



State of Wisconsin
Governor Tony Evers

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Secretary-designee Randy Romanski

DATE: September 2020

TO: ATCP Board

FROM: Farmland Preservation Program

SUBJECT: Report on AEAs recommended for designation in 2020

The AEA evaluation team met on August 12, 2020 to review three AEA petitions and one AEA modification petition received during this petition cycle. The team recommended the designation of the Cicero Blackmour AEA, Outagamie County, Town of Westford AEA, Dodge County, and the St. Marie AEA, Green Lake. The team conditionally recommended the designation of the modification to the Town of Grant AEA, Dunn and Chippewa Counties if more information is provided.

Table 1: *AEAs recommended for designation*

| AEA Name | Approximate number of acres | Number of petitioners | AEA Location County and Town |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Cicero Blackmour | 45,466 | 20 | <i>Outagamie County, Black Creek, Cicero, and Seymour</i> |
| Town of Westford | 18,203 | 17 | <i>Dodge, Westford</i> |
| St. Marie | 19,725 | 11 | <i>Green Lake, St. Marie and Princeton</i> |

Table 2: *AEA modification conditionally recommended for designation*

| AEA Name | Approximate number of acres of modification | Approximate number of acres in AEA with modification | Number of petitioners | AEA Location County and Town |
|---------------|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| Town of Grant | 5,095 | 31,140 | 13 | <i>Dunn and Chippewa Counties, Grant, Colfax, Sand Creek, Otter Creek, Auburn, and Cooks Valley</i> |

The petition evaluation committee requested that the proposed modification to the Town of Grant AEA petition provide additional information in order to be recommended for designation during the 2020 petition cycle. As of August 12, 2020, Town of Grant has addressed the informational requests from the committee and is working on gathering the missing political subdivision signature pages and soliciting additional non-petitioner cooperator signature pages. Town of Grant has been given till the end of September to produce additional signature pages.

Wisconsin - America's Dairyland

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After designation of the three successful petitions there will be 43 AEAs in the state totaling 1,475,280 acres. The AEAs are located in portions of 28 counties, 119 towns and the Bad River Reservation (See Attachment B).

Additional Comments from the Petition Evaluation Committee:

- The committee expressed concerns over the fact that core dairy counties around the state are not participating in the program. These counties could benefit from the opportunities that AEAs provide and could greatly benefit the communities.
- The committee commented that the petition application sanitizes the ideas and ideals of the AEAs. DATCP should explore ways to include petitioners more in the evaluation process through a presentation or interview in order to provide the committee the opportunity to better understand the community and their goals for creating an AEA.
- DATCP may want to start exploring avenues to increase the eligible acres that may be designated as part of the AEA program. The Towns Association has offered to help find legislators willing to help increase the available acreage.

The department has begun putting together AEA Snapshots for the designated AEAs across the state. These two page articles focus on an individual AEA to highlight the diverse nature of agriculture and unique community goals within that AEA. The department has published snapshots on the Headwaters of SE Monroe County AEA in Monroe County and the Golden Triangle AEA in Eau Claire County (See Attachment C).

Attachment A: Summary of the 2020 AEAs recommended for designation

Attachment B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs

Attachment C: AEA Snapshots for Headwaters of SE Monroe County AEA and Golden Triangle AEA

Attachment A: Summary of the 2020 AEAs recommended for designation

Cicero Blackmour AEA

Overview

- Outagamie County, Towns of Black Creek, Cicero, and Seymour
- 45,466 acres
- 20 petitioners
- Dairy, corn silage, alfalfa, row crops (soybeans and corn), rotational grazing

Goals

- Create regional sense of place and pride within the agricultural community via the establishment of the proposed AEA
- Explore and expand beyond traditional agriculture and agricultural related uses to allow for increased sustainability and market stability for existing and future agricultural operations within the proposed AEA and county as a whole.
- Encourage increased awareness and compliance with Chapter NR 151 "Runoff Management" via Farmland Preservation Agreements

Items of Note

- This is the 3rd AEA in Outagamie County and the boundary encompasses three townships that also have certified farmland preservation zoning in order to increase incentive to participate in the program

Town of Westford AEA

Overview

- Dodge County, Town of Westford
- 18,203 acres
- 17 petitioners
- Corn, corn silage, soybeans, alfalfa, and winter wheat

Goals

- Promote nutrient management planning to reduce sediment and phosphorus run off as a way to improve local surface water quality
- Give agricultural landowners the opportunity to participate in the program in a town without a farmland preservation zoning district
- Grow the relationship between farmer and lakeside landowners to promote conservation and preservation of Beaver Creek and Beaver Dam Lake.
- Allow current farmland preservation agreement holders to continue to participate in the farmland preservation program, encourage new participation in the area

Items of Note

- This AEA had 27 non-petitioning cooperator signature pages from citizen groups, lake groups, and local businesses
- This AEA is part of a multifaceted plan to improve the water quality in Beaver Dam Lake and tributaries

St. Marie AEA**Overview**

- Green Lake County, Town of St. Marie and Princeton
- 19,725 acres
- 11 petitioners
- Dairy, beef, row crops (soybeans and corn), wheat, alfalfa, direct market products, and timber production

Goals

- Allow current farmland preservation agreement holders to continue to participate in the farmland preservation program, encourage new participation in the area
- Protect farmland from development pressures from nearby urban pressures
- Support local food production and markets by creating a local brand to be sold at local stores and farmer markets
- Encourage sustained agricultural practices, promote best management practices

Items of Note

- 1st AEA in Green Lake County and 1st township in the county to participate in the farmland preservation program outside of zoning

Town of Grant AEA**Overview**

- Dunn and Chippewa County, Towns of Grant, Colfax, Sand Creek, Otter Creek, Auburn, and Cooks Valley
- 5,095 acres in modification extension
- 31,140 acres in total AEA
- 13 petitioners
- Corn, soybeans, alfalfa, oats, rye, winter wheat, grazing beef cattle, chicken producers, and bee keeping

Goals

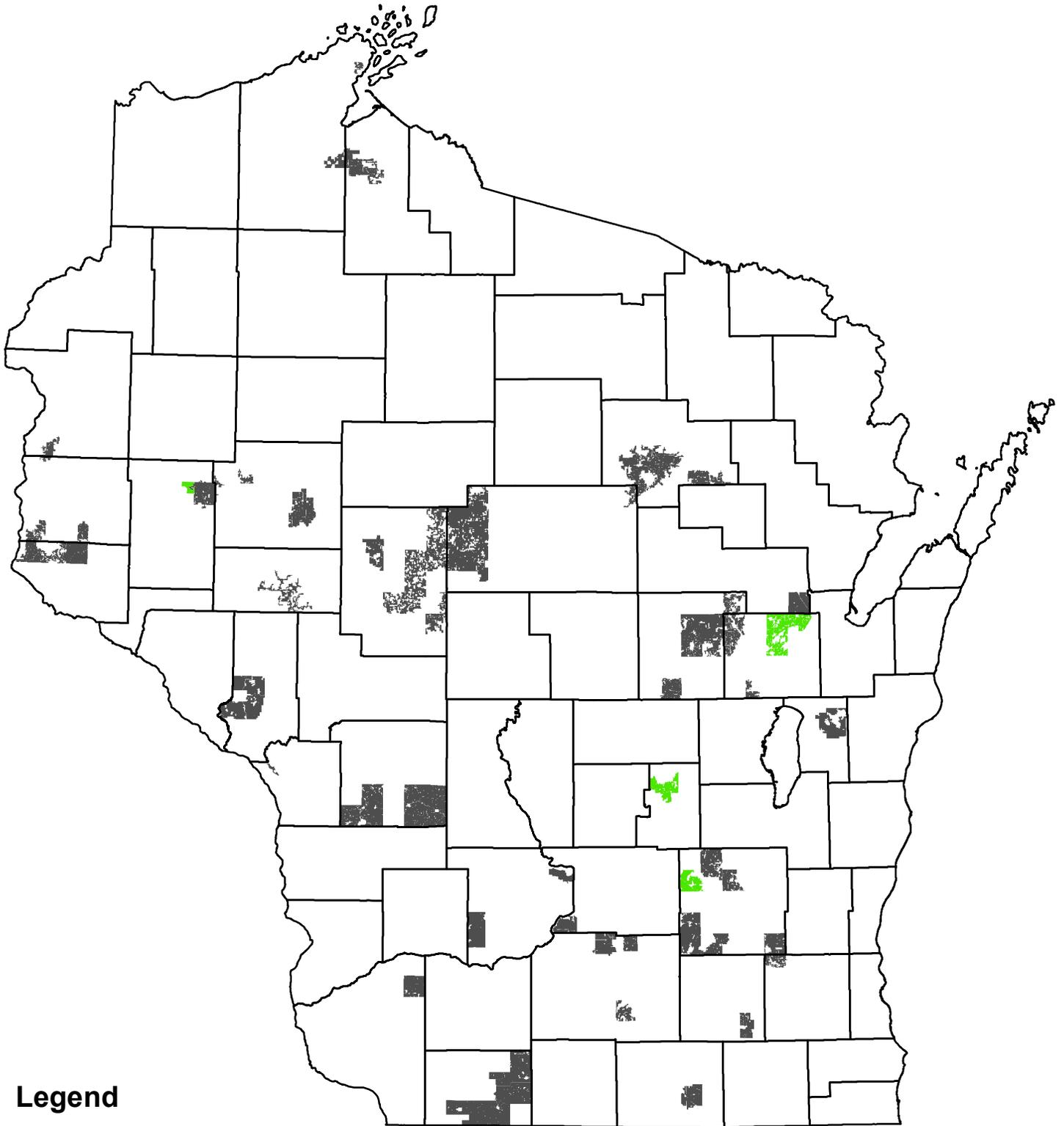
- Protect and improve agricultural lands for future generation
- Host nutrient management classes to promote best management practices to protect water resources

- Promote farmer networking and educational opportunities by partnering with local producer-led group and local technical college

Items of Note

- This modification will expand the existing AEA into a town that does not have a way to participate in the program but has a strong producer-led network that values conservation and preservation.

Attachment B: Proposed Agricultural Enterprise Areas 2020

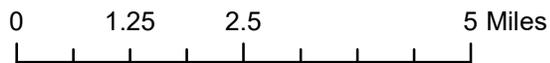
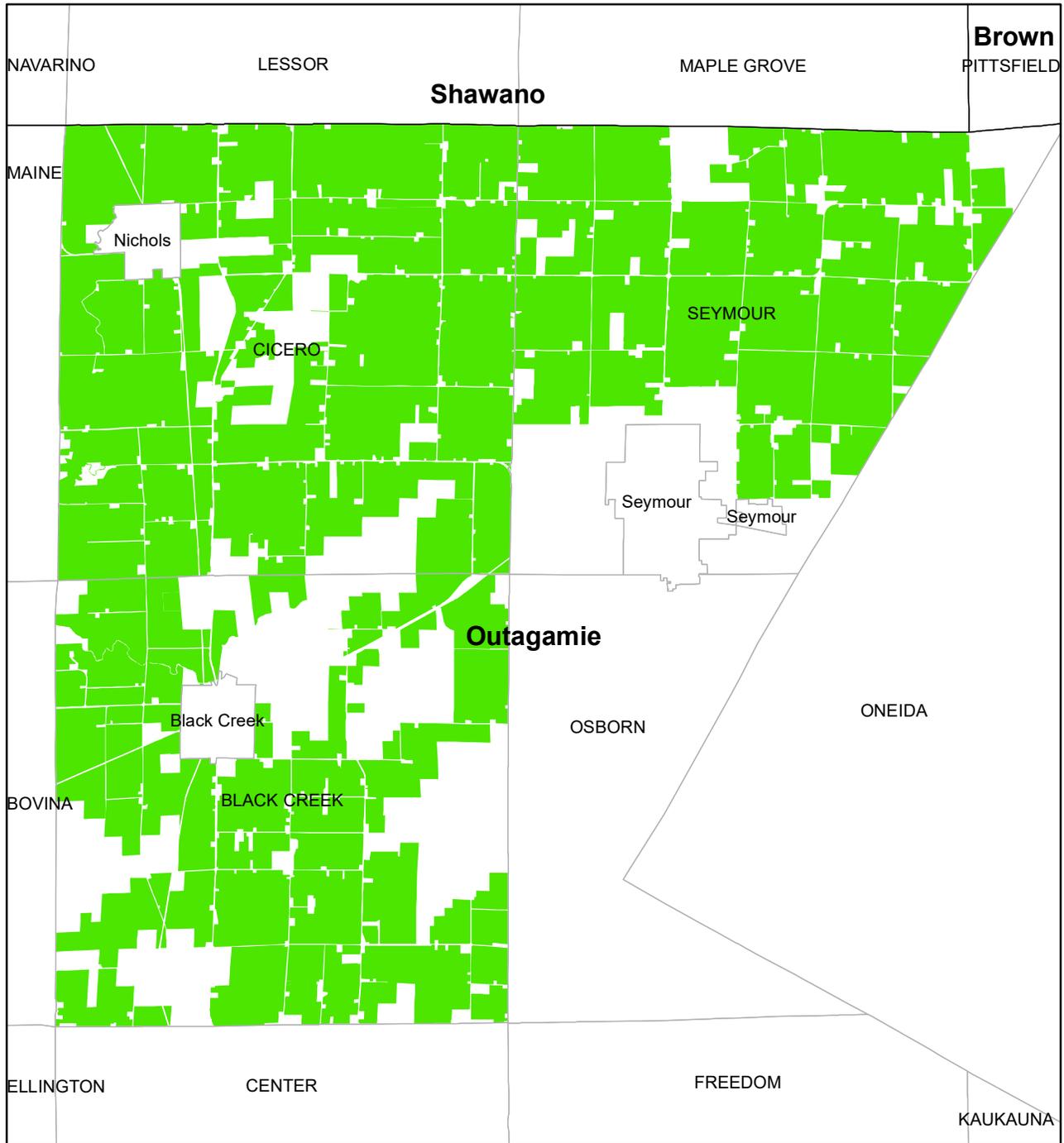


Legend

-  Proposed AEAs (2020)
-  Existing AEAs
-  County Boundary



Cicero Blackmour AEA

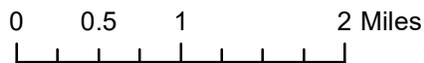
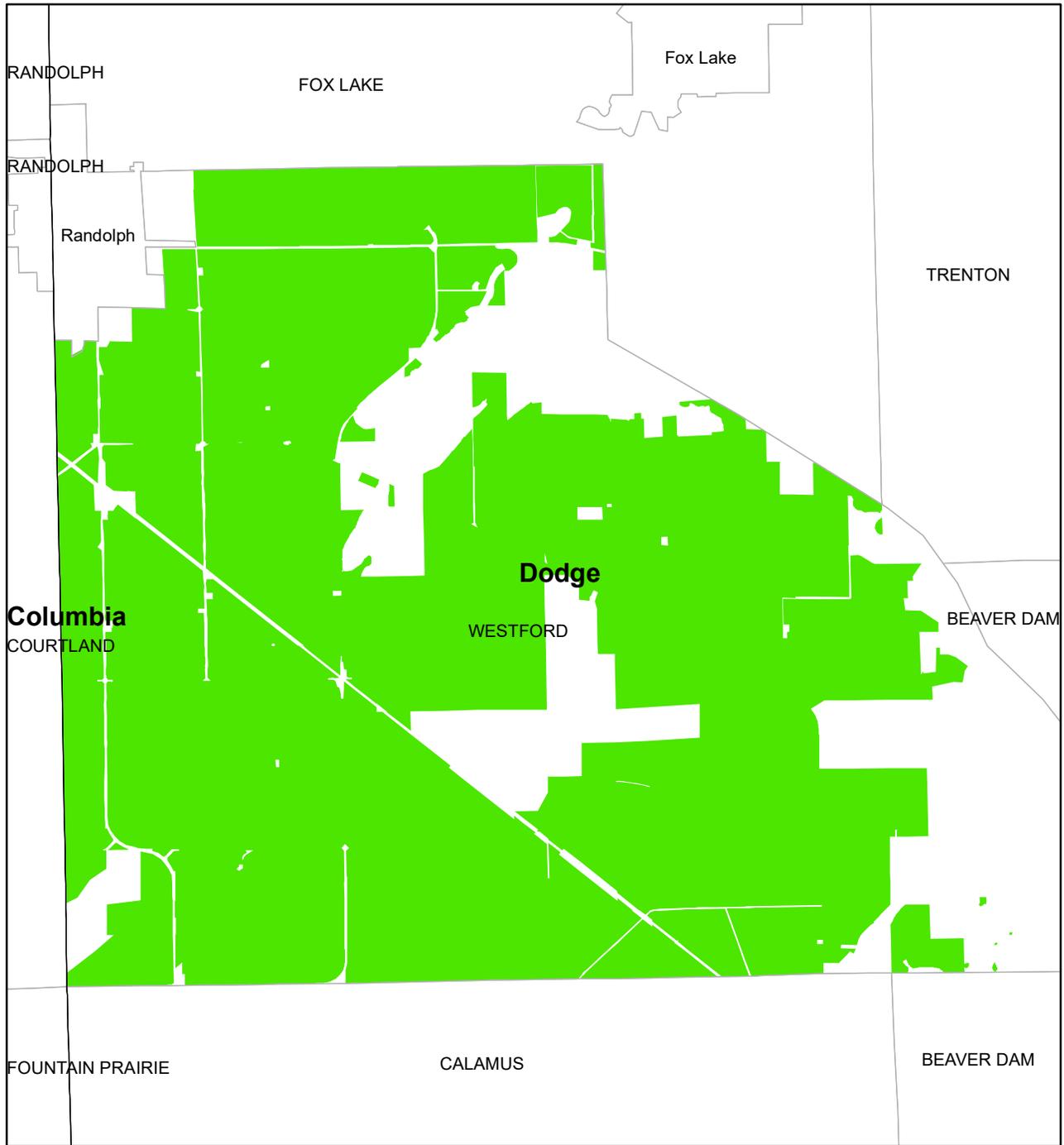


Legend

-  Town of Westford AEA
-  County Boundary



Town of Westford AEA

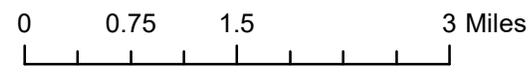
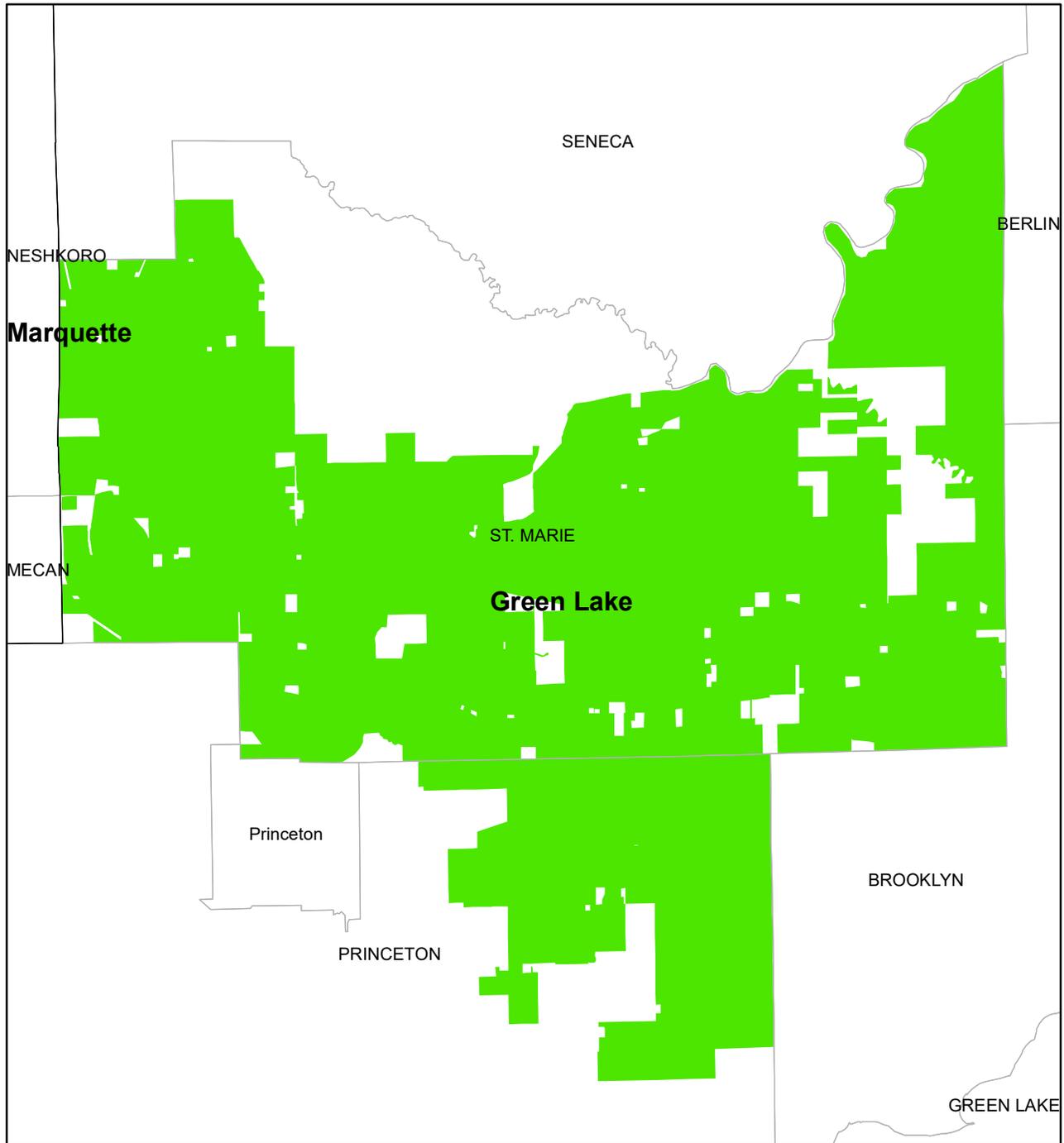


Legend

-  Town of Westford AEA
-  County Boundary



St. Maire AEA

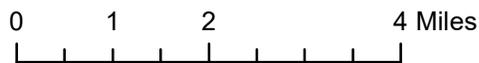


Legend

-  Town of Westford AEA
-  County Boundary



Town of Grant AEA Modification



Legend

-  Town of Grant AEA Modification
-  Existing Town of Grant AEA Boundary
-  County Boundary





Agriculture Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

Golden Triangle

County: Eau Claire

Acres: 21,394

AEA Designation: 2016

Municipalities: City of Augusta; towns of Bridge Creek, Lincoln, Otter Creek, Washington; village of Fall Creek

Background

The Golden Triangle agriculture enterprise area (AEA) is in the Chippewa Valley - an area between Eau Claire, Menomonie, and Chippewa Falls devoted to commercial and farmland activity. In 2015, a group of Eau Claire County farmers petitioned for the designation of the Golden Triangle AEA with the goals of promoting the agricultural economy and small-scale agriculture, using access to local city markets for local agricultural producers, and supporting farmland preservation. The Golden Triangle AEA was designated on January 1, 2016, and falls in portions of the towns of Lincoln, Washington, Otter Creek, Bridge Creek, the village of Fall Creek, and city of Augusta. It weaves across more than 20,000 acres with more than half as prime agricultural land. In Eau Claire County, agriculture provides 4,641 jobs to residents and contributes \$19.1 million in taxes, not including property taxes to local schools.



Local Support

One of the farmer petitioners was Joe Smith, a dairy farmer in Eau Claire County, who remembered in the 1960's when many farmers tilled up and down hills instead of following the curves of the land. Smith noticed that this style of tillage and planting was resulting in soil and nutrient loss that was traveling into a nearby trout stream. Stream pollution can result in poor fish health due to a loss of cover, food sources, or sites to nest on in stream beds. The potential loss of trout in the stream drove Smith's passion to start implementing conservation practices on the farm. "I wanted my grandsons to be able to go fishing in that stream," said Smith.

As a result, Smith began implementing sustainable practices, like conservation tillage and cover crops, into his rotation to help reduce the amount of soil and nutrient loss. In 2014, Smith received the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association state conservation farmer of the year award in recognition for outstanding work, community involvement, and education in conservation.



Smith stated the reason for forming the Golden Triangle AEA was to preserve farmland, noting the significant blocks of high quality agricultural soils within the Golden Triangle. Smith was among the first farmers in the area to sign a farmland preservation agreement. Getting farmers together and establishing commitments to the future of agriculture, through things like farmland preservation agreements and implementation of conservation practices, supports the growth of the farming community. The AEA is a group of individuals sharing the same interests in the future of agriculture.

"Farming and agriculture are an important part of our community, and we want to try to preserve farmland and support the next generation of farmers. The (AEA) gives us an opportunity to do this,"

-Golden Triangle AEA petitioner

This AEA is supported by the following agriculture enterprises and businesses:



Milk: haulers, producers & contractors



Licensed egg producers



Food processor & warehouse



Refrigeration services



Veterinary medicine



Feed & farm supply



Holstein Association
(and breeders)



Community supported agriculture
(CSA)



Beef producers



Dairy & livestock (nutrition) advisor



Livestock truckers



Grain dealer



Agricultural cooperative
(grain elevator, store,
bulk propane storage)



Organic certified
businesses, farms



Apple orchards



Berry patches



Plant/tree nurseries



Ag consulting
and accounting services



Demonstration farm



Historic Dells Mill and Museum



Eau Claire
downtown farmers market

County Support

The Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division helped landowners pull together materials for the AEA petition with the goal that the AEA serve as a bridge to keep landowners connected in the community. With this goal in mind, in the spring of 2020 the land conservation division purchased a no-till drill available to farmers to rent. No-till drills can drill different types and sizes of seed into a variety of planting conditions ranging from high residue, no-till fields to conventionally tilled fields. The purchase was possible through grants and fundraising at the local level, with the program's goal to be self-sustaining. Amanda Peters, Eau Claire County conservation technician-agronomist, reported that the new drill was well used in the first season and rented within the first week of purchase. The drill has also provided opportunities for farm-to-farm networking to discuss tillage, planting, and conservation goals.

“These landowners really wanted this (AEA). We let the farmers make the decision as to where they want to go.”
-Greg Leonard
Eau Claire County
Land Conservation Manager

The Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division acknowledged the opportunity for the Golden Triangle AEA to bring in new landowners and expand. Greg Leonard, Eau Claire County Land Conservation Manager emphasized any expansion is led by the landowners and their original passion behind this AEA is still present and visible today. In 2020, the land conservation division is working with a demonstration farm to show the benefits of cover crops and to increase farm-to-farm networking. A demonstration farm is a farm used primarily to research or demonstrate different agricultural techniques.

Ag in Your Community

- Incentives to cover conservation costs
- Tax credits
- Protect soil and water
- Preserve farmland
- Install conservation practices
- Ag innovation
- Farm-to-farm networking
- Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition

Future Growth

As the Golden Triangle AEA develops, it will continue to keep land in agricultural use and promote long term stability across the area. The efforts of the AEA petitioners have produced tangible and positive impacts to the landscape that will help to raise more awareness about the Golden Triangle AEA. The implementation of conservation practices has improved the water quality of the trout stream and the trout have returned. With Joe Smith's grandsons now in college, they visit him on the farm almost every year to go fishing.

Learn more at

<https://farmlandpreservation.wi.gov>

If you are a landowner in Eau Claire county and want to find out if your farmland is located in the Golden Triangle AEA, or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, or to learn more about conservation initiatives or resources in the county, **contact the Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division by phone at (715) 839-6226 or email lcd@co.eau-claire.wi.us.**

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



Agriculture Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

The Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County

County: Monroe

Towns of: Clifton, Glendale, Wellington, and Wilton

Acres: 86, 380

AEA Designation: 2014

Background

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

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



| | | |
|--|---|---|
|  5 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS |  10 AG CO-OPS & BUSINESSES |  99 PRODUCERS & LANDOWNERS |
|--|---|---|

DATCP designates AEAs in response to a petition from landowners and local governments. AEAs are part of DATCP’s Farmland Preservation Program to support local farmland protection goals, the agricultural economy, and environmental efforts.

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



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

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



Agronomy



Grain dealer and warehouse



Implement dealer



Transportation



National organic program certified operations and businesses



Milk producers



Fish farms



Deer farm



Licensed egg producer



Veterinary medicine



Livestock truckers



Livestock Genetics



Food processing plants



Food warehouses



Retail food establishments



Several bed and breakfasts



Amish farms and businesses



Elroy-Sparta bike trail

Prioritizing Agriculture and Looking to the Future

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

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

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

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

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

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

–Bob Micheel, Monroe County Conservationist

Learn more at

<https://farmlandpreservation.wi.gov>

Investing in the Local Ag Economy



Agreement enrollments



Incentives to cover conservation costs



Tax credits

Helping Your Community



Protect soil and water



Establish zoning



Preserve farmland

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

Monroe County Land Conservation Department

Bob Micheel (608) 269-8976

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

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



2020 Agricultural Enterprise Area Petition Cycle

Wednesday Jordan – DARM – Bureau of Land & Water Resources

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (DATCP)

September 2020

AGRICULTURE ENTERPRISE AREAS

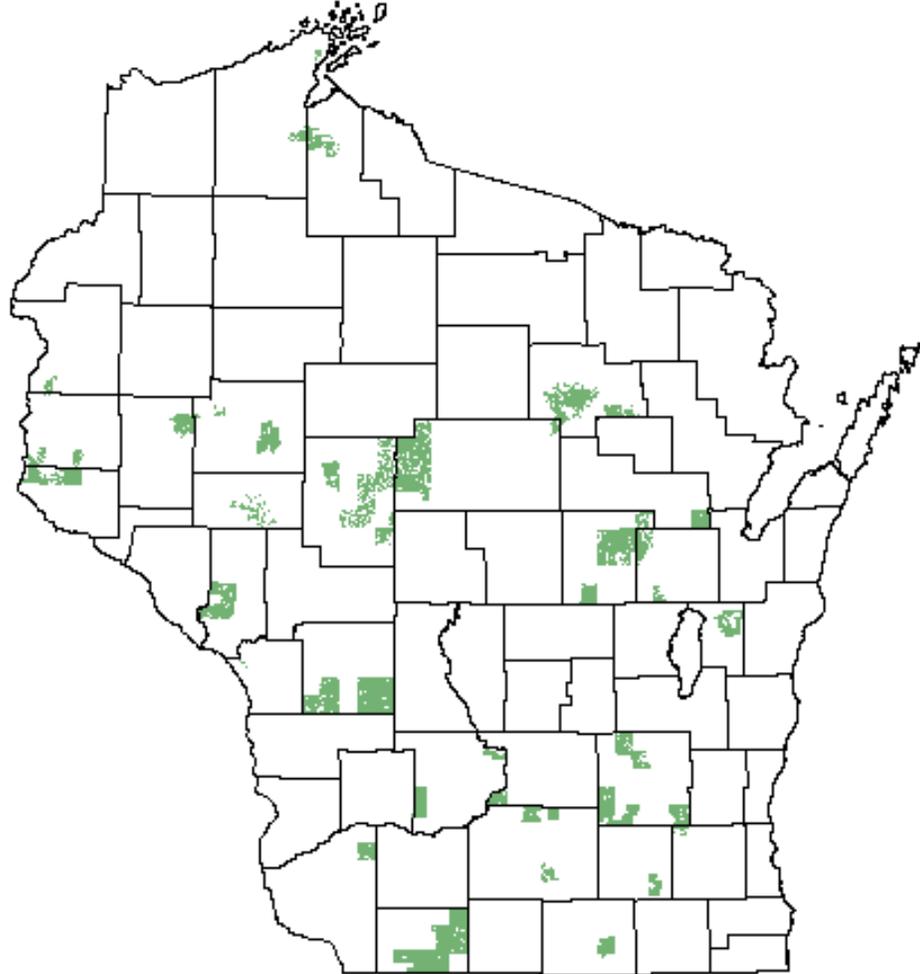


Golden Triangle AEA – Eau Claire County

- Agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs) are
- Community led
 - Important to local agricultural identity and economy
 - Support community's farmland and environmental protection goals



2020 AEA PROGRAM UPDATE



2020 Designated AEAs:

Currently, there are 40 AEAs in 112 towns and the Bad River Reservation in 27 counties covering 1,388,667 acres across the state.





2020 AEA PROGRAM UPDATE

Monroe County Co-operator Project -

- Goal to increase enrollment in farmland preservation plans to increase conservation compliance and increase the amount of protected farmland within the Headwaters of SE Monroe County AEA and the Scenic Ride and Valley AEAs
- Offered incentive of \$2,000 to landowners within AEAs who sign a new agreement to offset cost of starting a Nutrient Management plan and coming into conservation compliance
- In the first 8 months of the project, there has been an increase in FP agreement participation by 25% in the county
- 4 Co-operator grant proposals in AEAs have been submitted for 2021



2020 AEA PROGRAM UPDATE

AEAs in the Media -

- “Snapshots” - the department is working to put together articles to highlight the unique qualities of designated AEAs
 - Golden Triangle AEA – Eau Claire County
 - Headwaters of Southeastern Monroe County – Monroe County
- Growing Wisconsin Magazine articles on the AEAs designated in 2020:
 - Castle Rock AEA, Grant County & Bear Creek AEA Sauk County - WI Program Preserves Farmland and Promotes Conservation
 - South Fork AEA, Clark County - Neighbors Band Together to Protect WI Farmland





Agriculture Enterprise Area **SNAPSHOT**

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

Golden Triangle County: Eau Claire Acres: 21,394 AEA Designation: 2016
 Municipalities: City of Augusta; towns of Bridge Creek, Lincoln, Otter Creek, Washington; village of Fall Creek

Background

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| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 7 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS | 8 AG CO-OPS & BUSINESSES | 26 PRODUCERS & LANDOWNERS |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Local Support

One of the farmer petitioners was Joe Smith, a dairy farmer in Eau Claire County, who remembered in the 1960's when many farmers tilled up and down hills instead of following the curves of the land. Smith noticed that this style of tillage and planting was resulting in soil and nutrient loss that was traveling into a nearby trout stream. Stream pollution can result in poor fish health due to a loss of cover, food sources, or sites to nest on in stream beds. The potential loss of trout in the stream drove Smith's passion to start implementing conservation practices on the farm. "I wanted my grandsons to be able to go fishing in that stream," said Smith.

As a result, Smith began implementing sustainable practices, like conservation tillage and cover crops, into his rotation to help reduce the amount of soil and nutrient loss. In 2014, Smith received the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association state conservation farmer of the year award in recognition for outstanding work, community involvement, and education in conservation.



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 -Golden Triangle AEA petitioner

This AEA is supported by the following agriculture enterprises and businesses:

- Milk: haulers, producers & contractors
- Licensed egg producers
- Food processor & warehouse
- Refrigeration services
- Veterinary medicine
- Feed & farm supply
- Holstein Association (and breeders)
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Beef producers
- Dairy & livestock (nutrition) advisor
- Livestock truckers
- Grain dealer
- Agricultural cooperative (grain elevator, store, bulk propane storage)
- Organic certified businesses, farms
- Apple orchards
- Berry patches
- Plant/tree nurseries
- Ag consulting and accounting services
- Demonstration farm
- Historic Dells Mill and Museum
- Eau Claire downtown farmers market

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County Support

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 Eau Claire County Land Conservation Manager

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Ag in Your Community

- Incentives to cover conservation costs
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- Preserve farmland
- Install conservation practices
- Ag innovation
- Farm-to-farm networking
- Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition

Future Growth

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





2020 AEA PETITION PERIOD

Changes for this petition cycle:

- Pushed back petition deadline to accommodate changes to the public process due to COVID-19
- Moved meeting online
 - Able to invite more voices to the conversation to have a better representation of interests

Evaluation Committee:

John Kappleman, Large Dairy Account Specialist, Cereal Byproducts Company

Jerry Derr, District #1 Director, Wisconsin Towns Association

Jason Scott, Community Development Manager, WEDC

Terry McMahon, Regional Vice President Credit, Compeer Financial

Melissa Schlupp, Conservation Manager, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

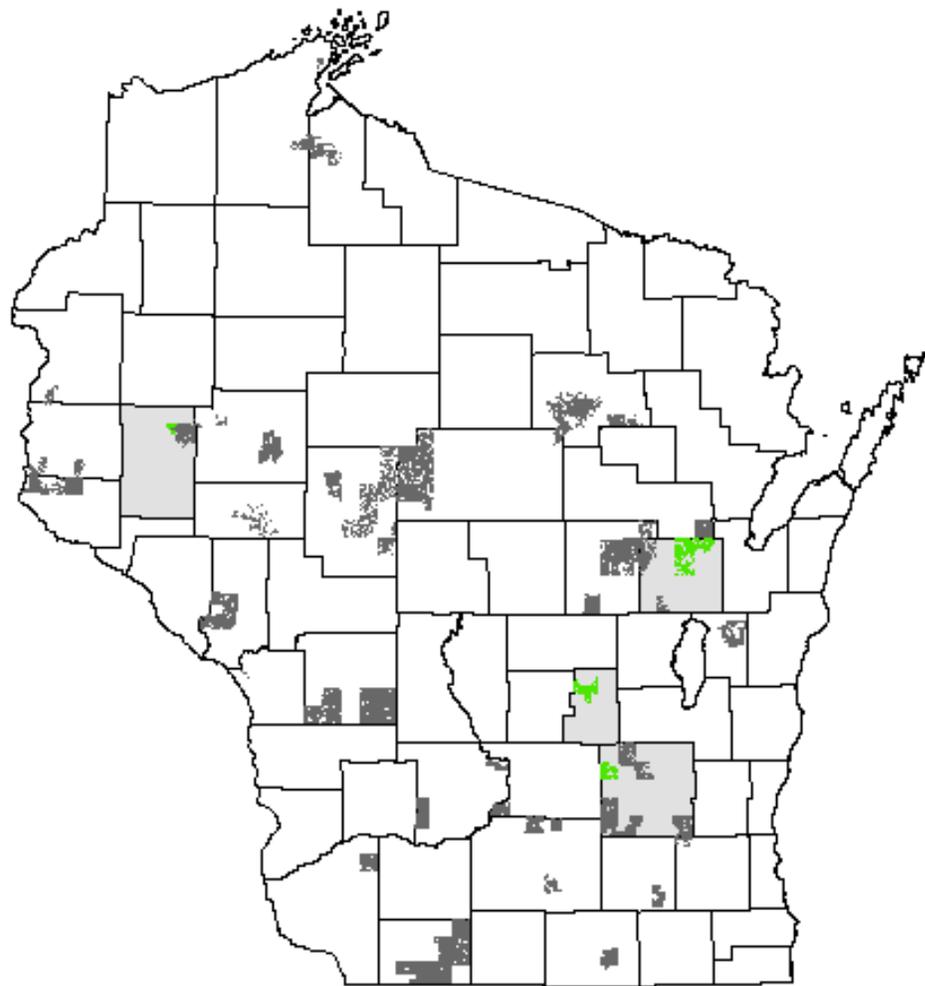
Melinda Osterberg, Community Development Educator, Lincoln County UW-Extension

Kara Kasten-Olson, Ag Development Supervisor, DATCP

Sheri Walz, Attorney, DATCP



2020 AEA PETITION PERIOD



Proposed AEAs:

- Three new AEAs
 - Cicero Blackmour AEA – Outagamie County
 - Town of Westford AEA – Dodge County
 - St. Marie AEA – Green Lake County
- One expansion to an existing AEA
 - Town of Grant AEA, Dunn and Chippewa Counties



2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: CICERO BLACKMOUR AEA – OUTAGAMIE COUNTY

Towns of Black Creek, Cicero, and Seymour

- 45,466 acres
- 20 petitioners
- Ag Production: Dairy, corn silage, alfalfa, row crops (corn and soybeans), rotational Grazing

Goals:

- Create regional sense of place and pride within the agricultural community via the establishment of the proposed AEA
- Explore and expand beyond traditional agriculture and agricultural related uses to allow for increased
- sustainability and market stability for existing and future agricultural operations within the proposed AEA and county as a whole.
- Encourage increased awareness and compliance with Chapter NR 151 "Runoff Management" via Farmland Preservation Agreements

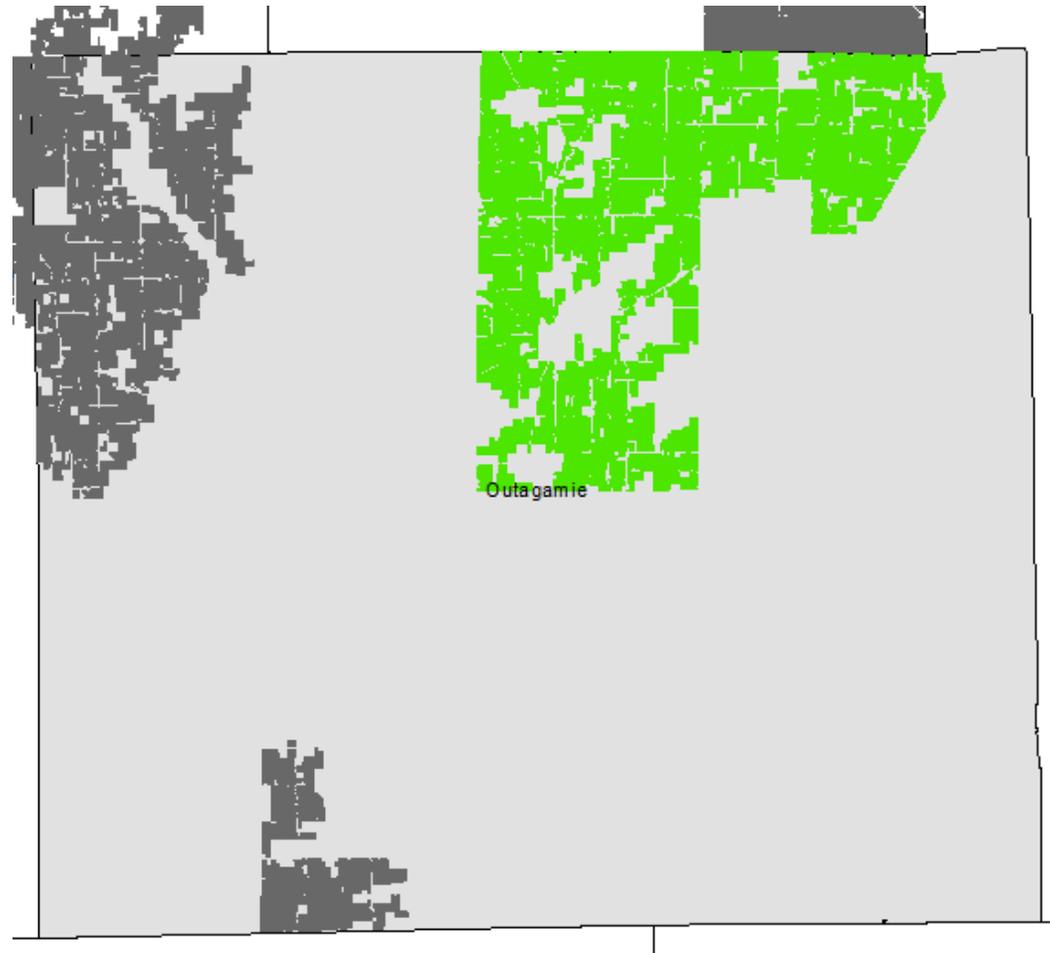


Photo from Outagamie County





2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: CICERO BLACKMOUR AEA – OUTAGAMIE COUNTY



2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: TOWN OF WESTFORD AEA – DODGE COUNTY

Dodge County, Town of Westford

- 18,203 acres
- 17 petitioners
- Ag Production: Corn, corn silage, soybeans, alfalfa, and winter wheat

Goals:

- Promote nutrient management planning to reduce sediment and phosphorus run off as a way to improve local surface water quality
- Give agricultural landowners the opportunity to participate in the program in a town without a farmland preservation zoning district
- Grow the relationship between farmer and lakeside landowners to promote conservation and preservation of Beaver Creek and Beaver Dam Lake.
- Allow current farmland preservation agreement holders to continue to participate in the farmland preservation program, encourage new participation in the area



Photo from Dodge County



2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: ST. MARIE AEA – GREEN LAKE COUNTY

Green Lake County, Town of St. Marie and Princeton

- 19,725 acres
- 11 petitioners
- Ag Production: Dairy, beef, row crops (soybeans and corn), wheat, alfalfa, direct market products, and timber production

Goals:

- Allows current farmland preservation agreement holders to continue to participate in the farmland preservation program and encourage new participation in the area
- Protect farmland from development pressures from nearby urban centers
- Support local food production and markets by creating a local brand to be sold at local stores and farmer markets
- Encourage sustainable agricultural practices, promote best management practices



Photo from WI DNR



2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: ST. MARIE AEA – GREEN LAKE COUNTY

PRINCETON TIMES

NUMBER 10

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020

Meeting on Ag Enterprise Area (AEA) takes pulse of St. Marie landowners

By Kristin Radtke

Town of St. Marie landowners packed the conference room at the Princeton Public Library for a February 27 informational meeting on a proposed Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) in the Town of St. Marie.

“IT’S REALLY UP TO THE LOCALS TO DETERMINE THEIR INITIATIVE.”

—TODD MORRIS

This meeting was a first step to gauge interest among farmers in that township, said Green Lake County Soil Conservationist Todd Morris, who ran the meeting.

SEE ST. MARIE, PAGE 8



PRINCETON TIMES-REPUBLIC PHOTO

A FEBRUARY 27 informational public meeting garnered much interest from Town of St. Marie landowners on the possibility of establishing an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) by signing a petition to do so. The meeting at the Princeton Public Library was run by Green Lake County Soil Conservationist Todd Morris.



A PETITION TO CREATE AN Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) in the Town of St. Marie is taking shape. With an August 8 filing deadline in sight, more than enough petitioning landowner signatures have been received by Green Lake County Soil Conservationist Todd Morris.

Attention Town of St. Marie Landowners

There will be an informational meeting for proposed Agricultural Enterprise Area in the Town of St. Marie. If you would like to learn more about what an Agricultural Enterprise Area is, or the benefits of establishing one, please join us on Thursday, February 27th from 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. at the Princeton Public Library to have your questions answered. Feel free to contact Green Lake County staff at 920-294-4051 if you have any questions.

Publish: February 20, 2020

Ag Enterprise Area moving forward for historic St. Marie designation

By Kristin Radtke

A proposed Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) in the Town of St. Marie is moving ahead, as a petition to formally establish this area gets closer to its deadline after gaining considerable support.

Their main goal? To preserve the farmland and rural character of the area.

Green Lake County Soil Conservationist Todd Morris said that the petition is moving forward, and is on track to be submitted before the August 8 deadline.

“Currently, I have six petitioning landowner signatures,” Morris told Red in Journal Newspapers. “You need a minimum of five to petition, and I am hoping to collect a few more.”

Not only are landowners showing their support of an AEA, the St. Marie Town Board has also signed the signature page in support of the petition, Morris pointed out.

“We also have the County Conservationist in support, and received his signature,” Morris stated. “I am now in the process of gathering support from local businesses to include with the petition.”

Total acres in the proposed AEA are 36,634, according to the petition.

All parcels in the area are contiguous and are located in the county’s farmland preservation plan.

The proposed AEA is primarily agricultural land, primarily consisting of farmers who have a strong desire to retain their land as farmland, the petition reads. Farming activities within the area include dairy, row crops, grazing, direct product marketing and timber sales. Morris’ data also noted an active conservation effort in the proposed AEA area, through federal conservation programs.

“Due to the importance of agriculture to the local economy, this AEA will encourage farmland preservation, protect natural resources, and minimize conflicts between farm and non-farm land uses,” Morris wrote.

Unique resources highlighted in the proposed AEA include the whopping crane raising facility in the White River Marsh Wildlife Area, along with the Fox River, Black Creek, and a portion of the Packias River.

In the petition application, Morris points out that historically, there has always been pressure within the county to convert agricultural land to non-farm residential development and other uses.

“The county must accommodate some population growth in order to maintain a viable workforce and economy,” Morris stated. “As long as growth is planned and controlled to ensure an efficient development pattern, the impacts of farmland conversion can be lessened significantly.”

“CURRENTLY, I HAVE SIX PETITIONING LANDOWNER SIGNATURES. YOU NEED A MINIMUM OF FIVE TO PETITION, AND I AM HOPING TO COLLECT A FEW MORE.”

—TODD MORRIS

Current land use trends in the area as detailed by Morris from 2012 statement measurements show the following:

- Green Lake County had 13,853 acres of agricultural land in 2012 – a 69 percent decrease from the amount of available agricultural land in 2007.
- Townships of Green Lake and Seneca have had a decrease of 2.83 and 3.56 percent in agricultural land from 2007 to 2012.
- The greatest losses were experienced by the townships of Berlin and Brooklyn, which saw a drop of 14.57 percent and 14.16 percent, respectively.
- The Town of Berlin experienced the greatest average loss of 1,791 acres, which was over 40 percent of all acreage lost by Green Lake County townships.
- The towns of Kington, Madford, and Iron Lake experienced slight growth in agricultural land.
- The towns of Manchester, Marquette, and Princeton lost very little agricultural

land over the five-year period.

“The loss in farmland does not appear to be excessive,” Morris noted. “However, over time, the acreage is likely to revert to its original agricultural use.”

The AEA was first brought into the public arena at a February 27 informational meeting, when Town of St. Marie landowners packed the meeting room at the Princeton Public Library.

That meeting was a first step to gauge interest among farmers in that township, said Morris, who ran the meeting.

What’s an AEA? According to information from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), AEA are community-led efforts that establish designated areas important to Wisconsin’s agricultural future.

More specifically, an AEA is an area of productive agriculture that has received designation from the state at the request of landowners and local governments. As a part of the state’s Farmland Preservation Program, AEA are used to support local farmland protection goals.

Morris pointed out that AEA can help communities preserve their type of land for the future while promoting the local ag economy and investing in local land and water resources.

“It’s a tool to support local policies and initiatives to protect the ag land base,” Morris said those attending the meeting in Princeton. “[And] it’s really up to the locals to determine their initiative.”

It also takes the public’s pulse on what kind of farming that participating Town of St. Marie landowners want to promote in the future, he added.

Establishing an AEA is not a land use control measure on an ordinance at the county level.

“It won’t affect your property taxes,” said Morris.

Property owners don’t have to enroll their whole farms and if they sell the enrolled land, the AEA agreement comes with it, said Morris.

The Town of St. Marie decision create an AEA is a first for Green Lake County.

Morris told landowners he’s not aware of any other AEA that exist in the county.

An AEA enables landowners to sign a designated preservation agreement. By doing so, a landowner agrees to keep land in agricultural use for 15 years and to meet state soil and water conservation standards. In return, the landowner may claim the farmland preservation tax credit each year.

Currently, that tax credit is \$5 per acre for landowners with a farmland preservation agreement signed or modified after July 1, 2009.

The amount goes up to a \$30 per acre tax credit for landowners who – in addition to the farmland preservation agreement – have lands located in a certified farmland preservation zoning district and in an AEA, the DATCP indicates.

To receive an AEA designation, landowners and local government can submit a petition, which Morris noted is entirely voluntary.

A proposed AEA petition will include the following requirements:

- Include a boundary that is contiguous, primarily in ag use, and falls within the county certified farmland preservation plan area.
- At least five eligible landowners within the boundary must sign the petition in support of the request.
- All political agencies with land that falls within the proposed AEA boundary, plus the county conservationist, must sign the petition in support of the AEA.
- The AEA must be consistent with other local planning efforts, including the county farmland preservation plan and any comprehensive plan.
- Once enrolled in an AEA, a person’s land can be released from their agreement before the 15 years is up. However, Morris pointed out that the landowner would have to pay a fee that’s three times per acre value for the year it’s released.
- The AEA would be equivalent to the highest ag value land in that township, he clarified.
- It’s a commitment to keep your land in ag for 15 years,” Morris commented.



2020 AEA PETITION CYCLE: TOWN OF GRANT AEA – DUNN AND CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Dunn and Chippewa Counties, Towns of Grant, Colfax, Sand Creek, Otter Creek, Auburn, and Cooks Valley

- 5,095 acres in proposed modification extension
- 31,095 acres in total AEA
- 13 petitioners
- Ag Production: Corn, soybeans, alfalfa, oats, rye, winter wheat, grazing beef cattle, chicken producers, and bee keeping

Goals:

- Protect and improve agricultural lands for future generations
- Host nutrient management classes to promote best management practices to protect water resources
- Promote farmer networking and educational opportunities by partnering with the local producer-led group and local technical college



Photo from the Town of Otter Creek



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM

- The community voice and enthusiasm for the AEA is lost in the petition, exploring new options to incorporate that into the petition would be helpful for committee members
- Some top dairy counties are not participating but there is huge opportunity to grow the program and extend the benefits to this community
- There is a desire to see the acre ceiling increased above 2 million acres
 - There has been steady interest in the program, and if some of our larger dairy communities start petitioning we will quickly hit the limit.
 - The Towns Association has offered to help in the legislative process



AEA PROGRAM GOALS FOR 2021

- Explore new opportunities for reinvestment for AEA's
 - DNR Surface Water Grants for AEA's with watershed protection Goals
 - Exploring partnerships with “Something Special from Wisconsin” branding program for AEA's
 - Expand the Co-operator grant program
- Expand educational and outreach materials for counties
 - “How to create an AEA”, “What can you do after AEA Designation”, FP Tax credits, etc.
 - AEA Snapshots
- Update the AEA Petition Process to better capture community goals and voice
- Develop new relationships with dairy producers to promote and expand the program in our top dairy counties





Wednesday Jordan

Farmland Preservation Program/Bureau of Land & Water Resources - DARM

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September 2020