

Biological Farming Friends Funding Recommendation

Yahara WINS Executive Committee Meeting 8/25/2021

Background:

Biological Farming Friends (BFF) is a producer-led watershed group (PLWG) that recently organized within the Yahara Watershed. ***They are seeking funding from Yahara WINS to help support and grow cover crop use within their organization.***

Although cover crops are gaining momentum in many conventional agriculture circles, supporting farmers to continue to push boundaries, experiment and change cropping systems is vital to increased participation and utilization. The BFF PLWG have established themselves by hosting field days, participating in UW research, and providing field scale demonstrations of new technologies, such as inter-seeding and roller-crimping of rye. ***The funding will be used to assist approximately 10 farmers utilize cover crops, both existing and new BFF members.*** Dane County Land Conservation, UW Extension, and the leaders of the BFF PLWG will support any farmers new to cover cropping with all technical questions and advice.

This is an opportunity for Yahara WINS to establish and cultivate a relationship with second PLWG that has established relationships with farmers in the southern part of the Yahara River watershed. And pave the way for future partnerships and accounting of phosphorus reduction activities that can be applied to the Yahara WINS partnership effort.

The requested funding will impact stream reaches 67, 68, and 69, with an overall estimated phosphorus reduction of 1,440 lbs. ***The total project cost is \$56,000 with \$35,000 of funding being requested from Yahara WINS.*** This is a one-time funding request with plans for implementation in mid-September 2021.

Yahara WINS currently has existing budget capacity in the 2021 budget due to underspent items to fund this request with existing budget funds. In June 2021, the Yahara WINS executive committee was informed that the Yahara WINS budget underspent the 2021 innovation grant program by \$15,500. These underspent dollars are recommended to be used to partially fulfill this grant request. In addition, the 2021 budget allotted \$20,000 for an additional USGS gauging station to be funded through a joint funding agreement. This project will not occur in 2021 and the future need for this project is currently being evaluated. This will result in \$19,500 of the allotted \$20,000 for the gauging station to be used to partially fulfill this grant request.

Recommendations:

- 1) Yahara WINS to provide full funding of \$35,000 to Biological Farming Friends Producer Led Watershed Group to assist with their cover crop initiative in 2021.
- 2) Work with BFF PLWG to come up with a service agreement to provide consistent conservation funding for phosphorus reduction practices in 2022.