

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: AEA snapshot: Town of Grant AEA promotes farmland preservation and protects natural resources

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MADISON, Wis. – Established in 2014 and expanded in 2020, the Town of Grant Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) promotes the preservation of the agricultural community. The AEA covers more than 31,000 acres across Dunn and Chippewa counties, spanning portions of the Auburn, Cooks Valley, Colfax, Grant, Sand Creek, and Otter Creek municipalities.

Forested land makes up almost half of the Town of Grant AEA. While woodlands are not typically associated with traditional ideas of agriculture, the lumber, maple syrup, nursery trees, and Christmas tree industries are all important to Wisconsin's agricultural portfolio. Woodlands within the AEA covered by a forest management plan written by a certified planner are eligible to participate in the farmland preservation program by enrolling in a farmland preservation agreement.

Landowners in the Red Cedar watershed see this AEA as a framework to support community agriculture, conservation and networking goals, and to build partnerships with other programs, such as the local producer-led watershed group the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers. With a focus on land management as a tool for maintaining water quality, farmers are utilizing farmland preservation agreements in the AEA, along with incentives from the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers, to reduce soil loss and sedimentation from moving into local bodies of water.

Dunn County hopes to expand the availability of eligible agricultural areas through additional certified farmland preservation zoning districts in the townships. Zoning can provide a tool for local authorities to implement practical land use planning goals while providing landowners in areas zoned for farmland preservation the opportunity to participate in the program and claim tax credits. Currently, Dunn County has three townships – Wilson, Grant, and Lucas – covered by a certified farmland preservation zoning district, including one covered by the AEA.

To find out if your land is located in the Town of Grant AEA in Dunn County or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact Dunn County Conservation Planner Rick Ingli at (715) 232-1496 or ringli@co.dunn.wi.us. To find out if your land is located in the Town of Grant AEA in Chippewa County or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact Chippewa County Conservation Specialist Lisa Richardson at (715) 726-7920 or lrichardson@co.chippewa.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.