



United States Department of Agriculture



Fiscal Year 2024 Local Working Group Virtual Meeting

June 7, 2023

Introduction

Ryan Gerlich, Moderator

Acting Assistant State Conservationist-
Partnerships



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Agenda



10:00: Welcome – Ryan Gerlich

10:00 - 10:10: State Overview – Jeremy Bennett, Acting State Conservationist

10:10- 10:20: WI Program Updates - Melissa Bartz

10:20- 10:30: Natural Resource Concerns – Eric Hurley

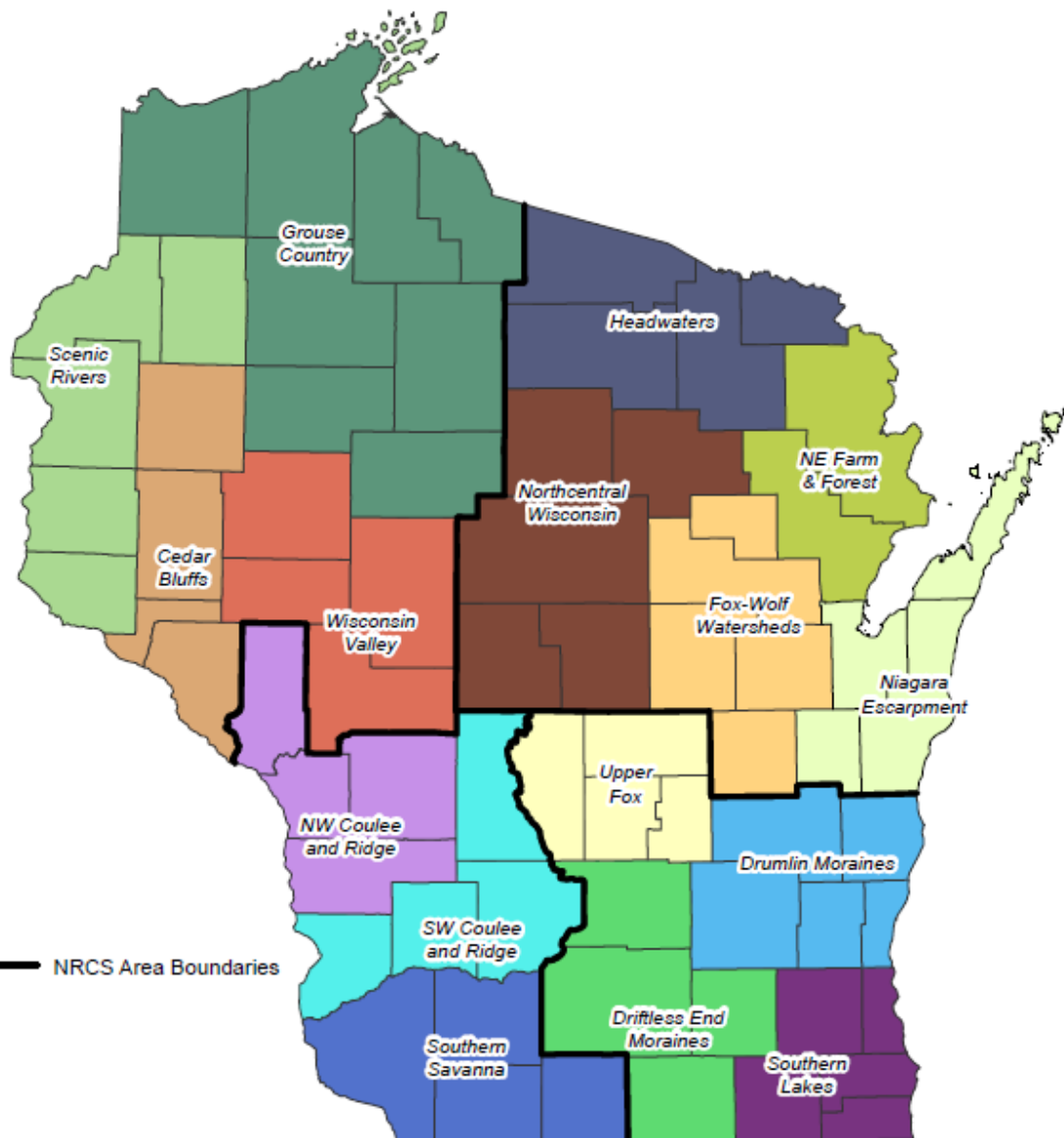
10:30 - 10:40: Review Purpose of LWG and move to Breakout Meetings – Ryan Gerlich

10:45 - 12:00: Area Breakout Discussions



FY 2024 Local Work Groups

March 2023



Northwest Breakout 10:45am-Noon:

Microsoft Teams meeting
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Northeast Breakout 10:45am-Noon:

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Southeast Breakout 10:45am-Noon:

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Wisconsin Overview

Jeremy Bennett
Acting State Conservationist



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Welcome Tyrone Larson



Ty Larson has been selected as the next permanent Wisconsin State Conservationist beginning July 3rd.



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NRCS Mission and Vision



Our Mission: We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.



Our Vision: A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.



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Administration Goals



- **Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry**
 - Focused on partnerships – with agriculture, with forestry, with tribes, with businesses, with communities;
 - Focused on creating new opportunities and markets for agriculture and forestry;
 - Focused on ensuring rural America plays a key role in our transition to cleaner sources of energy; and
- **Urban Agriculture**
 - USDA stood up new Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
 - Plays an important role in:
 - growing fresh, healthy produce
 - access to fresh, healthy food in food deserts
- **Historically Underserved Participants**
 - Increasing outreach to Historically Underserved participants
 - Improve representation by Historically Underserved participants



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Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)



- Signed into law by President Biden in August 2022
- The IRA provides NRCS with \$19.5 billion in **additional** funds for its **existing** conservation programs:
 - \$8.45 billion Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - \$2.7 million received for WI EQIP in FY2023
 - \$4.95 billion Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPPI)
 - \$3.25 billion Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - \$4.2 million received for WI CSP in FY2023
 - \$1.4 billion Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 - \$1 billion Conservation Technical Assistance
- **The IRA does not create any new programs** – it gives NRCS additional funds to **expand its existing climate efforts** and satisfy unmet demand
- IRA funds begin in **fiscal year 2023**; all IRA funds must be spent by **September 30, 2031**




NRCS, Producers and the IRA



- Agricultural producers can play a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering carbon, and deliver lasting solutions to the climate crisis
- NRCS supports farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners in meeting their conservation goals, ***regardless of the size, location, and type of operation***
- IRA provides an opportunity to expand this support, with a focus on climate change mitigation




The IRA Focuses on Mitigation



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Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List⁽¹⁾ FY2023



Climate Change Mitigation Practice Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ⁽²⁾ (units)	CSF Enhancement Code Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Bundle and Enhancement Activity
Soil Health	327	Conservation Cover (acres)	8000BFF1* Buffer Bundles†*
			8000CPL24 Cropland soil health management system*
			8000CCAL21 Climate smart advanced soil health†
			E3277A Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects
			E3277B Establish Monarch butterfly habitat
	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E3278B Resource conserving crop rotation
			E3288B Improved resource conserving crop rotation
			E328E Soil health crop rotation
			E328F Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			Crop rotation on recently converted land: CSP requires cover for soil organic matter improvement
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E328N Inter cropping to improve soil health
			E328O Perennial grain crop conservation tillage
			E329A No till to reduce soil erosion
			E329B No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E329C No till to increase plant available moisture
	332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)	E329D No till systems to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E329E No till to reduce erosion
			None Available
			E340A Cover crops to reduce soil erosion
			E340B Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
Soil Health	340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340C Use of multi species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E340D Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health
			E340E Cover crops to minimize soil compaction
			E340F Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients
			E340H Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressure and break pest cycles
	345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E341A Using cover crops for biological strip till
			E341B Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion
			E341C Reduced tillage to reduce field input particulate matter
			E345C Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture
			E345D Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
Soil Health	386	Field Border (acres)	E345E Reduced tillage to reduce erosion
			E386A Enhanced field borders to reduce soil erosion along the edge(s) of a field
			E386B Enhanced field borders to increase carbon storage along the edge(s) of a field
			E386C Enhanced field borders to decrease particulate emissions along the edge(s) of a field
			E386D Enhanced field borders to increase food for pollination along the edge(s) of a field
	392	Filter Strips (acres)	E386E Enhanced field borders to increase wildlife food and habitat along the edge(s) of a field
			E392A Extending existing filter strips to reduce water quality impacts
			E412A Grassed Waterways (acres)
			E433A Mulching to improve soil health
			E464B Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch
Soil Health	484	Mulching (acres)	E484C Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch
	585	Stripcropping (acres)	
	601	Vegetative Barriers (feet)	
Soil Health	603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers (feet)	

None Available

- The IRA directs NRCS to use the additional funds specifically for **climate change mitigation**.
- Mitigation activities ***reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve carbon storage***.
- FY23 list of **NRCS climate-smart mitigation activities**: nrcs.usda.gov/mitigation-activities.pdf
- NRCS is continually evaluating mitigation activities and IRA implementation approach and will update them as appropriate.
 - **Federal Register notice** (Nov. 21, 2022)

USDA Civil Rights Commitment

- Across USDA and NRCS, Civil Rights ensures equal employment opportunities and program access for all employees and customers.
- Civil Rights ensures that every employee, applicant and program participant is treated with dignity, equality and respect by enforcing Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity policies.
- These policies and emphasis on Civil Rights makes USDA an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender to customers.
- USDA is committed to equitable program delivery. By working with our partner groups, we will ensure these funds are equitably distributed to include historically underserved producers.



Civil Rights: The Historically Underserved

- **Historically underserved (HU) customers are beginning farmers, limited resource farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers and Veterans**
 - Beginning Farmer or Rancher – is new to farming or has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 consecutive years.
 - Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher – is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of that group without regard to their individual qualities.
 - Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher – has a household income at or below the national poverty level.
 - Veteran Farmer or Rancher – has served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm or ranch, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 consecutive years, or first obtained veteran status during the last 10 years.



Staffing additions since last LWG Meeting

33 Additional Positions:

- 16 Field level positions
- 9 Area level positions
- 8 State level positions

Positions by Area:

- NW – 9
- NE – 6
- SW – 4
- SE – 6
- State Office – 8

Positions by Type:

- Resource Conservationist – 14
- APS – 4
- ARC – 3
- Admin Assistant - 3
- ASTC – Compliance – 1
- Biologist – 1
- Engineer – 1
- Soil Scientist – 1
- State Soil Coordinator - 1
- Business Tools Spclst – 1
- Soil Conservationist - 1
- Management Analyst – 1
- Program Analyst - 1



Projected Staffing Goals

Projected staffing hires to support IRA

- FY2024 – 70 positions
- FY2025 – 120 positions
- FY2026 – 160 positions
- FY2027 – 90 positions

Supports increased staffing numbers with NRCS and partners and accounts for anticipated attrition.





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Wisconsin Program Updates

Melissa Bartz

Assistant State Conservationist –
Financial Assistance Programs



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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits.

- **Funding is available Statewide**
- **2023 Sign up 1**
 - 394 Contracts in State & National Initiatives
 - \$13,893,169 in State & National Initiatives
 - 394 Contracts in Local Work Groups
 - \$8,230,594 in Local Work Groups
- **2023 Sign up 2 including IRA (ongoing signup)**
 - ~\$3.4 million available



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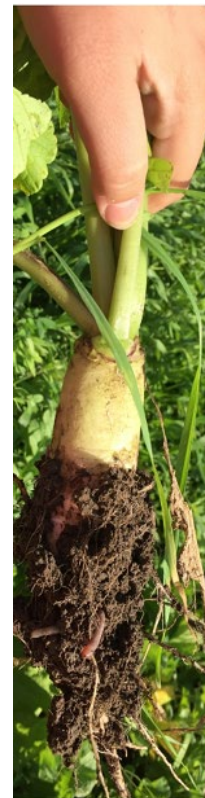


Any Questions Contact: meagan.duberstein@usda.gov

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Most agriculture producers that participate in CSP have already implemented conservation practices on their land. CSP offers additional opportunities to expand on existing conservation efforts on their operation.

- **Funding is available Statewide**
- **2023 Renewal Sign up**
 - 291 Contracts
 - \$8,486,732
- **2023 Classic Sign up including IRA (in progress)**
 - 1,027 Application submitted, Funding decisions are ongoing
 - \$14,786,645

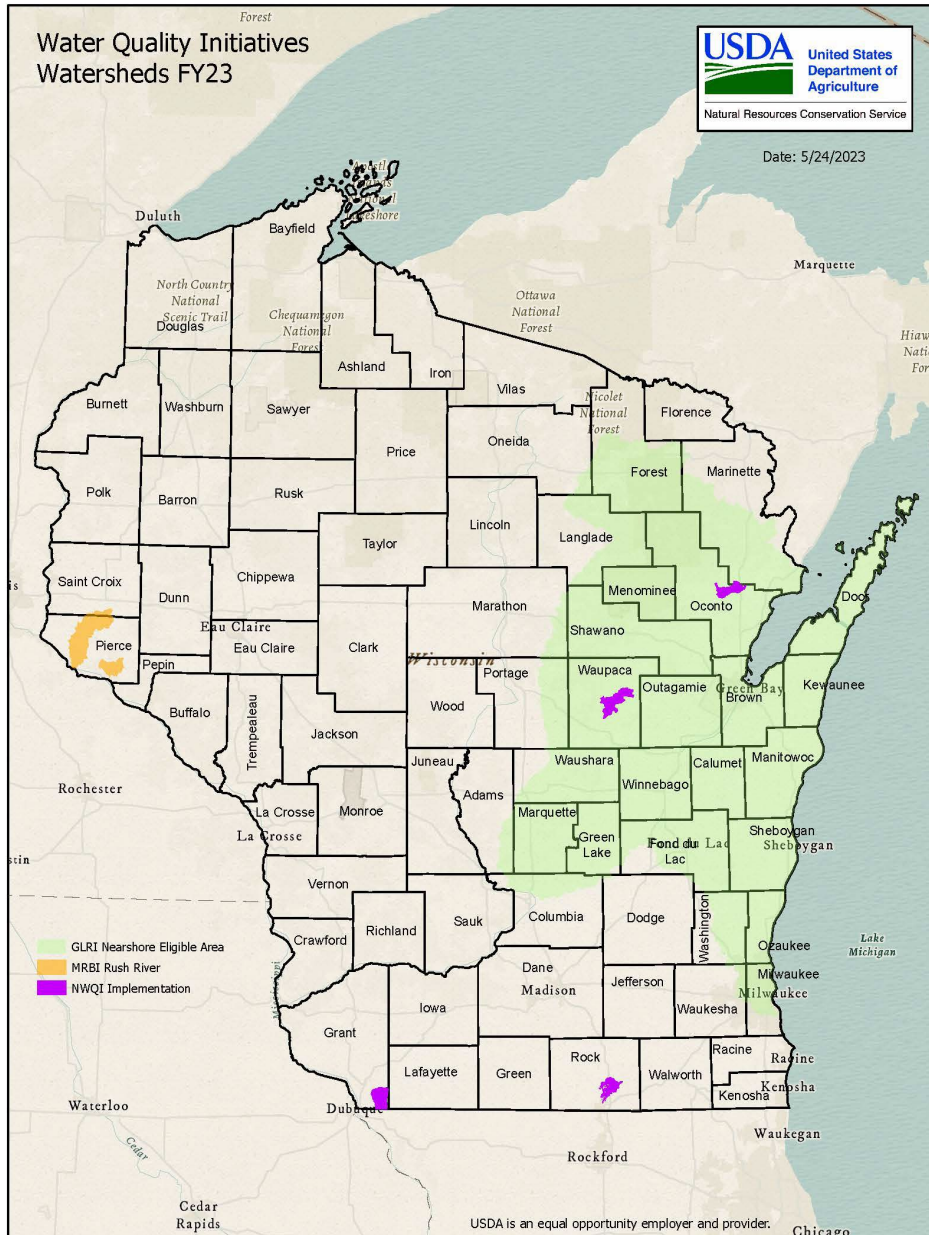


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Any Questions Contact: meridith.williams@usda.gov

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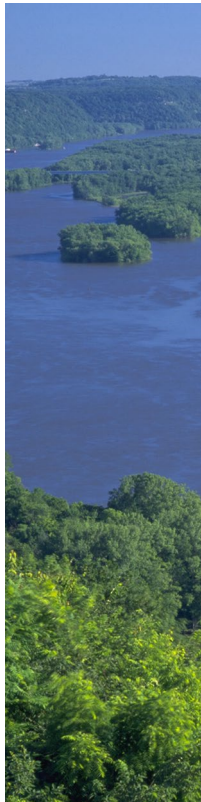
Wisconsin Water Quality Initiatives

- 28 of 72 Counties have GLRI, NWQI, or MRBI coverage
- ~19.3% of the state

Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)

MRBI emphasizes supporting nutrient loss reduction strategies through a targeted approach aided by watershed assessments to implement conservation systems composed of practices that avoid, control, and trap sediment and nutrients.

- **Funding is available in the Pierce/St. Croix Co. project**
- **2023 Sign up #1:**
 - 13 Contracts
 - \$194,611
- **2023 Sign up #2 (ongoing signup)**
 - \$305,689 available



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For Questions Contact: twyla.kite@usda.gov

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National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

Through NWQI, NRCS works with producers and landowners to implement voluntary conservation practices that address agricultural sources of water pollution as part of areawide efforts to improve water quality in priority watersheds throughout the country.

- **Funding is available in 4 active project areas in WI**
- **2023 Sign up #1**
 - 4 Contracts
 - \$283,970
- **2023 Sign up #2 (ongoing signup)**
 - \$869,540 available



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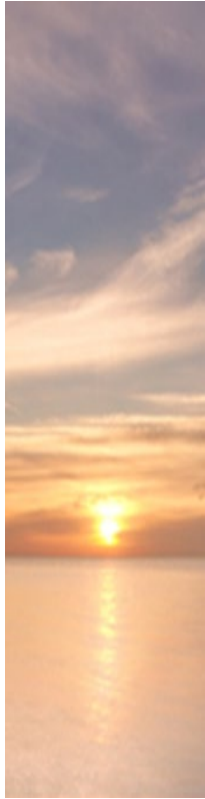
For Questions Contact: twyla.kite@usda.gov

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Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

With GLRI funding, NRCS works with farmers and landowners to combat invasive species, protect watersheds and shorelines from non-point source pollution and restore wetlands and other habitat areas.

- **Funding is available in the Great Lakes Basin**
- **2023 Nearshore Health Sign up #1**
 - 100 Contracts - \$6,017,802
- **2023 Wildlife Habitat Sign up**
 - 3 Contracts - \$156,597
- **2023 Invasives Species Sign up**
 - 7 Contracts - \$37,850
- **2023 Nearshore Health Sign up #2 – Ongoing signup**



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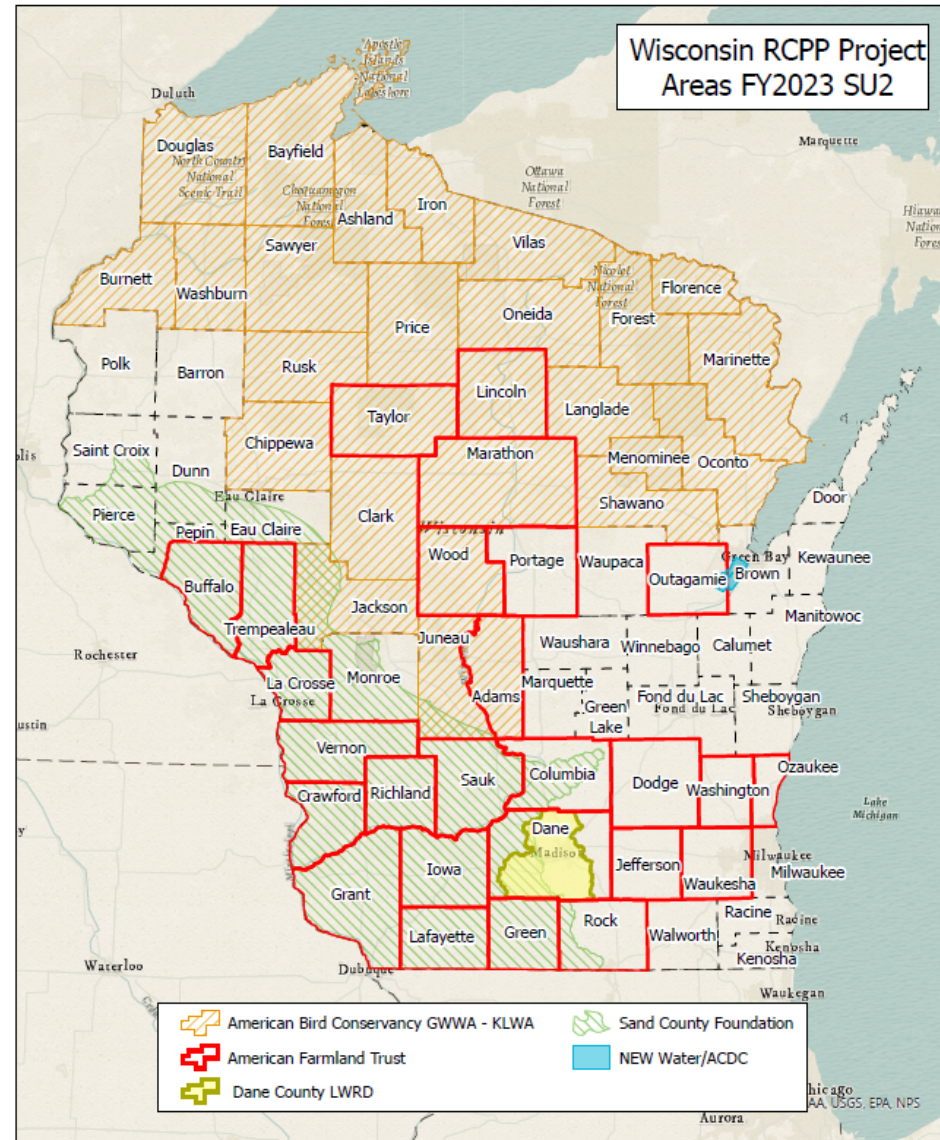
For Questions Contact: twyla.kite@usda.gov

Regional Conservation Partnership Projects

RCPP Signup 2 for FY2023:

54 of 72 Counties (75% of state)

Two additional RCPP project agreements are being finalized for FY24



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

RCPP offers opportunities for NRCS to work with partners to encourage:

- Impact
- Partner Contributions
- Innovation
- Partnerships and Management

2022 Results

- \$1.65 million (\$3 million with easements)
- 107 contracts

For questions contact:

brandi.richter@usda.org or jennifer.chakravorty@usda.org



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

FY23 Funding

FY2023 Signup 1

- 6 RCPP Projects (ABC, AFT, Dane County LWRD, MMSD, SCF, TU)
- Total of 48 contracts
- \$928,141

FY2023 Signup 2

- American Bird Conservancy (ABC) **LM**
- American Farmland Trust (AFT) **LM + EHE**
- Dane County Land and Water Resource District (LWRD) **LM**
- NEW Water Ashwaubenon & Dutchman Creek (ACDC) **LM**
- Sand County Foundation (SCF) **LM + R**
- **>\$1.55 million available across all projects**





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Natural Resource Concerns

Eric G. Hurley

Assistant State Conservationist –
Ecological Science



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Natural Resource Concern Classification

- **Soil**
 - **Water**
 - **Air**
 - **Plant**
 - **Animal**
 - **Energy**
 - **+ Human**
-
- **SWAPAE+H**



Soil Resource Concerns

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
SOIL	SOIL EROSION	<i>Wind and water erosion</i>	Sheet and rill erosion
			Wind erosion
		<i>Concentrated erosion</i>	Ephemeral gully erosion
			Classic gully erosion
			Bank erosion from streams, shorelines or water conveyance channels
	SOIL HEALTH	<i>Soil quality limitations</i>	Subsidence
			Compaction
			Organic matter depletion
			Concentration of salts or other chemicals
			Soil organism habitat loss or degradation
			Aggregate instability



Water Resource Concerns

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
WATER	EXCESS WATER	Weather resilience	Ponding and flooding
			Seasonal high water table
			Seeps
			Drifted snow
			Naturally available moisture use
	INSUFFICIENT WATER	Source water depletion	Surface water depletion
			Groundwater depletion
			Inefficient irrigation water use
	WATER QUALITY	Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	Nutrients transported to surface water
			Nutrients transported to groundwater
			Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to surface water
			Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to groundwater
			Sediment transported to surface water
		Field Pesticide loss	Pesticides transported to surface water
			Pesticides transported to groundwater
		Storage and handling of pollutants	Nutrients transported to surface water
			Nutrients transported to groundwater
			Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to surface water
			Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to groundwater

Air Resource Concerns

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
AIR	AIR QUALITY	<i>Air quality emissions</i>	Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors
			Emissions of greenhouse gases - GHGs
			Emissions of ozone precursors
			Objectionable odor
			Emissions of airborne reactive nitrogen



Plant & Animal Resource Concerns

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
PLANT	PLANT CONDITION	<i>Pest pressure</i>	Plant pest pressure
		<i>Degraded plant condition</i>	Plant productivity and health
			Plant structure and composition
		<i>Fire management</i>	Wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
ANIMAL	LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION	<i>Livestock production limitation</i>	Feed and forage balance
			Inadequate livestock shelter
			Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality and distribution
	HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE	<i>Terrestrial habitat</i>	Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
		<i>Aquatic habitat</i>	Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
			Elevated water temperature



Energy & Human Resource Concerns

SWAPAE+H	Category	CART Category	Resource Concern
ENERGY	ENERGY EFFICIENCY	<i>Inefficient energy use</i>	Energy efficiency of equipment and facilities
			Energy efficiency of farming/ranching practices and field operations

+ Human

HUMAN	LAND, LABOR, CAPITAL, MANAGEMENT, AND RISK
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Role of Local Work Groups

- Identify priority resource concerns
- Be specific
- Table is posted in the chat as a reference





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LWG Purpose and Breakout Meetings

Ryan Gerlich

Acting Assistant State Conservationist -
Partnerships



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Local Work Group Purpose

- **LWG's – a subcommittee of the State Technical Committee**
 - Other subcommittees: Source Water Protection, Wildlife, Soil Health, Forestry, Urban and Community Agriculture
- **Provides recommendations to NRCS**
 - Natural resource priorities
 - Conservation activities and practices
 - Technical and financial assistance
 - Needs assessments
- **Interested in joining a subcommittee?**
 - Contact Ryan Gerlich
ryan.gerlich@usda.gov
 - Letter to State Conservationist



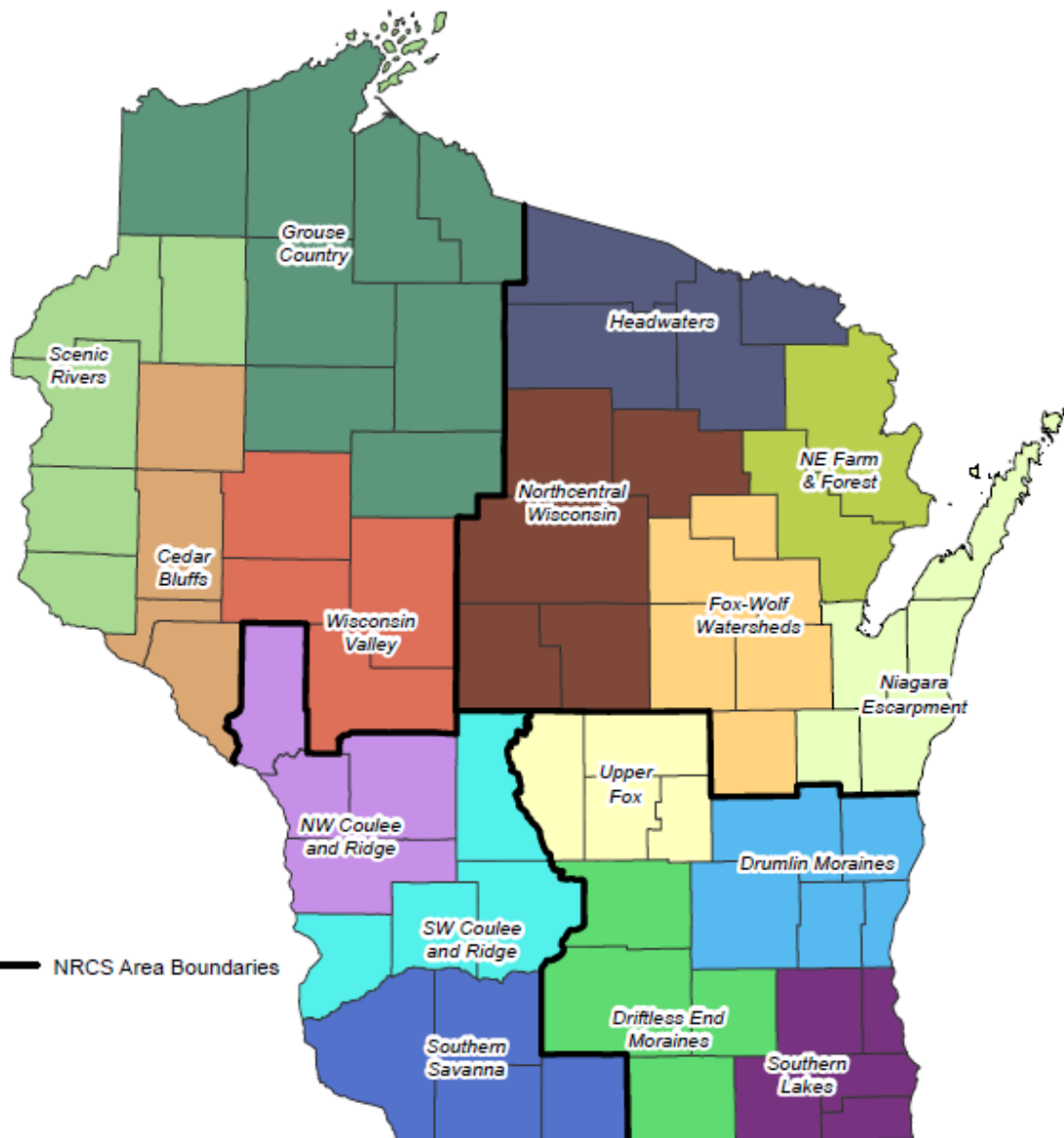
Local Working Group Details

- **16 LWG's grouped by geographic region and resources**
- **Open to the public and meet annually**
- **Members are a diverse group with agricultural and natural resource interests**
- **Examples include:**
 - agricultural producers representing diverse crops and livestock
 - nonindustrial private forest landowners
 - representatives of agricultural and environmental organizations
 - representatives of governmental agencies carrying out conservation



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