



Participating in AEM Tier 1

This document outlines the criteria for completion of *AEM Tier 1 Inventories*. Meeting or exceeding these minimum requirements will be the basis for acceptable utilization of state and federal AEM funding.

AEM Tier 1 - Inventory

Objectives

- Establish basic information on the farming operation.
- Identify potential natural resource concerns, opportunities and farmer interests.
- Determine the Tier 2 Worksheets that should be completed.
- Ascertain information that can be used to prioritize farms for Tier 2.
- Provide an educational opportunity.

Procedure – Farmer

- Complete Tier 1 Worksheet.
- Thoroughly answer all Tier 1 questions.
- Identify other on-farm issues, concerns and interests.
- Agree to notify the AEM Team when a significant change in farm type, farm management or farm resources occurs, or is being considered.

Procedure – Resource Professional

1. Select the planning unit to be addressed, which was prioritized in your AEM Strategic Plan.
 - a) Geographic (i.e. – watershed, aquifer recharge area)
 - b) Types of agriculture (i.e. – all, livestock only)
 - c) Consider developing a planning unit advisory committee
2. Determine steps to ensure good participation.
 - a) Establish methods (mail, personal contact, general meeting, newsletter, newspaper, etc).
 - b) Develop a follow-up strategy for non-responders.
 - c) Explain AEM, local program objectives and the *Tiered Approach to Conservation Planning* as part of your outreach effort.
3. Complete the full Tier 1 Questionnaire with each willing participant in the planning unit.
 - a) Document outreach to unwilling participants in the AEM Program. For future reference, consider recording basic Tier I information and any reasons given for not participating.
4. Review the *Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet* with the farmer – (If not reviewed at this stage the worksheet must be reviewed first during the Tier 2 visit). Much of this worksheet can be completed in the office prior to the farm visit.
 - Results of the *Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet* will determine the minimum worksheets that must be utilized in Tier 2 to address water quality concerns.
 - The *Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet* is an excellent tool for explaining watershed concerns to the farmer and the reason for District interest in farm operations.

5. Provide feedback to the farmer. Determine which Tier 2 worksheets should be utilized using the “*Making the Connection*” form and the *Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet*. Note – *Specialized Worksheets*, such as Horse or Greenhouse, require appropriate “core” Tier 2 Worksheets be completed in addition to the specialized worksheets.
 - a) Identify with the farmer the Tier 2 Worksheets that should be utilized.
 - b) Provide the farmer with an estimate of the time required to assess the farm.
 - c) If Tier 2 is not conducted immediately following Tier 1, consider providing copies of the pertinent Tier 2 Worksheets to the farmer prior to your Tier 2 meeting.
 - d) Provide information requested during the Tier 1 interview (this step can be completed as part of the Tier 2 Summary Report to the farmer if conducted immediately after the Tier 1 interview).
6. Create a cooperator file, or add to the existing file for the farm operation including:
 - a) *Tier 1 Questionnaire*
 - b) *Tier 1 Report to the Farmer* (unless Tiers 1 & 2 were completed in the same visit).
 - c) *Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet* (if completed as part of Tier 1).
 - d) Document the Tier 1 visit on the *Assistance Notes* form in the case file.
7. Based on your Strategic Plan priorities rank the farms that have completed Tier 1 for completion of Tier 2.
 - At a minimum, rank farms in a high, medium, or low category for completion of Tier 2.
 - This step would not be necessary when Tiers 1 & 2 are completed in the same visit.
8. Schedule the Tier 2 Assessment with the farmer if it was not conducted with the Tier 1 visit.
9. Reporting – Utilize the AEM *Tier 1 Data Management System* to record and report the following to the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee (SWCC):
 - a) Assign an identification number to each farm completing Tier 1
 - b) Record date Tier 1 interview was conducted.
 - c) Report data for the following items from the Tier 1 Questionnaire:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of operation 2. Owned and rented total acres 3. Owned and rented tillable acres 4. Owned and rented grazed land acres 5. Owned and rented hayland acres 6. Owned and rented woodland acres 7. Animal units 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Occurrence of manure application 9. Existence of manure storage 10. Pesticide use and storage 11. Presence of barnyard or feedlot 12. Presence of defined streams within or adjacent to the farm. 13. The 12-digit HUC watershed number for the farm location.
--	--

Deliverables Summary – Tier 1

1. Report the information collected in Procedure #8 above, for each farm completing a Tier 1 Questionnaire, to the SWCC through the AEM *Tier 1 Data Management System*.
 - a) Report farms by identification number only, not by name. Fill out a cross reference form, keep it current, and file it in a safe place so you can identify and match farms to the proper data.
2. Document the completion of each *Tier 1* on the *Final Report Form*, and record the time spent in the Time Log on a daily basis. Those forms will be reviewed and approved by your AEA at program close out and the Final report Form will be submitted to the SWCC.