

Dane Co. Exec. Parisi: Announces innovative program to clean up our lakes in partnership with family farms

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Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced an innovative new program today to help clean up our lakes by assisting small and medium sized farms store manure in the winter. \$1.1 million will be available this spring for farmers to apply to help build community manure storage which will reduce the application of manure during critical times of the year when runoff is most likely to occur. Dane County and our partners spend over \$8 million a year to support the implementation of conservation practices.

“Our farmers are our best partners when it comes to lakes clean-up efforts,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “The county is working to do our part to ensure we preserve our agriculture heritage while protecting one of our most valuable resources.”

UW-Scientists estimate that 40 percent of manure containing phosphorus runs off snow or frozen ground between January and March and ends up in the lakes. Funds will be allocated using two methods: traditional cost share agreements and requests for proposals. The traditional Dane County cost share will fund a cost share for community manure storage. The request for proposal will allow producers to submit project proposals describing innovative ideas and strategies for managing manure such as ultrafiltration or composting.

Proposals are due to Dane County early this summer, county staff will work with the top ranked proposals to develop full proposals. Projects that rank the highest will be contacted by Dane County to develop funding agreements for project implementation.

Dane County Executive Parisi has invested millions of dollars in lakes clean-up efforts. In his latest budget, Parisi allocated over \$10 million to clean up our lakes. From urban storm water discharges to rural manure storage, Dane County has a full hands on deck approach to lakes clean-up efforts.

“Our quality of life is one of the main reasons people are moving to Dane County more than anywhere else in Wisconsin,” said Parisi. “We have everything from generational family farms to bustling cities and beautiful lakes. Dane County must work to protect all of our vital resources to continue our economic growth.”

In addition to this effort which will prevent future runoff into our lakes, Dane County is working to remove phosphorous already in streams which feed into our lakes. Research done by our Dane County staff led to a 2017 budget proposal to fund an innovative effort to remove phosphorus-laden sediment from the bottoms of 33 miles of streams in the Lake Mendota watershed. In tandem with additional conservation efforts done in cooperation with farmers, it's projected Parisi's \$12 million initiative will eliminate 870,000 pounds of algae-growing phosphorus. This work will lead to clean lakes decades sooner. The County Board's Land Conservation Committee will need to approve the program and contracts.