



Petition Period Opens for 2016 Ag Enterprise Areas

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Media contact: Donna Gilson, 608-224-5130

donna.gilson@wi.gov

Bill Cosh, Communications Director
608-224-5020

William2.Cosh@wisconsin.gov

Editors note: Although the petition deadline is not until April 29, 2016, the petitions typically require months to prepare.

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is now accepting petitions for Agricultural Enterprise Areas to be designated in 2016.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are primarily in agricultural use for farming and for businesses that serve the farming sector. They are created when at least five landowners and their local governments petition for an AEA designation and the department approves the petition.

AEA designation does not limit land use within the area or protect it from development. It does allow farmers within the AEA to receive tax credits of \$5-\$10 per acre if they enter into farmland preservation agreements with the department. The designation can also be used with local planning and zoning, conservation easements, agriculture economic development incentives, and other tools to support farming and the local farm economy.

“AEAs can provide farmers and agribusinesses with certainty that they will have an agriculture infrastructure available to support their operations in the future. That way, they can invest in their businesses with confidence,” said John Petty, Administrator of DATCP’s Agricultural Resource Management Division, which houses the AEA program. “AEAs are a tool to help preserve and build rural communities. They allow for a broad range of actions that local governments can take to maintain a farming base for their economies.”

Petty encouraged petitioners to involve their communities in the petition process to be sure they have support. “The external evaluation team that reviews the petitions considers the level of local support in deciding whether to recommend areas for AEA status. It is a competitive process, so petitioners need to present the strongest case they can,” he said.

Petition materials, including detailed instructions and petition forms, are available online at <http://datcp.wi.gov> by searching for “petition materials.” Completed petitions are due to DATCP on April 29, 2016. Petitions must be completed jointly by local landowners and local government officials. Prospective petitioners should notify the department of their intent to apply, so they can receive announcements of workshops or webinars to help them prepare their petitions.

When AEAs designated this year take effect on Jan. 1, Wisconsin will have 31 AEAs totaling 1.01 million acres in 23 counties, 92 towns, and the Bad River Reservation. DATCP has the authority to designate up to 2 million acres for AEAs.

For more information, farmers and local government officials should call Coreen Fallat at 608-224-4625 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

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