

2020 Best Management Program Grantee Spotlight: Dry Brook Farm



The Best Management Practices (BMP) program funds agricultural projects which reduce surface runoff and erosion and improve water quality. Up to 90% cost share is available for projects and engineers from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets are available help farms at every stage of the process, from planning to post-construction closeout.

By the Numbers

\$55,593 awarded
(90% cost share)

1440 square feet of heavy
use area protection

~250,000 gallons of
clean water diverted from
heavy use area

“I think it’s a
good program –
I wouldn’t have done it
without it.”

– George Hollister, owner and
operator of Dry Brook Farm

Recipient

George Hollister raises 35-40 beef animals each year on Dry Brook Farm in West Pawlet. He has spent the last two decades fixing up that property, which in his words was “pretty run-down” when he purchased it.

Grant Award

\$55,593 for heavy use area protection and surface water diversion away from the heavy use area.

Funding Source

Best Management Practices (BMP) program

Grant details

BMP grant funding provided 90% cost-share on the total construction cost, which included labor contributed by the farm. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) also provided supplemental funds on the project. On this particular project, George’s contribution did not include any cash outlay by the farm – only expenses from labor.

Impact

Prior to applying to the Best Management Practices (BMP) program, an earthen heavy use area for the farm's beef herd was located near a water source at the bottom of a hill. The site was consistently wet, and George had trouble managing his manure, especially in the winter and shoulder seasons when the cattle spend a significant amount of time concentrated in the area.

George was able to remedy this issue with financial and technical assistance from the Agency of Agriculture's (Agency of Ag) BMP program. Over several years, Agency of Ag engineers worked with Dry Brook Farm to install surface water diversion above the site to keep runoff from the adjacent hill from running through the heavy use area, put a roof over the area to keep it drier, and installed concrete so that George can better manage the manure that collects in this area and remove it to an appropriate stacking site.

In addition to the scope of the project that was funded by the BMP program, George elected to fund some additional construction and improvements, such as electrical connectivity and water out to the barn, that were not part of his grant funding because they did not specifically have a water quality benefit. However, George decided those improvements were worth it to make the barn more useful for his farm and was glad to be able to get them done at the same time as the BMP-funded project.

"I think [BMP] is a good program" George shared, noting that he is happy with the new winter housing facility and how it is holding up, especially in the shoulder season. However, George shared, he probably wouldn't have done this building project without the financial and technical support he received through the BMP program.

"I put in a lot of sweat equity, which you wouldn't necessarily be able to see just from looking at it"

– George Hollister, owner and operator of Dry Brook Farm



Barnyard area before (top) and after (bottom) implementation of the heavy use area protection Best Management Practices project on Dry Brook Farm. This project reduced erosion and surface runoff of agricultural waste from the heavily used animal containment area near the barn pictured. Jason Bradley, an engineer from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, worked with George to help design the heavy use area in a way that met water quality and farm ease-of-use goals.