

WORKING LANDS CONNECTION

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Issue No. 24

August 2014

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Introducing Zoey Brooks, Wisconsin's 67th Alice in Dairyland

As Wisconsin's agriculture ambassador, Zoey Brooks strives to educate audiences about the impact and importance of our state's diverse agriculture industry. A native of Waupaca, Zoey grew up as a member of the sixth generation working on her family's dairy farm. This year, she will travel more than 40,000 miles throughout the state, promoting Wisconsin agriculture to various audiences and will conduct hundreds of media interviews, speeches and school presentations.



"We don't inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." This Native American proverb speaks volumes on the importance of preserving the land that Wisconsin agriculture depends on every day. Our farmland is at the roots of the agriculture industry, which generates \$59 billion each year for Wisconsin. Farmland conservation and preservation are vital to every single sector of this industry.

This land is rich not only in nutrients but history as well. Generations before our own farmed and worked the land we now call our home and livelihood. While we might have made momentous advances agriculturally, the love of the land remains the same. This dedication and devotion have allowed the farmland in our state to be farmed year after year. From planting in the spring, to care and sustainment through the summer and harvest in the fall, our farmland has sustainably provided us with the food, fuel, and fiber we all depend on. The fact that the land is even more productive now than it was in the past is indicative of how conservation is essential to the future of farming.

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For more information on Wisconsin's Working Lands Initiative:

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

E-mail: DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov

Zoey Brooks, continued

This dedication rings true on my own family farm as conservation is at the heart of everything we do. Our goal is to leave a legacy, not a liability. This simply means that the environmental decisions made today will impact future generations on our farm. We aim to conserve our land so that the next generation has productive land that it can continue to farm and improve. We also strive to keep our farmland in farming. Land isn't an entity that can be replaced or replenished. The land we are farming today needs to be preserved in order for agriculture to be productive in the future.

Farmers are not the only people who benefit from conservation efforts here in Wisconsin. These efforts protect the water and soil that everyone depends upon. Our farmers are caring for more than just the land. They're caring for their local communities by ensuring safe conservation practices. Wisconsin farmers work closely with local and state organizations to implement preservation and conservation strategies for their land. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) supports these local farmers through its land and water programs such as Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM), Conservation Reserve Enhancement program (CREP), nutrient management assistance, and conservation engineering assistance. Farmland preservation is also a key goal of DATCP, and its farmland preservation programs cover more than 2.7 million acres of Wisconsin farmland and provide tax credit incentives to more than 15,000 farmers.

Farmland preservation and conservation are beneficial to all aspects of Wisconsin commerce and the Wisconsin way of life. Prime and productive farmland will keep the agricultural industry strong for our generation and generations yet to come. More than anything, the importance of conservation is that we leave something for the next generation. After all, we're just stewards of the land, borrowing it from our future farmers.

Five AEAs Recommended for Designation in 2014

Designation of four new agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs) and the expansion of one existing AEA were recommended for designation by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection in 2014.

Following the new designations, there will be 29 AEAs across the state totaling just over 925,000 acres. These 29 AEAs are located in portions of 22 counties, 84 towns and the Bad River Reservation. Landowners, business owners, and local governments all show support for designation as an agricultural enterprise area through the petition process. To date, over 1,300 landowners have signed a petition to request this designation and hundreds of other landowners, business owners and neighboring municipalities have provided letters of support.

Friends in Agriculture AEA, Clark County. This new AEA covers just over 17,000 acres in the Towns of Fremont and Lynn. Agriculture is the main land use and less than 130 acres are in residential or commercial land use. Although the area primarily supports dairy farms, several farms in the area grow fresh market vegetables and fruits. The area aims to preserve and promote the agricultural economy and support the health of soil and water resources while respecting the diverse social and cultural heritage of the area.

Greenville Greenbelt AEA, Outagamie County. The Greenville Greenbelt AEA is a new 1,400 acre AEA located in the Town of Greenville in Outagamie County. The town has completed extensive planning over the past 10 years to support agricultural land use and landowners in the town have made investments in their farms to preserve the heritage of the area. Future plans include expanding the boundary of the AEA, supporting successful farm transitions, and adopting additional policies to protect agricultural land.

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2014 AEA Recommendations, continued

Heart of America's Dairyland AEA, Clark and Marathon Counties. The designation will expand the existing AEA by nearly 70,000 acres, bringing the covered area to 234,000 acres in the towns of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Weston, York, Brighton, Hull, Johnson, Holton, Frankfort, Bern, McMillan, and Eau Pleine. The AEA petitioners want to preserve the region's heritage as one of the top dairy areas in the nation, assure production capacity, and provide tools to minimize the conversion of farmland to non-farm uses. They also aim to develop markets for local products.

The Headwaters of Southeast Monroe County AEA, Monroe County. Nearly 100 landowners in the towns of Clifton, Glendale, Wellington, and Wilton supported the designation of this 86,000 acre AEA in Monroe County. The area supports many small dairy operations, as well as operations that grow grain and forage, and vegetables for direct market sales. The designation will help support future efforts to ensure the protection of productive agricultural land, while providing support for continued investment in the existing agricultural operations.

West Point AEA, Columbia County. Just over 15,000 acres in the Town of West Point will become the West Point AEA. The landowners and the town have shown a strong commitment to their agricultural economy through significant investment in farm businesses, participation in the state's farmland preservation program, and the adoption of numerous policies to support continued agricultural land use. Preservation of the agricultural history of the town is important to the area, as is promoting cooperation between farm and non-farm residents. The area hopes to strengthen the agricultural economy by encouraging and attracting diverse agribusinesses, while promoting the maintenance, expansion and modernization of the existing agribusinesses.

Interest in designation as an AEA continues across the state and local communities are already inquiring into the process for 2015. In response to this interest, the Legislature made a change to the statutes in 2014 to allow up to 2 million acres to be designated as an agricultural enterprise area. This change will enable more communities to pursue the designation to support local efforts to protect agricultural land use and promote the agricultural economy.

Individual landowners benefit from the designation through the opportunity to voluntarily enter into a farmland preservation agreement with the state. This enables the landowner to claim tax credits in exchange for keeping their land in agricultural use for at least 15 years.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection anticipates releasing another request for AEA petitions in early fall of 2014.

For more information about the program and to talk about whether designation as an AEA may be right for your community, contact Coreen Fallat at Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-4625.



Farmland Preservation Planning Workshops

In June 2014, DATCP staff held farmland preservation planning workshops in three different cities around the state. The meetings were held in Barron on June 18th, Wausau on June 25th, and in Dodgeville on June 26th. Representatives from the following counties attended the free workshops: Rusk, Pepin, Barron, Burnett, Chippewa, Wood, Taylor, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Iowa, Richland, Crawford, and Lafayette.

The purpose of the workshops was to reach out to counties whose Farmland Preservation Plans are set to expire in 2015 or later. Since these counties would be at the beginning of the planning process, DATCP staff hoped to provide feedback early in the planning stages to ensure a smooth certification process. The workshops were open forums where county representatives could bring questions and draft documents for DATCP staff to review. Some recurring topics included questions about planning grants, how to develop criteria for land that is eligible to be planned for farmland preservation, and general zoning and mapping questions. Several counties also asked for examples of plans that have already been certified by the department to help them get a better idea of how to meet the statutory requirements. Finally, received a list of issues and helpful hints to keep in mind as they continued work on their plans.

Similar workshops will be offered in the future for both farmland preservation plan and ordinance updates. For more information, contact Scott Karel at: Scott.Karel@wisconsin.gov



Recent Farmland Preservation Certifications

Local governments continue to revise farmland preservation plans and zoning ordinances. The following local governments completed the department's certification review since our last newsletter.

Farmland Preservation Planning: Rock County, Monroe County, Polk County, Sauk County (Map Amendment), Dodge County (Map Amendment),

Farmland Preservation Zoning: Town of Osceola (Fond du Lac County), Town of Oakfield (Fond du Lac County), Town of Metomen (Fond du Lac County), Town of Marshfield (Fond du Lac County), Town of Black Creek (Outagamie County), Columbia County, Dodge County (Map Amendment), Sauk County (Map Amendment)

For more information about certifications, contact Scott Karel at: Scott.Karel@wisconsin.gov.



Upcoming Events

2014 Nutrient Management User Group Meetings

Friday August 22nd	Monday August 25th	Tuesday August 26th	Thursday August 28th	Friday August 29th
Eau Claire	Jefferson	Wausau	Richland Center	Oshkosh

Conservation Observance Day

Friday, September 12th
8:15am-2:30pm
Smith Family Farm
Augusta, WI

Wisconsin Towns Association Annual Conference

Presentation on Agricultural Enterprise Areas
Monday, October 27th
Holiday Inn Convention Center
Stevens Point, WI



Requests for Information or Speakers

If you would like to request a DATCP speaker to present information in your area on farmland preservation or soil and water conservation, please contact Lisa Schultz at LisaJ.Schultz@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-4611.

Staff Announcements

Alison Volk is now Section Chief for the Land Management Section and oversees work on farmland preservation and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Alison started at DATCP in 2009 as an LTE and then as lead staff for certifying farmland preservation plans and ordinances. Prior to that, she served as a law clerk at a Madison law firm. Alison holds a law degree from UW-Madison and an undergraduate degree from New York University. Congratulations, Alison!

Matt Woodrow was recently hired as Unit Leader for DATCP's conservation engineering unit. Matt was a DATCP conservation engineer since 2010 and has a wide range of experience from his time with DATCP and prior to that, as a private sector engineer. Matt's experience with hydrology and computer software including Computer Aided Design and Geographic Information Systems combined with his customer service and interpersonal skills will be a great benefit to the team. Congratulations, Matt!



New Tools and Resources!

Our [interactive webmap](#) can show you the location of designated AEAs and farmland preservation planning and zoning areas

View this [recorded webinar](#) to learn more about farm transition planning basics.

DATCP developed new factsheets and guidance related to farmland preservation soil and water conservation compliance, which can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

The revised ATCP 50, DATCP's administrative rule for Soil and Water Resource Management, went into effect on May 1st, 2014. Guidance and factsheets about the rule revision can be found [here](#).

New versions of the following forms and documents are now available:

- [Certificate of Compliance](#)
- [Farmland Preservation Agreement](#)
- [Soil and Water Conservation Compliance Frequently Asked Questions](#)