



State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-1793/P1

JAM:emw

DOA:.....Hutter, BB0453 - Changes to the agricultural conservation easement program

FOR 2025-2027 BUDGET -- NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION

AN ACT ...; relating to: the budget.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

AGRICULTURE

Changes to the agricultural conservation easement purchase program

In the 2009-11 biennial budget act, the agricultural conservation easement purchase program was created for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, from willing landowners, by DATCP in conjunction with political subdivisions and nonprofit conservation organizations. An agricultural conservation easement (easement) is an interest in land that preserves the land for agricultural use while the ownership of the land itself remains with the landowner. Under the program as it was created in the act, DATCP was required to solicit applications to the program at least once annually and was provided \$12,000,000 in general fund supported borrowing for the purchase of the easements. Since the program was first created, the requirement that DATCP solicit applications to the program at least once annually was repealed, DATCP's authority for \$12,000,000 in general fund supported borrowing for the purchase of the easements was repealed, and a new provision required DNR to provide to DATCP funds from the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson stewardship program for the purchase of the easements. This bill undoes those changes, reinstating DATCP's requirement to solicit applications to the program at least once annually, providing DATCP authority for \$15,000,000 in general fund supported borrowing for the purchase of easements, and removing the requirement that DNR provide DATCP funds from the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson stewardship program for the purchase of the easements.

For further information see the state and local 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. 20.115 (7) (br) of the statutes is created to read:

20.115 (7) (br) *Principal repayment and interest; agricultural conservation easements.* A sum sufficient to reimburse s. 20.866 (1) (u) for the principal and

BILL**SECTION 1**

interest costs incurred in purchasing agricultural conservation easements under s. 93.73, to make the payments determined by the building commission under s. 13.488 (1) (m) that are attributable to the proceeds of obligations incurred to purchase agricultural conservation easements under s. 93.73, and to make payments under an agreement or ancillary arrangement entered into under s. 18.06 (8) (a).

****NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

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

20.115 (7) (tb) *Principal and interest; agricultural conservation easements.*

From the working lands fund, the amounts in the schedule to reimburse s. 20.866 (1) (u) for the principal and interest costs incurred in purchasing agricultural conservation easements under s. 93.73, to make the payments determined by the building commission under s. 13.488 (1) (m) that are attributable to the proceeds of obligations incurred to purchase agricultural conservation easements under s. 93.73, and to make payments under an agreement or ancillary agreement entered into under s. 18.06 (8) (a).

****NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

SECTION 3. 20.866 (1) (u) of the statutes is amended to read:

20.866 (1) (u) *Principal repayment and interest.* A sum sufficient from moneys appropriated under sub. (2) (zp) and ss. 20.115 (2) (d) and (7) (b) ~~and, (br), (s), and (tb)~~, 20.190 (1) (c), (d), (i), and (j), 20.225 (1) (c) and (i), 20.245 (1) (e) and (j), 20.250 (1) (c) and (e), 20.255 (1) (d), 20.285 (1) (d), (gj), and (je), 20.320 (1) (c) and (t) and (2) (c), 20.370 (7) (aa), (ad), (ag), (aq), (ar), (at), (au), (bq), (br), (cb), (cc), (cd), (cg), (cq), (cr), (cs), (ct), (ea), (eq), and (er), 20.395 (6) (af), (aq), (ar), and (au), 20.410

BILL**SECTION 3**

(1) (e), (ec), and (ko) and (3) (e) and (fm), 20.435 (2) (ee), 20.465 (1) (d), 20.485 (1) (f) and (go) and (4) (qm), 20.505 (4) (es), (et), (ha), and (hb) and (5) (c), (g), and (kc), 20.855 (8) (a), and 20.867 (1) (a) and (b) and (3) (a), (b), (bb), (bc), (bd), (be), (bf), (bg), (bh), (bj), (bL), (bm), (bn), (bo), (bq), (br), (bt), (bu), (bv), (bw), (bx), (cb), (cd), (cf), (ch), (cj), (cq), (cr), (cs), (cv), (cw), (cx), (cz), (g), (h), (i), (kd), and (q) for the payment of principal, interest, premium due, if any, and payment due, if any, under an agreement or ancillary arrangement entered into under s. 18.06 (8) (a) relating to any public debt contracted under subchs. I and IV of ch. 18.

SECTION 4. 20.866 (2) (wg) of the statutes is created to read:

20.866 (2) (wg) *Agricultural conservation easements.* From the capital improvement fund, a sum sufficient for the department of agriculture, trade and consumer protection to purchase agricultural conservation easements under s. 93.73. The state may contract public debt in an amount not to exceed \$15,000,000 for this purpose.

****NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

SECTION 5. 23.197 (15) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 6. 93.73 (2) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

93.73 (2) (b) The department, after consultation with the council under sub. (13), shall solicit applications under sub. (3) at least annually. The department shall issue each solicitation in writing and shall publish a notice announcing the solicitation. In soliciting applications, the department may specify the total amount of funds available, application deadlines, application requirements and

BILL

SECTION 6

procedures, preliminary criteria for evaluating applications, and other relevant information.

(END)