



ATCP 50

DATCP Grants Program and Funding

ARM Pub 228, 03/14

The latest revisions to ATCP 50 are effective on May 1, 2014. These revisions are primarily designed to implement new and modified farm runoff control standards adopted by the Department of Natural Resources in 2011 (2011 DNR standards). This summary focuses on changes made to ATCP 50 designed to increase accountability among recipients of Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) grants, re-balance funding criteria to better address state priorities, and re-focus program requirements to maximize funding for staff and farm cost-sharing.

***NEW* to ATCP 50**

ENHANCED PERFORMANCE TRACKING

- Counties are expected to include annual benchmarks in their description of planned activities. In an annual report to the DATCP, counties will report their documented progress in meeting these benchmarks.
- New funding criteria could allow DATCP to make grant awards based on county performance.

COUNTY STAFF AND SUPPORT GRANTS

Implementation of the 2011 DNR standards requires support of county staff who provide technical assistance and cost-sharing to farmers, and play a crucial role in helping farmers meet their conservation responsibilities under Farmland Preservation Program. The rule changes will enable DATCP to focus its funding by:

- Ending mandated minimum grant awards, and providing DATCP flexibility to modify its funding formula to meet programmatic needs.
- Capping county support and training costs at a maximum 10% of its annual grant.
- Clearly defining reimbursable training costs.
- Adding funding criteria enabling DATCP to impose cost controls to maximize available funding.

COOPERATOR GRANTS

Establishes a framework for funding cooperators (a person or entity under a contract with DATCP) to implement projects or other activities authorized under s. 92.14 (10), such as outreach, education and training:

- Defines requirements related to the application for grant funds, grant contracts that govern the terms of any awards, extension of projects for one year, and record keeping.
- Allows counties to receive cooperator grants under s. 92.14(10), Stats., if counties follow requirements to separate funding under these grants from grant dollars provided for SWRM staffing and support.

COUNTY COST-SHARE GRANTS

The rule revision facilitates implementation of the 2011 DNR standards by **re-focusing DATCP's funding emphasis** to address state priorities such as farm runoff control, limiting cost-sharing for non-farm practices, and simplifying DATCP grant administration.

The rule also creates more funding criteria to **support allocations that target spending on farms**. There are new criteria that promote projects that address high priority conservation concerns and coordinate state funding to maximize impacts. The new rule also recognizes that non-farm priorities such as invasive species will not have the same weight in DATCP funding decisions.

In addition, the rule attempts to maximize cost-share funding available to implement DNR agricultural performance standards and prohibitions, including those adopted in 2011. Specifically, this is accomplished by:

- Setting a 50% maximum rate for cost-sharing projects on land owned by local governments.
- Setting a 50% maximum rate for the following practices unless the practice is required to implement DNR standards: access roads, roof runoff systems, streambank and shoreline protection, cattle/stream crossing, and wetlands.
- Prohibiting DATCP reimbursement for state or local permit fees.
- Supporting farm cost-sharing by formally reinstating NOD/NOI funding and defining “economic hardship” to apply only to farms.

Rule changes improve DATCP administration of cost-share grants by:

- Simplifying grant procedures, including the transfer of unspent grant funds, to more quickly get funds in the hands of end users, such as farmers.
- Allowing extension of cost-share projects for good cause, if counties miss the December 31st deadline.
- Simplifying the transfer of funds from counties that do not need the funding to those that do.
- Codifying an approach to maximize spending of extended cost-share funds, allowing DATCP to pool extended funds, and apply them to any extended project.
- Clarifying procedures for recording cost-share contracts, including ending the recording requirement for “soft” cost-share practices, such as nutrient management.

COST-SHARE TECHNICAL STANDARDS

In addition to updating cost-sharing technical standards, the rule does the following regarding standards implementation:

- Allows cost-sharing of conservation practices using the most current technical standards not listed in the rule, with a landowner’s written consent.
- Adds a standard to cost-share systems to control feed storage discharges, and clarifies landowner responsibility to manage discharges when no cost-sharing is provided.
- Better defines when a nutrient management plan is required for barnyard and feed storage runoff control systems, and gives farmers the option to adjust their nutrient management plan to meet their responsibilities to maintain the capacity of a cost-shared manure storage structure after animals are added.
- Eliminates heavy use area protection as a separate cost-shared practice by allowing cost-sharing of this practice only as a component of a conservation system such as a barnyard runoff control system.
- Identifies several non-farm practices (e.g. trails, access roads, stream crossings) eligible for cost sharing, while setting limits on the extent of eligible costs for such practices (e.g. no cost-sharing of bridges as stream crossings).
- Allows more flexibility to provide cost-share funds for pesticide spill control structures without developing a pesticide management plan as a prerequisite.
- Better defines the scope of streambank or shoreline protection practices, and expand cost-share eligibility beyond riprap, to include structural and bioengineering treatments.