

§205. Findings and purposes

The Legislature finds that the conservation of soil and water are essential to the continued productivity of our agricultural lands and the purity of our waters. Yet the economic realities of modern farming have led to more intensive cultivating methods which exhaust topsoil and erode croplands faster than ever before. Presently, Maine's average rate of soil loss is approximately twice the sustainable rate of erosion. Approximately 15% of the state's eroded soil finds its way into our lakes and streams, which become polluted by the fine sediments, fertilizers and pesticides they carry. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of Maine's livestock and poultry farms are unequipped to productively use or cleanly dispose of animal wastes. The improper handling of animal wastes contributes both to soil depletion and water pollution. [PL 1983, c. 522 (NEW).]

Conservation programs and practices initiated and encouraged by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Maine's 16 soil and water conservation districts and federal conservation agencies have been demonstrably effective in reducing soil loss and implementing animal waste management plans. Resource conservation demands a continuing commitment of both financial and human resources. Many conservation practices have limited lifetimes or require annual maintenance. Changing agricultural production methods and technologies also require new cropping arrangements and new erosion control systems. [PL 1983, c. 522 (NEW); PL 1995, c. 532, §17 (AMD); PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV).]

Virtually all public financing for conservation practices in Maine, 98¢ of every government dollar spent, has been provided by the Federal Government, but the amount of federal spending has been steadily decreasing in constant dollars since 1972. Even under federally-funded programs, the farmer-landowner has been responsible for 25% to 100% of project costs. Because of low financial returns, many concerned farmers have been unable to set aside the money to finance their share of installation costs for conservation systems. [PL 1983, c. 522 (NEW).]

To continue the progress already made in soil and water conservation, State Government will need to assume a greater share of conservation spending than it has in the past. It is the intent of the Legislature that the largest portion of new funding be devoted to the development of innovative conservation projects by the soil and water conservation districts. [PL 1983, c. 522 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 522 (NEW). PL 1995, c. 532, §17 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV).

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