosen.

EQIP & CSP Priority Resource Concerns

- EQIP – FY2025 actual and FY2026 proposed (1 proposed change); Many of the others already address aquatic habitat
- CSP Agland – In addition to National required resource concerns; Survey Results verses changes for FY2026. Adding Weather Resilience was recommended, but more work needs to be done on identifying what that resource concern looks like, how it is evaluated, and what practices address it. Future discussions.

- CSP Forestry – In addition to National required resource concerns; Survey Results verses changes for FY2026. Adding Weather Resilience was recommended but also being tabled for future discussion.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: EQIP priorities - at some point can we see a more specific list of what you used from each subcommittee and why the priorities for elevated for incorporation?

Response: We'll look into this question.

Comment: Concerns for smaller farms, specifically dairy, that Roof and Cover does not address the liquid component. Making sure that producers are asked where the milkhouse waste goes. I was a little disheartened to see Waste Storage Facility come off the list. I feel both are important and necessary and recommend having them both on the list.

Response: Reminder that all practices are available, but priority practices pay at a higher rate. We will meet as a team to further discuss this decision and appreciate your feedback.

Question: Regarding the discussion around aquatic habitat, did it happen during the EQIP subcommittee meeting, as I don't remember it during the Fish and Wildlife subcommittee meetings? While some of the issues are addressed with other resource concerns, not all. And aquatic habitat ranked high in the CSP – Forestry priority list. I encourage you to keep this in mind.

Response: If I remember correctly, it took place during the Subject Matter Expert meeting. Travis - Keep in mind that there are a lot of recommendations that come in, in different ways and my team works to synthesize all of it for me to make decisions. It is possible that we make a change for one year and then change it back the next year. We appreciate the feedback and will make note of it.

Comment: Regarding the removal of weather resilience as a priority resource concern because there's more that needs to be done to see what it looks like, and how to evaluate it. Obviously, that's something a lot of folks would really like to work on. If we can talk at some point on how to do that. I want to flag that Evan Horne, Resilient Lands Coordinator, Climate Action Office, within the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, is starting a committee of folks to look at a lot of these resilience issues and maybe that would be a place to start.

Response: Thank you. We appreciate that information.

Comment: I would appreciate clarification around "Source Water Depletion" as a national resource concern (CSP Agland – Priority Resource Concerns slide). NRCS' Source Water Protection focus is on protecting and improving water quality, rather than water quantity which is what depletion implies. For those not familiar with NRCS' Source Water Protection priorities (as required in the Farm Bill), here's the link: [Source Water Protection | Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) and there's an excellent interactive map that shows the priority watershed/groundwater areas in every state.

Response: Source Water Depletion is a national resource concern, but not really applicable to Vermont, and is completely different than Source Water Protection.

This brings up a very important point for the next fiscal year. What has been presented are priorities that we would like to see for next year, but we are still waiting for guidance from the new administration on what they want to see as priorities for the next fiscal year. So, this is all subject to change.

Question: I am looking for some clarity. The top ten priority practices under EQIP, am I correct that that's not related to the priority practices for source water protection?

Answer: That is correct. I don't think we have an update on Source Water Protection or NWQI because it's kind of a niche aspect of it. But yes, they are 2 separate topics.

Workload Prioritization Tool (WPT)

- The goal is to utilize this tool to determine where our team will invest their time
- This tool is new to Vermont and can be adjusted each year

- Example: As mentioned earlier, we receive about 80 Farmstead applications a year, but with our current funding, we will only be able to fund about ten contracts. In our current process model, our team has to visit and develop ranking plans for all 80 producers. The goal with this tool is to prioritize the applications and get down to 40 or 30 and then spend our time with 30 producers rather than 80 producers. This concept has been expanded to all projects, not just farmstead.
- Ranking Pools Survey Results (funding pools) used to help set workload priorities

EQIP - FY26 Funding Pools & Allocation

- This is all subject to change once we receive the new administrations priorities, except for investment in Locally Led
- Locally Led Conservation Delivery (LLCD) - 14 Proposals selected (*handout attached*)
- Review of funding pools and allocations

Application Deadlines (Batching)

- EQIP, CSP Classic, RCPP, AMA: August 22, 2025
- EQIP Act Now: January 8, 2026
- Easements: October 10, 2025
- Applications are accepted on a continuous basis

Comments/Questions:

Question: Regarding the Workload Prioritization Tool, how will this impact the 303D list?

Recommendation: Love seeing the connection between farms receiving enforcement and EQIP to help provide that support. A Corrective Action Letter is just one of our enforcement types, so I would just broaden it to "under enforcement by AAFM (or DEC)". Our team is always here to coordinate who is under enforcement and I believe partners can see enforcement in partner database.

Response: We can discuss this further outside of this meeting.

Question: Can you elaborate on the riparian/forest buffer project interest in 26?

Response: The conversation was whether there was a practice that has a broader positive effect than tree/shrub planting. The thought is that riparian/forest buffer captures additional resource concerns (invasive species, brush management, tree planting, etc.).

Question: CPAs and DIAs require certified TSPs to develop the plans, but I know UVM staff often assist with grazing plans. Does an application with planning work done by UVM staff meet the prioritization requirements the same as official CPA/ DIAs?

Response: Yes, because UVM (and some other partners) use the same grazing sheet for grazing plans.

Question: Does the planning work that is in place need to have been funded by NRCS, or would an existing Forest Management Plan not funded by NRCS be sufficient to satisfy this "planning work completed" check box?

Response: If it is an FMP that meets the state's requirements, then it will be considered the same.

Wrap-up

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

Thank you all for your time and commitment. Our best days are ahead of us.

Future meetings:

- October 22, 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm

Welcome! VT State Tech Committee | July 16, 2025

Ground Rules for Hybrid Meetings

■ REMOTE attendees:

- MUTE your microphone in TEAMS
- Attendance: Type your name, title and affiliation into the chat
- Questions: "Raise your hand" or type your question in the chat
- Important reminder: The chat is for questions or comments relevant to the current topic/presentation. Please do not have "side conversations" in the chat

■ IN-PERSON attendees:

- Attendance: Sign in on the attendance sheet
- We are using a video camera, "Poly" which is in the north-central area of the room
 - Talk clearly and look towards the Poly
 - If logged into TEAMS, mute your speaker, microphone, and camera
 - Poly will serve as the speaker, microphone, and camera for the room
 - Please avoid side conversations as the Poly will pick them up and make it difficult for Teams participants to hear and it will distort the recording and transcript
- Questions: Raise your hand or use the chat in Teams



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11:30-11:45 am	Questions	
11:45 - 12:00 pm	Wrap-up	Travis Thomason

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356 Mountain View Drive,
Colchester, VT

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Passcode: 8EeTTL

Or call in (audio only)
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United States, Washington DC
Phone Conference ID:
608 468 364#

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan Results 2025

Wendy Wilton, FSA State Executive Director

Farm Loans

Over \$122 Million in current & proposed loans:

Direct Loan caseload: \$46.0 Million

Guaranteed Loan caseload: \$69.9 Million

Current obligation (new): \$6.5 Million

Loans to Beginning Farmers: \$1.58 Million

Current Direct lending rate is 5.125% for operating loans, 5.625% for ownership loans—favorable rates compared to other credit sources

Delinquency rate for Direct loans: 2.2%,

Guaranteed Loans, 0.3%

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Results 2025

Disaster Program Payments

ERP: \$3.19 Million, 2020-2021

Disaster payments made to date

*For **2023 & 2024, \$5.6 million:***

LIP: \$33,184 (livestock loss)

ELAP: \$17,313 (incl honeybees)

ECAP: \$3 million (flooding, excess moisture affecting crop loss, planting)

ECP: \$1.77 million for 2023 flood, some 2024 flood and winter storms. Most 2024 events not yet completed/paid

EFRP: \$1,600

NAP: \$774,028

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Results 2025

Future Program Payments:

- Remaining ECP payments for 2024 flooding and storms

American Relief Act of 2025, \$30
Billion total funding

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/disaster-assistance-programs>

- ELRP, Emergency Livestock Relief Program for Flooding, expected August sign up
- SDRP, Supplemental Disaster Relief Program, loss of revenue or quality of crops, expected July sign up
- Block Grants

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Results 2025

Other Current Programs

ARC-PLC: \$99,463, 2023-2024

DMC:

- \$29.2 million, 2023-2024
- \$60.8 million, 2020-2025

Pandemic Programs:

PATHH (timber pandemic program)

- \$1.9 million, 2020-2022

CFAP (C19 Pandemic program)

- \$80 million 2020-2022

Vermont Farm Service Agency USDA Secretary Priorities

Farmers First:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/farmers-first-small-family-farms-policy-agenda.pdf>

9 USDA Policy Goals including the following:

- Support for small family farms, 86% of all US farms
- Farm transitions
- Special focus on new and beginning farmers
- Reform to H-2A & H-2B
- Streamline processes for programs and approvals
- Easier applications, online access



United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Delivery Roll Out – FY2026
CPAs – DIAs - CEMAs
July 2025



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CNMP Policy

CNMP – Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan

530.403 EQIP Planning

D. Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) – (CNMP) applies only to operations where animals are kept and raised in confined situations.

530.405 EQIP Contracting and Contract Management

A. Schedule of Operations – If an EQIP schedule of operations includes an animal waste storage or treatment facility on an AFO, the participant must have an NRCS-approved CNMP



REQUIRED AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (RAP)

- “Field-by-field” Nutrient Management Plan in accordance with **NRCS-CPS-590**
- All nutrient sources shall be accounted for.
- All fields receiving mechanical application of manure, ag. waste and fertilizer.
- Soils > 20 parts per million (ppm) phosphorous shall
- Document significant changes to operation ...
- Records management!!!!
 - Date of Application
 - Field Location
 - Application Rate
 - Source of Nutrients
 - Weather & Field Condition



What is a CNMP

The CNMP, as a minimum, addresses the resource concerns for **soil erosion**, **water quality**, and **air quality** to the planning criteria level as outlined in the Title 180, **National Planning Procedures Handbook** (NPPH).

(CNMP)

Record Keeping

**Nutrient Management Plan
(NMP)**

(Technical Service Provider)

**Land Treatment Plan
(LTP)**

(NRCS and Partner Staff)

**Manure & Wastewater
Handling & Storage Plan
(M&WH&S)**

(NRCS Engineering Staff)

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CPA-DIA-CEMA

CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs are EQIP **financial assistance funds!**

CPA – Conservation Activity Plan – Technical Service Provider (TSP) are trained and qualified individuals, outside of NRCS, who can provide conservation planning for landowners.

DIA – Design & Implementation Activity - TSP to provide conservation planning, practices designs or implementation instructions.

CEMA - Conservation Evaluation & Monitoring Activity – Qualified Individual (QI) who will provide monitoring or evaluation of conservation measures applied to the land.

Qualified TSP can be found in the NRCS Technical Registry.



CPA-DIA-CEMA

CPA – Conservation Planning Activity

- Provided by TSP
- Steps 1 through 7

DIA – Design & Implementation Activity

- Provided by TSP
- Step 8
- Does not include practice design, application and checkout

CEMA – Conservation Evaluation & Monitoring Activity

- Provided by QI
- Step 9



NRCS – 9 Step Planning Process

1. Identify Problem/Opportunity
2. Determine Objectives
3. Inventory Resources
4. Analyze Resource Data
5. Develop Alternatives
6. Evaluate Alternatives
7. Make Decisions
8. Implement Plan
9. Evaluate Plan



CPA-DIA-CEMA



County	Code	Practice	Component	Units	Unit Cost
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$4,447.29
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$5,336.75
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations, Greater Than 700 Animal Units	No	\$6,971.90
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations, Greater Than 700 Animal Units	No	\$8,366.28
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$4,976.54
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$5,971.85
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations, No Land Application	No	\$836.54
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations, No Land Application	No	\$1,003.85
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	CNMP Revision	No	\$3,646.31
Statewide	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-CNMP Revision	No	\$4,375.57
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Dairy Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$5,148.19
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Dairy Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$6,177.82
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Dairy Operations, Greater Than 700 Animal Units	No	\$6,434.40
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Dairy Operations, Greater Than 700 Animal Units	No	\$7,721.28
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Dairy Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$4,184.37
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Dairy Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$5,021.24
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Dairy Operations, No Land Application	No	\$4,377.80
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Dairy Operations, No Land Application	No	\$5,253.36
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$4,508.43
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, 301 to 700 Animal Units	No	\$5,410.11
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$3,413.98
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, Less Than or Equal to 300 Animal Units	No	\$4,096.77
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, No Land Application	No	\$2,704.72
Statewide	102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	HU-Non-Dairy Livestock Operations, No Land Application	No	\$3,245.67

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CPA-DIA-CEMA - CNMPs

DIA 101 – CNMP Design & Implementation Activity

- A site-specific design and implementation activity plan that will address the planned practices for land application of manure and nutrients, and the handling, transfer, storage and treatment of animal wastes.

CPA 102 – Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan

- A site-specific conservation plan developed for:
 - AFO production area including the animal confinement, feed, and the waste handling and storage areas, and
 - The land treatment area, including any cropland which ag. waste might be applied to.



CPA-DIA-CEMA - CNMPs

DIA 157 – Nutrient Management Design

- Design the rate, source, placement, and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments while reducing environmental impacts. Implementation requirements for Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 590 Nutrient Management along with other supporting conservation practices are developed.
- Nutrient management plans are documents of record, establishing how nutrients will be managed including the Rate, Source, Placement and Timing of plant nutrients for plant production while addressing identified resource concerns including the offsite movement of nutrients. These plans are prepared in collaboration with producer and/or landowner and designed to help the producer implement and maintain an effective plan for the application of nutrients from available sources.



CPA-DIA-CEMA - CNMPs

CEMA 217 – Soil & Source Testing for Nutrient Management

- A **sampling strategy for nutrient management** measuring nutrient levels in soil and or nutrient source.

CEMA 226 – Site Suitability & Feasibility for WSF

- The **evaluation of a site** to determine the appropriateness for a planned storage facility, including soils testing, size, storage type, etc.

CEMA 227 – Evaluation of Existing WSF Components

- The **evaluation of an existing storage** facility to determine the appropriateness for the continued use of that facility and how it fits into the overall CNMP.



CPA-DIA-CEMA - CNMPs

Proposed Policy

- Producer with an up-to-date CNMP:
 - Will be ranked “High” or “Medium” and have a better chance of getting EQIP contract.
- Producer without CNMP:
 - Will be ranked “Low”.
 - However, can apply for CPA-DIA-CEMA so they can hire a TSP to develop a CNMP – **ACT NOW!**
 - Upon completion of an up-to-date CNMP, producer will be ranked “High” or “Medium”



911, 912 & 913 Practice Codes

911 – Technical Assistance – Design

Qualified TSP & PE develops design following NRCS standards.

912 – Technical Assistance – Application (Inspection)

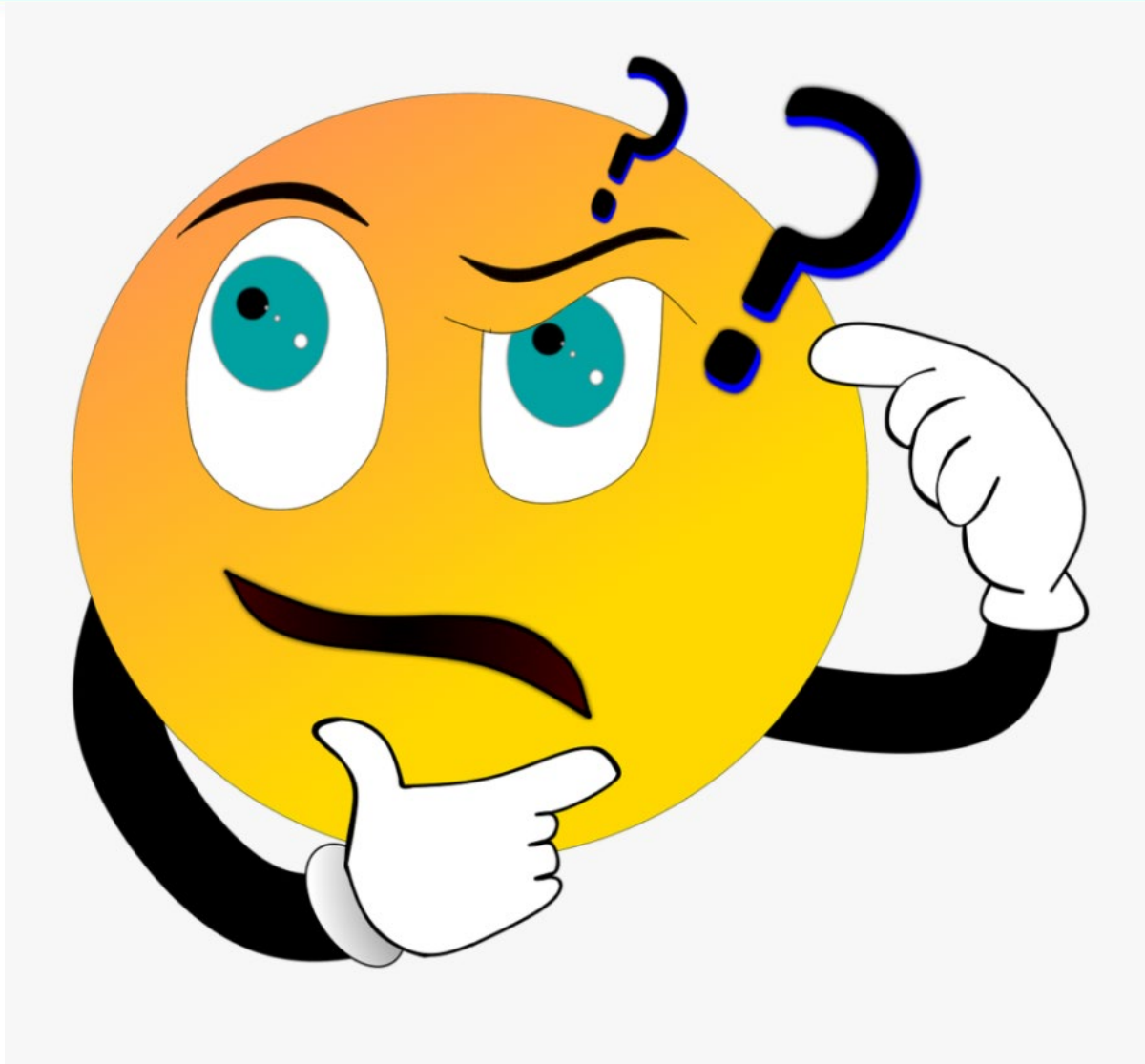
Qualified TSP & PE provides necessary quality assurance during construction to ensure practices are installed correctly.

913 – Technical Assistance – Check-Out

Qualified TSP & PE provides the necessary follow up or final inspection to ensure practices were installed correctly. Also, TSP provides final quantities for payment.

Technical Assistance Funds!





Questions?



Natural
Resources
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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Resources Team Updates

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Threatened & Endangered Species Guidance

- Current guidance is out of date and the new state instruction revokes old outdated state level procedures
- New guidance notes USFWS focus on use of their Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website
- IPaC allows for project level generation of species lists and then uses determination keys to identify if projects will, will not, or may effect these species
- New state instruction also details how to conduct reviews for state-listed rare, threatened, endangered species and species of greatest conservation need

Cultural Resources State Instruction

- New Prototype Programmatic Agreements (PPA) are in place with the VT Division for Historic Preservation and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community
- These PPAs expedite the review and consultation process for routine projects and activities
- Following the PPAs reduces customer project approval timelines, NRCS staff time and associated costs

Cultural Resources State Instruction

- New State instruction provides sideboards for defining the area of potential effect (APE), project redesign, and NRCS conservation practice planning and installation for the following practices:
 - Brush Management
 - Deep Tillage
 - Grazing Mechanical Treatment
 - Livestock & Irrigation Pipelines
 - Tree & Shrub Establishment



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

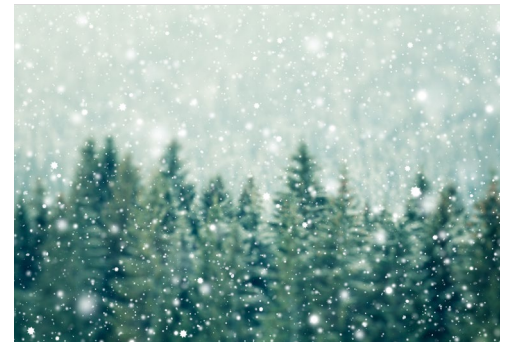


**State Technical Committee
Meeting- July 16, 2025**

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Agenda- Programs

- STC and Subcommittee Feedback
- EQIP Priority Practices (Top 10)
- EQIP & CSP Priority Resource Concerns
- Workload Prioritization Tool
- Locally Led Proposal Selections
- Application Deadlines



Feedback Received! THANK YOU!

- State Tech Meeting Attendance
- STC Survey Participation- NRCS, US FWS, VT AA, CD, VT Forest Parks and Recreation, Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, VT DEC, UVM, VT F&W, NOFA-VT, and
- Subcommittee Meetings: Soils, Water Quality, ALE, Urban & Small Ag, Forest & Wildlife, WRE, Working Lands, Subject Matter Experts, and Locally Led



EQIP- Priority Practices (Top 10)

Fiscal Year 2025

- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (CPC 329)
- Cover Crop (CPC 340)
- Fence (CPC 382)
- Pasture and Hayland Planting (CPC 512)
- Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (CPC 345)
- Waste Storage Facility (CPC 313)
- Heavy Use Area Protection (CPC 561)
- Nutrient Management (CPC 590)
- Waste Transfer (CPC 634)
- Tree/Shrub Establishment (CPC 612)

Proposed FY2026

- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (CPC 329)
- Cover Crop (CPC 340)
- Fence (CPC 382)
- Pasture and Hayland Planting (CPC 512)
- Prescribed Grazing (CPC 528)
- Trails and Walkways (CPC 575)
- Heavy Use Area Protection (CPC 561)
- Roofs and Covers (CPC 367)
- Forest Trails and Landings (CPC 655)
- Riparian Forest Buffer (CPC 391)

EQIP- Priority Resource Concerns

Fiscal Year 2025

- Field sediment, nutrient, and pathogen loss
- Storage and handling of pollutants
- Wind and water erosion
- Concentrated erosion
- Soil quality limitation (soil health)
- Terrestrial habitat
- Degraded plant condition
- *Aquatic habitat*

Proposed FY26

- Field sediment, nutrient, and pathogen loss
- Storage and Handling of Pollutants
- Wind/Water Erosion
- Concentrated Erosion
- Soil Quality Limitation (Soil Health)
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Degraded Plant Condition
- Livestock Production Limitation

CSP Agland- Priority Resource Concerns

Survey Results

Agricultural Land Ranking Pools
1. Concentrated Erosion
2. Degraded Plant Condition
3. Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pesticide Loss
4. Livestock Production Limitation
5. Pest Pressure Storage and Handling of Pollutants
6. Soil Quality Limitations
7. Terrestrial Habitat Weather Resilience
8. Wind and Water Erosion

- **Changes to FY2026 CSP Classic**
 - Remove Terrestrial Habitat
 - Remove Pest Pressure
 - ~~Add Weather Resilience~~
 - Add Storage and Handling of Pollutants
- Planners must still assess the National Required resource concerns
 - Source water depletion (21.9%)
 - Field Pesticide Loss (43.8%)
 - Terrestrial Habitat (31.3%)
 - Pest Pressure (25%)

CSP Forestry- Priority Resource Concerns

Survey Results:

Non-Industrial Private Forestland Ranking Pools
1. Aquatic Habitat
2. Concentrated Erosion
3. Degraded Plant Condition
4. Fire Management Field Sediment, nutrient and pathogen
5. Pest Pressure
6. Soil Quality Limitations Weather Resilience
7. Terrestrial Habitat
8. Wind and Water Erosion

- **Changes to FY2026 CSP Classic**
 - Remove Fire management
 - Remove Soil Quality Limitations
 - ~~Add Weather Resilience~~
 - Add Field Sediment, nutrient and pathogen
- Planners must still assess national resource concerns
 - fire management (22.6%)
 - soil quality limitations (22.6%)

EQIP Workload Prioritization Tool

- Selected funding pools will use this tool to identify if a project is High, Medium, or Low Priority prior to being ranked
- Identified Application Priorities:
 - Currently in compliance with existing contracts
 - Started or completed planning work through a TSP or NRCS (CNMP, CPA/DIA/CEMA, FMP, Grazing Plan, etc)
 - If requesting waste management practices then the project addresses a significant contribution of pollutants to water of the U.S. or received a Corrective Action Letter to address discharge
 - Limit livestock access to surface water OR convert annual cropland to pasture
 - Project is located in a least one 303(d) priority watershed

Ranking Pools Survey Results

Fund Pool Priorities

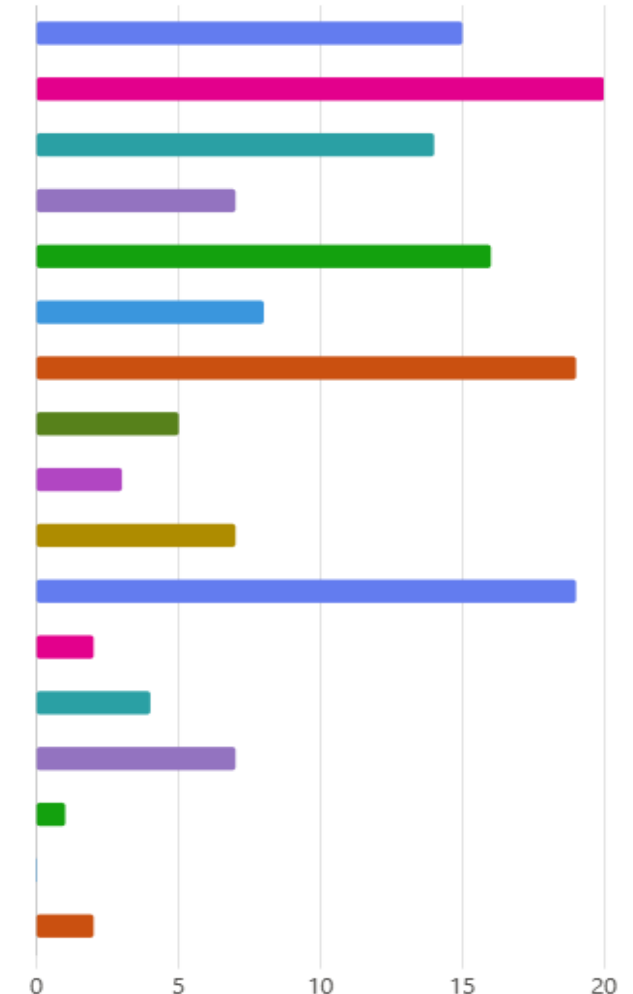
1. Livestock Partnership
2. Cropland (non structural)
3. Grazing
4. Forest Upland
5. CPA/DIA/CEMA

Investment Priorities

- **30-50%: Livestock**
- **10-30%: Forestry Implementation, Cropland, Pasture,**
- **<10%: Small scale, HU, Plans**

5. Which Statewide Ranking Pools do you feel are the top 5 critical pools to address Vermont's resource concern priorities?

CPA DIA CEMA - forest management plans/ nutrient management plans/ Wildlife Plans	15
Livestock Partnerships (Farmstead Project)	20
Structural Cropland Erosion (gully erosion, grassed waterways)	14
Source Water (priority watersheds)	7
Forest Upland Habitat (all forestry projects)	16
Small Scale/ Urban Agriculture (Diversify Veg, etc)	8
Grazing Pool - (watering systems, prescribed grazing, etc)	19
Agroforestry	5
On Farm Energy	3
NWQI - National Water Quality Initiative	7
Cropland (nutrient management, cover crops, etc)	19
Conservation Incentive Contract - Cropland (combines elements of EQIP & CSP)	2
Conservation Incentive Contract Pasture (combines elements of EQIP & CSP)	4
Beginning Farmer	7
Socially Disadvantaged	1
Organic Operations	0
Golden Winged Warbler	2



EQIP- FY26 Funding Pools & Allocations

- Investment in Locally Led- 14 Proposals Selected!
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Special Initiatives (subject to change):
 - Conservation Innovation Grants
 - National Water Quality Incentive
 - Golden Winged Warbler, Organic Transition Initiative
- National Priorities (subject to change):
 - Livestock- 50%
 - Beginning Farmer- 5%
 - Socially Disadvantaged- 5%
 - Wildlife (Forest Upland)- 10%
 - Conservation Incentive Contract- 5%

Application Deadlines

- EQIP, CSP Classic, RCPP, AMA: August 22, 2025
 - EQIP Act Now: January 8, 2026
 - Easements: October 10, 2025





NRCS Locally Led Conservation Delivery in Vermont



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDS) in Vermont are expanding their work with Vermont communities in delivering technical and financial assistance through USDA Farm Bill programs. This process is an innovative approach to the Locally Led Conservation Delivery (LLCD) model.

The LLCD model focuses on leveraging community feedback and partnerships and USDA funding to strategically invest federal dollars in local priority resource concerns to restore, conserve, and protect Vermont's natural resources and working landscapes.

NRCDS in Vermont have gathered feedback from Local Working Groups and crafted Conservation Action Plans and Locally Led Conservation Plans (LLCPs) outlining local resource concerns and goals, proposed solutions and actions, necessary funds and technical assistance, monitoring and evaluating methods, and an implementation timeline.

The following is a brief, summarized list of NRCDS LLCPs for the state of Vermont.

*Funding awarded is subject to fiscal year 2026 funding allocation. **Fiscal year 2026 conservation programs application deadline: August 22, 2025

Natural Resources Conservation District	Locally Led Conservation Plan	Conservation Practices Offered
Bennington County Conservation District (BCCD) – \$250,000*	BCCD aims to implement agroforestry and complementary conservation practices to restore the county's agricultural resilience.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Alley Cropping, Forest Farming, Hedgerow, Windbreak/Shelter Establishment, and Riparian Forest Buffer.
Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District (CCNRCD) – \$200,000*	CCNRCD proposes to improve the agricultural resilience and economic sustainability of small family farms in the county by offering financial assistance for agronomic practices that will improve soil health, and crop productivity.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: High Tunnel System, Low Tunnel System, Conservation Crop Rotation, Irrigation Water Management, Soil Carbon Amendment, and Low Tunnel Systems.
Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District (FCNRD) – \$1,500,000*	FCNRD proposes to create a funding stream that enables producers to implement infrastructure improvements that reduce runoff, support manure management, and ensure long-term farm viability through conservation practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, Waste Storage Facility, Composting Facility, Wastewater Treatment, Animal Mortality Facility, and Waste Transfer.
Grand Isle Natural Resources Conservation District (GINRCD) – \$300,000*	GINRCD seeks to establish a funding stream to advance soil health and water quality by supporting local landowners in adopting sustainable conservation practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: High Tunnel System, Conservation Crop Rotation, Cover Crop, Pasture and Hay Management, and Nutrient Management.
Lamoille County Conservation District (LCCD) – \$200,000*	LCCD seeks to support forest landowners in Lamoille County through targeted funding and technical assistance to enhance forest health, biodiversity, and economic resilience.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Forest Management Plan, Brush Management, Herbaceous Weed Management and Upland Wildlife Management.



NRCS Locally Led Conservation Delivery in Vermont

Natural Resources Conservation District	Locally Led Conservation Plan	Conservation Practices Offered
Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) – \$200,000*	OCNRCD seeks to address the rapidly growing threat of invasive plant species across the county. They hope to protect and restore native biodiversity, enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitats, reduce erosion, and improve water quality.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Brush Management, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, and Tree/Shrub Establishment.
Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) – \$200,000*	OCNRCD seeks to improve water quality and manage high flows in Orleans County by restoring wetlands, reducing erosion, and implementing conservation practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Water Sediment Control Basin, Vegetative Barrier, Grade Stabilization Structure, and Riparian Forest Buffer.
Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) – \$200,000*	OCNRCD seeks to support small family farms in the county by enhancing their sustainability and viability through conservation practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Pasture and Hay Planting, Annual Forages for Grazing Systems, Controlled Traffic Farming, and Nutrient Man-
Rutland County Natural Resources Conservation District (RNRCD) and Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District (PMNRCD) – \$500,000*	RNRCD and PMNRCD seek to improve soil health and plant productivity, control invasive species, reduce erosion and limit runoff impacts to surface waters through NRCS-approved conservation practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Pasture and Hay Planting, Prescribed Grazing, Watering Facility, Pollinator Habitat Design, and Critical Area Planting.
White River Natural Resources Conservation District (WRNRCD) – \$75,000*	WRNRCD seeks to expand access to conservation planning in Vermont through the use of technical assistance, workforce development and assessment-based practices.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Grazing Management Plan, Soil Health Testing, Forest Management Plan, and Pollinator Habitat Design.
Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District (WCNRCD) – \$25,000*	WCNRCD seeks to increase the number of forest management plans in the county so that threats to forest health such as pests, changing weather patterns, and increased fire risk can be reduced.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Forest Management Plan, Forest Management Practice Design, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Design, and Pollinator Habitat Design.
Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District (WCNRCD) – \$350,000*	WCNRCD seeks to improve forest health by combating invasive species, improving wildlife habitat and building climate resilience in the county.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Brush Management, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, Riparian Forest Buffer, and Aquatic Organism Passage.
Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District (WCNRCD) – \$200,000*	WCNRCD seeks to address the growing challenges small farmers in the county encounter such as poor soil quality, plant degradation, erosion, and pest pressure.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: High Tunnel System, Low Tunnel System, Raised Beds, Cover Crop, and Prescribed Grazing.
Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (Winooski NRCD) – \$200,000*	Winooski NRCD seeks to establish riparian buffer zones to naturally filter runoff, reduce erosion and create wildlife habitat.	Conservation practices offered in the proposal include: Riparian Forest Buffer, Riparian Herbaceous Cover, and Tree/Shrub Establishment, and Brush Management.

NRCS Mission: We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

NRCS Vision: A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.



Upcoming State Tech Committee Meetings

- October 22, 2025
- January 22, 2026
- May 20, 2026
- July 15, 2026
- October 21, 2026*

* Tentative Date – Calendar invites will be sent when determined.

