

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Accepting applications for Producer-Led Watershed Protection grants through September 15

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is accepting applications for 2024 Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants through September 15, 2023. These grants are awarded to producer-led groups to help support and advance producer-led conservation solutions and farmer participation in local watershed conservation efforts.

The total program budget for 2024 is \$1 million. Eligible groups that apply can receive up to \$40,000. The grants aim to help farmers find and promote conservation solutions best suited for their watershed, based on topography, soil, types of operations, and other factors that differ among regions of the state.

“Conserving and protecting our natural resources is essential for the success of our agricultural industries and economy, so farmers and producers play a critical role in our work to protect our state’s water and soil health,” said Gov. Tony Evers. “We were glad to once again invest in the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program through the 2023-25 biennial budget because these groups are critical to building strong partnerships within communities to ensure the health and well-being of our land, our people, and our agricultural industry for generations.”

“Producers across the state are working to preserve our rich soil and vital water resources,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “The funding that the Governor

and legislature agreed upon in the recent budget allows producers to continue this good work.”

Eligibility Requirements Applicants must be groups of at least five farmers whose farms are in the same or adjacent watershed. Each farm must have produced at least \$6,000 in gross farm revenue last year, or \$18,000 over the past three years. Each group must partner with a county land conservation department, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization. Both newly-formed and established groups are eligible to apply.

How to Apply Grant information and application materials are available at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx and must be submitted by email in Microsoft Word format. For more information, contact Producer-Led Watershed Program Manager Dana Christel at dana.christel@wi.gov or (608) 640-7270.

Program Information The Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants program is the first state program of its kind in the nation. Since the program first began in 2015, DATCP has awarded over \$5.2 million to 45 producer-led watershed groups across the state. Requests for funding since the program’s inception total nearly \$6.8 million. 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. In 2022, conservation practices implemented by groups in the program impacted 1.1 million acres.