What will my plan look like?

Individual agriculture water quality plans are based on Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are identified in the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Authority Plan. These BMPs can help reduce the amount of pollutants that reach our water resources.

Many landowners find that they are already applying good conservation measures that protect water quality. Others find that only a few changes are needed and these often result in improved efficiency and profitability for the operation. Your agriculture water quality plan will identify the current BMPs and help you decide if you need additional practices. BMPs establish a minimum acceptable level for planning, siting, designing, installing, operating, and maintaining agriculture and forestry facilities and operations.

Landowners who have a conservation plan, compliance plan or a forest stewardship plan may need to update and expand that plan to be sure that it includes protection of water resources.

Developing a water quality plan ensures that you will be eligible to apply for financial assistance through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program, as well as other cost share programs offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

If you need to install a conservation practice on your farm and require financial assistance, you may want to apply for one of the state or federal cost share programs that are available. Check with your Conservation District office for availability and details about the programs.

Cost Share Funds for Best Management Practices

To be valid, Agriculture Water Quality Plans must be current and address existing operations on your land. Call your Conservation District office for assistance.

You may also want to visit the Ag Water Quality home page at https://dep.gateway.ky.gov/eForms/Account/Home.aspx. This website has an online tool that can be used to assess your operation and identify BMPs to be included in your individual plan.
The goal of the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act is to protect surface and ground water from potential pollutants as a result of agriculture and forestry operations. The Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act was passed in 1994 to bring Kentucky into compliance with Federal laws. There are about 60 separate state regulations governing water quality as related to agriculture and forestry. The majority of these regulations have been a part of the Kentucky Revised Statute for many years. The Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act did not establish any new water quality laws other than requiring that all landowners with 10 or more acres in agriculture and/or forestry production develop and implement a water quality plan by October 21, 2001. The law is recorded in KRS 224.71-100 et seq.

Who is responsible for enforcement?

Enforcement of Kentucky's water quality laws is the responsibility of the Kentucky Division of Water. The enforcement process is complaint driven. Notices will be issued to land users when water pollution problems are identified. Fines up to $25,000 per day may be levied for violations that pollute the waters of the Commonwealth. Landowners who have a plan are given the opportunity to correct problems without penalties or fines if a violation is found. If the landowner chooses not to correct the problem, they may lose eligibility for financial assistance and the Division of Water can take enforcement action against them.

What if I lease the land I farm?

The landowner is ultimately responsible for developing and implementing the water quality plan; however, tenants and lessees also share in the responsibility. The land tenant may be more familiar with the land than the owner and may be in a better position to develop a plan that is both protective of the water and land resources, and practical to apply. If you own or lease more than one parcel of land, you may write one water quality plan as long as all of the different parcels are included in the plan.