

2018 AGCWIP Grantee Spotlight: UVM Extension Northwest Crops and Soils Program (NWCS)



During an outreach event, Catherine Davidson (L) and Heather Darby (R) use a rainfall simulator to demonstrate infiltration and runoff reductions from cover crops.

By the Numbers

\$233,307 awarded over
2 years.

13+ workshops with
550+ attendees to date.

3,800 stakeholders reached
via educational materials

50+ farmers provided direct
technical assistance to date

1 improved software

Recipient

University of Vermont (UVM) Extension is a major player in agricultural water quality education, outreach and technical assistance in Vermont. UVM Extension was the recipient of a \$1.3 million Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (AGCWIP) grant over two years, which was split up internally between four specialized programs.

The Northwest Crops and Soils Program (NWCS) is one of the UVM programs funded through their grant. NWCS aims to provide the best and most relevant cropping information, both research-based and experiential, and to deliver it in the most practical and understandable ways to Vermont farmers.

Grant Award

Total award of \$233,307 over two-year period.

Funding Source

Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (AGCWIP)

Intent

The UVM Extension NWCS develops high-quality educational events and materials to assist farmers with implementing practices and techniques to reduce nonpoint source pollution. Outreach was intended to include Nutrient Management Plan development and implementation classes and workshops for farmers, as well as trainings for manure applicators. In addition, NWCS intended to provide farmers and agricultural providers with technical assistance and education on innovative cropping and conservation systems such as cover cropping and no-till crop production.

Impact

Under this ongoing agreement, UVM NWCS has held over 13 workshops or other educational events, provided 63 hours of educational instruction to 238 farmer participants and 357 additional attendees, including agribusiness operators and partners. At one workshop, 68% of attendees who evaluated the event intended on making a change on their farm or how they advise farmers. For a separate event focused on reduced tillage, 93% said the knowledge they gained would assist them with their transition to no-till production.

In addition, NWCS has provided technical assistance (TA) to 51 farmers, assisting them with planning and decisions on field crop production, nutrient management, and implementation of new conservation practice management on over 18,000 acres. Conservation equipment was deployed to 41 farms covering approximately 2100 acres.

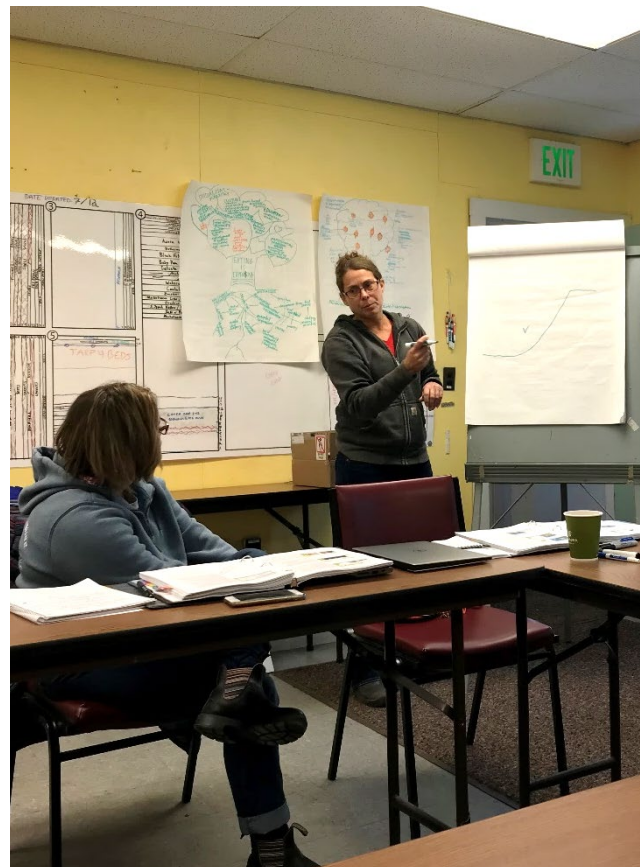
According to Heather Darby, an Agronomy and Soils Specialist on the UVM NWCS, AGCWIP has been extremely valuable in ensuring the success of UVM Extension programs. In an area of work where change happens over long periods of time, the structure of the AGCWIP program is essential, Darby declared. "The longer-term funding allows us to bring farmers along for the whole journey, from learning about the practice to implementing it," she explained.

In addition, Heather Darby finds that the strategy for accountability in the AGCWIP granting process plays off the strengths of the grantees. AGCWIP requires grantees to meet performance goals and to monitor their impact, but how they achieve goals can be flexible. "... (The program) allows UVM to do what we do best... to be adaptive to farmers' needs and to respond to outreach needs in real time," Darby declared.

In the coming months, NWCS anticipates keeping up the good work with a variety of outreach events including on-farm workshops conferences, webinars, manure custom applicator trainings, and nutrient management planning classes.

"That's been the nice thing about our Ag-CWIP grant: it allows UVM to do what we do best... to be **adaptive** to farmers' needs and to **respond** to outreach needs in real time"

– Heather Darby, NWCS



Heather Darby, an Agronomy and Soils Specialist at UVM Extension on the NWCS, explains the mechanisms behind soil conductivity and why that measurement is an important factor in managing nutrient runoff. Although their primary audience is farmers, UVM extensions specialists such as Heather reach a variety of audiences with their messages each year, from ag business owners to schoolteachers.