

NRCS Vermont Offices

NRCS State Office
356 Mountain View Dr., Suite 105
Colchester, VT 05446
802-951-6795
Vicky M. Drew, State Conservationist

USDA Service Centers

Berlin Service Center
617 Comstock Rd., Suite 1
Berlin, VT 05602
802-828-4493

Brattleboro Service Center

28 Vernon St., Suite 332
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-254-9766

Middlebury Service Center

68 Catamount Park, Suite B
Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-6748

Morrisville Service Center

109 Professional Dr., Suite 2
Morrisville, VT 05661
802-888-4935

Newport Service Center

59 Waterfront Plaza
Newport, VT 05860
802-334-6090

Rutland Service Center

170 S. Main St., Suite 4
Rutland, VT 05701
802-775-8034

St. Albans Service Center

27 Fisher Pond Rd., Suite 1
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-6505

St. Johnsbury Service Center

481 Summer St., Suite 202
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802-748-2641

White River Jct. Service Center

28 Farmvu Drive
White River Junction, VT 05001
802-295-7942

Williston Service Center

1193 South Brownell Rd., Suite 35
Williston, VT 05495
802-865-7895

<http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov>

Help for New, Limited-Resource and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

The 2008 Farm Bill continues to address the unique circumstances and concerns of farmers who are beginning, have limited resources, or who are socially disadvantaged because they belong to racial or ethnic groups that have historically been subjected to prejudice. It provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and focuses on equity in accessing USDA programs and services. http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/SLB_Farmer/



NRCS and Conservation Districts: Partners in Conservation

The USDA NRCS is a federal agency that helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led voluntary conservation efforts.

NRCS works in partnership with Vermont's 14 conservation districts, which help identify and address natural resource concerns in local communities, and coordinate public and private resources to meet local needs on a grassroots level.

A conservation district is a division of state government established under state law to conserve and wisely manage resources and partner with state and federal agencies to deliver program, education and technical assistance to their communities.

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider

Vermont Conservation Districts

Bennington County NRCD
PO Box 505, 310 Main St., Bennington, VT 05201
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Caledonia County NRCD
481 Summer St., Suite 202, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802-748-3885 x 110, Kerry.obrien@vt.nacdnet.net

Essex County NRCD
481 Summer St., Suite 202, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802-748-3885 x 114, Tamara.Colten@vt.nacdnet.net

Franklin County NRCD
27 Fisher Pond Rd., Suite 1, St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-6505, Renaee.masse@vt.nacdnet.net

Grand Isle NRCD
317 Old W. Shore Rd., North Hero, VT 05474
802-864-0223, giconrncd@aol.com

Lamoille County NRCD
109 Professional Dr., Suite 2, Morrisville, VT 05661
802-888-9218, Kim.komer@vt.nacdnet.net

Orleans County NRCD
59 Waterfront Plaza, Newport, VT 05860
802-334-8325, Dayna.cole@vt.nacdnet.net

Ottawaquechee NRCD
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Otter Creek NRCD
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Poultney-Mettowee NRCD
Box 209, Poultney, VT 05764
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Rutland NRCD
170 S. Main St., Suite 4, Rutland, VT 05701
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White River NRCD
617 Comstock Rd., Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05602
802-828-4493 x 110, Abbey.willard@vt.nacdnet.net

Windham County NRCD
28 Vernon St., Suite 332, Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-254-5323 x104 Jolene.hamilton@vtnacdnet.net

Winooski NRCD
617 Comstock Rd., Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05602
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<http://www.vacd.org>



A Guide to the USDA NRCS Conservation Programs in Vermont

If you own or manage farm or forest land, run a greenhouse, or grow specialty crops in Vermont, the conservation programs managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help you improve your operation while protecting soil and water quality and natural habitats. NRCS programs include technical assistance to identify appropriate best management practices for your land, and financial assistance to implement those practices. Sign-up for conservation programs is offered on a continuous basis.

A conservation plan or forest management plan needs to be written to identify the resource concerns on your land and the conservation practices needed to meet your objectives. Contact your local NRCS field office for help in developing a plan and to apply for financial assistance to implement your conservation practices (*see back page for USDA Service Center locations*).

What is a conservation plan?

Developing a conservation plan is the first step in working with NRCS and applying for most USDA conservation programs.

A conservation plan provides a road-map to sustaining or improving production while managing the natural resource base that supports your operation.

Conservation planning identifies objectives, resource limitations and opportunities and evaluates alternatives to help you make decisions in managing your operation.

What is a Farm Bill?

A Farm Bill provides for the continuation of funding for agricultural and other programs through the Department of Agriculture. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, known as the 2008 Farm Bill, contains new conservation provisions that simplify existing federal programs while maintaining the conservation-based emphasis developed during the preceding two farm bills.

Farm Bill priorities include reducing non-point source pollution, soil erosion and emissions; conservation of ground and surface water; and protection of at-risk species. Vermont continues to offer innovative practices for organic producers and forest land operators.

Additional assistance is available for new, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers (*see back page for more information*).

Program Priorities in Vermont

- Water quality
- Soil Conservation and Quality
- Forest Stewardship
- Energy Conservation
- Grass-based Agriculture
- Wetland Restoration
- Early Successional Habitat Management
- Water Conservation

2008 Farm Bill Conservation Programs

CTA: Conservation Technical Assistance
AMA: Agricultural Management Assistance
CSP: Conservation Stewardship Program
EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FRPP: Farm and Ranchland Protection Program
GRP: Grassland Reserve Program
WRP: Wetlands Reserve Program
WHIP: Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program



For more information visit: www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov

Helping People Help the Land

Version 1.2- July 2011

USDA NRCS 2008 Farm Bill Programs in Vermont

The chart below describes the conservation programs authorized in the most recent Farm Bill and available through NRCS in Vermont. These programs help reduce erosion, protect water quality in streams and rivers, and restore and establish wildlife habitat on our nation's lands. For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center (listed on the back page of this pamphlet) or visit us online at www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov.

Program	Description	Who is eligible? What land is eligible?	Length and type of agreement	Financial incentives by USDA	Participant obligations	What's new?
Conservation Technical Assistance: CTA	CTA provides conservation planning services to private and public individuals, groups and entities.	Individuals, groups, entities, Indian tribes and units of government who own and/or manage land.	Cooperative agreement	No payments are provided. Technical assistance is provided free of charge.	Directly participate in the planning process by providing information about your land and developing goals for your farm or forest lands.	N/A
Agricultural Management Assistance: AMA	AMA helps develop local food systems by funding high tunnels and mitigate the risk of drought through irrigation systems.	Individual, groups, entities, Indian tribes or joint operation with signature authority who own or manage land.	2-10 year contract	Compensation for implementing new irrigation systems and/or high tunnels.	Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.	50,000 per fiscal year limitation on payments.
Conservation Stewardship Program: CSP	CSP rewards farmers who are good conservation stewards of their land and offers compensation for enhancements.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who own or manage farmland with existing conservation and are not already enrolled in WRP, GRP, CRP or CSP.	5 year contract with possible renewal	Annual payments for maintaining, and compensation for enhancing, existing conservation practices or activities	Maintain or increase level of land stewardship.	Enrollment opened to all U.S. areas. Organic producers encouraged to apply. Formerly the Conservation Security Program.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program: EQIP	EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who own or manage farmland, pastureland or non-industrial forest land.	2-15 year contract	Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payments.	Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.	Contracts are limited to \$300,000. Emphasis on water quality, erosion control, forest management, organic farming, pollinator habitat, and energy conservation. Producers applying for organic initiative are limited to \$20,000 per year/ \$80,000 over six year period.
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program: WHIP	WHIP helps improve fish and wildlife habitat and restore natural ecosystems.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who own or manage farmland or non-industrial forest land.	2-10 year contract	Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payments for the cost of improving wildlife habitat. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.	Improve or restore wildlife habitat as agreed. Install and maintain wildlife practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 per fiscal year limitation on payments. Increased cap on long-term agreements.
Farm & Ranch-land Protection Program: FRPP	FRPP works in partnership with eligible entities to protect agricultural lands through the purchase of development rights.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who privately own farmland that contains productive soil resources and has a pending offer from an eligible entity.	Permanent easement	NRCS contributes a percent of the easement purchase based on appraised fair market value.	Maintain or increase level of agricultural land use.	The program's purpose changed from protecting topsoil to protecting agricultural use.
Grassland Reserve Program: GRP	GRP offers compensation for land-owners to protect, restore and enhance grasslands.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who own or control land that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs or shrubland.	Permanent easement or 10, 15, or 20 year rental contract	Payment for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Rental contract: annual payments for the length of the contract. Permanent easement: property's fair market value or GARC.	Maintain grasslands as agreed. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards	\$50,000 per fiscal year limitation on payments for restoration agreements. Grazing management plan is required.
Wetlands Reserve Program: WRP	WRP promotes the protection and restoration of wetlands through the purchase of easements and enhancement activities.	Individuals, groups, entities and Indian tribes who privately own farmed wetlands, land that has become wetland or that contributes to adjacent wetlands. Land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits.	30 year easement, permanent easement or 10 year restoration agreement	One time easement payment based on fair market value or a Geographic Area Rate Cap. Compensation for the cost of wetland restoration.	Maintain or restore wetlands as agreed. If restoration is needed, assist with the cost. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 per fiscal year limitation on payments for restoration agreements.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

How do I begin working with NRCS?

Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak with one of our conservation professionals. Contact information is on the back page, or visit www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov

Who is eligible to apply for NRCS programs?

Eligibility requirements vary slightly depending on the program. Our programs are generally directed towards producers on agricultural and forest lands. There are some exceptions, so please contact your local NRCS office to discuss your situation.

For most NRCS programs, you will need to complete several forms and meet additional eligibility criteria.

Are NRCS programs voluntary?

Participation in all NRCS programs is completely voluntary; however, NRCS program providing financial assistance require compliance with the terms of a contract.

If I enroll my land in an easement program, do I retain ownership?

If you enroll your land under an easement or rental contract, you retain full ownership of the land. Your participation in the program will restrict some uses of the land during the terms of the agreement, but you maintain control of public access.

Glossary: Common NRCS Phrases

Agricultural land: Cropland, grassland, pasture and other agricultural land on which agricultural and forest products or livestock are produced and where resource concerns can be addressed.

Beginning farmer: A farmer or forest land owner who has been farming or owned land fewer than 10 years.

Conservation practice: A structural, vegetative or management measure taken to maintain or improve the condition, productivity, sustainability or usability of targeted resources. Examples of conservation practices include cover crops, nutrient management, manure storage facilities, wildlife habitat improvement and hoop houses.

Contract: A legal binding agreement for the transfer of financial and technical assistance from NRCS to the participant for the installation and maintenance of specific conservation practices as scheduled and agreed to by NRCS and the participant.

Easement: An interest in the land defined and delineated in a deed whereby the landowner conveys all rights, title and interest, but the landowner retains rights specifically reserved in the easement deed contract.

Limited-resource farmer: A farmer or forest landowner who's total household income falls below the county average. Determine your eligibility at: www.lrfstool.sc.egov.usda.gov/tool.asp

Non-industrial forest land: Rural land that has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees and is owned by any non-industrial private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe or other private legal entity that has definitive decision making authority over the land.

Rental Contract: A legal document that specifies the obligations and rights of the participant, including annual rental payments to be provided to the participant.

Socially disadvantaged: People who belong to racial or ethnic groups that have historically been subjected to prejudice.

VT NRCS & Vermont Agency of Agriculture

NRCS staff coordinates efforts with the VT Agency of Agriculture to support agricultural production and conservation. In several key programs, NRCS and the Agency of Agriculture combine funding in order to maximize financial support to the landowner.