



Source Water Protection Program

OVERVIEW

The Source Water Protection Program, a joint project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the nonprofit National Rural Water Association (NRWA), helps to prevent source water pollution in all 50 states through voluntary practices implemented locally by agricultural producers.

The program is authorized by Sec. 12400 of the 1985 Farm Bill, as amended. Source water is surface and ground water that is consumed by rural residents. According to the NRWA, ground water is the primary source of drinking water for some 44,000 communities in the United States.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

NRWA operates the Source Water Protection Program with oversight and assistance provided by FSA. For each state, NRWA hires full-time water technicians with knowledge and experience in rural issues. The technicians help to create local teams comprised of citizens and federal, state, local and private entities who together work with FSA state executive directors, FSA county executive directors and state conservation specialists with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to create plans that identify where pollution prevention is needed most.

The technicians assist these teams in gathering local data and facilitate a planning workshop. The workshop allows participants to create a plan, known as the Rural Source Water Protection plan that includes the following:

- A map of the affected areas;
- An inventory of potential contaminant sources;
- A definition of areas that match up with entities and organizations;
- A definition of voluntary measures that may be initiated;
- Identification of public education initiatives; and

- Identification of entities and resources that will facilitate implementation of the plan and its sustainability.

The plans outline voluntary measures that agricultural producers can install on their lands to prevent water pollution, such as storing herbicides or pesticides in more secure containers, or relocating waste lagoons. The plans also establish committees to evaluate the voluntary practices implemented by producers. The teams educate producers about source water protection measures that can benefit their neighbors and communities. FSA monitors the overall performance of the program.

PARTICIPATING STATES

The program has been implemented in all 50 states. More information is available from each state Rural Water Association (Connecticut and Rhode Island are combined as the Atlantic States Rural Water Association) at <http://nrwa.org/initiatives/sourcewater-protection/>.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

Producers can participate by administering voluntary practices on their land and/or by becoming team members that develop the Rural Source Water Protection plans. Citizens from federal, state, local and private entities also can serve on local teams. Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Gender is not included.

INFORMATION ABOUT NRWA

NRWA was established in 1976 as a nonprofit, utility membership, trade association to represent rural and small community water and wastewater

systems. Today, NRWA is the largest utility member-based organization in the country serving all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico with more than 31,000 members.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about FSA and its programs, visit your local FSA county office or USDA service center, or on the web at www.fsa.usda.gov.

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