

## **State Legislative Update – Wisconsin’s Session Begins**

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The 2017-18 Wisconsin Legislative session has just begun and the WPA state advocacy team is ready to represent our members before the Wisconsin legislature and state agencies. The following is a brief preview of legislative and administrative issues that we are focused on this session.

### **2017-19 Biennial Budget Bill**

The most pressing issue that will arise early in 2017 is the debate and approval of the 2017-19 state biennial budget. Every two years, the State of Wisconsin must adopt a 2-year budget. The state’s fiscal year runs from July 1 of odd numbered years to June 30 of even-numbered years. Governor Walker will deliver his proposed biennial budget to both houses of the legislature in February. The legislature will then review and amend the budget throughout the spring before sending it back for final gubernatorial review near the end of June.

The WPA is already focused on three key budget issues: transportation funding, funding for UW-Madison and the UW System, and continued funding for DATCP’s producer-led watershed grant program.

Transportation Funding. The WPA, along with numerous other business, agricultural and municipal organizations, is urging the legislature to *consider all funding options* for generating additional revenue for the state transportation fund. In particular, we support the review and careful consideration of initiatives to generate additional revenue for local road infrastructure, as maintaining access to the transportation system is critical to maintaining our ability to get fruit to processing and distribution. This issue will be hotly debated in 2017.

UW Budget Funding. The WPA also strongly supports maintaining or increasing funding to UW Madison and the UW System. We know that there is a meaningful and distinct connection between applied research and a healthy agricultural economy. As such, this will be a critical budget issue for our advocacy program.

DATCP Producer-led Watershed Protection Grant Program. In the last biennial budget bill, the Legislature and Governor Walker provided \$500,000 to DATCP to distribute to producer-led water quality projects. WPA strongly supported this initiative, as we believe that long-term solutions must be developed locally, by farmers and communities working together. Accordingly, we will work to see that this program continues to be funded during the 2017-19 biennial budget process, as well.

### **Groundwater Quantity – High Capacity Well Legislation**

The WPA will once again support legislation this session that will provide certainty for our continued access to and use of groundwater for farming. Last session, each house of the legislature passed slightly different bills that would have provided certainty for farmers who need to repair, replace, reconstruct or transfer ownership of a high capacity well.

Once again, WPA will work with legislative leaders to urge passage of this legislation early in the 2017 session.

### **Groundwater Quality – Revisions to NR 151**

In response to concerns over pathogens found in drinking water wells in Kewaunee County, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has opened Wisconsin Administrative Code s. NR 151, to adopt a targeted performance standard for agricultural runoff in karst areas. The WPA is represented on the Technical Advisory Committee that was formed to make initial recommendations for a targeted performance standard to DNR. This process will continue this spring and a draft rule is expected to go to public hearing in early summer 2017. The WPA advocacy team will continue to actively participate in the development of this administrative rule revision.

### **ATCP 50 Update – NRCS 590 (2015)**

In 2015, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) adopted changes to NRCS Conservation Standard 590, which is the federal standard for nutrient management if you are receiving NRCS cost-share funding. In addition, the State of Wisconsin incorporates the 590 standard into Wis. Admin. Code § ATCP 50, the state's Soil and Resource Management Program. Accordingly, the Wisconsin DATCP has reopened ATCP 50 to revise it to incorporate the updated 590 standard, along with other changes.

To help compensate for the additional time or acreage farmers might need to spread nutrients under new restrictions, the cost-share rate to help farmers develop nutrient management plans would also increase from the current \$7 per acre annually to \$10. The proposed changes would also clarify that farmers might be required to meet conservation standards in some cases even if cost-sharing is not available.

The revised rule would also clarify that, whenever a nutrient management plan is required by local regulations (including livestock siting or local manure storage ordinances), it would have to meet state standards. WPA encourages farmers to review the standards and attend the public hearings, learn more about the proposed changes, and testify or submit comments on how the changes may impact your farm.

Please see the DATCP website for additional information and for the public hearing schedule: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/ATCP50RuleRevision.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ATCP50RuleRevision.aspx).