

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | October 2025



Rent Smart: Empowering Informed Renters in Wood County

by Ben Eberlein, Human Development & Relationships Educator

When looking for a place to live, it can feel like cost is the determining factor, especially in a competitive market – but renting involves so much more than just paying the monthly rent. Anyone who's ever rented or owned a home has probably had at least one experience where they thought, "I wish I would've known that before I moved in!"

UW-Madison Division of Extension developed **Rent Smart**, a research-based educational program, to help empower renters to feel more informed, confident, and prepared to navigate the rental process. Led by Extension Educators like Ben Eberlein in Wood County, the program covers essential topics ranging from personal finance to tenant rights and communication strategies.

Rent Smart is a 6-module course designed to teach participants how to budget for monthly expenses, find and keep affordable housing, complete rental applications, understand landlord screening processes, and learn the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords.

To accommodate access for all, Rent Smart is offered both in-person and virtually, locally and statewide. A full listing of virtual, statewide offerings is available on the Extension website at <https://finances.extension.wisc.edu/events>.

In-person classes are held monthly in Wood County in both Marshfield and Wisconsin Rapids. In Marshfield, Rent Smart will be offered from 1:00–4:00pm at the Everett Roehl Public Library in the Mork Study Room on October 29 and November 19. In Wisconsin Rapids, Rent Smart will be offered from 9:00am–12:00pm at McMillan Memorial Library in the 2nd Floor Meeting Room on October 31 and November 21.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law. You may request materials in an alternative language and/or format to make them more accessible. Contact us at familyliving@woodcountywi.gov or 715-421-8437. *Services are provided at no cost to you.*

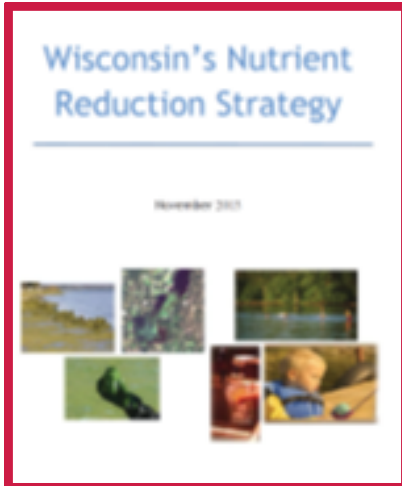
Rent Smart is free to attend, however, advance registration is required and must be submitted at least two days before each class. Registration can be done online at <https://bit.ly/RentSmartWR2025> for Wisconsin Rapids or <https://bit.ly/RentSmartMFLD2025> for Marshfield, or by calling the Extension office at 715-421-8437.

UW-Madison Division of Extension's offices are located throughout Wisconsin, to bring the research of the University to the people of Wisconsin. Your local Wood County office provides educational opportunities and events on topics that are relevant to our area. For a full list of upcoming events, visit <https://bit.ly/ExtensionWoodCtyEvents>.

Wisconsin's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

by Jen McNelly, Natural Resources Groundwater Educator

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been leading the development of a new statewide Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) in collaboration with the Interagency Water Quality Workgroup comprised of representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP); Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association; the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); University of Wisconsin – Madison, Division of Extension; Dane County Land and Water Resources Department; and the US Geological Survey (USGS).



Wisconsin's current NLRS, first published in 2013, provides a broad overview of nutrient management activities for both point sources and nonpoint sources in Wisconsin. This strategy documents ongoing activities whether they are implemented by federal, state or local agencies. It identifies areas where further progress is needed. Developed by the DNR with contractual assistance from the University of Wisconsin-Extension, it was the original document that set the state's nutrient reduction goals and influenced the development of the state's strategy moving forward. However, the 2013 document does not identify specific strategies to coordinate programs and resources across agencies and organizations and there was no process to engage stakeholders in the development of the 2013 Strategy.

Natural Resources Educators Jen McNelly and Anna Mitchell have partnered with the DNR and Interagency Water Quality Workgroup on stakeholder engagement as part of the NLRS update process. This has included helping to facilitate one-on-one interviews and listening sessions with stakeholders from across the state. The stakeholder engagement process was designed to identify practical, science-based solutions and priority actions that protect water quality while being supportive of agriculture.

Natural Resources Educators and Specialists are currently reviewing the responses gathered from multiple stakeholder listening sessions to identify common themes from across the varied audiences. Through this data analysis, partners will gain insights that will guide discussions at an upcoming roundtable event and inform the development of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, helping ensure the strategy reflects stakeholder perspectives and priorities.

One of the culminating events of the NLRS stakeholder engagement process will be a roundtable event where individuals and organizations that have participated in the stakeholder engagement process attend a face-to-face working meeting to 'roll up their sleeves' and participate directly in creating a unified strategy for reducing nutrient loss from agricultural land in Wisconsin using the themes identified in the data analysis of the stakeholder engagement process.

For more information about Wisconsin's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy or the stakeholder engagement process, you can visit: <https://nutrientstrategy.wi.gov/Pages/home.aspx>

For any additional questions you can contact Jen McNelly, Extension Wood County, at 715-421-8440 or jennifer.mcnelly@wisc.edu.

**Interagency Water Quality
Workgroup members who are
working on updating Wisconsin's
Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy**

