

## Measuring Success from Planting Cover Crops and Other Conservation Practices on Your Farm



*Diverse cover crops planted on a corn field will provide a continuous living root system in the soil and contribute to the long term health of the soil on your farm. This, in turn, will reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that are lost and carried away by stormwater runoff from the field. Photo taken on a farm in Woodstock, CT.*

Thank you for signing up for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

A lot of information has been published on the benefits of planting diverse cover crops and developing other healthy soil conservation practices such as no-till planting.

Is there a way to know directly how much of a difference this will make on your farm? YES!

- Would you like an estimate of how much topsoil is leaving your farm annually and whether planting diverse cover crops or employing other healthy soil practices is reducing that loss?
- The cost of commercial fertilizer is constantly changing. Would you like to know whether you may not need to apply as much?
- Are you willing to allow volunteers from The Last Green Valley to measure the concentration of soil and nutrients in the runoff from your fields? The results will be shared with you to inform you whether less soil and nutrients are being lost over time as you build soil health. The data will also be shared anonymously with project partners; your farm will not be specifically identified without your consent.
- This service will be provided at no cost to you.

The Last Green Valley in partnership with the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, the CT RC&D's AGvocate Program, and the Thames River Basin Partnership, received special funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help farmers improve soil health. Through this project, EQIP funding is reserved for farmers interested in using diverse cover crops, no-till methods, and other conservation practices to improve soil health and reduce soil erosion. By measuring runoff, we can quantify the success of these practices.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How will we know if this program is making a difference?

Special stormwater collecting boxes measuring 10" x 18" will be set in the ground at the field margins. The boxes fill up when it rains. Trained volunteers will visit your field to collect and test the water quality in edge-of-field runoff. The information will be used to estimate soil and nutrient loss per acre, which we expect to decrease over time as the health of the soil improves.

### Who will have access to the information after it is collected?

The information will be provided to you so that you can see how effective the conservation practices are at reducing soil and nutrient loss from your fields. Although general information and results about the project will be shared with project partners and other farmers to encourage participation in the program, no specific details or personal information will be provided to anyone else.

### How long will the boxes be in place?

The program will continue through 2020. Sign up now, because only a limited number of farms will be able to benefit from this research. It is important to install the boxes and begin measuring before conservation practices are implemented so we can observe the changes.

### Is there any cost to me?

No, there is no cost to you. We will install and monitor the boxes with your consent.

**For more information, contact Jean Pillo at 860-928-4948 x 605 or [Jean.Pillo@Comcast.net](mailto:Jean.Pillo@Comcast.net)**

**Thank you in advance for participating in this project!**



*A special box designed to collect stormwater runoff will be installed at the edge of the field. This box was installed in Woodstock, CT. Volunteers will measure nutrients and turbidity after each significant rain storm.*



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