



AEA Snapshot: Friends in Agriculture Helps Preserve Clark County's Rich Agricultural History

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MADISON – Each month, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) highlights a different Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) in Wisconsin. This month's snapshot features Clark County's Friends in Agriculture AEA. The area includes the towns of Freemont and Lynn and was designated an AEA in 2015. Landowners in this area are dedicated to preserving the agricultural way of life — ensuring that future generations can continue to farm the land. The goals of the Friends in Agriculture AEA include:

- Developing and implementing strategies to minimize land use conflicts by addressing development in outlying areas.
- Promoting nutrient management planning and best management practices to preserve and maintain natural resources.
- Providing farmers with access to technical assistance to implement soil and water conservation goals.
- Promoting new agricultural technologies that provide economic benefits for producers.
- Facilitating economic certainty for farms and agribusinesses to build production and processing capacity.

The area's history of agriculture production dates back to the late 1800s, and Clark County has since become Wisconsin's top county for dairy production. It also supports a variety of traditional and niche agricultural operations, including selling fruit and vegetables at local fresh markets and regional grocers; local greenhouses supplying residents with plants and garden transplants; and shipping grains and dairy throughout North America. In Clark County, agriculture contributes \$2.5 billion in economic activity and employs more than 7,000 people.

More than 6,400 acres of the Friends in Agriculture AEA are enrolled in farmland preservation agreements. The Clark County Land Conservation Department (LCD) works with operators in the Friends of Agriculture AEA to promote soil health and to ensure that conservation practices are implemented and maintained. The LCD also helps farmers and renters of land within the AEA to implement nutrient management plans. These plans help ensure that crops get the right amount of nutrients at the right time and place. Landowners who are interested in conservation practices or farmland preservation should contact the Land Conservation Department at (715) 743-5102 or fred.subke@co.clark.wi.us.

About Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)

Agricultural enterprise areas, or 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.

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