

WHAT IS A CLEAN WATER PROJECT?

Clean water projects protect, enhance, and restore water resources to meet Vermont's water quality standards.

Sediment and nutrients, like phosphorus and nitrogen, enter our waters from the land. Too much of these nutrients can have a negative impact on water quality. Clean water projects that reduce these forms of water pollution are one way the state supports water quality restoration. The state supports these projects through funding and regulation.

Clean water projects that reduce water pollution are a priority for the state. This is because they help the state meet its Total Maximum Daily Loads, also known as TMDLs. TMDLs are specific to each waterbody that has one. They define how much of a pollutant can enter a waterbody while still meeting Vermont's water quality standards. Each waterbody with a TMDL has an action plan to reduce the pollutants entering it.

We use five categories to describe where water pollution caused by excess sediment and nutrients comes from. They are known as land use sectors. These five sectors are agriculture, stormwater, natural resources, transportation related stormwater, and wastewater. The clean water project pollution reduction goals in each sector are:

	Agriculture: Slow and control runoff and soil erosion from farm production areas and fields
	Transportation Related Stormwater: Slow and control runoff and erosion from roads
	Natural Resources Restore the natural functions of river channels, floodplains, wetlands, lakeshores, and forests
	Stormwater Slow and control runoff from parking lots, sidewalks, roofs, and other developed lands
	Wastewater: Improve wastewater treatment infrastructure

Clean water projects can be regulatory or non-regulatory. Regulatory clean water projects are projects required to meet state regulations. Non-regulatory clean water projects are voluntary. Partners lead the development and implementation of clean water projects across the state.

Partners include:

- Farmers
- Regional Planning Commissions
- State & Federal Agencies
- Municipalities
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts
- Watershed & Conservation Organizations

WHAT ARE CLEAN WATER PROJECT CO-BENEFITS?

Clean water projects within each sector have co-benefits. Co-benefits are extra benefits that the projects provide. Co-benefits support the environment and local communities to:

- ☾ Increase flood resilience
- ☾ Improve soil health
- ☾ Improve habitat function & biodiversity
- ☾ Support workforce development
- ☾ Support carbon sequestration
- ☾ Provide local economic stimulus



Agriculture Clean Water Project Example



Before



After

One example of an agriculture clean water project is buffer plantings between agricultural land and waterways. The above photos depict one section of a 32-acre buffer project where trees and shrubs were planted. The planted trees and shrubs will grow to become a riparian forest buffer. They will filter pollutants from runoff and hold soil in place to prevent erosion. Pollution reduction by slowing and controlling runoff is the primary benefit of the project. Co-benefits of the project include:

- ☾ The planted trees and shrubs:
 - Increase flood resilience
 - Provide wildlife habitat for terrestrial organisms
 - Provide shade, shelter, and food for fish and other aquatic organisms
- ☾ The project as a whole strengthened partnerships and brought together funding sources. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) funded this project through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency Cost Share Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The landowner planted the buffer.

Check out the [Clean Water Project Explorer](#) to learn about specific clean water projects across Vermont.