

## **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 other 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 (BR) 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 other project cooperator grants.

BR 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. BR 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 others 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).

DATCP and DNR base the annual allocation plan on grant applications from the counties and other project cooperators submitted by the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. The Department usually issues a preliminary allocation plan to every county land conservation committee in July of each year for the subsequent calendar year. Counties and others may comment on the allocation

plan by appearing at the August LWCB meeting where the plan is presented. Written comments can be submitted for thirty days from the date of the August LWCB meeting date. After receiving comments, a proposed final joint allocation plan is submitted to the LWCB for their recommendation to the department in October. By mid-October, 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 other project cooperator grants. The plan must specify the total amount allocated for each purpose, the amounts allocated to each county or to each grant recipient other than a county and the reason for the allocation.

The DATCP and DNR departments prepare the annual allocation plan 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 other project cooperators. DATCP prepares a grant contract providing the specific details of each award. Before funds can be distributed, the grant contract must be signed by a county representative or other grant recipient, as well as a DATCP representative. In order for a county to be eligible to receive an annual SWRM grant contract, every county must have a current approved LWRM plan. Counties with expired LWRM plans will have their contract held until an updated plan is approved.

Staffing Award: The annual grant county contract awards 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 grant county contract also awards funds 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 grant year, and reimbursed by DATCP to the County by February 15 of the year following the grant year. If a project will not be completed by December 31 of the grant 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 other 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 2014 as the current calendar year is as follows:

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| January 1, 2014   | Counties may develop landowner cost-share contracts for the landowner to sign for using 2014 funds; however, the county should wait to sign the contract until both DATCP and the county have a signed contract in May.   |
| January 15, 2014  | Grant application for 2015 will be e-mailed to the counties and other project cooperators.  |
| January 31, 2014  | Last day for counties to reimburse landowners for cost-share projects completed by December 31, 2013.   |
| February 15, 2014 | Last day for counties and other project cooperators to submit reimbursements to DATCP for staff and support funds AND cost-share projects that were completed in 2013.  |
| April 1, 2014     | LWCB recommends and DATCP Secretary signs Addendum to the 2014 Final Allocation Plan, approving county cost-share and other project cooperator extensions. The approved extensions become part of the 2014 grant contract between DATCP and a county or other project cooperator. |
| April 15, 2014    | 2015 grant applications from counties and other project cooperators are due. NMFE and NOD/NOI grant applications due on or about this date.   |
| April 15, 2014    | 2013 annual reports are due from the counties to DATCP.   |
| April 30, 2014    | Grant contracts for 2014 are e-mailed to the counties.  |
| May, 2014         | Counties and other project cooperators return a signed 2014 grant contract to DATCP. After DATCP representative signs the contract, then a copy is e-mailed back to the county or other project cooperator.   |
| June 1, 2014      | Deadline for confirming that 2013 staff salaries used for 2015 grant awards   |
| June, 2014        | DATCP starts making payments in connection with cost-share reimbursement requests submitted through February 15 <sup>th</sup> of the next grant.  |
| July 1, 2014      | The first staff and support reimbursement request form for the period covering January 1 through June 30, 2014 is e-mailed to the counties.   |
| July 22, 2014     | The 2015 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan is e-mailed to the counties, other project cooperators, and LWCB members.  |

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| August 4, 2014    | The 2015 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB. Counties and others have a thirty-day period for commenting on the 2015 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan                                       |
| September 8, 2014 | The transfer form and instructions will be e-mailed to the counties for transferring funds from county to county.  |
| October 1, 2014   | Last day to submit a request to DATCP for redirection of funds from staff to cost-share.   |
| October 6, 2014   | The 2015 Joint Final Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB for approval and then submitted to DATCP and DNR secretaries for signature.  |
| October 15, 2014  | The second/final staff and support reimbursement request form for period covering July 1 through December 31, 2014 or January 1 through December 31, 2014 will be e-mailed to the counties.                      |
| October 27, 2014  | The cost-share project extension form and instructions will be e-mailed to the counties. Extension instructions will be e-mailed to the other project cooperators.   |
| December 1, 2014  | Last day to submit a request to DATCP to transfer cost-share funds between counties.   |
| December 31, 2014 | Last day for counties to have cost-share contracts signed by landowners to be eligible for 2014 funds.<br><br>Last day for counties and other project cooperators to e-mail in their extension request to DATCP. |