

Upcoming Events

- Beef Nutrition & Pasture Management Workshop
5:30 PM February 3, 2023 at 212 Main St., Poultney
- There’s Cost Share for that?—join NRCS staff to discuss new and existing programs
11:30 - 2:00 PM February 17, 2023 at the Castleton Fire House, 273 Route 30 in Castleton

Important Dates

- Sign up for the Grazing Class described below by February 20, 2023—three dates starting 2.28.23
- Champlain Valley Native Plant Restorative Nursery Annual Plant Sale—orders due by April 14, 2023
- Plant Sale pick up on May 6, 2023,
At the CVNPRN Nursery, 675 York St., Poultney

Opportunity for Farmers to Develop Grazing Plans
for Farm Viability and Reduced Feed Costs

- Do you have a grazing plan, but want a better understanding of how to implement it?
- Do you want to change from confinement or set pasture stocking to a managed grazing system?
- Do you need grazing infrastructure (fence, animal trails) and would like help designing a plan that may qualify for NRCS financial assistance?

If you’ve answered yes to any of these questions, consider taking the grazing management class.

This three-session class will cover: pasture plant ID and plant response to animal impact; pasture nutrition and animal performance; carrying capacity, stocking rate, and stock density; pasture system design and infrastructure needs; management techniques to avoid overgrazing, and grazing record keeping systems. All participants will receive a copy of Sarah Flack’s book ‘The Art and Science of Grazing’. For more information or to sign up, contact Rachael.

January 2023

POULTNEY METTOWEE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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Sudangrass & Teff Test Plots and Workshop

PMNRCD worked with a local farmer, Dan Munch, to plant two sets of forage test plots in 2021 and 2022. We used the District’s Haybuster 107 C No Till Drill to plant each plot. The sudangrass plot was roughly two acres and the teff plot was roughly 1/2 acre. The purpose of this project was to review growth and nutritional data on the two forages. We plan to use the information gained as a tool to help farmers interested in planting these warm season grasses in the future as summer temperatures and the length of dry spells increases due to climate change.



Our host farmer walks through his growing Sudangrass.



Nate Severy speaking on December 2nd.

On December 2, 2022, PMNRCD and the local farmer hosting the test plots held a workshop presenting our results, and another local farmer, Nate Severy, spoke about his experience growing these crops over several years.

We hope to expand our project in 2023. For more information contact Jennifer.

Conservation Practice Surveys (CPS) and the Partner Database

According to the Lake Champlain cleanup plans, agriculture in the South Lake watershed must reduce its phosphorous contributions to surface waters by 40% in order to meet the required reductions in phosphorus loading. In response to feedback from the farming community, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFMM) developed the Conservation Practice Survey (CPS) and funded development of the Partner Database to capture farmer funded water quality practices that are not tracked through grant reporting.

The surveys and database are used by non-regulatory staff at VAAFMM and partners who work with farms to track practices throughout Vermont. Some of the practices being captured include: livestock exclusion fencing, buffer strips wider than 25ft, crop rotations, conservation tillage, cover crop, nurse crops, manure injection, and fields planted to permanent forage. If you have implemented any of these practices in the last two years, and wish to be included in the surveys and data collection, please contact Rachael or Jennifer.

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What's the Scoop on Driveways, Runoff and Erosion?

Driveway drainage and erosion contributes tremendously to the amount of phosphorous in our lakes and streams. As driveways equal 1/3 of rural road miles in Vermont, there is a need to work locally with landowners and contractors to mitigate runoff on private lands through easy to install drainage practices.



Andres Torizzo and Doug Tifft install a cross culvert.

PMNRCD created a driveways program that experimented with techniques and practices to reduce runoff and erosion on local driveways. These practices focused on spreading and slowing stormwater runoff. They included ditching and directing water flow into vegetated areas; ponding and collection of water for infiltration; control of water flow at the outfall of collection areas, and infiltration practices including small, perforated dry wells installed adjacent to driveways. Most importantly, the driving surface must be raised and crowned to shed water into the drainage features.

Clean Water Service Provider Update

PMNRCD, the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, and many partners are working to establish policies for the Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) and the Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC) to prioritize projects for funding. These projects will include installation of practices on developed lands, forested lands, along streams, and on farms that will reduce phosphorus concentrations in surface waters. Public meetings to review both the overall application process and specific projects will begin in March, and everyone is welcome to attend. Please reach out to Hilary if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

Averie Noble is our new Project Specialist. She has come to us with a varied background in agriculture and a general adoration for nature. Along with years of professional and personal experience in agriculture, Averie also has a BS in Animal Sciences from Oregon State University. She currently resides in Benson with her husband and children. Averie and her family are in the process of redefining their family's 10th generation dairy farm, producing beef, goat, and chicken products. Averie focused on helping with tree planting and nursery work through the summer and is now dividing her time more equally between all District program areas.



Water Quality Monitoring

PMNRCD is assisting the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Lake St Catherine Association (LSCA) with water quality monitoring for phosphorus, nitrogen, and chloride concentrations. This activity is identified in the local Basin Plan (see Tactical Basin Planning section of the newsletter) as being of importance in determining where to locate water quality projects. The information will also be used by Lake St Catherine partners for their Lake Watershed Action Planning activities. In 2022, District staff collected water samples at five sites where streams drain into Lake St Catherine and twelve sites in the Mettowee Watershed.



2023 Plant Sale

The Poultney Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District is holding our annual plant sale fundraiser! This year we are offering a variety of native trees and shrubs for landscaping, naturalizing, and foraging (incl. balsam fir, sugar maple, serviceberry, elderberry, and winterberry) as well as a variety of berries and apple, peach, pear, and cherry trees. There are many benefits to using locally grown, native plants in your landscape. Native plants are more likely to thrive in our regional climate and they provide critical resources for wildlife. Consider these plants for backyard birds and pollinators, stabilizing stream banks and shorelines, or for use in rain gardens. The Nursery provides educational opportunities for local schools and the community. All funds generated by this sale are used to support District and Nursery programming.

View our catalog and order form at <https://www.pmnrcd.org/champlain-valley-native-plant-restoration-nursery/>. If ordering after **March 15**, please email or call to ensure your request can be filled. Pick up is Saturday, **May 6**, at the Champlain Valley Native Plant Restoration Nursery. Questions? Contact **Averie**.

Tactical Basin Planning

This year PMNRCD received funding to work with partners including the Rutland Regional Planning Commission and the Rutland and Bennington NRCs. These groups will continue to promote and develop projects that help meet strategies and goals in the Basin 2/4 (Poultney and Mettowee Rivers) Basin Plan drafted by our Vermont DEC Basin Planner, Angie Allen.

Dam Removal



Davenport Excavation removes a dam on the Mettowee River.

PMNRCD is working with multiple partners and landowners to remove six barriers to fish passage from the Mettowee River in Dorset, VT. The partners are working to improve water quality in the Poultney-Mettowee watershed and Lake Champlain; restore riparian function and processes; and reconnect and enhance aquatic habitats while improving flood resiliency. Three dams were removed this summer to enhance habitat connectivity in the Mettowee River headwaters. With the dams removed, fish including trout, dace, and minnows can migrate into the cooler and better oxygenated headwater streams during the warm summer months and can access more gravel spawning habitat.

Greenhouse Project



PMNRCD is grateful to receive a donated greenhouse from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). We are thankful that with the assistance of Legislative funding, we were able

to construct the new greenhouse quickly and efficiently, while supporting local businesses, who provided supplies and labor.

The new greenhouse will be very beneficial to the District, especially the Champlain Valley Native Plant Restoration Nursery. The structure will allow the nursery to expand its in-house native plant growth abilities, as well as provide a dry, warm meeting space for District and Nursery events. We are looking forward to using this structure to its full potential!