

WI LAND+WATER



2025-2027 BIENNIAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

OUR TOP PRIORITY: COUNTY CONSERVATION STAFFING

Support Wisconsin farmers and landowners by allocating \$20.2 million in base funding for county land and water conservation department (LWCD) technical professionals, from the DATCP budget.



REASONS TO INCREASE LWCD BASE FUNDING

- » LWCD staff carry out a range of the state's agricultural and resource management programs to reduce non-point pollution, preserve farmland, limit aquatic invasive species, protect waterfront property, manage forests, and reduce floods.
- » Without county staff support, vital state programs like DATCP's Farmland Preservation Program simply would not function.
- » LWCD staff assist Wisconsin's farmers in many ways, including supporting producer-led watershed groups, developing nutrient management plans, and improving profitability.
- » LWCD staff maintain relationships with landowners, building trust and partnerships that have major water quality benefits, like preventing soil erosion and protecting our drinking water.

County conservation staff are the key to unlocking dollars for Wisconsin communities.



For every \$1 of county staffing provided in the state biennial budget, LWCDs leverage \$2 in additional local, state, and federal funding.*

**Determined using data from DATCP*

ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Addressing the following issues at the state level would better allow LWCDs to meet the needs of their communities.



AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE AREAS

Protect farmland by increasing the statewide Agricultural Enterprise Area cap to 3 million acres, meeting increased farmer demand for Farmland Preservation Program participation.



CLEAN DRINKING WATER

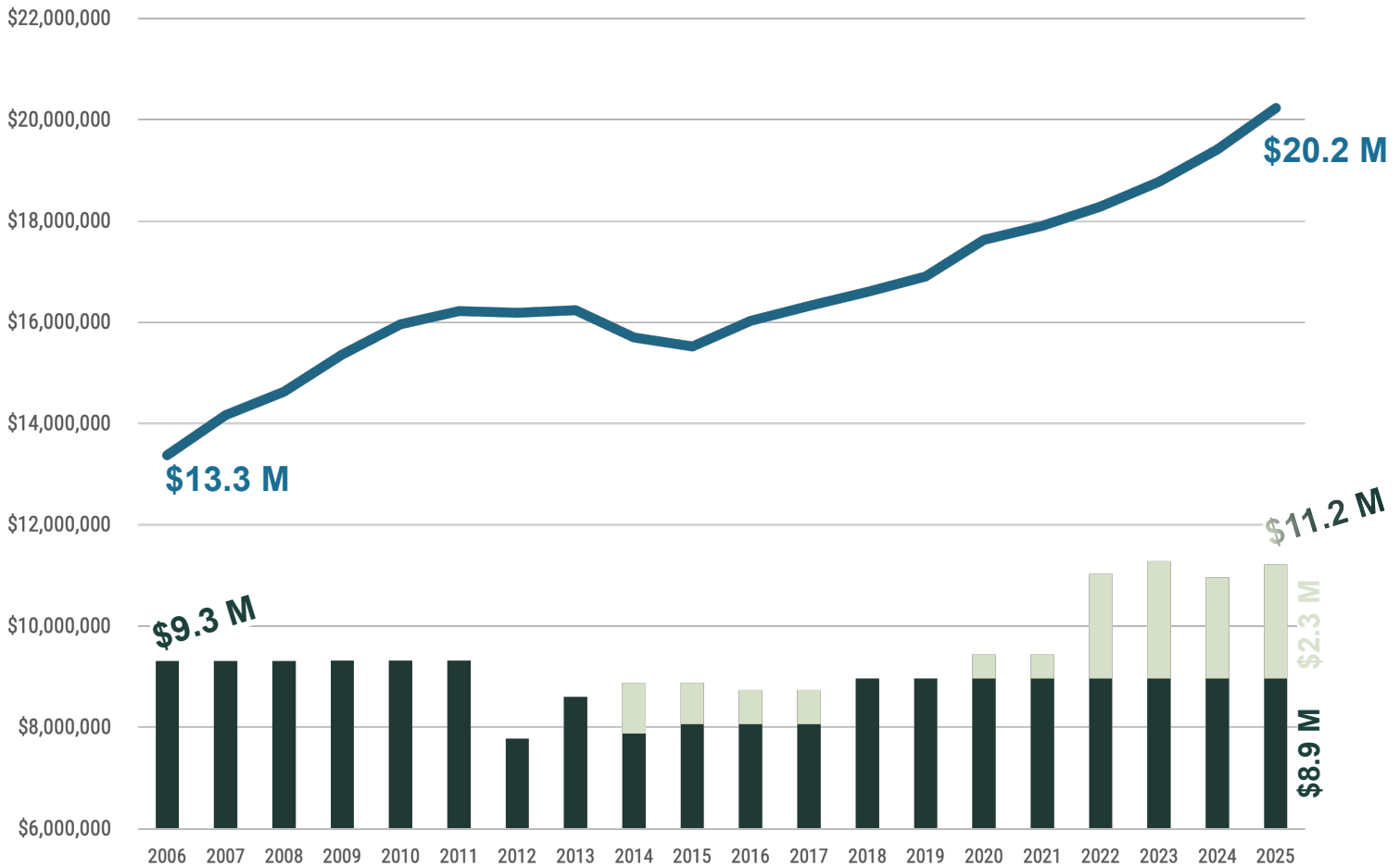
Give Wisconsinites with contaminated wells access to safe drinking water by expanding eligibility for well replacement or whole home filtration via the Well Compensation Program.



PROTECT WATERWAYS

Develop a science-based framework that minimizes the impacts of wake boats (shoreline erosion, water quality degradation, aquatic invasive species introduction and transport) while promoting local control.

County Conservation Staffing Budget Allocation



BASE FUNDING

- » In 2006, the state allocation of \$9.3 million—all of it base funding—met 70% of the county staffing need of \$13.3 million.
- » In 2025, the base funding allocation of \$8.9 million only met 46% of the county need.
- » In the 19-year period from 2006 to 2025, base funding relative to county staffing needs decreased by 26%.
- » Base funding provides stability, allowing LWCDs to leverage external funds and build partnerships with landowners.

ONE-TIME FUNDING

- » In recognition of the important role LWCDs play, between 2020 and 2025, the total state allocation was increased above the base funding of \$8.9 million, using one-time funding.
- » One-time funding provides a temporary increase, but it lapses back to base funding at the end of the budget.
- » This does not provide LWCDs with the stability required to meet the needs of landowners and carry out conservation programs, and limits their ability to leverage additional dollars for their communities.

COUNTY NEED

- » County staffing needs are based on actual expenses, as defined in Wis. Stats 92.14(6)(b).
- » Rising landowner demand for sustainable practices and the need to protect against unpredictable weather have increased department expenses to address evolving land use challenges.
- » Fully funding the needs of LWCDs enhances financial and technical support for landowners while boosting local economies by creating jobs that support conservation projects.