



Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) Spotlight: Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County Seeks Landowners Interested in Farmland Preservation

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MADISON – Since its designation as an agricultural enterprise area (AEA) in 2014, the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County has been working with landowners in its AEA to maximize the amount of land being preserved for agricultural uses. There are more than 3,000 acres of farmland in the AEA currently enrolled in farmland preservation agreements. Signing an agreement supports conservation efforts by keeping land in agricultural use for 15 years while meeting soil and water quality requirements. In return, landowners can claim an annual tax credit.

“Whether you farm the land yourself or rent it out, we are looking for more landowners within this area to sign farmland preservation agreements,” said Bob Micheel, Monroe County conservationist. “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.”

To increase participation, the county is offering an incentive payment to landowners that sign a new farmland preservation agreement in the AEA. New participants help to implement conservation practices, promote stewardship of soil and water resources, and facilitate 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,” said Mark Henthorne, a petitioner and dairy farmer in the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County. This sentiment 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.

To find out if your land is located in the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County AEA and to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact Bob Micheel at the Monroe County Land Conservation Department at (608) 269-8975 or bob.micheel@co.monroe.wi.us.

About the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County

The designation of the Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County AEA was a community-driven effort to highlight an important agriculture area within the county for businesses to cultivate their connections with agriculture. DATCP records show enterprises in this AEA are driven and supported by farming operations. This includes over 100 milk producers, 68 certified organic operations, food processors and shipping businesses, and retail food establishments. The following businesses in and surrounding the AEA help to support the area’s agricultural future: agricultural implements, farm equipment, crop transports, livestock genetics, veterinary medicine, and agronomy. 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. To learn more about this AEA, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/DesignatedAEAs.aspx.

About Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)

To learn more about AEAs and the Farmland Preservation Program, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AgriculturalEnterpriseAreas.aspx. To start or join a current AEA, contact the county land conservation department in the county where your land is located.

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