

## Why Water Quality Matters

Access to clean water keeps your farm, family, and community safe and prosperous. However, water quality in the Octoraro Creek watershed – spanning parts of Chester County and Lancaster County – is at risk. For example:

- In some areas, groundwater contains nitrate levels above safe drinking water standards. Well water must be treated to ensure nitrate is reduced to safe levels.
- Water from the Octoraro Reservoir is also high in nitrate and requires additional treatment to ensure safe drinking water for more than 40,000 people.
- Local streams cannot support the diverse aquatic life expected to be found in clean Pennsylvania waterways. Excess nutrients and sediment are degrading water quality – leading to failing water quality evaluation scores, rising treatment costs for drinking water, and negative impacts to the fisheries.



An Amish farmer working with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay wrote:

*“With the awesome responsibility of being a steward of Lancaster County farmland, I found that partnering with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and other technical service providers to be very helpful in bridging the gap between farmers and some of today’s environmental regulations. They have also supported my needs and interests on the farm, such as manure storage and stormwater management.”*

## Next Steps and Support

Ready to get started?

You don’t have to do it alone.

- ▶ Call an Octoraro Source Water Collaborative Partner
- ▶ Schedule a free visit with a Technical Assistance Provider

Let’s work together to protect your farm, your family, and your community. We’re here to help – all at no cost to you.

## Contact

Contact your County Conservation District to learn more and get paired with a Technical Assistance Provider.

**Lancaster County Conservation District:**  
(717) 299-5361 ext. 5

**Chester County Conservation District:**  
610-455-1360

You can also visit the Octoraro Source Water Collaborative website to learn more about local water quality protection efforts:  
<https://octoraroswc.org>

# Clean Water Starts on the Farm



Protect your family.

Protect your farm.

Protect your community.

Work together for a healthier future.



Land in the Upper Octoraro Creek Watershed (outlined in black) drains to the Octoraro Reservoir

## How Farming Practices Impact Water Quality

- When it comes to water quality, farming practices matter. Storm runoff from fields, barnyards, and pastures erodes exposed soils and carries sediment into local streams. This sediment reduces the storage capacity of drinking water reservoirs and smothers habitat that is essential for mayflies and other key food sources for fish.
- Overapplication of fertilizer or manure causes nitrogen and phosphorus to leach into groundwater or wash into local streams, leading to high nitrate levels and algae blooms that can deplete oxygen levels for trout, bass, and other aquatic life.
- Ineffective or malfunctioning manure storage can release large amounts of manure into local streams, further increasing nitrate levels and fueling algae blooms.

**Without careful planning,** pollutants from your farm can end up in the water your family and community drinks.

**Cleaner Water = a Healthier Family and a Stronger Farm.**

### The good news:

Small changes on the farm can make a **big** difference.



Credit: Chesapeake Bay Conservancy

## Why Act Now?

Making changes today means protecting your farm and family now and in the future.

Many practices that keep pollutants out of water supplies also benefit a farm's long-term productivity. For example:

- No-till farming and cover crops increase soil health, which boosts crop yield and farm sustainability.
- Planting trees and other vegetation to filter runoff along streams can protect livestock from pathogens and other health risks associated with contaminated water.

**Don't wait—take steps today to stop water pollution.**



## What Assistance is Available?

You may be contacted by a Technical Assistance Provider – a trusted local expert offering affordable help. These experts have partnered through the Octoraro Source Water Collaborative to ensure a wide variety of expertise to help farmers. They're here to:

- Listen first
- Walk your land with you
- Offer advice, not pressure
- Help you find cost-effective, workable options
- Answer questions about cost and potential funding assistance

**Landowners make the decisions. This is your land, your family, your choice.**



## What You Can Do

You can implement practices on your farm to help:

- Ensure fertilizer gets into crops rather than waterways
- Keep soil in place and prevent erosion
- Prevent manure from washing into streams or leaching into wells

Examples of practices that have water quality benefits include:

- Grassed waterways
- Streamside buffers
- Cover crops or no-till farming
- Manure storage improvements

**Local partners can design practices to fit your farm, your land, and your goals. They are not one-size-fits-all. Each farm is unique, and so is each plan!**