

Integrating Farmland Preservation with Future Land Use

Douglas County Towns Association Unit Meeting

Amnicon Town Hall

July 19, 2016

7:30PM - 9:30PM

What's happening with farms and farmlands in the state?



- In 1848, when Wisconsin was founded, 2 out of 3, or 67% of the population lived on a farm. Today, 2.6% of the population lives on a farm in WI.
- 8,700 farms and 620,000 acres were lost in WI from 2007 to 2012
- Farm losses are happening everywhere in the country, however, an 11% decrease in the number of WI farms surpassed the national average of 4.3%
- Farmers are aging along with the rest of the US population and the average age was 58 in 2015.
- However, as farmers retire, fewer young farmers are taking their place.

What's happening with Douglas County farms and farmlands?

Year	No. of Farms	Farm Acreage	Ave Farm Size (Acres)
1920	1,557	154,671	99.4
1930	1,922	169,961	88.4
1940	2,103	175,661	83.5
1950	1,533	188,210	122.8
1960	609	112,655	185.0
1970	347	79,147	228.1
1980	369	82,493	223.6
1990	340	83,000	244.0
2000	320	76,000	238.0

Sources: Douglas County Farmland Preservation Plan, NASS Statistics

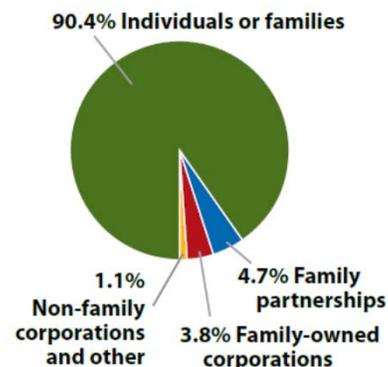
- Number of farms down 80% since 1920
- Farm acreage declined by >50% since 1920
- Average farm size increased 140% since 1920
- Biggest decline between 1960-1970; not much change in farm acreage or size since then
- 364 farms in 2012, up 14% from 2000 and 9% from 2007.
- Market value of products sold in 2012 was nearly \$8 million. Up 28% from 2007.

Douglas County Farm Ownership

- Douglas County farmers own and manage 70,578 acres, or 8.5 percent, of the county's land (Includes cropland, rangeland, pasture, tree farms and farm forests)

(Compare: Burnett = 16% / Bayfield = 7.6% / Ashland = 6.9%)

Who owns the farms?



Consequences of losing farmlands and farms in Douglas County

- A stable share of the economy is lost
- Loss of small, independent family owned businesses
- Economic impacts to local businesses that support ag
- Food production declines
- Will not be able to meet the growing demand for locally produced food
- Ecological and scenic assets of agriculture are lost
- A way of life is lost
- Once they're gone you can't get them back



Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program

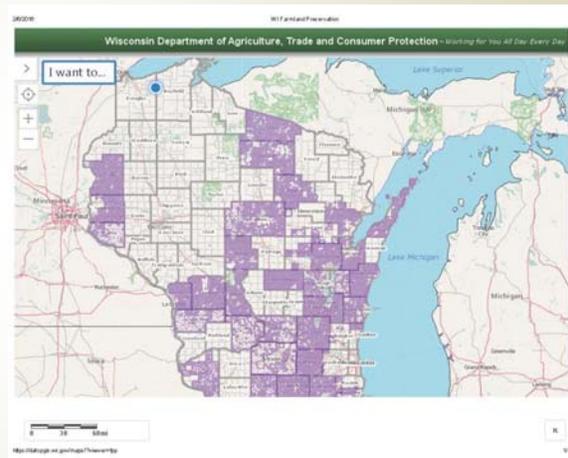
- Revised under the "Working Lands Initiative" in 2009
- Adopted to help address rapid land conversion and protect a \$59 billion industry vital to the state's economy and cultural heritage; preserve open space; and reduce conflicts from encroaching urban lifestyles.
- Helps farmers and local governments preserve farmland, protect soil and water, and minimize land use conflicts through:
 - **Planning**
 - Zoning
 - Agricultural Enterprise Areas
 - Agricultural Conservation Easements
 - Tax Credits

Updated Douglas County Farmland Preservation Plan

- A 15 person steering committee was created by the County Board in January 2016 to update the FPP.
- The FP Plan, currently being drafted, will incorporate the relevant ag chapters of existing plans (Comp 2010-2030, Land and Water, existing Farmland) with updates to sections on key trends and needs (i.e., housing, transportation, ag infrastructure, etc).
- It will include the existing vision, goals and objectives from the DC Comp Plan 2010-2030 and other approved county plans with some consolidation and revision for clarity.
- It will include the updated Preserved Farmland Map.
- It must be **recertified** by the State **every 10 years**.

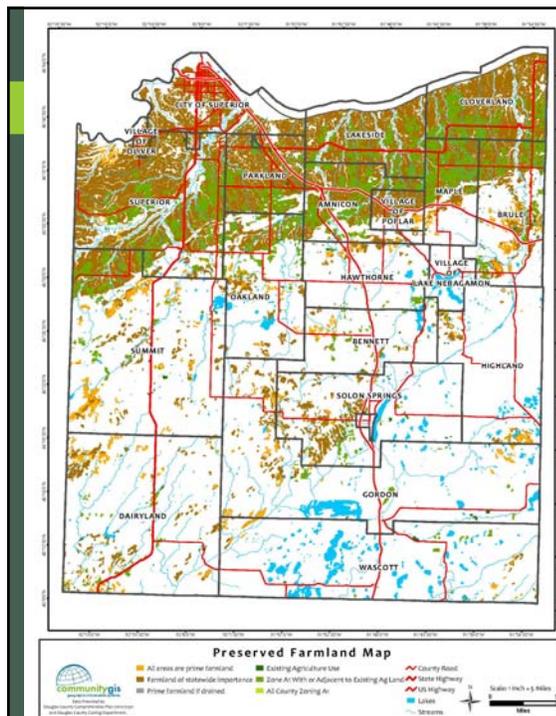
Certified Farmland Preservation Plans

- Must clearly identify farmland areas that will be preserved for ag related uses for **15 years following adoption**.
- Must describe the rationale used to identify farmland preservation areas and how they were mapped



Important points about certified farmland plans:

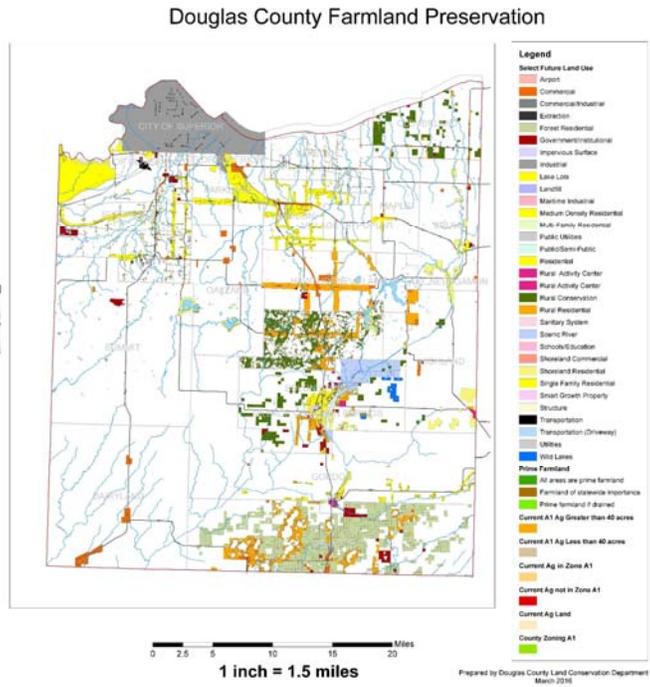
- The State encourages local governments to identify and preserve sufficient land and infrastructure needed to support agriculture
- The FPP is a **nonbinding guidance document** which can help counties and towns establish policies to protect farmland for the future
- It enables landowners meeting soil and water conservation standards to claim an **income tax credit**
- It enables counties and towns **eligible to participate in other parts of the Farmland Preservation Program** such as [Agricultural Enterprise Areas](#) and [Farmland Preservation Zoning](#)
- **It does not impose land use restrictions by itself**
- **It must be consistent with the future land use proposed in your towns**



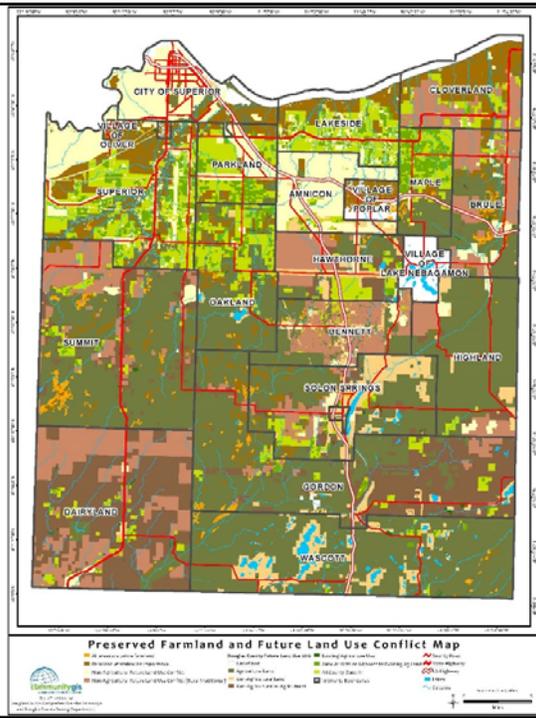
Updated "Preserved Farmland" Map

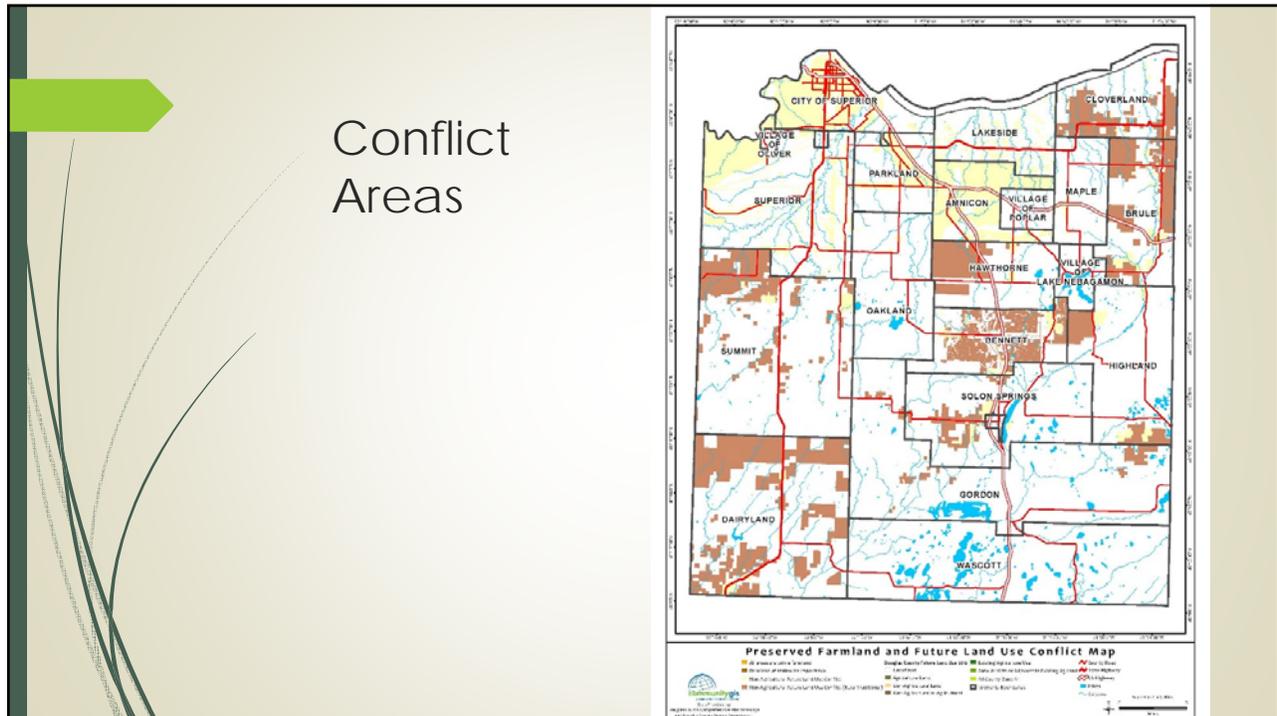
- Orange = "All areas are prime farmland" remains as is
- Brown = "Farmland of statewide importance" remains as is
- Gray = "Prime farmland if drained" class is removed (highly unlikely that current regulations would allow these areas to be drained)
- Land that has existing ag use is added (is currently producing)
- A-1 Zone that is adjacent to existing ag land use is added (to allow expansion of existing ag lands)

Town Future Land Use Map



Conflict Map



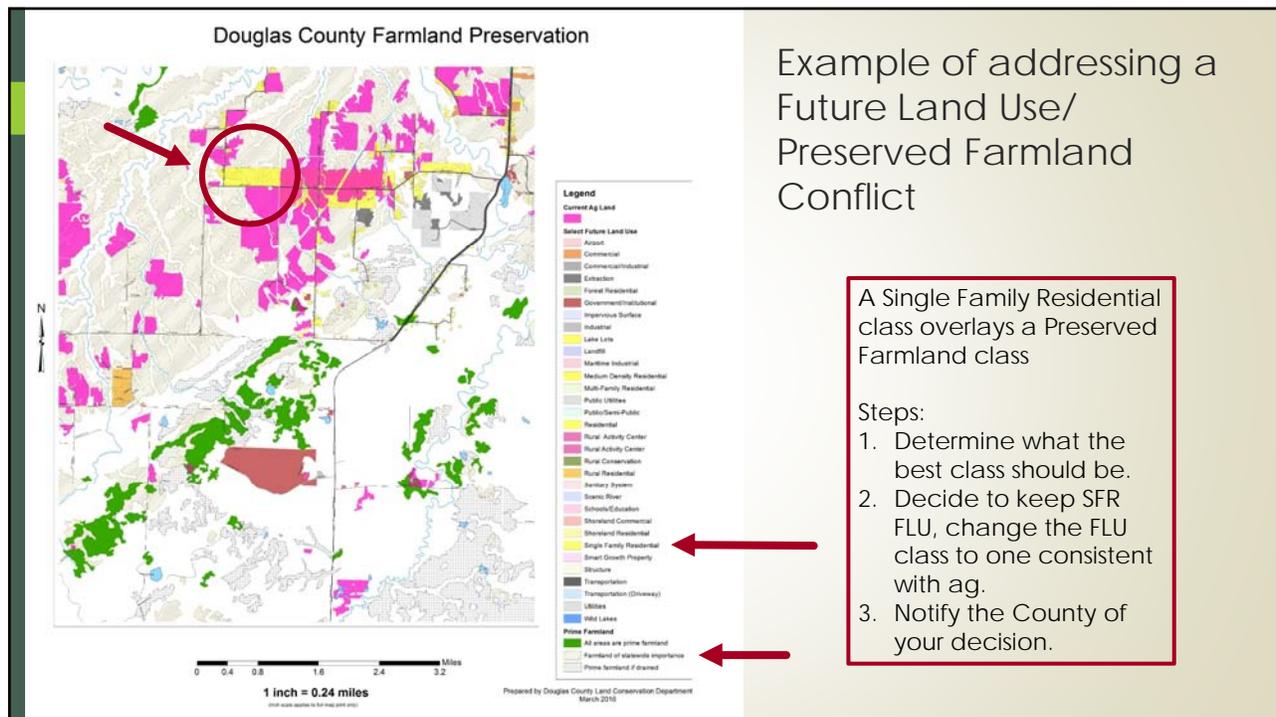


Assuring Consistency between the Preserved Farmland Maps and the Future Land Use Maps

- When areas of the FLU/Farmland maps are inconsistent, it will be up to the Towns to decide how to resolve the conflict.
- We will provide several options and recommendation to make it easier, but the decision will be up to you.
- The state will not allow lands to be included on the preserved farmlands map if **non-ag development is planned** for those lands **within the next 15 years**.

Towns decide how to address any conflicts

- Options to consider:
 - **Change the FLU** and keep the lands preserved for farming.
 - **Keep the FLU** class as is and remove the parcel(s)/class from the preserved farmlands map.
 - **Change the language** in a conflicting class so that it no longer conflicts – For example: “Rural Traditional Class” - Allows residences when activities integral to or incidental to an ag or ag related use are included; such as beekeeping, small livestock, Christmas trees, forest management, or enrollment in a wetland protection or ag conservation program.
 - **Create a new FLU class**
 - **Some combination of the above**
 - **Consider the Steering Committee Recommendations**



Recommendations

- When a non-ag conflict occurs on an area of "Prime Farmland", change the conflicting future land use due to the importance of these soils for farming.
- When a non-ag conflict occurs on an area of "Farmland of Statewide Importance" base your decision on town needs and adjacent land use and infrastructure.
- Avoid farmland losses and meet FLU needs by changing language where possible.



What is next for Towns?

- ▶ Please provide the name and contact information for the lead person responsible for reviewing maps (see sign-up sheet).
- ▶ Detailed maps with conflict areas clearly marked and quantified and a list of options will be mailed for you to consider.
- ▶ Send response to the County by October 31, 2016
- ▶ If needed, we will schedule a visit with your town to help work through the process.
- ▶ We will incorporate your decisions into the preserved farmland map.



Tentative Schedule

- ▶ Obtain maps from the county and review conflicts - **August thru Oct 2016**
- ▶ Finalize farmland preservation map and plan - **Nov 2016**
- ▶ Information only presentation to the county board - **Dec 2016**
- ▶ Present final draft to LCC which also serves as a public hearing - **Jan 2017**
- ▶ FPP resolution presented to county board for approval - **Mar 2017**
- ▶ County approved FPP submitted to the state for certification - **Mar 2017**



Questions?
Thank you for your time!

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