

DATCP: Petition period opens for 2020 Ag Enterprise Areas

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Please note: Although the petition deadline is not until June 21, 2019, the petitions typically require months to prepare.

MADISON - Communities interested in being designated as agricultural enterprise areas in 2020 can submit petitions until June 21, 2019, to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are used primarily 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.

AEA designation allows 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 allow farmers and agribusinesses to invest with some confidence that there will be an infrastructure to support their operations into the future,” said Lacey Cochart, director of the department’s Bureau of Land and Water Resources, which houses the AEA program. “They are just one tool that rural communities can use to help maintain their agriculture economies.”

Petitions typically require meetings and data gathering, so they may take several months to

prepare. Interested landowners and businesses should contact their local government officials to begin the process. The team that reviews 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.

Petition materials are available online at <http://datcp.wi.gov> by searching for “petition materials.” Completed petitions are due to DATCP by June 21, 2019. 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 37 AEAs totaling 1.32 million acres in 26 counties, 108 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 can call Natalie Cotter at 608-224-4611 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.