



# Agricultural Best Management Practices in the French Creek Watershed



## Did You Know?

Funding is available for conservation planning and implementation and can cover up to 100% of the cost of some projects.

## The Foundation of All Core Conservation Practices is a Current Plan for Your Farm

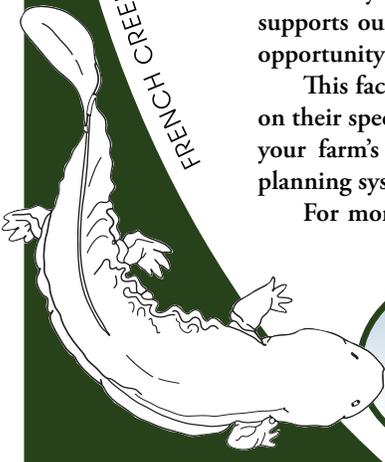
Pennsylvania farmers have long done their part to protect the environment while growing the food and fiber that supports our state, nation, and world. With the recent passage of the 2008 Farm Bill, Pennsylvania has a unique opportunity to build upon existing efforts to protect the legacy of our farms for future generations.

This fact sheet provides information on a suite of core conservation practices that farmers can implement based on their specific needs. Used individually, these core practices can increase production, decrease fuel use, and protect your farm's resources-but when used together they function as key components of a whole-farm conservation planning system.

For more information on these core conservation practices, contact our partners at your county conservation district. As with many aspects of managing your farm, sound technical assistance and advice will prove to be invaluable.

## Did You Know?

Agricultural land in the French Creek basin comprises 40% of the total land area. Two counties in the region rank high within the state for the number of farms, Crawford County at 10th and Erie County at 8th.



FRENCH CREEK VALLEY CONSERVANCY [www.frenchcreekconservancy.org](http://www.frenchcreekconservancy.org)



# Create a Nutrient Management Plan - And follow It

Nutrient management is precisely that-balancing the nutrient resources on your farm so they are not wasted and introduced into waterways. Developing and implementing a nutrient management plan for your farm provides a key tool to efficiently and effectively manage nutrients to enhance growing conditions and improve on-farm profitability. Managing nutrients in animal agriculture can include precision feeding, manure and fertilizer application on fields, barnyard management and manure storage. Correct implementation can save money and improve productivity while reducing the nutrient load that leaves the farm, improving the local and regional environment.

## Plant Cover Crops

Cover crops protect and even improve the soil in a cost effective and sustainable way. Keeping soil continuously covered reduces erosion from wind and rain. Growing and rotating a diversity of crops and leaving crop residues on the land improves soil qualities such as structure, moisture retention, and provides additional organic matter while reducing weeds. Cover crops can also be grown to retain or replenish nitrogen in the soil or to help reduce nitrate leaching into groundwater supplies.



## Establish Streamside Buffers

Keeping stream banks surrounded by permanent vegetation reduces non-point source pollution entering Pennsylvania's waterways from agricultural production. Grassed and forested stream buffers trap sediment, mitigate pesticides, filter out nutrients, and provide habitat corridors for fish and wildlife. Fencing livestock out of waterways may also be a necessary part of establishing and maintaining stream buffers and protecting animal health. Streamside buffers also play an important role in reducing damage to property during flood events by absorbing the energy of floodwaters.

## Plant with No-Till or Low-Till

Healthy productive soil is essential to a farmer's success. There are several crop residue management systems that can be used to keep your soils healthy and even improve them. No-till planting is the most effective conservation tillage practice, but some farms have additional options available to address tillage needs, including mulch till and strip tillage systems.



**For more  
information  
contact:**



**Chautauqua County Conservation District**  
3542 Turner Rd. Jamestown NY 14701-9607  
(716) 664-2351 Ext 3

**Crawford County Conservation District**  
21742 German Rd. Meadville, PA 16335  
(814) 763-5269

**Erie County Conservation District**  
1927 Wager Rd. Erie, PA 16509  
(814) 825-6403

**Mercer County Conservation District**  
24 Avalon Ct # 300 Mercer, PA 16137  
(724) 662-2242

**Venango County Conservation District**  
1793 Cherrytree Rd. Franklin, PA 16323  
(814) 676-2832

### Did You Know?

The Crawford County Conservation District leads groups of local high school students and conservation partners (including French Creek Valley Conservancy) in planting riparian buffer zones on local farms throughout Crawford County. In 2013, around 8,000 trees and shrubs were planted involving students and staff from 7 different local schools.