

Program Goals

- **TMDL reductions and stewardship**
 - This program will serve Vermont's need to reduce phosphorus loading under various Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Reductions compensated for through this program will be calculated directly from the Lake Champlain Basin TMDL
- **Farmer buy-in**
 - Farmers need autonomy over their land management decision-making and degrees of participation. This program will not be prescriptive but rather support farmers to take an active role in conservation planning on their farm and give them the ability to implement the practices that they know will work for their own operations.
 - Farmers desire fairness: farmers' stewardship efforts will be appropriately valued, and a variety of farm sizes and land use types will be eligible for payment.
- **Verifiable, measurable, location-specific outcomes**
 - The system will be designed with accurate, quantifiable, location-specific outcomes and payments that are directly tied to a positive value for the state.
- **Equity and Efficiency of program funding**
 - The system will be maximally equitable across geographic location, farm size, and length of time as land stewards while efficiently directing funding in a way that provides the most value to the public and to the farmer.
 - There are inherent trade-offs, but with flat baselines and equal payment rates across the state, yet ranking priority within funding pools, a compromise will be reached between these goals.
- **Additionality of stewardship**
 - Farmers will be paid for voluntary stewardship that goes above and beyond their regulatorily-required levels of stewardship (i.e. threshold for payment is tied to average TMDL P-reductions expected of farms).
- **Sufficiency of payment**
 - Payment level will be sufficient to compensate farmers both for their stewardship and for their efforts to gather data and input it into the system.
 - Payment schedule will be fair, reduce risk to both the funder and the farmer, and acknowledge the upfront effort/costs of participation and the length of outcome benefits.