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NEWS RELEASE

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Yahara WINS now accepting grant applications for innovative phosphorus projects

Applications accepted through March 31

MADISON, WI – The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, or Yahara WINS, is now accepting grant applications from area organizations for innovative, low-cost projects that will help reduce the amount of phosphorus in local waterways. Excessive phosphorus can cause dangerous and unsightly algae blooms in local lakes, rivers and streams, reduce water quality and harm aquatic life.

“Improving the quality of our local waterways through phosphorus reduction requires collaborative, adaptive and innovative approaches” says Martye Griffin, president, Yahara WINS executive committee. “Our grant program is designed to encourage big-picture thinking to help reduce phosphorus pollution by minimizing the risks and costs associated with testing and implementing new ideas.”

Yahara WINS seeks to invest \$50,000 in its Innovation Grant Project. Proposed projects can target either agricultural runoff or urban stormwater, the two primary contributors of phosphorus to waterways. The maximum award for a single project is \$10,000.

Projects should be relatively new or untested and have compelling value as a test case. The projects are not required to take place in the Yahara watershed as long as the lessons learned can be applied in the watershed. Recent examples include demonstration projects on new agricultural practices, improved and innovative leaf management techniques, and whole pond alum treatment.

Yahara WINS has offered grants since 2013 as part of an effort to reduce phosphorus through low-cost methods. Since its inception, the grant program has kept more than 65,000 pounds of phosphorus out of local waters; one pound of phosphorus can potentially create up to 500 pounds of blue-green algae.

Yahara WINS is comprised of partners across more than 30 area municipal and county entities, farm groups, water stakeholder organizations and other local entities. Yahara WINS partners pool their resources and provide funding for practices that reduce all sources of phosphorus runoff as part of a 20-year project to achieve water quality goals for the Yahara Watershed.

For questions about the innovation grants or to submit materials, email Kim Meyer, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District watershed programs coordinator, at kimm@madsewer.org. Applications will be accepted until March 31, 2021. For grant details, visit www.madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Yahara-WINs.

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Project background

The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, known as Yahara WINS, is a groundbreaking initiative to achieve clean water goals for the Yahara Watershed. In this effort, community partners, led by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, are collaborating on a strategy called watershed adaptive management in which all sources of phosphorus in a watershed work together to reduce phosphorus. The effort began in 2012 as a pilot project and transitioned to a full-scale effort in 2017.

The 20-year adaptive management project aims to achieve permit requirements and regional Clean Water Act goals identified through the Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load by 2036. To accomplish these goals, the group facilitates partnerships, conducts outreach, pools resources to fund phosphorus reducing practices in the watershed, analyzes stream samples and works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to address regulatory needs for the project. For more information and to view a copy of the annual report, check out the Yahara WINS webpage, <http://www.madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Yahara-WINs>.