

Agricultural Enterprise Areas

Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative

July 2009

An agricultural enterprise area (AEA) is a contiguous land area devoted primarily to agricultural use and locally targeted for agricultural preservation and agricultural development.

Benefits of AEA's

- Preserve areas valuable for current and future agricultural use
- Promote the development of agricultural businesses
- Ensure eligibility of farm owners for tax credits through farmland preservation agreements

The state is authorized to designate:

- 15 AEA's (up to 200,000 acres) during a two year pilot period ending December 31, 2011
- Up to 1,000,000 acres total statewide after 2011

Designation of an AEA

The designation of AEA's is based on review of a petition voluntarily submitted by owners of at least 5 eligible farms and any affected local governments. The state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will request submittal of petitions. The request will include submittal deadlines and review procedures. Petitions filed with DATCP must meet basic requirements identified by DATCP to be considered for designation. Additional evaluation criteria may be used to review competing petitions.

The area proposed for designation as an AEA must be:

- Located in a farmland preservation area, as certified under a county farmland preservation plan
- A contiguous land area
- Primarily in agricultural use

Once successful petitions are selected, the state will officially designate the areas as AEA's through a modified administrative rule process. The rule process requires a public hearing and notice to the legislature. AEA's may only be designated, modified or terminated through this process.

Petition materials, including requirements and evaluation criteria will be made available on the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection website at <http://workinglands.wi.gov>.

Agricultural Enterprise Areas

Guidance for requesting designation of an AEA

1. Determine your interest in being a part of an AEA. You may wish to contact the state with questions or for further assistance.
2. Confirm your eligibility. (*Gross farm revenues of \$6,000 in the preceding year or \$18,000 in the previous three years*).
3. Identify at least 4 other eligible landowners within the area to serve as petitioners.
4. Determine the boundary of the area to be proposed for designation.
6. Get the support of political subdivisions in which the AEA is proposed.
7. Determine if all of the following apply:
 - Located in a certified farmland preservation area
 - Consists of contiguous land area
 - Primarily in agricultural use
8. Develop the petition requesting designation of AEA, making sure to fully complete all sections of the petition.
9. Identify interested cooperators who may support your petition.
10. Submit the petition to the State of Wisconsin by the identified deadline when a request for submittals is made.
11. Once the AEA is established:
 - Sign a farmland preservation agreement to collect tax credits, if desired.
 - Continue to promote agricultural land use and the development of agriculture within the AEA.

The process to designate an AEA may be initiated by landowners or by a political subdivision. In either case, it is important for the local farm owners and local governments to work together to ensure adequate interest in establishing and maintaining an AEA.