



State of Wisconsin  
Governor Tony Evers

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

DATE: September 17, 2021

TO: ATCP Board

FROM: Farmland Preservation Program, Bureau of Land and Water Resources  
Agricultural Resources Management Division

SUBJECT: Report on Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) recommended for designation in 2021

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 annual farmland preservation tax credit.

Farmland owners, agribusinesses and local governments work together to file a Petition for Designation. Petitions submitted to DATCP for consideration will include the following requirements:

- A boundary that is contiguous, primarily in agricultural 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 jurisdictions with land that falls within the proposed AEA boundary, as well as all county conservationists, must sign the petition in support of the AEA.
- The proposed AEA must be consistent with other local planning efforts, including the county farmland preservation plan and any comprehensive plans.

The AEA Petition Evaluation Committee (Committee) met on August 11, 2021, to review two AEA petitions received during this petition cycle. The Committee recommended the designation of the Northern Douglas County AEA, in Douglas County, and the Montana Society for Responsible Land Use AEA, in Buffalo County. The table below summarizes the AEAs chosen for designation this petition cycle and Attachment A provides additional detail regarding each AEA's goals and unique characteristics.

The 2021 AEA Petition Evaluation Committee included the following individuals:

- John Kappleman, Large Dairy Accounts Specialist, Cereal Byproducts Company
- Jerry Derr, District #1 Director, Wisconsin Towns Association
- Kietra Olson, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Rural Initiatives Manager
- Terry McMahon, Compeer Financial, Regional Vice President Credit

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- Matt Krueger, WI Land + Water, Executive Director
- Kirk Langfoss, Marathon County Planning and Zoning Department, conservation technician
- Jason Pausman, Outagamie County Planning and Zoning, planner
- Dr. Andrew Stevens, UW-Madison, Assistance Professor of Agricultural & Applied Economics

Table 1: *AEAs Recommended for Designation*

| AEA Name                                 | Approximate number of acres | Number of petitioners | AEA Location County and Town   |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Northern Douglas County                  | 32,881                      | 12                    | <i>Douglas, Parkland, Amnicon, Cloverland, Lakeside, Maple and Village of Poplar</i> |
| Montana Society for Responsible Land Use | 29,751                      | 29                    | <i>Buffalo, Montana</i>  |

Following designation of these two successful petitions, Wisconsin will have 45 AEAs, totaling 1,537,166 acres, located in portions of 30 counties, 126 towns and the Bad River Reservation (see Attachment B).

Visit the Department’s AEA Website for more information, including SnapShots describing six of Wisconsin’s AEAs: [DATCP Home Agricultural Enterprise Area \(AEA\) Program \(wi.gov\)](#)

Department Contact:

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## **Attachment A: Summary of the 2021 AEAs Recommended for Designation**

### **Northern Douglas County AEA**

#### **Overview**

- Douglas County, Towns of Amnicon, Cloverland, Lakeside, Maple, Parkland and Village of Poplar
- 32,881 acres
- 12 petitioners, 20 non-petitioning cooperators
- Grazing, beef, dairy, soybeans, corn, other livestock including pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens

#### **Goals**

- Maintain and preserve agricultural land suitable to the present and future needs of agriculture in the county through education opportunities and one-on-one meetings.
- Maintain and promote a diverse agricultural community through multiple modes of education and outreach to reach the community.
- Support and promote a strong rural character, culture, and visual quality by providing opportunities for farmers and non-farmers to build relationships and share information.
- Support and promote sustainable agriculture, prosperous farmers, and supporting industries with the support of a new agricultural technician paid with a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts.

#### **Items of Note**

- This is the first AEA in Douglas County. The county does not have a certified farmland preservation zoning district so landowners cannot currently participate in the farmland preservation program.
- The community of farmers in the proposed area feel they have not traditionally had the same access to conservation and farm support programs that the rest of the state has. They hope that they can use this AEA as a framework to build a program in which farms have greater access to the resources and programming to support local conservation and land protection goals.

### **Montana Society for Responsible Land Use AEA**

#### **Overview**

- Buffalo County, Town of Montana
- 29,751 acres
- 29 petitioners, 4 non-petitioning cooperators
- Corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats, annual forage, malting barley, research hemp, grazing, beef, dairy, poultry

#### **Goals**

- Preserve farmland and the right to farm in an environmentally sustainable and regenerative manner. This includes enrolling 50% of the farmland acres in farmland agreements within the AEA within the first 5 years.
- Promote soil conservation and nutrient management among all farmers in the AEA through education, demonstrations, and research.
- Empower farmers and landowners to access conservation support and tools that support farm profitability and common conservation goals.
- Promote a farm business environment that encourages farmers to develop new crops, livestock, and marketing ventures.
- Protect agricultural land from runoff and sedimentation into streams by adding conservation practices

in areas for normal concentrated flow from fields into streams.

### **Items of Note**

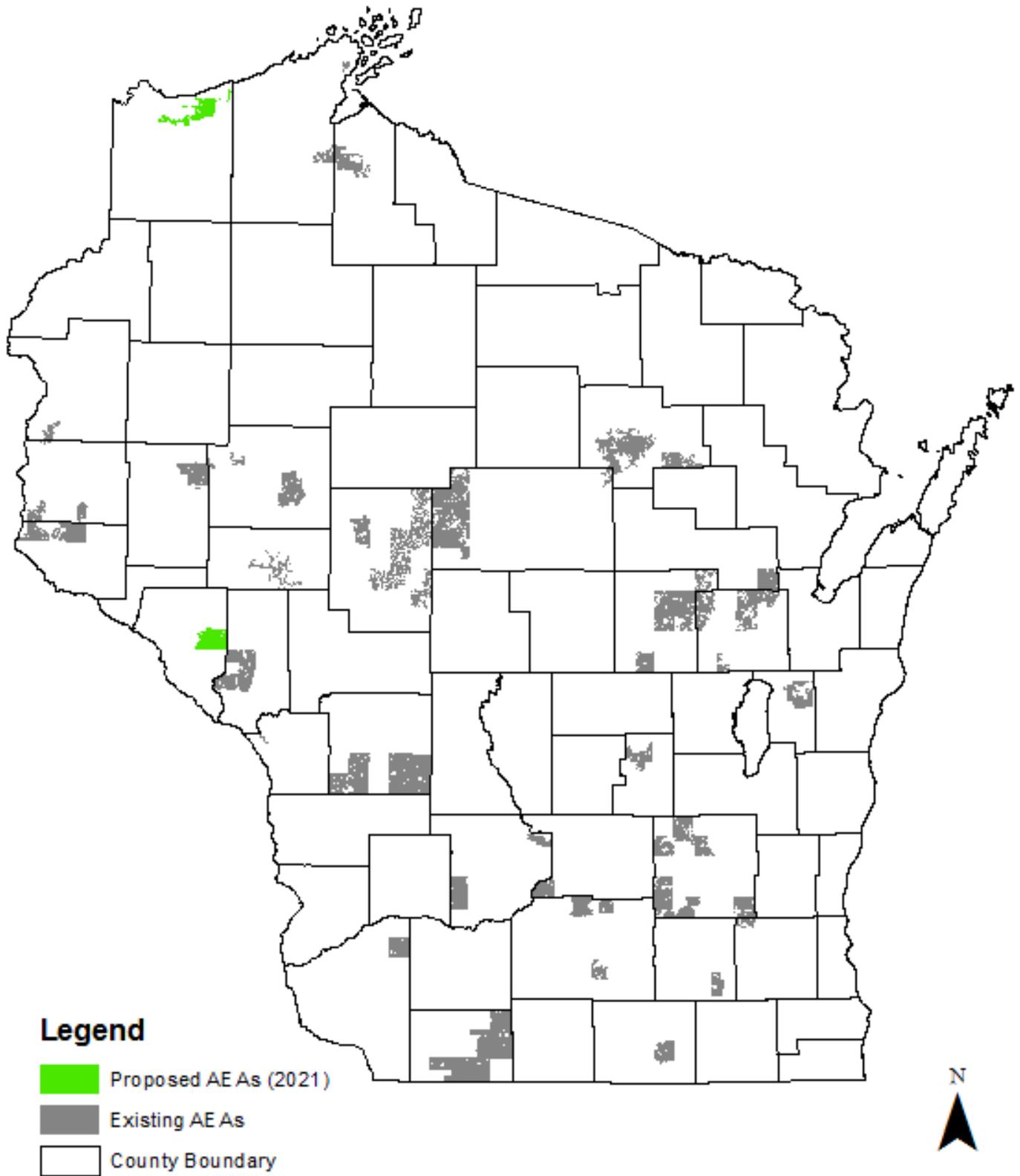
- The community within the AEA is tight knit and has a strong history of conservation and agricultural innovation. Neighbors work together to implement new practices on fields and share information and ideas. They hope to utilize these relationships to build and strengthen their conservation and land preservation efforts within the AEA.
- The town sees this AEA as a first step towards preserving and protecting their agricultural resources. The town is considering adopting town zoning authority and may pursue a certified farmland preservation zoning district in the future.

### **Comments from the 2021 AEA Petition Evaluation Committee:**

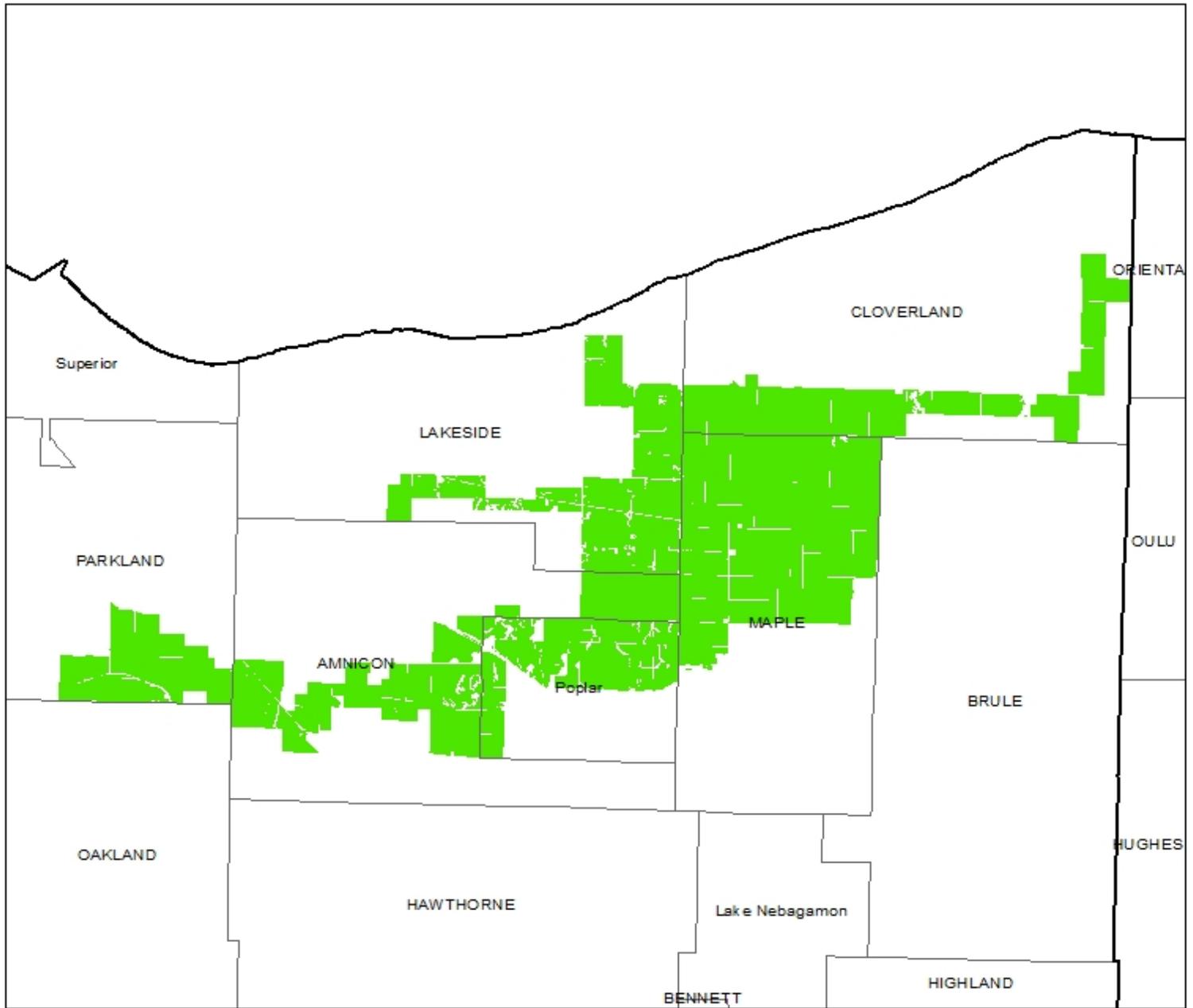
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- The committee expressed concerns about the way AEAs plan for and incorporate goals for business and economic development within the area. Petitions typically have well developed and focused goals for conservation and land preservation, but goals for sustaining and expanding markets and agribusiness viability tend to be more general. The committee would like to see more partnership with economic and business development groups and investment by the Department to expand this aspect of the program for both existing and future AEAs.
- DATCP should consider starting to explore avenues to increase the eligible acres that may be designated as part of the AEA program.

**Attachment B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs**



# Northern Douglas County AEA



0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

## Legend

-  Northern Douglas County AEA
-  County Boundary



# Montana Society for Responsible Land Use AEA



## Legend

-  Montana Society for Responsible Land Use AEA
-  County Boundary

