



**Department of
Agriculture and Markets**

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program

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County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)



Soil and Water Conservation Districts

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts are natural resource agencies who implement conservation programs at the local level

- 58 Districts in New York State
- Authorized under State Law
- Non-regulatory
- Implementation-based
- Partnership-driven
- Watershed Focused



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AEM Framework and State Cost Share Programs



Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Framework

AEM – a consistent framework for over 20 years to partner with farmers on environmental management and farm viability

- **Follows a 5-tier approach (voluntary, science-based, and confidential)**
 - Inventories basic farm information and interests (Tier 1)
 - Assesses existing stewardship and environmental risks (Tier 2)
 - Develops conservation plans (Tier 3)
 - Implements Best Management Practices (BMP) Systems (Tier 4)
 - Evaluates outcomes and updates plans (Tier 5)
- **AEM is the key framework for the State's agricultural conservation initiatives**
 - AEM-related technical assistance and cost-share programs via SWCDs
 - 9 Element Watershed Management/TMDL Planning/Harmful Algal Bloom Action Plans
 - NYS Grown & Certified
 - NYS DEC CAFO Permit
 - Climate Action Council Scoping Plan – Ag and Forestry Chapter



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Funding Programs to Help Advance AEM on Farms

- Locally-led and sponsored by your **Soil and Water Conservation District**
- Projects based on an AEM or equivalent conservation plans (e.g., SWCD, NRCS, CAFO, DAP)
- Funded through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund via NYS AGM / Soil and Water

Conservation Committee

- **AEM Base Program**
 - **Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement and Control Program (AgNPS)**
 - **Climate Resilient Farming (CRF)**
 - **Source Water Buffer Program**
 - **Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Programs**
 - **State Aid to Districts**
- Other Programs from NYSAGM (Farmland Protection Grants), NYSDEC, USDA-NRCS (EQIP, CSP), USDA-FSA, NYSERDA, Cornell PRO-DAIRY (Dairy Advancement Program), USEPA, and others....
- + Significant, on-going investment by farmers.



SWCD Directory



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AEM Base Program

Funding for Districts to provide.....

1. conservation **technical assistance** through AEM's five Tiers *and*
2. **cost-share funding with farmers to implement BMP Systems in Tier 4** (\$200K max/District; two-year cycles)

AEM Tier	Purpose	NRCS 9 Step Process	
Tier 1 – Inventory (Questionnaire)	Basic farm info and interests	1. ID Issues & <u>Opps</u> 2. Determine Objectives 3. Inventory Resources 4. Analyze Resource Data 5. Formulate Alternatives 6. Evaluate Alternatives 7. Make Decisions	
Tier 2 – Assessment (“Tier 2 Worksheets”)	Identify existing stewardship, resource concerns, and opportunities		
Tier 3 – Planning	Develop conservation plans		
Tier 4 – Implementation	Implement conservation practices based on the plans		8. Implementation
Tier 5 – Evaluation	Evaluate plans, practices, and programs		9. Evaluation



Ag Non-Point (AgNPS) Source Water Quality Program

About:

- AgNPS program was created in 1993
- First Round of AgNPS was awarded in 1994
 - \$340,000
- Approximately \$254 million has been awarded for AgNPS projects
- Approx. \$13 million available for projects in Round 30
 - Request for Proposals out in fall 2024

Program Goals:

- Water quality protection
- Reduce and/or prevent the non-point source contribution from agricultural activities in watersheds across the State
- Utilizes the AEM Framework and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to implement the program



Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) Grant Program

- **Launched in 2015 (Rounds 1-7)**
 - ~\$36 million awarded
 - 386 farms
 - ~454,000 metric tons of CO₂e/yr estimated emissions reduction
 - Includes 20 cover/flare projects to date
- **Three tracks (as of Round 7):**
 1. Livestock Manure and Methane Management
 2. Adaptation and Resiliency
 3. Healthy Soils NY
- **Goals: GHG Mitigation, C Sequestration, Adaptation + Farm Viability**



Thank you!

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