

# **La Prairie AEA**

**Rock County  
Towns of La Prairie and Turtle**

## **PART II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR AEA**

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

The land use and development goals of the proposed La Prairie AEA are to "continue to consist of a viable agricultural economy while at the same time maintaining a high rural quality of life" (see attachment a). The La Prairie infrastructure consists of producers supplying a high quality specialty product to Seneca Foods, Pioneer Seed Corn, Monsanto Soybean Research, mint distillery and fungible grain crops (see attachment letters b, c and c<sup>1</sup>). We have had agriculture preservation zoning since 1968 in an effort to preserve our community, while diversifying our agricultural product base.

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

Activities planned in the proposed AEA are to achieve agricultural preservation and development with the goal the implementation of our new zoning book which has been approved by DATCP and preserves large irrigated, blocks of specialty growing areas, and thus enhances the current employment level of 709 employees and a payroll of 26 million dollars in the Rock County area. We continue to work with our agri-business partners who consume product while generating a value added product through vegetables, seed corn, mint and fungible crops. The initial sign-up of 30+ producers show a total community involvement. The Rock County agri-business council is in support and concurrence of the La Prairie AEA (see attached d).

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

The La Prairie AEA location is embraced by our corporate partners (see attached b, c, c<sup>1</sup>) for preservation that uses our high quality infrastructure roads and main line railroad as a distribution network (see map attached e). With the Union Pacific, I-90, and Highway 14 dissecting our area, preservation of Class 1 farmland through exclusive zoning is important to economic enhancement of our agricultural assets.

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

The size and boundaries of the proposed La Prairie AEA involve the readiness of producers who supply our corporate partners to sign up with a current acreage in excess of 11,000 acres (see map f). With irrigated products which exceed 11 tons per acre of sweet corn, 6 tons per acre of peas that are within a 4-mile area to the processor and adjacent to an interstate. Our soils are Class 1 Plano Silt and not wet or subject to flooding. The usage of irrigation and multiple cropping determines that Class 1 soils with a quick delivery time to the value added producer is an additional on-time value for plant usage.

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

The current land uses in the proposed La Prairie AEA are almost exclusively agriculture (see map g) with a zoning minimum of 50 acres for placement of a house with a signed covenant on file and deed restriction on file (see attached h). Since 1968 La Prairie has had a strict farmland protection ethic, which translates into a favorable environment for long-term seed growth and genetics (see attached c).

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

Our proposed AEA is not only consistent with land use plans; it was a keystone factor in our new zoning and working with our corporate partners. DATCP has been consulted and worked closely with in order to make our maps match with usages in protection of a very specialized area.

**7. What nonagricultural development trends affect the proposed AEA?**

Non-agricultural development trends affecting our proposed AEA tend to migrate towards Harmony, Janesville and Rock Townships. Our united land protection ethic involves talking wastewater from Seneca for irrigation usage, which averts any municipal sewage problems. We have planned in our smart growth to embrace agriculture; with the employment levels at Seneca serving both urban and rural workforce.

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

La Prairie' current land use controls exceed those of the State. We were one of the first to sign on for County shoreland protection and Airport Overlay District. As one can see by our zoning map we strive to encourage agriculture as a business and not a hobby, thereby using the County's best soil for economic betterment of both urban and rural areas.

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

Our proposed AEA will promote compliance with State soil and water standards. Under ATCP 50, we already have some of the initial signatories who are in compliance with conservation standards (see attached letter i). Since La Prairie has very few chances for non-source point pollution, compliance with this is an easily achieved goal.

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

The proposed La Prairie AEA will promote agriculture and related investment by facilitating the best crops that the largest private employer, Seneca, can process. Additionally, Pioneer, with a large number of PHD's doing crop genetics has expanded twice in the last ten years. Their letters of support (see attached c) indicate a common desire to improve technology and develop long-term agricultural roots.

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

The proposed AEA already supports 700 jobs within the community and continues to boost the local economy through a multiplier effect of 26 million in wage dollars as well as specialized contracts for seed beans, seed corn, and mint for an overall good which is not cyclical with manufacturing, thereby providing a stable local economic base.

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

The level of cooperator support at this time of the petition is in excess of 11,000 acres, and 30 producers, and 3 large corporate entities as well as local and county government.

*Are there any other compelling reasons to choose this AEA proposal from among competing AEA proposals?*

Our overall reasoning to be among the first AEA's in Wisconsin are summed up as follows:

- The Town of La Prairie lies in a portion of Wisconsin, which after considerable advance preparation could be used as a template for an Agricultural Enterprise Zone.
- La Prairie began preparation of a jointly phased zoning, smart growth plan and 99% compliance in conservation plan some seven years ago. These plans have been reviewed and approved by the County of Rock and Department of Agriculture, Trade and consumer Protection. La Prairie takes local responsibilities seriously and has been charged by public meeting input to be "an uncommonly unique community that will continue to consist of a viable agricultural economy while at the same time maintaining a high rural quality of life."
- The economic base of La Prairie is currently achieved with an agricultural diversification of both products and corporate partners. Our partners include Seneca Foods with 680 employees and a payroll of \$24,000,000 contributing to the local economy. This facility processes 170,000 tons of locally grown specialty crops such as sweet peas, sweet corn, snap beans and lima beans. The Pioneer division of DuPont has a genetics and research center in La Prairie which currently employees 21 PhD's and MS graduates as plant breeders and contributes another \$1,350,000 to local payroll. Monsanto Soybean Genetics employs another 8 staff members and contributes \$700,000 in payroll to the local economy. Additionally, Syngenta has a test facility. Another avenue of Agricultural Specialties is a mint distillery for the synthesis of 3,000 acres of peppermint and spearmint oil. We grow these crops under both dry land and irrigated acreages. To further broaden the agricultural base, we have a locally owned feed mill.
- Another specialty is the growth of large acres of seed corn under separate individual contracts; this is further supplemented by fungible crops of soy, field corn, oats, wheat and alfalfa. These crops will tend to grow well above Wisconsin averages, on a soil structure of Plano Silt Loam with a Class I rating. Coupled with this is a younger than average producer age. We feel this gives Wisconsin a high value via local young producers, who give higher productivity and ingenuity. Therefore, the economics of this area will produce a higher return per acres to highlight an Agricultural Area. The ultimate public value is achieved with an ongoing industry, which will give Wisconsin more bang for the AEA buck.
- In order to understand our local land ethic, it must be noted that in 1968 La Prairie began exclusive Ag Zoning and set a higher standard again in 2008, by increasing the minimum lot size acres at 50 acres minimum, with a land filing at the county court house. A driveway length was established to best utilize soils for production and not drives.
- We have made a special notice of attaining a Specialty Ag Area in our plan, and have contacted the Town of Turtle to our south to work in tandem to avoid a "swiss cheese" effect.

In summation, we believe by granting La Prairie Agricultural Area designation, Wisconsin would give a signal to our industrial partners of Seneca, Pioneer, Monsanto and Syngenta and their 700 plus employees, that we will work as a viable sized Ag unit with enough room for future expansion and employment in the long term.

If the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Agency should choose to authorize a La Prairie Agricultural Enterprise Area, we believe the value added can well become a show place for high tech and Specialty Ag which can build upon itself as an ongoing green industry which preserve employment and high qualities of life for our region.