

SECTION 1

1.1 OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL SOIL AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GRANT PROCESS

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection administers Wisconsin's Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) program under the provisions of Chapter 92 Wisconsin Statutes and ATCP 50 Wisconsin Administrative Code. The Department assists the county land conservation committees by distributing funds through the SWRM grant program. These grant funds are used to help fund county soil and water conservation staff and support expenditures, as well as landowner conservation projects. These funds also can be used to support cooperators and OPC contracts to carry out special statewide activities.

The legislature appropriates funds to the department from three funding sources: General Purpose Revenue (GPR), Segregated (SEG) and Bond Revenue (Bond) for use in the SWRM grant program.

GPR is used to fund a portion of the total allocation of staff salary and fringe benefits and eligible support costs each calendar grant year (see ATCP 50.34). This revenue type consists of general taxes, miscellaneous receipts and revenues collected by state agencies which are paid into the general fund and are available for appropriation by the legislature.

SEG funds constitute the second source of base budget funds for the soil and water resource management program. This revenue type consists of funds that are dedicated to the *environmental fund*. The legislature appropriates some of the money in the *environmental fund* to the department for soil and water resource management. A *local assistance* appropriation provides funding for support of local land conservation personnel. An *aids* appropriation provides funding for landowner cost-sharing grants and OPC project cooperator (OPC) grants.

Bond funds are generated when the State of Wisconsin sells bonds. The legislature first appropriated these types of funds to the department for the soil and water resource management program in the 1997-99 biennium. The building commission must authorize the sale of bonds to generate the revenue. Bond funds are used for "hard" practices (see ATCP 50.34).

The Grant Allocation Process

By law, the Department must allocate grants to county land conservation committees and OPCs according to an annual joint DATCP/DNR Allocation Plan. The joint annual allocation plan is reviewed by the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) and approved by both the DATCP Secretary and the DNR Secretary (see ATCP 50.28).

The annual allocation plan is based on grant applications from the counties and OPC project cooperators submitted by the April 15th deadline. The Department expects to issue a preliminary allocation plan to every county land conservation committee in the summer of each year for the subsequent calendar year. Counties and OPCs may comment on the allocation plan by appearing at the appropriate LWCB meeting when the plan is presented.

Written comments can be submitted for thirty days from the date of the LWCB presentation date. After receiving comments, a proposed final joint allocation plan is submitted to the LWCB for their recommendation to the department. Then the department secretaries sign the joint final allocation plan. The final allocation plan is then posted to the web and e-mailed directly to those who are awarded funds in the plan.

The annual joint allocation plan must specify all of the following:

- The total amount appropriated to the departments for allocation under the plan.
- The total amount allocated under the plan by fund type.
- The total amount allocated to each county for staff and support and cost-share.
- The total amount allocated for OPC grants.
- The plan must specify the total amount allocated for each purpose, the amounts allocated to each county or to each grant recipient OPC than a county and the reason for the allocation.

The annual allocation plan is based on: available funding sources, statutory requirements, the LCC grant applications and the effectiveness of funding in achieving conservation goals statewide. DATCP revises the annual allocation plan to reflect all approved transfers and re-allocations, and prepares an accounting of all of these transactions in any given grant year by April of the year following that grant year.

General: The department distributes soil and water resource management grants to county land conservation committees and OPCs. In 2018, a Master SWRM Grant Contract was signed with each county. Annually, DATCP prepares a schedule of award for each county, specifying details of each award based on the annual allocation plan. In order for a county to be eligible to receive an annual SWRM grant award it must have a current, approved LWRM plan. Counties with expired LWRM plans will have the award held until an updated plan is approved.

Staffing Award: The annual schedule of awards details staffing and support funds to counties to reimburse for the work of staff and independent contractors who perform soil and water management activities, including county soil and water conservation priorities. No more than 10% of the total staffing award can be spent on support costs.

Cost-Share Award: The annual schedule of awards also specifies funds available to counties to enter into cost-share contracts with landowners to install eligible conservation practices. Projects must be completed by December 31 of the grant year, reimbursed by the County to the landowner by January 31 of the year following the award year, and reimbursed by DATCP to the County by February 15 of the year following the award year. If a project will not be completed by December 31 of the award year, then the County must apply for an extension before the end of the year for that project.

Project Awards: Under s. 92.14 (10), Stats., DATCP may award grants through the annual allocation plan to any cooperator for services and activities including information, education, and training. Sec. ATCP 50.35 establishes application and OPC grant requirements parallel to those for county grants, including the option to extend a grant-funded project for an additional year.

A calendar year timeline example, using 2018 as the current calendar year is as follows:

January 1, 2018	Counties may develop landowner cost-share contracts for the landowner to sign for using 2018 funds.
January 26, 2018	Grant application for 2019 will be e-mailed to the counties and OPCs.
January 31, 2018	Last day for counties to reimburse landowners for cost-share projects completed by December 31, 2017.
February 15, 2018	Last day for counties and OPCs to submit reimbursements to DATCP for staff and support funds AND cost-share projects that were completed in 2017.
April 3, 2018	LWCB recommends and DATCP Secretary signs Addendum to the 2018 Final Allocation Plan, approving county cost-share and OPC extensions. The approved extensions become part of the 2018 schedule of awards for counties and OPCs.
April 16, 2018	2019 grant applications from counties and OPC are due. NMFE and NOD/NOI grant applications due on or about this date.
April 16, 2018	Final due date for county submission to DATCP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual work plans for 2018 • 2017 annual reports (an earlier date may be requested).
April 30, 2018	Schedule of Awards and terms and conditions for 2018 are e-mailed to the counties.
May 2018	DATCP starts making payments in connection with cost-share reimbursement requests submitted through February 15 th of the next award year.
June 1, 2018	Deadline for counties to confirm 2017 staff salaries used for 2019 grant awards.
July 22, 2018	The 2019 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan is e-mailed to the counties, OPC, and LWCB members
August 7, 2018	The 2019 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB. Counties and OPCs have a thirty-day period for commenting on the 2019 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan
September 28, 2018	Announcement regarding transfer process.
October 2, 2018	The 2019 Joint Final Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB for approval and then submitted to DATCP and DNR secretaries for signature.
October 27, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email to counties with link to cost-share project extension form and instructions. • Extension instructions will be e-mailed to the OPCs.
November 1, 2018	First request for staffing grant reimbursements are due.
December 1, 2018	Last day to submit a request to DATCP to transfer cost-share funds between counties.
December 31, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last day for counties to have cost-share contracts signed by landowners to be eligible for 2018 funds. • Last day for counties and OPCs to e-mail in their extension request to DATCP.

