



State of Wisconsin  
Governor Tony Evers

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

DATE: September 2023  
TO: ATCP Board  
FROM: Farmland Preservation Program  
SUBJECT: Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) Update  
REQUESTED ACTION: For information only.

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 9, 2023, the petition evaluation committee (committee), a team of individuals with technical expertise in agriculture, conservation and financing met to review two new AEA petitions and one modification to an existing AEA petition received during this petition cycle. The committee recommended to the Secretary the designation of the Dellona AEA in Sauk County, the Marquette AEA in Green Lake County and the modification of the Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA in Monroe County. See attachment A for a summary of the Dellona AEA, Marquette AEA and Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA.

Table 1: *Recommended for AEA designation 2023*

AEA Name	Approximate acres	Number of petitioners	AEA Location County and Town
NEW - Dellona	8,284	11	Sauk County, Towns includes Dellona
NEW - Marquette	13,427	7	Green Lake County, Towns include Marquette, Green Lake, and Kingston
MODIFICATION – Scenic Ridge and Valley	20,684 in new acres (new total of 83,178 acres)	43	Monroe County, Towns include Leon, Jefferson, Wells, and Portland

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DATCP is authorized to designate up to two million acres as AEAs. Designation of the three successful petitions would result in 49 AEAs statewide totaling 1,619,566 acres covering portions of 30 counties, 135 towns, and the Bad River Reservation (Attachment B).

Attachment A: Summary of the 2023 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 2023**

### **Dellona AEA**

#### **Overview**

- New AEA Petition
- Sauk County, Town of Dellona
- 8,284 acres
- 11 petitioners, 2\* non-petitioning cooperators
- This area supports a wide array of agricultural production from grazing, beef, dairy, grains, soybeans, corn, community supported vegetable production, hoop house vegetable production, and conservation program including NRCS Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and streambank restoration efforts along Dell Creek.

#### **Goals**

- Promoting soil health principles including the implementation of nutrient management plans.
- Provide educational opportunities to producers help reduce cost of ag inputs and support compliance with local ordinances.
- Open up lines of communication between producers and county staff to better support farm management goals.
- Create a community for farmers and producers to support financial and environmental sustainability.

#### **Items of Note**

- Grazier-led petition with a strong focus on soil health and helping producers and landowners have a greater access to soil health practices.
- They county has worked with many of the agricultural land owners in the area to install conservation practices, like grassed waterways, on lands within the AEA. Along with the incentives provided through the farmland preservation tax credits, county is hoping to leverage this strong working relationship with the agricultural community in this AEA to increase the adoption of nutrient management in the AEA.

## **Marquette AEA**

### **Overview**

- New AEA Petition
- Green Lake County, Towns of Marquette, Green Lake, and Kingston
- 13,847 acres
- 7 petitioners, 5 non-petitioning cooperators
- This area supports a wide array of agricultural production from corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats, fresh market vegetables, annual forage, grazing, beef, dairy, and Federal Conservation Programs including Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wetland Reserve Program and Conservation Reserve Program.

### **Goals**

- Preserve the local farming economy
- Promote small scale agriculture such as fresh market vegetables, greenhouses, direct market beef and specialty crops
- Promote FP Agreements and the FP Tax credit
- Promote regenerative agriculture practices to improve soil health within the AEA

### **Items of Note**

- Enrollment in FP Agreements and protecting farmland will help community evaluate where it would be most appropriate to site future non-farm and recreational development around Lake Puckaway to reduce the strain on local resources (financial and natural).
- The additional option to sign a farmland preservation agreements in portions of the Towns of Marquette, Green Lake and Manchester that have adopted certified farmland preservation zoning will reinforce the local commitment to conservation and agricultural land preservation. A portion of the AEA covers part of the Town of Kingston which does not have farmland preservation zoning.

## **Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA**

### **Overview**

- Modification AEA Petition, originally designated January 1, 2016
- Monroe County, Towns of Leon, Jefferson, Wells, and Portland
- 20,684 new acres, 83,178 acres in total
- 43 petitioners, 7 non-petitioning cooperators
- This area supports a wide array of agricultural production from corn, soybeans, wheat, market vegetables, grazing, beef, dairy, poultry, feed supplier, grains, Conservation Reserve Program, and DNR water quality monitoring.

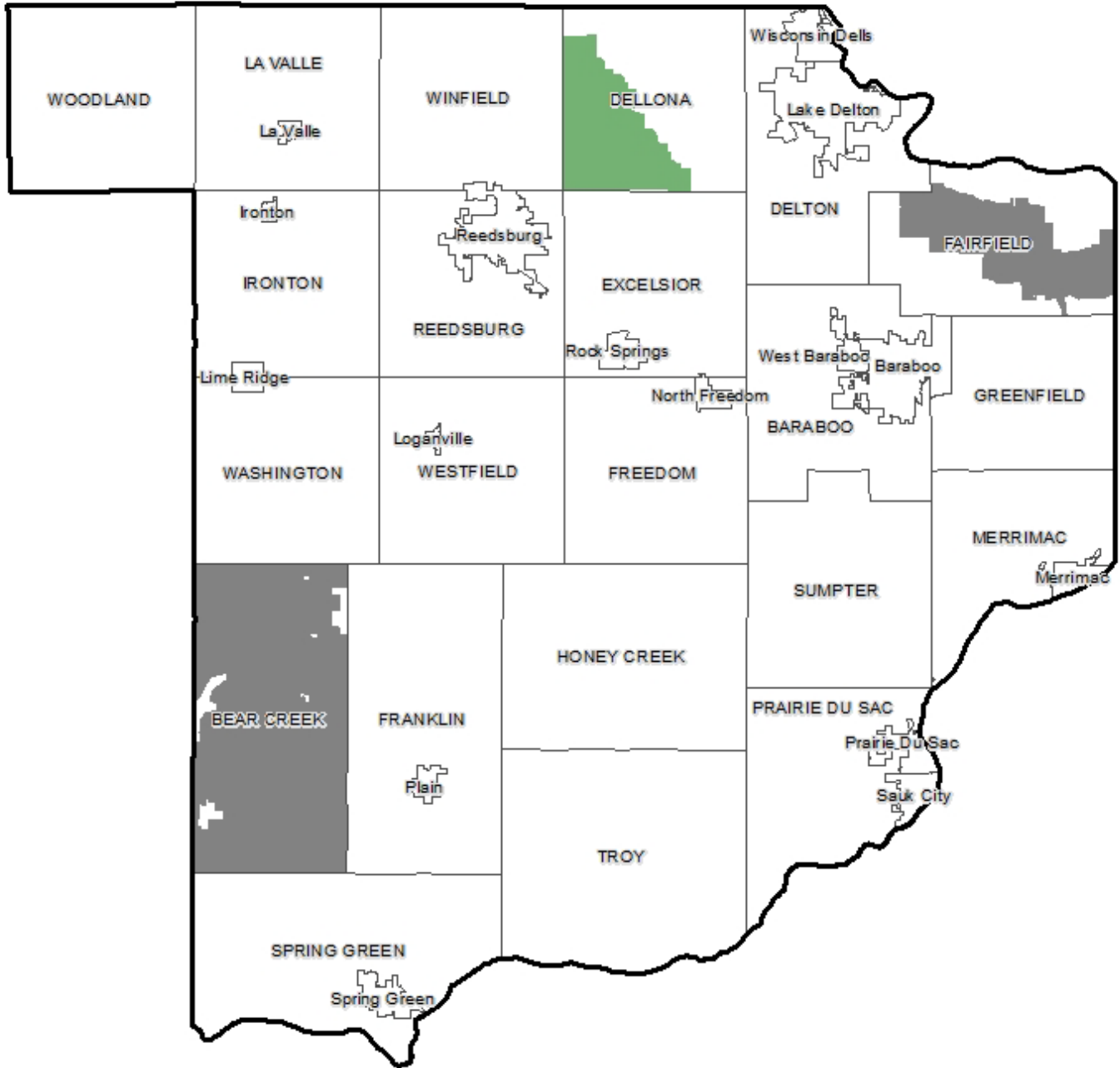
### **Goals**

- Preserve generational agricultural knowledge, business and lifestyles for future generations
- Continue the conservation ethic and strong history of farmers protecting soil and water resources
- Protecting the La Crosse River Watershed through participation in FP Agreements participation
- Support existing and promoting new agricultural business investment in the AEA

### **Items of Note**

- Local landowner champion personally obtained 43 petitioner signature pages in support of the modification to add the town of Leon to the Scenic Ride and Valley AEA before they started drafting the petition application. Petitions are required to have 5 petitioner signature pages to be submitted to the department.
- The town of Leon was considered to be a part of the original petition but they could not find the support to include the township at that time. After witnessing the success of the AEAs in the neighboring townships, the town of Leon wants to join this conservation minded community to protect and preserve their agricultural lands.

Dellona AEA – Sauk County







**Legend**

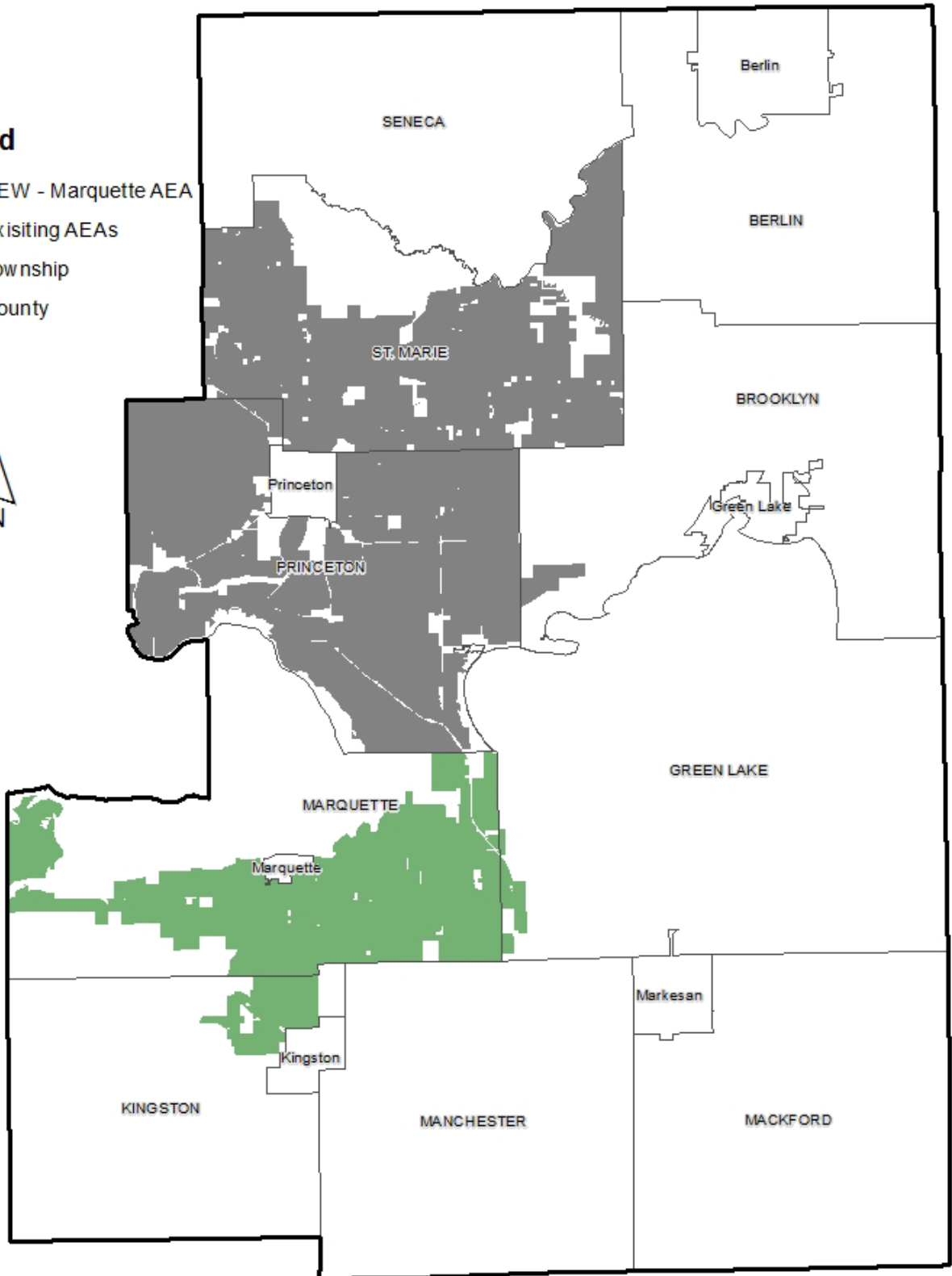
-  NEW - Dellona AEA
-  Existing AEAs
-  Township
-  County



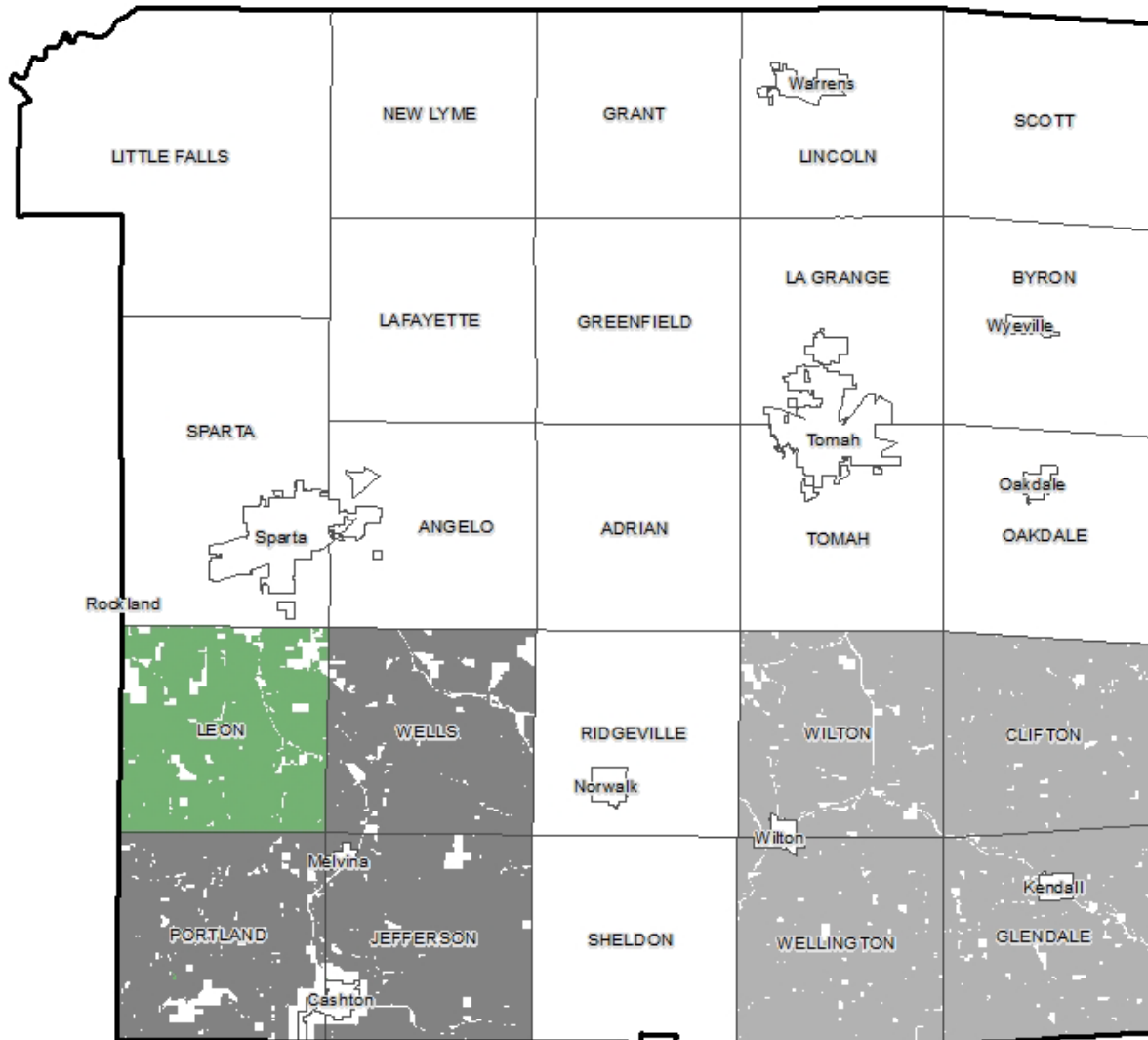
Marquette AEA – Green Lake County

**Legend**






-  NEW - Marquette AEA
-  Existing AEA's
-  Township
-  County



Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA Modification Boundary – Monroe County



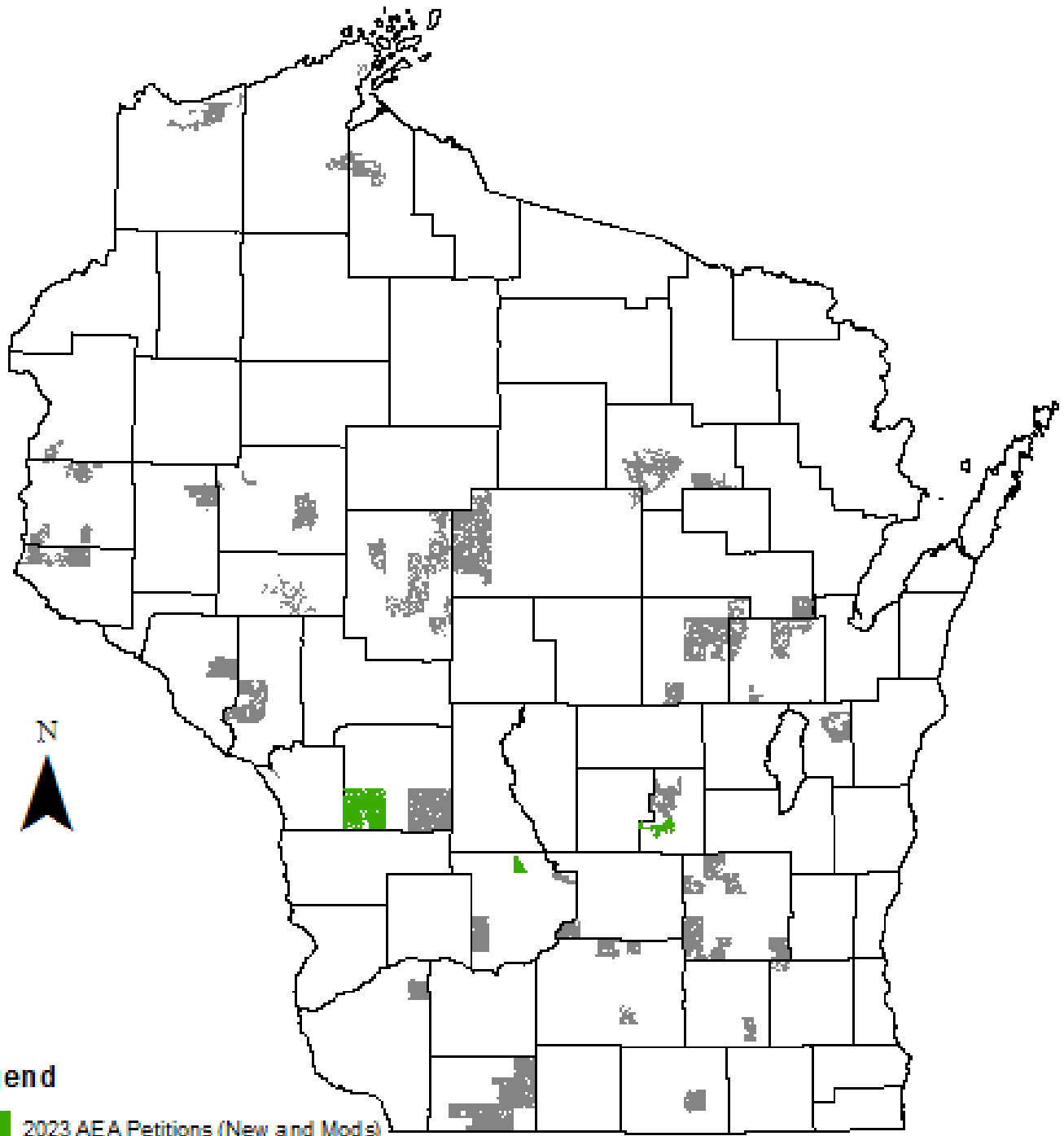
**Legend**

-  County
-  Township
-  MODIFICATION - Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA Propose Modificaiton
-  Original Scenic Ridge and Valley AEA
-  Existing AEAs








2023 Statewide Map of designated and recommended AEAs



**Legend**

-  2023 AEA Petitions (New and Mods)
-  Currently Designated AEAs
-  County Boundary