

Seeding and Filter Strip (SFS) Program



The Seeding and Filter Strip (SFS) program provides technical and financial assistance to support the long-term installation of perennial vegetation to help reduce soil erosion & agricultural runoff and prevent it from reaching waterbodies. Eligible practices include harvestable filter strips, pasture/hay plantings, and grassed waterways. The program prioritizes seeding down areas which present a significant water quality concern. The program offers 5-year and 10-year maintenance agreements.

Eligibility:

- Applicant must be a farm as defined in Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs)
- Applicant must control the enrolled land either through ownership or a lease that covers the maintenance agreement period outlined in their grant agreement – five or ten years.
- Land must be in active use and within 300 ft of surface water or a ditch.
- Land must be currently maintained as 1) annual cropland, 2) pasture or hayland with a history in annual crops within the past five years, or 3) a buffer area as required in the RAPs.
- Project must meaningfully address on-site natural resource concerns.

Other Program Information:

- Applications are accepted on a rolling basis but are due at least 60 days prior to the planting date. Optimal planting windows for perennial seedings in Vermont vary across the state but are typically early spring (e.g. April 15- May 30 for plant hardiness zone 4b) and late summer (e.g. August 7- September 15 for plant hardiness zone 4b).
- A project plan, including a map of the project and the proposed seeding species and rates, is required and must be approved by VAAFMM prior to grant award and project installation.
- Total grant award/payment will not exceed \$50,000 per project.
- Practice payment will occur after the successful installation and certification of the practice. Payment will be based on the final mapped acreage of the project.
- All enrolled land must be maintained as harvestable perennial vegetation and managed to promote practice function for the length of the maintenance agreement. Projects will be reviewed for ongoing adherence to the grant maintenance requirements and the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) throughout the length of the agreement.

Practice Descriptions:

- **Filter Strip:** A strip or area of herbaceous, perennial vegetation located primarily between a cropland field and an adjacent surface water or ditch. Filter strips must be adequately planned, seeded and maintained to remove sediments and/or nutrients from overland flow. Filter strips must be at least 25 feet wide. Regular harvesting of vegetation from filter strips is strongly encouraged.
- **Pasture/Hayland Planting:** An area of herbaceous, perennial vegetation that will be regularly harvested for hay or grazed by ruminant livestock according to a VAAFMM-approved grazing plan. To be eligible, land, at the time of application, must be in annual cropland OR be hayland and/or pasture which has prior history in corn or another annual commodity crop and has been heavily impacted by flooding or has other ongoing water quality concerns that pose a significant risk of delivering agricultural runoff to water. Payment rates and maintenance agreement options depend on VAAFMM determination of whether there is a significant water quality concern at the site.
- **Grassed Waterway:** A shaped or graded channel within a field of annual crops which has a broad and shallow cross section and suitable perennial vegetation designed to convey surface water at a nonerosive velocity to a stable outlet.

Payment Rates:

Practice	5-Year Agreement	10-Year Agreement
Filter Strip (25-34 ft)	<i>Not eligible</i>	\$200/acre
Wide Filter Strip (35 ft+)	\$700/acre	\$1,000/acre
Pasture/Hayland Planting – Area with High WQ Concern	\$700/acre	\$1,000/acre
Pasture/Hayland Planting	<i>Not eligible</i>	\$200/acre
Grassed Waterway	<i>Not eligible</i>	\$1,000/acre

Other associated practices which are necessary to the success of practices listed in the table above may be also eligible for up to 90% cost share. Examples of eligible associated practices/expenses include lined waterways, stable outlets, erosion control structures, re-grading work, and clean water diversion structures.

Learn more at [Agriculture.vermont.gov/sfs](https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sfs) or by contacting the Water Quality Division at 802-828-2431