

# HELPING FARMERS PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN THE PIKE RIVER WATERSHED

NRCS technical and financial assistance can assist you in meeting state regulations to protect water quality in the Pike River Watershed. The Pike River Watershed includes Lake Carmi and most of the agricultural land in the towns of Franklin and Berkshire.

2016

## Which watersheds are targeted?

Pike River, Rock River, St. Albans Bay in Franklin County and McKenzie Brook in Addison County.

- These watersheds will receive **prioritized technical and financial assistance from NRCS over the next 5 years**. NRCS' approach to watershed management aligns with the State of Vermont's tactical basin plans which focus on projects or actions needed to protect or restore specific waters.

## Why is the Pike River Watershed an area of focus?

- In an effort to assist the state in meeting the phosphorus TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) for Lake Champlain, NRCS initiated a **strategic planning approach** to water quality improvement for those watersheds in the Lake Champlain Basin that were **most impaired and contribute heavy concentrations of agricultural phosphorus runoff to the lake**.
- The objective is to work with farmers to provide **one-on-one assistance** to identify areas of nutrient loading and apply conservation practices.
- The goal is to identify, target, and treat areas on farms with the **most critical resource needs**.
- Accelerated and targeted implementation of conservation in this watershed aims to result in **measurable improvements to water quality**.

## What type of assistance is available?

- The NRCS **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to address natural resources concerns including water quality and soil health.
- Financial assistance is provided to help farmers install conservation practices including crop rotation, cover crops, grassed waterways, heavy use areas, riparian buffers, waste storage facilities, nutrient management plans, and more.
- EQIP may provide financial assistance of up to 75 percent of the costs of certain practices. However, limited resource producers, new and beginning farmers, and veteran farmers may be eligible for up to 90 percent.
- The Vermont Agency of Ag, Food and Markets is contributing assistance for specific structural practices (see attachment) which would mean that EQIP applicants could receive up to 85% financial assistance to install eligible practices.

*Farmers in the Pike River Watershed can apply for conservation assistance to protect soil and water quality through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).*

*Contact your local NRCS office today.*



## HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND IN THE PIKE RIVER WATERSHED

### How and why is NRCS targeting assistance to the Pike River Watershed over the next five years?

- ◆ The new TMDL for phosphorus reduction will require an **83 percent reduction in phosphorus loading from agriculture in this watershed**. NRCS' strategic plan is designed to help farmers install conservation practices that will aid in this goal.
- ◆ NRCS has allocated **\$4 to 6 million** over 5 years to help improve water quality and **accelerate conservation implementation** in the priority watersheds, including Pike River.
- ◆ Approximately **\$1 million is available to eligible farmers to implement conservation in both 2016 and 2017**, and then funding will begin to **decrease over the five year period**.
- ◆ Although NRCS is focusing on the Pike Watershed for five years, farmers are encouraged to **come in early** to apply for assistance to ensure access to the funding.
- ◆ Funding will become more limited over the five year period as it is allocated.

Pike River Watershed Area	Total Estimated Ag Phosphorus Loading	TMDL Reduction Goal	TMDL AG Phosphorus Reduction Goal (over 20 years)	NRCS Ag Phosphorus Reduction Goal (over 5 years)
25,088 acres	9,599 lb/year	83%	7,967 lbs/yr	5,200 lbs/year or 65% of TMDL goal

### Achieving the Required TMDL Phosphorus Reduction Load from Agriculture in the Pike River Watershed Will Require:

- ◆ 90% of crop-fields planted to cover crops
- ◆ 35% of crop fields in reduced tillage
- ◆ 50 acres of buffers installed on crop fields
- ◆ 100% of all ditches with 10 ft. buffers

### Ready to get started?

#### Pike River Watershed Facts

- ◆ Area in Annual Crops and Hay = 6,075 acres
- ◆ Percent of Watershed in Ag = 36%
- ◆ Active Farmsteads (2014)=70
- ◆ Medium Farming Operations=4
- ◆ Small Farmsteads=66

For assistance with conservation planning in the Pike River Watershed, contact:

**Nancy Allen, NRCS at 802-888-4935, or [nancy.allen@vt.usda.gov](mailto:nancy.allen@vt.usda.gov).**

**OR**

**Denise Smith, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain at 802-355-0694 or [denisefnlc@gmail.com](mailto:denisefnlc@gmail.com)**

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