



## Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMPs)

### What are Ag BMPs?

With more than 36,000 farms in New York State it is important to ensure the environmental protection of neighboring water bodies and land. Ag BMPs are a set of guidelines to enable individual farm operators to implement the best available knowledge regarding farm maintenance. In an effort to reduce run-off, erosion, pollution, and waste, Ag BMPs both inform and empower farm operators with the latest techniques for maintaining crop and environmental health. BMPs are methods used by farmers to control the generation and delivery of pollutants from agricultural activities to Vermont's rivers, streams and lakes. The goal of BMPs is to reduce the amount of agricultural pollutants entering surface and ground waters. In an effort to preserve New York's water systems, we outline the EPA's Core 4 system, a framework of farming techniques designed to make the most of our land while protecting our water resources.

#### Conservation Tillage

Conservation tillage practices are used in crop production to reduce negative effects on soil, water, and air quality. The four primary conservation tillage practices are designed to limit tilling requirements while maintaining crop residue on the soil surface. Decomposing crop residues act as a fertilizer, reducing the need for artificial nutrient additives. Examples include: No-till, Strip-till, Mulch-till, Ridge-till

#### Crop Nutrient Management

The practice of crop nutrient management serves four major functions:

- It supplies essential nutrients to soils and plants so that adequate food, forage and fiber can be produced.
- It provides for efficient and effective use of scarce nutrient resources so that these resources are not wasted.
- It minimizes environmental degradation caused by excessive nutrients in the environment, especially in waterbodies that receive runoff from fertilized fields and other agricultural lands.
- It helps maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological conditions of the soil.

#### Pest Management

The objective of IPM is to maintain pest levels below economically damaging levels while minimizing harmful effects of pest control on human health and environmental resources. Pests in the agricultural sense are any organism (plant or animal) judged to be undesirable to the production of crops or animals.

#### Conservation Buffers

Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land maintained in permanent vegetation to help control pollutants and manage other environmental problems. Buffers are strategically located on the landscape to accomplish many objectives. Examples include: Alley cropping, contour buffer strips, cross wind trap strips, field border, filter strips, grassed waterways with filters, herbaceous wind barriers, riparian forest buffers, vegetative barriers, and windbreaks/shelterbelts.

## Definitions:

**IPM (Integrated Pest Management):** Approach to pest control that combines biological, cultural and other alternatives to chemical control with the judicious use of pesticides.

**Contour Buffer Strips:** Plantings resistant to wind erosion and grown perpendicular to the prevailing wind erosion direction to prevent soil loss.

**Riparian Forest Buffers:** A riparian forest buffer is an area of trees and shrubs located adjacent to streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. Riparian forest buffers of sufficient width intercept sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and other materials in surface runoff and reduce nutrients and other pollutants in shallow subsurface water flow.

## Resources:

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/agmodule/agbmp1.htm>

**The Watershed Agricultural Council:**  
<http://www.nycwatershed.org/>

**National Resource Conservation Service:**  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

**New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets**  
<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/soilwater/AEM/>

## Recent EFC events:

### **Smart Water Management: From Watershed to You Technical Assistance Partnership Forum Syracuse NY November 19, 2009**

The event included a panel on Sustainable Approaches for Managing Water, facilitated networking session, and funding updates from the USDA RD, NYS EFC, and NYS DOS. Please visit our website to view and download TAPF presentations and the NYS DOS Guidebook.

### **Hudson Valley Greening Historic Preservation & Rehabilitation Event New Paltz, NY November 19, 2009**

This event focused on the benefits of retrofitting and rehabilitating historic buildings with energy-saving and environmentally-conscious techniques as ways to preserve history in a sustainable way, as well as to boost economic development, often catalyzed by attractive communities.

### **Overview of Green Design and Energy Issues for Planning and Zoning Officials Suffern, NY November 30, 2009**

This program provided information and ideas about incorporating green design principles and technologies in new commercial and residential development. It offered continuing education credits for planning and zoning board members to help them meet state requirements for 4 hours/year.

### **Green 2010: Education & Workforce Development for the 21st Century Economy Millbrook, NY December 4, 2009**

A regional conference on emerging businesses and jobs in the green sector, and on education and training programs to support these industries. For decision-makers in business, local government, building and real estate, education, planning and community development.

## Upcoming EFC Events:

### **Technical Assistance Partnership Forum Syracuse, NY February 25, 2010**

Details on date and place will be provided shortly in our monthly newsletter and on our website. Check back for details.

### **Convening Stakeholders on Agriculture and Water Quality Syracuse, NY February 18, 2010**

This event will bring together farmers, technical service providers, agency and funding representatives to discuss agricultural best management practices, supporting the agricultural sector and building sustainable partnerships.

### **Smart Management for Small Communities Practical Resources for Governance Blue Mountain Lake April 20-22, 2010**

Continuing in the EFC tradition, our annual conference at Minnowbrook Conference Center in Blue Mountain Lake in the Adirondacks will be focused on the needs of municipal leaders and will provide technical assistance, funding updates and practical skill-building sessions. Register soon on our website.

*The Environmental Finance Center at Syracuse University provides educational, financial, and technical services to elected officials and citizens seeking to implement or support environmental activities in their districts and communities. Our environmentally-conscious staff is constantly working to provide the most innovative, up-to-date, and cost-effective 'greening' tools to make spaces more livable and eco-friendly for all New Yorkers.*

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