



## Farm Viability

Although this barn symbolizes the fate of many of the farms in the Mill River watershed, agriculture remains a vibrant part of the watershed's economy and quality of life. A number of state and federal programs are available to help farmers improve the efficiency of their operations, strengthen their viability and make environmental enhancements.

Grants--either outright or through cost-share---are available on marketing, pesticide/fertilizer application, manure management, environmental improvements and land protection.

**Farm Viability:** This state program provides farmers with up to \$40,000 dollars and helps them develop short- and long-range business plans. Monies do not need to be repaid, but a lien of 10 to 20 years (depending upon the dollar amount awarded) is placed on the farm property to ensure that farming continues during this time period. For more information, contact: 413/529-0873 or <http://www.massdfa.org/funding/grants.htm>

**Agricultural Preservation Program:** Pays farmers up to \$10,000 per acre to place a permanent restriction on the land to ensure that it is kept in agriculture forever. Land with prime agricultural soils is a top priority. At present, more than 100 acres in the Mill River watershed are under this designation. Contact 617/626-1700 or <http://www.massdfa.org/funding/apr/index.htm>

**Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program:** This federal program pays landowners to return degraded wetlands and riparian buffers to their natural state and thereby improve wildlife habitat. This voluntary program provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. As part of this, the landowner agrees to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan, which describes the landowner's goals for improving wildlife habitat, including a list of practices and a schedule for installing them, and details the steps necessary to maintain the habitat for the life of the agreement. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers participants technical and financial assistance for the establishment of wildlife habitat development practices. In addition, if the landowner agrees, cooperating State wildlife agencies and nonprofit or private organizations may provide expertise or additional funding to help complete a project. The plan may or may not be part of a larger conservation plan that addresses other resource needs such as water quality and soil erosion. Typically cost-share agreements last from 5 to 10 years, with the USDA paying up to 75 percent of the cost of installing the wildlife habitat practices.

Check with the local NRCS office for details:

Franklin Co.: 413/772-0384

Hampshire Co.: 413/585-1000

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program:** This federal program provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement. Five- to ten-year contracts are made and conservation plans developed. Cost-share payments may be made to implement one or more eligible structural or vegetative practices, such as animal waste management facilities, filter strips, tree planting, and permanent wildlife habitat. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices, such as nutrient, pasture or pest management. Fifty percent of the funding available is targeted at natural resource concerns relating to livestock production. Check with the local NRCS office for details:

Franklin Co.: 413/772-0384  
Hampshire Co.: 413/585-1000

Other Links: <http://www.massdfa.org/programs.htm>