

## Dane County Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Pilot

Dane County has funding available to pilot an agricultural conservation easement program. The goals of the program are to preserve farmland and to protect water quality through the voluntary purchase of conservation easements.

### Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to local units of government for 25% of the acquisition cost of the easement not to exceed \$300,000. A total of \$300,000 is available for projects.

### Program Eligibility

To be considered for funding, all projects must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Located in a certified Farmland Preservation Zoning District and eligible for the Farmland Preservation Program.
- In compliance with agricultural performance standards and prohibitions in Chapter 49, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with permitting and certificate of use requirements related to manure storage in Chapter 49, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with stormwater and erosion control requirements in Chapter 14, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with all local, state, and federal rules.
- Have a nutrient management plan that meets the 590 standard and A2809 UW recommendations.
- Meets current zoning uses and does not have legal non-conforming uses.
- All intermittent (dashed blue line) and perennial streams (solid blue line) and constructed drainage have minimum 30-foot buffers (buffers may be harvestable).
- No significant junk piles on the property.
- No cropping in wetlands as defined Dane County. These areas are eligible for wetland restoration projects or the Dane County Continuous Cover Program.
- No drain tile in wetlands as defined by Dane County.
- Known drain tile shall be mapped and provided to the County or landowner will certify if no drain tile present.

### Application Requirements

Application materials should include

1. Application form (please use the Conservation Fund Grant Program Application found on pages 6-7 of the [Conservation Fund Grant Program Guidelines and Application Materials](#)).
  - a. Application attachments not identified in this document do not apply.
2. Project Map(s) that identify:
  - a. Project location
  - b. Aerial image
  - c. Property boundary
  - d. Wetlands, surface water and constructed drainage if any
  - e. Drain tile map if any

3. Property data:
  - a. Name of property owner
  - b. Any known encumbrances (easements, deed restrictions, enrollment in other programs such as CRP).
    - i. A preliminary title report will meet this requirement.
  - c. Any other relevant information
4. Narrative
  - a. Address how the project meets farmland preservation goals and protects water quality.
  - b. Address the ability of the project applicant to monitor and enforce the easement in perpetuity.
  - c. Address each point of the eligibility requirements.
    - i. Address how eligibility will be met prior to closing if necessary.
5. Appraisal that meets USPAP and Yellow Book standards
6. Landowner Intent
  - a. Letter of intent from landowner or accepted option or offer to purchase will meet this requirement.

**Pre-Application Meeting (optional)**

Dane County staff are available to review potential project. Please contact Sharene Smith at [smith.sharene@danecounty.gov](mailto:smith.sharene@danecounty.gov) to schedule a pre-application meeting.

**Application Deadline**

Applications should be submitted by October 31, 2024 or the deadline established by the Wisconsin NRCS for their FY2025, whichever is later.