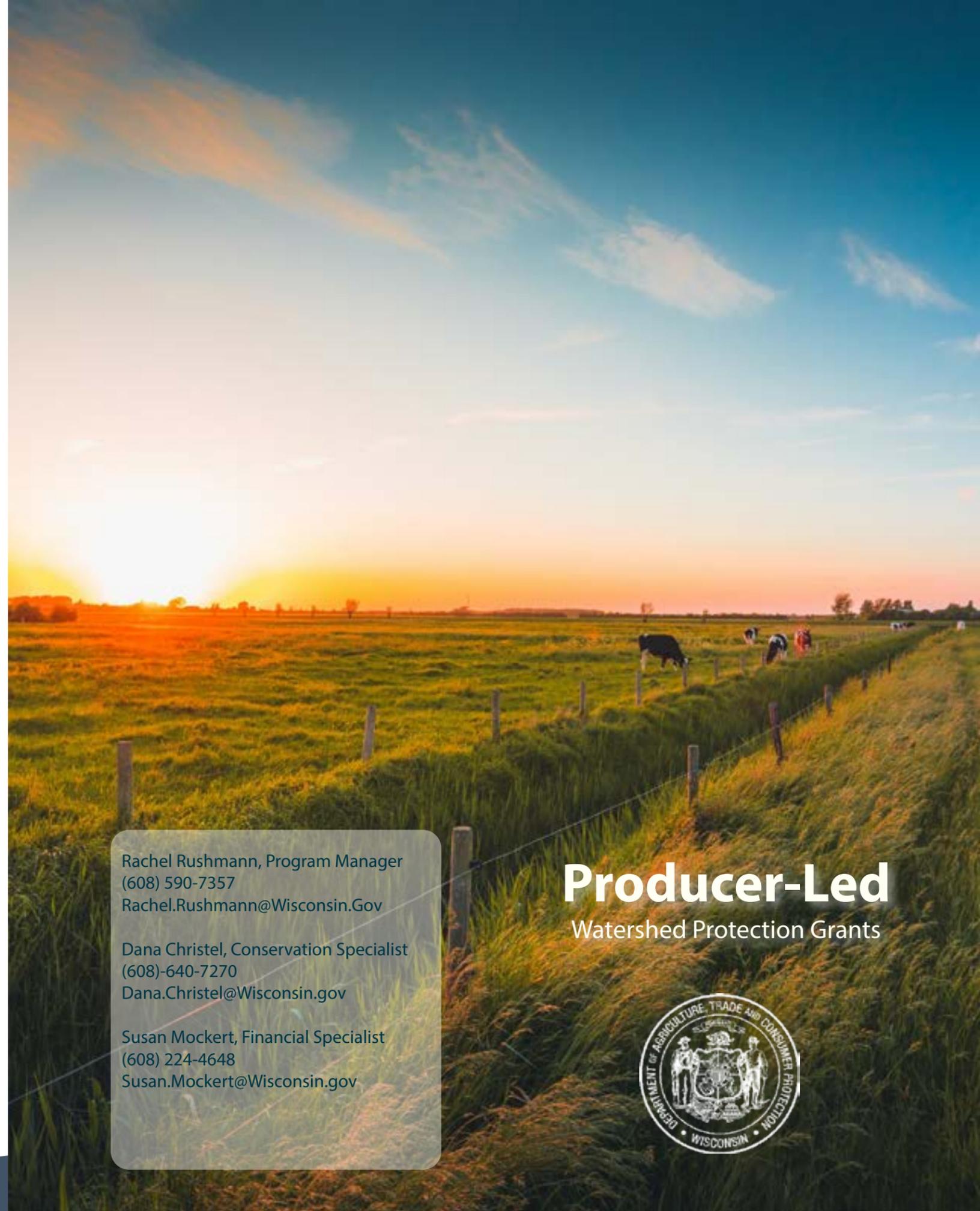


Farmer-to-Farmer Outreach

Having a strong outreach component is a key to the success of producer-led groups. Many of the groups promote conservation practices by 1) offering an incentive program to try the practices, 2) conducting field demonstrations to view various practices, 3) testing application methods and equipment and 4) participating in on-farm research.

DATCP provides the structure for a statewide network of producers and collaborators working on conservation efforts by offering:

- An annual workshop to brainstorm ideas, share lessons learned and hear from experts on relevant topics
- Regional meetings, trainings and support to encourage collaboration locally
- The “Planting Ideas, Growing Conservation” webinar series to highlight practices and management methods working in various part of the state
- List serves for group members to share their good work and events happening around the state



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Producer-Led

Watershed Protection Grants



Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities in their watersheds through the **Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program**.

Program Goal: To improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led conservation solutions by increasing on-the-ground practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

Grants support producer-led conservation solutions by encouraging innovation and farmer participation in on-the-ground efforts to improve Wisconsin's soil health and water quality. **Since its inception, the program funding has tripled and program participation has more than doubled.**

Each grant application must come from a group of at least 5 farmers in the same watershed, collaborating with conservation agencies, institutions or nonprofit organizations. The maximum grant award per group will be \$40,000, with a total of \$750,000 available funding each fiscal year.

FUNDING SUMMARY 2016-2021

FY	Total Awards	# of Groups Awarded
2016	\$242,550	14
2017	\$197,065	11
2018	\$558,246	17
2019	\$750,000	24
2020	\$750,000	27
2021	\$750,000	30

Quick program stats

\$40,000 maximum grant award
33 groups total
\$750,000 available in awards for each fiscal year
Over \$3.2 million grant awards distributed since 2016

There are 33 total projects that have been funded since the program's inception. *"Our partnership with DATCP's producer-led program is one of our core assets,"* said Chris van Someren of Jon-De Farm and the Western Wisconsin Conservation Council, a producer-led group. *"The cost-sharing part of the program is extremely helpful in motivating our members to experiment with and implement practices that protect soil and water health. Beyond the capacity for funding, the program brings the added benefits of education, communication, and collaboration between farmers across the state. This kind of cooperation between government and farmers will be a critical part of Wisconsin's conservation efforts moving forward."*

Different conservation practices being tried by producer-led groups include:

- Incentive payments
- Cover crops (various types of application)
- Harvestable buffers
- Grassed waterways
- Reduced tillage (no-till, strip till)
- Low disturbance manure injection
- Nutrient management
- Manure spreader calibration
- Soil testing
- Farm walkovers

Just this past year, farmers covered over 900,000 acres in conservation practices through the producer-led grant program.

Other activities groups focus on:

Field days, conferences, workshops, nutrient management trainings

On-Farm Research and Demonstration:

Cover crop test plots, nitrogen use efficiency, in-line water drainage systems, long-term soil health demonstration plots

Success of the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant program is measured in various ways, including through the evaluation of social, environmental and water quality impacts. Groups that are most successful encompass:

- Strong farmer leadership
- Dedication to increasing farmer involvement in trying and adopting conservation practices
- A strong outreach to other farmers and stakeholders
- Methods of tracking the outcomes of those practices

Tracking Conservation Outcomes:

DATCP teamed up with the UW-Madison Soils Department, the UW-Nutrient Pest Management program, and The Nature Conservancy to evaluate the benefits of the practices implemented by producer-led groups using SnapPlus nutrient management software. This effort is currently underway; using the soil types, crop rotations and other information specific to each watershed project area, we are assessing how the integration of conservation practices used by the farmers in each group are impacting soil and water quality metrics including soil organic matter and sediment and phosphorus losses from the field.

For example, cover crop and no-till practices implemented by the groups **resulted in potential reductions of over 61,000 pounds of phosphorus runoff and 71,000 tons of soil erosion** from farm fields.

For more information about the tracking project, visit: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedTrackingProject.aspx

More information is on our webpage:

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

