



Town of Grant

County: Dunn, Chippewa

Designation Year: 2014

Acres: 31,132

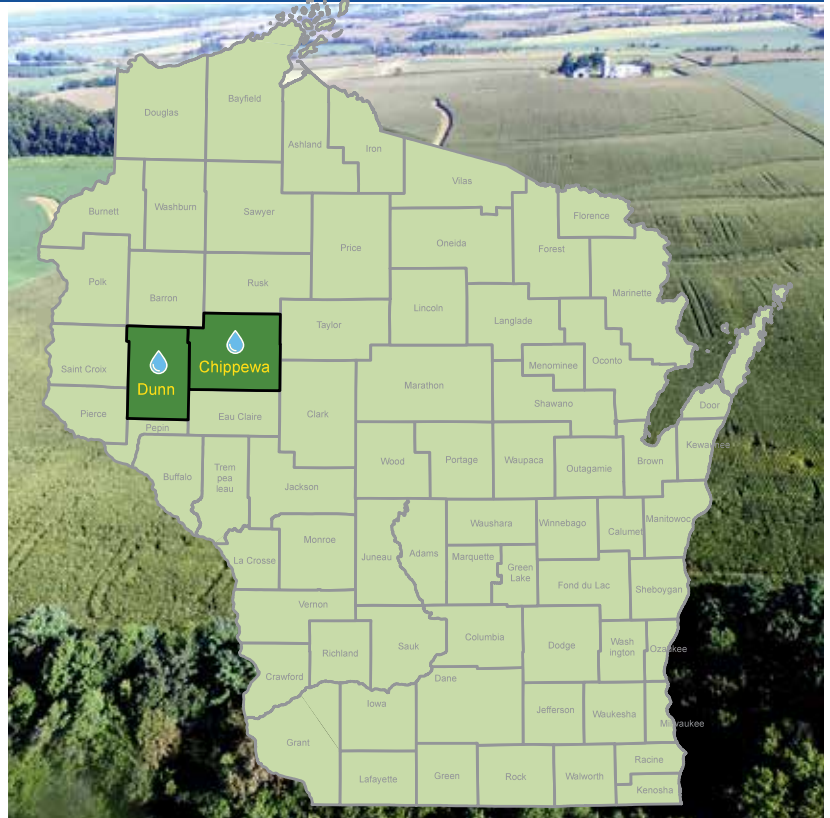
Municipalities in AEA: Auburn, Cooks Valley (Chippewa), Colfax, Grant, Sand Creek, and Otter Creek (Dunn)

The Town of Grant Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) was established in 2014 with a focus on preserving the agricultural community. Established as a logging town in the early 1900s, settlers found lush fertile soils under the forests that were perfect for farming. The Town of Grant is now a mixture of abundant agroforestry, productive cash cropping operations, and livestock operations. Observing the value of the AEA, in 2020, landowners in Otter Creek worked to expand the boundaries of the enterprise area.

The Town of Grant AEA supports community agriculture, conservation and networking goals, and builds upon partnerships with other programs, like the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers producer-led watershed group.

The Town of Grant AEA was created with the following goals:

- Create a network of support for farmers and agricultural landowners to achieve on-farm conservation and preservation goals.
- Maintain, promote, and develop agriculture infrastructure such as businesses, farmland and cropping ground, and workforce resources.
- Promote farmland preservation agreements and nutrient management plans as a means to preserve and protect farmland from nonagricultural uses.
- Adopt and implement stronger land use protections, such as certified farmland preservation zoning districts, to reinforce local farmland preservation and protection goals.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

15
AG CO-OPS & BUSINESSES

13
PRODUCERS & LANDOWNERS

Local champions

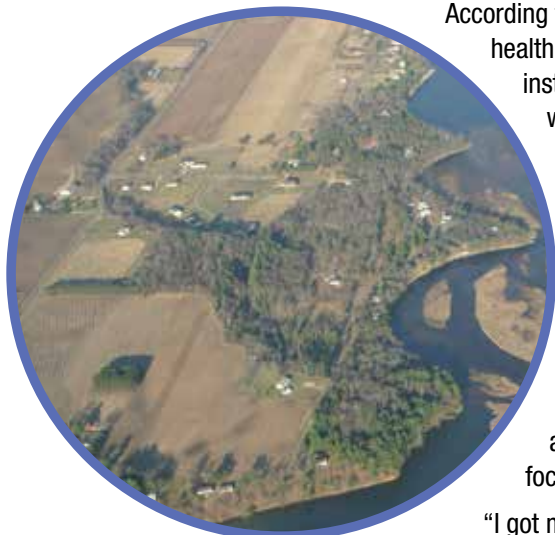
The Red Cedar River runs through the AEA, contributing water to the two biggest lakes in Dunn County. Unfortunately, high phosphorus levels in the river have led to algae blooms that contribute to low oxygen levels in streams, and excessive plant growth in the lakes downstream.

According to UW Extension, “links between the Red Cedar River basin’s resource base and the economic health and quality of area residents’ life are wide-ranging. Citizens, government entities, and institutions depend on the area’s leading industries (agriculture, tourism, and outdoor recreation) which are, ultimately, dependent upon the health of the basin’s rivers, lakes, and streams.”

Protecting this watershed through stewardship and the implementation of conservation practices required for farmland preservation program, participants can reduce the environmental impacts of pollution and help support the communities that are built around the rivers.

Bob Bernier, a local farmer in the Town of Otter Creek, learned how to farm from his father. Bernier saw firsthand how lands could be depleted of fertility and nearby waterways clogged with runoff without conservation, stewardship, and succession in mind. “I grew up farming my whole life with my father, who was ‘old school.’ He was taking from the land and not giving back,” said Bernier. When he became involved with the farm, Bernier wanted to focus on more than just profit margins of the crops.

“I got my dad to go to chisel plowing and now I’m 100% no-till,” he said. For Bernier and other



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



Agroforestry



Ag Equipment



Farm Supply



Certified Crop
Advisors &
Agronomists



Food Processing
and Storage



Meat Distributor



Cheesemakers



Aquaculture



Ag transport



Milk Producers



Organic Farms



Agritourism



Red Cedar
Conservation
Farmers Producer-
led Watershed Group



Red Cedar
Demonstration Farm



Menomonie
Farmer's Market

farmers in the Town of Grant AEA, the preservation of farmland goes hand in hand with the implementation of conservation practices.

Bernier and others saw the positive impacts of the Town of Grant AEA, which led to the boundary expansion in 2020.

With the expansion of the boundary, Bernier and his neighbors have another tool to help them support conservation and preservation goals. Beyond the farmland preservation agreements and tax credits, AEAs help provide the communities with a framework to develop long-term stewardship plans for farmland within the boundary. Bernier has worked with a local producer-led watershed group, the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers, to incorporate no-till practices into their farm systems. With the shared goals of protecting the Red Cedar watershed, farmers are taking the initiative to address how conservation farming practices affect water quality in the surrounding area. No-till systems help reduce soil loss and sediment moving into local bodies of water, but concerns about loss of production make some farmers hesitant to adopt the practice. Local farmers in the AEA who have implemented a no-till system have discovered that any loss of production is made up by savings in fuel and equipment costs.

Agroforestry in the Town of Grant AEA

Forested land makes up almost half of the agricultural lands in the Town of Grant AEA. While woodlands are not typically associated with traditional ideas of agriculture, the lumber, maple syrup, nursery tree, and Christmas tree industries are all important to Wisconsin's agricultural portfolio. Woodlands covered by a forest management plan written by a certified planner are eligible to enroll in a farmland preservation agreement, participate in the farmland preservation program through zoning if located in an eligible zoning district, and may be eligible for the tax credit if they meet the gross farm revenue and other eligibility requirements. Conservation efforts in woodlands are critical to protecting local soil and water resources. Following best management practices developed in a forest management plan, especially during harvest, can reduce soil erosion and runoff into streams and lakes.

Future Growth

Dunn County continues to empower landowners to be community advocates for land stewardship and agricultural preservation and hopes to expand the availability of certified farmland preservation zoning districts in the townships. "We have many farmers that are interested in participating in the FP program but are unable to do so because their land is not in an agricultural zoned township or is not covered by an AEA," said Travis Drier, the Nutrient Management Specialist for Dunn County. Local champions like Bob Bernier embolden their community to take the next step in their conservation journey.

Currently, Dunn County has three townships – Wilson, Grant, and Lucas – covered by a certified farmland preservation zoning district, one of which is also covered by the Town of Grant AEA. Landowners in areas zoned for farmland preservation may be eligible for the farmland preservation tax credit. Farmland preservation zoning can be used with AEAs to promote additional protections and increase the farmland preservation tax credit.

Preserving Local Agriculture



Support local agricultural economy



Adopt programs to protect farmland

Protecting Natural Resources



Protect Red Cedar Watershed and other water resources



Empower land stewardship through conservation



Incentives to cover conservation costs

To find out if your land is located in the Town of Grant AEA in Dunn County or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact:

Rick Ingli
Conservation Planner
Dunn County Land and
Water Conservation Division
Email: ringli@co.dunn.wi.us
Phone: (715) 232-1496

To find out if your land is located in the Town of Grant AEA in Chippewa County or to sign a farmland preservation agreement, contact:

Lisa Richardson
Conservation Specialist
Chippewa County Land Conservation
and Forest Management Department
Email: lrichardson@co.chippewa.wi.us
Phone: (715) 726-7920