AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT


DATCP File Photo

DATCP #4627

Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project

Washington and Dodge Counties

PSC Docket # 6650-CG-275

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

PUBLISHED APRIL 30, 2025; REVISED MAY 28, 2025

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

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LETTER TO THE READER

Dear Reader,

Through the Agricultural Impact Statement ("AIS") program, agricultural operations have the opportunity to provide feedback, document impacts, and suggest alternative solutions when their agricultural lands are affected by an entity with the potential powers of eminent domain. The AIS program also provides affected agricultural landowners time to gather information to make well-informed decisions before a study begins. Lastly, the AIS program makes suggestions and recommendations to study initiators to promote study alternatives and management practices that would reduce potential impacts to agricultural lands and operations.

The AIS program also serves the needs of the study initiator by conducting the AIS analysis and publishing the statement within a timely manner as required by Wis. Stat. § 32.035. In addition, the AIS program provides a continuing presence throughout study development and oversight processes in order to support agricultural operations and the statewide priority to preserve prime farmland.

The Agricultural Impact Statement program and the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection are honored to provide this essential state service to the agricultural landowners and operators of the state.

Thank you,

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ACRONYMS

AEA	Agricultural Enterprise Area
AI	Agricultural Inspector
AIN	Agricultural Impact Notification
AIS	Agricultural Impact Statement
CREP	Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
DATCP	Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department)
FP	Farmland Preservation Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
IAM	Independent Agricultural Monitor
MFL	Managed Forest Law
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Areas
PACE	Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement
PSC	Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
PSIG	Pounds per square inch gauge
ROW	Right-of-Way
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WisDNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

TERMS

Easement	Easements are contracts – bound to the property – which allow another party the right to use or enter a property without owning the property. Easements may be temporary (i.e. time limited) or permanent.
Horizontal Directional Drilling	A technique involving the drilling of an underground pilot hole to tunnel for an extended linear distance to avoid surface disturbance to a resource like a waterbody, wetland, or infrastructure. The pilot hole is enlarged through successive ream borings with progressively larger bits. Finally, a pre-welded segment of pipe is pulled or pushed through the completed tunnel.
Mitigation	Avoiding, minimizing, rectifying (repairing), reducing, eliminating, compensating for, or monitoring environmental & agricultural impacts.
Open Trench	The excavation of a trench to install individual sections of a pipeline. After the pipeline is installed, the trench is backfilled with soil.
Prime Farmland	Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses.
Right-of-Way (ROW)	The right to cross another's property for transportation or transmission purposes, such as roads, powerlines, and pipelines.
Severance	Splitting an agricultural parcel into two or more smaller parcels
Three-Lift Soil Handing	A soil handling method requiring the excavation and stockpiling of 1) topsoil, 2) subsoil and 3) substratum in three separate piles. After excavation and construction is complete, the excavated soils are backfilled in the reverse order from which they were removed (i.e. last soil removed is the first soil backfilled).
Topsoil	The thin, top layer of soil where the majority of nutrients for plants is found.
Uneconomic Remnant	The property remaining after a partial taking of property, if the property remaining is of such size, shape, or condition as to be of little value or of substantially impaired economic viability.
Wasteland	Small or irregularly shaped areas within a remnant agricultural field that are not able to be cultivated. These areas reduce the amount of tillable acres within a remnant field, which may also impact the economic viability of the remnant field.

SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection ("Department") has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement ("AIS") 4627 for a natural gas pipeline lateral proposed by the Wisconsin Gas LLC, doing business as We Energies. The proposed pipeline (referred to as "Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project" or "Project") is located in Hartford, Polk, and Jackson, and the Village of Slinger in Washington County as shown in Figure 1. Wisconsin Gas LLC has indicated the primary reason for the Project is to address the limited supply of natural gas to the area, stemming from a lack of sufficient pipeline infrastructure (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies, 2024).

To construct the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project, Wisconsin Gas LLC proposes to install approximately twelve miles of 12-inch steel transmission main with a maximum allowable operating pressure of 850 psig in the towns of Hartford, Polk, and Jackson, and the village of Slinger in Washington County. The Project also includes a pressure increase of an existing high-pressure system to the same 850 psig maximum allowable operating pressure, which requires upgrades to existing regulation and valving located in the towns of Hustisford, Rubicon, and Hartford in Dodge County. The new transmission main connects this high-pressure system and the existing lateral to Port Washington Generating Station, forming a continuous 850 psig system that extends from Hustisford to Port Washington. Including staging areas and Route C (which connects parts of Route A and B), the project proposes to impact between 171.84 and 199.71 acres of agricultural land and up to 52 agricultural landowners.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) has authority over the Project and the project initiator must obtain a Certificate of Authority (CA) to obtain the right to proceed with the Project. Through the issuance of a CA, the PSC would select the project route and other project criteria Wisconsin Gas LLC shall follow. To date, Wisconsin Gas LLC has submitted a CA application for the Project to the PSC under PSC Docket ID: 6650-CG-275 and is awaiting a ruling from the PSC. The Department will provide the PSC with AIS #4627 as evidence to aid in determining the outcome of Wisconsin Gas LLC's CA application.

In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(3), Wisconsin Gas LLC has provided the Department with the necessary information and materials to conduct an AIS. The Department has also contacted the agricultural property owners and operators impacted by the Project route. In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b), the Department has reviewed and analyzed Wisconsin Gas LLC materials and the comments from the affected agricultural property owners and operators to assess the agricultural impacts of the proposed project. Through the AIS analysis, the Department offers a set of recommendations and conclusions to

Wisconsin Gas LLC and the agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate current and future impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations along the Project route.

The set of recommendations are located within the AIS Recommendation Section beginning on page 14. The AIS analysis begins on page 18 with information on the project located in Section 2. Information and conclusions on the agricultural setting of Washington and Dodge Counties and impacted areas can be found in Section 3. The agricultural impacts of the project on the impacted land, landowners and operators can be found in Section 4. Appendices for AIS 4627 contain the following information: additional project figures and tables (Appendix A), Wisconsin Gas LLC's Agricultural Mitigation Plan (Appendix B), Three-lift soil candidate key (Appendix C), information on the appraisal and compensation process (Appendix D), a copy of Wisconsin's agricultural impact statement statute (Appendix E), various additional sources of related information for agricultural landowners and operators (Appendix F), Landowner Comments (Appendix G), Wisconsin Gas LLC's Feedback Form (Appendix H) and the Agricultural Monitoring Form for Pipeline Projects (ARM-LWR-543) (Appendix I).

If Wisconsin Gas LLC deviates from the selected alternatives or the selected sites, Wisconsin Gas LLC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may generate an addendum to this AIS, if warranted.

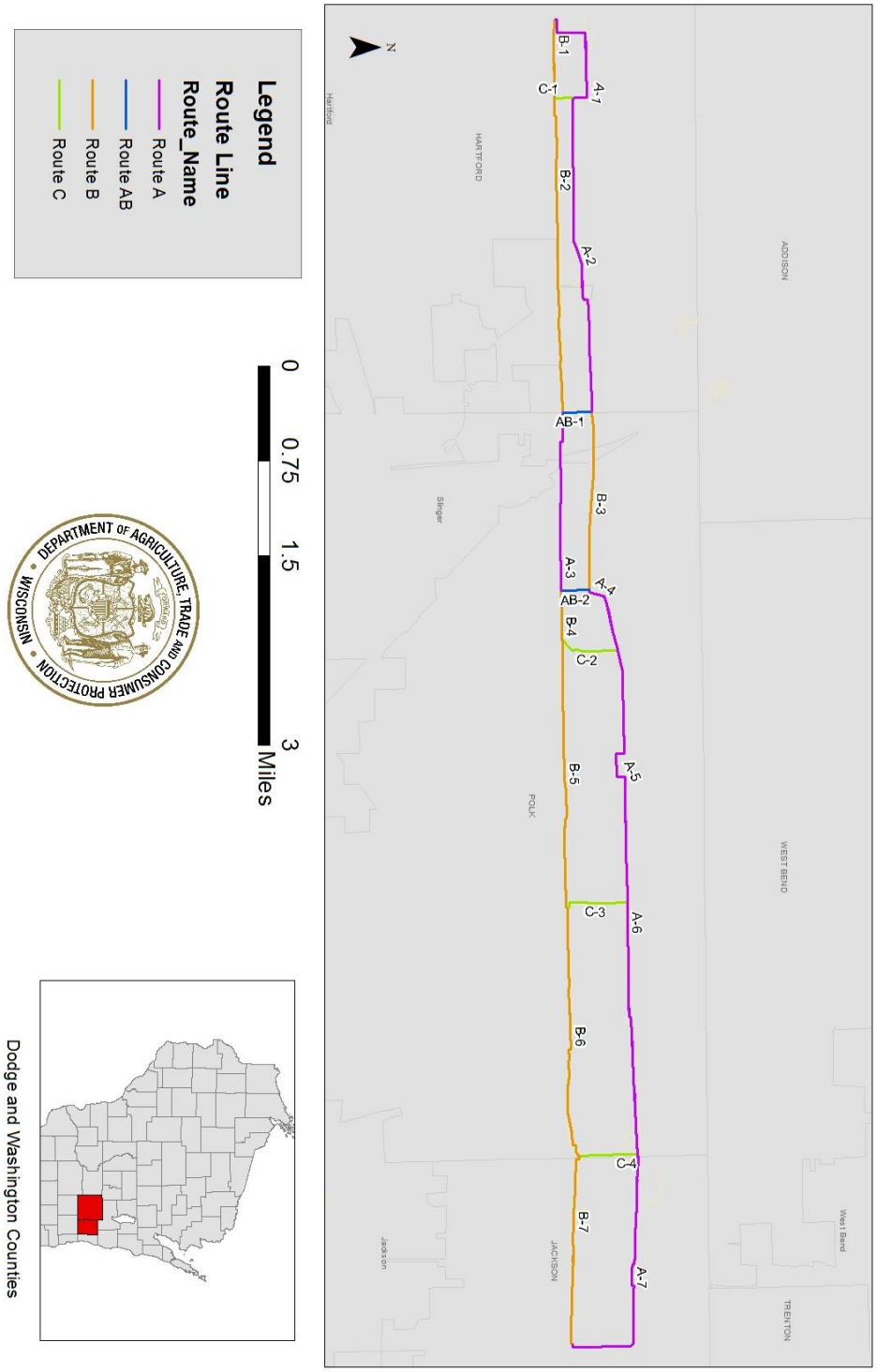

Figure 1: Route Segments of the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project in Washington and Dodge Counties, WI, DATCP.

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department has reviewed and analyzed the materials provided by Wisconsin Gas LLC and comments from the affected agricultural property owners and operators regarding the proposed Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project. Should PSC approve the Project, the Department provides the following recommendations, in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b) to PSC, Wisconsin Gas LLC and agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations resulting from the Project.

Recommendations to the Public Service Commission

1) The Department recommends that PSC select a route alternative that utilizes as much pre-existing ROW including pipeline, railroad and roadway corridors to reduce the overall impacts to agricultural lands and operation such as potential parcel severance during the period of construction and long-lasting impacts to the soil in terms of crop yield loss and drainage. Overall, the Department prefers some of the segments suggested by Wisconsin Gas LLC for the Preferred Route but the Department suggests PSC consider exchanging certain sections of one route with another that follow edge of fields and road ROWs to the degree possible, such as choosing Segments B-2, B-5, B-6, B-7 in place of segments C-1, A-2, C-2, A-5, A-6, A-7 to avoid severing agricultural fields and farm operations. See Section 4.4.1 "Severance" of AIS 4627 for more discussion on this recommendation.

2) The Department believes an Agricultural Inspector that Wisconsin Gas LLC plans to hire is sufficient to ensure Wisconsin Gas LLC adheres to the AMP and any additional BMPs the Department has recommended for Wisconsin Gas LLC. DATCP recommends that for the duration of Project construction, the PSC require Wisconsin Gas LLC to hire a dedicated Agricultural Inspector (AI). If this recommendation is approved by the PSC, all reports generated by the AI should be shared with the PSC, DATCP, and DNR. Furthermore, the potential AI should be required to complete DATCP's standard Agricultural Monitoring Form for Pipeline Projects (ARM-LWR-543) as seen in Appendix H and submit said monitoring forms to DATCP weekly or a timeframe that is consulted with and approved by PSC, DATCP and DNR. If Wisconsin Gas LLC has an applicable form that shares information that is requested on form ARM-LWR-543, then that can be used in lieu of ARM-LWR-543.

Recommendations to Wisconsin Gas LLC

1) In addition to the practices Wisconsin Gas LLC outlined within their Agricultural Management Plan, the Department recommends Wisconsin Gas LLC follow all the recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.3 through Section 5.6.18 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding: topsoil, increased soil rock content, soil compaction, de-icing & traction control, de-watering, erosion, fencing, weed control, construction debris, feed supply & dairy operations, construction noise & dust, restoration, irrigation, temporary access roads, managed forests, induced current, organic operations and biosecurity.

2) Wisconsin Gas LLC should provide notice and project information to impacted county drainage district board during the project planning stage and invite DATCP (acting through the state drainage engineer) and the county drainage board to identify potential concerns.

3) Wisconsin Gas LLC should provide landowners with direct phone numbers and email addresses to Wisconsin Gas LLC project staff and project contractors that are able to respond to a range of topics including but not limited to: environmental & agricultural impacts, land acquisition & ROW, project schedule, access limitations, compensation for release of lands from conservation programming and project complaints.

4) If there is adequate growing season for a crop to mature and be harvested after Wisconsin Gas LLC has an interest in the impacted lands, but before construction along the Project corridor begins, Wisconsin Gas LLC should allow the current agricultural operators to harvest a crop for that season to the extent possible or the Wisconsin Gas LLC shall compensate the agricultural operators for crop damages.
5) Wisconsin Gas LLC should provide appropriate compensation to all landowners with land enrolled in a conservation easement or farm program if the landowner must reimburse the administering agency for the land's removal or alteration. These conservation or farm programs could include, but are not limited to, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP), Farmland Preservation Program (FP), or the Managed Forest Law program (MFL).
6) Wisconsin Gas LLC should consult the Department as soon as a route is selected affording as much time as possible prior to construction regarding the status of effective agreements within the project corridor and for information regarding

required releases of land and repayment of funds for any CREP or FP agreements within the chosen project corridor.

7) Wisconsin Gas LLC is advised to consult the applicable County Land Conservation Department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area.
8) Wisconsin Gas LLC should implement training for all construction supervisors, inspectors, and crews to ensure that they understand the steps needed to protect the integrity of agricultural lands and operations during project construction and restoration.

Recommendations to Agricultural Landowners and Operators

1) Landowners should review the recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.3 through Section 5.6.18 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding: topsoil, increased soil rock content, soil compaction, de-icing & traction control, de-watering, erosion, fencing, weed control, construction debris, feed supply & dairy operations, construction noise & dust, restoration, irrigation, temporary access roads, managed forests, induced current, organic operations and biosecurity.

2) Under ATCP 48.40 landowners are required to notify a county drainage board of any action, including a change in land use that will alter flow of water into or from a district drain, increase soil erosion or movement of suspended soils to a district drain, or affect the operation of the drainage district or costs incurred by the district.

3) Landowners with conservation easements within the ROW should consult with the conservation program provider to determine if there any implications resulting from the land's alteration or removal from the contract. If the landowner is charged a fee for removing or altering the land within the conservation easement, landowners should negotiate with Wisconsin Gas LLC to recover any incurred costs.

4) Landowners concerned about potential impacts to their agricultural land should keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction, including field moisture conditions, historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons, crop yield records and photographs taken every season.

5) Prior to the start of construction, landowners should identify for Wisconsin Gas LLC where construction activities may interfere with farm operations, farm building/facilities or farming infrastructure including but not limited to drain tiles, wells, watering systems, drainage ditches, drainage tile, culverts, fencing, farm access roads, or grain bins.

6) After construction is complete, landowners should monitor for drainage problems. If problems are observed that can be attributed to construction, the landowner and Wisconsin Gas LLC should work together to develop a mutually agreeable solution.

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection ("Department") has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement ("AIS") 4627 in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035 for a natural gas pipeline lateral proposed by Wisconsin Gas LLC, doing business as We Energies. The proposed pipeline (referred to as "Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project" or "Project") project recommends installing approximately 12 miles of 12-inch steel transmission main in the towns of Hartford, Polk, and Jackson, and the Village of Slinger in Washington County (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies, 2024). The Project also requires upgrades to existing regulation and valving located in the towns of Hustisford, Rubicon, and Hartford in Dodge County. The new transmission main connects this high-pressure system and the existing lateral to Port Washington Generating Station, forming a continuous 850 psig system that extends from Hustisford to Port Washington (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies, 2024).

According to Wis. Stat. §32.035, the AIS is designed to be an informational and advisory document that describes and analyzes the potential effects of a proposed project on agricultural operations and agricultural resources, but it cannot stop a project. The Department is required to prepare an AIS when the actual or potential exercise of eminent domain powers involves an acquisition of any interest in more than five acres of land from any agricultural operation. The term agricultural operation includes all owned and rented parcels of land, buildings, equipment, livestock, and personnel used by an individual, partnership, or corporation under single management to produce agricultural commodities.

The AIS reflects the general objectives of the Department in its recognition of the importance of conserving vital agricultural resources and maintaining a healthy rural economy. The Department is not involved in determining whether or not eminent domain powers will be used or the amount of compensation to be paid for the acquisition of any property.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has submitted a Certificate of Authority (CA) to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) (REF#: 525391) to obtain approval to construct the Project (We Energies, 2024). The PSC has assigned the Project PSC Docket ID: 6650-CG-275, which can be followed within the PSC Electronic Records Filing System. The PSC will analyze the need for the project and the potential environmental and community impacts in an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DATCP, 2024a). In addition, the PSC will receive testimony and hold hearings to further assess the impacts of this project. Afterwards, the PSC will

approve, modify, or deny Wisconsin Gas LLC's proposed project. Construction on the project cannot begin before Wisconsin Gas LLC receives a CA from the PSC, as well as permits and approvals from other regulatory entities.

As established under Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(d), if Wisconsin Gas LLC intends to actualize its powers of condemnation at any point during the project through a jurisdictional offer(s), Wisconsin Gas LLC may not negotiate with an owner or make a jurisdictional offer until 30 days after the agricultural impact statement has been published. If Wisconsin Gas LLC deviates from the selected alternative or the selected sites, Wisconsin Gas LLC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may determine to generate an addendum to this AIS.

Should Wisconsin Gas LLC actualize its powers of condemnation for this acquisition, information on the appraisal and compensation process under eminent domain is provided within Appendix D. The full text of Wis. Stat. §32.035 is included in Appendix E. Additional references to statutes that govern eminent domain and condemnation processes and other sources of information are also included in Appendices E and F.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Project Summary

The proposed project occurs within Washington and Dodge Counties, WI. The project proposes to install approximately 12 miles of 12-inch steel transmission main in the towns of Hartford, Polk, and Jackson, and the Village of Slinger in Washington County (We Energies, 2024).

Wisconsin Gas LLC has provided the Department with an agricultural impact notification (AIN) and spatial materials for analysis for the proposed project (DATCP, 2024a). The AIN and materials from Wisconsin Gas LLC serve as the main reference documents for the Project. As the scope of Wis. Stat. §32.035 is limited to agricultural impacts, this analysis will only examine and evaluate the aspects of the Project that affect agricultural lands. A full list of the impacted acres for each agricultural landowner is provided (Appendix A, Table 1). For a general overview of the typical construction practices used to install a natural gas pipeline, please read the Department's Natural Gas Pipeline Construction Process publication ARM-LWR-562 available at agimpact.wi.gov.

Wisconsin Gas LLC proposes to install approximately 12 miles of 12-inch steel 850 pounds per square inch gauge ("psig") maximum allowable operating pressure ("MAOP") transmission main. The Project also includes a pressure increase of an existing high-pressure system's operating pressure from 400 psig MAOP to 850 psig MAOP. These two systems would connect with the existing 850 psig MAOP lateral from Hartford East Gate Station to Port Washington Generation Station (PWGS), forming a single 850 psig system stretching from Rubicon Gate to Hartford East Gate Station to PWGS (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies, 2024).

To accommodate the increase to 850 psig MAOP, Wisconsin Gas LLC has proposed improvements to be made to an existing valve assembly, two existing gate stations, and two district regulator stations. A total of five valve assemblies will be installed in the system (We Energies, 2024).

There are two proposed potential routes for the Project, Route A and Route B. Each route is divided into a number of segments. "A" segments are segments specific to Route A. "B" segments are specific to Route B. "AB" segments are segments that were common between the two routes. "C" segments are segments that connect the Route A and Route B at various locations that would allow for combinations of Route A and Route B segments, if desired (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies 2024).

Wisconsin Gas LLC's Preferred Route is a combination of segments from both Route A and Route B, rather than the original Route A or Route B (We Energies, 2024). The segments identified as Wisconsin Gas LLC Preferred Route can be found in Appendix A Attachment 4 of the application (REF# 525402).

2.2. Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC)

The PSC is an independent regulatory agency that regulates public electric, natural gas, water and sewer utilities in Wisconsin. Through PSC regulations, public utilities must obtain PSC approval before setting new utility rates and undertaking major construction projects, such as natural gas pipelines or substations. Prior to gaining approval, PSC staff review the utilities application and prepare either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the need, alternatives, cost, and environmental and social impacts of the proposed project.

Approval from the PSC is obtained by the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) or a Certificate of Authority (CA), both of which grant the utility the right to proceed with the project as described within the CPCN or CA. Issuance of a CPCN or CA

determined by a three-member PSC Commission. PSC Commissioners are full-time staff, appointed by the Governor, tasked with reviewing the project case file (documents, reports, testimony) and ultimately deciding whether to approve, modify, or deny a project. If the PSC determines that the project is needed and feasible, the utility must adhere to the PSC ruling and project alternatives/route selected by the Commission. PSC approval is not constrained by the utilities "Preferred" or "Alternate" route designations mentioned within this AIS and the Commission may choose any combination of route segments described in the application.

Wisconsin Gas LLC submitted an application for a CA for the Project to the PSC on December 12, 2024 under PSC Docket ID: 6650-CG-275 (We Energies, 2024). PSC determined on January 30, 2025 that an EA will be conducted for the Project (REF# 531336). DATCP expects the PSC to utilize the information contained within this AIS, the EA, the CA application, and testimony from the public to determine the degree of impacts each route alternative will have on the agricultural landscape and economy, prior to issuing a ruling.

2.3. Project Purpose

In the CPCN, Wisconsin Gas LLC has indicated the primary purpose of this Project is to increase the quantity and reliability of natural gas service, both on a peak day and annually, by providing a second pipeline source to the natural gas distribution network and opportunity to increase the reliability of firm service in the Southeastern Wisconsin area (DATCP, 2024a; We Energies 2024).

Wisconsin Gas LLC states that the Project will provide additional natural gas deliverability and reliability to the northern suburbs/lakeshore of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (We Energy, 2024).

2.4. Preferred Project Design

Wisconsin Gas LLC's Preferred Route is a combination of segments from both Route A and Route B, rather than the original Route A or Route B. A map showing the Preferred Route can be found in Appendix A Attachment 4 of the application (REF# 525402) as well as in Appendix A Figure 1 on the AIS appendices.

The Preferred Route consists of segments in order from the Town of Hartford to the Town of Jackson: B-1, C-1, A-2, AB-1, A-3, B-4, C-2, A-5, A-6, A-7. The Preferred Route is approximately 12 miles in length, with all segments featuring a 12" inch steel pipes (Table 1).

If approved, the PSC may choose to select the alternate route, combinations of a different route segments, or alter a proposed route segment when deciding the final route.

Table 1: Preferred Route Segment Descriptions, based on Table 4 of the CA (We Energies, 2024).

Segment Name	Pipe Diameter (in inches)	Length (miles)
B1	12	0.62
C1	12	0.15
A2	12	2.52
AB1	12	0.23
A3	12	1.43
B4	12	0.38
C2	12	0.5
A5	12	2.12
A6	12	2.01
A7	12	2.05

2.4.1. Pipeline Installation Methods

The pipeline will be installed using a combination of open trench and horizontal directional drilling (HDD). For additional information on open trench and HDD methods, refer to the Department's Natural Gas Pipeline Construction Process publication ARM-LWR-562 available at agimpact.wi.gov.

Typically the size of the trench will be approximately six feet wide by five feet deep for 12-inch pipe (We Energies, 2024). In areas where the soil has limited cohesion, Wisconsin Gas LLC states that the trench width may need to be widened to allow for benching or sloping, ensuring adequate depth of cover for the gas pipe is achieved. In agricultural lands, trench depth will be sufficiently deep enough to allow a minimum of four feet of cover over the top of the pipeline to avoid possible interference with farming equipment (We Energies, 2024).

Wisconsin Gas LLC plans to keep the excavated topsoil and subsoil separated during trenching in agricultural lands, to mitigate impacting future growing seasons and promote healthy soil after restoration to the degree possible (We Energies, 2024).

2.4.2. Above Ground Facilities

Wisconsin Gas LLC has indicated that eight above ground facilities will be constructed in the newly acquired ROW as part of the Project. Six of these facilities are described by Wisconsin Gas LLC to be on agricultural land (We Energies, 2024). Only one of these agricultural sites will be new and is associated with Valve Assembly on Route B. The site area will be 50ft x

50ft in size, is currently zoned as A-1 agricultural/vacant, and is located in Lakeview Circle, Slinger, WI. This site can be viewed on page 5 of Appendix A, Attachment 17 of the CA application (REF# 525416).

A summary of the associated above ground facilities required for the Project is provided in Table 14 - Proposed Above Ground Facilities of the CA application (REF# 525391). All of the above ground facilities can be seen in Appendix A, Attachment 17 of the CA application (REF# 525416).

2.4.3. Project Design Alternatives

There are two proposed potential routes for the Project, Route A and Route B. Each route is divided into segments. "A" segments are segments specific to Route A. "B" segments are specific to Route B. "AB" segments are segments that were common between the two routes. "C" segments are segments that connect the Route A and Route B at various locations that would allow for combinations of Route A and Route B segments. All proposed segments feature 12" inch-diameter steel pipes (We Energies, 2024).

Route A contains the following segments: A-1, A-2, AB-1, A-3, AB-2, A-4, A-5, A-6, A-7. Route A is 12.16 miles in length.

Route B contains the following segments: B-1, B-2, AB-1, B-3, AB-2, B-4, B-5, B-6, B-7. This route is 11.09 miles in length.

Route C contains the following segments: C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4. These segments combined are 1.63 miles in length.

Wisconsin Gas LLC provides an overview of Routes A and B in Appendix A Attachment 2 of their CA application (REF# 525400) and provides a map of the route segments in Appendix A Attachment 3 of their CA application (REF# 525401). Section 2.7.2 of the CA application (page 19) describes routes that were considered by Wisconsin Gas LLC and why they were or were not chosen (REF# 525391).

Wisconsin Gas LLC evaluated each route segment based on four primary factors for comparisons: location, cost, as well as environmental and construction impacts. Based on the evaluation, each segment was categorized and scored using a weighted number one through five, with five being most favorable. Each route received a score for the four factors based on the segments and sorted by the highest total score. A total of 128 different feasible potential routes were considered using all combination of the available route segments beginning at the STH 83 and Arthur Rd and ending at Hartford East Gate Station (We Energies, 2024). Wisconsin Gas LLC's Preferred Route scored 1st overall, Route A

scored 7th highest, Route B was the 111th highest scoring route. Route Selection and Ranking can be found in Appendix A, Attachment 7 of the CA application (REF# 525405).

2.5. Project Right-of-Way (ROW)

According to the CA, approximately 57,809 feet of proposed easement will be utilized for Route A, 31,665 feet for Route B, and 51,452 feet for the Preferred Route. The typical proposed permanent easement width is 50 feet; however, the final proposed easement widths along the proposed routes will be finalized during the easement negotiation process.

Wisconsin Gas LLC states that approximately 10% of the main will be located within public road ROW for Route A, approximately 46% for Route B, and approximately 19% for the Preferred Route (We Energies, 2024). Construction will take place in the easements and, where applicable, the road ROW will be used for main installation where terrain or other obstacles outside of the road ROW limit the construction work space. Wisconsin Gas LLC stated that temporary construction easements of 50 feet in width will be obtained if ROW cannot be used (We Energies, 2024). In areas where the Project is adjacent to overhead electric power corridor, approximately 35 feet of easement would overlap the existing utility easement. A preliminary plan set showing the proposed easements can be found in Appendix A Attachment 17 of the CA (REF# 525416).

2.6. Project Schedule

According to the AIN construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in spring 2026 on existing facilities. Construction of the transmission main is tentatively scheduled to start in late 2026 with an estimated completion by fall 2027 (Table 2). Wisconsin Gas LLC has identified any seasonal or regulatory construction constraints at this time.

Table 2: Anticipated Project Schedule

Project Activity	Anticipated Date
PSC decision	December 2025
Start for Land Acquisitions	January 2026
Construction Start	Spring 2026
In-service Date	Fall 2027

2.7. Off-ROW Access Roads

Wisconsin Gas LLC has indicated that five off-ROW access roads on agricultural land will be required as part of the Project. A summary of access road names and locations

required for the Project is provided in Table 17 - Access Roads on page 42 and 43 of the CA application (REF# 525391). These access roads appear on the following route segments: A-1, A-6 (two access roads are on this segment), A-7 and B-3.

Wisconsin Gas LLC stated that the reason for the proposed off - ROW access roads is to access both sides of a proposed or potential HDD location with necessary equipment or to minimize the impacts to a wetland by having the equipment traverse a non - wetland or smaller wetland area (We Energies, 2024).

2.8. Staging Areas

Wisconsin Gas LLC has selected 8 potential staging areas for the project, and it is anticipated that up to two of these staging areas would be selected and approximately two to eighteen acres would be utilized at each location. The proposed location of the potential staging areas is shown on Appendix A Attachment 12 (REF# 525409).

Of the potential 8 staging areas, one was identified as vacant/agricultural land. The associated Parcel Tax Key T6_0058 with a footprint of 1.33 acres.

Wisconsin Gas LLC notes that construction contractor hired for the project may, for convenience or safety reasons, arrange alternate staging areas with private landowners (We Energies, 2024). If additional staging areas are proposed at a later date, Wisconsin Gas LLC will complete an assessment of the site for potential environmental and cultural impacts. If the review indicates no adverse impact, a courtesy copy of the review with a description of the proposed construction activity will be provided to the PSC and WisDNR.

3. AGRICULTURAL SETTING

3.1. Farmland Preservation

Wisconsin's farmland preservation (FP) program provides local governments and landowners with tools to aid in protecting agricultural land for continued agricultural use and to promote activities that support the larger agricultural economy. Lands that are planned for FP by the county and included in a certified zoning district or located within an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) are afforded land use protections intended to support agriculture and are eligible for the farmland preservation tax credit.

Through this program, counties adopt a state-certified FP plan that maps areas identified as important for FP and agricultural development based upon reasonable and objective criteria. Based on the plan, local governments may choose to adopt a FP zoning ordinance or designate AEAs to achieve further land protections and ensure that farmland covered by the plan is eligible for FP tax credits. Such ordinances must be certified and AEAs must be designated by the Department. Landowners who are eligible in either or both AEA and FP zoning areas and claim the tax credit are required to follow the state soil and water conservation standards to protect water quality and soil health.

3.1.1. Farmland Preservation Planning

Washington County's current FP plan was certified by the Department in 2013 and was granted an extension to its expiration, which is now set for 2025 (DATCP, 2013). The criteria for land planned for FP in Washington County includes contiguous farms that comprise at least 100-acre blocks and are located outside of sewer service areas, parcels within agricultural zoning districts and farms with at least 30% of land in agricultural use. The Project's route A would affect a total of 22.92 acres of land planned FP in the Town of Hartford. And the Project's route B would affect a total of 13.54 acres of land planned for FP in the Town of Hartford (DATCP, 2013).

Dodge County's current FP plan was certified by the Department in 2021 (DATCP, 2021). The criteria for land planned for FP in Dodge County includes areas identified as agriculture or conservancy on the future land use map and excludes rural nonagricultural uses, and public recreational land. The Project's Route A would affect a total of 0.11 acres of land planned FP in the Town of Rubicon (DATCP, 2021). This acreage is a result of a regulator station currently at Grant Rd and STH 67 being moved onto new land and rebuilt to accommodate an uprate required for installation of the Project.

3.1.2. Farmland Preservation Zoning

There are no certified FP zoning jurisdictions within the Project's proposed area.

The project initiator should consult with all applicable local zoning authorities to identify if additional restrictions apply and to ensure compliance with local zoning regulations.

3.1.3. Agricultural Enterprise Areas

AEAs are community-led efforts to establish designated areas important to Wisconsin's agricultural future. This designation highlights the importance of the area for local agriculture and further supports local farmland preservation and agricultural development goals. Designation as an AEA also enables eligible landowners to enter into FP agreements. Through an FP agreement, a landowner agrees to voluntarily restrict the use of his/her land

to agriculture for fifteen years in exchange for eligibility for the FP tax credit. A review of the Department's AEA program shows that the Project's proposed routes do not encroach upon any AEAs (DATCP, 2022b).

Prior to 2009, owners of eligible farmland could sign 10 to 25-year FP agreements outside of AEA boundaries. There are no effective pre-2009 FP agreements located in within the Project's proposed routes.

3.2. Drainage Districts

Drainage districts are local governmental entities governed under Wis. Stat. Ch. 88 and organized under a county drainage board and for the primary purpose of draining lands for agricultural use (DATCP, 2019b). Landowners who benefit from drainage pay assessments to cover the cost to construct, maintain, and repairing the district's drains. According to the Department, approximately 190 active districts exist within 27 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

A review of the Department's Drainage Program database indicates that the Project's proposed Route A, Segment A-1 crosses one active drainage district in Washington County: the Hartford-Addison District #6705. The drainage district and where it crosses the project area can be seen in Appendix F, Attachment 22 of Wisconsin Gas LLC's CA Application (REF# 525460).

Under ATCP 48.40 landowners are required to notify a county drainage board of any action, including a change in land use that will alter flow of water into or from a district drain, increase soil erosion or movement of suspended soils to a district drain, or affect the operation of the drainage district or costs incurred by the district. Project initiators should give this notice at the project planning stage and shall invite DATCP and the applicable county drainage board to identify potential concerns. Wisconsin Gas LLC's CA application did not indicate whether the Washington County Drainage Board drainage board has already been notified of the Project, but Wisconsin Gas LLC did state that the County Drainage Board would be notified before undertaking any action. To that end, the Department reiterates that the Project initiators should inform the Washington County Drainage Board of the proposed project and work with the Board to mitigate potential impacts to existing drainage infrastructure.

3.3. Conservation Programs

Voluntary conservation programs such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are financial incentive

programs to help agricultural landowners meet their conservation goals. The USDA and the Department jointly administer the CREP program in Wisconsin.

3.3.1. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The CREP program pays eligible agricultural landowners enrolled within the program to install filter strips along waterways or to return continually flooded fields to wetlands while leaving the remainder of the adjacent land in agricultural production. To be eligible for CREP payments, a recipient must have agricultural lands in crop production that are within 150 ft of a stream or water body or 1,000 ft from a grassland project area (DATCP, 2019a).

A review of the Department's CREP records indicate that the Project's proposed routes will not encroach upon any CREP agreements or easements.

3.3.2. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The CRP program is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency of the USDA. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, eligible agricultural landowners enrolled in the program agree to remove highly erodible land from agricultural production and plant resource-conserving plant species such as grasses or trees that will improve environmental health and quality (USDA, 2022). Eligible agricultural landowners must possess lands with the potential for long-term improvements to water quality, prevent soil erosion or establish beneficial wildlife habitats according to the USDA Environmental Benefits Index (USDA, 2022). CRP enrollment information is privileged to the USDA and CRP program participants. The Department is therefore unable to determine if any of the impacted agricultural parcels are enrolled within the CRP program, unless landowners voluntarily share this information with the Department.

Of the twenty-six responses to the Department's pre-construction questionnaire, two of the landowners impacted by the project included that part of their land is enrolled within CRP. It is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain their CREP or CRP agreements, and they can work with the project initiator to maintain this compliance. The Department recommends that the landowners or farm operators with a CREP or CRP agreement consult with their local FSA contact and discuss the impacts of the proposed project to determine what information is necessary to share with the project initiator in order to maintain compliance with CREP or CRP agreements.

The Department advises the Project Initiators to:

- Work with landowners to identify effective CRP agreements prior to any construction or site disturbance activities.

- Coordinate with the appropriate Wisconsin CRP contact regarding effective CRP contracts within the project area and coordinate with FSA regarding impact mitigation to CRP enrolled lands and/or potential contract (CRP-1) releases within 12 months of expected construction or site disturbance activities.

3.3.3. Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The MFL program is a voluntary sustainable forestry program administered by the Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) under subch. III of ch. NR 46. In exchange for reduced property taxes eligible landowners commit to a 25-50 year sustainable forest management plan on their privately owned woodlands. Sustainable forestry practices such as harvesting mature timber according to sound forest management practices and reforestation and afforestation of land to meet the size and density requirements are required in enrolled landowner's management plans. Land with buildings or improvements associated with buildings are not eligible for MFL. Exceptions such as utility right of ways are permitted such that the project and its ROW will not interfere with future or current MFL eligibility (WisDNR, 2017). A review of the statewide parcel data indicates that the Project's route A would impact 0.21 acres on one parcel enrolled in the MFL program. The Project's route B would impact 1.97 total acres on two parcels enrolled in the MFL program.

The Department recommends that all landowners review potential implications of the Project's proposed area to their MFL enrolled lands. Impacted landowners should visit the WisDNR Forestry Assistance Locator website www.dnr.wi.gov/fal/ to find their local DNR Tax Law Forestry Specialist and discuss the implication of the route to their MFL enrolled lands.

3.3.4. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs

The 2009 - 2011 State of Wisconsin budget authorized the state Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program under Wis. Stats. § 93.73, which is intended to provide matching funds to assist local governments and non-profits with the purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements. The intent of the PACE program is to preserve agricultural land of significance at risk of development and to provide an additional layer of permanent protection to certified FP planned areas and designated AEAs. Post-PACE acquisition, the partnering local entity and the Department co-hold the agricultural conservation easement voluntarily purchased from landowners. At the time of this analysis, the state's PACE Program is not currently funded or accepting new applications. However, the state holds 17 PACE easements. A review of the Department's PACE Program shows the Project would not impact any state-held PACE easements.

Counties and private non-governmental organization such as land trusts may also hold agricultural conservation easements. Based on a review of publicly available online

resources, the Department found no publicly held easements that would be impacted by the Project (NCED, 2025). Some of the respondents of the pre-construction questionnaire prepared by the Department (section 4.3, "Agricultural Landowner Concerns") shared that their land is enrolled in a land conservation program. Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation has sections of the ice age trail and most of their land is under conservation practices with planned water and sediment control structures to be installed. Eugene Gehring indicated that all of their land is under a conservation stewardship program. The Department suggests that the project initiator work with landowners to learn what potential agricultural or conservation programs may be within the project area and what potential restrictions there may be on land transformation activities.

3.3.5. Soil and Water Resource Management Grant Program (SWRM)

The state has a SWRM program with goals including: enhancing surface and groundwater protections, providing financial and technical assistance for locally led conservation and addressing soil and water resource concerns. Through the SWRM Program, the Department allocates funds to County Conservation Departments to facilitate landowner cost-share for installation of conservation practices. When a cost-share contract is issued under Wis. Stat. §92.14, a landowner and or grant recipient agrees to install and maintain the conservation practice according to an operation and maintenance plan.

Landowners who are aware of any SWRM cost-shared practices on their farm within the proposed Project area should consult with the County Land Conservation Department to determine 1) the compatibility of the proposed ROW easement with the existing conservation practice and 2) if any effects will occur due to alteration of a practice during construction activities.

Wisconsin Gas LLC is advised to consult the applicable County Land Conservation Department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area. Practices that are not maintained in accordance with the terms of the contract operation and maintenance plan may be subject to repayment of cost-shared funds. If a landowner is required to repay any cost-share funds because a construction impact resulted in a violation of the SWRM contract, the landowners should contact the Wisconsin Gas LLC staff member, as designated by Wisconsin Gas LLC, responsible for handling compensation for release of lands from conservation programs. The landowner should be compensated for any termination of SWRM grant contract resulting from a construction impact.

4. AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS

In addition to being a key component of Wis. Stat. §32.035, documenting the agricultural impacts of a project provides the project initiator and the agricultural landowner the opportunity to better understand the project in its own right as well as learn how the project will impact agriculture. Furthermore, the documentation of agricultural impacts by agricultural landowners and operators creates the opportunity for them to consider alternatives that may reduce impacts to agricultural lands. To promote the opportunity for alternatives, the Department has used information provided by Wisconsin Gas LLC for this AIS and information gathered from agricultural landowners to analyze the potential agricultural impacts of the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project ("Project") in Washington and Dodge Counties, WI. The analysis of the agricultural impacts and conclusions drawn from it form the basis of the Department's recommendations within the AIS Recommendation Section above.

4.1. Landowner Rights

Before constructing the Project, Wisconsin Gas LLC will be acquiring easement contracts for permanent ROW and temporary construction areas. These easement contracts grant the utility the right to construct, operate, maintain, inspect, and repair the pipeline. According to Wisconsin Statute § 196.745, the utility is required to maintain the natural gas pipeline in an adequate and safe manner. All vegetation will be removed from the easement for construction of the pipeline. In addition, maintenance of the in-service pipeline will require continuing management of vegetation that grows within the easement. The type of vegetation that is allowed to grow within the easement and how vegetation is maintained are all subject to the easement contract. Regarding liability, the landowner is not liable for the construction, operation, maintenance, or repair of the pipeline, provided the landowner has not damaged any project facilities. Additional information about the appraisal and compensation process is included in Appendix D: Appraisal and Compensation Process.

After the easement is acquired by the utility, the easement seller still owns the land. Furthermore, no member of the public, other than utility employees or representatives, have access to the easement without the landowner's permission. Under normal conditions, utilities typically make every effort to notify landowners before they anticipate accessing the easement. In emergency response situations, the utility has the right to access the easement without permission from the landowner. The easement contract will contain all specifics regarding access, rights, responsibilities, and liabilities and should be thoroughly reviewed by the landowner prior to signing.

4.2. Agricultural Land Acquisitions & Easements

In order to implement the proposed Project, Wisconsin Gas LLC will affect approximately 171.84 and 199.71 acres of agricultural lands depending on the selected route, access roads and staging areas. Wisconsin Gas LLC plans to use a combination of temporary and permanent easements to obtain the necessary rights to construct the Project. The Department analyzed all impacted agricultural lands, regardless of the lands' current easement status, for the proposed Project.

The Department attempted to contact 52 agricultural landowners and agricultural tenant operators impacted by the Project routes who had agricultural impacts (Appendix A, Table 1). The following section relays the feedback and comments received from stakeholders and agricultural landowners through the Department's efforts. The information obtained helped form the basis of the Department's analysis of agricultural impacts to specific agricultural landowners and agricultural landowners in general. Wisconsin Gas LLC also engaged in a public outreach campaign, including in-person and provided a phone number for those that could not make the in-person meeting in the affected area to gather public and stakeholder input, however this information was not included within the AIN.

Agricultural tenant operators impacted by the Project may be eligible for a farm replacement payment from Wisconsin Gas LLC in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.19(4m)(b) if Wisconsin Gas LLC exercises the powers of eminent domain through a jurisdictional offer to the agricultural property owner. A voluntary sale between Wisconsin Gas LLC and an agricultural property owner, after a jurisdictional offer has been made, would not negate the potential for a farm replacement payment.

4.3. Agricultural Landowner Concerns

To gather additional information about the project's impact to agricultural lands and farm operations, the Department attempted to contact all 52 agricultural landowners impacted by the Project (Appendix A, Table 1). Agricultural landowners were given the opportunity to respond by mail or call the AIS program manager to give a verbal response. A total of 26 agricultural landowners responded, resulting in a response rate of 50.0%. A complete record of responses received for the Project can be found in Appendix G: Landowner Comments.

The majority of the respondents (25 of the total 26 respondents, or 96%) reported their agricultural operations consisted of cropland. Of the total respondents, 19% or 5 landowners cited that the impacted parcels also had homes and farm buildings on them, 8% or 2 landowners cited that they were managed woodlands, and 8% or 2 landowners cited

that their impacted parcels had pasture land. Eight respondents (31%) also indicated their agricultural operations possessed livestock and farm animals, including dairy cattle, beef cattle, poultry and horses.

When asked to select any of the concerns about the project, the primary concern identified by respondents was Crop Yield (Figure 2). Respondents were most concerned about soil productivity and health, access and impacts related to drainage or drain tile, with additional concerns shown on Figure 2.

Agricultural landowners were also asked to indicate if they participated in any conservation or agricultural programming including FP agreements, FP zoning, CREP, CRP and MFL. Two respondents indicated that they have land enrolled in the CRP program. Two respondents indicated they have land enrolled in the MFL program. One respondent indicated they have land enrolled in a Conservation Stewardship Program. Respondents did not report participation in CREP, FP or any additional programs.

The Department also requested agricultural landowners report the current land use within the proposed Project ROW as shown in Figure 3. The most common (61% of respondents) land use reported within the Project ROW was cropland. Crop Production is defined as an "Agricultural use" under Wis. Stat. § 91.01(2) if it's conducted for the purpose of producing an income or livelihood. The next most common choice (with 12%) was Homes and Farm Buildings, with the remaining responses shown in Figure 3.

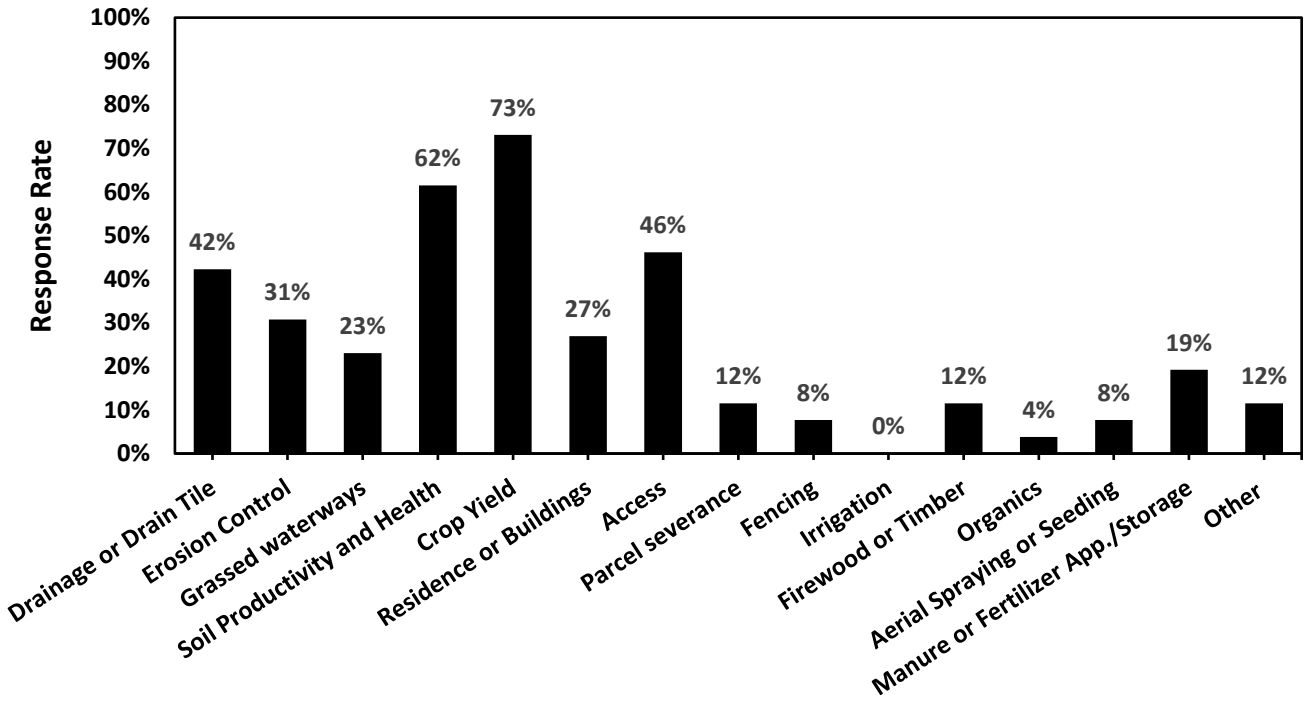

Figure 2: Landowner concerns resulting from the proposed Project.

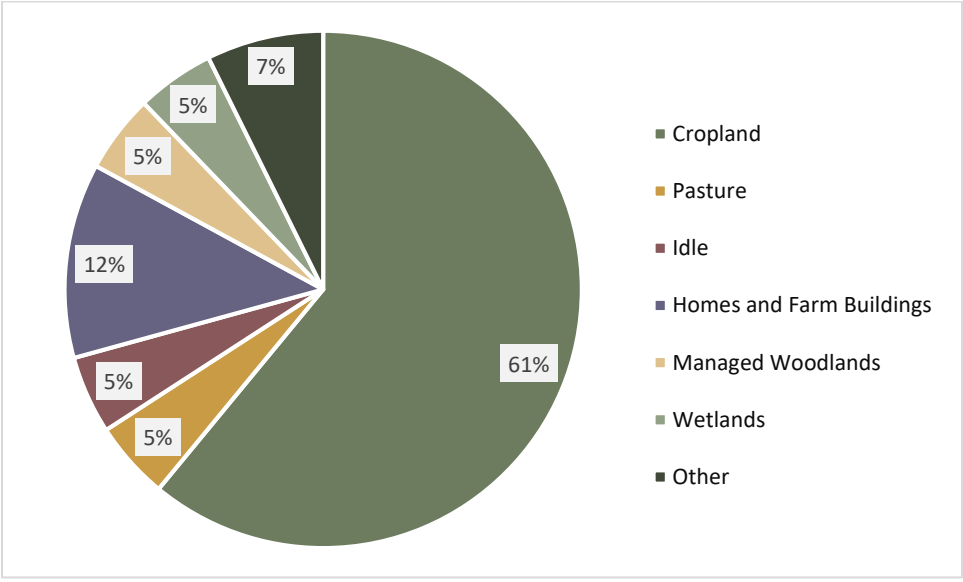

Figure 3: Land use of impacted agricultural parcels as reported by pre-construction questionnaire respondents.

4.3.1. Landowner Concern Conclusions

After review and analysis of the agricultural landowner responses obtained from the Department's pre-construction questionnaire surveys, the Department has identified the following priority areas of agricultural landowner concerns: crop yield, soil productivity and health, drainage and drain tile and access (Figure 3).

Seventy-three percent of respondents were concerned about crop yield issues associated with the Project, and the second most common concern for landowner was the related topics of productivity and health (62%). Soil productivity and health are important for crop yield and erosion protection with well-established soils. Pipeline projects can exacerbate soil erosion on agricultural land by disturbing soil, removing vegetation, and increasing runoff. These disturbances often lead to greater soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, and potential sedimentation in waterways. Additionally, farmland drainage systems are an important tool for managing water levels especially on hydric soils and for increasing crop yield. Please refer to Section 5.6.3 "Soil Compaction" and Section 5.6.5 "Erosion and Conservation Practices" for additional information about erosion and related mitigation practices.

Access was the third most common concern amongst agricultural landowner responses (46%). Access includes concerns such as the ability to maintain and harvest crops and plant crops, move livestock and equipment around as needed and ability to access fields during construction and after pipeline structures are in place. Please review related BMPs the Department suggests such as Section 5.6.6 "Fencing" and 5.6.10.1 "Restoration", and for any specific concerns related to access on an individual parcel, the Department recommends to share these concerns with Wisconsin Gas LLC and to include these concerns as part of easement negotiations.

A large group of respondents indicated concerns related to drainage or drainage tiles (42%), and grassed waterways (23%). To mitigate impacts to drainage systems, agricultural landowners should provide Wisconsin Gas LLC with locations of drainage structures and waterways; in-turn, Wisconsin Gas LLC should provide additional considerations to preserve these structures, which are linked to the productivity of the impacted agricultural land. Please refer to Section 5.5 "Drain Tile Repair & Drainage" for additional information about drainage damage mitigation practices.

Please refer to Section 4.6 for a comparative analysis of route impacts to agricultural soils. The Department reviews Wisconsin Gas LLC'S Agricultural Mitigation Plan (Appendix B) and recommends additional mitigation efforts to reduce as much potential impact as possible, beyond what Wisconsin Gas LLC cites for their standard practices. Please refer to Section 5.6 *Recommended BMPs* for additional agricultural mitigation practices.

Additionally, multiple landowners identified concerns relating to issues with land restoration after past utility projects on their land and ongoing crop yield losses since. Bob Peil cited that his family land has been utilized for public utilities in the past and previously experienced issues with land restoration and crop yield. Richard Kratz of Kratz Properties LLC cited issues with utility installation and the impact that it had on his no-till operation, every time utilities went through his property it would take years to develop the land back to similar production. Kratz reported communication issues where he was told to harvest a corn crop before it was ready, causing Kratz to harvest the corn as silage instead of commodity corn which caused a loss in profit even though the utility company then did not work on the land for 90 days (see Appendix G: Landowner Comments). If there is adequate growing season for a crop to mature and be harvested after Wisconsin Gas LLC has an interest in the impacted lands, but before construction along the Project corridor begins, the Department recommends that Wisconsin Gas LLC allow the current agricultural operators to harvest a crop for that season to the extent possible or compensate the agricultural operators for crop damages.

Landowners gave feedback for various route segments. One agricultural landowner supported segment B-6 over A-6 along Pleasant Valley Road to avoid additional disruption of farmland and keep the pipeline along road ROW (see Bob Peil in Appendix G: Landowners Comments). A landowner showed support for section B-2 instead of segment A-2 to avoid disruption to wetlands, habitat and no-till operation on their parcel of agricultural land (see Lane and Shirley VonAsten in Appendix G: Landowner Comments). There was support for section B-1 to avoid affecting DNR wetland area along route A-1 (see Eugene Gehring in Appendix G: Landowner Comments). There were several alternative routes that were suggested with County Rd C/Cedar Creek Rd being the closest to the proposed routes and likely most viable option (see Bob Peil in Appendix G: Landowner Comments). The Department reviewed agricultural landowner feedback and the potential impacts of the preferred route and supports route segments B-2, B-5, B-6, B-7 in place of segments C-1, A-2, C-2, A-5, A-6, A-7 as these routes follow the edges of fields and along road ROW and are not likely to sever agricultural fields and farm operations. Further discussion on the Department's preferred route segment can be found in Section 4.4.1 "Severance".

4.4. Severance, Access and Wasteland

The acquisitions of agricultural property can result in agricultural parcel *severance*, removal of existing field access points and potentially the creation of *wastelands* and *uneconomic remnant* parcels. The circumstances (i.e. loss of access, *severance*, *wasteland* etc.) surrounding the impacts to each impacted remnant agricultural parcel are unique, thus some agricultural parcels may remain economically viable, while others may not. The

following analysis will document the potential for *severance*, loss of access and potential creation of *wastelands* and *uneconomic remnant* parcels for agricultural lands impacted by the Project.

4.4.1. Severance

Severing an agricultural parcel to accommodate a project effectively splits the existing parcel into two or more smaller parcels. Severing an agricultural parcel may also remove existing access points, create agricultural *wastelands* or *uneconomic remnant* parcels, divide the operation of a farm or potential result in farmland conversion. Under Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Statute, compensation for damages resulting from severance is described in Wis. Stat. § 32.09(6).

The proposed project does not contain any pipeline segments that would share part or all of an existing pipeline ROW (We Energies, 2024). A portion of the project will be constructed within road ROW. In the AIN submitted to the department the project initiator did not identify any agricultural parcels projected to be severed by the proposed project.

A visual inspection of 2024 parcel data suggests that agricultural parcels within the proposed ROW may be severed, but not necessarily divided into two equal parts, by the construction of the proposed project depending on the selected route (Table 3).

Aligning the route with field boundaries can reduce the potential to sever an agricultural parcel. Post-restoration, many pre-existing agricultural land uses should be able to return, which further reduces the potential for permanent severance. The impacts of parcel severance may include crop damage, field access issues or loss amongst others. During the pre-construction phase, landowners concerned about the impacts of parcel severance should communicate the location of property improvements such as structures, field access points drain tile or installed conservation practices; existing certifications (organic, etc.); management of livestock including the location of existing fencing within the project ROW; plans to spread manure or other organic material on lands within the proposed project ROW with the project initiator. This information will assure that construction may proceed in accordance with applicable mitigation practices identified in the project Agricultural Mitigation Plan to minimize the effects of parcel severance and impacts to agriculture (Appendix B: We Energies Hartford-Jackson Interconnect AMP) which includes practices for: restoration of fencing, repair of severed drain tile, repair of existing erosion control facilities etc.

Post-construction, the Project Initiator will impose certain land use restrictions within the ROW that will prevent the construction of agricultural related buildings and the growth of some agricultural commodities such as trees or other woody plants. While agricultural

landowners can still access these lands, they may be prohibited from continuing a pre-existing land use within the ROW such as, MFL, maple syrup production, Christmas tree production, etc. In these situations, land use restrictions create a non-physical barrier to agricultural production. Essentially, land use restrictions have the potential to sever a proportion of an agricultural parcel that may no longer contribute to an agricultural operation. See Section 4.3 Agricultural Landowner Concerns and Appendix G: Landowner Comments for details of specific landowner concerns.

Table 3: Agricultural parcels, which may be severed by the proposed pipeline by Route, Segment, and landowner of record (2024 Parcel Data).

Route	Segment	Parcel	Primary Owner
A	A-1	T6_007600Z	STONE HOUSE DAIRY FAMILY PROPERTIES LLC
	A-2	T6_0051	EUGENE GEHRING
		T6_005400A	LANE VONASTEN
		T6_005400D	KENNETH BAUS
		T6_0057	TERRY BREUER
		T6_0058	TERRY BREUER
		T6_0077	KRATZ PROPERTIES LLC
	A-4	T9_0103	CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC
		T9_0104	CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC
	A-5	T9_005900A	JAY FEHRING
		T9_0064	CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC
		T9_0065	CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC
		T9_008000L	CEDAR LAKES CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC
		T9_0081	RONALD REWERTS REVOCABLE TRUST
		T9_008700Y	MARY BECKER ASSET TRUST
		T9_0088	MARY BECKER ASSET TRUST
		T9_008900A	STEPHEN SCHLEICHER FAMILY TRUST
		T9_008900B	GARY FENSKE
	A-6	T9_0037	ROBERT PEIL
		T9_003800Z	ROBERT PEIL
		T9_004100Z	LINDA STAUSS REV LIV TR
		T9_0042	JUDY SCHAEFER
	A-7	T7_0126	BAST FAMILY LTD PARTNERSHIP
B	B-3	T9_0101	DARLEEN BAERENWALD
		T9_0102	DARLEEN BAERENWALD
		T9_033000Z	BRIAN GUNDRUM

To reduce minimize the impacts to agricultural land, particularly the potential to sever agricultural parcels and impacting access to aspects of fields during Project construction and potentially long-lasting impacts such as yield loss, impaired drainage structures and more, the Department suggests PSC consider route segments that follow the edge of fields and road ROWs to the degree possible.

Wisconsin Gas LLC proposes the following route segments as their preferred route: B-1, C-1, A-2, AB-1, A-3, B-4, C-2, A-5, A-6, A-7. However, segments A-2, A-5, A-6, and A-7 have the potential to sever 14 unique agricultural operations during construction (see Table 3) while segments B-2, B-5, B-6, B-7 follow closer to the edges of fields and along roadways, and have less potential to sever agricultural fields. Choosing these counterparts to the routes also eliminates the need to use segments C-1 and C-2 to connect to the A segments, which removes the environmental, agricultural, location and construction impacts associated with these segments as well as provide Project cost savings of $1,128,000 for the Project. See Table 4 for a comparative analysis of these segments based on information provided in Wisconsin Gas LLC's Weighted Route Criteria Summary Table from their CA application, Appendix A, Attachment 10 (REF# 525399). For the weighted criteria, a score of 5 is considered the best, with 0 being the worst.

Table 4: Comparison of Select Routes based on Wisconsin Gas LLC Route Criteria Summary

Segment	Footage	Construction Cost	Environmental Impact	Location Impact	Construction Impact
A-2	13,344	$3,204,000	4.4	3.51	3
B-2	13,274	$4,852,000	4.16	4	2.5
A-5	11,211	$2,743,000	3.64	3.53	2.5
B-5	11,371	$4,991,000	3.74	3.44	2.5
A-6	10,623	$3,568,000	4.28	3.46	3
B-6	10,712	$2,848,000	4.32	2.33	2.5
A-7	10,800	$3,626,000	3.64	3.66	3
B-7	10,712	$2,848,000	4.32	2.33	2.5
C-1	798	$227,000	5	3.06	3
C-2	2,617	$635,000	5	2.8	2.5

Segment B-2 has a slightly lower environmental impact and construction impact rating, with a higher/more favorable location rating and costs $1,648,000 more compared to segment A-2.

Segment B-5 has a slightly higher/more favorable environmental rating, though costs $2,248,000 more and has a slightly lower location rating and the same construction impact as compared to segment A-5.

Segment B-6 has a slightly higher environmental rating and costs $720,000 less than segment A-6, though it does have a slightly lower/less favorable location rating and construction impact compared to A-6.

Segment B-7 has a higher/more favorable environmental rating and costs $778,000 less, though has a lower/less favorable location rating and construction impact rating compared to A-6.

Considering all of the suggested Route B segments (B-2, B-5, B-6, B-7) compared to their Route A counterparts (A-2, A-5, A-6, and A-7), Route B on average has a slightly higher/more favorable environmental rating (4.14 compared to 3.99), a lower/less favorable location rating (3.03 compared to 3.54) and a lower/less favorable construction impact rating (2.5 compared to 2.88). In terms of cost, the route proposed the Department would cost $1,536,000 more than the route proposed by Wisconsin Gas LLC. In the scope of the AIS and agricultural impacts for the project, the Department recommends B-2, B-5, B-6, B-7 in place of segments C-1, A-2, C-2, A-5, A-6, A-7 as these routes follow the edges of fields and along roads and are not likely to sever agricultural fields and farm operations. Route B in general impacts close to 30 acres less of agricultural land compared to Route A (see Table 5, Section 4.6, "Prime Farmland and Soils). Additionally, agricultural landowners provided feedback on the proposed routes in the pre-construction questionnaire the Department mailed out (See Section 4.3.1 "Landowner Concern Conclusions" for more information). One landowner supported B-2 over A-2 to avoid disruption to wetlands, habitat and their no-till operation on their parcel of land. Another agricultural landowner supported B-6 over A-6 to site the pipeline along road ROW and limit disruption to agricultural land to the degree possible.

4.4.2. Access

Acquisitions of farmland may remove existing points of access utilized by *agricultural operations* to enter their remaining farmland. Access to farmland may also be temporarily lost within the project ROW while the project is under construction. When agricultural lands and operations lose access, even temporarily, agricultural productivity may be impacted if crops, livestock or other agricultural products cannot be tended. Lost access may also directly result in lost income if a field cannot be planted or harvested, or if an entire *agricultural operation* is hindered.

Depending on the location of the selected Project ROW, construction may temporarily affect field access points along the selected route. To mitigate access impacts, it is recommended that the project initiator coordinate with affected landowners during the preconstruction phase to provide alternative access methods and locations during construction to the extent practicable. The Department recommends that the project initiator inform landowners of projected construction timelines well in advance of when and where construction will occur and for how long they could potentially lose access to all or a portion of the impacted farm fields. Landowners should disclose construction information to tenant operators where applicable.

4.4.3. Wasteland

Acquisitions and *easements* that sever farmland frequently create small remnant fields that may be difficult to access or are irregularly shaped. Small remnant fields that are irregularly shaped can make it difficult for agricultural equipment to navigate and reduce the amount of tillable acres. This in turn reduces agricultural productivity and decreases the economic viability of the land, which increases the potential of creating undeveloped land (Wis. Stat. § 70.32(2)(a)(5)) or what is commonly referred to as *wasteland*. Compensation for the reduction in the value of parcels that are small and/or irregularly shaped and the potential creation of *uneconomic remnant* parcels according to Wis. Stat. 32.05(3m) should be addressed in the appraisal of each affected parcel.

Above ground or surface-level structures in crop fields, such as valve assemblies, have the potential to alter travel patterns for agricultural equipment operators to maneuver around and may also create fragments of *wasteland* as shown in Figure 4A and B. In the Certificate of Authority application (PSC REF:525391) the project initiator identified multiple above ground facilities in agricultural zoning districts.

The Department's analysis found that the Project is unlikely to create significant agricultural *wasteland*. This determination is based on two main findings: 1) the Project proposes limited surface structures on agricultural lands and 2) the impacted agricultural lands can largely be returned to the pre-existing agricultural use. Collectively, these aspects limit the Project's potential to change the shape of a field or to create agricultural wastelands.

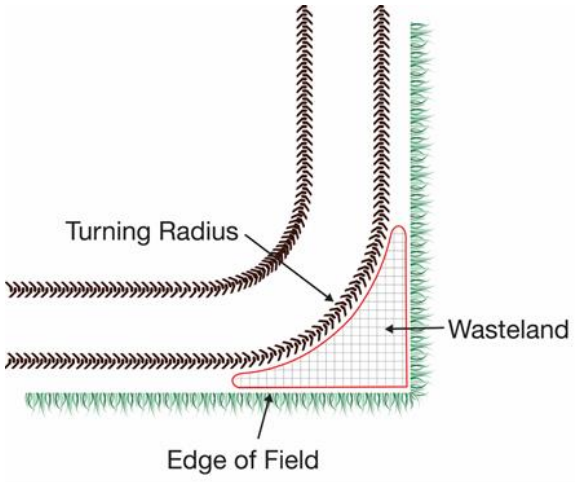

Figure A: Regular Shape

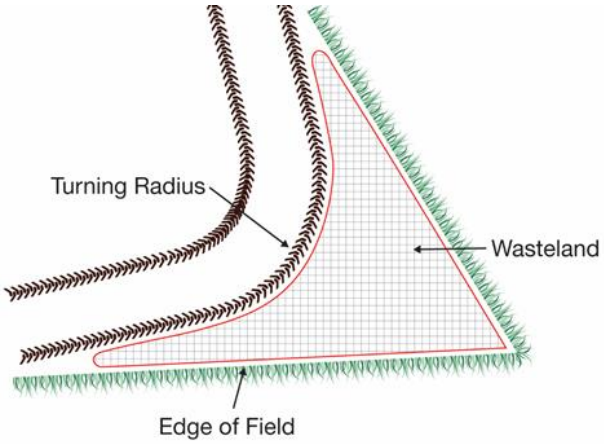

Figure B: Irregular Shape

Figure 4A and B: Examples of agricultural wastelands created from regular shaped fields with square corners (Figure A) and irregular shaped fields with sharp or acute angles (Figure B) that may result from parcel severance.

4.5. Agricultural Buildings and Infrastructure

Wisconsin Gas LLC stated to the Department within the AIN that the proposed Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project will not acquire or relocate structures as a part of the Project (DATCP, 2024a).

4.6. Prime Farmland and Soils

In the AIN provided by the project initiator, the project is proposed to impact between 171.84 and 199.71 acres of agricultural lands and soils. Based on the data provided by Wisconsin Gas LLC, the Department reviewed the soils impacted by the proposed Project and cataloged and analyzed them by farmland classification, for each individual route, using the NRCS *prime farmland* soils GIS layer. Farmland soil classifications impacted by the Project include *prime farmland* and *prime farmland* if drained (Table 5). *Prime farmland* is designated by the USDA according to section 622.3 of the National Soil Survey Handbook (USDA, 2017) and is based on the ability of the land and soil to produce crops. Definitions of *prime farmland*, *prime farmland* if drained and farmlands of statewide/local importance are provided under Table 4. The soil texture of agricultural soils impacted by the Project was analyzed, in general terms, across the project ROW for the proposed routes (PSC REF: 525400), Route A, Route B, Route AB, Staging Areas and Route C (PSC REF: 525409), as identified in Appendix A of the application for certificate of authority (PSC REF: 525391). Table 4 is not representative of all possible route configurations for the proposed project.

There are two proposed routes, Route A and Route B. Route AB is shared between the proposed routes. Route C connects Route A and Route B at various locations that would allow for combinations of Route A and Route B segments, if desired. Segments were not separated but were instead grouped by routes in this analysis. The soil analysis includes permanent, temporary, workspace and all project-related areas for that route.

If selected, Route A will impact approximately 128.3 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in Route A, 84.3% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 15.7% classed as not prime farmland. Within the boundary of the project ROW, 64.1% have been designated as *Prime farmland* or *Prime farmland if Drained.*

If selected, Route B will impact approximately 101.7 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in Route B, 83.4% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 16.6% classed as not prime farmland. Within the boundary of the project ROW, 60.7% have been designated as *Prime farmland* or *Prime farmland if Drained.*

Route AB is shared between both route A and B and will impact approximately 6.4 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in Route AB, 100% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 0.0% classed as not prime farmland. Within the boundary of the project ROW, 70.9% have been designated as *Prime farmland or Prime farmland if Drained*.

The staging areas are planned to be used for every possible route and will impact up to 47.3 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in the staging areas, 80.8% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 19.2% classed as not prime farmland. Within the boundary of the project ROW, 58.2% have been designated as *Prime farmland* or *Prime farmland if Drained.*

As proposed, Route C will impact up to 18.6 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in Route C, 91.4% hold some level of hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 8.6% classed as not prime farmland. Within the boundary of the project ROW, 66.8% have been designated as *Prime farmland* or *Prime farmland if Drained*.

The agricultural soils across the Project ROW in Route A, Route B, Route AB, Staging Areas and Route C when classified by texture, are primarily silt loam soils of various soil series. In general, silt loam soils are medium-textured soils (Cornell, 2017) with good soil structure, possess an ideal ability to hold onto water without becoming excessively wet and are usually best suited for crop production (UW-Extension, 2005). This soils analysis shows that Route A, Route B, Route AB, Staging Areas and Route C will impact or remove prime farmland and high-quality soils.

Table 5: Agricultural soils, by farmland classification, impacted by the proposed Project in Washington and Dodge Counties, WI.

Soil Texture	**Prime Farmland*** (acre)	**Prime Farmland if Drained◊** (acre)	**Farmland of Statewide Importance‡** (acre)	**Not Prime Farmland◊** (acre)	**Total** (acre)
Route A					
Complex	0.2	0.0	1.0	6.3	7.5
Loam	12.5	0.0	21.8	13.1	47.4
Mucky Peat	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.3	1.6
Sand Loam	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.7
Silt Loam	54.2	15.4	1.1	0.1	70.7
Water	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.04	0.04
Marsh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.4
				Route A Total	128.3
Route B					
Complex	1.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	9.0
Loam	11.2	0.0	21.3	8.1	40.6

Mucky Peat	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.1
Silt Loam	34.2	15.3	0.8	0.0	50.3
Marsh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
				Route B Total	101.7
Route AB					
Loam	1.8	0.0	1.9	0.0	3.6
Silt Loam	2.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	2.8
				Route AB Total	6.4
Staging Areas					
Complex	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.4	2.6
Loam	2.0	0.0	3.9	2.3	8.2
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.2
Silt Loam	20.3	4.0	5.6	4.8	34.8
Gravel Pit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5
				Staging Areas Total	47.3
Route C					
Loam	6.5	0.0	4.6	1.5	12.7
Silt Loam	3.5	2.4	0.0	0.0	5.9
Water	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.04	0.04
				Route C Total	18.6

*__Prime farmland__ is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and may be utilized for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other lands excluding urban built-up land or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.
◊__Prime farmland if drained__, indicates that if farmland is drained it would meet prime farmland criteria.

Ŧ__Farmlands of statewide importance__ are set by state agency(s). Generally, these farmlands are nearly prime farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields high as prime farmlands under proper conditions.

Φ__Not Prime farmland__, indicates farmland is neither prime farmland nor of designated importance.

4.7. Drainage and Soil Health

Maintaining proper field drainage and preserving soil health is vital to the success of an agricultural operation. However, pipeline construction activities have the potential to affect both surface and

subsurface (i.e. drain tile) drainage patterns and the overall soil health of agricultural fields. Potential drainage impacts from the construction of a pipeline include broken or damaged drainage tile lines, alterations to the topography of existing grassed waterways, or changes to known surface water flowlines. When these impacts happen and go unrepaired, drainage may become impaired, leading to the buildup of standing water on fields. Standing water on agricultural fields has a broad range of negative impacts including crop losses, concentrating mineral salts, flood damage to farm buildings, or causing disease in livestock.

Soil structure, texture, organic matter and microorganisms are all important factors that influence soil health (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). Project construction activities with the potential to impact soil health include excavation and the movement of heavy equipment through the Project ROW that may compact soil. UW-Extension report A3367 states that heavy equipment with axle loads that exceed 10 tons increase the risk of soil compaction into subsoil layers that cannot be removed by conventional tillage (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). This construction-caused soil compaction may also damage drain tiles leading to ponded water where none existed prior to construction. Construction activities may also disrupt and/or mix soil profiles within the Project ROW as well as the surrounding area. Research has also shown that construction related impacts (e.g. equipment axle weight, use of excavation, intermixing of soil layers etc.) have the potential to negatively impact crop yields from two years up to a decade within the ROW depending on construction methods, severity of the construction impacts, and mitigation practices (Culley and DOW 1988; Soon et al., 2000; Shi et al., 2014).

The Project has the potential to create a range of drainage and soil health impacts for the impacted agricultural operations. The nature of open trench construction methods inevitably brings risks of topsoil mixing, soil compaction and damage or breakage of drain tiles. For more information on pipeline construction methods and open trench excavation, refer to the Department's Natural Gas Pipeline Construction Process publication ARM-LWR-562, which is available at agimpact.wi.gov. Collectively, these risks raise the potential for yield losses for the impacted agricultural landowners in the Project ROW. The project initiator has prepared an agricultural mitigation plan (AMP) which includes practices to mitigate impacts to soil health. The Department has reviewed the Project AMP and found that it complies overall with agricultural mitigation and restoration activities the Department seeks, though the Department offers additional best management practices that go beyond what the AMP addresses. The Department's review and analysis of the AMP is contained in Section 5.1.

5. AGRICULTURAL IMPACT MITIGATION

Whether it be by design or geographic footprint, some projects have the potential for greater agricultural impacts. Common characteristics of projects with the potential for increased

agricultural impacts include project ROWs spreading across long linear tracks of land, impacts to numerous landowners or state/federal requirements to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Examples of these projects include natural gas pipelines, high-voltage electric transmission lines or the expansion/creation of a highway corridor. In response to these types of projects, the Department analyzes the potential for best management practices (BMP) and/or an agricultural mitigation plan (AMP) to reduce or eliminate project related agricultural impacts.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has voluntarily prepared an AMP for the Project, which the Department has reviewed as part of this analysis in Section 0. A copy of the AMP can also be found in Appendix B: Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project AMP. Wisconsin Gas LLC stated they believe the Project's AMP will help assure that impacted agricultural operations will be restored to pre-construction conditions. In addition, Wisconsin Gas LLC specified that many aspects of the AMP are targeted at mitigating potential adverse project impacts to agricultural productivity. The Department recognizes the value and benefits achieved when any project initiator proactively supports practices and efforts to restore impacted lands to pre-construction conditions and mitigate impacts to agricultural productivity.

5.1. Environmental Impact Monitor (IEM), Agricultural Inspector (AI) & Independent Agricultural Monitor (IAM)

When hired, an IEM works on behalf of the PSC, WisDNR, the Department or other state regulatory agency as opposed to the utility. IEMs monitor project construction activities and report on a wide range of environmental issues such as construction impacts to wetlands, waterways, protected species, archaeological sites, state and federal properties, and erosion control. The IEM is also responsible for reporting incidents and has the power to stop project work if construction activities would violate permits, approvals, PSC order conditions, or agreement with a state regulatory agency.

In comparison, an AI or IAM monitor project construction & restoration activities and report on a wide range of agricultural issues including but not limited to construction impacts to soil health, soil erosion, crop damage, agricultural operations, irrigation and impacts to surface and subsurface drainage. Each will also verify if the project initiator is complying with any agricultural best management practices or conditions established by the project initiator or required by a regulatory agency. The main difference between an AI and an IAM is that an IAM works on behalf of the regulatory agency, as opposed to the project initiator.

The construction of the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project holds the potential for numerous agricultural impacts, which Wisconsin Gas LLC plans to mitigate by following an AMP. Wisconsin Gas LLC stated in the AMP that an AI will be present during construction and restoration phases to

ensure the AMP is implemented properly (DATCP, 2024a). In determining whether an AI is sufficient to ensure compliance with the AMP, the Department evaluated the length of the pipeline, localized potential agricultural impacts, and proposed construction timeline.

In regards to an IEM, there is the potential for potential for a range of environmental impacts to soil, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, archeological sites, stream crossings and surface water quality. However, the Department believes the potential magnitude of environmental impacts do not constitute the need for an IEM.

Wisconsin Gas LLC plans to hire an experienced Agricultural Inspector to work with farmers in the near future and through negotiations, construct ruction and restoration. Absent an IAM, the AI hired or selected by the Wisconsin Gas LLC will have the ability to assist impacted agricultural landowners and help mitigate the potential agricultural impacts from the Project.

In reviewing the potential magnitude of agricultural impacts from the Project, the Department believes an AI is sufficient to ensure Wisconsin Gas LLC adheres to the AMP and any additional BMPs the Department has recommended for Wisconsin Gas LLC. DATCP recommends that for the duration of Project construction, the PSC require Wisconsin Gas LLC to hire a dedicated Agricultural Inspector (AI). If this recommendation is approved by the PSC, all reports generated by the AI should be shared with the PSC, DATCP, and DNR. Furthermore, the potential AI should be required to complete DATCP's standard Agricultural Monitoring Form for Pipeline Projects (ARM-LWR-543) as seen in Appendix H and submit said monitoring forms to DATCP weekly or a timeframe that is consulted with and approved by PSC, DATCP and DNR. If Wisconsin Gas LLC has an applicable form that shares information that is requested on form ARM-LWR-543, then that can be used in lieu of ARM-LWR-543.

5.2. Agricultural Mitigation Plan

The Department's review of the Project found several potential agricultural impacts where an AMP is vital to mitigating agricultural impacts. Wisconsin Gas LLC has voluntarily prepared an AMP for the Project and will utilize an agricultural inspector to ensure the AMP is adhered to during project construction and restoration phases (DATCP, 2024a). The Department reviewed the AMP to verify that it aligns with current agriculturally relevant BMPs and mitigation steps the Department seeks for the Project. A copy of the AMP is available in Appendix B: Hartford Jackson Interconnect AMPs.

In the following sections, the Department will review a slate of other BMPs that may provide additional protections for agricultural operations and mitigate agricultural impacts.

5.3. Three-Lift Soil Handling

The *three-lift soil handling* procedure is recommended for cropland and pasture where the mixing of the subsoil layers from construction practices such as pipeline trenching, may result in persistent crop yield reductions. For agricultural soils, the typical pipeline construction practice is to remove

and stockpile only the *topsoil* (usually the top 12 inches) from the entire pipeline trench. In contrast, the *three-lift soil handling* method requires the stockpiling of the 1) *topsoil*, 2) subsoil and 3) substratum in three separate piles. After the pipe has been placed within the trench, the excavated soils would be backfilled in the reverse order from which they were removed (i.e. last soil removed is the first soil backfilled). For more information on the *three-lift soil handling* method, refer to the Departments Three-Lift Soil Management publication ARM-LWR-294 available at agimpact.wi.gov.

The *three-lift soil handling* method is useful when the proposed trench will intersect both the B and C horizons of a soil profile and the C horizon is of poorer quality (gravel, rock, and/or sand) than the B horizon (silt, clay, and/or loam). Alternatively, this practice may be applicable to soil profiles with a distinct upper and lower B horizon, as opposed to a B and C horizon. Additional factors such as slope, soil drainage, thickness of the soil horizons, and acres of soil units crossed by the project are important in determining soil candidates for which the three-lift method could be beneficial for protection of crop yields. A key for identifying soil candidates for *three-lift soil handling* is provided in Appendix C: Three-lift Soil Candidate Key.

The Project Initiator has prepared a three-lift soil handling BMP within the AMP, which is shown in Appendix B. Prior to construction, the Project Initiator will utilize Department criteria, as seen in Appendix C: Three-lift soil Candidate Key, to identify soil candidates and areas that qualify for three-lift handling. Wisconsin Gas LLC will inform landowners possessing lands within the construction ROW that meet the three-lift soil handling criteria to offer it as a possible trenching procedure on their property during construction. During construction, the AI will monitor excavation activities within the qualified three-lift soil handling areas and verify if three-lift soil handling is appropriate. The Department has found Project Initiator's three-lift soil handling BMP to be consistent with the methodology set forth by the Department (see Appendix B: BMP-09).

5.4. Yield Compensation & Crop Loss

The Department's soil health analysis, seen in Section 4.7, has indicated the potential for the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project to impact soil health and crop yields for years to come. As livelihoods of agricultural operations are irrevocably linked to the productivity of the soil and crop yields, project initiators have an obligation to compensate impacted agricultural landowners for the future yield reductions across the project ROW. Compensation for yield loss generally occurs at the time of easement contract negotiations.

The Department recommends that agricultural landowners request at least 200% of crop value within the ROW for reimbursement. Project initiators may structure this reimbursement over a 2 – 4 year timeframe, but the total reimbursement should be no less than 200%. An example agreement may reimburse an agricultural landowner for 100% crop loss the year of construction, followed by a 60% reimbursement the second year and 40% for the third year. Agricultural landowners should also work with the project initiator to determine the most appropriate way to

determine the value of the crop within the ROW during the year of construction, as well as future crop value.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a systematic plan for determining the value of the impacted crop and compensating the impacted farm operation as seen in Appendix B: BMP-08. BMP-08 conforms to the mitigation practices the Department seeks when recommending language for crop loss/yield reduction compensation. Specifically, Wisconsin Gas LLC states in BMP-08 that, "[t]*he landowner/renter will be compensated a total of 200% of the value of the crop based on the calculation in Item 2 above. 100% of the value of the crop during the year of construction, 60% the first year after construction, and 40% the second year after construction."* (Appendix B: BMP-08).

The Department also recommends that agricultural landowners keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction. Records could include keeping crop yield records, beginning once the ROW is known, and photographs taken every season. These measures can help a landowner negotiate for compensation, should Project damages occur.

5.5. Drain Tile Repair & Drainage

The Department's soil health analysis, seen in Section 4.7, has indicated the potential for the Hartford Jackson Interconnect Project to damage or break several agricultural drain tile lines. Construction activities – especially those that excavate soil – can disrupt, damage or break agricultural infrastructure including drainage tiles, grassed waterways, and drainage ditches. Project initiators have a duty to restore the agricultural landscape as near to pre-existing conditions as possible.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a stepwise plan for temporary and permanent drain tile repairs as seen in Appendix B: BMP-04. BMP-04 conforms to the mitigation practices the Department recommends for restoration of damaged or broken agricultural drain tile lines. To facilitate the understanding of drainage system restoration to the impacted agricultural landowners, the Department offers a brief overview of recommendations it supports:

- Agricultural landowners should inform Wisconsin Gas LLC about the existence and location of drainage systems or planned drainage systems that could be affected by the Project.
- Agricultural landowners should document field moisture conditions and the historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.6.3 "Soil Compaction" when crossing a known drain tile.

- Where construction activities have created new wet areas Wisconsin Gas LLC should work with the landowner to determine the best means to return the agricultural land to pre-construction function.

5.6. Recommended BMPs

The following section will relay the Department's analysis of Wisconsin Gas LLC's AMP beyond the three main project specific areas of agricultural related impacts reviewed in Sections 5.3 – 5.5. The Department will relay any mitigation step(s) to Wisconsin Gas LLC that it supports but did not find within the AMP. Agricultural landowners may use the following information as recommendations for potential mitigation practices they may want Wisconsin Gas LLC to follow on their property.

5.6.1. Topsoil Segregation

Agricultural topsoil is an invaluable resource that should be preserved. Excavation activities required to create the open trench needed to install a natural gas pipeline has the potential to mix highly productive topsoil with underlying less productive and potentially rocky subsoils. Deep rutting also has the potential to intermix topsoil. If intermixing of topsoil occurs, the resulting soils are generally known to be less productive, and in-turn reduce the agricultural productivity of the impacted area.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP for the management and segregation of agricultural topsoil as seen in Appendix B: BMP-02. Collectively, BMP-02 in conjunction with BMP-06: *Soil Restoration* conforms to many of the mitigation practices the Department seeks to preserve the quality of agricultural topsoil. The Department wishes to highlight the following mitigation practice contained in BMP-02 as it aligns with Department priorities to preserve productive agricultural topsoil:

- *All of the topsoil to a depth of 12 inches, or the entire original topsoil depth if it is less than 12 inches, will be removed from the subsoil storage area, the trench area, and the rest of the temporary right-of-way (work and traffic areas); however, topsoil will not be removed from under the topsoil storage piles or areas where construction mats are laid on the surface for material storage or equipment travel. WISCONSIN GAS LLC has the option to remove amounts of topsoil in excess of 12" at its discretion.* (Appendix B: BMP-02).

Wisconsin Gas LLC may also wish to consider adding the following mitigation practices to either BMP-02 or BMP-06 to promote the preservation of topsoil:

- Prohibit the spreading of mixed soils or segregated subsoils on undisturbed cropland, pastures or other agricultural fields, unless authorized by the landowner.
- Should soils become intermixed, remove any intermixed topsoil, within the top 12 inches, from the right-of-way (ROW) and replace with new clean topsoil that is comparable to the pre-existing topsoil.

5.6.2. Increased Soil Rock Content

Large stones at the surface can damage farm machinery and lead to added costs to landowners for removal. Many subsoil layers have a greater rock content than the topsoil. Trench excavations may bring up lower soil horizons with rocky subsoil, which may mix with upper soil layers. Even where three-lift soil handling is used, additional rocks may be spread through the subsoil layer during backfilling. Project initiators may also apply gravel or rock at access points to agricultural fields or access roads which may mix with soil within or adjacent to the ROW.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP for soil restoration as seen in Appendix B: BMP-06. BMP-06 conforms to the mitigation practices the Department seeks to prevent increased rock content in agricultural topsoil.

5.6.3. Soil Compaction

Equipment used to construct natural gas pipelines has the potential to compact soil and reduce soil productivity on the farmland traversed during construction. Soil compaction is widely known to have a range of potential negative impacts to the productivity of soil, including reduced crop productivity, reduce crop uptake of water and nutrients, restriction of plant rooting depth, decreased water infiltration and increased surface runoff. Review Section 4.7: *Drainage and Soil Health* for additional information on the factors influencing soil health.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP for soil compaction management and soil decompaction as seen in Appendix B: BMP-06. BMP-06: *Soil Restoration* conforms to many of the mitigation practices the Department seeks to alleviate soil compaction issues. The Department wishes to highlight the following mitigation practices contained in BMP-06 as it aligns with Department priorities to prevent soil compaction and/or de-compact agricultural topsoil:

- *Deep subsoil ripping shall be carried out on all traffic and work areas of agricultural right-of-way where full corridor stripping of topsoil occurred. This includes the pipeline workspaces, temporary workspaces, and temporary access roads. It does not include the area over the trench. (Appendix B: BMP-06).*
- *Subsoil compaction will normally be alleviated with three passes of the de-compaction equipment. Multiple passes refers to the implement passing over the same soil band. That is, three passes of a 10-foot wide implement will treat a 10-foot wide band of soil, not a 30-foot wide band. (Appendix B: BMP-06).*
- *Passes must be made in multiple directions. This can be achieved in the narrow pipeline right-of-way by weaving the implement back and forth across the area being ripped. (Appendix B: BMP-06).*

- *De-compaction through the topsoil may be necessary, if the subsoil and/or topsoil are compacted during topsoil replacement activities. A penetrometer will be used to determine if additional decompaction is necessary through the topsoil.* (Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - k).

Wisconsin Gas LLC may also wish to consider adding the following mitigation practices to BMP-06 to further mitigate the impacts of soil compaction:

- Use only low-ground pressure and/or wide tracked equipment within ROW to reduce axel weight applied to soils.
- Use construction matting in wet areas or areas prone to rutting within the ROW to spread out pressure.
- Avoid working in areas with recently saturated soils.
- When possible, conduct construction work during winter months when the ground is frozen.

5.6.4. De-icing & Traction Control

Construction crews commonly apply various products to improve vehicle traction across temporary road matting within the construction ROW to control for wet, slippery, or icy conditions. The application of sodium chloride (e.g. rock salt), as a de-icing agent, to temporary road matting within the construction ROW can lead to sodium chloride rich runoff that has potentially detrimental impacts to the health of nearby soils, ecosystems and surface waters (Richburg, 2001; Kelly *et al.*, 2008; Corsi *et al*., 2010). Alternative de-icing products, which are less damaging to the health of soil, vegetation and ecosystems as compared to sodium chloride, do exist. For example, county highway departments commonly apply sand or small lime chips (1/8" to 3/16" diameter), or a combination of the two as an alternative to sodium chloride, especially when surface temperatures are colder than 15°F when sodium chloride is less effective. University of Wisconsin Madison – Extension publication A3877 provides a list of alternative de-icing products Wisconsin Gas LLC may wish to consider when selecting an alternative(s) to sodium chloride based products. However, sodium chloride may still be required to mitigate situations that pose elevated safety risks.

The Department did not find mention of mitigation practices related to de-icing and traction control within the Project AMP. As construction is planned to start in late 2026 with no seasonal construction constraints, the Department recommends Wisconsin Gas LLC to consider adding the following BMPs to the Project AMP to address impacts related to salt applications on temporary road matting over agricultural soils.

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should use alternatives to sodium chloride, when safety conditions allow, for de-icing and traction control on temporary road matting when crossing agricultural soils.

- When the application of sodium chloride is necessary to resolve a matter of safety an alternative method cannot, Wisconsin Gas LLC should limit the sodium chloride application rate to the lowest level required to maintain a safe working environment.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should prepare a spill response plan in the event sodium chloride or an alternative product is over applied or spilled onto agricultural soils.

5.6.5. Dewatering

During excavation, trench dewatering may be necessary. Improper dewatering can result in soil erosion, sedimentation and deposition of gravel, sand, or silt onto adjacent agricultural lands, and the inundation of crops. The discharge of these construction waters must comply with current drainage laws, local ordinances, WisDNR permit conditions, and the provisions of the Clean Water Act.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP for trench dewatering as seen in Appendix B: BMP-05. BMP-05: *Trench Dewatering* conforms to the mitigation practices sought by the Department. The Department wishes to highlight the following mitigation practice contained in BMP-05 as they align with Department priorities to mitigate agricultural impacts from trench dewatering:

- *Rainwater or groundwater that collects in the trench will be pumped:*
  - *Onto a well-vegetated area that will prevent the water from returning to the right-of-way, or*
  - *Into a filter bag or a settling basin constructed of straw bales when adequate vegetation is absent or when in the vicinity of a wetland or waterbody*. (Appendix B: BMP-05).
- *Preferably, dewatering efforts will not deliver water onto cropland. If it is absolutely necessary to do so, the crops will be inundated (flooded) less than 24 hours.* (Appendix B: BMP-05).
- *Discharge of water from the trench of non-organic farm operations and hydrostatic testing shall not be made in a way that can runoff onto adjacent organic farm operations.* (Appendix B: BMP-05).

5.6.6. Erosion and Conservation Practices

Natural gas pipeline construction activities can destabilize existing erosion control practices such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc. The destabilization of these erosion control practices have the potential to cause soil erosion within the ROW, but also from upland fields. During wet conditions the risk of soil erosion is increased, as exposed soils, especially areas with increased slope, may more easily erode and move downslope. Wind erosion may also be of concern if existing windbreaks are removed from the ROW, especially when soils are dry. If left unchecked, significant erosion can have an adverse effect on the long-term productivity of agricultural lands.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP to address erosion and repairs to existing agricultural erosion control facilities as seen in Appendix B: BMP-03. BMP-03: *Erosion Control* conforms to the mitigation practices sought by the Department. The Department wishes to highlight the following mitigation practices as they align with Department priorities to control soil erosion and mitigate impacts to agricultural conservation practices & facilities:

- *Existing agricultural facilities, such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc., damaged due to construction activities will be restored to pre-construction conditions. Photographs and elevation surveys may be taken as necessary prior to construction activities at the site to ensure final restoration is satisfactory.* (Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - i).
- *Erosion controls such as silt fence, staked hay bales, and erosion matting will be used to prevent surface runoff from carrying sediment laden water onto adjacent lands. Dewatering may be required to remove standing water from trench or bore pit areas. Erosion control and dewatering technical standards are described on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/standards. These standards will be met or exceeded at all times. It is not permissible to allow soil or water runoff to occur from non-organically farmed fields onto organically farmed fields at any time even if both fields are owned by the same landowner.* (Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - f).

5.6.7. Fencing

Construction may require fences that cross the Project ROW to be severed. Changes to existing fence lines can interfere with grazing activities, particularly for rotational grazing operations that depend on precise, scheduled grazing in particular areas. Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP to address impacts to fencing as seen in Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - d. This BMP generally conforms to the mitigation practices sought by the Department. However, Wisconsin Gas LLC may also wish to consider adding the following mitigation practice to further address the impacts to fencing caused by the Project:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should develop a plan for livestock to access pastures adjacent to the Project ROW or otherwise compensate the landowner for the costs related to restricted grazing.

5.6.8. Weed Control

The Project may introduce noxious weeds or other invasive plants species into the Project ROW that compete with agricultural crops. Noxious weeds may also spread from parcel to parcel by construction equipment and project activities. Once weeds establish, they can interfere with agricultural harvesting equipment, attract unwanted insects, and require physical removal or chemical applications to remove. Wisconsin Gas LLC has prepared a BMP to address impacts to weed control as seen in Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - h. However, the Department believes Wisconsin Gas LLC may wish to consider implementing the following additional mitigation steps, specific to weed control, to strengthen its weed control BMP:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should offer agricultural landowners, during easement negotiations, the ability to state whether they do or do not give Wisconsin Gas LLC express written consent for herbicide to be applied within the ROW they own.

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should use tracking pads at frequently used access points.

- Wisconsin Gas LLC and its contractors that are applying herbicide or pesticides should utilize the Department's Driftwatch™ online mapping tool to locate agricultural lands and operations that are susceptible to herbicide or pesticides. If the online mapping tool locates an agricultural operation on or near areas that will receive herbicide or pesticide applications, Wisconsin Gas LLC should contact the operation to discuss the appropriate methods required to minimize the risk of accidental exposure.

- Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit the WDATCP DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.driftwatch.org/.

5.6.9. Construction Debris

After construction is complete, there may be construction debris remaining on the field. If large pieces of debris or rocks are left in the field, agricultural machinery may be damaged when the landowner first works the land. The debris from various woody tress species, such as cherry or walnut trees cans be toxic to livestock. To mitigate the potential impact of construction debris, Wisconsin Gas LLC has proposed various BMPs in Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices – h, k and Appendix B: BMP-06. Collectively, these BMPs contain the mitigation practices the Department recommends for to mitigate the impact of construction debris.

5.6.10. Feed Supply and Dairy Operations

The construction of a natural gas pipeline may disrupt a planned crop or crop rotation. Impacts to alfalfa fields and planned alfalfa seeding are especially disruptive to dairy operations, as they need to maintain a proper supply of alfalfa to feed dairy cows. Any delays, yield reductions or damages to an alfalfa crop may require the dairy operation to buy haylage or hay, obtain more corn silage, and/or provide protein supplements such as soybean oil meal to make up for the lost alfalfa.

The Department did not find mention of mitigation or compensation practices related to the disruption of feed supply for dairy operations within the Project AMP. To address impacts resulting in the loss of animal feed and leading to the purchase of replacement feed, DATCP recommends that dairy operations should be compensated by Wisconsin Gas LLC for increased operational costs associated with the purchase of forage resulting from the reduction of forage from within the Project ROW.

5.6.11. Construction Noise and Dust

During each phase of the Project, noise and dust are likely to be generated. Landowners near the Project ROW may experience noises and dust associated with construction techniques and the movement of heavy equipment. This noise and dust may cause dairy, beef cattle and other grazing livestock to stampede, break through fences, and escape from the farm property. Fur animals, poultry and other confined livestock may also be impacted by these sounds.

The Department did not find mention of mitigation practices related to noise and dust within the Project AMP. To address impacts resulting from construction noise and dust Wisconsin Gas LLC should consider adding the following BMPs to the Project AMP.

- Identify agricultural livestock operations with sensitive animals within and adjacent to the Project ROW and provide them appropriate advance warning of construction activities, so they may take steps to safeguard their animals.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should clean all roadways (private, county, state etc.) of construction debris, dirt and rocks.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should use tracking pads at frequently used access points.
- Apply water over the dust generating areas to reduce dust output.

Nearby agricultural landowners may also wish to consider the following recommendation:

- Livestock owners & operators within the Project ROW who are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform Wisconsin Gas LLC or their representatives during the easement negotiation process. Additionally, they may wish to remind Wisconsin Gas LLC of their concerns just prior to the start of construction.

5.6.12. Restoration

Restoration is final step in assuring an impacted agricultural area is restored as close as possible to preconstruction conditions. In general, restoration activities include the soil restoration, soil grading and seeding. Stockpiled topsoils and subsoils removed during construction are returned, in the proper order, and graded to match the existing topography and slopes. All ruts and depressions are restored and new topsoil may be brought in where topsoil has been lost or seriously mixed with subsoils. Agricultural soils are also monitored for compaction and when required undergo decompaction efforts to return the soil structure to its original condition. In areas where crops are not present, such as roadsides, pastures, old fields or upland woods, native seed mixes (or other appropriate seed mixes approved by the landowner) may be sown.

Wisconsin Gas LLC has proposed various BMPs in Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices and Appendix B: BMP-07 to restore the impacted agricultural lands as close as reasonably possible to their pre-construction conditions. Collectively, these BMPs contain the majority of mitigation practices the Department supports. Department believes Wisconsin Gas LLC may wish to consider implementing the following additional mitigation steps, to strengthen restoration efforts:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should monitor the ROW for soil erosion and maintain erosion control practices until there is sufficient vegetative growth in the ROW to mitigate soil erosion. Only after restoration activities are complete and vegetation has re-established within the ROW should temporary restoration erosion control devices be removed.

5.6.13. Irrigation

Natural gas pipeline construction activities and the placement of pipeline poles can interfere with the operation of linear or center pivot irrigation systems used to irrigate crops. Soil compaction from construction equipment may also impact or damage underground piping that supplies irrigation systems. Any interruption to irrigation systems cause by the Project can deprive crops from needed water and nutrients resulting in decrease crop yields.

We Energies has prepared a BMP to address impacts to irrigation as seen in Appendix B: Best Construction Management Practices - e. However, the Department believes Wisconsin Gas LLC may wish to consider implementing the following additional mitigation steps, specific to irrigation systems, to strengthen its BMP:

- Prior to construction, agricultural operations that use irrigation within or adjacent to the Project ROW should inform Wisconsin Gas LLC of their irrigation system, how the Project may impact the system, irrigation schedules frequency of irrigation and weather conditions that may change the irrigation schedule.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.6.3 "Soil Compaction" when crossing a known irrigation pipeline.

- If the Project plans to disrupt an irrigation system, Wisconsin Gas LLC should notify the landowner beforehand and establish a mutually acceptable amount of time that the system will be taken out-of-service.
- If an irrigation system needs to be reconfigured as a result of the Project, Wisconsin Gas LLC should work with the irrigation operators to reconfigure the irrigation equipment where necessary and to compensate them for any portion of cropland where the irrigation system no longer operates.

5.6.14. Temporary Access Roads

Wisconsin Gas LLC has proposed to install temporary access roads as part of the Project, when an alternative access road does not exist, to allow personnel and construction equipment to access the Project corridor. When a temporary access road is constructed there is a range of potential negative effects to agricultural lands including the mixing of topsoil with subsoil & rocks, soil compaction, soil erosion, and interference with existing drainage & irrigation. New temporary access roads also have the potential to impact agricultural operations by severing cropland or pastures, limiting field access or limiting access to agricultural infrastructure & buildings. Any of these impacts can result in lost agricultural productivity whether from lost soil productivity, crop losses or the direct loss of agricultural revenue when access to agricultural infrastructure is limited.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impacts of access roads when they cross agricultural lands within the Project ROW:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consult with agricultural landowners before siting any temporary access roads.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should strip and stockpile the topsoil for later reuse during restoration.
- After topsoil removal, Wisconsin Gas LLC should install a geotextile construction fabric along the roadbed prior to the placement of gravel/rock roadway.
- Access roads should also be designed to allow proper drainage and minimize soil erosion.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.5 "Drain Tile Repair & Drainage" when siting an access road over drain tiles.

5.6.15. Managed Forest Law, Trees and other Woody Vegetation

If approved, the Construction Project will impact approximately between .21 and 1.97 acres of MFL lands depending on the route that is selected. An explanation of the state's MFL program and what that means for the woodlands enrolled within the program is provided in Section 0 "Managed Forest Law". Additional acres of unmanaged forest lands will also be impacted, but are beyond the scope of this AIS as unmanaged forest lands are not defined as an agricultural use according to Wis. Stat. § 91.01(2). Both managed and unmanaged woodlands can provide financial benefit to the

landowner either directly through the sale of managed forest for timber, the sale of firewood, or the harvest of tree sap for sale. The removal of any trees from a property may also decrease the market value of the property.

Prior to the start of construction, Wisconsin Gas LLC will remove all woody vegetation, trees and brush not already removed by the landowner from the full width of the Construction Project ROW. Vegetation will be cut at or slightly above the ground surface using mechanized equipment or by hand. Removal of stumps and roots will also occur over the area where the trench will be excavated.

The Department recommends the following regarding tree removal:

- Landowners who wish to obtain their own appraisal for value of property within a proposed easement should also hire an appraiser who has experience and expertise in valuing trees.
- Landowners who wish to farm within the deforested area should discuss tree stump removal with Wisconsin Gas LLC during the easement negotiation process.
- Before an easement is signed, landowners should determine from the Project Initiator where trees will and will not be permitted to re-grow within the ROW.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consult with landowners before disposing of any trees or stumps that need to be removed from the pipeline ROW.

5.6.16. Induced Current on the Pipeline

A small direct current (DC) is applied to pipelines for cathodic protection to prevent corrosion of the pipe material. Because pipelines, particularly if located in electric transmission line corridors, can be carriers of induced alternating current (AC), the pipeline industry takes precautions to discharge AC current along the pipe into the ground. This is necessary to both protect the integrity of the DC cathodic protection system as well as to prevent continued flow of AC current in the pipe. If induced AC current is not adequately grounded, it can cause long-term serious metal loss from the pipe wall, potentially resulting in gas leaks.

5.6.17. Organic Farms & Other Areas with Certifications

Construction and ongoing maintenance activities for the Project may jeopardize a farm's organic certification or other certifications such as *pesticide free* or *herbicide free* (certified areas) if a prohibited chemical is used on their certified land, drifts from a neighboring field or enters their land on construction machinery, construction matting or improper de-watering. Wisconsin Gas LLC and their contractors must use caution and care where the Construction Project ROW borders or crosses an area with certification. Wis. Admin. Code § ATCP 29.50(2) states that no pesticides

(includes herbicides) may be used in a manner that results in pesticide overspray or significant pesticide drift. In addition, any oil or fuel spill on these farms could prevent or remove a farm's certification.

If a determination is made that an organic farm is within the project area, the Department recommends the following:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC should not apply herbicides or pesticide to organic farms or other certified farms that preclude the use of these chemicals without the expressed written consent of the landowner.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC shall not apply an herbicide or pesticide in a manner that results in overspray or significant drift.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should clean construction equipment and materials prior to entering an area of certification.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should post signs at entry points to an area of certification denoting its existence and reminding personnel of appropriate mitigation steps to take.
- Agricultural landowners with an area of certification should contact Wisconsin Gas LLC and report the range and type of substances that are and are not permitted according to their certifications.
- Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit the WDATCP DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.driftwatch.org/.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC and its contractors that are applying herbicide or pesticides should utilize the Departments Driftwatch™ online mapping tool to locate agricultural lands and operations that are susceptible to herbicide or pesticides. If the online mapping tool locates an agricultural operation on or near areas that will receive herbicide or pesticide applications, Wisconsin Gas LLC should contact the operation to discuss the appropriate methods required to minimize the risk of accidental exposure.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should generate and distribute a list of organic farms or other certified farms and the prohibited chemicals to their construction staff and contractors.
- Prior to construction, Wisconsin Gas LLC and the farms with areas of certification should agree to the appropriate methods avoid unintentional contacts or applications of prohibited chemicals from entering their farms.

- Wisconsin Gas LLC may wish to underlay heavily used areas of the ROW with geotextile fabric in order to limit the potential for prohibited substances from contaminating areas with certification.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC should consult with farms with areas of certification prior to the application of seeds for revegetation efforts on their property.

5.6.18. Biosecurity

Farm biosecurity is the implementation of measures designed to protect a farm operation from the entry and spread of diseases and pests. Construction activities can spread weeds, diseases, chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMO's) that impact an agricultural operation. Certified organic farms and farms with other certifications such as pesticide-free or herbicide-free are susceptible to the widest range of biosecurity impacts and may suffer greater negative impacts if their agricultural operation is exposed to a biosecurity threat. For more information on basic biosecurity protocols, please visit the Department's Basic Biosecurity website at the provided link or at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/BasicBiosecurity.aspx

The Department recommends the following to mitigate biosecurity risks within the Project ROW:

- Wisconsin Gas LLC and agricultural operations within the Project ROW should develop a biosecurity plan that contains a set of protocols including but not limited to: Cleaning construction equipment between parcels; manure handling within the ROW; responsible parties that can move livestock and manure within the ROW; establishing communication channels to report construction and farm activities within the ROW.
- Wisconsin Gas LLC and their contractors should avoid contact with livestock and manure throughout the Project.
- If livestock need to be moved, Wisconsin Gas LLC should work with the livestock owner to move the livestock.

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Wisconsin Gas LLC (d.b.a We Energies)

- Janet Sosnosky

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