

Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) Grants

Many of the current producer-led projects have integrated aspects of nutrient management into their projects. Our NMFE grant program provides funding to train farmers on how to write their own nutrient management plan. Producer-led groups that are interested in incorporating nutrient management training into their projects are encouraged to apply to this program, along with conservation districts, county, state and federal agriculture or natural resource agencies, technical colleges and universities or University of Wisconsin - Extension offices.

Tier 1 funding (maximum of \$20,000): Provide nutrient management training to producers and plan writers to develop 590-compliant nutrient management plans.

- Tier 1 funding can be used for participant payments to complete soil testing or to attend training as well as for administrative, training and support costs.

Tier 2 funding (maximum of \$2,500): Offer nutrient management training and education but developing a 590-compliant plan isn't required.

- Tier 2 funding can be used for administrative, training and support costs.

Applications are accepted annually and are available by January 31 of every year, with applications due on April 15 of that same year.

How can groups use Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant funds?

For startup costs

Work planning, developing a mission, and setting goals

For incentive payments to farmers adopting conservation practices

Soil testing, cover crops, nutrient management planning, no-till planting, buffer strips, grassed waterways, manure composting, low-disturbance manure injection and other non-traditional practices

For implementation and outreach costs

Field days, conferences and workshops; bringing in experts; measuring and promoting economic and environmental benefits of conservation practices; developing innovative approaches to manure storage; on-farm research; water quality monitoring

These are examples of eligible costs, but the grant program rewards innovation. The program manager can help groups determine if other proposals would be eligible before they complete their applications.



2016 Producer-Led Projects

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

Farmers finding ways to save Wisconsin's waters

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

2811 Agriculture Drive, P.O. Box 8911
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8911

For more information and how to apply:

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects

[ProducerLedProjects](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects)

Contact:

(608) 224-4622



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Improving soil and water quality in Wisconsin's watersheds: 4 of the 14 awarded producer-led projects

Who knows the land better than farmers themselves?

That's the premise behind Wisconsin's Producer-Led Watershed Protection grants. Farmers band together to seek solutions to conservation problems – solutions that fit the conditions on their farms without damaging productivity or profits. The goal of this

About the program

voluntary program is to improve water quality by preventing or reducing runoff pollution from farm yards and fields. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection awards the grants. Each producer group may receive up to \$20,000 a year, with a total of \$250,000 available annually.

There are some basic requirements:

- Only groups of five or more farmers may apply for the grants – not individual producers.
- Members of the group must all farm in the same watershed.
- The group must help other producers in the watershed work to reduce runoff pollution from their fields.
- Each group must have formal agreement with a collaborator – DATCP, DNR, a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization.
- The group must contribute or find matching funds at least equal to its grant request. Matches may include in-kind services.

In addition to their formal collaborators, producer groups may also work with other organizations interested in environmental or rural issues, and their projects may dovetail with conservation projects involving their land conservation departments and other government agencies.

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families: \$20,000

Producers in the Milwaukee River Watershed farm amid Wisconsin's most intensely populated region, and their land drains to Lake Michigan.

So when the six farmers who formed this new group applied for a Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant, they knew that protecting water quality in their own backyard could also help urban dwellers see that farmers are good environmental stewards.

And they knew they could tap into regional efforts to protect the Great Lakes. The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and a Milwaukee-based private foundation, the Fund for Lake Michigan, were already collaborating on a five-year watershed initiative to reduce runoff into Lake Michigan under the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program. But there was no organized agricultural component to that effort. Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families fills that gap.

They are collaborating with the Ozaukee County Natural Resources Committee, which provides the county conservationist's expertise.

Their work plan includes:

- Planting 625 acres to cover crops and harvestable buffer strips on 15 farms
- Establishing a cover crop demonstration plot
- Hosting a cover crop and a tillage field day, with the general public invited
- Offering a winter workshop
- Creating a twice-yearly newsletter
- Exploring low soil disturbance manure injection

Farmers will be eligible for \$35/acre for planting cover crops and buffer strips, partly paid from the grant. Grant funds will go toward materials, lunch and mailings for the field days and workshop, with the Fund for Lake Michigan providing matching funds, and Ozaukee County providing county conservationist time. All told, the producer group will get almost \$31,000 in matching funds and in-kind services from these partners.

In the first year, MRW Clean Farm Families hopes to add five farmers to the council, recruit three agricultural industry partners, and enroll fifteen producers to plant cover crops and buffer strips. They plan to reach out to beginning farmers and grazers, female producers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and military veterans.

“The producer council will provide an avenue for producers and landowners to communicate concerns, priorities, and share lessons learned around conservation practices on their farms.”

The six founding farmers are diverse – small and large dairy producers, a beef farmer and a poultry producer. They share a desire to learn from and help teach their fellow farmers, and to let their non-farming neighbors see that they are working to protect the waters of Wisconsin and the Midwest.



Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council: \$20,000

Mill Creek is a Wisconsin River tributary, with high phosphorus levels that threaten both surface and groundwater. Council members plan on-farm research into different cover crop varieties and planting patterns, their effect on soil drying and warmup, and will compare nutrient loss in tile-drained fields with and without water level controls. Payments to producers planting cover crops will vary depending on what they plant. Farmers may also receive \$8/acre for no-till planting and \$100/acre for planting buffer strips. Along with a field day, they plan a trip to meet another farmer-led watershed group and tour Wisconsin River reservoirs to view the effects of phosphorus overload. Staff time and matching funds total more than \$38,400 from their collaborator, the Portage County UW-Extension, and the Portage County Land and Water Conservation Department.



Upper Sugar River Producer Coalition: \$9,850

Education will be the cornerstone of this new group's efforts in south central Wisconsin. Collaborating with Dane County UW-Extension and the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, the seven-member group will host a field day and a water quality workshop, test phosphorus levels at fifteen sites to find targets for improvement, and offer \$13/acre incentive payments to plant cover crops on up to 350 acres. Its goals for the first year include writing a mission statement and project plan and recruiting seven to ten more producers. Their grant will help pay for mailings, meeting space, meals, and farmer and staff time; field day and workshop costs; and cover crop incentives. Matching funds and in-kind contributions total \$12,750, including staff time, meeting space, printing costs and laboratory fees.

Peninsula Pride Farms: \$20,000

Groundwater quality is the top priority for these 75 producers in the Ahnapee River and Stony Creek watershed of southern Door and Kewaunee counties, who contend with shallow, fractured bedrock that can provide a direct path for contaminants. Peninsula Pride Farms aims for partnerships with local, state and national conservation groups to provide outreach and education and promote farm practices with measurable outcomes. Their grant will help with startup costs, field days, workshops, expert consultation, and demonstration projects. Some funding will go toward cost-sharing for new practices. Nutrient management will be a dominant tool. Ultimately, they hope to implement a farm evaluation program similar to Yahara Pride Certification in southern Wisconsin. Their collaborator is UW-Discovery Farms, and they have more than \$38,500 in matching funds.