2019 SENATE BILL 718


AN ACT to create 20.115 (7) (cm) and 93.60 of the statutes; relating to: creating a pilot grant program for farmers to reduce nitrate loading, funding research for nitrate loading reduction methods, extending the time limit for emergency rule procedures, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to create a nitrogen optimization pilot program, under which DATCP awards grants to farmers to implement a project, for at least two growing seasons, that reduces nitrate loading or that uses nitrogen at an optimal rate while protecting water quality, for example by reducing nitrogen application despite a decrease in crop yield, by growing a crop that requires less nitrogen or that is nitrogen fixing, or by expanding or conserving wetlands. Under the bill, a farmer may not receive more than $50,000. The farmer must collaborate with the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, and the University of Wisconsin–Extension (collectively, the university) to adjust the grant project to meet the university’s research needs.

The bill requires the university to monitor grant projects on-site and to use information gathered from grant projects to research nitrate loading reduction methods, with a goal toward making recommendations to agricultural producers on.
optimizing nitrogen usage while improving water quality in this state. The bill also requires the university to prepare a report to the legislature, based on this research, that includes information and recommendations on improving nutrient management software programs, improving nutrient management plan adoption and implementation rates, and improving or altering the state cost-share system, and that includes an assessment of the cost effectiveness of different nitrogen reduction methods and an estimate of the demand for a permanent program that is similar to the grant program established under this bill. The university may receive a grant for its monitoring, research, and reporting requirements under the bill. The amount of the grant may not exceed 20 percent of the amount awarded to the farmer for the grant project.

The bill requires DATCP to attempt to provide grants to farmers in different parts of the state and to provide grants for projects in areas that have different soil types or geologic characteristics. The bill requires DATCP to prioritize projects that are innovative and that are not currently funded through existing state or federal programs and to prioritize farmers who plan to implement projects for longer periods of time. The bill also requires DATCP to collaborate with the farmer and the university when awarding grants under the pilot program.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 20.005 (3) (schedule) of the statutes: at the appropriate place, insert the following amounts for the purposes indicated:

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SECTION 2. 20.115 (7) (cm) of the statutes is created to read:

20.115 (7) (cm) Nitrogen optimization pilot program

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20.115 (7) (cm) Nitrogen optimization pilot program. As a continuing appropriation, the amounts in the schedule for the nitrogen optimization pilot program under s. 93.60.

SECTION 3. 93.60 of the statutes is created to read:

93.60 Nitrogen optimization pilot program. (1) In this section, “eligible university entities” means the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

(2) The department shall award grants from the appropriation under s. 20.115 (7) (cm) to agricultural producers and to the eligible university entities as provided under this section.

(3) An agricultural producer may apply for and receive a grant to implement a project, for at least 2 growing seasons, that reduces nitrate loading or that uses nitrogen at an optimal rate while protecting water quality, including by reducing nitrogen application despite a decrease in crop yield, by growing a crop that requires less nitrogen or that is nitrogen fixing, or by expanding or conserving wetlands. The department may not make a grant under this subsection to an agricultural producer in an amount more than $50,000. The agricultural producer receiving a grant under this subsection shall collaborate with the eligible university entities to adjust the grant project to fit the needs of the academic research conducted by the eligible university entities under sub. (4).

(4) The eligible university entities shall collaborate with an agricultural producer that applies for a grant under sub. (3) to monitor the grant project on-site and to use information gathered from the project to research nitrate loading
reduction methods with a goal toward making recommendations to agricultural
producers to optimize nitrogen usage while improving water quality in this state.
The eligible university entities shall prepare a report based on their research that
includes information and recommendations on improving nutrient management
software programs used in this state, improving nutrient management plan
adoption and implementation rates, and improving or altering the state cost-share
system, and that includes an assessment of the cost effectiveness of different
nitrogen reduction methods and an estimate of the demand for a permanent program
that is similar to the grant program established under this section. The report shall
be submitted upon completion to the chief clerk of each house of the legislature for
distribution to the appropriate standing committees under s. 13.172 (3). The eligible
university entities may receive a grant to implement the monitoring, research, and
reporting requirements under this subsection. The department may not make a
grant to the eligible university entities for activities related to a grant project in an
amount that exceeds 20 percent of the amount awarded to the agricultural producer
under sub. (3) for that project.

(5) In making a grant under this section, the department shall collaborate with
the eligible university entities and the agricultural producer. The department shall
also seek to provide grants to agricultural producers in different parts of the state
and to provide grants for projects in areas that have different soil types or geologic
characteristics. The department shall prioritize projects that are innovative and
that are not currently funded through existing state or federal programs and shall
prioritize agricultural producers who plan to implement projects for longer periods
of time.

(6) The department shall promulgate rules to implement this section.

(1) Emergency rules. No later than the 90th day after the effective date of this subsection, the department of agriculture, trade and consumer protection shall, using the procedure under s. 227.24, promulgate rules to implement s. 93.60. Notwithstanding s. 227.24 (1) (a) and (3), the department is not required to provide evidence that promulgating a rule under this subsection as an emergency rule is necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety, or welfare and is not required to provide a finding of emergency for a rule promulgated under this subsection. Notwithstanding s. 227.24 (1) (c) and (2), emergency rules promulgated under this subsection remain in effect until July 1, 2021, or the date on which permanent rules take effect, whichever is sooner. Notwithstanding s. 227.24 (1) (e) 1d. and 1g., for emergency rules promulgated under this subsection, the department is not required to prepare a statement of scope of the rules or to submit the proposed rules in final draft form to the governor for approval.

(END)