



Strip cropping on steeper slopes helps to reduce erosion.

A Non-Farmer's Guide to AEM

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The Canandaigua Watershed AEM Program is a farmer led initiative that uses a team approach to provide the best service to the farmer and the environment. The program utilizes the expertise from government agencies and the farmer to resolve potential pollution threats. Through the leadership of local farmers and the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District over \$1.2 million from state and federal sources has been provided to watershed farms since 1996 in order to protect our drinking water source.

Preventing agricultural runoff from reaching streams and eventually the lake is the highest priority of AEM projects. Best Management Practices (BMPs) are practices or equipment proven useful in properly managing the quality of runoff coming from agriculture. Farm operations are extremely diverse, so BMPs must be chosen and designed for each particular situation.

It is appropriate that public funds be used for BMPs on private farms. The public greatly benefits by the installation of these practices through cleaner water for drinking and recreation. Clean water is cheaper and safer to process into drinking water and results in fewer unwanted byproducts such as (carcinogenic) trihalomethanes. Some pathogens, notably cryptosporidium and giardia, are



Farmsteads give our area the rural character that many people cherish.

extremely difficult to detect and remove from water, so exclusion is highly preferable. Keeping nutrients out of lakes means fewer weed beds, which means more pleasant recreational conditions in general. Clean water secures the value of shoreline properties, which in turn secures the municipal and school tax base.

Farmer participation is purely voluntary - it's their land and their business, after all. Farmers are footing a hefty part of the bill for installation of BMPs on their property. They must put up cash and/or labor as their part of the cost share and will have to maintain the BMP in the future. Also, the funding farmers receive through public sources is considered income and is taxed accordingly even if the BMP does not increase profits.

It is in the best interest of the non-farm community that area farmers are able to stay in business. Farms give rural areas their character. People who move to the country to enjoy open spaces will find that commodity in short supply if farmers are out of business. Preservation of local farms on an economically viable and environmentally sound basis is and will continue to be in the public interest. AEM is a mutually beneficial enterprise for farmers and non-farmers alike.