

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection: Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants increase conservation practices on Wisconsin farms

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has released the [2020-2021 impact report](#) for the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program, which shows that conservation practices among producer-led groups in the program rose by 23% from 2020 to 2021. These practices help reduce soil erosion and phosphorus loss from farm fields, ensuring that nutrients go into farmers' crops instead of local soil and water sources.

"In Wisconsin, farmers serve as a significant economic driver, feed our families, strengthen the fiber of our communities, and preserve our rich soil and vital water resources," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. "The producer-led program is critical in ensuring a strong future for Wisconsin's agriculture industry. With the help of increased funding from the 2019-2021 biennial state budget, producer-led groups again had the opportunity to build strong connections to help address conservation needs in rural areas and protect our state's water quality and soil health."

Data suggests that DATCP's Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program is an effective way to increase the use of conservation practices across farmland. According to DATCP's analysis, there were 807 farmer members participating in producer-led groups covering 526,846 acres of Wisconsin cropland in 2021. These groups conducted 129 outreach events to fellow farmers and community members, reaching 5,124 attendees on important conservation and water quality topics in agriculture. The groups started and

maintained 26 on-farm demonstration and research projects, which help farmers, landowners and agricultural professionals learn and innovate on new soil health strategies and conservation systems.

The total reported conservation practice acres rose to 978,881 acres in 2021 from 798,221 acres in 2020, a 23% increase in total conservation practices. More specifically, the program saw a 20% increase in cropland receiving cover crops, a 34% increase in acres managed using no-till practices and 46% increase in nutrient management planning.

About the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

Since its inception in 2015, DATCP has awarded more than \$4.2 million to 41 groups in watersheds across the state. Grant projects have focused on providing conservation education to farmers, conducting on-farm demonstrations and research, issuing incentive payments for implementing conservation practices, organizing field days, and gathering data on soil health and water quality.

DATCP is accepting applications for the grants through September 16, 2022. Through 2021-2023 budget, Governor Evers authorized an increase to annual program funding. DATCP will award up to \$1 million in Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants in 2023, and eligible groups can receive up to \$40,000. Grant information and application materials are available on [DATCP's website](#) and must be submitted to DATCP through email in Microsoft Word. For more information, contact DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Manager Dana Christel at dana.christel@wi.gov or (608) 640-7270.

To learn more about producer-led watershed protection grants and view the full impact report, visit [DATCP's website](#).