

WATERSHED MOMENTS

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program Biannual Newsletter



Farmers Educate PEOPLE Firsthand

By Wade Moder, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association

For the last two years, Farmers for the Upper Sugar River (FUSR) has teamed up with the Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE) program to educate high school students on where their food comes from, experience what farming is like, and better understand the link between agriculture and the environment.

Established by UW-Madison, the PEOPLE program offers first generation, incoming college students from low income backgrounds the opportunity to complete four weeks of classes on campus each year from 8th to 12th grade. If they successfully complete each year, they receive a full college scholarship.

FUSR is one of 47 producer-led watershed groups in Wisconsin funded through the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). The PEOPLE program approached FUSR's fiscal agent, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, about providing a week's worth of outdoor learning.

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Photos above and below-right: Garfoot farm hosting PEOPLE program.

In 2022, the PEOPLE students spent an afternoon at Dave and Duane Garfoot's farm, two brothers and FUSR members. The Garfoots raise cattle and crop over 300 acres in the Driftless area of southwest Dane County near Mt Vernon, and recently began rotational grazing. For nearly all of the students, it was their first time stepping foot on a farm or seeing a cow in person. Dave and Duane gave them a tour of the farm and introduced them to conservation practices like contour farming, cover crops, no-till planting, grazing and more. Dave was impressed by the great questions the students asked about cropping, livestock management, conservation practices, and more. The Garfoots even let the students climb into the cab of a harvester as they were getting ready for chopping wheat the next day.

In 2023, Jeff Grindle and Marsha Ralston hosted the students at their beef and horse farm in Belleville, Single Oak Farm. With the West Branch Sugar River winding through much of their acreage, Jeff and Marsha have maintained buffer strips through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and adopted new conservation strategies learned through FUSR. The students got to tour the farm and learn the key aspects of their operation including beef production, horse boarding, and market farming, and how all of it connects to the watershed. They even got to sample raspberries for the market stand fresh off the cane, and one of the students had such a good time that he wanted to move in!

Thank you to Dave and Duane Garfoot, Jeff Grindle, and Marsha Ralston being such great hosts and showing another reason why producer-led groups like Farmers for the Upper Sugar River are such assets to the community.



WINTER WORKSHOPS

Share your upcoming events with the prodledgrants listserve or with your regional team lead!

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

Annual Workshop

February 20th, 2023, Wausau WI

[More information here.](#)

Farmers for Soil Health Winter Workshop

December 19th, Whitewater, WI

Hosted by multiple farmer-led groups in SE WI

[More information here.](#)

How Can Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grants Help Producer-Led Watershed Groups? A Q+A with Andrea Topper

by Dana Christel

Andrea Topper is DATCP's Nutrient Management Outreach Specialist. She brought a strong connection to the vegetable industry as a former crop consultant when she joined DATCP three years ago and has played a critical role in advancing and renovating DATCP's nutrient management programming to include different types of agriculture such as rotational grazing, horse farms and cranberry operations, while working to integrate nutrient management as a key component of our current soil health movement. She also manages the Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) Grant Program, which provides nutrient management education to farmers and enables them to write their own nutrient management plans. The program is separated into two different tiers (Tier 1 and Tier 2) to provide different elements of NM education. In this article, Andrea shares how the NMFE program may be of particular value to producer-led watershed groups.

Q: What is the difference between Tier 1 and Tier 2 NMFE grants?

A: Tier 1 funds can be used to host a nutrient management planning class and offer soil sampling and participation stipends for completing a nutrient management plan.

The goal of Tier 1 grants is to educate farmers on how to write their nutrient management plan, with the desired outcome of submitting the completed plan to their county land conservation department. Tier 1 grants have a maximum award of \$25,000, which is a new increase from \$20,000 in previous years.

The stipends provided to each farmer include soil sampling for up to \$750, manure analysis for up to \$100, and participation in the class and plan writing for up to \$700. There is no limit on the number of years that farmers can receive a participation stipend; If a county or a producer-led group applies for a Tier 1 year after year, farmers can attend and receive a stipend each year. Recurring participants are eligible to receive the participation stipends each year and soil sampling stipends every four years.

With a Tier 1 grant, a farmer is going to a class to learn about properly managing NPK on their farm, legume and manure credits, how this affects nutrient recommendations, and about manure application precautions. Farmers also learn how to use the SnapPlus program to write their plan.

Tier 2 funds are used to host nutrient management related events that might focus on low disturbance manure injection, grazing and accounting for animal nutrients on the landscape, cover crops, or soil sampling demonstrations.

WINTER CONFERENCES

Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic

January 10-11, 2024

Madison, WI

[More information here.](#)

Dairy Strong Conference

January 16-18, 2024

Green Bay, WI

[More information here.](#)

NMFE Grants continued

Money can be used for facilities rentals, purchasing food or refreshments. Tier 2 grants have a maximum award of \$3,000.

With Tier 2 grants, there is a lot of flexibility in how the education is delivered. Examples might include: a workshop bringing farmers and planners together to talk about nutrient management plans, a training for manure haulers on best practices for manure spreading, or for field days.

Q: How might producer-led groups use NMFE grants and which Tier is most useful?

A: Producer led groups are eligible to apply for both Tier 1 and Tier 2. It truly depends on the group and where their interests lie. If producers are interested in writing their own nutrient management plans, a Tier 1 grant would be the way to go. If producers in the group already have a nutrient management plan and are looking for new innovating nutrient management practices or if there are producers who are looking to learn more about nutrient management-related topics, the Tier 2 grant would best fit those more education-based opportunities, as they could apply for those funds to host field days, workshops, or other trainings. In Tier 2 grant applications, farmers don't need to have an NMP in order to participate.

Q: Can you share some examples of how other producer-led groups have used NMFE grants?

A: We have had producer-led groups use a Tier 1 NMFE award, where they worked to pull in educators to offer a night class to deliver the NMP curriculum and hosted hybrid classroom opportunities for their members.

The trainings were well received and allowed for organic conversation between producers. We have not had any PL groups use Tier 2 NMFE grants yet, but I think there are endless opportunities for PL groups to utilize a Tier 2 grant, given its flexibility in how the funds can be used. Whether it be hosting a field day or a winter meeting, the Tier 2 NMFE grant could be a perfect way to supplement producer-led efforts revolving around nutrient management topics.



Photo: SnapPlus Training

WINTER CONFERENCES

Grassworks Grazing Conferences

February 1-3, 2024

Wisconsin Dells, WI

[More information here.](#)

Marbleseed Organic Farming Conference

February 22-24, 2025

La Crosse, WI

[More information here.](#)

NMFE Grants continued

Q: Can groups work on a Tier 2 NMFE grant together to deliver an educational program?

A: Yes! There may only be one financial grant manager, but if two groups are wanting to host an event together, they most definitely can share the funds between the two groups. The benefit of applying separately would be that each group could be eligible to receive \$3,000.

Q: What are the requirements of an NMFE grant?

A: Tier 2 grant requirements are fairly simple: host an educational event related to nutrient management, submit up to two reimbursement requests and a final report must be submitted. Tier 1 grants have a few more pieces to manage. Tier 1 awards are built with the intent of teaching producers how to write their own nutrient management plan, so there is pre-built curriculum that must be taught to producers and in order for producers to get their stipends, their NMP must be turned into the county LCD. Like Tier 2, a maximum of two reimbursements can be filed and a final report must be submitted. It should be noted that NMFE grants may not be used as match sources for Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants.

Q: What is the timeline of applying for and receiving an NMFE grant?

A: Applications are posted on the NMFE webpage mid-January and will be due April 15th, 2024, for the next grant cycle. Grants are typically awarded around August of each year when the preliminary allocation plan is announced. Grants are 1-year awards that can be extended for one year.

More resources on NMFE grants and nutrient management support provided by DATCP can be found on the NM webpage: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/NMFEGrants.aspx.

Future NM trainings are posted at [DATCP Home Nutrient Management Trainings \(wi.gov\)](#), and details for upcoming virtual winter trainings may be viewed here: [2024NMFETrainingAgenda.pdf \(wi.gov\)](#).



Additionally, as the Nutrient Management Outreach Specialist, Andrea Topper is available to assist farmers, conservation professions, and agronomists with nutrient management-related questions and concerns. She may be reached at:

Andrea.Topper@Wisconsin.gov
(608) 405-0235

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

2024 Farm & Rural Lobby Day

January 17, 2024

Madison, WI

Organized by Wisconsin Farmers Union

[More information here.](#)

Regional Networking & Outreach Opportunities

by Dana Christel

For the last several years, DATCP with partners has worked to establish regional networks within the larger statewide Producer-Led Network to help provide a stronger pathway and more opportunities toward networking among producer-led groups. Currently, most regions have one or more network coordinators who facilitate quarterly check-ins with the lead contacts of groups in the region where they can discuss upcoming events, resource needs, partnership opportunities, speaker-sharing opportunities or troubleshooting topics. Some have also been working together to organize co-sponsored events to help bring farmers from more groups together.

DATCP does have funding available for groups to host regional events for up to \$2,500 per event to pay for things like speaker fees, refreshments, venue fees or other event costs. As the program grows and partner staffing has changed, the networks have shifted over the years. DATCP will work to provide the most up-to-date regional network information on the [producer-led webpage](#). For more information about regional collaboration or if you would like to host a regional event, contact Randy Zogbaum at Randy.Zogbaum@Wisconsin.gov

Farewell & thank you!

I wanted to take this last opportunity to thank you all for the chance to work with you on this program. It truly has brought me so much fulfillment. I consider a person to be lucky when they can leave a job feeling accomplished about the work they've done. So, I would say I'm pretty lucky and I have you to thank for that because of the amazing work and commitment put into your projects and your communities. I wish you all success in your future progress, and hopefully this turns more into a 'See you around' than a Farewell.

All my best,
-Dana

