regulations that may require certain agricultural practices, such as contour cultivation, strip cropping and the planting of erosion-preventative vegetation. The SWCDs do not have the power to enforce these regulations, however.

The Soil Conservation Service, a branch of the USDA, works with the SWCD boards to offer farmers assistance in limiting water contamination and water misuse. All SCS measures are voluntary and are often referred to as Best Management Practices.

### What are Best Management Practices?

Farmers interested in limiting their exposure to unwanted penalties and liabilities should utilize BMPs. BMPs are management and cultural practices that allow the farmer to get the most beneficial use out of the land while preserving the purity of water bodies. The primary sources of water contamination are suspended solids, nutrients, animal wastes, and pesticides. When these substances are present in excess, algae blooms, fish kills, sedimentation, health hazards, aesthetic changes, and modifications of plant and animal species diversity may result.

The Soil Conservation Service limits these problems by involving farmers in a variety of conservation practices. The practices vary given the agricultural system in use, the land involved, the waters being affected, and the potential pollutants. The SCS will identify the problem, design an appropriate Best Management Practice, oversee the implementation of the BMP, and monitor the effectiveness of the BMP. The SCS will not pay for the BMP, however.

An example of a BMP is a natural or constructed waterway maintained with vegetative cover in order to prevent soil erosion and to filter nutrients. BMPs change often as technology changes. Be sure to keep abreast of the most current BMPs available. Specific inquiries should be directed to your local Cooperative Extension Service and Soil and Water Conservation District.

## VII. Groundwater Discharge

### How does Florida regulate groundwater discharge?

Discharge of waste- into State waters is prohibited unless permitted by a state agency. Because underground water is included in the definition of water, this also applies to groundwater. A discharge activity will not be permitted if contaminants reduce ground or surface water quality below the required DER classification standard. A contaminant is any substance which is harmful to plant or animal life.

Application of chemicals- to control insect and aquatic weeds for agricultural purposes is exempt. However, the chemicals must be approved for the particular use by the EPA or DACS, application must be made according to the label, and state standards as well as the Florida Pesticide Law, F.S. Chapter 487, must be followed.

### What are groundwater classifications?

Groundwater is classified into four categories based first on whether the water is potable (drinkable) or non-potable, and then on the total of dissolved solids the water contains. F.A.C. 17-23.403(1). Under the classification scheme, aquifers (geographic formations that supply groundwater to wells, springs, or surface waters) retain the highest protection and are known as G-1 waters. Class G-4 waters are non-potable, located in confined aquifers only, and receive the least amount of protection. Unconfined groundwater always receives more protection as it is susceptible to contamination from another aquifer.