What is a Nutrient Management Plan?

A Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) is described as an environmental operating plan for which it is written. An NMP also could be thought of as a document that describes how nutrients are stored, managed, and utilized on the farm. NMPs are written, based on the farm’s production activities, yet be attainable and practical.

The Nutrient Management Program was established by the Maine Legislature in 1998. The Nutrient Management Program was initiated by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the U.S.D.A. NRCS, the U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency, county Soil & Water Conservation Districts and others.

The success of the Nutrient Management Program has been the result of an effective working relationship among many agencies and farmers, particularly the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency, county Soil & Water Conservation Districts and others.

For more information: Contact the Nutrient Management Coordinator at 207-287-7608 or mark.hedrich@maine.gov.

U.S.D.A. NRCS also has funds available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or from other programs for qualifying projects. The U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency offers farm operating loans for constructing certain projects. A Nutrient Management Loan Program, available through the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), offers low-interest loans for certain nutrient management projects.

Where can a farmer obtain more information about nutrient management planning and projects?

There are many sources of information for nutrient management planning, farm management, or environmental protection. The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the U.S.D.A. NRCS, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, local Soil & Water Conservation Districts and others have expertise and publications available in specific specialty areas. For example, the Department of Agriculture recently published a “Manual of Best Management Practices for Maine Agriculture” that provides information for implementing many farm-related and environmental projects.
A residual is any material generated as a byproduct of a nonagricultural production or treatment process that has value as a source of crop nutrients or soil amendment. A farm that is required to have an NMP must have its Plan developed and implemented at the time the farm becomes operational.

**Which farms are required to develop and implement an NMP?**

These farms include those that:

- Confine and feed 50 or more animal units (1 animal unit = 1000 pounds of animal) at any one time;
- Store or utilize more than 100 tons of manure or compost annually not generated on that farm;
- Are the subject of a verified complaint of improper manure handling or
- Store or utilize regulated residuals.*

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**How does a farm owner obtain an NMP?**

There are approximately 60 nutrient management planners certified to write and approve Plans in Maine. A list of these planners may be obtained from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Alternatively, the Plan may be written by the farmer and then approved by a certified planner.

**How does an individual become a certified nutrient management planner?**

**Categories for certification:**

A person may be certified either as a commercial/public NMP specialist or as a private NMP specialist. A commercial/public specialist may prepare and approve an NMP for another person or may approve an NMP prepared by another person. Private specialists may develop and approve an NMP only for his or her own operation.

**Education and training requirements:**

Persons seeking certification must provide proof of certification by a national certifying program for nutrient management planning, or may become certified through a Maine state training and certification program approved by the Commissioner. This involves successfully completing an approved pre-certification training workshop, or demonstrating a good understanding of agricultural subjects including soil fertility, crop and manure management, past education, training or experience, and passing a test.

**Are there other types of nutrient management plans available to a farm?**

Yes. A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) may be prepared for a farm. These plans are written by certain U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel or by private contractors, and are required for obtaining funding from certain federal programs, primarily for farm environmental project development. These projects may involve enhancement of the natural resources on the farm and the reduction of potential off-site impacts by addressing: the production, storage and handling of manure and fertilizers; the amount, source, placement and timing of land application of materials; water and wind erosion; and the long-term viability of the farm. Some financial assistance may be available for the development of a CNMP.

**Is financial assistance available for implementing nutrient management projects?**

The Department occasionally has grant money available for nutrient management/environmental projects. The...