



Agriculture Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

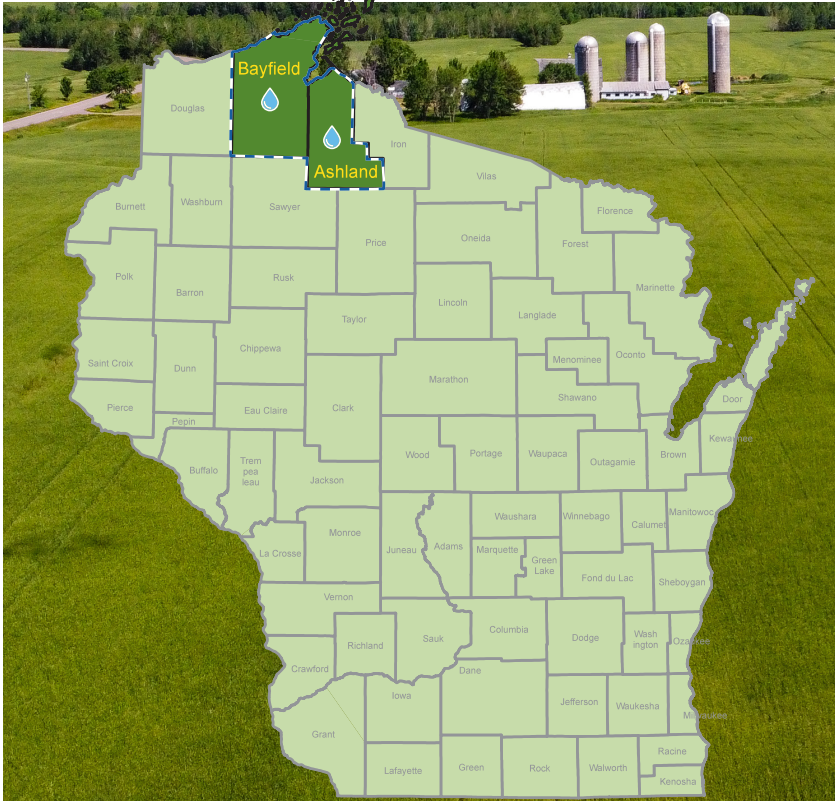
Fields, Waters and Woods

Counties: Ashland and Bayfield

AEA Designation: 2014

Acres: 41,879

Municipalities and Reservations: Marengo, Ashland, White River, Bad River Reservation



Background

The Fields, Waters and Woods Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) was established in 2014 in Ashland and Bayfield counties, spanning portions of the towns of Kelly, White River, Marengo, and Ashland and the Bad River Reservation. This AEA is a homage to the landscape around Lake Superior and geographically a mixture of forestry and agriculture intersected by miles of rivers and streams. Just over three percent of the total land area of Ashland County is devoted to agricultural use. The remainder of the land is largely devoted to forestry and open water. The unique geography of the AEA in the north woods can present unique challenges to agriculture, including shorter growing seasons, variable clay, till or bedrock dominated soils, small fields bisected by waterways, and increased precipitation and runoff.

The Fields, Waters and Woods AEA is primarily home to dairy, beef, and cash crop operations, but has recently seen some increase in the production of non-traditional meat products, produce, community-supported agriculture, and value-added agricultural products such as cheeses, jams, and wines. Many of the beef and dairy farms are clustered between the White and Marengo Rivers, which straddle the Ashland and Bayfield county border. The AEA was first established with a goal of enabling producers to enroll their land into the farmland preservation program as a means to maintain agricultural production in the area. In this AEA, promoting farmland preservation is an avenue

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LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS

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AG CO-OPS &
BUSINESSES

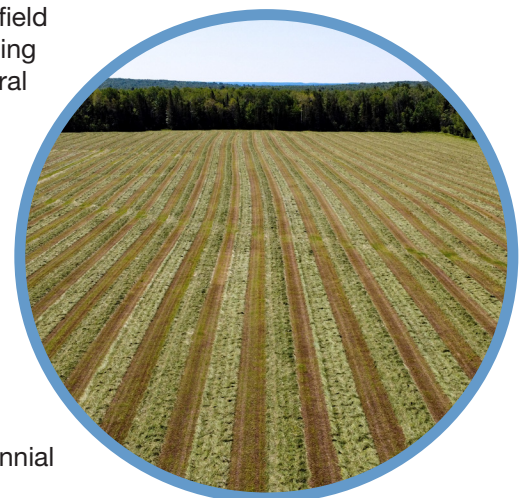
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PRODUCERS &
LANDOWNERS

to support the clustering protected farms, encourage agricultural growth and diversification of the agricultural economy, and minimize land use conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses through outreach and education.

County Support

To support these goals, Ashland County partnered with Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron counties to apply for a National Association of Conservation Districts grant to hire Agricultural Technician Matt Bolen to work on farmland preservation, nutrient management, and wildlife abatement. A native of southern Bayfield County, Bolen's background is in wildlife and fisheries. He is enthusiastic about bridging his background with a desire to promote conservation in agriculture and protect natural resources. Bolen wants farmers in the AEA and around Ashland County to know that there are number of great resources available to support their farmland and conservation goals:

- A \$2,000 incentive for Ashland County farmland owners that sign a new farmland preservation agreement in the Fields, Waters and Woods AEA in 2022. Financial assistance to install conservation practices to preserve or improve soil and water resources.
- A no-till drill available for producers in the Lake Superior Watershed to rent from the County Land Conservation Department. No-till practices can help producers decrease or limit soil erosion on their farm. It may also enable producers to renovate pastures and hayground with minimal tillage to maintain ground in perennial living cover.



This AEA is supported and surrounded by the following enterprises, businesses, non-profits, and Institutions:

-  Agro-tourism
-  Aquaculture
-  Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative
-  CREP Participation
-  Deer Farming
-  Food Processing
-  Lake Superior CSA
-  Meat Distributors
-  Milk Production
-  Northland College
-  Nursery
-  Organic Farming
-  Trout Streams
-  Ad Hoc Dairy Producer Group
-  South Shore Nutrient Management Farmer Education Program
-  UW Extension
-  Veterinary Clinics
-  Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
-  Wisconsin Indianhead Tech College

- Support in writing or updating a nutrient management plan.

Ashland County is looking to grow participation in the Fields, Waters and Woods AEA through enrollment in new farmland preservation agreements. A farmland preservation agreement is a voluntary contract between a landowner and the state in which they agree to keep their land in agricultural use and meet soil and water conservation practices, including the preparation of a nutrient management plan. In return, the landowner is eligible for an annual tax credit. In 2022, there is a \$2,000 incentive available to Ashland County landowners that enroll all or a portion of their farm in farmland preservation agreements in the AEA.

In addition, the Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas and Iron County coalition is looking to grow the number of farms in the Lake Superior region with a nutrient management plan. A nutrient management plan is a farm strategy to use manure and other fertilizers to meet crop nutrient needs, while reducing the potential for runoff from fields to lakes, streams, and groundwater. The objective is to ensure that crops get the right amount of nutrients at the right time and place, benefiting producers by improving crop yields and reducing costs, and the environment and community by keeping nutrients on fields and out of lakes, streams and groundwater. Bolen is available to help farmers and landowners in the AEA and 4-county region navigate the intricacies of writing a nutrient management plan for the first time or update their existing nutrient management plan.




Training and Outreach Conservation Specialist Andrea Topper with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, says “without a nutrient management plan, it can be hard to make a fertility plan and know what your crops needs are. Preparing a nutrient management plan using SnapPlus accounts for current soil test levels, takes into consideration soil type and yield goals, and gives producers the proper fertilizer recommendation for each crop. This information helps producers identify previous over and under applications in their rotations and make adjustments accordingly to their fertility plans. With increased costs in commercial fertilizer in 2022, being on top of your fertilizer plan is more important than ever!”

A nutrient management plan, when paired with soil testing, can be a tool for any type of producer to identify their soil nutrients, potentially reduce fertilizer costs or applications, and adjust inputs to meet nutrient needs on the farm and save money. Having a plan can also benefit producers who travel long distances for fertilizer or to rent equipment by making them more efficient.




Future Growth

Leveraging available resources to prepare or update a nutrient management plan, enroll in farmland preservation, or access other conservation assistance can help achieve community goals to preserve local natural resources and promote increased conservation practice adoption. Ashland County is home to more than 327 miles of stream segments classed as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters, including 49.1 miles of the White River and 40.8 miles of the Marengo River, which both transect the Fields, Waters and Woods AEA. The county hopes that promoting healthy soil and water through nutrient management, farmland preservation, and other sustainable agricultural and conservation practices will preserve the outstanding and exceptional character of its natural resources and agricultural lands as a key element of the culture and economy of the region.

Preserving Local Agriculture

-  Farmland and working agriculture.
-  Protecting the rights of farmers within the AEA.
-  Land planning, targeted infrastructure development, and outreach education.

Protecting Natural Resources

-  Nutrient management planning.
-  Reducing runoff and soil erosion.
-  Promoting healthy soil.

To find out if your land is located in the Fields, Waters, and Woods AEA in Ashland and Bayfield Counties or sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact:

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Land and Water Conservation Dept. - Phone: (715) 682-7187 Email: matt.bolen@co.ashland.wi.us