

Dept. of Natural Resources: Accepting pre-applications for 2024 surface water grants

Posted on Friday, Aug 18, 2023

>> **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.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will award more than \$6 million to local groups to protect and improve surface water.

Lake groups, river groups, local governments, nonprofit organizations and producer-led groups are encouraged to apply for a grant. Interested organizations should submit a pre-application by **Sept. 15** to ensure they are eligible to compete for a grant in November.

The [DNR's Surface Water Grants Program](#) leverages money from the water resources account of the state conservation fund to help local communities accelerate water protection and restoration efforts across Wisconsin. The funding can be used to support a wide range of locally driven projects that invest in watersheds and surface water bodies.

Activities eligible for funding include:

- Organizational capacity building
- Educational programs on surface water
- Data collection and ecological assessments
- Lake and river management planning
- Water quality improvement
- Projects that restore aquatic habitat
- Aquatic invasive species prevention and control
- Conservation easements and land acquisition

[Wisconsin Legislature: 2023 Wisconsin Act 5](#) amended lake and river protection grant statutes to explicitly designate producer-led groups, or a legal entity acting on their behalf, as eligible applicants to receive surface water grants. A producer-led group is a group of five farmers and a collaborator (e.g., UW-Extension, DNR, County or nonprofit conservation organization) who have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If the group is not incorporated, the collaborator may serve as the applicant/fiscal sponsor.

Who Is Eligible To Apply For Grant Funding?

Eligible organizations include lake associations and districts, river management organizations, local units of government, nonprofits, schools, producer-led groups, and others. Individuals are not eligible for grants (with few exceptions) but may partner with an organization that is willing to sponsor a project. Reach out now to your [local environmental grant specialist](#) to confirm eligibility.

What Funding Is Available?

The amount of funding available varies by project. For example, education projects are eligible for up to \$5,000 in state support while comprehensive planning grants are available for up to \$25,000 and larger management plan implementation grants can provide up to \$200,000 per project. Grants operate on a reimbursement basis and require matching funds from 25% to 33% of the total project cost.

How To Apply

Submit a pre-application by Sept. 15. This will connect you to local assistance and ensure you are eligible to submit a final application on Nov. 15.

Pre-application forms can be found under the “applying” tab on the [DNR’s Surface Water Grants Program webpage](#). Right-click the link to Surface Water Grant Application Form 8700-284 and download or “save as” to create a copy of the form on your computer. Open the form from your local drive and fill out the sections labeled “pre-application.”

Email the form by Sept. 15 to DNRSurfaceWaterGrants@Wisconsin.gov. The department will be in touch with more information following your submission.

For More Information

Visit the [DNR's Surface Water Grants Program webpage](#) for more information on applying and managing a grant project.

The [DNR Surface Water Grant Applicant Guide](#) is a comprehensive user manual for the program. This document has been updated for the 2023-2024 grant cycle. It is organized chronologically to explain how to navigate the grant program from application to closing. Start by reading Section 1, which contains enough high-level introductory information to get you started.