

# SOURCE WATER BUFFER PROGRAM

## PROTECTING YOUR DRINKING WATER

### Overview

The Source Water Buffer Program is administered by the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and Markets. The goal of the program is to protect public drinking water and to enhance water quality protection. The Source Water Buffer Program funds the purchase of conservation easements and projects that establish riparian buffers on farmland that borders critical water sources.

Funding for the program is provided through the Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017. Approximately \$5 million is available to support the purchase of conservation easements and the implementation of buffer systems, which filter surface runoff or shallow groundwater to protect the water quality of New York State's aquifers, watersheds, reservoirs, lakes, rivers, and streams.

### Why should a farmer participate in the program?

Vegetated or forested buffers are extremely effective practices to improve and protect water quality and mitigate nutrient pollution. The Source Water Buffer Program provides long-term protection of these areas to positively impact water quality for future generations.

- The program will cost share up to 75%, the purchase of perpetual conservation easements or 50-year term conservation easements.
- Funds may also be used to install or enhance vegetated or forested buffers within the easement area.

### Who can participate? What is required?

- Soil and Water Conservation Districts are eligible to apply to the program on behalf of interested farmers.
- Participating farmers must either own an eligible farm operation or lease land to an eligible farm operation.
- Eligible agricultural lands must be:
  - Directly adjacent to surface waters designated as a drinking water source;
  - Directly adjacent to tributaries that drain to designated drinking water source;
  - Wetland areas directly adjacent to surface waters designated as a drinking water source;
  - Within a wellhead protection area designated by the NYS Department of Health; or
  - Within the contributing area directly adjacent to an aquifer sinkhole.

### Next steps

- Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis.
- If you are interested in learning more or participating in the Source Water Buffer Program, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District at <https://www.nys-soilandwater.org/contacts/index.html>.