

Bloomer Area AEA

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Farmland Preservation Program (ch. 91, Wis. Stats.)

Agricultural Enterprise Areas: Request for Petitions

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is requesting petitions, under s. 91.86, Wis. Stats., to designate *Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)* under s. 91.84, Wis. Stats. Petitions must be filed by **February 26, 2010**.

Interested petitioners should contact Coreen Fallat at Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov or (608) 224-4625 to indicate their intent to submit a request for AEA designation.

DATCP will evaluate the petitions and, by June 11, 2010, will announce selected AEAs for subsequent designation by rule. Between now and January 1, 2012, DATCP may designate up to 15 AEAs with a combined area of up to 200,000 acres. After January 1, 2012, up to 1 million acres may be designated as AEAs statewide. DATCP may issue a second request for petitions in 2010.

An *Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA)* is a contiguous land area, devoted primarily to agricultural use, which is locally targeted for agricultural preservation and development. Designation of an AEA does not, by itself, control or limit land use. However, farmers in an AEA may earn state income tax credits by entering into voluntary farmland preservation agreements. An AEA may be part of a broader local strategy to protect farmland and promote agricultural and related development.

Who May Petition

A petition must be jointly filed by at least 5 eligible farmers in the proposed AEA, and by each county, town or municipality in which any part of the proposed AEA is located. Other persons may sign the petition as supporting "cooperators."

Filing the Petition

- Petitioners must jointly complete and file the attached PETITION FORM. All required petitioners must sign, and every petitioner should keep a copy of the complete petition.
- Submit *hard copies* of all the following to DATCP:
 - The completed PETITION FORM (*including* any supporting pages, maps and documentation).
 - A signed *signature page* for each owner of an eligible farm who is signing the petition.
 - A signed *signature page* for each political subdivision in which any part of the proposed AEA is located.
 - Cooperator signature pages if any.

Submit hard copy materials to:

Wisconsin DATCP
Attn: DARM AEA
2811 Agriculture Dr
PO Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911

- Submit an *electronic copy* of the following (see attached Map and Spatial Data Guidelines):
 - Map of the proposed AEA.
 - Spatial location data used to create the map.

Submit electronic materials to:

Email: DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov (Enter "Map and spatial location data for proposed AEA" in the subject line).

- If you have questions, call 608-224-4625 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

REVIEW AND DECISION

DATCP has the discretion to grant or deny a petition subject to s. 91.86, Wis. Stats. DATCP will consider the materials included with each petition, and may choose among competing petitions. Decisions will be *based on the materials that you submit*, so please make sure that the materials are clear, complete and accurate. DATCP will give notice of its decision to the contact person identified in the petition. DATCP may also issue a public announcement, particularly if it grants a petition.

DATCP must designate AEA's by administrative rule. An AEA does not take effect until DATCP adopts and publishes a rule creating that AEA. Any decision granting an AEA petition is contingent upon a successful administrative rulemaking process to implement that decision. Rules are subject to possible legal and policy challenges. DATCP may reverse its decision and withdraw a proposed rule at any time. DATCP may also modify or repeal an AEA by rule.

Map and Spatial Data Guidelines

A clear agricultural enterprise area map should:

- Be titled with the preferred name of the proposed AEA.
- Clearly delineate the boundary of the proposed AEA so it is easy to determine whether a parcel of land is located within the proposed area.
- Have a map scale of no greater than one inch = 2,000 ft. (1:24,000).
- Show political boundaries (county, city, town, village), parcel boundaries, section lines, roads and water bodies.
- Have a map legend that includes symbols for all data represented on the map, including farmland preservation area boundaries, political boundaries, parcel boundaries, section lines, roads, and water bodies.
- Identify map scale, north arrow, map date and map producer.
- Be submitted in .pdf or equivalent file format via an appropriate electronic data transfer method (email, ftp, cd, flashdrive, or other acceptable method).

Spatial location data used to create a farmland preservation map should:

- Be projected in the WTM83, NAD83(1991) coordinate reference system.
- Include metadata written to the "Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata (CSDGM), Vers. 2 (FGDC Metadata Standard)." This includes data source, producer, contact, and attribute definitions. Metadata should also indicate, in the "purpose" section, that the map information is provided as a part of the petition requesting designation of an agricultural enterprise area.

- Be submitted in vector shapefile or equivalent file format via an appropriate electronic data transfer method (email, ftp, cd, flashdrive, or other acceptable method).

If you have any problems meeting these preferred mapping and data standards, please contact DATCP at 608-224-4632 or by email at DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.



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 submit the following information in support of the petition (*use the space provided or check the appropriate box*):¹

PART I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Preferred name of AEA. Bloomer Area AEA
- B. County or counties in which the proposed AEA is located (*all must sign this petition*). Chippewa
- C. All towns, villages or cities in which the proposed AEA is located (*all must sign this petition*). Town of Bloomer,
City of Bloomer,
Chippewa County
- D. Number of owners of "eligible farms,"² within the proposed AEA, who are signing this petition (*at least 5 required*). 14
- E. Total number of acres in the proposed AEA.³ Approx. 4,780 ac.
- F. All counties signing the petition have a certified farmland preservation plan. Yes No
- G. All land in the proposed AEA is located within a farmland preservation area designated in the certified county farmland preservation plan. Yes No
- H. All of the parcels in the proposed AEA are contiguous.⁴ Yes No
- I. The proposed AEA is primarily in agricultural use. Yes No
- J. Designated contact person for the AEA.

Name: Dan Stiehl

Address: 612 17th Avenue, Bloomer, WI 54724

Phone number: 715-828-9014

Email: _____

¹ Personal information you provide may be used for secondary purposes (Privacy Law s. 19.62-19.80, Wis. Stats.)

² An "eligible farm" is one that produced at least \$6,000 in "gross farm revenues" during the tax year preceding the year of this petition, or a total of at least \$18,000 in "gross farm revenues" during the 3 taxable years preceding the year of this petition. "Gross farm revenues" means gross receipts from agricultural use of a farm, excluding rent receipts, less the cost or other basis of livestock or other agricultural items purchased for resale which are sold or otherwise disposed of during the taxable year.

³ DATCP will give preference to proposed AEAs of at least 1,000 acres of land.

⁴ Contiguous means immediately adjacent or separated only by a lake, stream, or transportation or utility right-of-way.

PART II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR AEA

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

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

Describe any planned activities within the AEA, including grants, development incentives, cooperative agreements, land or easement purchases, land donations, promotional activities, public outreach or other actions that will help achieve the stated goals. Identify other individuals and entities involved in these efforts and their level of commitment. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Map 1 shows the location of the proposed Bloomer Area Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) and the petitioning farms.

This AEA petition has been filed by a small group of expanding cash grain and conventional dairy producers with adjoining operations covering approximately 4,780 acres.

Of special significance, a new regional food grade soybean processing facility is now being constructed in the City of Bloomer, immediately adjacent the AEA. This facility will create significant opportunities for area soybean producers and will expand Wisconsin's capacity to export food grade soybeans and other specialty grains to developing world markets.

The goal of the petitioners is to establish an AEA to:

1. Gain the knowledge, experience, and information needed to assist other producers, towns, and the County to develop farmland protection strategies applicable to the Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire Urban Area.
2. Preserve the agricultural land and water base within the AEA that will support and maintain the economic viability of the existing farm operations.
3. Maintain a stable and predictable supply of milk, corn, and grain as currently marketed to area dairies, poultry producers, and ethanol processors.
4. Refine existing cash grain production practices and establish new business relationships (among the farm petitioners) to establish and maintain a market supply of specialty (non-GMO) food grade soybeans to meet the production demand of a newly established soybean processing facility.
5. Preserve and build upon the existing agri-business relationships that currently exist between the farm producers, the area agricultural processors, and the local businesses that service the agricultural infrastructure.
6. Use the AEA and the associated relationships to pursue new business ventures that will build the economy and advance State and local development goals.

A number of project-based activities are planned to pursue these goals and to gain added value from the pilot project.

The pilot project will be used by the petitioners and by Chippewa County to pursue the following objectives:

1. Create or upgrade business plans for agricultural producers and agri-businesses within the AEA.
2. Create or upgrade business plans for any agri-businesses entering supply or service contracts with agricultural-related storage or processing facilities planned in the City of Bloomer.
3. Determine appropriate varieties of soybeans and specialty grains that are best suited for the area's climate, and best available agronomic practices as needed to supply food grade soybeans and other specialty grains to meet a growing export market demand.
4. Demonstrate weed, disease, pest control, and soil and water conservation practices that can be applied to allow for the sustained production of corn, specialty grains, and food grade (non-GMO) soybeans.

This pilot project will be actively supported by Chippewa County, with direct staffing commitments through the Chippewa County Cooperative Extension Office (UWEX) and the Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation and Forest Management (LCFM).

To advance these State and local program objectives, County staff support will be made available to:

- Organize and facilitate structured communication among the petitioners, as required to implement the pilot project.
- Coordinate pilot project-related activities.
- Apply for and manage grants and short-term projects that will be used to advance the stated objectives (1-4).
- Implement a public outreach program and promotional activities to inform and educate the general public, stakeholders, and targeted agricultural interests of the objectives and outcome of the pilot AEA.
- Document the process, steps, and resources (\$ and time) that are required to establish an AEA, and the resources required to administer and service Farmland Preservation agreements so that this information can be shared with others.

It is important to note that this project is supported by the Town of Bloomer, the City of Bloomer, and by the Bloomer Economic Development Corporation. As supporting institutions, these entities will participate in the public outreach and project evaluation components of this project.

It is also important to emphasize that this petition is producer-driven (Hilger, Stiehl, Rooney, Siverling, Marquardt, Lueck).

Three (3) of the petitioners have substantial agricultural land holdings in adjoining and neighboring towns (Woodmohr, Eagle Point, Cooks Valley, Howard, Wheaton). These towns are located in close proximity to the City of Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire urban area and experience a high rate of urban development.

The Towns of Cooks Valley and Howard are not zoned. The Towns of Woodmohr, Eagle Point, and Wheaton participated in County Comprehensive Zoning.

Exclusive agricultural zoning is no longer available or administered under the Chippewa County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. As a result, the agricultural land base is being consumed by development, with no institutional mechanism available to protect the working lands.

This pilot project is very important to the future of production agriculture in Chippewa County. The knowledge and experience gained (through this pilot) will become immediately available and will be readily transferred to neighboring towns with significant development pressure.

The timing of this project is also important. The information gained will be of direct value to all producers, the County, and to the towns as they consider farmland protection strategies and work to revise the Chippewa County Farmland Preservation Plan (as required before 1/31/2012).

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

Explain what is special about this location. Include why the proposed AEA is geographically well “targeted” for agricultural preservation and development. Explain how the geographic distribution of existing agricultural uses and related infrastructure helped determine the location (see next). Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Strong Business Foundation

This AEA pilot has a strong business foundation. This business foundation is based upon an existing market demand for traditional row crops and specialty crops, and by recent capital investments made by the petitioning producers in land and grain storage/processing facilities in and adjacent the AEA.

As previously noted, a regional food grade soybean terminal is now under construction that will receive and process soybeans produced in the AEA, and from farms in West Central Wisconsin.

This plant will be very important to agriculture in the region and to the regional economy. This plant will:

1. Create new opportunities for area producers to produce high value specialty crops that pay a market premium.
2. Expand the State’s capacity to export food grade soybeans and other specialty grains to developing Asian and international markets.

The details of this agricultural development are outlined in a current press release provided as Attachment I. The economic impact of this development is outlined in Q#11.

It is anticipated that in 2010, this facility will initially process 400,000 bushels of soybeans from 10,000 acres. It will have the capacity to process up to 1,000,000 bushels from 25,000 acres.

This location and economic scenario make this project well suited to promote agricultural preservation and development because it provides a benchmark opportunity to show:

1. How neighboring cash grain and dairy producers can work together to optimize production and farm profits with the AEA.
2. How cash grain producers can refine their operations to meet a new market demand for food grade soybeans and other specialty grains.
3. How local agricultural producers, and State and local agencies can work together to support the agronomic, infrastructure, and economic development needs of a newly created food processing facility.
4. The linkages between working lands, farmland protections, and agriculturally-based economic development.
5. The economic impacts of the newly created AEA and soybean processing facility on the local economy.

Diverse Mix of Stable Cash Grain and Forage-Based Dairy Operations

Most farms in this area have successfully made the transition from small-scale, family-operated dairy operations to larger-scale, family-owned cash grain/lease operations.

The AEA supports two (2) free standing forage-based dairy operations, two (2) heifer replacement/steer operations (supported by on-farm forage and cash grain production), and five (5) large-scale cash grain operations (corn/beans).

Individual production efficiencies are gained through the bulk order of production inputs, equipment leasing, professional management, and the retention of managed skilled and trained labor.

Some equipment sharing occurs among some of the cash grain producers on a limited basis (at time of crop harvest), to optimize available trucking and the use of available grain drying and storage facilities.

This production approach has allowed the cash grain and dairy producers in the area to specialize and to successfully produce reliable milk, corn, and bean supplies to area processors.

This mix of forage-based dairy and cash grain operations will allow the petitioners to explore enterprise relationships and agreements necessary to support sustainable production, including cropland lease arrangements, crop rotations and field management practices, manure and nutrient management, and weed and pest control.

Recent Capitalization has Increased Operational Efficiency and Capacity for Grain Production

In the past five (5) years, there has been significant investments in farmland and farming operations located within the AEA.

A significant portion of these investments have been made by several crop producers who have reinvested capital generated from other non-agricultural business ventures (road construction, energy infrastructure, and business investments).

Capital investments have been made in land, land improvements, grain drying and storage facilities, machinery, technology, and crop inputs. Additional operational investments have been made in professional farm management, trained labor, crop inputs, and agronomic services.

The key investors and the extent of recent investments are as follows:

<u>Investor</u>	<u>Type and Scope of Investment</u>	<u>Year</u>
Duncan Creek Farms	•Dairy modernization	2001
D. Stiehl	•80 acre farm	2002
Hilger Farms Partnership	•100 acre farm	2004
Rooney Farms	•525 acre farmland	2004 - present
B. & T. Lueck	•80 cow dairy expansion/modernization	2005
Hilger Farms Partnership	•80 acre farmland	2007
D. R. Stiehl	•80 acre farm	2008

These capital and operational improvements have served to significantly upgrade the production-based infrastructure, and have increased production efficiency and yields.

As a result, these operations have proven to be profitable in a highly competitive market with limited profit margins.

Producers have the Knowledge Base, Agronomic Skills, and Operational Capacity to Explore Specialty Grain Markets

The cash grain and forage producers within the AEA have established a sophisticated production, processing, and marketing network.

These producers are well positioned to refine their operations to produce specialty grains in response to emerging market opportunities.

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

Explain why the size and boundaries are appropriate, and will help “focus” preservation development efforts. As part of the explanation, include a discussion of agricultural uses and infrastructure, unique land resources, soil productivity, proximity to viable farm markets or processing facilities, and other relevant factors. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Boundaries Drawn to Create High Density Agricultural Business Unit

The boundaries of this AEA were drawn to include only those producers who have expressed an interest to work together to advance the stated goals and objectives of the AEA. A special effort was made by the petitioners to limit the size of the pilot and to not recruit or include the farms of adjoining landowners who preferred not to participate.

As a result, the AEA has a high density of eligible working farms. Importantly, all of the petitioners with eligible farms included in the AEA have a stated interest in entering Farmland Preservation agreements, and/or exploring projects that might advance the stated project objectives (see Q#2).

Manageable Project Size Allows for Targeted Focus

The size and composition of the AEA (4,780 acres, 14 working farms) provides a reasonable production base to support cooperative ventures.

The relatively small number of participants is manageable, and will allow the County and State to work with the producers to pursue demonstration projects and grants that will be used to advance the project objectives (See Q#2).

Land Characteristics are Representative of West Central Wisconsin

The location and physical characteristics of this AEA makes it representative of counties in West Central Wisconsin (Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, Barron).

The AEA is located on the northern edge of the tension zone, which has historically constituted the northern range of cash grain operations in Wisconsin.

Farms in the AEA are located on a glacial outwash plain and stream terraces of the Chippewa River. Soils are of the Billet, Rosholt, and Oesterle Association. Soils are predominantly class 1-3 prime agricultural soils. Land improvements have been made through farm drainage to upgrade Class IV-VI soils that have limitations due to wetness.

Location of Working Farms is Close to Agri-Processors

The agricultural commodities produced in this AEA are used to supply regional agri-processors, and are critical to the ongoing viability of the surrounding agricultural infrastructure.

- All of the milk produced by the dairy farms in the AEA (approximately 1,000,000 lbs.) is shipped to area dairy facilities (Ellsworth and Menomonie). All of the corn produced on the dairy farms is fed to the dairy herd and replacements.
 - All of the beef produced is sold and processed locally.
 - Nearly all of the corn produced in the AEA by the cash grain producers is marketed to regional poultry producers (Jennie-O Turkey, Golden Plump Chicken), located within 70 miles of the AEA, or to area ethanol plants (Ace Ethanol, & Western Wisconsin Energy, LLC), located within 50 miles of the AEA.
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The close proximity of these working farms to agri-processors limits transportation costs and assures a reliable low-cost production supply.

Location of Working Farms is Close to Existing Infrastructure and Transportation Network

The AEA has a good farm-to-market road network and is located within three (3) miles of the North/South Hwy. 53 corridor, with immediate hub access to the Hwy. 29 East/West corridor and the Hwy. 94 corridor.

It is important to note that the AEA also has direct rail service.

The resulting road and rail network provides for the efficient transport of agricultural imports (fuel, lime, and fertilizers) to local producers and for the cost effective transport of grain and agricultural commodities to local processors, and to regional and international markets.

The location of the AEA in proximity to the agricultural infrastructure, transportation network, and market centers is shown on Map 2.

Location of Working Farms in Proximity to Regional Urban Centers

The AEA is located on the edge of the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls/Menomonie urban area. This location allows ready access to urban markets where agricultural products are processed and marketed.

Conversely, this location places an additional demand on the ag land base associated with nonfarm-related urban development (See Q#7).

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

Provide documentation to show that the proposed AEA is primarily in agricultural use. Describe the percentage and distribution of agricultural and agriculture-related uses; residential uses; transportation, utility, energy and communications uses; undeveloped natural resource and open space uses; and other uses as applicable. Identify the principle types of agricultural use and describe the location, geographic scope, size, significance and compatibility of those agricultural uses. Describe current trends and emerging issues within the proposed area. Attach a land use map for the area to support this explanation (at the town or county scale).

Land Uses

Land uses within and adjacent the AEA are primarily agricultural and agricultural-related. Cultivated land, used to support dairy and grain crop production, comprises approximately 90% of the enterprise area.

The location and distribution of agricultural uses, nonfarm residential, transportation, utility-related uses, and undeveloped natural resources is shown on Map 3.

Principle Agricultural Uses

Agricultural uses are those that have been developed to support and maintain four (4) free-standing forage-based productive dairy operations; two (2) steer operations, supported by on-farm forage and cash grain production; and five (5) cash grain operations (forage/corn/beans).

Approximately 70% of the cropland used for cash grain operations is producer-owned and operated with the balance of 30% rented from historic farm owners using standard competitive five (5) year leases.

Cash grain production from this area has historically supplied regional poultry operations (Jennie-O Turkey & Golden Plump Chicken). In recent years, market demand for corn from this area has increased significantly in response to corn supply demands from two (2) corn ethanol plants located within 30 miles of the proposed AEA (Ace Ethanol – Stanley, 2002, West Wisconsin Energy, LLC - Wheeler, 2005).

All of the cash grain producers also operate land located outside of the AEA as part of their larger cash grain operations.

Current Trends

The current trends and emerging issues within the AEA are representative of those that affect working farms in Wisconsin. Those most pronounced in and adjacent the AEA are as follows:

1. Changes in types, sizes, and intensity of agricultural operations and production, whereby small-scale dairy operation are being replaced by larger-scale dairy operations, swine or poultry operations, or by cash grain operations.
2. Changes in agricultural technology with a trend toward less labor and greater automation.
3. Changes in agricultural markets with a trend toward specialization and processing for select markets.
4. Land use development trends, whereby land historically used to support productive farm operations is being divided and developed for nonfarm related residential, commercial, and recreational use. See Q#7.

5. Changes in capital investment with an emerging trend whereby capital gains and profits generated from other (nonagricultural) enterprises are being reinvested in agricultural land, agricultural operations, and agriculturally related business enterprises.

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

The entire proposed AEA must be located within a farmland preservation area designation in the county's certified farmland preservation plan (please document). Explain how the proposed AEA is consistent with existing county and local land use plans. If there are inconsistencies, explain how they will be reconciled. Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

The establishment of this AEA is consistent with all of the local land use plans for the areas.

Consistency with Landowner Plans

It is important to note that this AEA has been sponsored and driven by local producers who plan to preserve and manage their land for agricultural production.

Consistency with Town Plans

The Town of Bloomer has developed and adopted the Town of Bloomer Land Use Plan, (2001). That plan contains a detailed "preferred future" land use map and has identified farmland protection as a principle land use goal.

To implement that land plan, the Town exercised village powers and contracted the West Central Regional Planning Commission (WCRPC) to develop the Town of Bloomer Zoning Ordinance.

The Town of Bloomer Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2002. That ordinance contains an agricultural production zoning district to limit development density and restrict nonagricultural use. The ordinance includes an associated zoning map that shows the location of agricultural parcels included in that district.

In 2007, the Town of Bloomer and the WCRPC submitted this ordinance and the associated zoning map to DATCP to determine if it could be certified by DATCP under Wis. Stats, Chapter 91.32, as meeting the minimum requirements of the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program. In response to that submittal, DATCP provided a detailed outline of inconsistencies in the ordinance text and map that precluded State certification.

In 2009, the Town of Bloomer contracted the services of the WCRPC to develop the Town of Bloomer Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan has now been developed and will be considered for adoption on March 11, 2010.

The Town of Bloomer Comprehensive Plan again identifies farmland protection as a principle land use objective. This plan contains the most current map of planned land use and identifies those parcels that will be protected through agricultural production zoning.

To implement it's comprehensive plan, it is the Town's intent to:

1. Submit to Chippewa County a map of those areas that have been identified, through the comprehensive planning process, as "agriculturally significant parcels" to be considered as the County updates the Chippewa County Farmland Preservation Plan, and
2. Contract the services of the WCRPC to evaluate, amend, and upgrade the zoning maps and text of the Town of Bloomer Zoning Ordinance so that it conforms to the standards for farmland preservation zoning, established in Wis. Stats., Chapter 91; and to submit that upgraded ordinance to Chippewa County and to DATCP for certification.

Consistency with County Plans

The Chippewa County Comprehensive Plan (11/09), and the Chippewa County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, (08/09), document the county's intent to actively support the efforts of individual landowners and towns to preserve farmland.

The Chippewa County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, (8/09), explicitly identifies farmland preservation and the conservation of "working lands" as a management objective and identifies the development of a "Working Lands Pilot Program" as a program priority.

Goal 2; Objective 1, of the plan states:

"Support the efforts of individual landowners, private nonprofit conservation organizations, and local municipalities to preserve productive "working lands".

- Develop and implement a "working lands" pilot project to evaluate and advance County options for farmland protection.
 - Prepare a project proposal through the Wis. Working Lands Initiative to define the scope, purpose, and means to evaluate a pilot project.
 - Prepare and enter 66.03 municipal agreements and M.O.U.'s with participating municipalities and public agencies.
 - Prepare and submit project budget and grant proposals.
- Revise and update the Chippewa County Farmland Plan in association with State efforts to update WI Stats. 91 and the State Farmland Preservation Program.
 - Identify the location, size and boundaries of working land conservation areas through use of Town or county-based planning processes, and landowner registries.

Consistency with County Farmland Preservation Plan

The AEA is located in an area identified for agricultural preservation, as documented in the Chippewa County Farmland Preservation Plan, (1987).

The parcels planned for farmland protection in the County's Farmland Preservation Plan (1987), and those planned for farmland protection under this AEA proposal (2010), are fully consistent. The extent of consistency is illustrated in Map 4, which shows the parcels historically planned for farmland preservation in relation to the parcels located within the proposed AEA.

The only apparent inconsistencies are associated with six (6) minor inclusions of nonfarm parcels, less than 35 acres in size). This inconsistency can be attributed to the mapping criteria used when creating the initial 1985 Farmland Preservation Plan map (parcels less than 35 acres in size were mapped as nonfarm inclusions). There also may be a limited number of nonfarm parcels, less than ten (10), that have been created since the original mapping was completed.

To reconcile the minor inconsistency in mapping between the Chippewa County Farmland Preservation Plan (1987), and the proposed AEA mapping (2010), petitioners proposed to simply recognize the six (6) nonfarm related parcels (less than 35 acres) and any nonfarm residential parcels that have been created since 1985, as pre-existing nonfarm inclusions. Given their size (1.5 – 5 acres), it is expected that these inclusions have limited potential for further non-agricultural related development.

7. What nonagricultural development trends affect the proposed AEA?

Explain current development trends affecting the proposed AEA. Describe the likelihood that land in the AEA will transition out of agriculture in the foreseeable future (note that an AEA may not include any area planned for nonagricultural development within the next 15 years). Attach supporting documentation, where appropriate.

Given the location of the AEA in proximity to the City of Bloomer and the Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire Urban Area, there are ongoing land use trends that have resulted in the fragmentation and development of productive agricultural land to non-farm uses.

These development trends are driven by a market demand for single family housing units, rural estates, and small hobby farms, located within commuting distance of major urban areas.

As a result of these trends, several secondary impacts have resulted that have a negative affect on the viability of ongoing agricultural operations. They are:

- Increased land prices.
- Loss of land base and increased fragmentation of productive lands used to support working farms.
- Increased traffic and road congestion that affect the movement of farm equipment and road safety.
- Increased potential for urban/rural land use conflicts including an escalation of agriculturally related nuisance complaints (noise, dust, odor, agricultural runoff, and nonpoint pollution control).
- Increased concern over land access, recreational trespassing and wildlife management (including deer and nuisance species).

In the past twenty (20) years, there has been significant development of nonfarm residents located in and adjacent the AEA. The location of this development in proximity to the AEA is shown on Map 4.

If this application is approved, it is unlikely that land in the AEA will transition out of agriculture in the foreseeable future. Approval of the AEA would provide continuity toward the long-term Farmland Preservation Program goals.

It is unlikely because:

1. The Town of Bloomer and petitioning landowners share a strong social and business commitment to limit development within the AEA.
2. The AEA boundary has been created so that it does not include parcels that are beyond the control of the cooperating petitioners.

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

Describe current and proposed land use controls such as zoning ordinances (farmland preservation, shoreland, wetland), farmland preservation agreements, easements, subdivision ordinances, natural area protections or other similar controls. If the area is zoned, attach a zoning map for the area (at the town or county scale). Attach documentation, where appropriate.

The Town of Bloomer has developed and now administers a Town Zoning Ordinance that limits rural density and restricts nonagricultural use in a designated agricultural production district (See Q#6).

This ordinance establishes a rural development density of one (1) nonfarm residence per thirty-five acres (1/35), and encourages residential clustering through use of a development bonus.

The ordinance has been successfully administered since 2002 and will be applied to support the AEA.

These Town land use controls will be augmented by existing land use ordinances administered by Chippewa County, including Shoreland/Wetland zoning (NR115), Wis. Storm Water Runoff Control (NR 216), and County Land Division (1 acres minimum lot size/no rural density restrictions).

Opportunities to pursue conservation easements to protect farmland and natural areas are now available through the Chippewa County Stewardship Fund, State Stewardship Fund, USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and other state and federal grant sources. These opportunities will be explored at the request of the petitioning landowners who chose to enter a State Farmland Preservation Agreement.

It is important to note that the Chippewa County Land Conservation Committee, West Wisconsin Land Trust, and DNR are now cooperating in a joint pilot project to purchase an agricultural conservation easement of 295 acres on a working farm located in this proposed AEA (Siverling McCann Creek Farmland Protection Pilot Project). The location of this farm is shown on Map 4.

The terms of this conservation easement have been negotiated and the funding for the project has been allocated. It is anticipated that this project will be completed before 12/31/10.

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

Farmers in an AEA who enter into a farmland preservation agreement must meet the following state standards (ATCP 50, Wis. Adm. Code), to claim a tax credit. Please indicate whether any of the petitioners are already in compliance with these standards. Explain how the proposed AEA will promote compliance with conservation standards. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

- *Control of soil erosion*
- *Nutrient management planning*
- *Prevention of direct runoff from feedlots or stored manure into state waters*
- *Prevention of overflowing manure storage structures*
- *Repair of failing and leaking manure storage structures and closure of abandoned manure storage structures*
- *Construction of new or substantially altered manure storage structures to technical standards*
- *No stacking of manure in unconfined piles in water quality management areas*
- *Diversion of clean water from feedlots, manure storage areas and barnyards in the water quality management area*
- *Maintenance of self-sustaining sod cover along waterways*

Compliance with ATCP 50/NR151 Nonpoint Pollution Standards

Chippewa County has formally adopted the state agricultural nonpoint pollution control prohibitions and performance standards, as established in NR 151 and ATCP 50.

The County has also adopted an administrative framework and process for systematically administering these standards as part of its soil and water conservation program (Chippewa County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 7/2/09, Appendix 4, "Addendum to the Chippewa County Operational Agreement Between DNR & Chippewa County Land Conservation Department for the Administration and Implementation of Agricultural Nonpoint Pollution Performance Standards and Prohibitions Under NR151 and NR243, April 16, 2004").

The Chippewa County Land Conservation Committee and Department have systematically administered this process since 2004 as a foundational element of the County's soil and water conservation program efforts.

Establishment of the AEA will promote compliance with the conservation standards by:

1. Triggering the statutory requirement (Wis. Stats, Chapter 91) that these conservation standards be administered by the County, and be implemented by landowners who enter a Farmland Preservation agreement.
2. Institutionalizing the administrative process (adopted by Chippewa County) by which each farm entering a Farmland Preservation agreement will be systematically evaluated to determine the extent of current compliance and will be informed of the extent of current compliance and any outstanding issues of noncompliance.
3. Targeting available state and federal funds with technical assistance to encourage landowners to come into compliance.
4. Assuring transparency and public accountability through the use of an established producer-driven annual reporting and self-certification process, as currently administered by the Chippewa County Dept. of Land Conservation and Forest Management to assure ongoing compliance.

Farmland Preservation Program Participants to Share Costs of Compliance Monitoring

Of special importance, the petitioners have agreed to the administrative procedures that will be used to document and administer the NR151/ATCP 50 standards.

They have also agreed to a fee structure that will be used to fully offset the County's administrative costs of administering Farmland Preservation Agreement applications and the ongoing program costs associated with annual compliance monitoring and certification.

To offset these ongoing public costs, an annual fee of \$.50 per acre will be assessed to each participating landowner based upon the acres enrolled through the farmland preservation contract.

If successful, this fee for service arrangement may help promote compliance with the State's soil and water conservation standards by distributing new program costs between County government and program participants.

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

Describe current and proposed investment within the AEA. Identify key current and potential investors and their level of commitment. Explain how the AEA will promote or facilitate agricultural and related investment. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

The proposed AEA will promote agriculture and agricultural investment.

Historic Investments in the AEA

The level of historic capital investment made by the petitioning families in land and agricultural facilities in the AEA is substantial.

Ongoing operational investment costs made by the petitioning producers (machinery, labor, fuel, and crop inputs) are also very significant.

Several petitioners within the AEA have recently made significant capital investments to expand and/or upgrade their operations and facilities.

Recent capital investments include additions to the agricultural land base made through land purchases within and adjacent the AEA, upgrades to existing grain storage facilities, and the expansion and modernization of several dairy facilities (See Q#3).

Anticipated Investments in the AEA

The AEA will promote and facilitate agricultural-related investments by:

1. Promoting the use of farmland preservation agreements. This will stabilize land use in the AEA and provide relief from nonfarm related development pressure and costs (See Q#7).
2. Providing the stability and institutional assurance needed to encourage local investments by the petitioners and local financial institutions in agricultural-related processing facilities.
3. Establishing a targeted area for the use of project grants and rural economic development loans that would be used by the petitioners to improve and grow their enterprise operations.

It is anticipated that future investments made by the petitioning producers will be consistent with the existing specialty/growth model. Further investments in agricultural land are planned and anticipated as farmland located adjacent the AEA boundary become available.

Opportunities for Further Growth and Investments to Meet Market Demand

As described in Q#3, a new soybean processing plant will be located immediately adjacent the Bloomer Area AEA and will.

1. Create new opportunities for area producers to produce high value specialty crops that pay a premium, and
2. Expand the State's capacity to export food grade soybeans and other specialty grains to developing Asian and international markets.

The details of this agricultural development are outlined in a recent press release provided as Attachment I.

It is important to note that 2010 production contracts are now being sought.

This plant will be especially advantageous to producers in the AEA, Chippewa County, and West Central Wisconsin because the close proximity to the processing plant significantly reduces transportation costs.

Economic Impact of New Facility

At the request of the petitioners, an analysis was conducted to estimate the regional economic impact that is anticipated from this soybean processing facility.

This analysis was conducted by the University of Wisconsin – Extension, through the Chippewa County Extension Office (A. Dane, Community Development Specialist).

The estimates were made using IMPLAN economic modeling software and represent the total impact on Chippewa County and immediately adjacent counties.

The assumption was based upon a “built-out scenario” of the plant’s capacity to process 1 million bushels (1,000,000 bu) of soybeans per year at an assumed value of \$12/bushel (recognizing the premium received for food grade soybeans).

The following estimates were generated, that includes the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of the facility:

Total Economic Impact	\$14,937,215
Total Jobs Estimate	44
Total Taxes Estimated (Local, State, Federal)	\$ 279,883

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

Explain how the AEA will promote economic activity between agricultural enterprises or between agricultural and nonagricultural enterprises. This may include, for example, joint marketing opportunities, purchase of feed, shared facilities and equipment, custom manure spreading or other opportunities. Attach documentation, where appropriate.

Establishment of this AEA will maintain the viability of these working farms and will help stabilize, maintain, and build the rural economy.

Establishment of an AEA pilot project will provide the opportunity for the petitioners to evaluate and explore opportunities to expand these enterprises within and outside of the AEA.

As described in Q#2, the economic activity between the agricultural producers is well established, and has allowed these producers to specialize and adapt their operations as needed to remain viable.

As described in Q#3, the economic activity and business relationships between the producers, the food and commodity processors, and the agricultural service sector are well established and expanding.

As described in Q#10, producers anticipate significant opportunity to supply existing and developing area processors.

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

Describe the level of support by other farmers, and by affected businesses, community organizations, and government entities. Attach cooperator "signature pages," if any.

As described in Q#4, all landowners with eligible farms within the boundaries of the AEA have expressed their support for this petition.

This petition is strongly supported by the City of Bloomer and the City of Bloomer Economic Development Corporation.

The economic development corporation has an interest in participating in this pilot project to help define and advance the concept of an AEA, and to use the AEA as a catalyst to support and encourage further agri-business related economic development.

Are there any other compelling reasons to choose this AEA proposal from among competing AEA proposals? Explain, and attach documentation where appropriate.

We have not reviewed all of the other AEA proposals so are not aware of any other compelling reasons to select it among completing interests.

In summary, we believe this proposal is a strong candidate for a pilot project because the AEA:

1. Is relatively small in size and is comprised of a high density of committed petitioners with an existing agricultural enterprise relationship.
2. Will preserve farmland and support the development of agronomic practices needed to produce high value food grade soybeans (and other specialty crops) that will expand the State's capacity to supply developing Asian and international markets.
3. Will allow for the effective transfer of knowledge and experience about this farmland preservation approach to other towns in the Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire urban area that are experiencing significant development pressure.
4. Is strongly supported by local government, as exhibited by a commitment by Chippewa County to assign staff support to assure the success of the project.

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

Corporation

Partnership

LLC

Other (describe) _____

Authorized signature _____ Date _____

Print name of signer _____

Authorized signature _____ Date _____

Print name of signer _____

Farm address: _____

Farm owner address: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Petitioner information

I (we) already have a farmland preservation agreement with the state. Yes No

I (we) are interested in entering into a farmland preservation agreement.
(Note: To enter into a farmland preservation agreement, the farm must meet state soil and water conservation standards.) Yes No

Political Subdivision Signature Page

The petition must be signed by every political subdivision (county, town, city or village) in which any part of the proposed AEA is included. A separate signature page, in the following form, must be attached for each political subdivision. This signature page must be signed by an authorized officer or representative of the political subdivision.

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: _____

Principle mailing Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Acreege of land in proposed AEA located in political subdivision: 4,281 acres (Approximate pending final approval of AEA boundary by town and eligible petitioner.)

Cooperator Petitioner Signature Page (optional)

Other persons (cooperators) may sign in support of the petition. A separate signature page, in the following form, is required 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):

Principle mailing Address: _____

Phone number: _____

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

I have read this petition and support the designation of the proposed area as an AEA.

Print name _____

Authorized signature: _____ Date _____

Political Subdivision Signature Page

The petition must be signed by every political subdivision (county, town, city or village) in which any part of the proposed AEA is included. A separate signature page, in the following form, must be attached for each political subdivision. This signature page must be signed by an authorized officer or representative of the political subdivision.

Political subdivision name: Chippewa County, Wisconsin

Type (check one): County Town City Village

Printed name of authorized officer or representative: William H. Reynolds

Title of authorized officer or representative: Chippewa County Administrator

Authorized signature: _____ Date: _____

Principle mailing Address: 711 N. Bridge Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Phone number: 715-726-7984

Acreage of land in proposed AEA located in political subdivision: 4,281 acres (Approximate pending final approval of AEA boundary by town and eligible petitioner.)

Cooperator Petitioner Signature Page (optional)

Other persons (cooperators) may sign in support of the petition. A separate signature page, in the following form, is required 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):

Principle mailing Address: _____

Phone number: _____

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

I have read this petition and support the designation of the proposed area as an AEA.

Print name _____

Authorized signature: _____ Date _____