



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
 Division of Agricultural Resource Management
 P.O. Box 8911
 Madison, WI 53708-8911
 Phone: (608) 224-4611

2019 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 have read the guidance¹ provided and submit the following information in support of the petition:²

PART I:

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME OF AEA Bear Creek	
COUNTY/COUNTIES IN WHICH PROPOSED AEA IS LOCATED Sauk	TOWNS, CITIES OR VILLAGES IN WHICH PROPOSED AEA IS LOCATED Town of Bear Creek
TOTAL ACRES IN PROPOSED AEA 30,691	TOTAL NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE FARM OWNERS WHO SIGNED PETITION 7

2. PETITION CONTACT INFORMATION

STAFF CONTACT Brian Sadler	EMAIL Brian.sadler@saukcountywi.gov	PHONE NUMBER 608-355-4841	
MAILING ADDRESS STREET 505 Broadway	CITY Baraboo	STATE WI	ZIP 53913
LANDOWNER REPRESENTATIVE Bruce Marion	EMAIL bwmarion@wisc.edu	PHONE NUMBER 608-576-3651	
MAILING ADDRESS STREET 210 S Kenosha Dr	CITY Madison	STATE WI	ZIP 53705

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- a. All parcels in the proposed AEA are located within a farmland preservation area designated in the certified county farmland preservation plan. **Yes** **No**
- b. All parcels in the proposed AEA are contiguous. **Yes** **No**
- c. The proposed AEA is primarily in agricultural use. **Yes** **No**
- d. At least five (5) eligible farm owners signed the petition under the *Petitioning Landowner Signature Page Attachment*. **Yes** **No**

¹ Guidance available at: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AEAPetitionInfo.aspx

² Personal information you provide may be used for purposes other than that for which it was collected, s. 15.04(1)(m), Wis. Stats.

PART II.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Question 4a. Introduction to proposed AEA

The Town of Bear Creek is located in the southwest portion of Sauk County. This rural landscape boasts a beautiful mix of wooded ridges and fingers of field and pasture land. The topography lends itself well to hay production which means this region still supports several small dairy operations. Bear Creek is one of the premier trout streams in the county. Over the last several years there have been public, private, and nonprofit entities lending time, talent and financial support to preserve and enhance the fishery and surrounding habitat of Bear Creek. Farmers also know that their farming practices have a direct impact on these delicate waters and they take pride in caring for the land. The landowners within the proposed AEA want to help ensure the conservation ethic of their region continues into the future.

Question 4b. Current Land Use and Land Use Trends

When compiling information for this section, consider using resources such as the county's farmland preservation plan, or local comprehensive plans

- a) Describe ALL current land uses within the proposed AEA *OR* attach a current land use map:

(Comprehensive Plan-Town of Bear Creek)

The Town of Bear Creek is unique in that the Town has designated only one land use district to be applied town-wide. This district, called the Rural Agricultural Conservation Area (RAC) is intended for sustained agricultural and forestry land uses and uses that are consistent with and compatible with agricultural and forestry operations. This district limits landowners to the creation of not more than 3 residential lots in each 10-year period. The intent of the RAC is to maintain the area's rural appeal and food and fiber traditions. Farms and farming operations should continue to be a significant component of the RAC. New rural residential development should be sensitive to the visual landscape while minimizing conflict with farming and forestry operations. Hobby farming, lands set aside for preservation and recreation, and low density residential development are forms of land uses that are compatible with the RAC.

The proposed acreage of the AEA is 30,647 acres, all of which falls within the Town of Bear Creek. The areas within the township which are excluded from the AEA are state and county owned lands as well as Unincorporated Developed Area. The vast majority of the landscape, 96%, is made up of mixed agricultural and forest land. Only 3% is developed, most of which is considered developed open space.

Only 18 new septic permits have been issued in Bear Creek township in the last 5 years.

- b) Provide information about land use trends in and around the AEA:

Some of the dairy operations in and around the area have moved away from milking and have converted to cash grain cropping, but within the proposed AEA there is still a high percentage of dairy farms. We are seeing an increasing trend in rotational grazing of both beef and dairy herds.

- c) List the main types of agricultural production in the proposed AEA:

Corn for silage, corn for grain, and alfalfa are the main crops in this area. Dairy production and some rotationally grazed pastures are also present. There are also some small farms looking to direct-market or sell meat/eggs to the local grocery co-op. Forest land within the AEA contributes towards the farm revenue by way of the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program and maple syrup production. Bee hives can be found along pastures, CRP, and cropland throughout the landscape which adds yet another agricultural value.

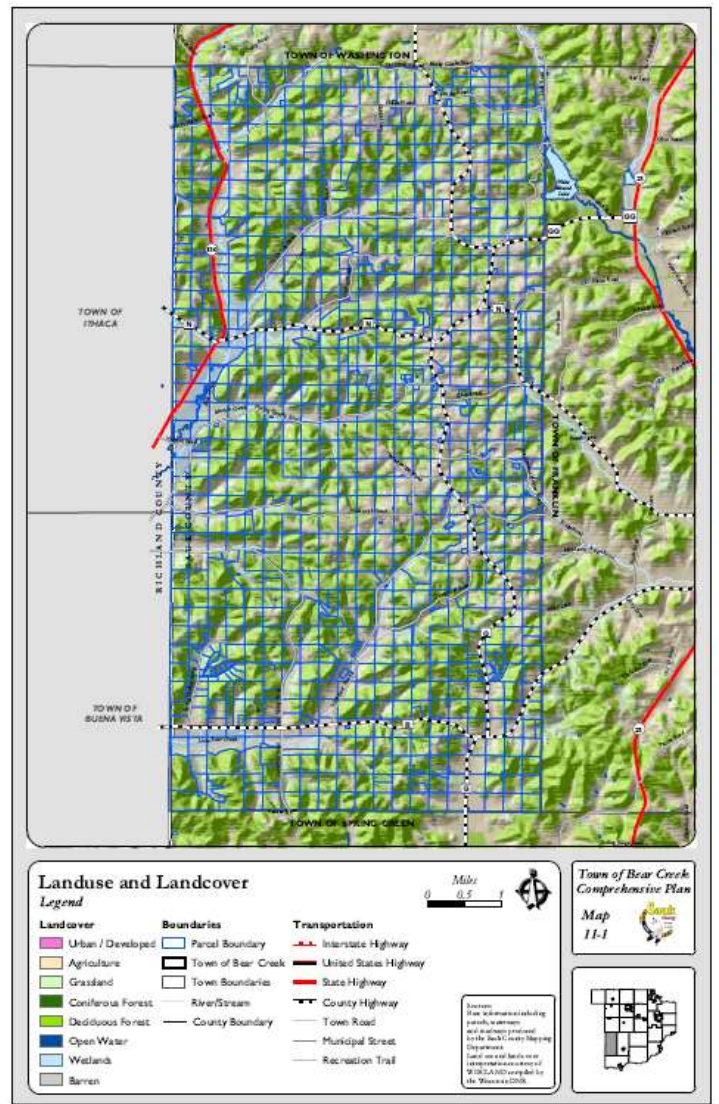
Question 4c. Land Use Controls and Plans in Proposed AEA (check all that apply)

- Farmland preservation zoning ordinance
- Other zoning ordinances:
- Farmland preservation agreements
- Purchase of development rights and/or easements (donated or purchased)
- Transfer of development rights
- Subdivision ordinances
- Cooperative boundary agreements/inter-municipal agreements
- Natural area protections
- Comprehensive plan
- Other (specify)

(Comprehensive Plan)

During the summer of 2006, surveys were mailed to every household or landowner in the Town of Bear Creek. The majority of respondents to the survey indicated that they would support varied forms of community-supported agriculture and value-added agriculture operations. When asked if residents support the direct sale of farm products, 63% indicated they would. Forty-seven percent of residents also indicated that they would support forms of agriculture tourism, workdays and educational opportunities. From a different perspective, 85% of respondents indicated that the preservation of farmland was either essential or very important.

Identify and pursue opportunities for farmers to obtain additional income from activities and the sale of items related to agriculture and farming as an occupation and utilize state and county farm programs to maintain and upgrade farming operations including grants, tax incentives, land use valuation and rural development programs. Utilize expertise from agencies such as the USDA, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment, UW-Extension, representatives from farm cooperatives and others to both explore the feasibility of and provide resources to farmers who may be considering the production of alternative agricultural products, markets and growing methods.



Question 4d. Indicate the approximate level of petitioner compliance with state soil and water standards

- Nearly all petitioners are in compliance

- More than half of the petitioners are in compliance
- Half or less than half of the petitioners are in compliance
- Few or no petitioners are in compliance
- Compliance status of petitioners is unknown

5. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

Question 5a. AEA goals for agricultural preservation and agricultural development

- a) State the specific goals for the preservation of agricultural land use:
 Preserve and maintain existing land uses as well as provide for future land use considerations that will promote the balance among quality of life, property values, environmental protection, and economic opportunities.
- b) State the specific goals for agricultural development and/or innovation:
 Grow and promote locally grown produce either through direct marketing or selling to local co-ops such as the Honey Creek Market in Plain. Grow the mindset of regenerative farming practices.
- c) How does the AEA plan to meet the goals identified above (include any planned investments, grants, development incentives, cooperative agreements, land or easement purchases, or public outreach activities)?
 Host NMFE classes to continue working with producers to develop and maintain nutrient management plans and promote more environmentally and economically sound management systems. Educate landowners on the importance of fair rental prices to producers who follow the conservation standards whether they have an agreement or not. Host soil health events with the use of our county rainfall simulator.

Question 5b. How did you determine the boundary (location and size) of the proposed AEA?

After we were approached by former Farmland Preservation agreement holders in the center of Bear Creek township, we reached out to other landowners who also had agreements in the past. The main proponents of the petition, along with county staff, called or visited several of their neighboring landowners and encouraged them to come to an informational meeting or to contact the county representative. Mailers were sent out to previous agreement holders as well as news releases in the local paper. The parcels of all interested parties were mapped out and all but 2 parcels were located within Bear Creek township. We looked at different watersheds as possible boundaries, but they crossed several different municipal boundaries and did not include all the interested producers. Due to intermixing land covers of forest and fields, there are no large contiguous tracts of cropland that are conducive to setting clean boundaries. The township line offers a clean, clear boundary that includes all but one of the original interested parties and will be clear to future landowners interested in signing an agreement.

Question 5c. Describe existing or future activities that may take place within the AEA if designated

Type of Activity	Existing/Future	Additional Details
Selling organic free range products such as eggs and grass-fed beef to local grocers.	Existing and future	Grass-fed beef production through rotational grazing has been expanding rapidly in the area.

Farm/Art DTour	Existing	As part of Fermentation Fest, the Farm/Art DTour normally runs through the northern half of Bear Creek township. This event draws thousands of people from across the state and beyond to experience the agricultural landscape of the area.
Pasture walks showcasing farms within the AEA who have converted from conventional livestock management to adaptive/rotational grazing	Future	Field days to network with and educate farmers within the area who have or are looking to rotationally graze animals.

6. OUTREACH

Question 6a. Describe all efforts to provide information to and involve the public in the petition process

Examples of information to include: number and dates of public meetings held, number of mailings, door-to-door outreach etc.

- 4/25/19 – Press release in Spring Green news advertising first meeting, calls and visits to neighboring landowners
- 5/1/19 – First informational meeting at town hall
- 5/10/19 – Post cards (21) mailed to landowners in Bear Creek township that had previously held agreements advertising our second meeting and who to contact with questions if not attending the meeting.
- 5/15/19 – Press release in Spring Green news advertising second meeting
- 5/23/19 – Second informational meeting at the town hall
- 6/5/19 – Town Hall meeting at the Town of Bear Creek to discuss and sign resolution in support of the AEA

Question 6b. Planned Strategy for Encouraging Landowners to Sign Farmland Preservation Agreements

Do you plan on hosting informational meetings, sending out mailings, conducting one-on-one conversations etc.?

Once the AEA is established we plan on hosting an informational meeting at a central location. We will advertise this by press releases in the local newspaper and postcard mailings to all landowners within the AEA. We will also make phone calls and visit one-on-one with local producers who we know in the area.

Agreement sign-up goal (percent of AEA or number of landowners): 50 %