

WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Producer-led watershed protection grants third round of funding awarded to 17 farmer groups

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MADISON – Wisconsin’s latest round of Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants has been awarded to 17 groups of farmers who will work with conservation agencies and organizations to address soil and water issues tailored to their local conditions.

Seven of the groups are first-time grant recipients. Together the 17 groups will receive the full \$250,000 available for 2018. Grants range from just over \$8,200 up to \$27,500, for activities that most often include incentives for farmers to plant cover crops and undertake other conservation practices. All include farmer-to-farmer education via field days, conferences and similar activities.

This is the third round of grant awards since the funding was made available in the 2015-17 state budget. The 2017-19 budget increased the maximum amount that groups could receive to \$40,000, up from \$20,000 previously.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants are intended to give financial support to farmers willing to lead conservation efforts tailored to their own watersheds. The emphasis is on innovation and practices not already covered by other state and federal programs, and the intent is that participating farmers will reach out to other

farmers to help them adopt conservation practices.

Producer groups must work with DATCP, the Department of Natural Resources, a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization. Grant funds cannot pay for real estate, loans, equipment purchases, or lobbying, and the program places caps on the amount of funding that can be used for staff support to the groups. Each group must start with at least five farmers in the watershed.

First-time grant recipients:

Cedar Creek Farmers — \$13,000

Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil-Healthy Water — \$27,500

Farmers for Tomorrow — \$25,730

Farmers of the Sugar River — \$11,550

Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance — \$12,000

Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers — \$21,000

Tainter Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council — \$13,000

Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County — \$13,000

Previously funded projects receiving new grants:

Buffalo-Trempealeau Farm Network — \$12,000

Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council — \$23,000

Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council — \$12,000

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families — \$13,000

Peninsula Pride Farms — \$10,000

Uplands Watershed Group — \$13,000

Upper Sugar River Producer Coalition — \$12,000

Waumandee Watershed — \$8,220

Yahara Pride Farms — \$10,000