



Polluted Runoff (Nonpoint Source Pollution)

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Agriculture

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The United States has more than 330 million acres of agricultural land that produce an abundant supply of food and other products. American agriculture is noted worldwide for its high productivity, quality and efficiency in delivering goods to the consumer. When improperly managed, however, activities from working farms and ranches can affect water quality.

In the 2000 National Water Quality Inventory, states reported that agricultural nonpoint source (NPS) pollution was the leading source of water quality impacts on surveyed rivers and lakes, the second largest source of impairments to wetlands, and a major contributor to contamination of surveyed estuaries and ground water.

Agricultural activities that cause NPS pollution include poorly located or managed animal feeding operations; overgrazing; plowing too often or at the wrong time; and improper, excessive or poorly timed application of pesticides, irrigation water and fertilizer.

Fact Sheets and Reports

- [Protecting Water Quality from Agricultural Runoff \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 104K, [About PDF](#))
This is a fact sheet about how agricultural runoff affects water quality (March 2005, EPA 841-F-05-001).
- [Conservation Buffers to Reduce Pesticide Losses \(PDF\)](#) (25 pp, 1.2MB, [About PDF](#))
This document summarizes recent research investigating the ability of conservation buffers to trap and degrade pesticides carried in field runoff. It is the result of a joint effort between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Water and Climate Center and EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances.

Guidance Documents and Manuals

- [Techniques for Tracking, Evaluating, and Reporting the Implementation of Nonpoint Source Control Measures - Agriculture](#)
This guidance from 1997 was written to help state, regional and local environmental professionals track the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) used to control agricultural nonpoint source pollution.
- [Animal Feeding Operations \(AFOs\)](#)
This page includes general information on AFOs, links to the USDA-EPA Unified National Strategy for Animal

NPS Categories

- Abandoned Mine Drainage
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Hydromodification & Habitat Alteration
- Marinas & Boating
- Roads, Highways & Bridges
- Urban Areas
 - Low Impact Development
- Wetland & Riparian Management



A flush tank and lagoon system keeps the feeding area clean for these Missouri dairy cattle. The lagoon also stores nutrients for future application to pastures. (Photo courtesy of NRCS)



Designing cow pastures that create physical obstacles to stream wading can reduce the amount of animal waste that enters a waterbody.

Feeding Operations and the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation proposed rule, and includes guidance documents and compliance guides for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

- [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\) Conservation Practice Standards](#)
NRCS conservation practice standards provide guidance for applying conservation technology on the land and set the minimum acceptable level for application of the technology. This site lists current national conservation practices in alphabetical order, with links to the practice standards, conservation practice information sheets and Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) worksheets (when available).
- [2002 Farm Bill Provisions \(from NRCS\)](#)
The conservation provisions of the 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act help farmers and ranchers meet environmental challenges on their land. This site provides access to the 2002 conservation provisions and includes other links to sites related to the USDA Farm Bill.

Information Resources and Centers

- [EPA's National Agriculture Compliance Assistance Center](#)
The National Agriculture Compliance Assistance Center is the "first stop" for information about environmental requirements that affect the agricultural community.
- [Water Quality Information Center at the National Agricultural Library](#)
From the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the WQIC provides electronic access to information on water quality and agriculture. The center collects, organizes and communicates the scientific findings, educational methodologies and public policy issues related to water quality and agriculture.
- [Conservation Technology Information Center \(Core4 Conservation\)](#) [EXIT Disclaimer](#)
The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) is a national, public-private partnership with a mission to provide reliable, profitable solutions to improve the relationship between agriculture and the environment. The center provides information on agricultural conservation issues.
- [North Carolina State University \(NCSU\) Water Quality Group](#) [EXIT Disclaimer](#)
The North Carolina State University (NCSU) Water Quality Group is a multidisciplinary team that analyzes and conducts natural resource management programs with an emphasis on nonpoint source (NPS) pollution policy, assessment and control technologies.
- [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\) Photo Gallery](#)
Approximately 1,500 conservation-related images are available for download from this site. The photos are organized in a database that allows users to search 54 categories from 30 States using key categories like buffers, conservation tillage, water quality and wildlife.

Special Programs

- [Farm*A*Syst \(from the University of Wisconsin Extension Office\)](#) [EXIT Disclaimer](#)

Farm*A*Syst is a partnership between government agencies and private business that enables you to prevent pollution on farms, ranches and in homes using confidential environmental assessments.

- Home*A*Syst (from the University of Wisconsin Extension Office) [\[EXIT Disclaimer\]](#)
Every home presents potential risks to the family's health and the environment. Home*A*Syst helps you identify these risks and take action.
- Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service Home Page (CSREES)
USDA's National Integrated Water Quality Program.

