



SECTION TWO

GETTING STARTED: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HOBBY FARM SITE

Sections 2 and 3 provide tools to plan a new hobby farm or improve an existing one, so your farm's activities will have a minimum impact on nearby water resources. Here we provide information to help you understand your existing site. In the next section, we will discuss forming a Hobby Farm Plan.

"Stormwater-friendly" farming requires you to identify the water resources that might be affected by your farm and how stormwater drains from your particular hobby farm site. It also requires you to understand some municipal and state requirements that apply to the farming activities you propose. The Fact Sheets in this section will assist you to understand your farm site and its environment so that you can plan your activities to result in little or no impact on the water resources to which your hobby farm drains.

The following Fact Sheets are intended to assist you in answering the following questions:

- How hobby farms generate pollution, why they are a concern, and offer ideas for addressing pollution.
- What farm activities are you planning and what do you need to make sure they work with your site?
- What features of your farm site affect how you use it, while managing stormwater runoff?
- Are there important water resources on or near your hobby farm?
- What local and state regulations do you need to consider in planning your farm activities?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HOBBY FARM OR IMPROVEMENT OF AN EXISTING ONE CAN RANGE FROM BEING VERY SIMPLE TO COMPLEX, SIMILAR TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USING A SHOVEL OR A SMALL TRACTOR.

THIS HANDBOOK FOCUSES ON HOW TO INCORPORATE IDEAS AND PRACTICES TO MANAGE STORMWATER RUNOFF AND MINIMIZE POLLUTANTS FROM YOUR HOBBY FARM. YOU SHOULD USE INFORMATION IN THIS HANDBOOK WITH OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES YOU RELY ON TO PLAN YOUR HOBBY FARMING ACTIVITIES.

If you are just converting part of your lawn to vegetable garden and you are not too close to a wetland, stream, or pond, the planning and implementation of stormwater protection measures will be relatively simple. Your “stormwater management plan” may consist of some basic measures to control erosion, avoid excessive irrigation runoff, and carefully apply fertilizers and other agricultural compounds needed to cultivate a healthy crop. You may be able to undertake this conversion to hobby farming by consulting your local Conservation Commission or searching a few online resources on raising the vegetables you select and implementing some simple measures from this handbook.



On the other hand, if you own several acres and will engage in a variety of farming activities ranging from cultivating vegetables, to raising animals, to growing forage crops for your livestock, your site evaluation, site planning, and hobby farm operations planning will become more complicated and require additional effort. Also, if your property has wetlands or surface water within or near it, your activities may be subject to regulation and will require a greater planning effort.

With this range of hobby farming activity in mind, we provide the following Fact Sheets to guide you to the information you need to start a new environmentally friendly hobby farm or improve an existing one.

The remainder of this handbook provides tools and practices that the hobby farmer can use to ensure that hobby farm operations have a minimum of impact on nearby water resources.

HELPFUL LINKS

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/nps/what-nonpoint-source

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection: www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/watersheds/nonpoint-source-pollution.html

University of Massachusetts Amherst - The Center for Agriculture, Food and The Environment: www.ag.umass.edu

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension: www.extension.unh.edu

