



Land & Water Monthly Newsletter

BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection

March 2026

Joint Allocation Grants and Reporting

1. Soil and Water Resources Management Grants
[Application Guidance](#)
[Staffing, Cost-Share, and Innovation Application](#)
Due 4/15/2026 to datcpswrm@wisconsin.gov
2. Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grants
[Application Guidance](#)
[Application](#)
Due 4/15/2026 to datcpsoilandwatershedmanagement@wisconsin.gov
3. Reporting
[2026 Annual Workplan template](#)
Due 4/15/2026 to Jennifer.Chakravorty@wisconsin.gov

Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP)

- If you would like to learn more about the process and results of the NOPP grants, join us at a *Regional Workshop on Fine Tuning Nitrogen Management Through On-Farm Research: NOPP and More*. There are three events remaining in the series. To learn more and to register, visit <https://cropsandsoils.extension.wisc.edu/regional-workshops-on-fine-tuning-nitrogen-management-through-on-farm-research-nopp-and-more>.
- 2026-2027 NOPP awards will be announced soon.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- CREP Enrollment Open
CREP opened for enrollment on February 12, 2026 for FY2026 under signup 65 and will [remain open until March 20, 2026](#). The 2018 Farm Bill was extended until September 30, 2026 and FSA will be “batching” enrollment under CREP again this year to ensure CRP nationally remains under the statutory acreage cap. CREP offers will be approved by FSA on a first-come, first-served basis, and both new and re-enrolls will be accepted. We recommend that landowners interested in CREP begin the offer process with FSA as soon as possible to ensure they can enroll. Details regarding the sign up will follow as we receive them from FSA.

Second CREP Training for LCD Staff on March 11

Thanks to everyone who joined the virtual training in February. DATCP is offering a second virtual CREP training on March 11, 2026 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. The training is for all local office staff (LCD, FSA, NRCS). We invite LCD staff to contact their federal partners to attend with them. The training will review program requirements, landowner engagement, agency partnership coordination, and state administrative processes. All local agency partners are encouraged to attend including both new and seasoned local CREP staff. If interested, RSVP via email to Brian Loeffelholz (Brian.Loeffelholz@wisconsin.gov) by 12 p.m. on March 9, 2026. A link to the meeting will be provided Monday afternoon for those who RSVP.

Nutrient Management Updates

- 2027 Nutrient Management Farmer Education grant applications are due April 15 to datcpsoilwatershed@wisconsin.gov.
- Previously recorded webinars and trainings can be found here: [Nutrient Management Trainings](#). Scroll to the bottom of the page to find trainings.
- Please don't forget to submit your survey response with your SnapPlus V3 User Group Name and associated email. You can fill out the survey at <https://forms.office.com/g/4gu52qyGth>.
- DATCP staff and the UW-Extension NPM team are hosting a live online Nutrient Management Farmer Education Class on March 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is a DATCP approved class that allows farmers to be eligible to write their own nutrient management plan. Registration is free. Register here: www.go.wisc.edu/OnlineNMTraining.
- **NEW!** - Webinar series: Incorporating Off Farm Waste into Nutrient Management Plans. Hosted in partnership with DNR and UW-Extension. For more information, click [here](#). Or, view the flyer at <https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents2/OffFarmWasteWebinarFlyer.pdf>.

Conservation Engineering

- *Funding opportunity:* The application period for the 2026 Engineering Reserve Fund is open! This year, the fund has \$300,000 available. If you have a project that needs funding, reach out to your DATCP Area Engineering contact for additional details and to complete the needed materials for the submittal. Applications are due by **March 27, 2026**.
- *PDH Opportunities:* Just a reminder that this year at the Wisconsin Land+Water Annual Conference, there will be seven sessions that will qualify for conservation engineering professional development hours for your DATCP Engineering Certification and/or NRCS Job Approval Authority. Looking forward to the sessions, and we hope to see you there!

Soil and Water Resources Management (SWRM) Grants

- 2027 Joint Grant Applications are due April 15 to datcpswrm@wisconsin.gov.
 - [Application Guidance](#)
 - [Staffing, Cost-Share, and Innovation Application](#)
- [Table 2.2](#) of the SWRM Grant Resources outlines funding sources, unit reporting, and maximum reimbursement rates in an easy to access format. This is a resource to save and reference when drafting your landowner cost-share [contracts](#) (revised August 2025 – **NEW FORMS REQUIRED!**).

Farmland Preservation (FP) Program and Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA)

- The 2026 Agricultural Enterprise Area Petition Cycle is now open. Petitions will be accepted until July 31, 2026. Application materials for new and modifications to existing AEAs are available on our website, [Petitioning for Agricultural Enterprise Area \(AEA\) Designation](#). If you are interested in petitioning for an AEA during the 2026 cycle, please email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov to discuss your petition proposal and to schedule your petitioner interview.
- Counties that are working on updating or amending their farmland preservation plan in 2026, 2027, and 2028 are encouraged to apply for the farmland preservation planning grant. This grant may reimburse up to 50% of a county's cost to prepare a farmland preservation plan or update, up to a maximum grant of \$30,000. Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Grant applications are due by March 27, 2026. For a copy of the application or questions about the grant, please email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

- Farmland Preservation Agreement applications (new and re-enrollments) that are submitted to the department by October 1, 2026 will be prioritized for processing for 2026 tax credit eligibility. Landowners who are interested in applying for a Farmland Preservation Agreement are encouraged to apply early. We will continue to process agreements throughout the end of the year, but agreements submitted to us after October 1 may not be processed (drafted and sent to the landowner for signature) before the end of the taxable year.

As you work with landowners this field season, encourage them to apply early so they can claim the tax credit for 2025. Completed agreement applications should be submitted to DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

- The Farmland Preservation Agreement application has been updated. The new application now includes an area on the form to indicate that the application is to re-enroll lands under an expiring agreement. The new form can be accessed at <https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents2/FPAgreementApplication.docx>. All agreement applications submitted after January 1, 2026, must use the new agreement form. Any applicants who submit agreement applications on the old form after this date will be asked to resubmit using the current form.

DATCP Drainage Program

- All activities within drainage districts are managed and administered by a county drainage board. Contact information can be found on the [Drainage Program website](#) or by contacting Barton T. Chapman, P.E., Drainage Program Manager, at Barton.Chapman@Wisconsin.gov.

Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) Program

- The AIS program published [AIS 4625](#) for the Elm Road to Racine Transmission Project in Milwaukee and Racine counties.
- You can find more information about the AIS program at agimpact.wi.gov. You can also contact DATCPAgImpactStatements@wisconsin.gov with questions regarding any active AIS statement or the AIS program.

Soil Health Program

- **NEW: Soil Health Workshop at Wisconsin Land & Water Conference.** Join us for the soil health workshop, “What is Soil Health Anyway?” on March 6 from 8-9 a.m. in the Upper Dells Ballroom. The session will dive into a variety of soil health topics and answer *How do we apply soil health concepts in our work as conservationists, and how do we know if we are making a difference?* Contact Randy Zogbaum at randall.zogbaum@wisconsin.gov if you have any feedback to share and/or would be interested in participating in a soil health user group.
- **NEW: Measuring Soil Health.** How do we know our conservation efforts are improving soil health? The Soil Health Assessment kit developed by Kevin Erb with UW Extension combines portions of the NRCS [Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment Guide](#) (Tech Note No. 450-06) and their [Soil Quality Test Kit Guide](#) to provide a tool for in-field assessment of changes in soil health. NRCS has also developed [CEMA 216](#) Soil Health Testing. Both of these tools provide methods to evaluate changes in soil health as we implement conservation practices. Please contact Randy Zogbaum at randall.zogbaum@wisconsin.gov if you have any questions about either method.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant (PLWPG) Program

- The Annual Workshop was held February 24 at the Food + Farm Exploration Center in Plover. Thank you to everyone who attended!
- Annual reports are being analyzed, and the conservation progress report will be shared later this year. If

you have questions or want to learn more, please email randall.zogbaum@wisconsin.gov.

Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebate Program

- The application period ended January 30 with over 200,000 acres submitted for review. Eligible applicants and verified land units will be credited on their 2026 spring crop insurance bill.
- Program information is available at covercropsrebate.wi.gov.

Administrative Rule Updates

- ATCP 52's permanent rule update related to Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants, the Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program, and the Crop Insurance Premium Rebates for Planting Cover Crops was approved by the Governor and sent to the Legislature on December 2, 2025. Updates include general rule cleanup and the incorporation of the two newer programs. Documents relating to this rule can be found here: [CR 25-057](#).
- **Emergency Rule 2515 (EmR2515)** for [Providing Crop Insurance Premium Rebates for Planting Cover Crops](#)
- **Emergency Rule 2516 (EmR2516)** for [Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program](#)