



Dane County Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Pilot

Dane County has funding available to pilot an agricultural conservation easement program. The goals of the program are to preserve farmland and to protect water quality through the voluntary purchase of conservation easements.

Any projects funded in 2025 and 2026 will be considered pilot projects. Applicants, landowners, other funding parties and the County will need to work together to bring projects to closing.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to local units of government and qualified non-profits for 25% of the acquisition cost of the easement not to exceed \$300,000. A total of \$300,000 is available for projects.

Program Eligibility

To be considered for funding, all projects must meet the following eligibility requirements or have an approved plan to meet the requirements:

- Located in a certified Farmland Preservation Zoning District and eligible for the Farmland Preservation Program.
- In compliance with agricultural performance standards and prohibitions in Chapter 49, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with permitting and certificate of use requirements related to manure storage in Chapter 49, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with stormwater and erosion control requirements in Chapter 14, Dane County Code of Ordinances.
- In compliance with all local, state, and federal rules.
- Have a nutrient management plan that meets the 590 standard and A2809 UW recommendations (submit a copy of the Nutrient Management Plan SNAP Plus database).
- Meets current zoning uses and does not have legal non-conforming uses.
- All intermittent (dashed blue line) and perennial streams (solid blue line) and constructed drainage have minimum 30-foot buffers (buffers may be harvestable).
- No significant junk piles on the property (for example, abandoned vehicles, tires, appliances and garbage in wooded areas. Surplus equipment that is present for spare parts may be allowed as agreed to between the parties).
- No cropping in wetlands as defined Dane County. These areas are eligible for wetland restoration projects or the Dane County Continuous Cover Program.
- No drain tile in wetlands as defined by Dane County.
- Known drain tile shall be mapped and provided to the County or landowner will certify if no drain tile present.
- Properties that meet eligibility criteria will be issued a certificate of compliance with state and local agricultural performance standards.

Application Requirements

Application materials should include

1. Application form
 - a. Application attachments not identified in this document do not apply.
2. Project Map(s) that identify:
 - a. Project location
 - b. Aerial image
 - c. Property boundary
 - d. Wetlands, surface water and constructed drainage if any
 - e. Drain tile map if any
3. Property data:
 - a. Name of property owner
 - b. Any known encumbrances (easements, deed restrictions, enrollment in other programs such as CRP, etc.).
 - i. A preliminary title report/commitment will meet this requirement.
 - c. Any other relevant information
4. Narrative
 - a. Address how the project meets farmland preservation goals and protects water quality.
 - b. Address the ability of the project applicant to monitor and enforce the easement in perpetuity.
 - c. Address each point of the eligibility requirements.
 - i. Address how eligibility will be met prior to closing if necessary.
5. Landowner Intent
 - a. Letter of intent from landowner or accepted option or offer to purchase will meet this requirement.

Pre-Application Meeting

Dane County staff are available to review potential project. Please contact Ben Kollenbroich at kollenbroich.benjamin@danecounty.gov to schedule a pre-application meeting.

Application Deadline

Applications should be submitted by November 21, 2025.