

Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Process

Step	Staff Effort/Time Required	Estimated Costs*
Step 1: LWCD explains the program guidelines (including required eligibility criteria) to an interested landowner.	Low	
Step 2: Landowner submits application to LWCD.	-	
Step 3: LWCD reviews all applications and determines who is eligible to move forward. Staff contact applicants to ask if they want to be ranked (and in some cases gives input on likelihood of ranking high).	Low	
Step 4: LWCD ranks each submission which includes an in-depth review of all applicants' properties and operations, and a site visit. LWCD researches possible deed restrictions that could hinder federal application.	Medium (min 5 hrs)	
Step 5: LWCD determines the highest ranking submission and communicates with applicants that the highest ranking project will move forward.	Low	
Step 6: LWCD prepares materials to apply for USDA-NRCS funding. This includes working on products/items such as maps, land uses, highly erodible land, mineral rights, GIS shapefiles, FSA eligibility, NRCS funding application). LWCD estimates value of easement based on most recent appraisals of previous projects.	High	
Step 7: NRCS reviews application materials and determines eligibility, then ranks the landowner's application among other applicants. NRCS will determine if funding will be obligated towards the purchase of development rights.	-	
Step 8: If NRCS obligates funding, LWCD follows NRCS rules to complete easement process. LWCD obtains a title search from a title company. NRCS determines if the title is clear of restrictions that would hinder the value of the land and appraisal. NRCS interviews applicant and performs site visit.	Low	~\$500
Step 9: LWCD drafts the conservation deed. This work requires a farmstead envelope survey (completed by county surveyor), computation of total acres to ease, legal descriptions, various maps, and NRCS forms. Jefferson County Corporation Counsel reviews draft conservation deed.	High	
Step 10: NRCS reviews and approves the easement deed.	-	
Step 11: An appraisal from an approved national appraiser is conducted to determine easement purchase value. Appraisal is sent to NRCS for review and approval.	Low	~\$3,500

Step	Staff Effort/Time Required	Estimated Costs*
Step 12: Once appraisal is approved, the NRCS funding obligation is adjusted to account for difference between fair market value estimate and appraisal fair market value.	Low	
Step 13: LWCD creates the baseline documentation that reviews all deed restrictions and creates baseline observations and monitoring objects that the landowner and LWCD will use to reference easement conditions over time.	High	
Step 14: If needed, LWCD works with NRCS on conservation plan, a forest management plan, or an easement plan.	0-Medium	
Step 15: LWCD works with title company and NRCS to determine easement closing date. Conservation deed and baseline documents are recorded with Jefferson County Deeds office.	Low	Price of easement + closing costs (~\$2,400)
Step 16: Annual monitoring is conducted by LWCD and reports sent to NRCS and landowners.	Medium	

*Estimated Costs based on most recent easement purchases and can change.



Land & Water Monthly Newsletter

BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection

August 2025

Nutrient Management Updates

- Nutrient Management Regional Meetings - registration is open! There are five in-person meetings scheduled throughout the state in the months of August and September. These meetings are the best opportunity to hear the latest nutrient management updates from DATCP, NRCS, and UW staff. A light lunch will be provided. More information and registration are available here: [NPM Regional Meetings](#).
- SnapPlus V3 Online Tutorial is now available! The recording from our SnapPlus V3 webinar is now available along with the materials needed to follow along and participate alongside the webinar. More information can be found here: [Nutrient Management Trainings](#). Scroll down to “Online Training” and access “SnapPlus Training: SnapPlus V3 Tutorial Webinar.”
- The 2024 Annual Nutrient Management report is now available here: [2024 NM Update Report](#). The 2025 Annual NM survey and calculator will be coming out later this summer along with an office hour.

Conservation Engineering

- The DATCP North/Northwest Area Environmental Specialist/Technician position has been posted. The deadline to apply is at 11:59 p.m. on **Monday, August 11, 2025**. The posting and job description can be found [here](#). Please share this job posting with anyone you think might be interested!

DATCP Drainage Program

- The Wisconsin Association of Drainage Boards (WADB), in cooperation with DATCP, has scheduled four statewide outreach meetings. The purpose of the meetings is to engage the drainage community as well as landowners, drainage boards, and county officials; and to provide information on drainage districts and the implementation of Wisconsin drainage law. These meetings will provide affected stakeholders the opportunity to share their concerns and help develop statewide policy. All meetings will be held from 1-3:30 p.m. at the following locations:
 - **Portage County**
Thursday, August 21, 2025
Town of Buena Vista Town Hall
6684 County Road BB
Bancroft, WI
 - **Outagamie County**
Wednesday, September 17, 2025
Town of Center Town Hall
N3990 State Road 47
Appleton, WI

- **Racine County**

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

Racine County, Ives Grove Complex Auditorium

14200 Washington Ave.

Sturtevant, WI

- 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.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant (PLWPG) Program

- The Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant application period is now open, with the deadline for grant application submission being **September 12, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.** Please refer to the *Request for Proposals* for guidance on funding priorities, eligible projects, application information, and grant submission and administration. The RFP and grant application can be found in the upper right corner of the [PLWPG webpage](#), listed under 2026 Application Period. It can also be found here: [PLWPG Request for Proposals](#).
- A webinar to discuss the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant will be held **Tuesday, August 19 at 12 p.m. on [Microsoft Teams](#)**. During the webinar, we'll discuss program and application resources available, updates on reporting and reimbursement processes, and dedicate time for open question and answer.

Soil and Water Resources Management (SWRM) Grants

- FY 2026 budget numbers are available and will be released via the 2026 Preliminary Joint Allocation Plan being presented to the Land and Water Board on August 5. A 30-day comment period will extend to September 5. Please review and submit comments to datcpswrm@wisconsin.gov.
- **NEW FORMS REQUIRED!** Many of the SWRM forms have been updated with new content and new numbers. Please refer to [Section 3 of the SWRM Grant Resources](#) webpage to access these forms.

Land and Water Conservation Board - LWRM Plans

- At the August 5, 2025 LWCB meeting, Door and Iron counties will present LWRM plan five-year reviews to the board. Oconto County will present a plan revision.
- On September 2, 2025, the LWCB Advisory Committee on Research will convene on [Teams](#) at 9 a.m.

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

- The 2025 Agricultural Enterprise Area petition cycle is now closed. If you are interested in learning more about the AEA program and information about AEA petition process, including application materials and examples of successful petitions, visit the [Petitioning for AEA Designation webpage](#).
- We are currently accepting applications for farmland preservation agreements. Agreement applications that are submitted to the department by **Friday, November 7, 2025** will be prioritized for processing for 2025 tax credit eligibility. Landowners who are interested in applying for a farmland preservation agreement are encouraged to apply early.

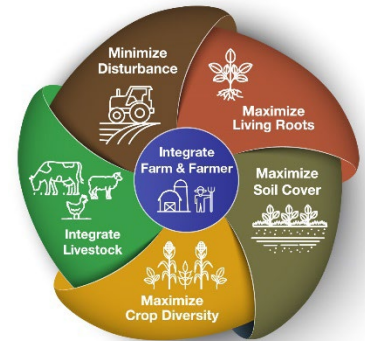
We will continue to process agreements throughout November and December, but agreements submitted to us after November 7 may not be processed before the end of the taxable year. As you work with landowners this field season, encourage them to apply early so they can claim the tax credit for 2025. Completed agreement applications should be submitted to DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) Program

- The AIS program published [AIS 4613](#) for the STP 975 Lateral Capacity Improvement Project in Portage County and [AIS 4650](#) County Trunk Highway T Reconstruction and Reconditioning Project in Chippewa and Eau Claire 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

- The Soil Health Graphic and our Soil Health Website was recently updated to recognize the importance of integrating the farm and the farmer in the soil health system. Soil health principles give us the guideposts to ensure our soil is a vital living ecosystem. As the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) states, soil health provides the framework to provide “the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes.” Soil Health is accomplished by implementing the Principles of Soil Health and providing the functions of a healthy soil; regulating water; cycling nutrients; sustaining plant and animal life; providing physical stability and support; and filtering and buffering potential pollutants. Check out the DATCP Soil Health website [here](#).
- **REMINDER: Soil Health User Group** – It has been a year since ATCP 50 was updated - what have you discovered? How do you evaluate soil health? Does your office have a Soil Health kit? If so, how do you use these kits? There’s a growing interest in soil health benefits, and these kits are a great tool to evaluate changes to soil health with the implementation of conservation practices. DATCP is looking for feedback on how we can better support soil health initiatives. Please contact Randy Zogbaum at randalll.zogbaum@wisconsin.gov if you have any feedback to share and/or would be interested in participating in a Soil Health User Group.
- **REMINDER – Soil Health Training!** Randy can provide or help develop training at any length or format for the summer field season. Below are three suggested learning objectives for soil health trainings. Contact Randy Zogbaum if you would like custom trainings to meet specific needs. Randy is also available if you have questions regarding the online trainings or the soil health program, email Randy at randalll.zogbaum@wisconsin.gov.
 - **Learning objective 1** is to discuss what soil health is (and isn't) by defining some basic vocabulary and concepts.
 - **Learning objective 2** is to demonstrate how to assess and monitor changes and improvements in soil health on Wisconsin Farms.
 - **Learning objective 3** is to demonstrate how soil health systems can be implemented on Wisconsin farms.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- Enrollment Update FFY2025 – Batch 2
In early July, FSA opened CREP enrollment under “Batch 2” under signup 63 for FFY2025, for both new and reenrolled acres. The enrollment period went until Friday, July 18, 2025. We don’t know the total yet from Batch 2 but had over 100 agreements enrolled during Batch 1. If you haven’t yet, please reach out to your local FSA office when you have a chance to start the county/state enrollment side CREP with

landowners. The following are the federal enrollment deadlines for this year's sign up:

- 9/19/2025 - Deadline for NRCS/TSP to complete the conservation plan, sign and obtain signatures on CRP-1, and return the conservation plan to FSA.
- 9/30/2025 - Deadline for COC or CED to approve FSA CRP/CREP contracts (CRP-1's).

Rules

- A Scope Statement for ATCP 52 Permanent Rule related to Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants general rule cleanup, and the incorporation of the Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program and Crop Insurance Premium Rebates for Planting Cover Crops Program is open: [SS 046-24](#).
- **Emergency Rulemaking** is also underway for providing [Crop Insurance Premium Rebates for Planting Cover Crops](#) and [Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program](#) to administer the programs until a permanent rule is in effect.