

Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act

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The Agriculture Water Quality Act was passed by the Kentucky State Legislature in 1994. It states that landowners with 10 or more acres in agricultural production must develop a water quality plan. If you farm ten or more acres in Kentucky or plan to harvest trees on ten or more acres, then you are required by Kentucky state law to implement an agriculture water quality plan.

This plan documents best management practices being followed to protect water resources. These practices could include planned grazing systems for livestock, filter or buffer strips around crop fields, animal waste storage structures and nutrient management plans. It should also include plans to limit livestock access to streams, if it is a livestock operation. In addition, the document should include information about proper handling of herbicides and pesticides, and proper maintenance of septic systems.

To implement a water quality plan, first look at the activities in your operation. You can use a web-based planning tool or a printed document to answer questions about the operation. By answering these questions, you can identify the appropriate best management practices needed. Then, implement these practices and document that these practices are being used and properly maintained.

Many of the best management practice (BMP) options included in the KY Ag Water Quality Act make good agronomic sense for the farm. For example, Livestock BMP #1 Planned Grazing Systems (Rotational Grazing) provides benefits to pastures and livestock, as well as a water quality benefit. In many cases, proper practices are already in place, and creating an agriculture water quality plan provides a document stating that you are doing the right things to protect water quality on your farm.

Keep in mind that an agriculture water quality plan is not a voluntary document, and the KY Ag Water Quality Act has not gone away. As a farmer, you have the flexibility of choosing practices that best fit your operation, but you still must have an implemented plan. Periodically review and update ag water quality plans to reflect changes in farming and forestry practices or land ownership. Additionally, an ag water quality plan is required when applying for most cost share programs.

By implementing an agriculture water quality plan, you help to protect both surface and groundwater from agricultural contaminants. Keeping the water resources of the Commonwealth clean protects human and animal health, and reduces the cost of treating drinking water.

For more information about developing an Ag Water Quality Plan, visit www.ca.uky.edu/awqa or visit your local Conservation District or Cooperative Extension Service office.

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