

Benefits

Are there other reasons for participation besides increasing carbon sequestration?

Yes, they include:

- The same practices that will increase carbon sequestration are also beneficial to soil and water. There will be less soil erosion, decreased nutrient loss and less chance of contamination to ground and surface waters.
- Reduced direct costs are possible, such as using less fuel to plant no-till compared to conventional methods of planting.
- If a voluntary marketing program is developed, there will be an additional source of income available to participants.
- Of course, there is always the satisfaction of knowing that what you do today will have an impact on what happens tomorrow. Your contribution is important.



Harvesting the test plot. Yield was the same as conventional tillage corn planted on the same day.

Please Contact Us

To learn more about this program and what it may do for you

To assist by providing information about your land

To express interest in participation in a voluntary marketing program, if established

To learn more about conservation practices that will increase carbon storage as well as protect our soils and water

To become a contributing partner to help with outreach, education, data collection or policy development.

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Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District

Maine Carbon Credit Program



Test Plot: No-till corn planted in established grassland using conventional corn planter.

The **Maine Carbon Credit Program** is a pilot project established to develop a soils carbon baseline and increase landowner knowledge about carbon issues. Ultimately, the goal is to provide landowners who use conservation practices that increase carbon storage in soils the opportunity to participate in a voluntary market for carbon credits.

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MAINE CARBON CREDIT PROGRAM

The **Maine Carbon Credit Program** is focusing on outreach, education and the establishment of a soils carbon baseline to prepare for a voluntary carbon credit marketing program. The pilot program, started in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties, has been extended to include Aroostook and Kennebec Counties (Phase 2).

To reach our goals, we will be working on several tasks. In addition to presenting information about the program and assessing producer interest at several meetings across the State, we will be gathering and modeling data that will provide information about current carbon levels in our soils (the baseline).

Why are we doing this? Our climate is changing. While we in Maine may enjoy the warming now, the long term effects on our agriculture, forests, water resources and air quality will not be as pleasant. If we change the way we use our natural resources, conserve energy and switch to cleaner technologies, we have a chance to slow the impact of human induced climate change on the world our grandchildren will inherit.

One of the driving factors of climate change is carbon dioxide emissions, from all sorts of sources. Increasing carbon sequestration (storage) in soils by changing our farming practices or by planting more trees can help reduce the amount of emissions available to fuel climate change, as well as provide additional protection for our soil and water resources.

What are soil carbon credits and why does a baseline need to be established? A simple explanation is that a carbon credit is the difference between carbon already present in soils (the baseline) and carbon gained over time by changing land management practices. It can be used to offset carbon dioxide emissions and can be sold like a commodity.

What practices are accepted? Practices that add more carbon to the soil or slow down the rate carbon dioxide is released include things such as no-till planting, strip till planting, converting cropland to grassland and planting trees. The practices used for carbon credits must be in addition to, or over and above, your normal operation, for instance changing from conventional tillage to no-till. Though there are currently rules in place governing what is accepted for credits, they are subject to change and very likely will change in the future as the science and market for carbon credits evolves.

What has to be done before we can establish a program? A baseline for soils carbon has to be established first, in order to figure out what the increase in carbon storage will be if, for instance, you change from conventional tillage to no-till. To do this, we will model available data, things like land management practices, what crops are planted, soils and weather, etc. We may also ask you to provide additional historical information on your property. Once we have established a baseline for the State, we will start the process of having our soils accepted as suitable for carbon credit projects and figure out how we can implement the program. Until the modeling is completed and the baseline established, we really will not know for sure if a volunteer program will be viable in Maine, a lot depends on the market and the price received for credits.

How can carbon credits be sold? Right now, credits from pooled agricultural land are being sold on the Chicago Climate Exchange, an entity similar to the stock market, providing landowners with an additional source of income for implementing conservation practices. The first carbon credit from agricultural soils was sold in 2005. Several corn belt states now have programs with over 2,500,000 acres enrolled.

In all of these states, the pooled credits are handled by an aggregator, an organization that handles the sales and parcels out the funds. In Iowa, the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation is the aggregator. In North Dakota, the aggregator is the National Farmers Union. All projects must be independently verified and of course there are contracts to sign. The Maine Association of Conservation Districts is exploring the potential of becoming a verifier here in Maine.

We think that it may be possible to start a similar voluntary program in Maine if our carbon sequestration rates are high enough to make it worthwhile.

Debate is happening all over the country on the best way to develop policies and programs that will be effective in reducing emissions. We want to ensure Maine landowners have the same opportunities that are now available to others and that will be available in the future.



Growing no-till corn