

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants awarded to 36 farmer groups

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MADISON, Wis. – The latest round of Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants has been awarded to 36 farmer groups by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Farmers will use the funds to work with conservation organizations to address soil and water issues specific to their local watersheds.

Seven of the groups are first-time recipients. Together, the 36 groups will receive the full \$1 million included in the state budget. Grants range from \$3,250 to \$40,000 for conservation practice incentives, education and outreach, on-farm demonstrations, and water quality testing and monitoring efforts.

Farmers continue to find value in the program and by collaborating with other farmers on conservation solutions. “The grant program has kept our group together and motivated to do more,” said Brian Malszewski, member of the Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network. “It not only has opened doors to more communication on cover crop practices amongst the group, but with other groups throughout the state. It has personally held me accountable, and because of this program our team of farmers has gone above and beyond.”

This is the seventh round of grant awards since funding was first made available in the 2015-17 state budget. The 2021-23 budget authorized annual program funding totaling \$1 million. Grant requests for 2022 totaled nearly \$1.2 million.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants give financial support to farmers willing to lead conservation efforts in 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 help other farmers adopt conservation practices by offering incentives and through peer-to-peer education and outreach activities.

“As an agronomist and a farmer, I feel it’s very important that we share our knowledge about practices that improve the soil, limit erosion, and make our world better,” said Jake Kaderly, CCA, member of Farmers of the Sugar River. “The grant gives us that opportunity to locally share that knowledge through having events with speakers, in field demonstrations, and keeping the thought that soil health comes first.”

Groups must partner with a county land conservation department, UW-Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, or another nonprofit conservation organization on their projects. Funds cannot pay for real estate, loans, equipment, or lobbying, and the program places caps on funding for staff support to the groups. Each group must start with at least five farmers in the watershed.

More information about the farmer groups and their accomplishments can be found at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx.

2022 Funding Summary

Newly-Funded Groups

Bad Axe	\$33,600
Coon Creek	\$20,140
Farmers of the Lemonweir Valley	\$33,600
Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri	\$7,500
Farmers on the Rock	\$33,600
Jefferson County Soil Builders	\$18,522
Rock River Regenerative Graziers	\$39,358

Existing Groups

Bear Creek-Chippewa River	\$20,140
Biological Farm Friends	\$19,089
Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network (BTFN)	\$33,600

Calumet County Ag Stewardship Alliance	\$22,898
Cedar Creek Farmers	\$3,250
Central Wisconsin Farmers' Collaborative (CWFC)	\$33,600
Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water	\$33,180
Farmers for Lake Country	\$23,604
Farmers for the Upper Sugar River	\$40,000
Farmers for Tomorrow	\$33,600
Farmers of Mill Creek	\$40,000
Farmers of the Sugar River	\$22,000
Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council	\$14,700
Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council	\$16,800
Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance (LASA)	\$40,000
Lake Wisconsin Farmer Watershed Council	\$40,000
Ozaukee County Clean Farm Families (CFF)	\$33,600
Peninsula Pride Farms (PPF)	\$40,000
Producers of Lake Redstone	\$33,600
Red Cedar Conservation Farmers	\$33,600
Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group	\$25,000
Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers	\$29,225
Shell Lake-Yellow River Farmer-Led Watershed Council	\$21,252
South Kinni Farmer-Led Watershed Council	\$10,140
Tainter Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council	\$33,600
Uplands Watershed Group	\$10,000
Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County	\$40,000
Western Wisconsin Conservation Council	\$33,600
Yahara Pride Farms	\$33,600