

Summary of Revisions to NR 190, 191 and 195, Wis. Adm. Code
Lake and river protection grants
NR 198 Wis. Adm. Code,
Aquatic invasive species control grants

Basis and Purpose of the Proposed Rules

This proposed rule implements enabling legislation and facilitates investing a \$2.8 million increase in the annual funding allocation for the control of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The management of AIS will be improved statewide through this revision by allowing larger, more efficient prevention and control projects, lowering local costs, and providing a greater diversity of sponsors and eligible activities.

Summary of the rules

Proposed revisions to all grants, chs. NR 190, 191, 195 and 198 will:

1. Increase the value of hourly donated, non-professional labor that can be used as local match from \$8 to \$12. This will encourage more volunteer citizen participation in projects, make projects easier for sponsors to afford and allow more efficient use of local cash in projects.
2. Require that application materials not part of a required form be submitted in an electronic format. This will facilitate and speed the grant application review process.
3. Require grant applicants to provide specific information to the department about the location and extent of public access to the waterbody that is the focus of the project. This will help the department identify, track, manage and protect the public's access to state waters.

The objectives of the proposed rule changes specific to ch. NR 198 AIS Control Grants are to:

4. Implement changes in enabling legislation that increase the maximum state cost share rate from 50% to 75% and eliminate priority for local government sponsored projects. This will reduce local project costs and allow broader range of project sponsors.
5. Increase the maximum amount of the state funds available for Education, Planning and Prevention projects from \$75,000 to \$150,000; Established Population Control projects from \$75,000 to \$200,000 and Early Detection and Response projects from \$10,000 to \$20,000. This will allow for longer and geographically broader projects which will be more effective and efficient to administer.
6. Divide Education, Planning and Prevention projects into two classes: those less than and those greater than \$50,000. Provide an equal amount of funding to, and evaluate each class separately. This will assure that smaller lake and organization projects will not compete against larger, more comprehensive projects.
7. Allow for a cash advance option for early detection and response projects. This will allow projects to begin immediately while the required local share is being raised.
8. Expand grant sponsorship to include, on a limited basis, universities, colleges and technical schools, hydroelectric corporations and other branches of state and federal government that manage natural resources. This will allow projects to be developed on a statewide scale with statewide benefits and efficiencies. It will allow managers to access funding for projects on state and federal properties with out the burden of securing the support of a third-party sponsor.

9. Broaden the eligibility criteria for nonprofit organizations to include more eligible sponsors.
10. Create a new subchapter (subch. V) that allows the department to disburse funds to sponsors who are successfully and ecologically containing established infestations under a department-approved plan to help offset the costs of permit application fees. This provide support to local organizations that are not otherwise using the grant program to manage and contain an AIS such as Eurasian watermilfoil.
11. Create a new subchapter (subch. VI) that allows the department to solicit and fund research and demonstration projects that will advance statewide knowledge and improve aquatic invasive species (AIS) management techniques. Management of AIS is a relatively new and rapidly evolving science. This expansion will help assure the annual investment of \$4.3 million is guided by science.
12. Add priorities and incentives that encourage sponsors to integrate watershed pollution control, habitat protection and restoration efforts into their projects. This will help couple long-term prevention with control, creating projects that are more resilient to AIS.
13. Change wording and language to improve clarity and other housekeeping items.