

## **Winooski Conservation District Seeking to Talk with Small Farmers in the Lake Champlain Basin**

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### **Winooski Conservation District Receives Funding from the Lake Champlain Basin Program to Conduct 'Kitchen Table Talks' with Small Farms**

WILLISTON, VT – The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) awarded funding to the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) to reach out to small scale farmers in the Lake Champlain Basin and offer information about Best Management Practices (BMP) and the impacted of the proposed Required Agricultural Practices (RAP).

With the assistance of the grant, Winooski NRCD staff are reaching out to small farmers within Chittenden, Washington and Orange counties, meeting for 'Kitchen Table Talks' - one-on-one, on-the-farm discussions between farmers and District staff about BMPs and available resources. New resources available for farmers include the WNRCD educational series factsheets.

All large Vermont farms have historically followed Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAP), but the proposed RAPs expected to go into effect in summer 2016 will include small and medium size farms under consistent guidelines. Some anticipated changes include creating larger buffers between fields and streams to slow and absorb field runoff, new conditions for protecting flood plains with cover crops between growing seasons, and the requirement that all farms write Nutrient Management Plans (NMP). An NMP is a comprehensive planning document based on a farm's soil and manure sampling, land use mapping and documentation of grazing practices. It prescribes the best approach for farmers to apply manure or other inputs onto the land to maximize nutrient uptake and crop production. WNRCD Agricultural Water Quality Specialist Sarah Janson notes that "applying the right amount of nutrients in the right places is beneficial for health of crops, soil and water and hopefully the bottom line for the farmer." Farmers who have developed NMPs gain insight into which fields require more nutrients and which fields are already at the right level.

WNRCD is pleased to have the funding available to undertake outreach within the District to small farms and be able to help them navigate the often confusing options available to address runoff issues on their farms. "The funding provided by the Lake Champlain Basin Program not only allows for District staff to reach out and help individual farmers understand the current BMP's and the proposed RAP's but allows for us to target specific practices to a farmer's needs. Through this grant the WNRCD has been able to create educational factsheets on individual BMP's, these can be found on our website at: [www.winooskinrcd.org](http://www.winooskinrcd.org)." said District Manager Corrina Parnapy.

For more information about addressing runoff and how best management practices (BMPs) can improve the water quality of a waterbody near you, contact the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District at: [info@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:info@winooskinrcd.org)