



First Producer Led Watershed Protection Projects Go to 14 Wisconsin Farmer Groups Across the State

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Editors note: Contact information for project leaders is listed at the end of this release. A higher-resolution version of the map is available by contacting Donna Gilson.

MADISON – Wisconsin's first Producer Led Watershed Protection Grants have been awarded to 14 groups of farmers who will work with resource conservation agencies and organizations to address soil and water issues tailored to their local conditions.

Secretary Ben Brancel said, "All of these projects have strong farmer leadership and a commitment to improving water and soil quality on Wisconsin farmland. Each project is unique, but they all include learning about best management practices, installing conservation practices, and forming partnerships to strengthen their efforts. I look forward to seeing what they accomplish."

Brancel leads the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, which will administer the program.

He added, "We were very impressed how many groups could organize themselves in such a short period of time in this first round of funding. It is clear that they have been thinking about similar efforts for quite some time. We commend the farmers' commitment and the level of partnerships involved in these innovative water quality projects."

Of the 14 groups, 9 are new and 5 already existed. About half will collaborate with their county land conservation departments and about a third are working with their local University of Wisconsin-Extension offices. UW Discovery Farms and non-profit organizations are also collaborating with some of the projects. Together they will receive \$242,550.

The new grant program was included in the 2015-17 budget, designed to give financial support to farmers willing to lead conservation efforts in their own watersheds. Each group is eligible for up to \$20,000 a year.

Producer groups must work with DATCP, the Department of Natural Resources, a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization. Grant funds cannot pay for real estate, loans, equipment purchases, or lobbying and the program places caps on the amount of funding that can be used for staff support to the groups. Applications for the next round of grants will be available later this year.



GRANTS – ADD ONE

The first grant recipients are:

Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network – Elk Creek Watershed

Understanding and improving nitrogen application in the Elk Creek Watershed

Working with Discovery Farms on a nutrient use efficiency project, will also host field days and meetings, and develop a farmer network with connections to nitrogen experts. \$17,700

Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network – Waumandee Creek Watershed

Reducing soil and nutrient loss through the adoption of cover crops

Collaborating with Buffalo County Land Conservation Department to host a symposium and field day, run cover crop trials, and install conservation practices on highly erodible lands. \$12,000

Peninsula Pride Farms – Ahnapee Watershed

Working with agriculture to protect groundwater in southern Door County and Kewaunee County

Collaborating with Discovery Farms on protective land management practices in this karst region, using field days, conferences, incentive programs and research demonstration projects. \$20,000

Farmers for Lake Country – Oconomowoc River Watershed

Improving water quality in the Oconomowoc River watershed

Collaborating with Tall Pines Conservancy, will offer incentives to install filter strips, plant cover crops and adopt reduced tillage systems. Will also use a flow monitoring system to define target areas and measure runoff reductions. \$7,000

South Kinni Farmer-Led Watershed Council

Dry Run Creek Farmer-Led Council

Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council

Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council

Improving water quality and building soil health

Collaborating with Dunn, Polk, Pierce and St. Croix county land conservation departments, coordinated by UW-Extension, four groups will offer incentives to test conservation practices including cover crops, grassed waterways, reduced tillage and increased crop diversity, and host field days and conferences. \$20,000 each

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families

Improving soil health and water quality in the Milwaukee River watershed

Collaborating with Ozaukee County Land Conservation Department and the Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership, will showcase conservation practices tailored to individual farms, host workshops, and sponsor cover crop, harvestable buffer and tillage demonstrations. \$20,000

Farmers of Barron County Watersheds

Reducing nutrient and sediment loss in the Yellow River watershed

Working with Barron Land Conservation Department, will establish baseline data for land use and target areas, and use on-farm research and demonstration trials to address nutrient and sediment loss. \$16,000

Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council

Water quality improvement and public outreach in Mill Creek

Working with Portage County UW-Extension, will engage in research on cover crop effects on soil moisture and temperature, and agricultural drains to improve water management. Will also offer incentives for planting cover crops. \$20,000

Farmer Led Watershed Group in Iowa County

Farmer led watershed group in the Trout Creek-Mill Creek watershed

Collaborating with Michael Fields Institute, will provide incentives for practices to address the watershed's erosion, groundwater quality, improve nutrient management, and perform on-farm demonstration trials. \$20,000

GRANTS – ADD TWO

Yahara Pride Farms

Reducing agricultural phosphorus loss to surface waters in the Yahara watershed

Working with UW Discovery Farms, will continue focus on conservation and nutrient management to reduce nutrient runoff, work on comprehensive farm assessments, and do on-farm research on nitrogen use efficiency, cover crops, manure stacking and composting, manure injection and strip tillage.

\$20,000

Upper Sugar River Watershed Coalition

Forming a producer-led coalition in the Sugar River watershed

Collaborating with the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, will work with UW-Whitewater to identify highly erodible areas to focus conservation efforts. Forming a coalition of farmers to address the highly erodible area and other resource concerns. \$9,850

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Project	Local contact	Phone
Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network -- Elk Creek Watershed	Kellen Nelson	715-797-4969
Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network -- Waumandee Creek	Don Baloun	920-219-2815
Peninsula Pride Farms -- Ahnapee Watershed	Don Niles	920-621-3253
Farmers for Lake Country – Oconomowoc River Watershed	Don Heilman	608-279-2732
South Kinni Farmer-Led Watershed Council	Rodney Webb	715-531-8869
Dry Run Creek Farmer-Led Council	Kyle Kulow	715-531-1908
Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council	Tim Ritten	715-485-8631
Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council	Dan Prestebak	715-231-6541
Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families	Jim Melichar	262-206-1731
Farmers of Barron County Watersheds	Karyn Schauf	715-537-9376
Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council	John Eron	715-498-5222
Farmer Led Watershed Group in Iowa County	Michael Dolan	608-444-9759
Yahara Pride Farms	Jeff Endres	608-279-8991
Upper Sugar River Producer Coalition	Wade Moder	608-437-7707