Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2024 Performance Report Executive Summary

Vermont's waterways are important environmental and economic resources for residents and visitors. The State of Vermont funds clean water projects to protect, enhance, and restore water quality across the state. Clean water projects are regulatory or non-regulatory practices or protections that address water pollution, focusing largely on sediment and excess nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. The Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2024 Performance Report, referred to hereafter as Report, summarizes efforts of state government, along with federal and local partners, to improve water quality across Vermont from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016 to 2024 (July 1, 2015–June 30, 2024).

Clean Water Investments

Vermont's clean water funding helps municipalities, farmers, landowners, and nonprofit organizations implement clean water projects statewide. State and federal funding programs, as well as regulatory requirements, drive clean water implementation efforts in Vermont.

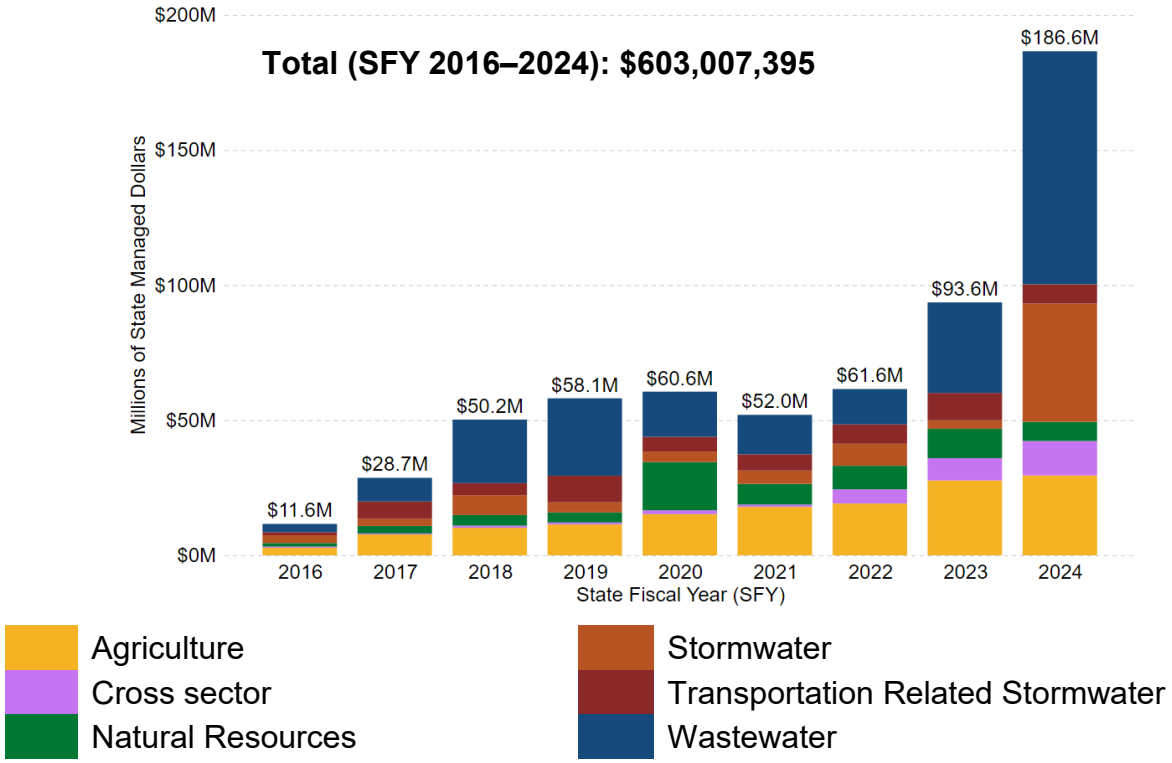
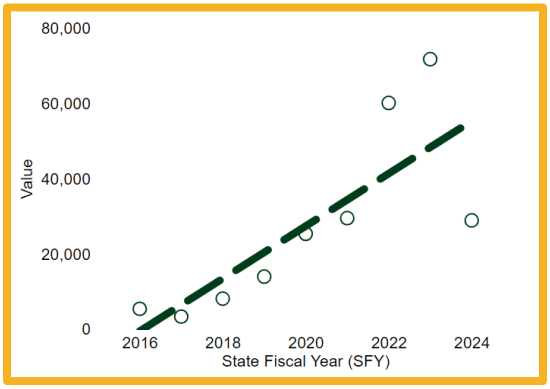


Figure ES-1: Total dollars awarded by State of Vermont agencies to clean water projects statewide by land use sector, SFY 2016–2024.

The State of Vermont invested over $600 million in clean water projects through grants, contracts, loans, and assistance programs from SFY 2016 to SFY 2024. The amount of funding awarded to clean water projects rose significantly between SFY 2016–2024. Project funding varies annually based on project readiness, award timing, and economic factors. Increased funding levels in SFY 2023 and 2024 are a result of the short-term influx in federal funding made

available to Vermont by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The short-term availability of ARPA funding is expected to continue through SFY 2025, but ARPA funding will not be available to support new awards after December 31, 2024. *See Report Chapter 2 to learn more about clean water funding and investments.*

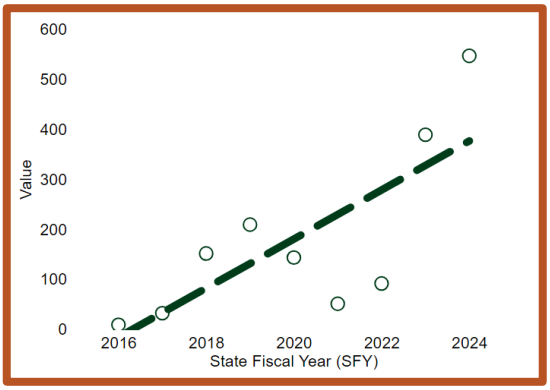
Results of State Funded Investments — Highlights



246,915 acres of agricultural conservation practices implemented

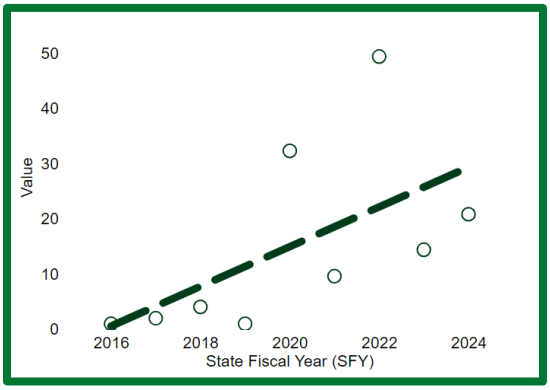
Recent increase is in part a result of the launch of the new innovative Vermont Pay for Performance Program.

Recent year's data may be incomplete and will be updated in future reports.



1,627 acres of existing impervious surface treated by stormwater treatment practices under stormwater permits

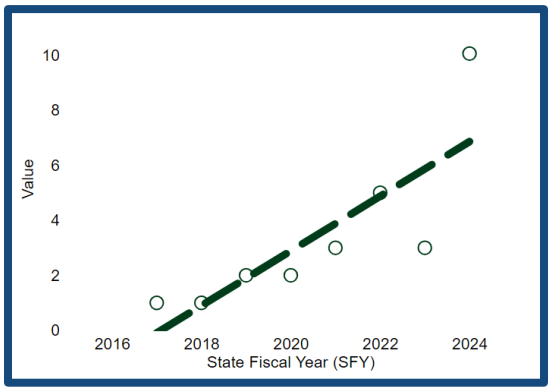
Results of stormwater permits are reported at the time of permit issuance, and permittees have five years to implement the required stormwater control measures. Recent increase is driven by the issuance of permits for Vermont's Three-Acre Sites.



135 acres of floodplain restored

Year-to-year variation is a result of the timing of project completion. Many acres may be restored by a single project.

Recent year's data may be incomplete and will be updated in future reports.



27 wastewater collection systems refurbished

Recent increase is a result of flood damage assessments, prompted by 2023 and 2024 flooding events, focused on identifying affected collection infrastructure.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Progress

The 2024 Performance Report summarizes the state's progress in implementing the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). TMDLs identify water pollution reductions required to restore water quality. The figures below show the estimated total phosphorus load reduction, in metric tons per year, achieved by clean water project implementation thus far in the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog basins. Estimates include the results of projects implemented through state and federal funding programs and in response to regulatory requirements. *See Report Chapters 3 and 4 for more information.*

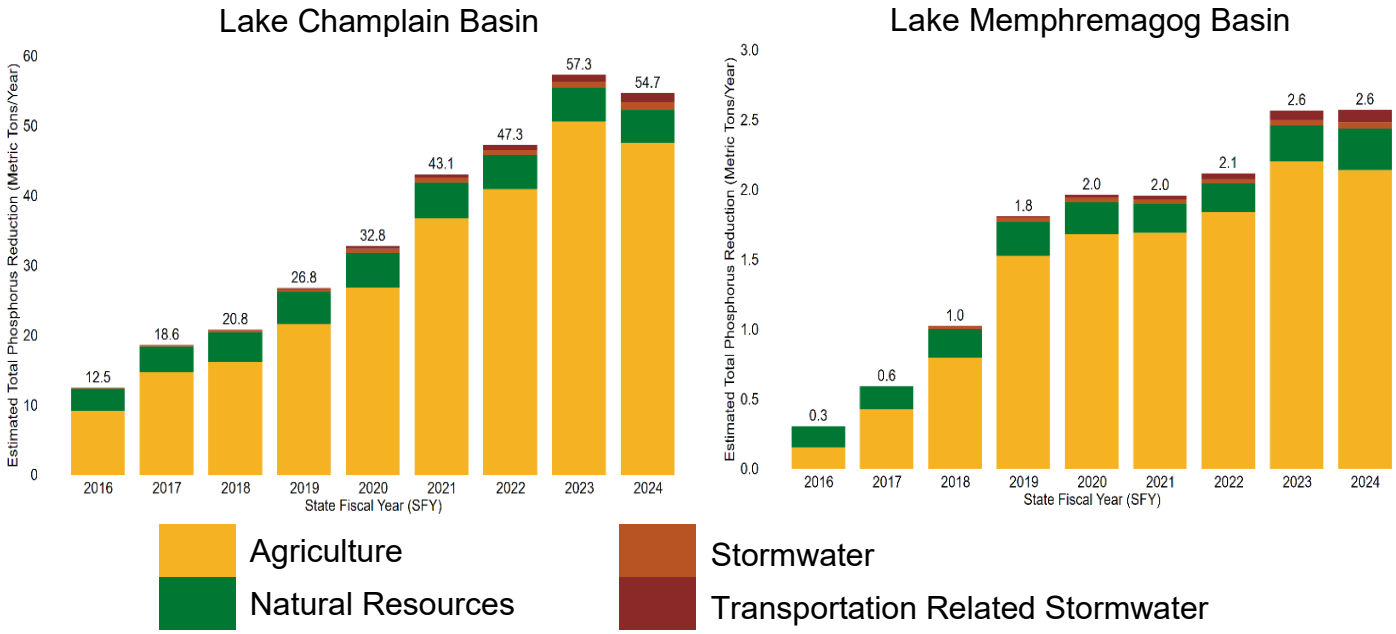


Figure ES-2: Annual estimated total phosphorus load reductions (metric tons per year) associated with reported clean water projects in the Lake Champlain (left) and Lake Memphremagog (right) basins during SFY 2016–2024 by land use sector.

Over the past nine state fiscal years, the state has made substantial progress towards reaching the water quality targets outlined in the state's large-scale phosphorus TMDLs, with 26% of the required reduction achieved to date in the Lake Champlain basin and 17% of the required reduction achieved to date in the Lake Memphremagog basin. Achieving the water quality goals outlined in the state's large-scale TMDLs is not a linear path — variance in the rate of progress is to be expected over the 20-year implementation period.

The magnitude and schedule of data collection for this Report necessarily introduces a lag in quantifying output and outcome metrics, resulting in annual estimated phosphorus reductions in the most recent state fiscal year being at or slightly below the penultimate year. This is akin to the true-ups seen in Federal economic indicator reporting, and is not indicative of a shifting trend in progress. As additional data becomes available, it is reflected in future years of reporting, with additional gains in progress reflecting expanded data availability. The figures below illustrate the difference in estimated phosphorus reductions across all reporting years as reported in SFY 2023, compared to SFY 2024, to demonstrate how data lags may contribute to incomplete results in the most recent few years of estimated phosphorus reduction data.

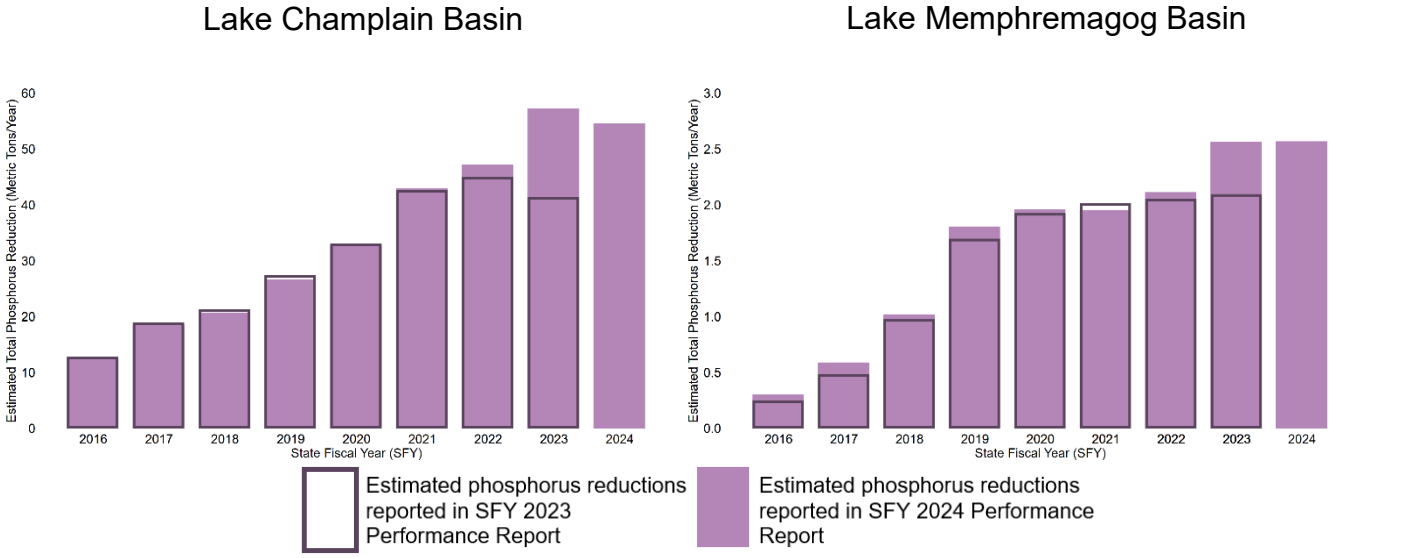


Figure ES-3: Estimated annual phosphorus reduction data in the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog basins as reported in SFY 2023 compared to SFY 2024.

Continued effort, investment, and coordination are critical in the state's ability to reach its water quality goals. The Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2024 Performance Report serves as a useful tool to provide accountability on the state's clean water progress and to inform adaptive management. By taking an adaptive management approach, the state will continue to identify and prioritize its resources to break down barriers to project implementation and clean water progress. Clean water project implementation is an important piece of climate resilience work and clean water projects have co-benefits like increased flood resilience, improved carbon sequestration, better soil health, and improved habitat function and biodiversity. In addition to achieving water quality goals, Vermont's work to improve water quality directly supports climate adaptation and flood mitigation, which will increase the state's resilience to future climate related stressors.

Learn More and Explore the Data

Explore the data behind the Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2024 Performance Report, including investments, outputs, estimated phosphorus reductions, and much more in the online Clean Water Interactive Dashboard via the Clean Water Portal.

https://anrweb.vt.gov/DEC/cleanWaterDashboard/