

WATER QUALITY

Grants target farm runoff

Farmers will use money to reduce phosphorus flowing into lakes.

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Twenty-five farm families have entered into contracts with Dane County to implement conservation practices intended to reduce the amount of pollution flowing into area lakes.

The farmers will get some of their costs reimbursed as part of a \$2 million federal grant received by the county, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi said Thursday.

Parisi called the partnerships unprecedented and said they'll improve lake quality by reducing phosphorus runoff. The mineral, found in fertilizers, is the main contributor to lake algae.

The 25 farms will collectively

share about \$800,000, with individual amounts ranging from \$3,000 to \$200,000, Parisi said. More farms will be added.

Projects include building roofs over animal feeding areas, planting grass by farmland ditches and digging out ditches to remove soil and sediment with high phosphorus concentrations.

"In a lot of cases, farmers have limited funds to work with, and sometimes they fall short when it comes to land conservation," said Jeff Endres, 46, a participating farmer. "This allows some money to be put toward projects to get them done."

At his 350-cow dairy farm near Waunakee, Endres is getting about \$10,000 to implement

a five-year nutrient management plan for 1,100 acres of farmland.

The money is going toward testing soil and manure to calibrate the precise amounts of nutrients needed for plant growth without using excess phosphorus, he said.

Endres said he will contribute about \$20,000 of his own money.

The farms are in areas identified as major county target areas for phosphorus runoff.

The effort announced Thursday is part of a five-year plan by Parisi to improve lake water quality. Other components include restoring wetlands and retrofitting storm drains to filter out phosphorus-laden debris.

