

Non-Reporting General Permit (NRGP): Your Top 5 Questions, Answered

As a farmer, you're a leader in the fight against water pollution. Many farmers like you are helping clean up Vermont's lakes, rivers, and streams by taking on water quality improvement projects.

But navigating the permits required to complete these projects can be confusing, especially when there's a wetland involved. It can be hard to determine what's required when constructing a water quality improvement project in or near a wetland. However, it is important to consider wetlands when carrying out these projects because wetlands perform valuable services. They provide clean water by filtering out pollution and help control flooding by catching storm runoff and flood waters and storing it.



The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) wants to make it as easy as possible for you to continue to complete important water quality practices. Here are a few answers to some of your questions. Don't see the answer you're looking for? We're always available to answer more questions you have. You'll find our contact information at the end of this document.

#1 - What is an NRG?

The non-reporting general permit is a process designed to help farmers and others follow environmental regulations without the financial and administrative burden of an individual permit or a general permit authorization when installing water quality improvement projects. For farmers, these projects include stream crossings, trails and walkways, access roads, heavy use areas and constructed wetlands. **There is no fee for this permit, there are no reporting requirements, and there is no application process.** Please note this does not preclude the potential need for other permits such as a Stream Alteration Permit.

#2 - Is the NRG a new regulation?

No. DEC has had the responsibility of protecting wetlands throughout the landscape since the beginning of the Wetland Rules in 1990. **The Wetland Rules require that you obtain a permit if you're doing anything other than growing food or crops in a wetland and buffer.** The NRG is a streamlined permit process to support water quality improvement projects.

#3 - How do I know if I need an NRG?

If your water quality improvement practice will **impact 5,000 square feet or less of a managed wetland or wetland buffer** that is currently used to grow food or crops and the practice will end growing in that area, **you'll likely need the NRG.** You don't need to apply for coverage under the NRG. You simply need to do the project according to NRCS standards and impact less than 5,000 square feet of managed wetland or buffer. While the overall size of your project may be larger than 5,000 square feet, the NRG

addresses the wetland or buffer impact of the project, not the overall footprint. See the permit for specific thresholds.

#4 - How do I know if my project is in a wetland?

If you answer 'yes' to any of the three questions listed below, your project may be in a wetland:

1. Is the area often **too wet to hay or plow**?
2. Would your tractor make **muddy ruts** or do your cows sink in the area?
3. Are **crops stunted** or is hay made of different plants in a low spot?

Before you start construction, determine if there are mapped wetlands or unusually wet soils on your property. The wetlands inventory map will help you figure this out:



<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/WetlandProjects/default.html> Not every wetland is mapped so your knowledge of the wet areas on your land is invaluable to determine if the area is a wetland. You can also call the Vermont Wetlands Program at (802) 490-6100 to request a printed map, assistance over the phone, or at your request, a visit to your farm to see the land in person.

#5 - Why is an NRGF necessary?

Think of this permit as your insurance policy. As the public's awareness of water quality continues to grow, DEC is receiving more calls from concerned citizens about whether specific projects are consistent with state regulations. In following the permit's requirements, meaning constructing your water quality improvement project in a manner consistent with NRCS standards, you're doing everything you need to do to follow state regulations and your project is authorized. If a neighbor or outside organization tries to say you're not following regulations, you can simply reference the NRGF and that, indeed, **you are covered**. Further questions or concerns can always be directed to DEC.

Still have questions? We're here to help!

Contact the Department of Environmental Conservation's Wetlands Program:

- On the Web: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands/contact>
- Phone: (802) 490-6195
- Email: ANRWetlands@vermont.gov