

Conservation Voters applaud Evers' Investments in Agriculture

Written by Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Ryan Billingham
Friday, 05 February 2021 13:22

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These are common sense, practical solutions meant to help farmers, stop the use of Wisconsin's agriculture industry as a political football in Madison.

MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers announced today that his administration will invest more than \$43 million in Wisconsin's agriculture economy and farm families in a wide-ranging budget proposal that includes several items centered on farmer-led conservation and agricultural innovation.

The announcement includes additional funding for county conservation staff, a crucial resource for local creation and implementation of conservation practices. These staff are the frontline, boots-on-the-ground conservationists who know their local communities and are indispensable to protecting land and water at the local level.

Executive Director Kerry Schumann had this to say on today's announcement:



“Wisconsin's agriculture industry isn't just one of our state's most important economic engines, it's also part of our culture and our tradition. These initiatives invest in common sense, practical solutions meant to help farmers lead the way in local conservation efforts aimed at protecting

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our water and soil. Conservation and agriculture are not mutually exclusive. Under past administrations and budgets, farmers have been given short shrift when it comes to funding for programs that make it easier for them to innovate and increase their knowledge and implementation of current conservation practices. County conservation staffing and funding has been used as a political football in previous administration's budgets. They are crucial to conservation efforts. We're pleased with the commitment to increasing and funding those staff positions at the local level – where good conservation practices matter most. We appreciate Gov. Evers' commitment to protecting our natural resources while giving farmers tools to lead stewardship efforts from their own acreage."

The budget proposal includes these conservation initiatives:

- Creating and funding a Value-Added Agricultural Grant Program, which would provide education and technical assistance related to producing value-added agricultural products, such as organic farming and best practices related to grazing;
- Providing additional funding to counties in order to support three conservation staff per county;
- Increasing funding for the Producer-Led Watershed Grant Program, which supports farmer groups working collaboratively to address local water issues;
- Creating and funding Water Stewardship Grants which provides support for third parties assisting farmers with water stewardship;
- Creating and funding a Conservation Grant Program which supports farmers seeking to transition to more environmentally sustainable agricultural practices; and
- Providing funding in order to support additional UW-Extension specialists and county agents, who provide both on-the-ground technical assistance and research to support producers throughout Wisconsin.

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Engaging voters to protect Wisconsin's environment.