



Agriculture Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

The Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County

County: Monroe

Towns of: Clifton, Glendale, Wellington, and Wilton

Acres: 86, 380

AEA Designation: 2014

Background

In 2013, 99 landowners with the cooperation and support of the towns of Wellington, Glendale, Clifton, and Wilton, along with Monroe County and 10 local agribusinesses, 99 landowners asked the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to designate the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County agricultural enterprise area (Headwaters AEA).

An AEA is a community-driven effort to establish areas of land important to Wisconsin’s agricultural future where businesses can cultivate their connections with agriculture. DATCP records show enterprises in the Headwaters AEA are driven and supported by: a licensed egg producer; grain dealer and warehouse; food warehouses; several food processing plants; milk producers; livestock truckers; fish farms; national organic program certified operations and businesses; retail food establishments; and a deer farm. The following businesses in and around the AEA help to support the area’s agricultural future: ag implements, farm equipment, crop transports, livestock genetics, veterinary medicine, and agronomy. These enterprises are also critical to ensuring the agricultural future and rural identity of the Headwaters AEA. This area also includes several bed and breakfasts, the Elroy-Sparta bike trail, and Amish farms and businesses that promote agritourism and a commitment to the agricultural landscape.



 5 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	 10 AG CO-OPS & BUSINESSES	 99 PRODUCERS & LANDOWNERS
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DATCP designates AEAs in response to a petition from landowners and local governments. AEAs are part of DATCP’s Farmland Preservation Program to support local farmland protection goals, the agricultural economy, and environmental efforts.

Since the designation of the Headwaters AEA in 2014, the Monroe County Land Conservation Department has been working with landowners to promote farmland preservation agreements – land must be in an AEA to enroll. A farmland preservation agreement is a commitment to keep land in agricultural use for 15 years and to implement best management practices for soil health and water quality. Since 2014, the Headwaters AEA has enrolled more than 3,000 acres of farmland in agreements. In return, landowners can claim an annual tax credit. Monroe County is looking to grow participation in their farmland preservation program. As a part of this effort for 2020, the county is offering a new incentive payment to landowners that choose to sign a farmland preservation agreement in the AEA. In return for this investment, each participant helps implement conservation practices on the ground, promotes stewardship of soil and water resources, and facilitates local goals for preservation of agricultural lands.



“One of my biggest interests is soil conservation. Our hope is that the AEA will create an interest in the community.”

– Mark Henthorne, petitioner and dairy farmer in the Headwaters AEA



Agronomy



Grain dealer and warehouse



Implement dealer



Transportation



National organic program certified operations and businesses



Milk producers



Fish farms



Deer farm



Licensed egg producer



Veterinary medicine



Livestock truckers



Livestock Genetics



Food processing plants



Food warehouses



Retail food establishments



Several bed and breakfasts



Amish farms and businesses



Elroy-Sparta bike trail

Prioritizing Agriculture and Looking to the Future

Monroe County is looking to the past to preserve farmland for the future. With the state of the agricultural economy having been depressed for several years, it is a critical time for farmland protections and keeping land in agricultural use when economic pressures can incentivize farmland conversion. This relays the goals of the original petition: Lead the way towards voluntary land preservation, protect productive agricultural lands, and foster an enhanced conservation movement in Monroe County.

Monroe County and the AEA petitioners are also looking at additional tools for landowners and local governments to protect farmland to build on the priorities of community participation in farmland protection and conservation programming. This includes:

- Updating comprehensive land use plans for towns
- Establishing general zoning for municipalities in an AEA
- Pursuing farmland preservation zoning for communities with general zoning

Zoning: Helps to implement practical land use planning and provide community members with another way to protect their farmland by limiting potential land use conflicts which can lead to farmland conversion.

Farmland preservation zoning: Helps promote agriculture by restricting non-agricultural use in an agricultural area, and can limit land use conflicts. Landowners in areas zoned for farmland preservation may be eligible for the farmland preservation tax credit. Farmland preservation zoning can also be used with AEAs to promote additional protections and increase the farmland preservation tax credit.

“Whether you farm the land yourself or rent it out, we are looking for more landowners within this AEA to sign farmland preservation agreements. AEAs and farmland preservation agreements are a step in the right direction to protect and preserve a community’s agricultural lands. Funding is available to help with conservation costs, such as nutrient management planning.”

–Bob Micheel, Monroe County Conservationist

Learn more at

<https://farmlandpreservation.wi.gov>

Investing in the Local Ag Economy



Agreement enrollments



Incentives to cover conservation costs



Tax credits

Helping Your Community



Protect soil and water



Establish zoning



Preserve farmland

To find out if your land is located in the Headwaters AEA and to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact:

Monroe County Land Conservation Department

Bob Micheel (608) 269-8976

Email: bob.micheel@co.monroe.wi.us

To start or join a current AEA, contact your county land conservation department where your land is located.