Gov. Evers, DATCP: Announce commercial nitrogen optimization pilot program grant recipients

Posted on Thursday, Apr 20, 2023

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), announced that 20 recipients are receiving grant funding for the 2023 Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP). These grants aim to refine and enhance the understanding of new methods that optimize commercial nitrogen applied to agricultural fields, helping to protect vital soil and water resources.

“This pilot program is a great way to bring together partners in this work, from farmers and producers to conservation professionals, to promote collaboration and find best practices to ensure that we are protecting our state’s natural resources from harmful contaminants while helping farmers protect their bottom line,” said Gov. Evers. “Farmers know firsthand the value of having clean water and fruitful land, and we are glad to continue to invest in and support producer-led conservation efforts in my 2023-25 biennial budget so farmers can continue to stay innovative and productive for years to come.”

“As stewards of the land, Wisconsin farmers understand that our rich soil and water resources are our strength, and they work tirelessly to ensure that our farmland is maintained for future generations,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “Thanks to Governor Evers and the Legislature, these grants will give farmers across the state the opportunity to continue identifying new opportunities in nitrogen optimization.”

The NOPP was designed to encourage agricultural producers to develop innovative approaches to optimize the application of commercial nitrogen for a duration of at

least two growing seasons. The selected producers must collaborate with a University of Wisconsin (UW) System institution, which will monitor the grant project on-site and conduct commercial nitrogen optimization field studies.

Funding for the NOPP and the cover crop insurance premium rebate program, which assists farmers with rebates of $5 per acre of a cover crop planted for crop insurance premiums paid on those acres, was announced last summer. These programs were created under 2021 Wisconsin Act 223, legislation put forth by the bipartisan Water Quality Task Force and signed into law by Gov. Evers in April 2022. Building on these efforts to conserve and protect Wisconsin's soil and water resources, Gov. Evers' 2023-25 biennial budget proposes to provide $2.4 million in each year of the biennium to continue the NOPP, as well as the cover crop insurance program.

The grant structure allowed agricultural producers to work together and apply under a single application, with each individual producer eligible to receive a maximum award of up to $50,000. Of each of the grants, up to 20 percent will be awarded to the UW System for monitoring and research assistance. The application period for the program closed on Jan. 31, 2023.

DATCP received 31 funding applications totaling more than $2.1 million in requests. The grant recipients and their planned projects, totaling nearly $1.6 million, are:

Joe Ailts | $43,505
Explore organic and inorganic nitrogen soil testing as a means to reduce nitrogen applications.
Number of producers on project: 2

David Albright | $50,000
Evaluate the nitrogen efficiency and yield return of Augmenta camera system.
Number of producers on project: 1

Gregory Bean (McCain Foods) | $100,000
Create a Public-Industry Partnership for Enhanced Nitrogen Management (PIPE-N) in potatoes.
Number of producers on project: 2

Brendon Blank | $128,134
Determine nitrogen rate for best winter triticale forage yield, quality, and

phosphorus removal.
Number of producers on project: 3

Joe Bragger | $18,940
Optimize urea applications when applying poultry litter to corn.
Number of producers on project: 2

Cranberry Creek | $50,000
Study nitrogen application timing in Wisconsin cranberry marshes.
Number of producers on project: 1

Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water | $246,926
Determine nitrogen rate from multi-species cover crops after wheat in greater Dodge County.
Number of producers on project: 13

Flyte Farms | $50,000
Maximize potato yield nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) with at-plant additives in a reduced nitrogen setting.
Number of producers on project: 1

Jim Hebbe | $48,000
Evaluate a biological nitrogen product in maintaining corn yield.
Number of producers on project: 1

InDepth Agronomy | $64,271
Validate corn nitrogen rates for eastern Wisconsin soils.
Number of producers on project: 2

Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance | $100,582
Determine optimal nitrogen rate for planting corn for grain production “green” in cereal rye cover crop following the soybean production year.
Number of producers on project: 4

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute | $71,041
Estimate nitrogen credits from multi-species cover crops planted after wheat.
Number of producers on project: 3

Tracey Novak | $25,597
Evaluate Pivot Bio PROVEN40® over four nitrogen rates.

Number of producers on project: 1

Pleasant Valley Acres LLC | $42,851
Evaluate corn maximum return to nitrogen (MRTN) rates on coarse versus loam soil types.
Number of producers on project: 1

Powell-Smith Grass-Based Study | $149,934
Examine use of commercial fertilizer supplementation for prime grass-legume crop with dairy manure.
Number of producers on project: 3

Red Cedar Conservation Farmers | $148,364
Determine NUE: Trial 1 – effect of cover crop termination on NUE; Trial 2 – effect of manure and tillage on NUE.
Number of producers on project: 4

Trent Towne | $47,947
Evaluate the benefits of winter grazing on corn yields while optimizing nitrogen application.
Number of producers on project: 1

Ben Turzinski | $48,935
Conduct field-scale corn nitrogen rate study in irrigated loamy sands in Portage County.
Number of producers on project: 1

Dean Weichmann | $48,686
Optimize commercial nitrogen applications in corn after short-season cover crops.
Number of producers on project: 1

Western Wisconsin Conservation Council | $100,000
Conduct a four-year nitrogen rate study under irrigation in western Wisconsin.
Number of producers on project: 2

Additional information on the Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Grant Program is available on DATCP's website here. An online version of this release is available here.