



Agricultural Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

St. Marie AEA

County: Green Lake

Municipalities in AEA: St. Marie, Princeton

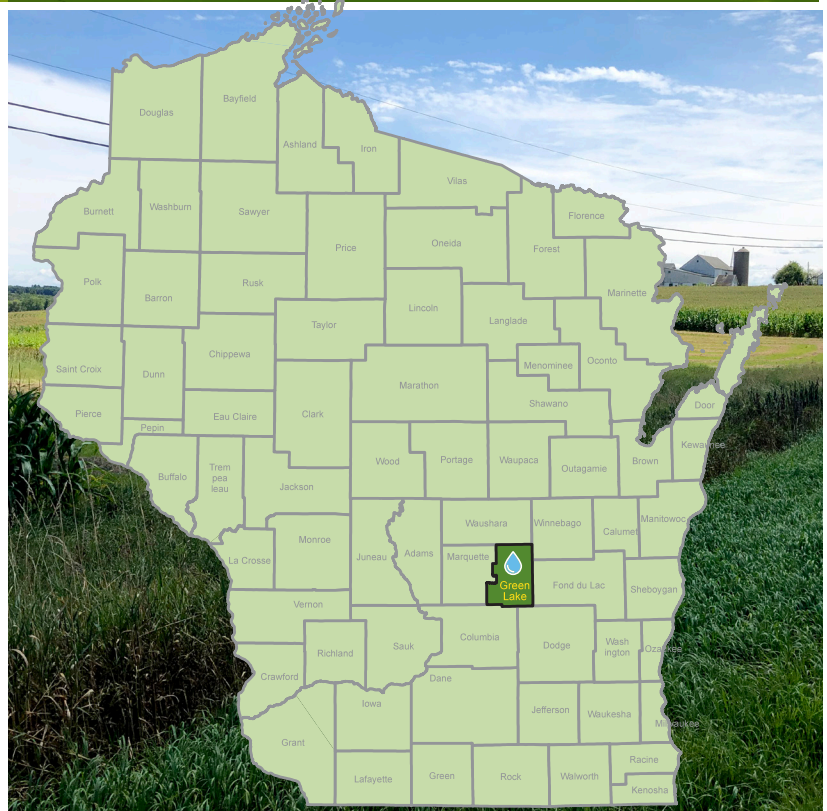
Designation Year: 2021

Acres: 19,725

Designated in 2021, the St. Marie Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) covers portions of the towns of St. Marie and Princeton in Green Lake County. Bounded by the Fox, Black Creek, and Puchyan rivers, this area is home to lush farmland that is worked by a community committed to preserving rural character and agricultural resources.

The Farmland Preservation Program is a partnership between local governments, landowners, farmers, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). The program offers two avenues for participation by agricultural landowners: farmland preservation zoning and AEA. The Towns of St. Marie and Princeton have not historically participated in the Farmland Preservation Program through the county's certified farmland preservation zoning district. For the agricultural producers and landowners in the towns of St. Marie and Princeton, the St. Marie AEA was the best way for them to achieve their conservation and land preservation goals while incentivizing land use protections with the farmland preservation tax credit. Through the collaborative nature of the AEA petition process, which requires landowners, local stakeholders, and local governments to come together to draft the petition, the community gained more control over the land use protection and conservation goals of the AEA.

Landowners within designated AEA are eligible to participate in the Farmland Preservation Program through farmland preservation agreements. These agreements are a 15-year voluntary contract between the landowner and the state. During the agreement period, the landowner must keep the land in agricultural use and maintain soil and water best management practices. In return, the landowner may claim a \$5 per acre tax credit.



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LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS

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AG CO-OPS &
BUSINESSES

11
PRODUCERS &
LANDOWNERS

The goals of the St. Marie AEA include:

- Supporting local food production and farm economy through an AEA labeling program for local groceries and farm markets;
- Encouraging farmland preservation by limiting the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses to maintain the rural character of the area;
- Supporting the transition of viable and profitable agricultural enterprises for the next generation and encourage the continued tradition of farming.

A Legacy of Preservation

The St. Marie AEA is primarily made up of small family farms, ranging in size from around 10 to 180 acres. Production in this area is varied, from standard agricultural crops such as corn and beans to direct market products like fruits and vegetables. But what has kept these family farms in business for generations is the enduring legacy of farmland preservation and production.

Roger Naparalla, a farmer who inherited his land from his father, wanted to honor the legacy of his family farm.



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



Agroforestry



Ag Equipment



Non-Agricultural Landowners in the Town



Farm Supply



Grain Trucking



Agronomists



Ag Consulting-Certified Crop Advisors



Food Processing Facilities, Food Warehouses



Meat Distributors



Cheesemakers



Aquaculture



Plant Nurseries



Livestock Truckers



Milk Producers



Organic Farms



Agritourism



Farmer's Market



White River Marsh State Wildlife Area

“My father had a vision: To preserve the land and keep it working. I want to keep what we have and never have it developed,” said Naparalla. As he starts planning for his farm transition to his children, he wants to continue to honor his father’s legacy.

With the increased demand for land for development, future farmland owners may be tempted to sell. For Naparalla, the St. Marie AEA has been one more tool to achieve his goals for on-farm conservation and preservation. His farmland preservation agreement provides a sense of security that his farm will remain in production agriculture even after he is no longer the operator.

“With the 15-year agreement, we can preserve the farm. Hopefully, now the kids won’t take it out of production,” said Naparalla. These farmland preservation agreements can be a great tool for landowners like Naparalla who are looking to pass on their operation to the next generation while putting some security measures in place that the farm will be kept in agricultural use.

Farmland preservation agreements also ensure that farms will be managed to the state’s soil and water conservation standards. This includes creating and implementing a nutrient management plan, managing non-point source pollution control, preventing soil erosion, and executing tillage setback near surface water. With the tools the AEA provides, members can continue to protect their local agricultural heritage, pass down their legacy to the next generation, and ensure their lands are being managed with soil and water conservation in mind. Ultimately, this will lead to a more resilient and sustainable agricultural landscape for future generations to enjoy.

Keeping the land healthy and productive is just as much of a priority for Naparalla as ensuring the continued operation of his farm.

“My father had a saying: ‘If you have a handful of soil, you have something,’” said Naparalla.

The Future of Farmland Preservation

The Green Lake County Land and Water Conservation Department has seen an increased interest in the Farmland Preservation Program in recent years. With the creation of the St. Marie AEA in 2021 and the Town of Princeton AEA in 2023, the county hopes to work with local landowners and producers to continue to expand the program.

“We really want to make sure that agriculture stays strong in our county,” said Todd Morris, the Green Lake County Conservationist.

Through the petition process, Green Lake County has seen citizens come together to promote soil health and conservation as tools for land preservation and to better their communities. Morris said Green County hopes to continue growing the farmland preservation community in the county and wants to make conservation tools more accessible. Local landowners or townships who are interested in starting a new AEA or who are interested in farmland preservation zoning should contact the Green County Land Conservation Department to learn more.

Continued Tradition of Farming



Transition farmland to the next generation



Limit the conversion of farmland



Support local agricultural economy

Protecting Natural Resources



Reduce field runoff to protect local watersheds and wetlands



Preserve natural areas for wildlife habitat



Incentives to cover conservation costs

To find out if your land is located in the St. Marie AEA or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact:

Todd Morris - County Conservationist
Green Lake County Land Conservation Department
Phone: (920) 294-4052 - email: tmorris@greenlakecounty.gov