

Watershed Agricultural Program

The Watershed Agricultural Program is a comprehensive effort to develop and implement pollution prevention plans on farms in NYC's water supply watersheds. The program is a voluntary partnership between the City and farmers in the watershed to manage nonpoint sources of agricultural pollution, with particular emphasis on waterborne pathogens, nutrients, and sediment. In addition, the program incorporates the economic and business concerns of each farm into the development of its Whole Farm Plan in order to fully establish the principles and goals of pollution prevention into the farm operation.

The Watershed Agricultural Program strives to maintain and protect the existing high quality of the NYC water supply system from agricultural nonpoint source pollution through the planning and implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on farms. When possible, the Program uses traditional BMPs that are proven to protect and enhance source water quality, and, if necessary, to employ and evaluate innovative BMPs to increase the number of alternatives available to farmers to address "non-traditional" agricultural water pollution concerns, especially waterborne pathogens.

Largely funded by the City, the Program is administered by the not-for-profit Watershed Agricultural Council, whose board consists of farmers, agri-business representatives and the DEP Commissioner. Over time, the City and WAC have been able to leverage generous financial support from other sources to enhance the Program, particularly the US Department of Agriculture, EPA, and Army Corps of Engineers. Local, State, and Federal agricultural assistance agencies provide planning, technical, educational, engineering, scientific and administrative support for the program under sub-contractual agreements with the Council.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

On August 26, 1998, New York City entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and New York State to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in the Catskill and Delaware Watersheds. This MOA allows watershed landowners to enter into 10 to 15 year contracts with the USDA to retire environmentally sensitive agricultural lands from production. CREP helps establish forested riparian buffers and vegetated filter areas on cropland. The USDA pays the farmer on average an enhanced rental rate of \$115.00 per acre per year as well as 50 percent of the cost of all BMPs associated with establishing riparian buffers and/or permanent vegetative cover. In addition, in FY 00, USDA added two significant financial incentives, the Signup Incentive Payment (SIP) and the Practice Incentive Payment (PIP). New York City, through its agreement with the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), pays the remaining 50 percent of BMP costs for participating farms, as well as technical and administrative assistance costs.

In the fall of 2002, New York City requested and was granted a continuation to December 31, 2007, of the New York City Watershed CREP Agreement.

