What are Agricultural Best Management Practices?

Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) are practical measures that producers can take to reduce the amount of fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, and other pollutants entering our water resources. They are designed to improve water quality while maintaining agricultural production. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) has adopted BMPs for most commodities in the state. Each BMP manual covers key aspects of water quality and water conservation. Typical practices include:

**Nutrient Management** to determine nutrient needs and sources, and manage nutrient applications (including manure) to minimize impacts to water resources.

**Irrigation Management** to address the method and scheduling of irrigation to reduce water and nutrient losses to the environment.

**Water Resource Protection** using buffers, setbacks, and swales to reduce or prevent the transport of sediments and nutrients from production areas to waterbodies.

Why should I implement BMPs?

- Implementing (and maintaining) verified FDACS-adopted BMPs provides a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards for the pollutants addressed by the BMPs.

- Some BMPs can help you operate more efficiently and reduce costs, while you help protect the environment.

- Producers who implement FDACS-adopted BMPs might satisfy some water management district (WMD) permitting requirements. Check with your WMD.

- With some exceptions, the Florida Right to Farm Act prohibits local governments from regulating an agricultural activity that is addressed through rule-adopted BMPs.

- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is developing Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) to meet adopted water quality targets called Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Where FDEP adopts a BMAP that includes agriculture, producers must either implement FDACS-adopted BMPs, or conduct monitoring (prescribed by FDEP or the water management district) to show they are not violating water quality standards. Water quality monitoring is extremely expensive.

FDACS BMPs for various commodities can be found at: [http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Water/BMPs](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Water/BMPs)
What is the enrollment process like?

Site Evaluation
FDACS staff are available to assist producers with on-site assessment and BMP selection. During the BMP assessment and enrollment process they will help you evaluate the characteristics of your property and your operation, identify the BMPs you currently implement, and determine whether there are additional FDACS BMPs applicable to your operation. The presumption of compliance is based on the expectation that producers understand and address the water quality and conservation issues on their operations, within economic and technical constraints.

FDACS staff will record your current BMPs and any applicable new BMPs on a checklist, which will be submitted to FDACS with a signed Notice of Intent to implement the BMPs. The assessment will take from two to four hours, depending on the size of the operation, the commodity, and other factors.

Things to Have on Hand
It would be helpful to have the following on hand during the enrollment visit:
- Copy of tax bill – to ensure having the correct parcel ID numbers
- Management Records such as soil test results
- A map of the farm
- Personnel who are knowledgeable about the operation

After Enrolling in BMPs
An important part of BMP implementation is record keeping, as specified in FDACS rules and BMP manuals. This is sometimes the only way to confirm BMP implementation. BMP records should be accurate, clear, and well-organized. You may develop your own record-keeping forms or use the ones provided in the manuals. FDACS staff, UF-IFAS BMP Implementation Teams, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS and/or county Extension staff can assist producers with BMP implementation and record-keeping methods.

Contact Information
For assistance with BMP enrollment, call (850) 617-1727 or email AgBmpHelp@FreshFromFlorida.com.

To identify and directly contact field staff in other areas, please visit [http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Agricultural-Water-Policy/Organization-Staff](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Agricultural-Water-Policy/Organization-Staff)