State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Ben Brancel, Secretary

DATE: July 2, 2014

TO: Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

FROM: Ben Brancel, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
John Petty, Administrator, Agricultural Resource Management Division

SUBJECT: Report on AEAs recommended for designated in 2014

The Agricultural Enterprise Area evaluation team met on May 30, 2014 to review the five AEA petitions received during this petition cycle. The team recommended the designation of four new AEAs and the modification of one existing AEA. More details about the recommended areas can be found in Attachment A.

Table: AEAs recommended for designation

Proposed Name	Size (modified size)	AEA Location
Friends in Agriculture AEA	17,158	*Clark County:* Towns of Fremont and Lynn
Greenville Greenbelt AEA	1,444	*Outagamie County*: Town of Greenville
Heart of America's Dairyland AEA*	70,441 (234,773)	*Clark County*: Towns of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Weston, York; *Marathon County*: Towns of Brighton, Hull, Frankfort, Holton, Johnson, Bern, McMillan, Eau Pleine
The Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County AEA	86,380	*Monroe County*: Towns of Clifton, Glendale, Wellington, Wilton
West Point AEA	15,888	*Columbia County:* Town of West Point

*Modification

Designation steps

Designation of the recommended AEAs will be completed by departmental order, and notification of the order will be posted in the state newspaper. Following notification, the designation will take effect on January 1, 2015. One of the recommended AEAs is currently in the process of updating the county's farmland preservation plan to ensure eligibility with program requirements. Designation orders for that AEA will be completed following plan certification, anticipated to occur in October or November.

Farmland preservation agreements in AEAs
Following designation, there will be 29 AEAs in the state totaling nearly 940,000 acres. The AEAs are located in portions of 22 counties, 85 towns and the Bad River Reservation. Nearly 1,300 landowners have signed the petitions requesting designation as an AEA. Hundreds of letters of support from other landowners, neighboring cities and villages, business owners and other interested parties have also been received. To date, the department has enrolled over 430 farmland preservation agreements covering nearly 100,000 acres.

2015 AEA petition cycle
The state currently now has the authority to designate up to 2 million acres as AEAs. The release of the request for petitions for the 2015 cycle is planned for early fall of 2014.

Next steps
The department continues to work with the AEAs to encourage landowners to apply for farmland preservation agreements, and to strengthen the AEA network through increased communication and information sharing. A webinar on farm transition planning was held in April and additional webinars are planned for 2014, including a webinar on farmland preservation techniques. In addition to the achievements related to farmland preservation, we will continue to identify opportunities to work with AEAs to further their agricultural economic development goals. An annual status update will be completed to gather information from AEAs designated in the prior cycles. Finally, a new policy will allow existing AEAs to pursue small boundary modifications outside of the regular petition process.

Attachment A: Summary of the 2014 AEAs recommended for designation
Attachment B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs

Attachment A: Summary of the 2014 AEAs recommended for designation

FRIENDS IN AGRICULTURE AEA

Overview

- Clark County: Towns of Fremont and Lynn
- 17,158
- 36 petitioners
- Dairy and horticulture

Goals

- To preserve and promote the agricultural economy and its social, cultural, and economic heritage
- Assess natural resource quality and quantity and assist farmers with soil and water conservation to protect environmental resources and maintain productive and efficient use of agricultural lands for use by existing, expanding and new agricultural enterprises
- Develop and implement strategies to minimize land use conflicts
- Develop joint marketing opportunities for local products
- Pursue new technologies that provide management and economic benefits to agricultural producers that efficiently utilizes the economies of scale created by large blocks of contiguous farmland
- Maintain and create economic certainty for farms and agri-businesses desiring to build additional production and processing capacity through reinvesting in their businesses and the local economy.
- Create the largest contiguous block of working lands by linking to other designated AEAs

Items of Note

- Clark County has the largest number of dairy farms and the largest producer of milk in Wisconsin
- Proximity to important transportation corridors (road and rail) that connect to major metropolitan consumer areas
- Significant investments made on individual farms and by local supply and processing businesses, including the expansion of dairy processing and production capacity
- Agriculture in the area diversifying to include greenhouses and fresh market vegetables and fruits
- Less than 130 acres of the area is considered residential or commercial land use

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GREENVILLE GREENBELT AEA

Overview

- Outagamie County: Town of Greenville
- 1,444
- 9 petitioners
- Cash cropping

Goals

- Ensure that agricultural land identified through town and county planning efforts remains in agricultural use
- Increase development densities in the urban portion of the Town through subdivision ordinances, and/or development of TDR and PDR programs
- Establish controls on residential development to promote infill development and to target land adjacent to urban areas
- Expand the boundary of the AEA to encompass more agricultural land in the Town of Greenville
- Promote and support good agricultural land management and waste management efforts on private lands
- Support economic opportunities associated with farming
- Support the development of 'grow/eat local' efforts
- Provide support to ensure the successful transition of existing farm businesses

Items of Note

- Extensive planning efforts over the past 10 years support continued agricultural land use in the area
- Significant effort to provide education and outreach on the importance of the "Greenville Greenbelt"

- Numerous ag-tourism opportunities and individual investments in the Town of Greenville highlight the agricultural heritage of the area
- Recent investments in agricultural businesses and the local technical college support continued agriculture in the area

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HEART OF AMERICA'S DAIRYLAND AEA (2011; Modified 2012; Modified 2013)

Overview

- Clark and Marathon Counties, Town of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Weston, York, Brighton, Hull, Frankfort, Holton, Johnson, Bern, McMillan, Eau Pleine
- 70,441 (234,773)
- 125 (395) petitioners
- Dairy and cash crops

Goals

- To preserve and promote the agricultural economy and its social, cultural, and economic heritage
- Retain and enhance existing businesses
- Assure production capacity and protect food security
- Assess natural resource quality and quantity and assist farmers with soil and water conservation to protect environmental resources
- Provide tools to control population density and control residential and farming conflicts
- Develop joint marketing opportunities for local products
- Pursue new technologies that provide management and economic benefits to agricultural producers that efficiently utilizes the economies of scale created by large blocks of contiguous farmland
- Maintain and create economic certainty for farms and agri-businesses desiring to build additional production and processing capacity through reinvesting in their businesses and the local economy.

Items of Note

- Extensive public outreach process inclusive of diverse producers and diverse backgrounds
- Area number one for dairy production in the state and also supports vegetables, fruit, nursery and bedding plants
- Strong interest in protecting farmland through farmland preservation agreements
- Proximity to existing agricultural infrastructure, including the Central WI Agribusiness Innovation Center
- Recipient of a 2013 Top Rural Development Initiative Award from Wisconsin Rural Partners
- Working with students from the UW-Madison Urban and Regional Planning department to evaluate and advance economic strategies for the AEA

THE HEADWATERS OF SOUTHEAST MONROE COUNTY AEA

Overview

- Monroe County: Towns of Clifton, Glendale, Wellington, Wilton
- 86,380
- 99 petitioners
- Dairy, cash grain

Goals

- Preserve the agricultural heritage of the area
- Build support for the development of future land use plans and policies to ensure the protection of productive agricultural land
- Foster a conservation movement to protect valuable resources
- Retain and enhance existing businesses while supporting new investments in agriculture
- Minimize land use conflicts through available land use tools including farmland preservation agreements

Items of Note

- Good agricultural infrastructure in place to support the current farms and agricultural businesses
- Significant block of agricultural land with limited rural residential development allows the opportunity to establish land use policies and controls to ensure the area remains in agricultural land use
- Strong dairy area; also grain and forage, vegetables for direct market, timber
- Strong support from landowners and cooperators

WEST POINT AEA

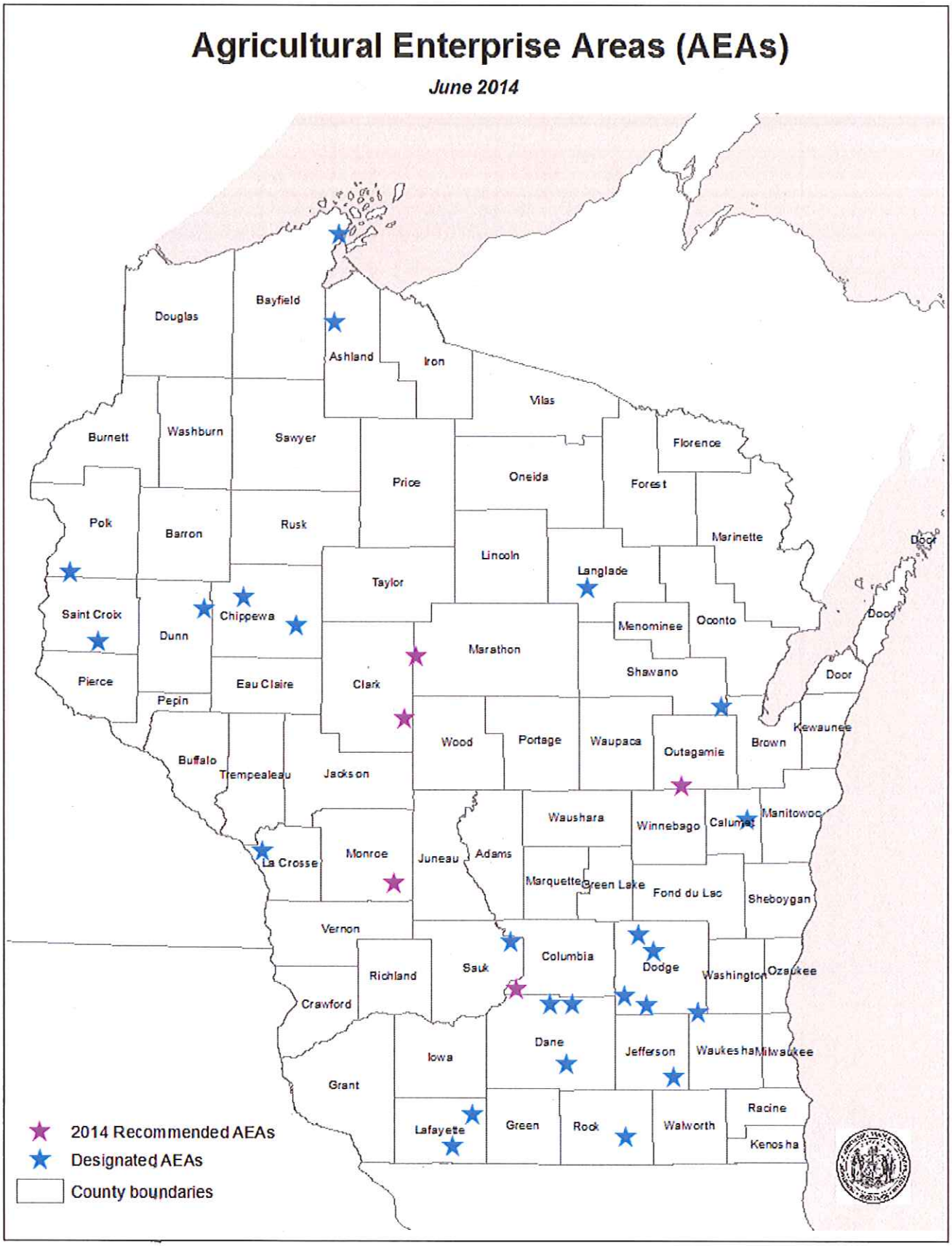
Overview

- Columbia County: Town of West Point
- 17,158
- 21 petitioners
- Dairy, beef, row crop

Goals

- Preserve productive farmland and farming to support the local and regional economy and to recognize and preserve the agricultural history and culture of the town
- Maintain and promote a high level of conservation practices on farmland to help protect vital wildlife habitat and soil and water quality.
- Slow the fragmentation of agricultural lands and limit encroachment of non-farm development on agricultural lands to reduce land use conflicts.
- Maximize and strengthen farmland preservation efforts by providing incentives to landowners to retain and preserve agricultural lands.
- Support and preserve multi-generational farms.
- Promote cooperation between farm and non-farm residents.
- Provide education on farming, farm organizations, and farm related activities.
- Support and encourage agricultural diversity
- Modernize agricultural operations to remain competitive.
- Strengthen agribusiness infrastructure by encouraging and attracting new agribusiness as well as promoting the maintenance, expansion and modernization of the existing agribusinesses.
- Encourage renewable energy technologies and innovation for other sustainable practices.
- Promote both conventional and alternative agricultural practices and uses that are sustainable.

Items of Note

- Over 40% of the area owned by farmers who participate in the state's farmland preservation program
- Agricultural tourism opportunities in the area highlight the heritage and contribute to the local economy
- Recognition of the value of the nearby urban areas as a market for locally grown products
- Substantial reinvestments to existing operations of over $10 million over the past decade
- Significant service and supply businesses and processing facilities support agriculture in identified area

Appendix B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs