

Benefits

Are there other reasons for participation besides increasing carbon sequestration? Yes, they include:

- The same practices that will increase carbon sequestration also are beneficial to soil and water.
- Reduced costs, such as less fuel used compared to conventional methods of planting, may also be possible.
- 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 the 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.

Funding has been provided by a Conservation Innovation Grant from USDA/NRCS and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Other partners providing in-kind support include the Maine Department of Agriculture, University of Southern Maine, Maine Association of Conservation Districts, Time and Tide RC&D and Maine Rural Partners.

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Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District

Maine Carbon Credit Program



Androscoggin County 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

This pilot program focuses on outreach, education and the establishment of a soils carbon baseline. The goals include:

- Outreach to increase landowner knowledge of and participation in conservation practices that increase soils carbon storage.
- Develop county baselines of soils carbon to prepare for a voluntary carbon credit program.
- Find out what additional data is needed to extend the program statewide.
- Determine interest in participation and potential viability of a carbon credit program.
- Develop additional partnerships.

To reach these goals, we will be working on several tasks during this first phase. They include:

- Presenting the program at a minimum of five meetings across the State to educate and assess landowner interest in developing a voluntary marketing pool.
- Gathering and modeling data for Androscoggin & Sagadahoc counties to test the procedures. Reviewing the results to see what is needed to establish a statewide baseline in the next phase of the program.
- Explore what is needed to establish a voluntary program marketing carbon credits gained from using conservation methods that increase carbon storage.
- Continue partnership building to ensure funding to complete all phases of the project.

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 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 practices. It can be used to offset carbon dioxide emissions and can be sold like a commodity.

The baseline 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 how the land is used, what crops are planted, weather etc. We may also ask you to provide additional historical information on your property.



Growing no-till corn

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 established programs with over 2,000,000 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. The Maine Association of Conservation Districts is exploring the potential of becoming an aggregator in Maine. All projects must be independently verified and there are contracts to sign.

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.

What practices are accepted? Practices that add more carbon to the soil or slow down the rate carbon dioxide would be released include things such as no-till planting, strip till planting, converting to grassland and planting trees.