

New Jersey: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

New Jersey Priority Watersheds

Through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies, NRCS in New Jersey selected three watersheds located in Salem and Cumberland Counties for this initiative. The Upper Cohansey, Upper Salem, and Upper Alloway Creek watersheds have documented phosphorus, bacteria, and sediment impairments, which may be caused by soil erosion, exposed soil, and lack of riparian buffers and filter strips. While the land use in these areas is varied, the majority of land is in agricultural production, with the Upper Cohansey watershed at 68% of its land area in agriculture, the Upper Salem at 65% and the Upper Alloway Creek at 41%. Agricultural runoff contributing to these impairments can be mitigated by conservation practices on agricultural lands that may help to reduce the phosphorus, bacteria, and sediment impairments within the watersheds. The New Jersey Department of



A filter strip is a strip of grass, trees, or shrubs that filters or cleans runoff and remove contaminants before they reach water bodies or water sources, such as wells.

Photo Credit: Steven Hancock

Environmental Protection developed plans to address the bacteria (fecal coliform) and nutrients issues within the Cohansey River to achieve water quality standards. The plan developed for nutrient management calls for a high reduction in total phosphorus loading for freshwater rivers. Conservation practices that can reduce phosphorus loading

The National Water Quality Initiative in New Jersey will work in the Upper Cohansey, Upper Alloway Creek, and Upper Salem watersheds to help farmers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.

within these watersheds include no-till farming, cover cropping, conservation crop rotation, nutrient management, filter strips, and irrigation water management.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and

others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

Numerous conservation partners have been focusing efforts in these watersheds in recent years with a goal of improving water quality. Groups such as New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Cumberland-Salem Soil Conservation District and the Cohansey Area Watershed Association have all been working to improve water quality in this region.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

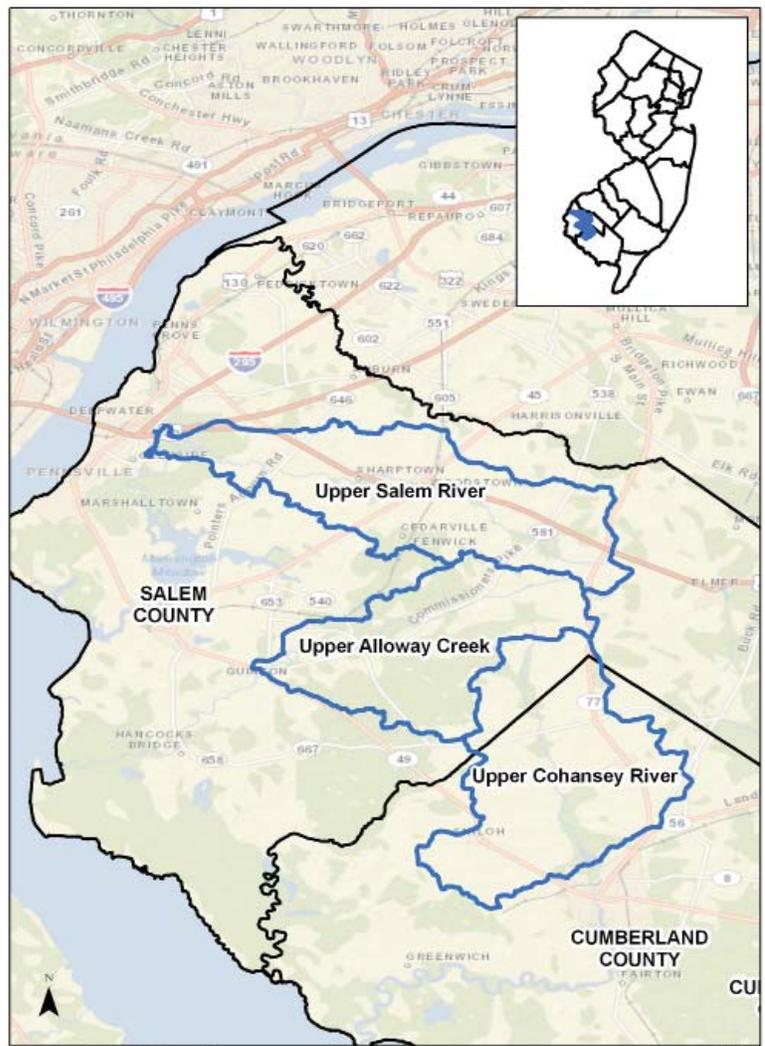
Almost every county in the Nation has a [USDA Service Center](#). To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2012, must be received by June 15, 2012.

For more Information

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Basemap: World_Street_Map

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Map of New Jersey Priority Watersheds

Map Credit: Trish Long,
GIS Specialist



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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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