

2018 AGCWIP Grantee Spotlight: Champlain Valley Farmers' Coalition (CVFC)



Farmers and agricultural conservation experts discuss the implementation of grassed waterways and filter strips at an on-farm educational event put together jointly by CVFC and UVM Extension.

By the Numbers

\$242,360 awarded over
4 years.

25+ workshops with
550+ attendees to date.

14 farmers provided direct
technical assistance to date

2 part-time hires

1 strategic plan developed

Recipient

Champlain Valley Farmers' Coalition (CVFC) is a farmer-led organization with over 150 members, most of whom are farmers in the Central Champlain Valley in Vermont.

Since its foundation in 2013, CVFC has aimed to help farmers improve water quality in Lake Champlain while maintaining their economic viability. CVFC has worked towards this mission by educating fellow farmers, the public, and policy makers on innovative conservation practices, often in partnership with UVM Extension.

Grant Award

Total award of \$242,360 over four-year period.

Funding Source

Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (Ag CWIP)

Intent

Through their grant, the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition assists farmers to reduce non-point source pollution, achieve regulatory compliance, and improve economic and environmental viability on Vermont farms. The group applied for funding with the intent to expand their education and outreach efforts, technical assistance to farms, and organizational capacity by funding workshops and events, providing technical assistance to farmers to implement conservation practices, developing a strategic plan for the future of the farmer organization and expanding the capacity of members to perform in leadership roles in the agricultural community.

Impact

Since receiving their Ag CWIP funding Champlain Valley Farmers' Coalition has held over 25 on-farm workshops with over 550 attendees, mostly representing farmers and agribusinesses. CVFC staff have also worked with more than 14 farmer-members over the past two years to plan or implement conservation practices. They sponsored a leadership development seminar for farmer-members to enable them to better face challenges and proactively come up with solutions in difficult situations. The goal is to enhance grassroots conservation efforts and empower farmers to teach and learn from one another for effective conservation and water quality improvement efforts.

CVFC has recently completed their Strategic Plan with a professional consultant. One key takeaway from that process, according to Brian Kemp, president of CVFC, was that the group should expand their outreach to include the public in order to increase public awareness of the work that farmers are doing to protect the waters of the state. Another takeaway was that the group has grown large enough to benefit from hiring a full-time executive director who would provide central leadership and focus on furthering the goals of the group. The next step will be ensuring sustainable funding for this position into the future.

According to Brian Kemp, president of CVFC, their AGCWIP grant has been "absolutely vital" to their operations and to solidifying their plans to grow and expand. "This clean water funding has been instrumental in these last two to three years and hopefully it will help keep us going in future years to come," he stated.

Going forward, CVFC aims to reach out to partner organizations like FWA, CRFWA, NOFA, Farm Bureau, and Watersheds United VT to collaborate to expand current programming and more effectively help farmers advocate for environmental and economic sustainability.

"This clean water funding has been **instrumental** in these past two to three years and hopefully it will help keep us going in future years to come ... it's been **absolutely vital**"

– Brian Kemp, CVFC president



Brian Kemp, manager of Mountain Meadows Farm and president of CVFC, discusses conservation practices with Ben Gabos, a Vermont State Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Coordinator, at an event hosted by CVFC.