



## More Than 170,000 Acres Added to Ag Enterprise Areas

Release Date: 7/13/12

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*Editors note: You can view the complete petitions for each of the agricultural enterprise areas at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, search "agricultural enterprise". Local contacts are listed at the end of this release.*

MADISON – Five new agricultural enterprise areas will be designated, and two existing ones will be expanded, under an order signed this week by Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Ben Brancel.

The new areas total about 171,600 acres in seven counties and 28 towns, with 330 landowners petitioning for the designation, which will become official Jan. 1. Wisconsin now has 22 agricultural enterprise areas statewide, totaling almost 510,000 acres in 17 counties and 55 towns. Nearly 750 landowners have signed petitions seeking the designations.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are part of Wisconsin's farmland preservation program. They are intended to encourage preservation of agricultural land use and to promote agricultural economic development appropriate to each area. Landowners in AEAs are not subject to any new land use regulations. Farmers owning land within an AEA can receive tax credits in exchange for signing an agreement to keep their land in agricultural use for at least 15 years.

The new and expanded AEAs are:

**Antigo Flats AEA, Langlade and Marathon counties** This expands an existing AEA, adding 11,886 acres and bringing the total to 74,104 acres in the towns of Ackley, Antigo, Neva, Peck, Polar, Price, Rolling, Vilas and Harrison. Goals include developing local and regional markets for certified potato and small grain seed, dairy products, wood technology and other local commodities. Petitioners also want to provide technical and educational assistance to agribusinesses, develop agritourism, and help farmers protect natural resources.

**Elba-Portland AEA, Dodge County** This new AEA covers 38,580 acres in the towns of Elba and Portland. In this cash cropping and dairy region, the petitioners' goals are to maintain a strong agricultural community that will keep agribusinesses and attract new ones, and encourage new investment in farming operations.

**Halfway Creek Prairie AEA, La Crosse County** This is also new, encompassing 1,647 acres in the towns of Onalaska and Holland. Cash-cropping and dairy and swine operations dominate agriculture in this region. Along with protecting existing farmland, AEA goals include fostering bio-energy production, preserving land and water resources, and maintaining existing agricultural markets and suppliers.

**Heart of America's Dairyland AEA, Clark and Marathon counties** This expands an existing AEA by 36,999 acres, bringing the covered area to 97,984 acres in the towns of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Brighton and Hull. The AEA petitioners want to preserve the region's agricultural heritage, assure production capacity, and provide tools to minimize converting farmland to non-farm uses. They also aim to develop markets for local products.

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## **AG ENTERPRISE AREAS – ADD ONE**

**Pecatonica AEA, Lafayette County** Parts of the towns of Argyle, Blanchard and Lamont are included in this new 45,776-acre AEA. Petitioners here want to diminish barriers to new farming businesses, encourage multi-generational farming, and attract cottage agricultural industries. They also want to provide training for local workers in bio-products and food industries, and explore the potential for growth of technologies for energy efficiency and renewable energy on farms and in rural areas.

**Shields-Emmet AEA, Dodge County** 16,051 acres are included in this new AEA, covering portions of the two townships. Petitioners in the AEA seek to encourage farmland preservation agreements and soil and water conservation plans as a means to improve farm operations and support their rural identity. They also encourage non-traditional farming practices and investing in modernized farm equipment.

**Vienna-Dane-Westport AEA, Dane County** This new AEA consists of 20,681 acres in the three townships. Goals include maintaining strong agricultural land use through the use of land use tools that limit encroachment of nonfarm development by creating incentives for farmers to sign farmland preservation agreements. Petitioners also wish to expand opportunities for new markets and new uses for agricultural products and by-products.

This is the third round of AEA designations. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection can designate up to 1 million acres as AEAs. Local landowners, with support of local governments, must seek the designation.

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### ***Local contacts for 2012 agricultural enterprise areas***

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**Antigo Flats AEA:** Alex Crockford, 715-627-623; Andy Johnson, 715-261-6000

**Elba-Portland AEA:** Nate Olson, 920-386-3948

**Halfway Creek Prairie AEA:** Charlie Handy, 608.785.5919

**Heart of America's Dairyland AEA:** Andy Johnson, 715-261-6000; Matt Zoschke, 715-743-5285

**Pecatonica AEA:** Lisa Trumble, 608-776-3836

**Shields-Emmet AEA:** Nate Olson, 920-386-3948

**Vienna-Dane-Westport AEA:** Shawn Haney, 608-846-3800