

# HELPING FARMERS PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN THE ROCK RIVER WATERSHED

*NRCS technical and financial assistance can assist you in meeting state regulations to protect water quality in the **Rock River Watershed** and help you be a good steward of the land.*

2016

## Which watersheds will receive priority assistance?

Pike River, Rock River, St. Albans Bay in Franklin County and McKenzie Brook in Addison County.

- These watersheds will receive **technical and financial assistance from NRCS over the next 5 years**. NRCS' approach to watershed management aligns with the State of Vermont's tactical basin plans which focus on projects or actions needed to protect or restore specific waters.

## Why is my watershed an area of focus?

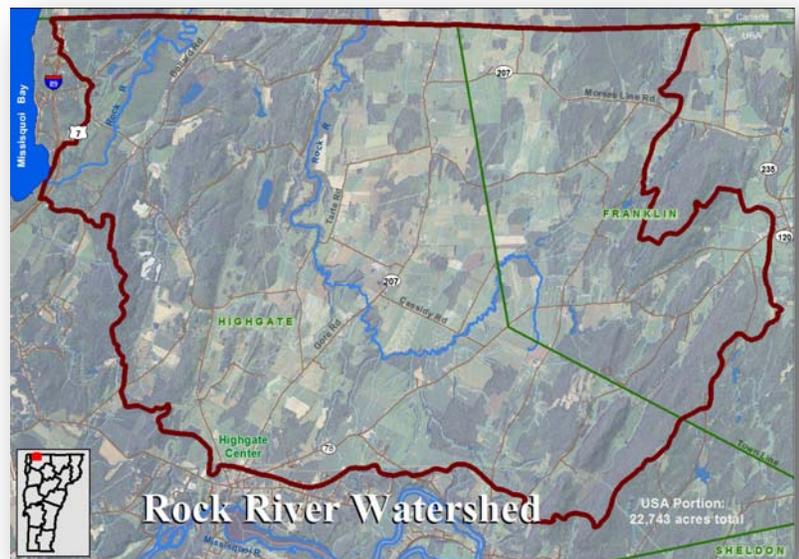
- In an effort to assist the state in meeting the phosphorus TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) for Lake Champlain, NRCS initiated a **strategic planning approach** to water quality improvement for those watersheds in the Lake Champlain Basin that were **most impaired and contribute heavy concentrations of agricultural phosphorus runoff to the lake**.
- The objective is to work with farmers to provide **one-on-one assistance** to identify areas in need of conservation practices.
- The goal is to identify, target, and treat areas on farms with the **most critical resource needs**.

## What type of assistance is available?

- The NRCS **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to address natural resources concerns including water quality and soil health.
- Financial assistance is provided to help farmers install conservation practices including crop rotation, cover crops, grassed waterways, heavy use areas, riparian buffers, waste storage facilities, nutrient management plans, and more.
- EQIP may provide financial assistance of up to 75 percent of the costs of certain practices. However, limited resource producers, and new and beginning farmers may be eligible for up to 90 percent.
- The Vermont Agency of Ag, Food and Markets is contributing assistance for specific structural practices which would mean that EQIP applicants could receive up to 85% financial assistance to install eligible practices.

*Farmers in the Rock River Watershed can apply for conservation assistance to protect soil and water quality through **NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**.*

*Contact the St. Albans NRCS office today to get started.*



## HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND IN THE ROCK RIVER WATERSHED

### How and why is NRCS providing assistance to the Rock River Watershed over the next five years?

- ◆ The new TMDL for phosphorus reduction will require an **83 percent reduction in phosphorus loading from agriculture in this watershed**. NRCS' strategic plan is designed to help farmers install conservation practices that will aid in this goal.
- ◆ NRCS has allocated **\$4-6 million** over 5 years to help improve water quality and **accelerate conservation implementation** in the priority watersheds, including Rock River.
- ◆ Approximately **\$1.64 million is available to eligible farmers to implement conservation in both 2016 and 2017**, and then funding will begin to **decrease over the five year period**.
- ◆ Although NRCS is focusing on the Rock River Watershed for five years, farmers are encouraged to **come in early** to apply for assistance to ensure access to the funding.
- ◆ Funding will become more limited over the five year period as it is allocated.

Rock River Watershed Area	Total Estimated Ag Phosphorus Loading	TMDL Reduction Goal	TMDL AG Phosphorus Reduction Goal (over 20 years)	NRCS Ag Phosphorus Reduction Goal (over 5 years)
22,743 acres	19,248 lbs/year	83%	15,976 lbs/yr	7,000 lbs/year or 40% of TMDL goal

### Achieving the Required TMDL Phosphorus Reduction Load from Agriculture in the Rock River Watershed Will Require:

- ◆ 90% of crop fields planted to cover crops
- ◆ 50% of crop fields in reduced tillage
- ◆ 64 acres of buffers installed on crop fields
- ◆ 100% of all ditches with 10 ft. buffers
- ◆ 24 waste management system upgrades

*Total cost of all conservation practices required to meet the TMDL goal is estimated to be \$12,000,000 of which 90% could be cost-shared by NRCS and the State of Vermont.*

#### Rock River Watershed Facts (for U.S.)

- ◆ Total Acres=22,700
- ◆ Area in Annual Cropland= 4,900 acres
- ◆ Percent of Watershed in Ag = 48%
- ◆ Active farmsteads (2014)=10,000 acres or 48 %

#### For assistance with conservation planning in the Rock River Watershed:

**NRCS Soil Conservationists Carissa Stein or Tricia LaValley at 802-524-6505**

**OR**

**Denise Smith, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain at 802-355-0694 or denisefnlc@gmail.com**

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