



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
 Division of Agricultural Resource Management
 P.O. Box 8911
 Madison, WI 53708-8911
 (608) 224-4500

Agricultural Enterprise Area Petition

The undersigned persons hereby petition the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), pursuant to s. 91.86, Wis. Stats., to create an Agricultural Enterprise Area (**AEA**) under s. 91.84, Wis. Stats. We have read the guidance provided and submit the following information in support of the petition (*use the space provided or check the appropriate box*):¹

PART I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Name of AEA. | Halfway Creek
Prairie AEA |
| B. County or counties in which the proposed AEA is located. | La Crosse |
| C. All towns, villages or cities in which the proposed AEA is located. | Tn of Onalaska
and Holland |
| D. Number of owners of eligible farms, within the proposed AEA,
who are signing this petition. | 6 |
| E. Total number of acres in the proposed AEA. | 1650 |
| F. All parcels in the proposed AEA are located within a farmland preservation
area designated in the certified county farmland preservation plan. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| G. All parcels in the proposed AEA are contiguous. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| H. The proposed AEA is primarily in agricultural use. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| I. Primary agricultural land use in proposed AEA. | over 91% of AEA
is Agriculture.
Crop farms,
Livestock Farms
and agri-business |
| J. Designated contacts for the AEA. <i>Please list at least two contacts for the AEA; preferably at least one staff contact (county, town, UWEX, etc.) and one landowner representative.² You may have more than two contacts. Attach a separate page if necessary.</i> | |

Name: Charlie Handy
 Address: 400 4th street north La Crosse, WI 54602
 Phone number: 608.785.5919
 Email: chandy@lacrossecounty.org

Name: Mike Dummer
 Address: n6613 county xx Holmen, WI 54636
 Phone number: 608-323-3731
 Email: michaeldummer@hotmail.com

¹Personal information you provide may be used for purposes other than that for which it was collected, s. 15.04(1)(m), Wis. Stats.

²The listed contacts should be willing to:

- Communicate with other petitioners and partners in the AEA, with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and with contacts in other AEAs
- Engage in activities within the AEA

PART II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR AEA³

Introduction to proposed AEA (optional):

The purpose of establishing the “Halfway Creek Prairie” Agricultural Enterprise Area is to grow and expand agriculture in the Towns of Holland and Onalaska in keeping with town, county, and state goals to preserve agricultural and promote development of agriculturally-related businesses.

The Petitioners have operations ranging from cash crop to large dairy, to a swine livestock facility, grain elevator service, manure composting facility, along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, a portion of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge and a Private Land Trust. Several of the Petitioners were raised in Wisconsin’s Halfway Creek Prairie. From the time of settlement of this area, up to current times, its residents have embraced and protected the beautiful natural resources, while establishing a complementary agricultural heritage as a legacy for their families and others who have similar ideals.

A majority of the Petitioners are 3rd and 4th generation farmers whose families farmed the land before them. Their agricultural businesses are diverse, successful, and provide jobs as well as economic support to other businesses in the area, such as feed stores, implement dealers, veterinarians, and farm supply stores, and also bring active recreation for locals and tourists to the area.

1. State the goals of the proposed AEA for

a. preservation of agricultural land use:

The AEA is being established to further support the current land use goals stated in the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan and Holland and Onalaska Town plans: to protect existing farmland and promote agricultural and related development. Enhance the acreage covered by conservation and nutrient management plans. Gain knowledge, experience and information necessary to assist other producers, Towns, and the County to develop farmland protection strategies specifically for the Halfway Creek area. Preserve the Agricultural land and water resources within this AEA that will support and maintain the economic viability of existing and expanded farm operations. Act as a Buffer to the adjacent Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

b. agricultural development:

Foster growth of bio-energy opportunities. Refine existing production practices and establish new business relationships within the AEA to maintain and enhance a stable and predictable supply of agricultural products to protect the existing infrastructure of Agricultural markets and suppliers. Preserve and enhance existing agri-business relationships within the AEA and those that will directly affect this AEA to maintain and increase the agricultural infrastructure and economic viability of farming in the Halfway Creek area. Utilize the Halfway Creek Prairie AEA

³ DATCP will evaluate petitions under s. 91.86, Wis. Stats., and will consider information provided in response to the following questions.

and the associated agri-business relationships to pursue new business ventures to build the economy and advance economic development.

2. Describe (a) all current land uses within the proposed AEA and (b) provide information about land use trends in and around the AEA. (*The proposed AEA must be primarily in agricultural use.*)

a. More than 90% of the land use within the AEA boundary is agriculture. The other 10% is farmstead, residential and a couple of small businesses that are related to agriculture, for example, a vehicle maintenance and repair shop. La Crosse County is developing very quickly and much of that growth is in the Holmen area, which is adjacent to this AEA. This AEA holds some industrial zoned lands, a few scattered non-farm residences, but the vast majority is cropland, farm buildings and pasture land. There is also a significant area of wildlife habitat. See the attached GIS information for exact acreages of each land use.

b. Due to the increasing value of cash crops, the value of agricultural land as rental or sale has seen significant increase over the past 5 years. Also, the demand for development has significantly decreased. This trend is a positive trend for agricultural preservation, especially in this AEA due to its proximity to incorporated municipalities. The development pressure of these municipalities is great, but if we follow our adopted comprehensive plans, and use tools such as the AEA process to continue to protect and preserve these properties we can encourage necessary development to locate in appropriate dense neighborhoods in other areas and preserve this valuable farmland. There are over 300,000 acres of land in La Crosse County. County wide, agriculture and forest lands make up for 67 percent of the County's land area, with agriculture specifically making up just under 38% of the total. According to the 2007 census of agriculture, there were 845 farms in La Crosse County, compared to 868 in 2002, representing a decrease of 2.7 percent. The number of acres of farmland declined from 174,213 in 2002 to 165,368. This data translates into a 2.5 percent decline in the average farm size – from 200.7 acres in 2002 to 195.7 acres in 2007. Statistically, in the state of Wisconsin some recent observations include:

- A SHARP DROP (-43%) IN THE NUMBER OF ACRES BEING DIVERTED FROM AGRICULTURE
 - VALUE OF LAND DIVERTED FELL SHARPLY -24%
 - VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND ROSE 12%
 - CASH RECEIPTS FOR CROPS ROSE 34%
 - CORN UP 46% SOYBEANS UP 25%
 - PROJECTED PRODUCTION INCREASES IN 2010, AND 2011
 - LA CROSSE COUNTY ONLY 36 ACRES WERE DIVERTED IN 2008
-

3. How did you determine the boundary (location and size) of the proposed AEA?

Public Outreach, interested landowners, buffer and adjacent to wildlife refuge, Municipal boundaries to the east, and in looking at the local comprehensive plans. The boundary is based on Contiguous acres of participating landowners, using full parcels to assist in determining the exact boundary lines.

4. Confirm that the proposed AEA is consistent with any existing local comprehensive plan. Submit a future land use map, if available. *Please do not submit a complete copy of any comprehensive plan.*

The county(ies) of La Crosse has(have) a comprehensive plan and the proposed AEA is consistent with this plan.

The Town(s) of Onalaska and Holland has(have) a comprehensive plan and the proposed AEA is consistent with this plan.

There are no comprehensive plans for the political subdivisions in which the proposed AEA is located.

5. Describe any recent investments made to support agriculture and agricultural-related business in or near the proposed AEA.

The US Fish and Wildlife service recently invested \$8.8 million in a visitor center and land to open the Wildlife refuge up to the public with a visitors center and an area for staff to work within the refuge. The west salem farmers coop has invested millions annually for the past 10 years to provide grain storage, transport and drying facilities to farmers in this area. The Holmen Locker and Meat Market has recently expanded significantly their facilities to assist in direct marketing their meat. We have received some financial information from 3 of the 5 landowners in this application. As you know farmers are very independent minded business owners, and this information is sacred. These three landowners reported gross revenues in 2010 of approximately \$9 million dollars. They have employed themselves, as well as an additional 12 FTE Employees. This information does not include a few other farmers within the AEA who did not submit information. One landowner reported investing \$160,000 in buildings and machinery over the past 10 years. Also, the Dummers grain services has invested significantly in their grain drying, transport and storage facilities. There are some attachments to this petition which describe some of these investments and agri-business operations. See attached documents.

6. Indicate the approximate level of petitioner compliance with state soil and water standards.

Nearly all petitioners are in compliance

More than half of the petitioners are in compliance

Half or less than half of the petitioners are in compliance

Few or no petitioners are in compliance

Compliance status of petitioners is unknown

7. Describe the level of non-petitioner cooperator support for the petition.

Babcock Genetics is a non-petitioner/ cooperator for this petition. they are located within the boundary of the AEA, but because they are out of state landowners, they do not see a significant value to themselves to be a petitioner. They do, however see a value to the relationships and preservation of agriculture that this AEA can accomplish for them. We have also included letters of support from the City of Onalaska, our state elected representatives and senator for the proposed AEA and a letter for support from the local non-profit land trust. We have numerous letters and comments of support from ag related companies like Holmen Locker and Meat Market and Rudy's Feed and Seed and etc. You will also see that many of the signatures from local levels of government are also farmers or agri-business owners. These relationships intertwine and the process of obtaining approvals, and describing the AEA petition process was very supported and rewarding.

8. Fill in the tables to provide information about the activities (past, ongoing and future) that support the proposed AEA.

A. Farmland Preservation Agreement Strategy	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Summarize these outreach efforts, including who will provide assistance (attach an additional page if necessary)</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational meeting(s)	Landowners, County and Town Staff have already accomplished many of these activities, but we will continue to present information to the area and educate our agri-business of the benefits of participating with AEA petitioners. We have engaged the local media, a copy of the article is attached with this application. We will work hard to educate our AEA petitioners regarding conservation compliance and other necessary activities for Agreements. This network will be utilized to promote meetings with DATCP and the AEA landowners to educate them of the terms of the agreements, and see if the agreements are of interest. Any landowners who sign agreements will provide credibility to the process and encourage others to sign.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mailing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One-on-one conversations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/media	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

B. Land Use Controls		
<i>Type of Control</i>	<i>Timeframe (past, ongoing, future)</i>	<i>Provide details about the selected control (attach an additional page if necessary)</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farmland preservation zoning ordinance	ongoing	current ordinance is certified, and new ordinance will be applying for certification soon.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other zoning ordinances Specify: shoreland/ floodplain	ongoing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farmland preservation agreements	past	Because there is county zoning, we have a very limited number of agreements left in La Crosse County. We have worked with them in the past and have the capacity to do so in the future
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purchase of development rights and/or easements (donated or purchased)	ongoing	La Crosse County has an ordinance in place which allows us to hold conservation easements. We have applied in the past for funding from both the State and from Farm and Ranchland Protection Programs. We have not received any funding to date. We have a private non-profit organization who holds more than 10,000 acres of conservation easements, including the Holland sand prairie which is adjacent to the boundary of this AEA
<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer of development rights		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision ordinances	ongoing	adopted and administered both at the town and county level
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperative boundary agreements	ongoing	The Town of Onalaska has a boundary agreement with the City of Onalaska, and we are pursuing additional agreements in La Crosse County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural area protections	ongoing	US Fish and Wildlife Service has the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge which is adjacent to the boundaries of this proposed AEA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) Deed Restrictions	Ongoing	We will be enforcing Deed Restrictions, along with Base Farm Tracts within our Zoning Ordinance.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) County Farmland Preservation Committee	Ongoing	This committee works on PACE applications, Conservation Compliance enforcement actions, but also participates in educational activities to promote conservation and farmland preservation to the ag landowners, and to the builders/ developers in La Crosse County

C. Agricultural Development Activities

<i>Type of Activity</i>	<i>Timeframe (past, ongoing, future)</i>	<i>Summarize contribution to AEA (attach an additional page if necessary)</i>
<i>Ex: Joint marketing or purchasing, development of agri-tourism opportunity, value-added agricultural activity</i>		
Nutrient management Trading	Ongoing	Our Land Conservation Department has a thorough training session annually to assist landowners in producing their own NMP's. This has created a do it yourself cooperative atmosphere at these training sessions, and an informal nutrient trading process has ensued where dairy farmers who have excess phosphorous are assisting cash croppers to utilize this animal manure through hauling and spreading agreements. Any AEAs within La Crosse County will promote the expansion of this concept.
Cooperative trucking, step-saving and etc.	Ongoing	This Location of Dummers Grain Service within the AEA is promoting a cooperative atmosphere with the landowners sharing trucking, hauling and other step-saver type of activities at harvest time.

D. Other AEA Activities		
<i>Type of Activity</i>	<i>Timeframe (past, ongoing, future)</i>	<i>Summarize contribution to AEA (attach an additional page if necessary)</i>
<i>Ex: Form a stakeholder group, attend statewide AEA meetings</i>		
Promote Additional AEAs to La Crosse and Trempeleau County Landowners	future	If this application is successful, we plan to contact landowners adjacent in Trempeleau County to approach them and discuss adding to the boundary of the AEA in Trempe county. We also have two to three other areas in La Crosse county that have potentially tens of thousands of acres. As a group our expertise will assist them in deciding if they want to consider an AEA petition.

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PART III. MAP AND SPATIAL LOCATION DATA

Please send the following to DATCP in electronic form. Follow the map and spatial location data guidelines found in Part III of the guidance document.

1. A map of the proposed AEA, **and**
2. The spatial location data for the AEA boundary.

PART IV. IMAGES FROM PROPOSED AEA (OPTIONAL)

If desired, petitioners may submit high resolution images taken from within the boundary of the AEA. Photos should help to depict agriculture and agricultural-related land use described in the petition.

Please follow the image submission guidelines in Part IV of the guidance document.

PART V. SIGNATURE PAGES AND LOCAL RESOLUTIONS

Submit appropriate documentation from all eligible farm owner and political subdivision petitioners. See attached "Landowner Signature Page," "Political Subdivision Signature Page" and "Cooperator Signature Page."

Please follow the signature page and resolution guidelines in Part V of the guidance document. Sample resolution text is included in Appendix B of the guidance document.

Landowner Signature Page

The petition must be signed by the owners of at least 5 eligible farms within the proposed AEA. A separate signature page, in the following form, must be signed by the owner of each farm. An authorized individual may sign on behalf of a legal entity. If a farm is jointly owned by a husband and wife as individuals, both must sign.

Farm owner (correct legal name or legal name of business entity):

Type of business entity, if applicable (check one):

Individual or married couple

LLC

Corporation

Other (describe)

Partnership

Authorized signature _____ Date _____

Print name _____

Authorized signature _____ Date _____

Print name _____

Farm owner address (street, city, zip): _____

E-mail address(es) (if available): _____

I (we) currently claim a farmland preservation tax credit (either under farmland preservation zoning or through a farmland preservation agreement). Yes No Don't Know

I (we) are interested in maintaining our existing farmland preservation agreement or entering into a new farmland preservation agreement. Yes No Maybe
(Note: To claim the farmland preservation tax credit under a farmland preservation agreement, the farm must meet state soil and water conservation standards.)

Political Subdivision Signature Page

In addition to passing a resolution in support of this petition, this signature page must be signed by an authorized officer or representative of every political subdivision (county, town, city or village) in which any part of the proposed AEA is included.

Political subdivision name: _____

Type (check one): County Town City Village

Printed name of authorized officer or representative: _____

Title of authorized officer or representative: _____

Authorized signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal mailing address: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Cooperator Petitioner Signature Page (optional)

Persons other than the petitioners may sign in support of the petition. A separate signature page, or letter of support, may be submitted for each cooperator. An authorized individual may sign on behalf of a legal entity.

Legal name of cooperator:

Relevant interest (farm owner, business, nonprofit or community organization, government entity, other):

Principal mailing address:

E-mail address:

Briefly describe your interest in signing this petition requesting designation of an agricultural enterprise area:

Print name _____

Authorized signature: _____ Date _____



Halfway Creek Prairie AEA

The purpose of establishing the “Halfway Creek Prairie” Agricultural Enterprise Area is to grow and expand agriculture in the Towns of Holland and Onalaska in keeping with towns, county, and state goals to preserve agricultural and promote development of agriculturally-related businesses.

The Petitioners have operations ranging from cash crop to large dairy, to a swine livestock facility, grain elevator service, manure composting facility, along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, a portion of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge and a Private Land Trust. Several of the Petitioners were raised in Wisconsin’s Halfway Creek Prairie. From the time of settlement of this area, up to current times, its residents have embraced and protected the beautiful natural resources, while establishing a complementary agricultural heritage as a legacy for their families and others who have similar ideals.

A majority of the Petitioners are 3rd and 4th generation farmers whose families farmed the land before them. Their agricultural businesses are diverse, successful, and provide jobs as well as economic support to other businesses in the area, such as feed stores, implement dealers, veterinarians, and farm supply stores, and also bring active recreation for locals and tourists to the area.

The Following are the agricultural land use and development goals of the proposed AEA:

1. The AEA is being established to further support the current land use goals stated in the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan and Holland and Onalaska Town plans: to protect existing farmland and promote agricultural and related development. Specifically:
2. Foster growth of bio-energy opportunities.
3. Enhance the acreage covered by conservation and nutrient management plans.
4. Gain knowledge, experience and information necessary to assist other producers, Towns, and the County to develop farmland protection strategies specifically for the Halfway Creek area.
5. Preserve the Agricultural land and water resources within this AEA that will support and maintain the economic viability of existing and expanded farm operations.
6. Refine existing production practices and establish new business relationships within the AEA to maintain and enhance a stable and predictable supply of agricultural products to protect the existing infrastructure of Agricultural markets and suppliers.
7. Preserve and enhance existing agri-business relationships within the AEA and those that will directly affect this AEA to maintain and increase the agricultural infrastructure and economic viability of farming in the Halfway Creek area.
8. Utilize the Halfway Creek Prairie AEA and the associated agri-business relationships to pursue new business ventures to build the economy and advance economic development.
9. Act as a Buffer to the adjacent Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

Economic information for each enterprise,

Green Earth Compost,	\$165,000 in gross sales and tipping fees One full time worker and 5-6 part time workers
Custom Heifer Raising,	\$325,000 in gross sales Two full time and one part time worker
Cropping Operation,	\$200,000 in gross sales Two part time workers
Dummer's Grain Service	\$8,000,000 in gross revenue One full time and two part time workers

Dummer Narrative:

In 1940 Henry and Agnes Dummer sold their farm in Chipmunk Coulee, Stoddard and moved to a farm they had just bought west of Holmen, WI. They moved their farm equipment as well as their family, consisting of four young children, two girls and two boys. Both boys, Leo and Francis worked on the farm as was the custom and as was necessary. Leo eventually moved on to a career outside of agriculture but he and his family always stayed close to the farm, Leo and Marie's acreage are included in the AEA. Francis married Shirley and had 6 children, four boys and two girls. Francis and Shirley farmed with Franny's parents, Henry and Agnes. In the mid 50's the neighboring farm was purchased to expand the acreage to support more cows that filled the addition that was built onto the barn. Francis and Shirley worked hard to build up the post depression nutrient depleted soils on the farms. As the four boys graduated from high school, one by one they returned to the farm. In 1980, the opportunity to purchase the neighboring farm appeared, the decision was made to seize the opportunity and the purchase was made. On the farm were bins and a grain dryer that were larger than what could be utilized by the crops available from the acres owned. In 1982, the decision was made to expand the operation into a commercial grain elevator, thus the beginning of Dummer's Grain Service which today employs Bob and Karla Dummer and several part-time employees. The farming operation at this time consisted of milk cows, steers, cash crops of corn and soybeans and a custom combining business that complimented the grain elevator. While our farming operation was growing, so were LaCrosse, Onalaska and Holmen. The local economy was very good and neighborhoods expanded right up to our line fences. It was clear that buying more land to expand the cropping operation was becoming unrealistic. With all of the brothers now involved in the farming operation there was a need to expand the farming operation and broaden the business base. After much discussion and looking outside of the box the decision was made to start a composting business. Tom Dummer assumed the responsibility of growing this new segment of the farming operation. Over the years Green Earth Compost has created relationships with all neighboring communities to receive their residential waste, (brush, leaves and grass clippings). Currently, Green Earth Compost is entering into composting construction waste. Actually, the construction waste, brush and wood waste is ground to make animal bedding and the animal bedding and animal waste is composted. Green Earth Compost has grown its wood waste volume to the point where the livestock division no longer needs any crop residue for bedding. In 1992 the decision was made to sell the milk cows rather than upgrade the barn, the silos and the feed bunk. But, livestock would continue to be a very important sector of the farming operation. A custom heifer raising operation was started that today consists of approximately 800-900 heifers from 4 area dairies. Worth noting is the successful use of 8 mound systems that house approximately 60 heifers per mound. The livestock enterprise is managed by Jim and Jamie Dummer. It is also important to discuss the relationship that has successfully existed between Babcock Swine and Dummer Family Enterprises for over 30 years. Babcock Swine is also inside the boundaries of the Halfway Creek AEA. Over the years Dummer Family Enterprises has managed the application and usage of all of the animal waste from Babcock Swine. The method of application is by underground pipes and center pivots. To fully utilize the existence of underground pipes and center pivots we have installed two high capacity wells for irrigation of crops. Currently, Babcock Swine is under construction of a new feed mill that will utilize local grain. In 2004, the opportunity to expand our grain elevator business arose in the form of a coop in Arcadia which decided to sell their grain business. The decision was made to purchase what is now Buck County Grain. Brian, Jeff, Kathy and Mike Dummer and several part-time employees all work at Buck Country. Today, there are four generations of our family involved in the different enterprises that we operate.

We believe that the inclusion of the properties owned by Dummer Family Trust and Dummer Family Enterprises in the Halfway Creek AEA is important to the local, county and state economies because we are supplying a important service to four area dairies with our custom heifer growing business. Additionally, our Green Earth Compost business diverts residential and construction waste from the county landfill to a successful recycling business that turns waste into very useful compost that is marketed thru many of our local lawn care and garden centers. Our cropping operation requires planting, maintenance and harvesting inputs and equipment that is all purchased locally. Lastly, Dummer's Grain Service offers local crop producers a full menu of marketing options as well as crop drying and storage. The movement of incoming and outgoing grain provides many local truckers with work opportunities. In conclusion we believe that our businesses are very valuable to the local, regional and state economies. We have been very fortunate to have many family members who have become working partners in our diversified business and we continue to be blessed with a number of family members who are waiting in the wings and aspire to become working partners.