

# State of Wisconsin Groundwater Research and Monitoring Program — FY28 Request for Proposals

---



## Joint Solicitation

### Facilitated by

Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council and University of Wisconsin Water Resources Institute

### Participating state organizations

Universities of Wisconsin / Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources / Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection / Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services

### Proposal Submission Deadline

3:00 p.m. CDT, Friday, October 2, 2026

### For more information

Detailed submission information is included in this document and at the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#).

An informational webinar for prospective investigators will be held from 1-2 p.m. CDT on September 11, 2026. Join via [Zoom](#) (Meeting ID: 938 6884 7795, Passcode: 904182). A recording will be made available.

To subscribe to the RFP notification email list, email [jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu](mailto:jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu).

---



State of Wisconsin \ GROUNDWATER COORDINATING COUNCIL

TONY EVERS, GOVERNOR

101 South Webster, Box 7921, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

FAX 608-267-7650 | TDD 608-267-6897



State of Wisconsin \ GROUNDWATER COORDINATING COUNCIL

Tony Evers, Governor

101 South Webster Street  
Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707  
FAX 608-267-7650  
TDD 608-267-6897

Date: May 27, 2026

To: Interested Researchers

From: Joe Van Rossum, Groundwater Coordinating Council

Christy Remucal, University of Wisconsin Water Resources Institute

Subject: Joint Solicitation for Groundwater Research and Monitoring

**Joe Van Rossum**  
Council Chair  
DNR

**Sue Swanson**  
WGNHS

**Robby Personette**  
DATCP

**Sarah Yang**  
DHS

**Christy Remucal**  
UW

**Barry Paye**  
DOT

**Travis Wagner**  
DPS

**Steve Diercks**  
Governor's  
Representative

We are pleased to announce the state of Wisconsin Joint Solicitation for Groundwater Research and Monitoring for Wisconsin Fiscal Year 2028. Complete instructions for proposal submission are enclosed. The goal of this solicitation is to identify and support scientific research that will answer key questions and advance our understanding and effective management of groundwater in Wisconsin.

The solicitation is a coordinated effort of the Universities of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources; Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; and Safety and Professional Services. This cooperative solicitation allows interested individuals to prepare project proposals that can be submitted to several different funding sources simultaneously and eliminates the need to submit similar proposals several times for different solicitation efforts. It is our intent that this joint solicitation will make it easier for interested researchers to prepare proposals, promote coordination among state organizations and researchers, and enhance the ability of state agencies and the Universities of Wisconsin to meet their objectives.

Funding is available for new research or monitoring to meet specific state program needs and objectives. Up to \$295,000 will be available for new groundwater projects in Fiscal Year 2028.

You are invited to review the enclosed materials and decide if you wish to submit a proposal. **The deadline for submittals is 3 p.m. CDT, Friday, October 2, 2026.** Investigators are required to submit proposals using [eDrop](#), a web-based proposal submission system that is now open for registration. Please visit the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#) for more information.

## Overview

The Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council (GCC) provides consistency and coordination among the four state entities in funding groundwater monitoring and research to meet state needs. This solicitation is coordinated jointly to facilitate proposal writing, streamline the review process, curtail duplication, improve coordination among state programs and researchers, and enhance communication among state programs and among principal investigators. Although all proposals received will be distributed to each organization, lead investigators are asked to identify the state program whose mission and priorities best match their projects.

The Universities of Wisconsin (UW) and the Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources (DNR); Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP); and Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) participate annually in this coordinated joint solicitation for groundwater research and monitoring proposals. Collectively, this joint solicitation has funded more than 500 projects and helped establish Wisconsin as a national leader in groundwater research.

Up to \$295,000 will be available for groundwater-related monitoring and research in fiscal year 2028 (FY28) for new projects. The four participating programs are summarized below:

- UW Groundwater Research — Up to \$120,000 anticipated to fund approximately two new projects administered through the University of Wisconsin Water Resources Institute.
- DNR Groundwater Monitoring and Research — Up to \$175,000 anticipated for new studies, with a quarter of the funds focused on reducing risk of groundwater contamination, and the majority of funds focused on public water supply and source water protection.
- DATCP Pesticide Research — No funding available in FY28, but agency participates in review and recommendations.
- DSPS On-site Wastewater Treatment System Research — No funding available in FY28, but agency participates in review and recommendations.

## Contacts

UW: Jennifer Hauxwell, [jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu](mailto:jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu)

DNR: Carla Romano, [carla.romano1@wisconsin.gov](mailto:carla.romano1@wisconsin.gov)

DATCP: Sam Brockschmidt, [samuel.brockschmidt@wisconsin.gov](mailto:samuel.brockschmidt@wisconsin.gov)

DSPS: Travis Wagner, [Travis.Wagner@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Travis.Wagner@wisconsin.gov)

## Funding Priorities

The Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council encourages proposals that:

- Support students in becoming strong scientists and provide opportunities to practice community engagement.
- Coordinate with agency/university outreach and communications staff to effectively share results.

- Directly engage with Wisconsin communities throughout the research lifecycle, including question formation, to increase the likelihood that the research informs community actions.

In addition to these overarching priorities, specific university and agency priorities are summarized in the sections below. Please note - Method development proposals are considered when clearly tied to state agency needs (see agency-specific priorities or consult agency contacts). Applicants are encouraged to review past projects funded through the WGRMP at the [Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council website](#) and at the [WGRMP Report Repository](#) when preparing their proposal.

### **UW Groundwater Research Program — Priorities**

The Universities of Wisconsin (UW), through its Water Resources Institute (WRI) and its Groundwater Research Advisory Council (GRAC), seeks projects of fundamental or applied nature on any aspect of groundwater research in the natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, economics or law. For the purposes of this solicitation, “groundwater research” is defined as research that advances the understanding, protection or management of groundwater resources. Projects that are primarily focused on wastewater or drinking water treatment technologies, surface water protection or soil science must make a clear link to current groundwater science. Funding comes from a variety of state and federal sources. UW priorities are focused on groundwater quality, quantity, management, and community engagement as described in the following sections.

#### ***Maintain or enhance groundwater quality***

- Identification and characterization of chemical pollutants in groundwater systems, including emerging contaminants and nitrogen, and their threats to ecosystems and human health, including the type, toxicity and persistence of degradation products.
- Occurrence of viruses and bacteria and effects on human health.
- Occurrence of metals and radionuclides and effects on human health.
- Effects of environmental conditions and variability on groundwater quality.
- Impact of land-use practices on groundwater quality, including the effects of agricultural, industrial, municipal, residential or waste management activities with infiltration to groundwater.
- Groundwater–surface water interactions, including chemical transformations in the hyporheic zone; impacts of groundwater withdrawal on groundwater and surface water chemistry; influence of groundwater discharge on surface-water quality; and wetland impacts on groundwater.
- Controls on pollutant transport including the development or validation of predictive models.
- Impacts of contaminated groundwater on Wisconsin families, including human health effects in such areas as reproduction, development and chronic disease; or on economic losses attributable to groundwater contamination.

#### ***Maintain or enhance groundwater quantity***

- Assessments of water availability and the impacts of human water use on groundwater levels, groundwater storage, surface water features and ecological features.
- Seasonal effects on groundwater levels, flow patterns and quantity.

- Impact of land-use practices on groundwater quantity, including the effects of agricultural, industrial, municipal, residential or waste management activities with infiltration to groundwater.
- Strategies for maintaining and enhancing groundwater availability.
- Economic valuation of the costs and benefits and/or impacts of groundwater withdrawals on Wisconsin and the region.

#### ***Maintain or enhance groundwater management***

- Investigations into the best methods for optimizing groundwater use for human and environmental needs in Wisconsin.
- Development and evaluation of tools or protocols designed to evaluate the environmental impacts of high-capacity wells or other types of withdrawals.
- Development and use of new technologies for groundwater characterization or management.
- Management of groundwater data, including informatics, visualization, access and maintenance.
- Analysis of policy alternatives associated with groundwater management.
- Economics of groundwater use or management.
- Implications of changing environmental conditions on groundwater management.
- Effectiveness of drinking water advisories, including strategies to make them more effective.

#### ***Engage directly with Wisconsin communities***

- Research that examines the causes and impacts of groundwater-related issues that affect a range of communities in general and/or related to any of the topics above, evaluates strategies to improve the interrelationship between local populations and water or provides scientific information relevant for communities.

#### **DNR Groundwater Monitoring and Research — Priorities**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) supports monitoring and research to answer key questions and evaluate management practices for decisions leading to safe and reliable groundwater supplies. Funding comes from a variety of state and federal sources. A significant portion of this funding is targeted for projects related to public water supply source water protection. Source water protection of groundwater sourced drinking water supplies includes research into the occurrence, fate and transport of both anthropogenic and naturally occurring contaminants, development of methods and techniques that can be used to improve or update wellhead source water assessments, and development of best management practices for agriculture activities, industrial operations and stormwater control facilities to minimize groundwater impacts and prevent contamination. Studies focused on developing sampling tools or analytical methods are not a priority, except for microplastics or nanoplastics, which must be studied at relevant ambient concentrations.

The DNR has identified the following needs for groundwater monitoring and research (listed in no particular order of priority).

### ***Evaluation of nitrogen fertilizer management systems and conservation practices for protection of groundwater and drinking water wells***

Nitrogen and bacteria are leading causes of drinking water well contamination in Wisconsin. Projects focus on developing and/or evaluating one or more of the following:

- New decision support systems and tools, especially those building upon existing work, which help agricultural producers reduce nitrogen losses and prevent groundwater contamination.
- Assessment of the magnitude and timing of in-season crop nitrogen needs and soil contributions to plant-available nitrogen, supporting better crediting of this source and reducing the potential for overapplication and leaching into groundwater.
- Address key uncertainties in mass balance and process-based tools used to quantify nitrogen budgets and nitrate leaching potential, with the goal of improving forecasting abilities.
- Develop and evaluate workflows that combine outputs from multiple tools, with the goal of consolidating functionalities with existing nutrient management tools such as SnapPlus.
- Quantification and factors affecting variability of nitrogen loss reductions from existing or new conservation practices or approaches, including associated cost-benefit analyses. It is encouraged that these studies are supported by groundwater or vadose zone monitoring. Modeling efforts are encouraged to be validated against real-world data.
- Identification of behavioral drivers and barriers to adoption of nitrogen-specific groundwater protection practices among agricultural producers. Evaluate the communication strategies to increase adoption of such practices using appropriate social science approaches.

### ***Information to evaluate the risk from microbial pathogens in groundwater***

Public water systems and private water supply wells are at risk from microbial pathogens in groundwater. Work is needed to:

- Evaluate well construction methods for susceptibility to microbial pathogens.
- Evaluate the fate and transport of microbial pathogens in the vadose zone and in aquifer systems, and the specific factors, including anthropogenic and environmental sources that influence microbial occurrence, survival, and transport in the subsurface. It is encouraged that studies consider the factors and mechanisms leading to preferential flow and rapid transport of contamination.
- Evaluate the ability of various microbial detection methods to detect and quantify viable infectious microbial pathogens in environmental water samples.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Wisconsin state soil treatment requirements (minimum separation distances, soil specifications, etc.) at reducing microbial pathogens in groundwater at regulated waste land application/disposal sites.
- Occurrence of antibiotic resistance genetic material and microbes in groundwater.

### ***Groundwater quantity, water use management, and related impacts***

Water withdrawals can impact groundwater availability, surface water flows and ecology, water quality, and other areas of concern. To better understand and manage water withdrawals, the DNR needs additional data, assessment, and information on the following topics:

- Evaluating impacts of high capacity wells on groundwater-surface water interaction. This includes advancing analytical or numerical approaches to estimate streamflow depletion, parameter estimation

and uncertainty (e.g. aquifer parameters, streambed conductance), or relating potential drawdowns to ecological impacts.

- Evaluating impacts of high capacity wells on groundwater quantity availability, particularly in non-porous media and/or low permeability environments, such as advancing analytical or numerical approaches to drawdown or depletion equations in crystalline bedrock, characterizing fracture networks and pathways, or quantifying recharge in fractured rock aquifers.
- Understanding the role of groundwater quality and its impacts on groundwater quantity availability, such as geogenic or anthropogenic contaminants in aquifers, impacts of such contaminants on potable and non-potable uses, and how to best identify and avoid such contaminants, particularly in sole-source aquifers.
- Other groundwater quantity issues needing support from monitoring and research include:
  - Improving understanding of water budget components, particularly evapotranspiration and recharge.
  - Evaluation of land-use change impacts on water budget components.
  - Consumptive use coefficients, particularly for agricultural applications.
  - Relationship between high groundwater use and changes in groundwater quality.
  - Development of basin-scale groundwater budgets.

### ***Source water protection tools***

Research is needed on the following topics to help communities protect their drinking water sources:

- Improved tools and efficient methods for updating and refining [source water zones of contribution](#) for wells, particularly municipal wells affected by contamination. Currently, many source water assessment areas are defined by a calculated fixed radius. Research is needed to assess the conditions under which more advanced methods are justified based on the contaminant of concern, aquifer setting and well characteristics. Preferred analysis would consider three dimensional near-field flow and contaminant transport characteristics as well as strategies for managing uncertainties in these models.
- Improved tools and models to define source water assessment areas and managing uncertainty in contributing areas for wells cased in fractured and/or confined aquifers.
- Economic analysis decision support tools to assist communities and policy makers in evaluating the cost-effectiveness of groundwater protection investments, such as acquiring land in source areas, compared to alternatives like water treatment or well replacement.
- Evaluations of barriers and behavioral drivers related to existing or potential source water protection initiatives. This includes assessing opportunities to expand beyond typical provisions of municipal or county-level ordinances and regulation, and support infrastructure for locally-led, voluntary approaches to safeguarding groundwater quality.

### ***Metals and radioactive contaminants***

- Investigate the distribution of metals and radioactive contaminants occurring in Wisconsin (arsenic, manganese, radium, strontium, etc.) based on aquifer formations, mineralogical composition, structural geology, and water use patterns (including water level fluctuations). Identify geological and hydrogeological conditions that influence the mobilization of these contaminants into groundwater.

- Identify and develop assessment tools that can forecast the presence and concentration of metals and radioactive contaminants based on both natural factors (e.g., aquifer type) and human influences (e.g., land use, landfill proximity, groundwater extraction).
- Assess the effectiveness of well construction regulations, including special casing requirements, in reducing contamination of metals and radioactive contaminants into drinking water wells across Wisconsin. Identify regions where additional protections or modifications to well construction guidelines may be needed to prevent contamination.

***PFAS: Source tracking, transport, and disposal***

Recent monitoring studies have highlighted the presence of PFAS in Wisconsin's groundwater. However, further research is needed to better understand transport mechanisms in the vadose zone and improve source tracking based on PFAS mixtures. To maximize research impact, study sites should be chosen to avoid overlap with regulatory-required investigations. Field studies are generally preferred over laboratory studies. Proposals may focus on one or more of the following:

- Impact of historical and current land spreading of wastes on PFAS in groundwater, including the characterization of PFAS leaching from biosolids activities.
- Transport in the vadose zone, including the role of water table fluctuations, colloid facilitated transport in overall PFAS mobility to groundwater, and variability of vadose characteristics such as organic carbon content.
- Development of modeling studies and tools to assess the fate and transport of PFAS plumes in the vadose zone and groundwater. This research may include identifying potential source site locations and areas within the state where deep aquifers are at long-term risk of contamination. This research may also include the development of a well-defined groundwater model where there is known widespread PFAS groundwater contamination, but little is known about flow paths (e.g. Oneida County). The use of existing PFAS data is encouraged to inform these modeling efforts.
- Identification and/or estimation of PFAS loading to surface water via groundwater discharge. Studies could consider factors such as groundwater recharge rate, land use, soil/aquifer material properties, hyporheic zone interactions, and known surface water concentrations above surface water standards.
- Development of source-tracing methods capable of distinguishing between PFAS contributions from different potential sources, such as septic system liquid effluent, land-applied septage, land-applied municipal and/or industrial sludge, aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) use, and landfill leachate (including releases from lined and unlined landfills).
- Study and analyze the cost, feasibility, and effectiveness of different methods of treating PFAS before they are released into a water system or water body.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of different options for disposing of biosolids or sludge that contains or may contain PFAS.
- Study and analyze the cost, feasibility, and effectiveness of different destruction and disposal methods for PFAS.
- For sites contaminated by PFAS, in consultation with persons who are able and qualified to conduct environmental remediation in this state, study and analyze the cost, feasibility, and effectiveness of different methods for remediating PFAS that leave the contaminated medium in place and methods that remove the contaminated medium.

### *Other emerging groundwater contaminants*

Research is needed to determine whether certain emerging substances pose a threat to our groundwater resources.

- **General groundwater relevance** – Conduct targeted research to determine whether emerging contaminants—including lithium; 1,4-Dioxane; pharmaceuticals; 6PPD; hormones; viruses; prions and other microbial agents—pose a meaningful risk to groundwater resources.
- **Pesticides of emerging concern (e.g., neonicotinoids, chlorothalonil, pyrethroids)** – Investigate the fate and transport of pesticides of emerging concern (neonicotinoids, chlorothalonil, pyrethroids, etc.) in groundwater systems. Prioritize research on environmental variables, use patterns, and transport mechanisms that control the occurrence of such pesticide active ingredients and their metabolites in groundwater.
- **Microplastics and nanoplastics** – Support research to evaluate the presence, transport, and potential impacts of microplastics and nanoplastics in groundwater, including the development of sampling and analytical methods capable of detecting these materials at environmentally relevant (ambient) concentrations.

### *Additional ongoing needs*

While the department will give preference to proposals that meet the priorities above, the following important ongoing needs will also be considered:

- **Protecting Groundwater from Impacts by Stormwater Infiltration** – Research is needed to evaluate if and how stormwater management practices influence the leaching of contaminants in areas susceptible to groundwater contamination, to quantify the extent of impacts and to develop and demonstrate innovative techniques that minimize potential contamination.
- **Groundwater Monitoring and Data Analysis** – Development of advanced statistical analysis tools and machine learning models to analyze existing groundwater data (from sources such as Groundwater Retrieval Network, DATCP, etc.). This effort should focus on detecting trends, particularly those related to new contaminants, and identifying potential risks related to groundwater and drinking water contamination issues.

### **DATCP Pesticide Research — Interests (FY28 participation in review only)**

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Pesticide Research Program is administered by the Agricultural Resource Management Division.

In general, the focus of the DATCP program is on pesticide research, which includes but is not limited to groundwater issues. Proposals for DATCP funds are typically one to two years in duration. The agency may agree to fund longer-duration studies. Research proposals may be submitted to meet the following general or specific areas of DATCP interest listed below. Proposals submitted to address specific interests may gain agency preference over those addressing general interests.

DATCP will not have funding available in FY28. However, the department will be invited to participate in the review of proposals and make recommendations to the other organizations participating in the solicitation to help meet department priorities.

### *General interests include*

- **Evaluating pesticide management practices on water quality** - The extent to which pesticide management practices affect the quality of groundwater and surface water, and the methods to enhance these practices and alleviate their impact on water resources, remain unclear. Further research is necessary to assess the effects of pesticide management practices on groundwater or surface water quality. Examples of pesticides of interest are atrazine and atrazine metabolites, and neonicotinoids.
- **Evaluating factors influencing the patterns of groundwater contamination by pesticides and pesticide metabolites in Wisconsin** - Falling under this category are studies that explore the impact of factors such as soil composition, land use patterns, and aquifer characteristics, on the short and long-term fate and transport of pesticides in groundwater. Studies that focus on regions within the state of Wisconsin that are recognized to be highly susceptible to groundwater contamination are encouraged.

### *Specific interests for FY28 include*

- **Evaluating management strategies to reduce the occurrence of imidacloprid in groundwater** - Imidacloprid, an insecticide extensively utilized in agricultural and urban settings across Wisconsin, has been detected in various regions of the state by DATCP. In several instances, imidacloprid concentrations exceeded the recommended groundwater standard or health advisory level of 0.2 µg/L. To address this concern, it is crucial to conduct monitoring and/or modeling studies to facilitate the development of management practices that effectively reduce the occurrence and concentration of imidacloprid in groundwater, ensuring that levels consistently remain below the established health advisory threshold.
- **Monitoring studies on leaching of neonicotinoids in groundwater** - Neonicotinoids are a class of insecticides widely used in Wisconsin. Their water solubility and persistence make them prone to leaching through the soil into groundwater, posing a potential risk to drinking water supplies and aquatic ecosystems. Multi-season continuous tile-drain, groundwater and/or lysimetric monitoring studies are needed to evaluate the loss of neonicotinoids applied to major Wisconsin crops, such as corn, soybeans, beans, potatoes, small grains, vegetables, fruit crops, and more. Studies focused on regions of Wisconsin with coarse and medium-grained soil and shallow groundwater are encouraged.
- **Multi-decade modeling study on atrazine transport and fate in groundwater** - Wisconsin regulations restrict atrazine use beyond federal product label restrictions. In certain regions of Wisconsin, the use of atrazine has been discontinued or reduced since the late 1990s. Despite these measures, traces of atrazine and its metabolites continue to be detected in some of these areas. To gain a deeper understanding of the long-term behavior of atrazine in groundwater, there is a pressing need for the development of multi-decade modeling studies. Conducting such studies would greatly enhance the interpretation of monitoring data collected by DATCP. For further insights, multi-decade atrazine data from DATCP can be obtained upon request.
- **Advanced statistical models of pesticides in groundwater** - The proposed studies should focus on developing advanced statistical models and algorithms capable of analyzing large datasets of groundwater samples and associated pesticide concentrations. Emphasis should be placed on identifying patterns, trends, and potential correlations between land use, hydrogeology, well characteristics, environmental factors, and groundwater contamination. Additionally, proposals that highlight the development of predictive models to forecast future pesticide concentrations in

groundwater based on historical data will be given special consideration. The incorporation of spatial and temporal variables is also encouraged to capture the complex dynamics of pesticide contamination in different regions of Wisconsin, and seasons. Multi-decade pesticide data from DATCP can be obtained upon request.

- **Assessing the impact of high capacity wells on spatial variability of pesticides in groundwater** - High capacity wells can impact the spatial variability of pesticides in groundwater. The pumping rates associated with high capacity wells can alter the natural flow patterns of groundwater, resulting in localized variations in pesticide concentration. Understanding and monitoring the spatial distribution of pesticides in groundwater in areas where high capacity wells are found is crucial for assessing the potential risks associated with pesticides in groundwater and for ensuring the protection of water resources. For further insights, multi-decade pesticide data from DATCP can be obtained upon request.

### **DSPS On-Site Wastewater Treatment System Research — Objectives (FY28 participation in review only)**

The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has supported research focused on the performance of on-site sewage system designs, products and management practices that can be incorporated into the administrative rules regulating on-site sewage systems. These designs, products or management practices must be 1) directed toward protecting public health, groundwater and surface water quality; 2) result in on-site sewage treatment that is consistent with the provisions of the Groundwater Protection Law; 3) affordable by the average owner of an on-site sewage system; and 4) practical for the conditions and soils of Wisconsin. The department also intends to monitor, on an ongoing basis, the performance of various on-site sewage system methods and technologies. The purpose of the performance monitoring is to provide additional information on the long-term performance of the various on-site sewage system methods and technologies to confirm their reliability, to provide data for improvements and to monitor long-term compliance with the groundwater standards. The DSPS is currently interested in the long-term performance of various mechanical pretreatment devices commonly referred to as aerobic treatment units and their treatment of common nutrients in wastewater (total suspended solids; biochemical oxygen demand; fats, oils and grease; and nitrates) in private onsite wastewater treatment systems. Systems with design flows greater than 12,000 gallons per day in the state are jointly regulated by the DSPS and the DNR. DSPS will not have funding available in FY28. However, the department will be invited to participate in the review of proposals and make recommendations to the other organizations participating in the solicitation to help meet department priorities.

## **Applicant and Project Requirements**

### **Eligibility**

- UW: Funds restricted to Universities of Wisconsin faculty or academic staff with principal investigator status; non-UW researchers may be associate investigators.
- DNR: Funds restricted to Universities of Wisconsin faculty or academic staff with principal investigator status, and state/local agencies with capacity for applicable research or monitoring; others may collaborate with eligible co-investigators. Inclusion of a UW-eligible principal investigator is encouraged.

- Investigators with overdue final reports are not eligible for new funding and projects that appear to be continuations of previous funded projects and proposals twice rejected with minimal modification will not be considered.

### **Budget Requirements and Considerations**

- Projects should be 2 years or less in duration with contracts approved annually with year-2 (if applicable) contingent on progress and budget.
- Include personnel, supplies, lab expenses, equipment (no capital > \$5,000/item), and necessary travel to completed the project (note - costs associated with conference travel not allowed).
- At this stage, do not include overhead or indirect costs, but note that some funding sources may require a revised budget if proposal selected.
- In general, combined faculty/staff salaries and fringe benefits to be paid from any project should not exceed 10 percent of the total individual grant, but if needed, please provide justification.
- In general, budget categories “Supplies” and “Other Costs” together should not exceed 20 percent of the total individual grant, but if needed, please provide justification.
- Preference may be given to projects supporting or involving graduate and undergraduate students.

### **Contractual Requirements**

Projects must meet departmental requirements for monitoring wells (installation, documentation, abandonment), sampling, laboratory analysis, and data management (see NR 141 and NR 149, Wis. Adm. Code).

### **Project Selection**

#### **Review of Proposals**

Proposals are reviewed by:

- External peer reviewers
- The Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council Research and Monitoring Subcommittee
- The UW Groundwater Research Advisory Council
- Staff from the funding organizations

Peer reviewers consider the following criteria:

- Rationale - Does the proposed activity address an important issue, problem or opportunity in development, use or management of groundwater resources?
- Scientific Merit - Does the activity advance the state of the science or discipline?
- Clarity of Objectives and Feasibility - Are the objectives of the proposed research clearly presented and is the proposed research feasible as written?
- Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators - Are investigators qualified by education, training and/or experience to execute the proposed activity and do they demonstrate a record of achievement with previous funding?

- Anticipated Outcomes and Engagement - What are the likely outcomes or impacts (environmental, educational, social, economic, etc.) that could result from the project? Did investigators identify potential users of project results (e.g., communities, state and federal government agencies, specific businesses, industries, etc.?). Are partners and populations served by the project engaged in the process and potential outcomes associated with the proposed work?
- Budget/Value – Will the budget adequately (but not excessively) support the project?
- Overall Summary and Rating - Is the project worthy of funding?

## Final Decision-Making

Funding decisions are targeted by the end of February with the following processes:

- UW: The GRAC, which consists of university, state and federal agency and public representatives, meets as a body to discuss the results of the review process. The GRAC pays close attention to UW priorities and direct relevance to groundwater issues in its deliberations. The GRAC recommends a priority list of projects that the UW should strive to fund in accordance with budgetary resources. A suitable UW Groundwater Research Program is then assembled by the WRI and submitted to the GCC, which advises the Department of Administration on the release of UW research funds upon passage of a state budget.
- DNR: DNR staff and managers from groundwater-related programs review proposals to evaluate expected practical application of the project results. In making final funding decisions, the Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater will formulate its recommendations based on input from all project reviewers and available funds. Considering input from all reviewers and extent of available funds, the DNR secretary's GCC designee makes the final selection of projects to receive funding from DNR sources.

## Project Administration and Reporting

Funded proposals become the property of the granting organization. Each organization has separate administration and reporting requirements as described below. Final reports and summaries are submitted via systems noted below and archived by the Wisconsin Water Library for broad access. The Wisconsin Water Library catalogs all groundwater reports into WorldCat and MadCat, two library indexing tools that provide worldwide access to the research. By having this information permanently indexed, the results are easily available to other scientists, policy makers and stakeholders. The library has also partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Ecology and Natural Resources Digital Collection to make full-text reports available.

### UW Reporting

- Submit annual administrative progress reports in August.
- 15-page final scientific report within 60 days after project ends.

### DNR Reporting

- Quality Assurance Project Plan may be required at project start if federally funded and involves analytical sampling.

- Quarterly status reports are due within 30 days after each quarter to the DNR project manager.
- Scientific final report due within 60 days of contract end; include methods, data collected, and discussion on management implications of the results.
- No-cost extensions ( $\leq 1$  year) may be possible depending on funding source expirations.

## Proposal Submission

### Overall structure

- Proposals are submitted by researchers following the step-by-step guidelines below and via the web-based system eDrop – [edrop.aqua.wisc.edu](http://edrop.aqua.wisc.edu)
- For eDrop-related questions, contact [tomxiong@aqua.wisc.edu](mailto:tomxiong@aqua.wisc.edu)

### Required Proposal Components

- Basic information including title, abstract, location, budgets, keywords, investigators, target agencies, financial contact, and suggested reviewers outside Wisconsin
- Proposal narrative in PDF format using the Proposal Narrative template available on the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#)
- Budget using the Excel template available on the available on the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#), including a separate workbook if a subcontract is included.
- 2-page Curriculum vitae for investigators (associate investigators optional)
- Letters of support (optional but encouraged)
- Administrative approval via email from an official authorized to sign proposal submissions

All components must be submitted by 3:00 p.m. CDT on Friday, October 2, 2026. The system closes promptly at the deadline.

### Step-by-Step Guidelines for Proposal Submission

Detailed step-by-step guidelines for proposal submission follow, and supporting documents are available for download on the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#). All proposals must be submitted using these instructions.

We recommend that investigators concentrate on steps one through three in addition to securing optional letters of support from partners prior to submitting online.

Please adhere to the page limits for certain sections that are listed below. All pages should be 8.5 x 11 inches, all margins should be no less than 0.75 inches, and all sections use no smaller than 11-point type. The project summary, project description, references, and current and pending support pages should each start on a new page. The project summary and project description should have at least 1.5 line spacing (except for figure and table legends). The proposal must be consecutively paginated on the bottom of the page. Any section of a proposal that exceeds the specified maximum page limits will be grounds for returning the proposal to the author.

### ***STEP 1: Prepare proposal narrative***

Please use the Microsoft Word template titled “Proposal Narrative Template” that can be downloaded from the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#). The proposal narrative will consist of the following items:

- Title, Investigators, Roles and Affiliations of Investigators (top of first page)
- Project Summary (begin on same page; **not to exceed 2 pages**; minimum of 11-point font and 1.5 line spacing)
  - Specific groundwater or related problem addressed by research/monitoring proposal.
  - How will findings contribute to understanding or solving the problem? Describe expected practical application of the project results.
  - Project objectives.
  - Project approach to achieve objectives, including methods and procedures.
  - Potential communities served or users of project findings.
- Project Description (begin on new page; **not to exceed 10 pages**; minimum of 11-point font and 1.5 line spacing)
  - Objectives.
  - Background information describing prior research/monitoring relevant to objectives and, if applicable, relationships to other projects funded through the WGRMP; references to past and ongoing projects and how they relate to the proposed investigation; information gaps that will be filled by the proposed project. (Information on past projects can be found at the [Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council website](#) and at the [WGRMP Report Repository](#).)
  - Project plan outlining experimental design and schedule.
  - Methods detailed enough to convince the reviewer that the investigators are using modern techniques. A general statement alluding to techniques is not acceptable.
  - Relevance to groundwater-related problems and state agency/UW priorities and potential societal outcomes or impacts (environmental, educational, social, economic, etc.).
  - Training support (if any) provided by the project, including a description of how students would be supported or incorporated.
  - Engagement/outreach plan that describes how researchers will engage with potential users of project results (e.g., communities, state and federal government agencies, specific businesses, industries, etc.). Describe how partners and populations served by the project are engaged in the process and potential outcomes associated with the proposed work. Describe conversations with agency funders that may have shaped proposal goals and/or relate to future coordination with agency partners.
  - Brief budget justification (paragraph or less), including details for any funding designated for outside of the UW and any funding items that exceed recommendations described in the “Budget Requirements and Considerations” section of the RFP.
  - Brief description of each investigator’s role on the project and the percentage of time that each will spend on the project (whether funding is requested for that individual or not).
- References Cited (begin on new page; **no specified page limit**; minimum of 11-point font)
- Current and Pending Support (PI and all Co-Investigators) (begin on new page; **no specified page limit**; minimum of 11-point font)

After the proposal narrative is prepared, delete all of the italicized instructional text in the section headings, convert it to Adobe PDF format (.pdf), and save it on your local computer or network. The system requires that the proposal be in Adobe Acrobat PDF format (.pdf) in order to upload it as described in Step 7 below.

### ***STEP 2: Prepare budget***

Please use the Microsoft Excel budget spreadsheet titled “Budget Template” that can be downloaded from the [WRI Joint Solicitation web page](#). The budget will consist of the following items:

- Salaries and Wages
- Fringe Benefits
- Tuition Remission Charges (if applicable)
- Supplies and Publication Costs (list office, lab, computer and field supplies separately)
- Travel (to support completion of the project only; travel for conferences is not allowed)
- Other Costs (e.g., equipment maintenance and fabrication, subcontracts, rentals, etc.)

If you have a subcontract with another institution, please provide a) a budget workbook using the Budget Template for your year 1 and 2 budgets overall (including the subaward totals on the “Other Costs” line, and b) an additional budget workbook using an additional Budget Template for years 1 and 2 of the subcontract only that details how the subcontract will be allocated across budget lines. In summary, if including a subcontract, submit two workbooks with a naming convention that makes it clear that one is the overall and one is for the subcontract. You are able to upload more than one file in Step 8 below.

**Please note:** At the point of submission, the funding source should be considered State of Wisconsin funds. In the event a proposal from a UW campus is selected for funding by the DNR, the budget may need to be updated to include the campus’ indirect costs, depending on the source of the funding the agency uses to fund the proposal. As you develop your proposal budget, please do not include indirect costs at this stage. Note also, an example budget is provided on the “Example Budget” tab of the workbook that demonstrates the level of detail requested for each budget item.

Save the Excel budget file on your local computer or network as you work on it. When you submit your proposal package online you will be uploading this Excel file as described in Step 8 below. Do NOT convert the Excel file to PDF.

### ***STEP 3: Prepare curriculum vitae of principal investigators (associate investigators option)***

Upload a PDF of the curriculum vitae (including recent publications) for each investigator under the appropriate section in Step 6 below (not to exceed 2 pages per person; minimum of 11-point font).

### ***STEP 4: Log in or register in eDrop***

Investigators must log in (previous users) or register (new users) online (<https://edrop.aqua.wisc.edu/>) before submitting proposals. Instructions on the site will assist you in entering your proposal package. Note to new users – the registration process involves a two-step verification, requiring you enter both an email address (step one) and phone number (step two) to receive two different verification codes that you must enter in order to complete the registration.

### ***STEP 5: Select the RFP associated with this request for proposals in eDrop***

After you login to eDrop, you may choose between two dashboard “viewers,” and the instructions below are associate with the “new Dashboard.” To determine which one you are using, look to the top right of the

screen under your name. “Switch to old Dashboard” indicates you are currently using the new dashboard and vice versa.

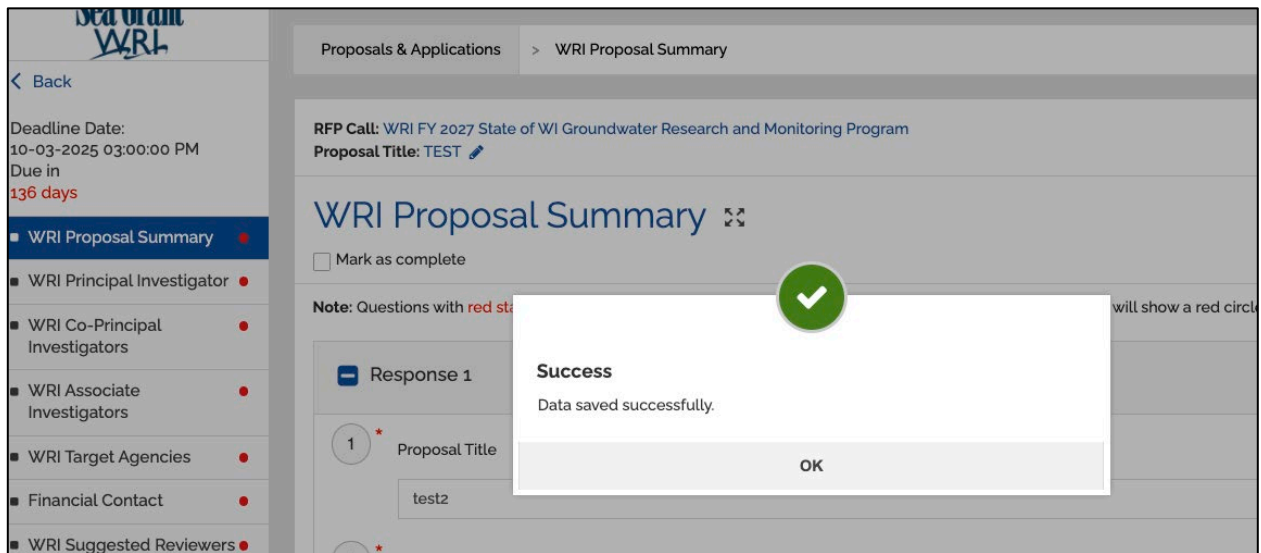
Once you login, you will see several tabs. Select the “Funding Opportunities” tab. Within the task pane associated with “WRI FY 2028 State of WI Groundwater Research and Monitoring Program (Full-Proposal)” → Select “Add” to begin.

Next, in the dialog box that appears, enter a title for your proposal and click “Continue.” You may edit the title if necessary, by using the small edit (pencil) icon that appears following the Proposal title field near the top of the screen.

Clicking continue will activate a list of entry forms that will appear in the left side panel (e.g., “Proposal Summary,” “WRI Principal Investigator,” “WRI Co-Principal Investigator,” etc., through “Administrative Approval”) The list of forms will be visible whenever you are in the WRI FY 2028 State of WI Groundwater Research and Monitoring Program (Full-Proposal) task pane.

***STEPS 6 through 11 (below) may be completed separately***

You do not need to upload your entire proposal package in a single session; however, you must hit the “SAVE” button to avoid losing anything you enter AND as you navigate between pages in *eDrop*. Do not hit the “NEXT” button until you have successfully saved your information. We encourage you to frequently SAVE your updates. If you exceed word limits, SAVEs will not be successful, and you can lose data. A successful SAVE is indicated by this prompt: “Success - Data saved successfully” with a green check mark icon.



Your account will remain active through the submission deadline, and you may edit each section until your proposal is officially submitted (see Step 11). If you log out of a session, click on “Current Tasks” to resume working on your proposal.

Once you have completed a section, click on the “Mark as complete” box in the upper left of the screen.

Note: Your proposal is not officially submitted until you click on the “SUBMIT” button in the “Submission Preview” tab.

### ***STEP 6: Enter basic information about the proposal***

Once you have entered a project title (Step 5 above), you will see a list of proposal sections/tabs on the left side of the screen.

Work your way down the list of tabs, being sure to click “SAVE” at the top of each page. You can select any category or modify any section at any time before you submit your entire proposal. Note, you only need to enter the required information indicated by an \* in each section.

- WRI Proposal Summary - Enter proposal title, list of investigators (specify role as Lead PI, Co-PI or Associate Investigator) and their affiliations, abstract, location of research, budget (total year 1 and year 2 request), and keywords
- WRI Principal Investigator - Enter information about the principal investigator (including uploading a PDF of a 2-page curriculum vitae)
- WRI Co-Principal Investigators - Enter information about co-principal investigator(s) (including uploading a PDF of a 2-page curriculum vitae)
- WRI Associate Investigator - Enter information about associate investigator(s) (optional - including uploading a PDF of a 2-page curriculum vitae)
- WRI Target Agencies - Enter/prioritize funding agencies
- WRI Financial Contact - Enter financial contact and department/organization where project would be administered
- WRI Suggested Reviewers - Provide the names, affiliations, and email addresses of six qualified reviewers who are currently based outside Wisconsin and with whom you have no conflict of interest (e.g., no collaboration within the past four years, no advisor–advisee relationship, and no family relationship).

### ***STEP 7: Upload the PDF file of the proposal narrative into the online system***

This is the file that you prepared in Step 1 (“WRI Proposal Narrative File Upload” tab).

### ***STEP 8: Upload Excel file of the budget into the online system***

This is the file that you prepared in Step 2 or multiple files if you included a subcontract (“WRI Budget File Upload” tab).

### ***STEP 9: Upload PDF file(s) for letters of support***

Investigators may upload letters of support from collaborators or stakeholders. This step is optional but encouraged (“WRI Letters of Support File Upload” tab).

### ***STEP 10: Provide administrative approval***

All proposal submissions require administrative approvals and clearances before they can be considered, including for subawards. Please refer administrative staff reviewing your submission to Step 2 of these guidelines, “Prepare budget,” for details about the source of funds used for this competition.

For all proposal submissions, an email stating that the proposal has received all required approvals and clearances must be sent to Melissa Boyce ([maboyce@wisc.edu](mailto:maboyce@wisc.edu)) with the following requirements:

- The email must come from a campus official who is authorized to approve extramural grant applications (for UW-Madison proposals, this would be your dean’s office).
  - (Attachment of official transmittal documents or electronically routed authorization forms are also

acceptable from non-officials, as long as they demonstrate the required institutional approvals and also comply with the requested items below.)

- The subject line of the email should be “WGRMP FY28.” If one PI is submitting multiple proposals, please use WGRMP FY28-1, -2, etc.
- The body of the email must identify the:
  - Name of the principal investigator
  - Title of the proposal
  - Approved budget amount for each year and total
  - Name of the submitting institution

When this step is completed, or if you are certain it will be completed by the submission deadline, check the box corresponding with this tab in eDrop. This administrative approval must be sent by the submission deadline.

### ***STEP 11: Submit your proposal***

Click on the “Submission Preview” tab. Please review the accuracy of the information provided before submitting your proposal. To formally submit your proposal package, select the “SUBMIT” button at the top right of your screen. This step MUST be done by the submission deadline.

### **Digital Accessibility**

This electronic resource and supporting documents were designed to be accessible. If you encounter a barrier or need a reasonable accommodation due to disability, please email [jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu](mailto:jennifer.hauxwell@aqu.wisc.edu).