

Budget Blueprint 2025-27:

PROMOTING CLEAN DRINKING WATER AND RESILIENT FARMS

To address Wisconsin's growing water quality and agricultural challenges, bold action is necessary. For the 2025-27 State Biennial Budget, we call for significant financial investments to provide clean drinking water for Wisconsinites and appropriate incentives for farmers to protect water quality.

SUPPORT AND ENHANCE CURRENT CONSERVATION EFFORTS

County conservation staffing: Support Wisconsin farmers and landowners by allocating \$20.2 million in annual base funding, as provided in s. 92.14(6)(b), for county land and water conservation department technical professionals.

Investment: \$20.2 million annually ongoing (an \$11.3 million increase over current base funding levels)

Nitrate contamination prevention: Expand the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program to better develop nitrogen management techniques to reduce nitrate contamination in drinking water in vulnerable parts of the state.

Investment: \$1.25 million annually (\$250,000 increase over current funding levels)

Promoting cover crops: Increase funding to the Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebate Program, incentivizing the planting of cover crops to improve water quality and promote soil health.

Investment: \$1 million annually (\$200,000 increase over current funding levels)

DNR CAFO Program Staffing: Provide 6 new positions at the Department of Natural Resources to improve efficiency and operations in reviewing and processing CAFO permit applications. New positions should be provided specifically as follows:

- **1 CAFO Review Engineer** | Responsible for all plans and specs review and approval of new waste storage and waste transfer facilities.
- **2 CAFO Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) Reviewers** | Responsible for completing NMP assessments that are submitted by CAFO farms.
- **1 CAFO Hydrogeologist Reviewer** | Responsible for review of new and reissuance requests to assess and review potential water quality issues with respect to the varying soil and water conditions across the state.
- **2 Agricultural Runoff Specialists** | Responsible for communication with farms, review and drafting of individual WPDES permits, scheduling public comment and public hearings for permit issuance, reissuance or modifications. They are also part of the DNR spill response team and communication with the public with regards to the WPDES permitting process or for questions about specific CAFOs.

ENSURING CLEAN DRINKING WATER

Well contamination: Offer households with contaminated wells access to funds for well replacement or whole home filtration. Increase investment and enact statutory programmatic changes to the Well Compensation Program to expand eligibility requirements and provide greater access to the program.

Investment: \$5 million annually

Well testing: Provide grants for county-led programs or direct state assistance that prioritizes testing for low-income households and high-risk areas.

Investment: \$2.5 million annually

FOSTERING INNOVATION

Producer-led watershed protection grants: Increase support for the Producer-Led Watershed Grant Program.

Investment: \$1.25 million annually (\$250,000 increase over current funding levels)

Enhancing managed grazing: Enhance managed grazing livestock production systems by creating a transition to grazing pilot program to assist farmers who intend to strategically transition row crop fields to pasture or perennial forage production systems for livestock.

Investment: \$500,000 annually