

Dane County Exec. Parisi: County now accepting applications for popular Continuous Cover Program

Posted on Monday, Jan 25, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Dane County is now accepting applications for its Continuous Cover Program, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. The program began in 2019 and provides landowners with an incentive to convert existing cropland acres into permanent, perennial grass. Community interest in the county's effort continued in 2020. As a result, County Executive Parisi increased funding for the Continuous Cover Program in this year's budget to \$1.75 million to provide more landowners with the opportunity to participate in the program.

"Dane County's Continuous Cover Program offers small family farms and rural property owners the opportunity they need to make ends meet during these challenging times and protect their lands for conservation efforts," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "This program helps farmers preserve the character of their land, make their property less vulnerable to flooding, and enhance wildlife and pollinators habitats. We look forward to welcoming even more participants to the program this year."

The Continuous Cover Program began in 2019 with \$750,000 plus funding from the Yahara CLEAN budget as a way to reduce run-off, enhance carbon sequestration, and preserve rural character in Dane County. Nearly 60 applications were received, which encompassed approximately 1,000 acres of property. County Executive Parisi doubled funds in 2020 to \$1.5 million due to program's success. To date, Dane County has protected close to 700 acres of land in 22 townships. Converting to grasses and pollinator habitat has reduced phosphorus run-off into local waters by over 1,700 pounds each year.

Benefits of the Continuous Cover Program include reducing phosphorus and carbon emissions, protecting lands for conservation in the face of expanding development pressures, and promoting habitats good for pollinators that continue to face adversity from challenges like pesticides and climate change. The conversion of cropland to perennial grasses increases water infiltration, improves water quality, reduces soil erosion, and enhances wildlife habitat practices, all while helping farmers as they continue to face economic challenges.

The program offers landowners a tool to diversify or address marginally productive lands. The property can be converted to continuous cover through a variety of practices including: prescribed grazing, pasture establishment, cool season grass establishment, native prairie, and pollinator habitat. Those who enroll in the program commit to keeping and maintaining their land in perennial cover for at least 15 years.

Dane County's Land & Water Resources Department is now accepting open enrollment of Continuous Cover Program applications. To apply or learn more about the Dane County Continuous Cover Program, visit <https://lwr.d.countyofdane.com/ccp> or call (608) 224-3730.