



COMMUNITY



4-H & YOUTH



ENVIRONMENT



AGRICULTURE



FOOD

WORKING WITH FARMERS TO PROTECT LAKE CHAMPLAIN

The Agronomy and Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) is making a positive impact on Lake Champlain. With agricultural lands accounting for 38 percent of phosphorus pollution in our lake and tributaries, farmers are taking action. Thanks to a partnership among the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), UVM Extension and the Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District, Extension Agronomists Jeff Carter and Heather Darby, and the ACAP team provide outreach and technical assistance to farmers within the Lake Champlain Watershed.

ACAP has been in operation since 2011, but between July 2014 and September 2015 alone, the program helped a total of 140 farms to implement 239 conservation practices.

An increasing number of Vermont farmers have adopted practices that reduce the amount of soil and nutrients sent into nearby waters from their land.

Farmers are installing fencing to keep livestock away from water, producing cover crops that reduce soil erosion, and developing nutrient management plans (to name a few) - all with a goal of minimizing their impact on Lake Champlain. These changes have resulted in the reduction of soil and nutrient runoff from more than 27,763 acres of cropland and livestock production facilities. When including practices implemented since 2011, that number grows to an impressive 86,382 acres.

The ultimate impact of this work will take some time to measure; however, it's clear these new practices will play a significant role in the improvement and sustainability of the water in Lake Champlain.



**140 FARMS
REDUCED THEIR
NUTRIENT RUNOFF**
(JUST IN THE PAST YEAR!)

HOW DID THEY DO IT?

Nutrient Management Plans:
12,311 acres

Manure Management:
2,255 acres

Conservation Mulch Tillage:
1,547 Acres

Cover Crops:
8,590 Acres

No-Till Planting:
3,060 Acres





Photo: Lauren Traister

YOUTH “TRY” NEW WAYS TO INCREASE RECYCLING

More than 50 percent of what we currently throw away could and should be recycled or composted, but isn't. Vermont is poised to lower that number thanks to the Universal Recycling and Composting Law (Act 148) - and our youth are ready to help. The Teens Reaching Youth (TRY) for the Environment Waste Solutions Program was created thanks to a grant from the State Farm Youth Advisory Board, and a strong partnership between Extension's 4-H Teen and Leadership Program and the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District.

With leadership from Extension's Lauren Traister, 11 TRY teams conducted waste audits in their schools and then developed new and creative ways to increase recycling/composting and decrease waste through action plans. One school installed a milk dispenser to eliminate cartons, another added magnetic lids to cafeteria trash cans to catch silverware, and many focused on removing food scraps from trash. TRY teams reached 2,932 students and 496 staff with their action plans, increasing both awareness and the number of waste solution champions in local schools.

In recognition of its significant contributions to the protection of our environment, TRY's Waste Solutions Program was recently selected as a 2016 recipient of the Vermont Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. Congratulations to all the TRY teams!

IN JUST SIX WEEKS:

- TRASH DECREASED BY 20%
- COMPOSTABLES IN TRASH DECREASED BY 43%

FARMERS CULTIVATE PRODUCE SAFETY

The Community Accreditation for Produce Safety (CAPS) program was developed by the Vermont food system community to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to food safety. With the leadership of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association and coordination by UVM Extension's Hans Estrin, CAPS provides smaller produce growers with a tool to document and demonstrate their food safety practices.

Beginning in October 2014, Estrin and an advisory board of growers, buyers and

regulators developed an online platform and identified the critical produce safety components needed for accreditation.

In addition to a farm produce safety plan, the board settled on 18 items required for a passing grade including employee trainings and providing photo documentation of rinse and sanitizer stations.

An impressive 68 farmers have registered, paid the \$100 fee, and submitted their produce safety plans since the online system launched in March. When including

additional farmers who have conducted food safety self-assessments and written plans, CAPS has engaged growers with approximately 1,500 acres of vegetable production and an estimated value of \$9 million in annual sales to date.

Produce buyers have already contributed nearly \$29,000 toward the development of CAPS. It's clear this program - and food safety - are essential to the growth of Vermont's local food system. More at: practicalproducesafetyvt.wordpress.com.

“FOOD SAFETY WAS DAUNTING. YOU TALK TO A MICROBIOLOGIST AND THERE ARE SO MANY POSSIBLE ROUTES OF CONTAMINATION. ‘CAPS’ HAS MADE THE JOB OF KEEPING AHEAD OF IT ALL SIMPLE, VERIFIABLE AND TOTALLY TRANSPARENT. IT'S GREAT.”

-HANK BISSELL, LEWIS CREEK FARM