

Sand County Foundation: Receives grant to incentivize conservation on Wisconsin farms

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MADISON, Wis. – The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has awarded a grant to Sand County Foundation to provide financial incentives for farmers who reduce erosion and protect water quality.

The NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant supports Sand County Foundation's [ongoing work](#) to accelerate the adoption of soil health management on farmland. [Sand County Foundation](#) is a national non-profit that works at the intersection of agriculture and environmental improvement.

The three-year grant will be used to apply [performance-based conservation](#) planning to incentivize farmers and farmland owners in eastern and central Wisconsin who implement a management change that results in a measurable environmental improvement on their farms. These climate-smart agricultural practices can include growing cover crops, reduced tillage practices, implementing nutrient management plans, and installing prairie filter strips.

“This performance-based conservation incentive approach is an innovative way to pay farmers according to the sediment and nutrients they retain on the land as a result of the conservation practices they adopt,” said Dr. Heidi Peterson, Sand County Foundation’s Vice President of Agricultural Conservation and Research.

Peterson called it an alternative to blanket ‘pay-for-practice’ incentives. She said the three-year project would target the incentives to late adoptors of conservation practices and beginning farmers.

“Sand County Foundation is seeking collaborations with organizations, municipalities, and private companies interested in investing in these farmers as they adopt climate smart management, to achieve their supply chain sustainability goals,” Peterson said.

Other key partners in the project include Green Lake Sanitary District, Tilth Agronomy, Ozaukee County Land & Water Management Department, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection.

Those interested in participating in the project can email Tricia Verville, Sand County Foundation’s Director of Agricultural Systems at tverville@SandCountyFoundation.org.