



The State of Vermont's Lake Champlain RCPP Program

The Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program is a \$16 million grant that will help landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin of Vermont and New York invest in the best conservation practices to help improve water quality.

The Lake Champlain RCPP will provide financial and technical assistance to agricultural and forest landowners over the next five years, to help with the development and implementation of site-specific farm and forest projects that will directly improve water quality in streams and rivers that flow towards Lake Champlain.

Financial Assistance

RCPP funds are available through USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. There is the opportunity to receive up to 90% cost-share for water quality improvement projects with a combination of funding from NRCS and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

Opportunities for Conserved Lands

Funding is available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for agricultural and forestry water quality improvements. All agricultural funding is for the development and implementation of conservation plans and improvements on *conserved* lands. Only a portion of the farm has to be conserved for the *entire farm* to be eligible to participate. As specified above, up to 90% cost-share is available for agricultural practices.

Opportunities for Those Interested in Conserving Agricultural Lands

Vermont's farmland conservation program partners with Vermont Land Trust to offer conservation easements through the NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Farms that participate agree to permanently conserve agricultural land, and as of 2014,

are required to have and implement a conservation plan that addresses natural resource concerns on the farm.

Vermont's wetland restoration and conservation program offers Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) through NRCS' ACEP which compensates landowners for retiring land from agriculture in perpetuity, and restoring wetland functions and values. As match to this grant, the State of Vermont has developed a *Wetlands Incentive Payment Calculator* that will determine an incentive payment to accelerate landowner participation in high priority wetland, riparian and floodplain restoration projects. The State is also providing *cash payments* to pilot test this innovative approach.

Technical Assistance

In addition to direct payments to farmers for the programs listed above, RCPP also provides technical assistance to help landowners develop and implement these valuable conservation practices.

Participant Eligibility

- Agricultural EQIP funding is available for conserved farms in the Lake Champlain Basin or farms that are in the process of selling development rights.
- Forestry EQIP funding is available to all landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin.
- Agricultural & wetlands easement funding is available to all landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin.
- Small farms are a high priority.

Ranking

- Higher ranking points are given to producers or landowners that fall within the St. Albans Bay, Missisquoi Bay & South Lake watersheds.
- Higher ranking is given to applications based on the inclusion and number of agronomic practices, those that improve water quality, air quality, water conservation, soil health, wildlife habitat, plant and animal communities and energy conservation.

More Information

Landowners who are interested in the Lake Champlain RCPP program are encouraged to apply at their local USDA service center. Vermont NRCS County office locations can be found online at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/vt/contact/>

For additional information, please contact:

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NRCS website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/vt/home/>

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