

Antigo Flats AEA

Langlade County

Towns of Ackley, Antigo, Neva, Peck, Polar, Price and Rolling

PART II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR AEA

DATCP will evaluate petitions under s. 91.86, Wis. Stats., and will consider information provided in response to the following questions.

1. What are the agricultural land use and development goals of the proposed AEA?

Include a discussion of proposed agricultural uses and agricultural-related uses, including a discussion of relevant infrastructure in the AEA. Explain how the proposed AEA will advance the state's goal of agricultural preservation and development. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Agriculture is the heartbeat of our community. The very pulse of our economy is tightly linked to the success of agriculture, both the agriculture commodities produced, and the services, and ancillary agriculture business enterprises.

The area we propose for the Antigo Flats AEA is very well known for the potatoes grown here, as they have been a leading economic mainstay for over 100 years. While we are home to over 3000 acres of quality commercial potatoes, our 8000 acres of seed potatoes are our claim to fame. This seed is consistently among the highest quality seed potatoes grown in North America. Our Seed Potato Certification Program, office in Antigo, is internationally renown for the high standards achieved and strong relationship with world class research of the University of Wisconsin. These potato farms have warehouses with an ability to store approximately 350 million pounds of potatoes. These potato storages are additionally connected to grading facilities and fresh market packing sheds. These farms have invested in wells and irrigation systems that not only irrigate potatoes but nutritious processing crops such as snap beans (1800-3000 acres), green peas (2700-3000 acres), and sweet corn (2900-3000 acres).

Potato acreage has remained constant for nearly half a century, showing the successful outcome of both value added and sustainable practices, long before they became cliché. Our people were early leaders in nutrient management, integrated pest management, crop rotations, cover crops, and now precision agriculture and irrigation efficiencies. In addition, many new farmers participating in the AEA will embrace conservation measures. The Antigo Flats AEA designation by DATCP will recognize that our soils, indeed our State Soil, Antigo Silt Loam, continues to be sustainably farmed.

When you cultivate vegetables well and are successful, ancillary business and industry support also grows. The Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Association is headquartered in Antigo, as are packaging equipment dealers, packaging products manufacturing, potato brokerages, agricultural aviation, crop consultants, crop advisors, certified grain seed dealerships, a fertilizer and agronomy plant, agricultural dealerships and farm supply stores, farm equipment manufacturing, machining and repair shops, industry organizations (WPVGA, WSPIA), farmers market, proximity to canning companies, and the resources of UW Extension and affiliated Langlade Ag Research Station.

With an award winning cheese factory, owned by Sartori Foods, and many farms that have modernized and reinvested in recent years, dairy remains an equally strong sector of the local economy next to potatoes considering both raw production and processing together. The Antigo based cheese plant is world renowned for hard and semi hard Italian cheeses, in particular Asiago and Parmesan cheese. (See attached list of awards) The dairy farms represent a diversity of Wisconsin dairying today, with larger farms, family operated mid sized dairies, and a significant number of grazing and organic dairies dotting the landscape. The dairy population is relatively stable and benefits from proximity to dairy markets, dairy suppliers. Dairy farmers are notably involved with many local organizations including the Dairy Promotion Committee, Langlade Holstein Breeders, the Antigo FFA, FFA alumni, and the Antigo High School vocational ag program.

Forestry is a significant employer and land use in the county and where high value vegetables and rotation crops cannot be grown. With the construction of a new Wood Technology Center at the North

Central Technical College, Antigo Campus, we will have a influx of skilled labor entering the market place. Although not included in the current AEA proposal consideration should also be given to these "working lands" and opportunities to develop new wood technology industries within the AEA.

The Antigo Flats AEA fits hand in glove with the Langlade County's Comprehensive Plan adopted December of 2009. In 1982, the County adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan and has since then had strong participation in the program, currently at 59.2%. Given the lifting of income limitations, participation is anticipated to increase. Farmers are convinced that the Antigo Flats is worth the investment, Langlade County has long been a leader in protecting farmland. In 1985 the County adopted Exclusive Ag Zoning and has remained a leader in northern Wisconsin for protecting farmland through zoning (see Maps - Exclusive Ag Zoning State Map, July 2009.)

Agriculture is the heartbeat of our community and our mix of crops, services, and exceptional natural resources has been a defense against the economic declines seen in other northern Wisconsin economies. We recognize the potential to further develop local and regional markets for certified potato seed, dairy, certified small grain seed, wood technology, and other local commodities. The designation of this area as an Ag Enterprise Area by the state will increase name recognition, promote our agricultural and industrial identity, and be used as a tool in marketing efforts for ag tourism and retail sales opportunities.

2. What activities are planned in the proposed AEA to achieve the agricultural preservation and development goals?

Describe any planned activities within the AEA, including grants, development incentives, cooperative agreements, land or easement purchases, land donations, promotional activities, public outreach or other actions that will help achieve the stated goals. Identify other individuals and entities involved in these efforts and their level of commitment. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

In the last two years Langlade County UW Extension has met with a community partners and created a Community Partner Advisory Group (CPAG). From initial outcomes of this initiative we have worked to develop a broad range of community initiatives to address poverty, food security, employment and business development. For agriculture these initiatives have included developing new markets, new small producer educational programs, product innovation, and sustainable practices.

UW Extension partnered with stakeholders to organize and create structure to a new farmers market. Successful development of the Antigo Farmers' Market Association created an opportunity for over 30 new agriculture enterprises to be launched or increase consumer access. The AEA designation will strengthen visibility to the market and create new opportunities for cooperative local and regional marketing efforts.

Another outcome of this work with community partners is increased cooperation between stakeholders and the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program to increase access to vegetables for low income families and seniors in particular through farmers markets and local food pantries. Current grant applications submitted to Fiskars and an "Innovative Grant" to UWEX consider more collaboration between WNEP with the agricultural community to increase access to fresh vegetables and gardening skills for self reliance.

As an additional outcome to these efforts with community partners, our locally based, Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association, was just awarded an Agriculture Diversification and Development (ADD) Grant to help revolutionize seed potato production with the AEA and more quickly bring new potato varieties to market. We are giving consideration to further ADD grant opportunities within the Antigo Flats AEA to increase new market access to locally grown seed potatoes.

Other grant awards have been a keystone of our local efforts to improve nutrient management on our local farm. Grower interest in conservation compliance will likely increase given the Working Lands Initiative to update and also initiate new nutrient management plans. Funding for educational grants has become significantly more competitive and we hope that designation as an AEA would increase the likelihood of more frequent awards.

In 2009, the Antigo Garden Club and Master Gardeners began a significant renovation of the Antigo Silt Loam State Historical Marker. The beautiful sign will receive further attention in 2010 with stain and the landscaping will see new flowers installed around it. In addition, with the designation of the Antigo Flats as an AEA, our community intends to install additional signage to commemorate this pledge of preservation and stewardship.

UW Madison and UW Extension continue to have a strong partnership with the farmers represented within the Antigo Flats AEA through a partnership with the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association. Since 1975, UW Extension has operated a 34 acre potato research facility in the proposed AEA to answer questions particular to seed potato production and local climate at the Langlade County airport.

Developing an AEA area in Langlade County is a collaborative effort between UW Extension, Land Records & Regulations, and Land Conservation Departments. We have for many years been working to train farmers to write nutrient management plans (NMPs). With the requirements of conservation compliance attached to participation in the AEA, we will certainly see an increased interest in either new NMPs or updated NMPs. The AEA will certainly help in our development of Farmer Nutrient Management Education Grants

Other collaborators on this project include the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), and Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association (WSPPIA), who have been important in promotion and support of this application.

24083 Maximizing productivity of NFT potato seed minitubers

Wis. Seed Potato Improvement Association, Antigo Amount Awarded: \$24,000.00

Primary Contact: John Gallenberg

Project Objective: Nutrient film technology (NFT) minituber production could revolutionize the Wisconsin and US seed potato industry by reducing the generation time by 1 to 2 years and in-turn reducing potato seed production costs 20% (\$500,000 to \$1,000,000 in production costs/yr). In addition, the ability to bring new potato varieties to market more quickly will allow Wisconsin seed growers to maintain and expand their customer base.

3. How will the AEA location promote agricultural preservation and development?

Explain what is special about this location. Include why the proposed AEA is geographically well "targeted" for agricultural preservation and development. Explain how the geographic distribution of existing agricultural uses and related infrastructure helped determine the location (see next). Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

The Antigo Flats as Unique Location

An official state soil was created by 1983 Wisconsin Act 33 to remind Wisconsinites of their soil stewardship responsibilities. Thus, Antigo Silt Loam was declared the official state Soil. This soil occurs only in Wisconsin, across the north central part of the state. It is a versatile and productive soil and is representative of the many silty soils that cover nearly half of the state. It is named after the city of Antigo in Langlade County.

Professor Francis D. Hole, a UW-Madison soil scientist was behind the drive to declare an official

state soil. It was done to remind the people of Wisconsin of their soil stewardship responsibilities. Antigo Silt Loam was selected to represent more than 500 major soil types in Wisconsin.

People argued that soil, a natural resource that took 10,000 years to produce, not only is essential to Wisconsin's economy, but also is the foundation of life itself. Antigo Silt loam is a productive, silty soil originating from the glaciers and enriched by organic matter from prehistoric forests. This soil supports dairying, potato growing, and timber.

About 11,000 years ago, near the end of the last Ice Age, glacial meltwaters deposited the sand and gravel outwash that forms the lower subsoil and substratum of the Antigo soil. Strong winds and glacial meltwaters then deposited 2 to 3 feet of silty loess and loamy outwash on top of the sand and gravel. Soil development, under northern hardwood forests, produced an organic enriched surface layer and a clay enriched subsoil.

The soil stores water for use by plants and filters our ground water and surface water. We depend on the soil to provide us with food and fiber. Soils play a major role in recycling carbon and nitrogen. Without soils neither we or the ecosystems in which we live could exist. The quality of our soil resources directly affects our quality of life. Good conservation practices allow us to use the soil while protecting the environment and keeping the soil healthy for future generations.

Geographic Distribution

Upon this soil, our social culture is grown. Agriculture is an important economic force in Langlade County. It includes hundreds of family-owned farms, related businesses and industries that provide equipment, services and other products farmers need to process, market and deliver food and fiber to consumers. The production, sales and processing of Langlade County's farm products generates employment, economic activity, income and tax revenue. Langlade County is located on the edge of Wisconsin's Northwoods. The county has 132,000 acres of farmland. While this area was settled later than other areas of the state, we have several farms that have been recognized as century farms.

Potato production and dairy are the main agricultural enterprises. Langlade County is ranked second in the State for potato acreage at 11,000 acres, second to Portage County. Potatoes are grown in a three year rotation with other crops. Thus of over 33,000 acres of land dedicated to potato production, nearly all it is located in the 79,332 acres of the AEA. Approximately 8,000 acres are grown for certified seed potato production. Our isolation from other potato growing areas, our superior soils and cooler temperatures provide ideal growing conditions for this use.

The area produces excellent forage crops that support a number of thriving dairy farms, the majority of which are located within the AEA

Other areas within the AEA support an extensive logging and lumber industry, including sawmills, and wood manufacturing companies. A reflection of this is that Antigo is the future site of the North Central Technical College Wood Technology Center for Excellence.

Additional land area within the AEA produces Christmas trees, wreaths and maple syrup, with a combined value of over 2 million dollars.

4. How did you determine the size and the boundary of the proposed AEA?

Explain why the size and boundaries are appropriate, and will help "focus" preservation development efforts. As part of the explanation, include a discussion of agricultural uses and infrastructure, unique and resources, soil productivity, proximity to viable farm markets or processing facilities, and other relevant factors. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

The area has been defined geologically by the impact of two glaciers and their outwash of sand

gravel, later covered by approximately 3 feet of windblown silt loess. Soil development under the forested landscape increased the clay content and organic matter of the soil. These formative influences created a hydrologically rich, highly fertile, and relatively flat agricultural area. These areas are fairly well defined in the north and east by the glacial moraine deposits. To the west and south, soils become significantly less desirable for potato and vegetable production, which does not make them different than farmland in bordering communities. In these less defined areas, the borders were selected based on the class of crop land, crop history, and the ability to make this acreage contiguous with the AEA.

5. What are the current land uses within the proposed AEA?

Provide documentation to show that the proposed AEA is primarily in agricultural use. Describe the percentage and distribution of agricultural and agriculture-related uses; residential uses; transportation, utility, energy and communications uses; undeveloped natural resource and open space uses; and other uses as applicable. Identify the principal types of agricultural use and describe the location, geographic scope, size, significance and compatibility of those agricultural uses. Describe current trends and emerging issues within the proposed area. Attach a land use map for the area to support this explanation (at the town or county scale).

The Antigo Flats is predominately prime farmland as indicated by the attached Map 2. The residential areas and proposed areas for single family homes was not included in the AEA delineation. The Comprehensive Plan has identified areas that are suitable for development outside the AEA. There remain areas of undeveloped natural resources within the AEA which lend to the beauty of this area and remind us to be good stewards. These include some low lying areas, farm woodlots, and the Springbrook and Eau Claire Rivers.

The principal types of agriculture use are potato including seed and fresh market and some processing. Snap beans, peas, and sweet corn are grown in this area for canning companies. Potatoes are grown in rotation, typically with oats and red clover, although variations to this crop rotation are common including crops of winter wheat, alfalfa, soybeans. The dairy and potato farms find compatibility within the rotation crops used (corn, haylage, soybean.) Dairy remains a strong component and land rental swaps are common for potato acreage. In addition, corn for grain and silage are grown by dairy farmers in this area.

There is also a small component of grazed pasture, including managed rotationally grazed pasture. There are also four organic farms within the AEA which further represent the innovative approach to value added marketing common in the area. Current trends have seen periodic influxes of canning crops when corn grain prices are high in other canning crop counties. This is a welcome, but not necessarily a stable market.

6. How is the proposed AEA consistent with your other local land use plans?

The entire proposed AEA must be located within a farmland preservation area designation in the county's certified farmland preservation plan (please document). Explain how the proposed AEA is consistent with existing county and local land use plans. If there are inconsistencies, explain how they will be reconciled. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Langlade County adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan in 1982 which was subsequently certified by DATCP. The plan identifies county goals for preserving valuable farmland and other natural resources. Areas suitable for farmland preservation are mapped for each town. The proposed agricultural enterprise area is located in the Towns of Ackley, Antigo, Neva, Peck, Price, Polar, and Rolling and has extensive acreage identified as prime agricultural land. Attached are copies of each

town map from the 1982. Note the white on the map are the "farmland preservation areas" and the hatched areas are identified as "other lands".

he Langlade County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December, 2009 and is consistent with the 1982 Farmland Preservation Plan in terms of identification of prime agricultural land. One of the main goals of the comprehensive plan is to "protect economically productive farmland". The future land use map in the comprehensive plan identifies the proposed agricultural enterprise area as an "agricultural area" (see attached Future Land Use Map 7-2 from the plan).

The towns of Antigo, Neva, Polar, and Rolling have also adopted comprehensive plans which were incorporated into the county comprehensive plan. Each of those plans places a heavy emphasis on preserving prime farmland with the identification of the following 2 goals: "Conserve the town's major agricultural, cultural, and natural resources" and "Preserve the productive farmland in the town for long term farm use and maintain agriculture as an important economic activity and way of life."

There are no known inconsistencies between the county and local plans for the proposed agricultural enterprise area.

7. What nonagricultural development trends affect the proposed AEA?

Explain current development trends affecting the proposed AEA. Describe the likelihood that land in the AEA will transition out of agriculture in the foreseeable future (note that an AEA may not include any area planned for nonagricultural development within the next 15 years). Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

The proposed agricultural enterprise area is located on what is known as the "Antigo Flats", a large glacial outwash plain containing the Antigo Silt Loam State Soil. It is ideal for agriculture and has been utilized that way for years. Even before planning and before zoning regulations went into effect, the land owners strived to preserve the land due to the economic importance of the resource. Those areas currently farmed and planned for farming are not likely to be transitioned out of agriculture in the foreseeable future. The towns and county have been successful in directing nonagricultural development away from the "Antigo Flats" to infill areas adjacent to the City of Antigo or to the hilly, wooded terminal moraine area surrounding the flats. Refer to the Future Land Use Plan Map 7-2 in question #6.

8. How will current or proposed land use controls support the proposed AEA?

Describe current and proposed land use controls such as zoning ordinances (farmland preservation, shoreland, wetland), farmland preservation agreements, easements, subdivision ordinances, natural area protections or other similar controls. If the area is zoned, attach a zoning map for the area (at the town or county scale). Attach documentation, where appropriate.

The Towns of Ackley, Antigo, Neva, Peck, Price, Polar, and Rolling have ratified Langlade County's Zoning Ordinance which includes the state certified Exclusive Agricultural District (A-1). Langlade County adopted the ordinance in 1985 which also includes shoreland and wetland regulations. Since that time the county has maintained the same agricultural zoning language with few modifications. Langlade County also has a land division ordinance that governs the creation of parcels less than 10 acres in size. The county does not have natural area protection controls other than the existing general zoning ordinance that contains conservancy (wetland), shoreland, and floodplain zoning.

These regulations are designed to preserve the farmland preservation areas. The majority of the land in the proposed agricultural enterprise area is zoned A-1 exclusive agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 35 acres (see attached zoning maps for each of the towns). As stated in #6, the county has

strived to preserve the prime agricultural land in the "Antigo Flats" by denying rezonings out of the exclusive agricultural district.

Attached in Supporting Documents, you will find a list of landowners who have historically participated in the Farmland Preservation Program through zoning certificates. We have put a check next to farms that are in the AEA. The Towns of Price, Rolling, and Ackley also have a total of 6 farmers with farmland preservation agreements which expire between May, 2010 and December, 2018.

9. How will the proposed AEA promote compliance with the state's soil and water standards for nonpoint source pollution?

Farmers in an AEA who enter into a farmland preservation agreement must meet the following state standards (ATCP 50, Wis. Adm. Code), to claim a tax credit. Please indicate whether any of the petitioners are already in compliance with these standards. Explain how the proposed AEA will promote compliance with conservation standards. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

- Control of soil erosion
 - Nutrient management planning
 - Prevention of direct runoff from feedlots or stored manure into state waters
 - Prevention of overflowing manure storage structures
 - Repair of failing and leaking manure storage structures and closure of abandoned manure storage structures
 - Construction of new or substantially altered manure storage structures to technical standards
 - No stacking of manure in unconfined piles in water quality management areas
 - Diversion of clean water from feedlots, manure storage areas and barnyards in the water quality management area
- Maintenance of self-sustaining sod cover along waterways*

Our petitioners are either in compliance with the ag performance standards outlined in this application or are in the process of developing a nutrient management plan. Our conservation efforts since the mid 1990's have prepared us well for the development of an Ag Enterprise Area. Our strong involvement with the previously existing Farmland Preservation Program has given us a good opportunity to maintain regular conservation compliance spot checks. In addition to the farmland preservation checks, farmers are involved an annual self certification of compliance through Langlade County Land Conservation Department.

We have also had a unique relationship with farmers in the area of nutrient management. Over the last decade we have had strong participation with voluntary qualified farmer written nutrient management plans. Qualified farmers have been trained by UW Extension & Land Conservation through Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grants (MALWEG) and with DATCP Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) SEG funds. For the MALWEG grant, we have offered this an incentive program. With the completion of and submission of the plan, farmers are awarded a check that essentially covers the cost of soil sampling. The SEG projects have been awarded separately to 4 farms. We are convinced that the development of an AEA will increase the number of previously unreached farmers and increase the number of farmers updating old nutrient management plans. We hope that the AEA designation will improve our competitiveness for the limited grant funds to continue educational efforts.

10. How will the proposed AEA promote agricultural and related investment?

Describe current and proposed investment within the AEA. Identify key current and potential investors and their level of commitment. Explain how the AEA will promote or facilitate agricultural and related investment. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

The City of Antigo is currently investing into the Peaceful Valley Park area in downtown with the intention of creating a farmers market pavilion. The first stage of this has been completed with 4 season bathroom/kitchenette facility next to the proposed facility. This location could also be used for produce and other auctions for agriculture.

Servco FS Cooperative, is the primary fertilizer, energy, and agronomy business located in Antigo. The Cooperative recently completed an expansion of their bulk storage, warehousing, and fertilizer plant, completely tearing down the old storage, and expanding capacity from 6000 tons to 17,500 tons. Five years ago they purchased another building 7,200 square feet to 56,000 square foot. In the near future, the company is expanding eastward into Oconto County and also recently purchased SEM, expanding their fuel distribution from Green Bay to Escanaba.

Volm Bag, a national industry-leading ag packaging company based in Antigo is in the development stages of a proprietary packaging system that may revolutionize the vegetable retail industry. This is expected to require a reinvestment and expansion of facilities.

Partners related to Spring Brook Farm, LLC a WPEDS permitted farm, recently constructed a new heifer facility in the County to bring their heifer raising back into the local community.

After suffering a devastating fire after harvest in 2008, Schroeder Brothers Farms, Inc, the area's largest potato grower, rebuilt a state of the art, potato packing facility and warehouse complex.

The farmers on and in the vicinity of the Antigo Flats certainly would benefit from marketing strategies that would increase sales and price stability. The AEA designation would be a very good step toward local and regional branding of a wide range of products. Commodities that would benefit from such branding would include seed potatoes, small grain seed, dairy products, wood products, orchard products, maple syrup, nursery and horticulture business.

Certainly increased name recognition would come with AEA designation, and that would bring attention to our other industries and social capacities.

11. How will the proposed AEA support economic activity within the community?

Explain how the AEA will promote economic activity between agricultural enterprises or between agricultural and nonagricultural enterprises. This may include, for example, joint marketing opportunities, purchase of feed, shared facilities and equipment, custom manure spreading or other opportunities. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

Designation as an AEA will support economic development of agricultural enterprises. Designation may very well help leverage investment by Federal, State, County, and local Economic Development Corporation for investment, business planning, and cooperative marketing strategies.

With the growing sector of small family vegetable farms and CSAs, we are currently investigating our marketing strategy to meet their quality and cultivar needs in seed potatoes.

The area is currently not very well developed as an agri-tourism destination. We are not yet celebrating our heritage and commodity trade through festivals, retail outlets, food themed restaurants, or even significantly at our museum. This heritage and notoriety could provide local business opportunities for increased traffic and certainly strengthen a community sense of well-being.

2. What is the level of cooperator support for this petition?

Describe the level of support by other farmers, and by affected businesses, community organizations, and government entities. Attach cooperator "signature pages," if any.

There is a high level of cooperator support for this petition. The partners that worked on this project include UW Extension, Land Records and Regulations staff, Land Conservation Departments, Community Development Corporation, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and the the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (<https://www.wisconsinpotatoes.com>) and farmer members of the Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Board, the majority of which signed petition letters.

Not all the potato growing area was included as we had hoped. in future years we hope to have further opportunity to work with Marathon County. Please notice in the attached cooperator "signature pages".

Are there any other compelling reasons to choose this AEA proposal from among competing AEA proposals? Explain, and attach documentation where appropriate.

Antigo Silt Loam was named the official state soil of Wisconsin by the State Legislature in 1983, a declaration intended to remind us of the importance of our soil resources. This soil was chosen to represent the more than 500 different soils in Wisconsin. This soil occurs only in Wisconsin, across the north central part of the state. It is a versatile and productive soil and is representative of the many silty soils that cover nearly half of the state. It is named after the city of Antigo in Langlade County.

As the world population is expected to increase dramatically over the next decades, highly productive staple crops and the land suitable for them to be grown on will become very important to preserve as well as the infrastructure that support this.
