

WORKING LANDS CONNECTION

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Ben Brancel, Secretary

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Recent Change to Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) Program

The 2011 WI Act 253 recently changed the Chapter 91 of Wisconsin State Statutes to allow agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs) to be designated, modified or terminated through an order by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. This statutory change simplifies the agricultural enterprise area program and increases program efficiency in a way that is more consistent with the voluntary nature of the program. Prior to this change, the designation, modification or termination of an AEA required the department to go through an emergency administrative rule process.

While this change alters the way that the state may take action on an AEA, it does not alter the process by which a petition is developed at the local level. Petition development still requires voluntary and coordinated local action by landowners and all local governments. During petition development, the petitioners typically host public meetings and appear before town and county boards to gain support from local governments, landowners, area businesses and other partner organizations.

To view the new statutory language, visit: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/acts/253>. If you have any questions about this new language or about the AEA program, contact Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov.

Interested in learning more about the state's 17 designated AEAs?

Access our interactive webmap and petition documents from our website:

http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working_Lands_Initiative/AEA/Designated_Agricultural_Enterprise_Areas/index.aspx

For more information on Wisconsin's Working Lands Initiative:

Website: <http://workinglands.wi.gov>

E-mail: DATCPWorkingLands@Wisconsin.gov

Evaluation of 2012 Agricultural Enterprise Area Petitions

The deadline for submitting petitions requesting designation of agricultural enterprise areas was March 30, 2012. The goal of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for the "2012 Petition Cycle" is to designate new agricultural enterprise areas that show a strong commitment to preserving farmland and to supporting the local agricultural economy.

All petitions submitted by this deadline are currently under review by the agricultural enterprise area evaluation team. After evaluating the petitions, the team will make a recommendation to DATCP as to which areas to designate. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made this summer. The team is comprised of individuals with diverse knowledge of all aspects of successful agricultural enterprises.

- Mike Bandli, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), Agricultural Development and Diversification Program
- Kenn Buelow, Holsum Dairies and 2011 Petitioner for Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA
- Jerry Derr, District #1 Director, Wisconsin Towns Association
- Philip Freeburg, Local Government Law Educator, UWEX Local Government Center
- Jon Hochkammer, Legislative Director, Wisconsin Counties Association
- Rene S. Johnson, Vice President, Agricultural Lending, Union Bank and Trust Company
- John Kappleman, Large Dairy Accounts Specialist, Cereal Byproducts Company
- Cate Rahmlow, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Sector Development Manager

The department has the authority to designate up to one million acres statewide as AEAs. Following the 2012 petition cycle, we estimate that just over 500,000 acres will be designated as AEAs throughout the state. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection anticipates that the next request for petitions will be released early this fall.

To receive guidance on requesting AEA designation, contact Coreen Fallat at Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov or (608) 224-4625.



Requests for Information or Speakers

If you would like to request assistance from DATCP staff or to request a speaker to present information in your area on these subjects, please contact us at DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

Update: Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE)

The department continues to make progress towards the purchase of agricultural conservation easements on fifteen farms in Wisconsin. These farms were selected through a review completed by the department and the state's PACE Advisory Council in 2010.

To date, eight of the 15 projects were completed, covering approximately 3,000 acres of farmland. The remaining seven projects will be completed throughout the spring and summer of 2012. Overall, it is anticipated that approximately 5,600 acres will be permanently protected for future agricultural use as a result of the PACE program.

The department is also in the process of evaluating the PACE program and developing a report including evaluation and recommendations for the program to be submitted to the legislature by June 30th, 2012. The PACE evaluation is required as part of 2011 Wisconsin Act 32.

Farmland Preservation Planning Clinics Offered to Counties

This summer DATCP staff will be visiting four locations around the state to assist counties that are just beginning the farmland preservation planning process. The locations will be centrally located to those counties scheduled to update their plans between now and 2013. DATCP staff will meet with interested counties individually to discuss farmland preservation plan requirements and address any issues that the counties are encountering or concerned about in the planning process. Stay tuned for additional information over the next several weeks, including an invitation to sign up for an individual appointment. Should you have any questions in the interim, please contact Alison Volk at Alison.Volk@Wisconsin.gov or 608-224-4634.

Staff Announcements

Patrick Schultz is the new Agricultural Engineer for the DATCP ARM Division in the northwest area NRCS office in Altoona. After graduating from the UW-Platteville with a degree in civil engineering, Patrick spent the last 3.5 years with an environmental engineering consulting firm in the Green Bay area providing agricultural engineering services to farms across Wisconsin including the design and permitting of dairy operations. Patrick also has experience in subsurface soils investigations, construction oversight practices, and environmental ground water sampling practices. Welcome, Pat!

Jim VandenBrook recently announced that he will be retiring from state service in May after nearly 30 years. Fortunately for Wisconsin, Jim has accepted the position of Executive Director of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA). Jim's vast knowledge of natural resource protection and policy and program development will continue to benefit our state in his new role. Good luck, Jim!

