

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Marathon County offers farmland preservation incentive to landowners in heart of America's Dairyland AEA

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MADISON, Wis. - Since the designation of the Heart of America's Dairyland agricultural enterprise area (AEA) in 2011, farmers, community members, and local governments have worked together to preserve their local agriculture industry and the rich farmland, soil, and water resources that make it possible. The Heart of America's Dairyland AEA now spans 224,906 acres over two counties, making it the largest AEA in the state.

Marathon County aims to sustain the area's agriculture resources by encouraging increased participation in the Farmland Preservation (FP) Program in the AEA. To achieve this goal, the county is partnering with landowners in the AEA through an incentive program that launched in 2021. New participants who are interested in signing a FP agreement within the AEA may be eligible to receive a \$500 incentive payment. New participants whose farmland is located in a town within the AEA with FP zoning may also be eligible to receive a \$500 incentive payment to participate in the FP program.

In addition to these efforts, members of the county's farming community created a producer-led watershed group named the Eau Pleine Partnership for Integrated Conservation (EPPIC). The Eau Pleine Watershed encompasses most of the AEA boundary within Marathon County. This group encourages and promotes conservation practices such as no-till farming, managed grazing, and cover crops and aims to integrate resilience into the natural resources, community, and economy of the Eau Pleine Watershed. With shared goals for conserving farmland, Marathon County hopes to collaborate with groups like

EPPIC to grow and expand the farmland preservation program in the county and reach more producers.

To find out if your land is located in the Heart of America's Dairyland AEA in Marathon County or sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact Marathon County Conservation Technician Amanda Kasperek at (715) 261-6031 or amanda.kasperek@co.marathon.wi.us. To learn more about the Heart of America's Dairyland AEA in Clark County, contact the [Clark County Land Conservation Department](#).

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.