

*Farmers
Working
Together*



*For a Clean
Lake Champlain
and Thriving
Agriculture*

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition
Newsletter Update
June 14th, 2016

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Greetings,

On May 13, 2016, the Agency of Agriculture submitted their Proposed Required Agricultural Practices Rule with the Vermont Secretary of State. There have already been two unofficial public comment periods for the draft RAPs, and with this filing there is now one last opportunity to have your voice heard before it is reviewed and voted on by the legislature and set into effect on October 7th, 2016 (many of the components of the RAPs will not go into effect until the following year, however).

Towards the end of June, there will be multiple opportunities for farmers and members of the public to attend public hearings to learn more about the RAPs and formally submit comments about the Rule. When we spoke to Secretary Chuck Ross at our monthly

Coalition meeting, he made it very clear that the constructive criticism and proposed alternatives that the Coalition has put forward has been of huge value when making changes in previous drafts.

This spring, there has been a huge surge in farmers trying new practices that protect the environment and help make them more financially viable. A large number of people are trying No-Till corn, people are harvesting their cover crops as livestock feed, several people are no-till seeding their new hay seeding into their cover crops, and there are more grass waterways in annual cropland than we have ever seen. All of these practices have a pretty steep learning curve, and as farmers try these new practices we are all (farmers and service providers alike) learning what does and doesn't work in our area. We shouldn't view these practices in the light of "it must work perfectly the first time or I will never do it again". We all need to familiarize ourselves with the concepts and figure out how to adapt them to work on each unique farm.

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Upcoming Events

6/21/2016 – 12:30pm-3:30pm: **RAP Public Hearing-St Albans**, St Albans Historical Museum

6/22/2016 – 12:30pm-3:30pm: **RAP Public Hearing-Brandon**, Brandon American Legion

6/23/2016 – 12:30 – 3:30 pm: **RAP Public Hearing-S. Royalton**, Vermont Law School (Chase Center)

These are three of five public hearings to be held in June for farmers, stakeholders and the public to provide testimony and comment on the Proposed RAP Rule. The Agency also has an online webinar prepared in advance of the formal hearings to present the rules in detail. The public can also submit comments to the Agency's RAP e-mail inbox at AGR.RAP@vermont.gov or by mailing written comment to the Agency of Agriculture at 116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620.



6/17/2016-11:00am-1:00pm: **So your no-till corn is growing, now what?**

3382 Town Line Rd, Addison, VT. Field is on the North side of the road across from Harvest Moon Holsteins.

Join the UVM Extension Crop, Soil, and Pasture Team on a Crop Patrol to look at and discuss no-till management! Nitrogen and fertility management, and weed management for both conventional and no-till corn will be covered. UVM Extension will also share the latest on what they have found to be working on farms growing no-till crops.

Field Walks

With the field season underway and farmers finishing first cut, we are now starting back up our summer crop patrols! If you have or know of any practices that are helping make our farms more sustainable, please let us know!

Draft RAP Proposal

On May 13th, the Agency of Agriculture released its third draft of the Required Agricultural Practices, new regulations that will replace the AAP's and ask the farming community to do their part to minimize any negative impacts they have to the environment and the lake. This draft is the last opportunity for public input before it is reviewed and approved by the legislature. The draft proposal and other pertinent information can be found by visiting the website <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/regulations/rap>

The CVFC gathered at our June membership meeting and went over the changes in the new draft regulations, pointing out issues and brainstorming solutions along the way. After this very productive session, Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross, along with Jim Leland and Ryan Patch joined us in the discussion. We were able to ask them specific questions about deadlines, brainstorm how the Agency can improve communication with the farming community, and clarifying sections in the draft that were unclear.

Now that we have had a chance to discuss the new draft ruling, we will be writing a response letter to the Agency of Agriculture that will be sent in as a formal comment highlighting changes they should make to the regulations. **We encourage all farms to write and submit their own comments**

about the ruling. If we do not tell the Agency what we think and what changes we think should be made, then those changes will never happen!

If you or your farm is interested in providing input on the proposed Draft RAPs, you have until July 7th, and your comments can be emailed to AGR.RAP@vermont.gov.

Recordkeeping for your Nutrient Management Plan

More than ever before, farmers are being asked to keep better records about planting, harvesting, and fertilizing crops. A Nutrient Management Plan is supposed to both guide the farmer in what he/she *intends* to do for that cropping season, and is also a way for the farmer to track what he/she *actually* did. For farmers who actively use their NMP's, it is a great way to see trends for how different fields behave over time and adjust management accordingly; it allows you to manage the fertility on each field as opposed to one plan for the entire farm; it has maps that you can photocopy and give to employees or custom applicators and highlight what you want done in specific fields; and it is a great way to show regulators, the public, and fellow farmers all the great work you are doing on your farm.

Recordkeeping can be as simple as having a piece of paper on the wall of your milk house or a clipboard in your tractor cab where you write down the date, field name, and what you did. It can be as sophisticated as yield monitors on harvesting equipment and flow meters on manure equipment. The more diligent and accurate you are with your records, the more those records can be used to better manage your farm and help you make informed cropping decisions.

Weather is one area that can be difficult to track. You need a rain gauge or weather station and you have to make sure to check and record after every rainstorm that follows or precedes a fertilizer application. You can also go to www.newa.cornell.edu where you can look at a regional map, find a weather station near you, and find daily weather data from that specific location that you can print off and put in your records. You can also have a weather station installed on your farm (visit the "about weather stations" tab on the website) with assistance from Cornell and UVM!

CVFC is Hiring!

CVFC is reopening our search to fill the new Dairy Outreach Coordinator position. We were unable to find the right person for the job the first time around, so we decided to take more time to fill this important new addition to our organization. Please share the announcement widely! Questions can be directed to Kirsten Workman, CVFC Secretary at kirsten.workman@uvm.edu or (802) 388-4969 x347.

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The Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc. invites applicants for a half-time staff position to increase dairy farmer and industry membership in this organization. Responsibilities include direct work with the CVFC Board of Directors to strengthen organization membership, communicate through public media and other organizations about CVFC goals and projects, and to provide insight on emerging agriculture policy and practices that impact dairy farm viability and water quality protection. This position is currently funded at 50% time through 2017 and may be expanded to a full-time position with acquisition of additional grant funding.

Minimum qualifications: Applicant must be knowledgeable of economic and environmental issues relative to dairy farming, protection of soil and water resources, state and federal conservation practice programs. Strong personal communication and technical writing skills required and must be proficient with Word, Excel and website template software. Strong organizational skills and reliable transportation required. A complete job description is available at

www.champlainvalleyfarmercoalition.com/jobs.html. A current resume and letter of intent for the position must be mailed to: CVFC, 23 Pond Lane, Suite 300, Middlebury, VT 05753 or info@champlainvalleyfarmercoalition.com.

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc.

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