



Petition Period Opens for 2018 Ag Enterprise Areas

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Please note: Although the petition deadline is not until June 8, 2018, the petitions typically require months to prepare.

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will accept petitions beginning Nov. 10 for agricultural enterprise areas to be designated next year.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are primarily in agricultural use for farming and for businesses that serve the farming sector. They are created when at least five landowners and their local governments petition for an AEA designation and the department approves the petition.

Communities interested in AEA designation need to begin work soon; these petitions typically require meetings and data gathering, so they may take several months to prepare. Landowners and agribusinesses interested in forming an AEA should contact their local government officials to begin the process. The external evaluation team that reviews the petitions considers the level of local support in deciding whether to recommend areas for AEA status, so petitioners should involve their communities from the beginning.

AEA designation does not limit land use within the area or protect it from development. It does allow farmers within the AEA to receive tax credits of \$5-\$10 per acre if they enter into farmland preservation agreements with the department. The designation can also be used with local planning and zoning, conservation easements, agriculture economic development incentives, and other tools to support farming and the local farm economy.

“AEAs help provide farmers and agribusinesses invest with more confidence that there will be an infrastructure to support their operations into the future,” said John Petty, Administrator of DATCP’s Agricultural Resource Management Division, which houses the AEA program. “They are one of a range of tools that rural communities can use to help maintain a farming base for their economies.”

Petition materials are available online at <http://datcp.wi.gov> by searching for “petition materials.” Completed petitions are due to DATCP by Friday, June 8, 2018. Petitions must be completed jointly by local landowners and local government officials. Prospective petitioners should notify the department of their intent to apply, so they can receive announcements of workshops or webinars to help them prepare their petitions.

When AEAs designated this year take effect on Jan. 1, Wisconsin will have 34 AEAs totaling 1.1 million acres in 25 counties, 98 towns, and the Bad River Reservation. DATCP has the authority to designate up to 2 million acres for AEAs.

For more information, farmers and local government officials should call Natalie Cotter at 608-224-4611 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

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