

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program



**Dani Heisler, Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant
Program Manager**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Program Goal: To improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led solutions that increase on-the-ground practices and farmer participation in local watershed efforts



Conservation practice implementation, outreach and education, on-farm demonstrations and research



At least 5 farmers



Collaborator

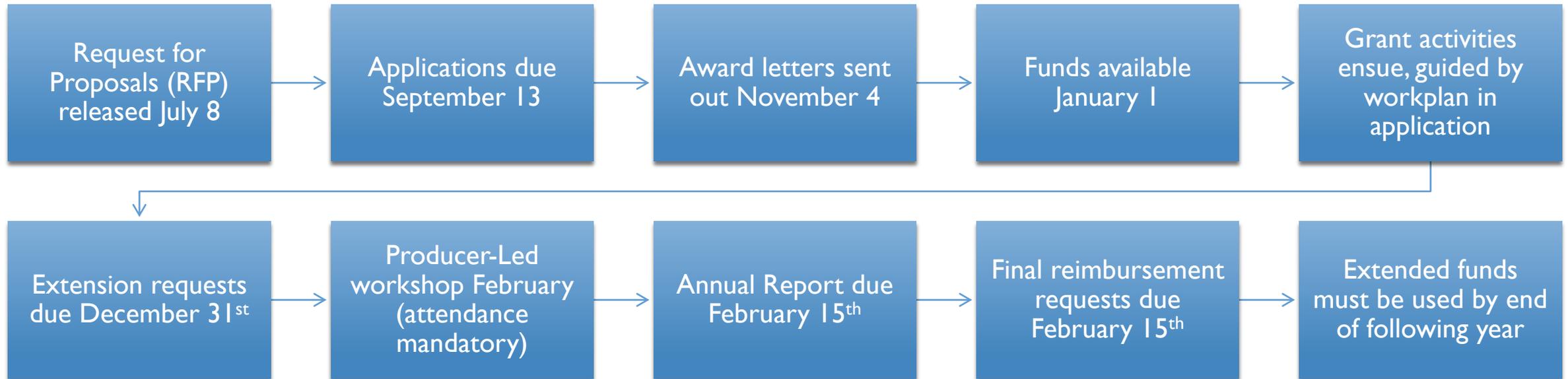


\$40,000 maximum

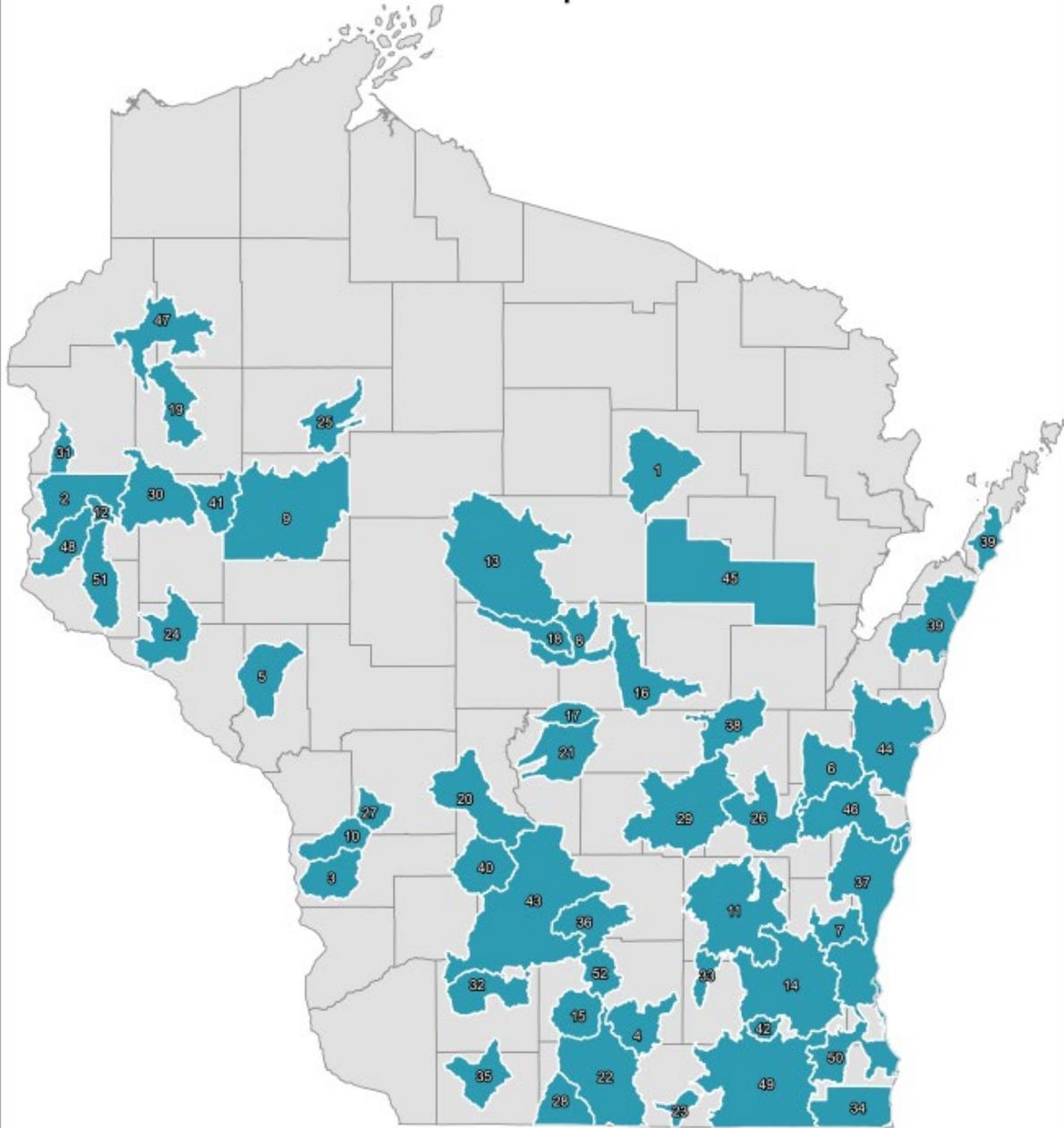
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PRODUCER-LED GRANT PROGRAM TIMELINE



2026 DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Groups



PROGRAM GROWTH

2026: 52 groups

\$1.65 million in requests \$ 1 million awarded

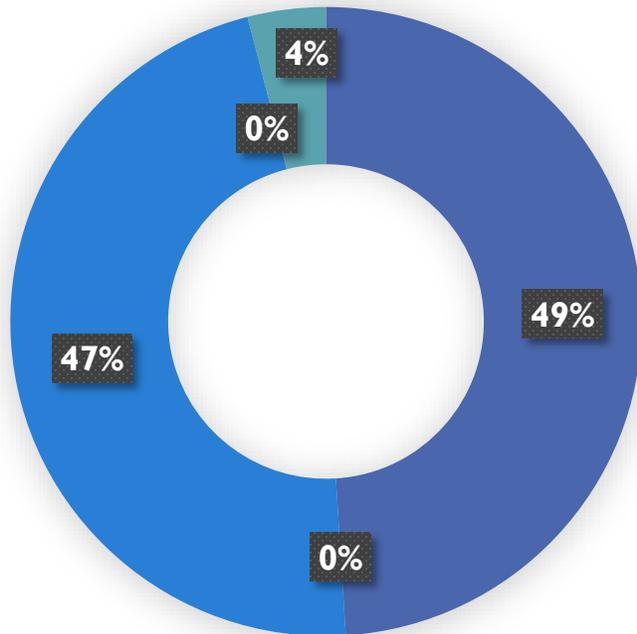
2025: 50 groups	\$1.7 million in requests	\$1 million awarded
2024: 47 groups	\$1.57 million in requests	\$1 million awarded
2023: 43 groups	\$1.53 million in requests	\$1 million awarded
2022: 36 groups	\$1.2 million in requests	\$1 million awarded
2021: 30 groups	\$1.04 million in requests	\$750,000 awarded

2016 was the first year of grant funding with
\$242,550 awarded to 14 groups



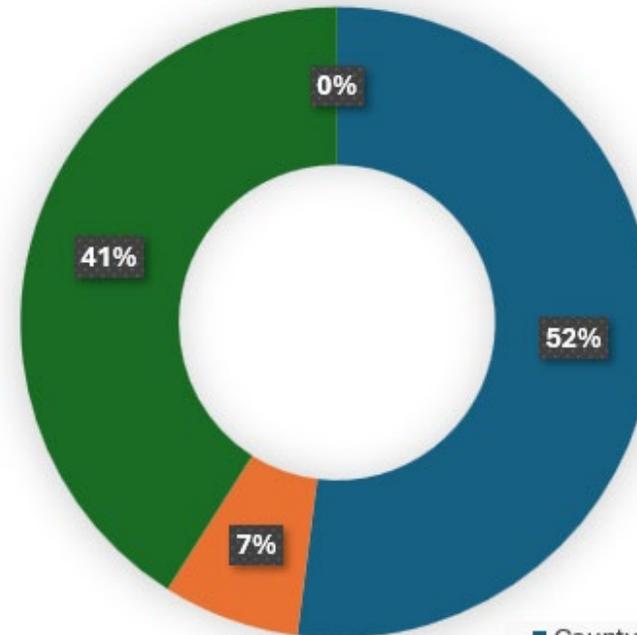
PRODUCER-LED COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT

Fiscal Manager



- County LCD
- UW-Extension
- Non-Profit / Own Organization
- DNR
- Other Legal Entity

Primary Collaborator



- County LCD
- UW-Extension
- Non-Profit
- DNR



WHAT DO FARMER-LED GROUPS DO WITH PLWPG FUNDING?

- Conservation Incentive Programs
- Conservation Demonstration and Education
 - Educational workshops, Farm Tours and Field Days
 - Work Planning, Strategic Planning & Watershed Planning
 - On-Farm Demonstrations & Research
- Promotional Activities
 - Apparel, Signage, Branding
- Administrative Support
 - Board Meetings, Supplies, Staffing



CONSERVATION INCENTIVES

- Conservation Practices funded often include; Cover Crops, No-Till / Low-Till, Low-Disturbance Manure Injection, Perennial Plantings
- Groups often use 50-75% of their award to fund practices
- Most implement an acreage or incentive allotment maximum
- Report acres and practices to demonstrate Improvement on the landscape
- Collect data points to determine best suited practices, species, rates, or management for group's respective area

Infiltration zones- create an area that collects water from impervious surfaces on farmsteads. Can include roofs, driveways, lawn, but cannot collect surface water from cow lots or feed pads. Designed like a rain garden. Purpose to encourage more infiltration of water and reduce surface runoff. **Incentive \$15/1000 sq ft captured**

Strip till- use of a strip till machine to incorporate fertilizer or prepare seed bed for planting, purpose being to reduce tillage/disturbance of soil but provide healthy crops. **Incentive \$100/ac up to 5 acres per farm**

Roller crimper/ organic no-till- use of roller crimper or other means to prepare a seedbed for planting to reduce weeds, purpose to reduce tillage/disturbance. **Incentive \$100/ac up to 5 acres per farm**

Cover Crop/Alternative forages- planting of cover crops or alternative forages to maximize living roots in crop rotation and provide plant diversity. **Incentive \$25/ac up to 40 ac/farm**

Perennial Headlands/Buffers- to convert row cropped headlands or field borders to perennial grass or forage. Purpose to reduce disturbance and tillage on headlands or field borders to improve infiltration and reduce surface runoff. **Incentive \$100/ac up to 5 acres per farm**

Prairie Strips or Perennial Grass Strips- plant strips along contour to create a perennial area that reduces surface runoff, increase infiltration, increases plant diversity on the landscape, reduces nutrient loss. **Incentive \$100/ac up to 2 acres per farm**

Rotational Grazing- purpose to encourage producers currently not rotationally grazing to divide paddocks to see benefits of resting paddocks and breaking up parasite cycles. Will be given opportunity to work with watershed mentors who are already rotationally grazing to point out tips to increase success. **Incentive \$50/ac up to 10 ac/farm**

Pasture Management- purpose to encourage producers to try new Best Management Practices on pasturelands, by use of mowers to clip pastures, clip fencerows to prevent invasive species from spreading, and promote growth of beneficial plant species. **Incentive \$50/ac up to 10 ac/farm**

Woodland Water Management- purpose is to encourage farmers and landowners to increase management of woodlands with incentive to promote infiltration zones by means of herbaceous plants and or physical structures to reduce run-off or overflowing water in areas of concern. Vernon county is 50% woodland, and woodlands provide a great opportunity to promote better water infiltration and reduce erosion. **Incentive \$100/ac up to 5 ac/farm**

Tree Planting (pasture)- purpose is to encourage farmers to create shade in their pastures to help prevent cattle from congregating under single trees which creates erosion in paddocks. Trees must be planted in a pasture using tree tubes. **Incentive \$10/tree up to 50 trees/farm**

EPPIC FARM TOURS



JUN
11

Wednesday, 1:00 pm | 245423 WI-97, Athens, WI 54411

Red Door Family Farms

Red Door Family Farm is a first generation, Organic farm. Stacey and Tenzin Botsford along with a handful of dedicated employees and volunteers have been growing a wide variety of vegetables for direct to consumer and wholesale markets for over 10 years. They use intensive management, and season extension methods to focus on high quality, nutrient dense, fresh produce on approximately 15 acres. Features of this farm include: high tunnel production, greenhouse propagation, wash-pack facility, and compost production.

Tuesday, 10:00 am | 115315 W Townline Rd, Athens, WI 54411

Miltrim Farms

Miltrim Farms is a 4th generation Dairy farm in western Marathon County, WI. Currently we milk around 2200 milk cows, and we crop around 5000 acres of corn for grain, silage, and grass hay; half of which are in the Eau Pleine watershed. We currently have 2500 no-till acres, 2700 acres in cover crops, and use low disturbance manure injector on 3500 acres. Through the use of precision ag, we have converted some of our headland acres into perennial grasses and pollinators.

Wednesday, 10:00 am | 128752 State Hwy 153, Edgar, WI 54426

Rock Ridge Orchard

Rock Ridge Orchard is a family-owned apple orchard found in Edgar, Wisconsin. They grow over 30 varieties of apples that are used to create delicious homemade bakery treats and fresh cider. Rock Ridge has adopted the use of both cover crops and pollinators into their orchard system, which is very unique for that industry. Come join us for a tour of their operation and orchard!

Wednesday, 9:00 am | 125849 County Rd U, Edgar, WI 54426

Pat Socha - Cover Cropping Research Trials

The objective of Pat's research pilot project is to determine the effects of interseeding cover crops into corn grain on corn yield, cover crop biomass, and cover crop forage quality. In collaboration with DATCP and other watershed groups around the state, Pat will plant a series of cover crops via drone at different times during the growing season. Working with UW Extension, corn grain samples will be collected to determine yield, and forage samples will be collected from the cover crops to determine quality and tonnage. **More information to come on this exciting event, stay tuned!**

Wednesday, 10:00 am | 204062 Grand Meadow Rd, Stratford, WI 54484

The Franseen Farm

EPPIC's 2023 farmer of the year award recipient located in Rozellville, WI, Mark and his father John have been using regenerative farming practices in their dairy operation. These soil health practices include cover crops, residue management, rotational grazing, and composting. They have a unique operation compared to many of our other EPPIC farmers as they milk dairy goats! This is a great operation to check out in person!

Tuesday, 10:00 am | 2934 Circle Rd, Junction City, WI 54443

Albert Acres' Demo Trials Field Day

In collaboration with Wood Co. LWCD, this field day is located in the Little Eau Pleine Watershed in Junction City, Dustin Albert will be trying skip-row plantings in corn grain with an interseeded cover crop in the rows. This practice aims to increase cover crop biomass in his corn grain. Dustin will also be showcasing winter camelina (new type of cover crop to our area) in a soybean rotation. As part of this demo, we will also be discussing soil health and better soil health practices. **Pay attention for more information to come on this event!**

SEP
24

OCT
7

FIELD DAY

FRIDAY JUNE 20, 10-NOON

Address: 7313 Schaller Rd, Verona, WI
[More info at demofarms.danecounty.gov/events](https://demofarms.danecounty.gov/events)

Learn about research conducted by Tyler Duerst Farms in partnership with Dane Demo Farms, and check out the new edge-of-field monitoring on the Dane County property.



- Cover Crop Termination Study
- Cover Crops on Low-lying Acres
- Edge of Field Monitoring



Refreshments provided
Brats will be served at noon

Phone Number: 608-445-1474
Email Address: meyer.kim@danecounty.gov



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SOIL HEALTH EVENT

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 9:30 AM TO NOON

Hosted by: Sime Farm, 1192 Starr School Rd, Stoughton

- **Get a firsthand look at soil diversity** across farming systems in a dual-site soil pit dig
- **See how your soil measures up** - learn about the Haney test and compare real local samples to UW benchmarks
- **Explore innovative livestock feeding strategies** on a farm tour with the Sime family - learn how they maximize cover crops and marginal lands to reduce feed costs

Hot lunch provided by the
 Biological Farmer Friends farmer-led watershed group
 RSVP appreciated but not required, call or text Marie, 608-228-6324



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DRONE INTERSEEDING FIELD DAY

WHEN: THURSDAY JUNE 12TH, 6PM

WHERE: W3857 HWY 12&16, LYNDON STATION

Please park on side of Cassidy/ Langer Road

Brad Gilbert with Agri Air Applicators will be flying rye into V2- V3 corn on the Powers property. DATCP Soil & Watershed Program Managers along with UW-Extension will join us to talk about this statewide Demonstration and Research Project.



A light dinner and refreshments will be served following the presentation.



Evaluating Program Success

Conservation Progress Report

Stakeholder Discussions



2024 Conservation Progress Report

PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO GROW

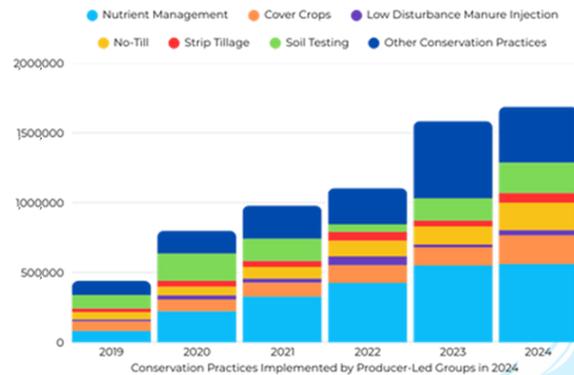
In 2024, there were **47 producer-led groups** funded by the program, comprised of **2,411 members** and **969,149 acres of managed farmland**, compared to 2,016 members and 782,674 acres in 2023.



The members utilized **\$667,526** in DATCP funds to implement conservation practices, and farmers invested an additional **\$2,706,197.40** in conservation practices as match.

CONSERVATION PRACTICES INCREASED BY 6% FROM 2023

In 2024, conservation practices implemented by producer-led groups grew to over **1.69 million acres**.



KEEPING SOIL AND NUTRIENTS IN PLACE

34% increase in no-till practices

2% increase in nutrient management

37% increase in cover crops



Minimizing disturbance to the soil to help prevent erosion from wind and water.



Applying nutrients at the right rate, time, and place so they don't run off into waterways.



Keeping the ground covered to hold soil in place and feed soil.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The 206,068 acres of cover crops planted and 196,196 acres of land under no-till management in 2023 potentially reduced an *estimated**:

This is comparable to 39,504 gas powered passenger vehicles driven for one year.

169,361 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents of soil-based greenhouse gas emissions

331,157 tons of soil erosion occurring on farm fields

235,405 pounds of phosphorus from leaving farm fields

One pound of P that reaches a waterbody can feed up to 500 pounds of algae and one dump truck load can carry as much as 10 tons of soil.

SOIL HEALTH SYSTEMS

Farmers in producer-led groups are integrating multiple practices onto their farms as part of a larger soil health system, including **innovative or non-traditional soil health practices**.

In 2024, producer-led groups implemented nearly **399,230 acres** of these "other soil health practices," which include **targeted nitrogen management, managed grazing, and other perennial vegetation practices**.



Social and Community Impacts



“Fringe practices such as planting green, no-till and growing cover crops are now becoming mainstream practices within the group as well as around the state.”



“People understand that this is a community watershed council and actions of each affect what happens to other people, i.e. what happens on the ridgetops affects what happens in the valley.”

What are some of the areas that **farmers and other community members** changed their viewpoint and awareness of as result of participation in group?

Themes identified:

- ❑ Greater acceptance of conservation practices amongst farmers
- ❑ Community recognition & understanding the benefits of practices
- ❑ Technical knowledge related to practices, water quality information, soil tests and nutrient management
- ❑ Economics of conservation





**Dani.Heisler@Wisconsin.gov, **Producer-Led Watershed Protection
Grant Program Manager****

[DATCP Home Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants \(wi.gov\)](http://wi.gov)