

# *Cleaning and Protecting Wisconsin's Waters:*

Cost Sharing: Enable farmers to implement conservation practices without breaking the bank.

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## **Funding for agricultural practices**

Given the scale of the polluted runoff problem, technical and financial assistance must be provided to farmers.

Providing state, federal and county dollars to landowners to install best management practices required in the proposed rules is an appropriate way to minimize water contamination from agriculture.

However, because the dollars earmarked for runoff controls are very limited, Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection must allocate resources efficiently in order to "halt and reverse the depletion of the state's soil resources and pollution of its waters" (ch. 92, Stats).

DNR and DATCP must provide money in a responsible manner that helps a maximum number of farmers to be good land stewards.

## **The Clean Water Coalition's\* position on appropriate uses of government money for agriculture:**

1. Cost sharing cannot be used as a way to weaken or eliminate enforcement of clean water standards.

- As the agricultural standards are written, farmers are only required to implement practices after they "receive" cost share money.
- This cost sharing structure rewards those who delay implementation and creates an additional and unwarranted bureaucratic hurdle.

2. Cost share funds should be made available to implement vegetative buffers, nutrient management plans and other practices, but not to maintain those practices.

- Cost sharing to implement these practices is a responsible public policy objective, but once these practices are installed, continued maintenance should be considered a cost of doing business.

*One Jefferson county farmer who has already installed conservation practices on his farm agrees that he could not have afforded [a pollution control system] but said he does not think the state should pay him to maintain it. –Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Tuesday, September 4, 2001.*

3. Cost share funds should not be used to pay farmers for the cost of land taken out of production, unless that land is placed into a permanent, or long-term, conservation easement and the payments are structured similar to formulas used by Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and other similar federal programs.

4. State and county dollars should be spent first on farms that are directly affecting polluted waterways. However, there is an equally important public policy goal in protecting relatively pristine lakes and waterways from the threat of nonpoint pollution.

- Ultimately, the rule must provide flexibility to allow these decisions to be made on a county-by-county basis.

5. It is acceptable to provide additional funding for landowners who qualify for hardship money, but the formula for determining “hardship” must be realistic.

- If almost any farmer is eligible for this additional funding, the definition hardly qualifies as a responsible definition of “hardship.”

6. Cost share funds should be provided for nutrient management plans for one crop rotation cycle.

- Implementation of nutrient management plans is one of the most cost effective practices that a producer can undertake because of the opportunity to save money in the long run when nutrient management plans are properly developed and instituted.

7. Farmers must be required to implement no-cost or low-cost practices without funding.

- The proposed rules must define no cost and low cost practices that do not need to be cost shared and that must be implemented and enforced regardless of cost sharing being received.



### **What can you do to make sure the state uses conservation dollars wisely?**

Please write a letter to the Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Board encouraging them to limit cost sharing dollars to the implementation of conservation practices for farmers who need it the most.

Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection Board  
John Malchine, Chairman  
P.O. Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708

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\* The Clean Water Campaign is funded in part by a generous grant from the Beldon Fund.

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