



Finger Lakes RC&D Awarded \$500,000 Grant

These sheep at the Rory Miller farm in Schuyler County live within the Chemung River Basin, which contains a major tributary to the Susquehanna River. Sheep are one type of livestock which a farmer can raise and become eligible for a Nat'l Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant through the Chesapeake Bay Targeted Watershed Grant Program. Fencing constructed to NRCS standards is an eligible BMP under the new grant.

The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, via its Chesapeake Bay Targeted Watershed Grant Program, has awarded a \$500,000 grant to the Finger Lakes Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council.

According to Lola Tears, President of the RC&D Council, this grant will be used to promote and install Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as prescribed grazing systems, as well as wetland and riparian buffers, throughout the 10-county region of NY which comprises the Upper Susquehanna River Basin.

These BMPs will help improve water quality, enhance the habitat of grassland nesting birds, and encourage the sustainability of small and medium size family farms.

The partnership which is working on this watershed-wide initiative is made up of the Finger Lakes RC&D Council, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the 10 local Soil & Water Conservation Districts.

Once the contract is fully executed between the

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the Finger Lakes RC&D Council, approximately 33 livestock producers from the 10-county project area, which includes Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins, and Tioga counties will be recruited to participate in this project.

The grant will provide cost sharing to participating livestock operations for the purpose of installing a variety of BMPs that will exclude livestock from local rivers, streams and lakes, establish new wetland areas, as well as implement prescribed grazing systems.

Eligible farms must have a minimum of 25 animal units (dairy, beef, sheep, goats and/or horses), be a participant in N.Y.'s Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program, and provide a 25 percent match in the form of cash, labor, materials, or equipment. To find out more about this watershed-based initiative and determine a farm's eligibility, contact the Finger Lakes RC&D Council at (607) 776-7398 Ext 5 or via the internet at: fingerlakesrcd@infoblvd.net.