

## SECTION 1

### **1.1 OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL SOIL AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GRANT PROCESS**

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection administers Wisconsin's Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) program under the provisions of Chapter 92 Wisconsin Statutes and ATCP 50 Wisconsin Administrative Code. The Department assists the county land conservation committees by distributing funds through the SWRM grant program. These grant funds are used to help fund county soil and water conservation staff and support expenditures, as well as landowner conservation projects. These funds also can be used to support cooperators and OPC contracts to carry out special statewide activities.

The legislature appropriates funds to the department from three funding sources: General Purpose Revenue (GPR), Segregated (SEG) and Bond Revenue (Bond) for use in the SWRM grant program.

GPR is used to fund a portion of the total allocation of staff salary and fringe benefits and eligible support costs each calendar grant year (see ATCP 50.34). This revenue type consists of general taxes, miscellaneous receipts and revenues collected by state agencies which are paid into the general fund and are available for appropriation by the legislature.

SEG funds constitute the second source of base budget funds for the soil and water resource management program. This revenue type consists of funds that are dedicated to the *environmental fund*. The legislature appropriates some of the money in the *environmental fund* to the department for soil and water resource management. A *local assistance* appropriation provides funding for support of local land conservation personnel. An *aids* appropriation provides funding for landowner cost-sharing grants and OPC project cooperator (OPC) grants.

Bond funds are generated when the State of Wisconsin sells bonds. The legislature first appropriated these types of funds to the department for the soil and water resource management program in the 1997-99 biennium. The building commission must authorize the sale of bonds to generate the revenue. Bond funds are used for "hard" practices (see ATCP 50.34).

Beginning with the 2023-2025 biennium budget GPR funds are appropriated to the SWRM program to be used for hard/structural practices.

#### The Grant Allocation Process

By law, the Department must allocate grants to county land conservation committees and OPCs according to an annual joint DATCP/DNR Allocation Plan. The joint annual allocation plan is reviewed by the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) and approved by both the DATCP Secretary and the DNR Secretary (see ATCP 50.28).

The annual allocation plan is based on grant applications from the counties and OPC project cooperators submitted by the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. The Department expects to issue a preliminary allocation plan to every county land conservation committee in the summer of each year for the subsequent calendar year. Counties and OPCs may comment on the allocation plan by appearing at the appropriate LWCB meeting when the plan is presented. Written comments can be submitted for thirty days from the date of the LWCB presentation date. After receiving comments, a proposed final joint allocation plan is submitted to the LWCB for their recommendation to the department. Then the department secretaries sign the joint final allocation plan. The final allocation plan is then posted to the web and e-mailed directly to those who are awarded funds in the plan.

The annual joint allocation plan must specify all of the following:

- The total amount appropriated to the departments for allocation under the plan.
- The total amount allocated under the plan by fund type.
- The total amount allocated to each county for staff and support and cost-share.
- The total amount allocated for OPC grants.
- The plan must specify the total amount allocated for each purpose, the amounts allocated to each county or to each grant recipient OPC other than a county and the reason for the allocation.

The annual allocation plan is based on: available funding sources, statutory requirements, the LCC grant applications and the effectiveness of funding in achieving conservation goals statewide. DATCP revises the annual allocation plan to reflect all approved transfers and re-allocations, and prepares an accounting of all of these transactions in any given grant year by April of the year following that grant year.

General: The department distributes soil and water resource management grants to county land conservation committees and OPCs. In 2017, a Master SWRM Grant Contract was signed with each county. Annually, DATCP prepares a schedule of award for each county, specifying details of each award based on the annual allocation plan. In order for a county to be eligible to receive an annual SWRM grant award it must have a current, approved LWRM plan. Counties with expired LWRM plans will have the award held until an updated plan is approved.

Staffing Award: The annual schedule of awards details staffing and support funds to counties to reimburse for the work of staff and independent contractors who perform soil and water management activities, including county soil and water conservation priorities. No more than 10% of the total staffing award can be spent on support costs.

Cost-Share Award: The annual schedule of awards also specifies funds available to counties to enter into cost-share contracts with landowners to install eligible conservation practices. Projects must be completed by December 31 of the grant year, reimbursed by the County to the landowner by January 31 of the year following the award year, and reimbursed by DATCP to the County by February 15 of the year following the award year. If a project will not be completed by December 31 of the award year, then the County must apply for an extension before the end of the year for that project.

Project Awards: Under s. 92.14 (10), Stats., DATCP may award grants through the annual allocation plan to any cooperator for services and activities including information, education, and training. Sec. ATCP 50.35 establishes application and OPC grant requirements parallel to those for county grants, including the option to extend a grant-funded project for an additional year.

## Grant Program Calendar

January 1	Counties may develop landowner cost-share contracts for using current year's funds.
Mid-January	Next year's Joint Grant Application will be e-mailed to counties and other project cooperators.
January 31	Last day for counties to reimburse landowners for cost-share projects completed by December 31 of previous year.
February 15	Last day for counties to submit reimbursements to DATCP for staff and support funds AND cost-share projects that were completed in previous year.
March 15	Report Due from counties to DATCP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous year's Annual Report of activities and accomplishments</li> </ul>
Early April	LWCB recommends and DATCP Secretary signs Addendum to the current year Final Allocation Plan, approving county cost-share extensions. The approved extensions become part of the current year grant contract between DATCP and a county.
April 15	Due from Counties to DATCP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next year's SWRM Joint Grant Application due.</li> <li>• Current year Work Plan is due.</li> </ul>
Mid-April	Email current year's SWRM schedule of awards to the counties.
May – February 15	Counties may submit reimbursement request for eligible cost-share project expenses incurred to DATCP for processing.
August 1 – February 15	Counties may submit reimbursement requests for current year staff and support expenses to DATCP.
August – September	The Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB for approval. Emailed to counties for 30-day review period which ends as posted.
Mid-September	The transfer form and instructions will be emailed to the counties for transferring cost-share funds from county to county.
October	The Joint Final Allocation Plan is presented to LWCB for approval and then submitted to DATCP and DNR secretaries for signature.
Late October	The approved Joint Final Allocation Plan is emailed to the counties.
Early November	The cost-share project extension form and instructions is emailed to counties.
December 1	Last day to submit a request to DATCP to transfer current year cost-share funds between counties.
December 31	Last day for counties to have cost-share contracts signed by landowners to be eligible for current year funds. Last day for counties to email in their extension request to DATCP.