

DATCP: Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant applications now available for 2019

Posted on Thursday, Jul 5, 2018

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MADISON - Groups of Wisconsin farmers can now apply for the Producer-Led Watershed Protection grants for 2019. Applications will be accepted through Monday, Sept. 17.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will award grants to producer-led groups that focus on ways to prevent and reduce runoff from farm fields and farmsteads. Each group is eligible for up to \$40,000 a year, with a total of \$750,000 available in this round of funding. Applicants must find or contribute matching funds at least equal to the grant request.

The grants are intended to help farmers find solutions best suited for their particular watersheds, based on topography, soil type, types of operations and other factors that differ among regions of the state and work to increase farmer participation in these voluntary efforts.

Both newly formed and established groups may apply.

Applicants must be groups of at least five farmers whose farms are in the same watershed. Each farm must have produced at least \$6,000 in gross farm revenue last year, or \$18,000 over the past three years. Each group must partner with DATCP, the Department of Natural Resources, a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization, and work with other producers in the watershed to voluntarily reduce runoff pollution from farm operations.

A few examples of projects include:

- Startup work such as watershed planning and bringing in experts to speak about soil and water quality issues
- Incentive payments to farmers to do soil testing and nutrient management planning, plant cover crops, install grassed waterways, and other conservation activities
- Develop new approaches to manure storage and applications
- Host conferences, workshops or field days to engage additional farmer participation

Grant funds cannot pay for real estate, loans, equipment purchases, out-of-state conference or travel or lobbying.

Application materials are available at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/-ProducerLedProjects.aspx. Applications will be accepted only via email in Microsoft Word format. Farmers with questions should contact Rachel Rushmann, rachel.rushmann@wi.gov, (608) 224-4622.