



State of Wisconsin
Governor Tony Evers

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Secretary Randy Romanski

DATE: November 14, 2024

TO: Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

FROM: Randy Romanski, Secretary
Farmland Preservation Program

SUBJECT: Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) Update

PRESENTED BY: Wednesday Coye, Farmland Preservation Program Manager

REQUESTED ACTION: For information only.

SUMMARY:

Agricultural enterprise areas are community led efforts establishing 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, AEAs strive to support local farmland protection goals. Local communities can voluntarily pursue designation of an AEA by submitting a petition to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Through this designation, the community can encourage continued agricultural production and investment in the agricultural economy. Landowners within designated AEAs are eligible to enter into voluntary farmland preservation agreements committing all or a portion of their farm to agricultural use and maintaining state soil and water conservation standards. In return, they may be eligible to claim the farmland preservation tax credit annually.

On August 14, 2024, the petition evaluation committee (committee), a team of individuals with technical expertise in agriculture, conservation and financing met to review two new AEA petitions received during this petition cycle. The committee recommended to the Secretary the designation of the Woodland AEA in Sauk County and the Delavan Lake Watershed AEA in Walworth Lake County. See attachment A for a summary of the Woodland AEA and the Delavan Lake Watershed AEA.

Table 1: *Recommended for AEA designation 2024*

AEA Name	Approximate acres	Number of petitioners	AEA Location County and Town
NEW - Woodland	20,403	8	Sauk County, Town of Woodland
NEW – Delavan Lake Watershed	9,863	11	Walworth County, Towns of Delavan, Geneva and Walworth, and Village of Fontana

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DATCP is authorized to designate up to two million acres as AEAs. Designation of the two successful petitions would result in 51 AEAs statewide totaling 1,648,572 acres covering portions of 31 counties, 140 towns (villages and cities), and the Bad River Reservation (Attachment B).

Attachment A: Summary of the 2024 AEAs recommended for designation including maps

Attachment B: Map of existing AEAs, highlighting the recommended AEAs

Attachment A: Summary of the areas recommended for AEA designation 2024

Woodland AEA

Overview

- New AEA Petition
- Sauk County, Town of Woodland
- 20,403 acres
- 8 petitioners
- 2 non-petitioning cooperators: 1) Local Certified Crop Advisor; 2) Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group
- This area supports a wide array of agricultural production from grazing, beef, dairy, grains, soybeans, corn, pork, horse pastures, tree and plant nursery, and conservation program including NRCS Conservation Reserve Program and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Goals

- Preserve and maintain agricultural land use of the area by promoting farming practices that help build the soil such as no-till, cover crops, and rotational grazing
- Provide for future land use considerations that will promote:
 - quality of life for agricultural landowners
 - property values of agricultural lands
 - environmental protection
 - economic opportunities for agricultural landowners

Items of Note

- Many of the petitioners initially got involved with the farmland preservation program in 2023 during the Dellona AEA petition process and worked to educate neighbors to garner support for an AEA in the town of Woodland.
- Landowners in the area have always been early and eager adoptees of conservation practices, policies and programs. Establishing the Plum Valley Conservation Cooperative in 1946, landowners in the area continue to honor this legacy by diversifying operations, improving soil health and removing highly erodible lands from rotational crop production to more suitable land uses such as grazing.

Delavan Lake Watershed AEA

Overview

- New AEA Petition
- Walworth County, Towns of Delavan, Geneva and Walworth, and Village of Fontana
- 9,863 acres
- 11 petitioners
- 3 non-petitioning cooperators: 1) Delevan Lake Improvement Association (DLIA); 2) DeLong Co. LLC (Grain Elevator and Crop Advisors); 3) Local Farmer/Landowner not within proposed AEA boundary
- This area supports a wide array of agricultural production from corn, soybeans, Community Supported Agriculture farms, and Federal Conservation Programs including Conservation Stewardship Program.

Goals

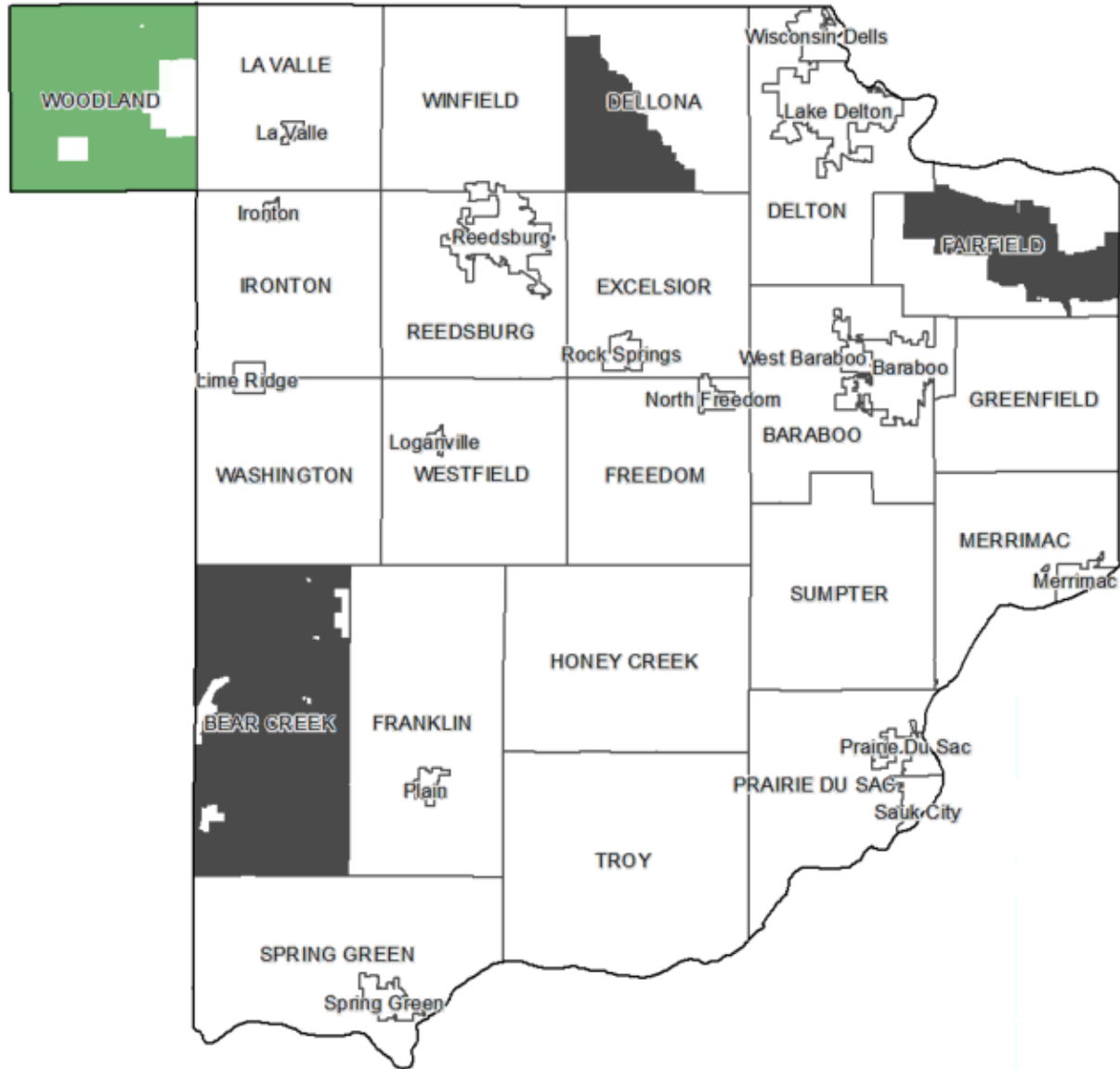
- Promote awareness and compliance with the state's soil and water conservation standards, as recommended by the Jackson Creek Nine Key Element Plan, to further community efforts to remove Jackson Creek from the impaired water list.
- Protect Jackson Creek, Delavan Lake, and the overall Rock River Basin from agricultural runoff by encouraging the use of conservation practices and nutrient management planning within the AEA.
- Encourage and expand efforts to bring together AEA producers with watershed stakeholders to put conservation practices on the ground to:
 - improve soil health
 - reduce pollutant loads into Delavan Lake
- Preserve agriculture lands near adjacent urban areas by implementing recommendations contained in Walworth County's Comprehensive Plans and Farmland Preservation Plan.

Items of Note



- Petition is a result of a multi-year process that began when the county updated their farmland preservation plan in 2023. Landowners, later petitioners, expressed interest in the agricultural enterprise area program worked with conservation and planning staff early on in the planning process to ensure that the goals of the future petition would align with the county's overall farmland preservation program.
- County plans on leveraging grant funding from partner agencies to achieve goals across county and local programs to achieve water quality protections.

Attachment B: Maps of Recommended and Designated AEAs

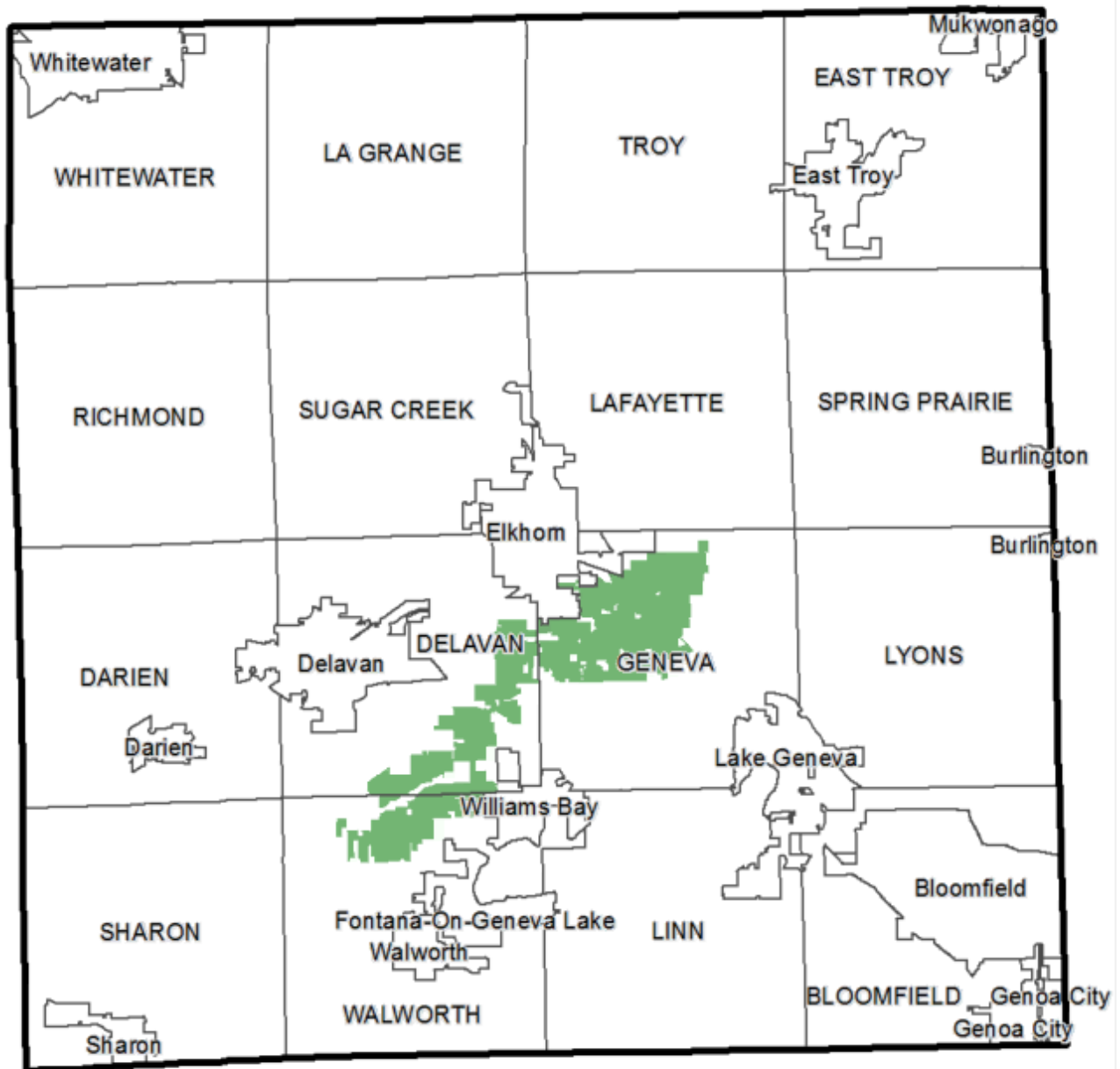
Woodland AEA – Sauk County




Legend

-  Woodland Agricultural Enterprise Area
-  Existing Agricultural Enterprise Areas

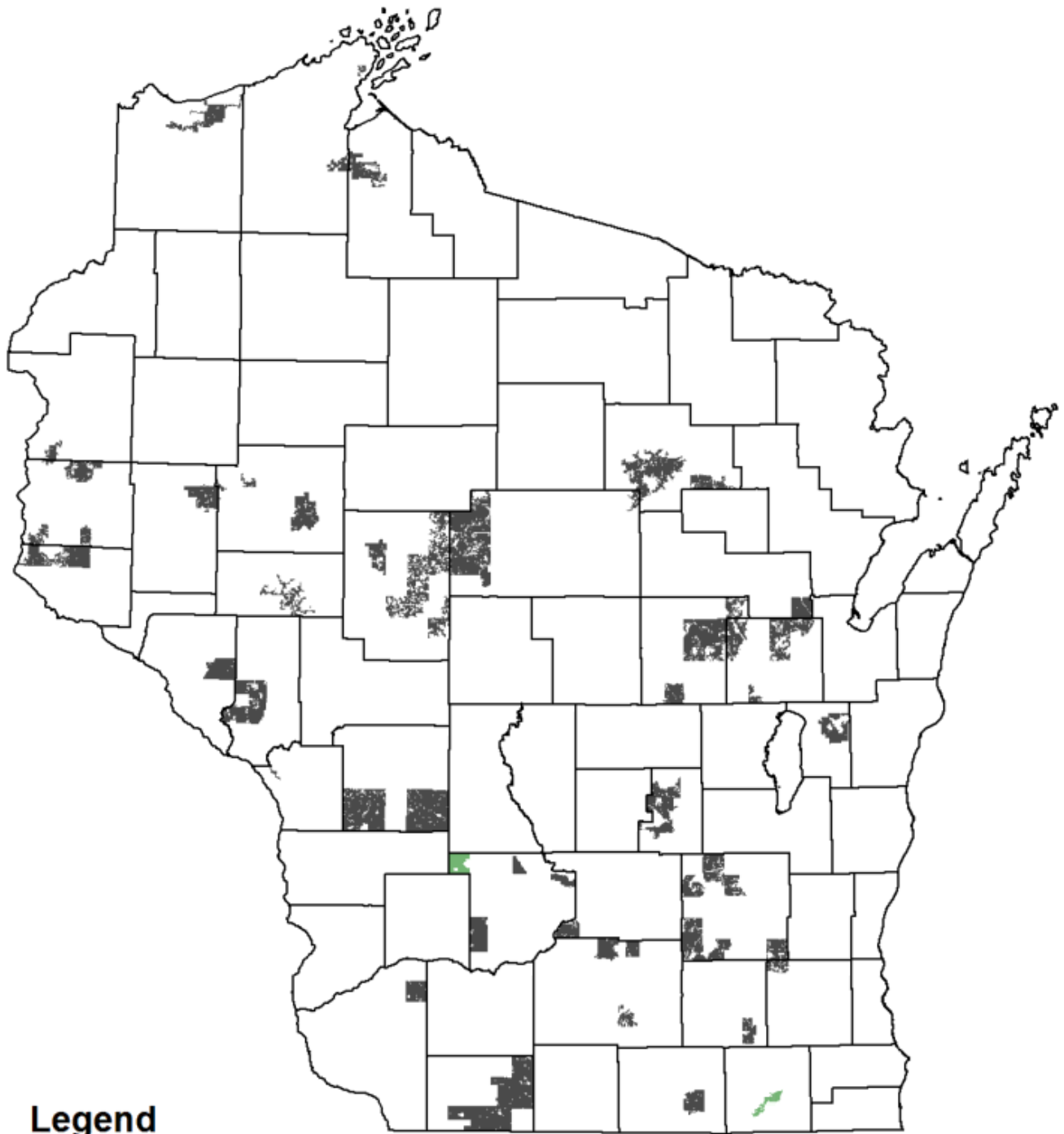
Delavan Lake Watershed AEA – Walworth County





Legend

 Delavan Lake Watershed Agricultural Enterprise Area

2024 Statewide Map of designated and recommended AEAs



Legend

-  2024 New Recommended Agricultural Enterprise Areas
-  Existing Agricultural Enterprise Areas