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Dept. of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection: Fields, Waters and Woods AEA conserves natural resources through farmland preservation, nutrient management planning

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MADISON, Wis. – Established in 2014, the Fields, Waters and Woods Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) promotes farmland preservation and nutrient management planning to preserve its natural resources and agricultural lands. The AEA covers more than 41,000 acres in Ashland and Bayfield counties, spanning portions of the towns of Kelly, White River, Marengo, and Ashland and the Bad River Reservation.

Ashland County is looking to grow participation in the Fields, Waters and Woods AEA through enrollment in new farmland preservation agreements. A farmland preservation agreement is a 15-year agreement between a landowner and the state to keep the covered land in agricultural use and meet the state soil and water conservation standards. In 2022, Ashland County is offering a $2,000 incentive to county landowners that enroll all or a portion of their land in farmland preservation agreements in the AEA.

To further support and grow the AEA, Ashland County partnered with Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron counties to apply for a National Association of Conservation Districts grant to hire Agricultural and Wildlife Damage Technician Matt Bolen, who works on farmland preservation, nutrient management, and wildlife abatement. Utilizing Bolen's skills and assistance in nutrient management planning, this

coalition of counties aims to grow the number of farms in the Lake Superior region with a nutrient management plan. These plans help farmers meet crop nutrient needs using manure or other fertilizers while reducing the potential for runoff from fields to lakes, streams, and groundwater.

To find out if your land is located in the Fields, Waters and Woods AEA, sign a farmland preservation agreement, or learn more, contact Ashland County Agricultural and Wildlife Damage Technician Matt Bolen at (715) 682-7187 or matt.bolen@co.ashland.wi.us.

About Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)
AEAs are community-led efforts to establish designated areas important to Wisconsin's agricultural future. As a part of the state's Farmland Preservation Program, AEAs strive to support local farmland protection goals. Through this designation, communities can encourage continued agricultural production and investment in the local agricultural economy.

Eligible landowners within an AEA can sign a 15-year farmland preservation agreement 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.

To learn more about AEAs and the Farmland Preservation Program, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AgriculturalEnterpriseAreas.aspx. To start or join a current AEA, contact the county land conservation department in the county where your land is located.