CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Farmland Preservation Plan will follow the stated policies of this plan. Key steps are highlighted here. The county will update the agriculture zoning districts in the County Zoning Ordinance in 2014. Revised district language and zoning maps will follow the policies of this plan and will need review, approval and adoption by both the county and towns before taking effect. Amendments to the zoning ordinance to create farmland preservation districts will conform to the requirements of Chapter 91, WI Stats. and will ensure the continued state certification of the ordinance.

The county will continue to encourage and support local landowner petitions to establish AEAs and if options become available to implement the PACE program will encourage and support that also.

The County will also identify and consider amendments to the general zoning ordinance, land division ordinance and other land use ordinances that would encourage higher density housing outside the farmland preservation areas, including incentives for development outside the farmland preservation areas, conservation design housing as a buffer adjacent to the farmland preservation area and prohibiting major subdivisions in farmland preservation areas.

Strategies
1. Farmland Preservation Zoning Ordinance:
   Towns and Marathon County can use farmland preservation zoning districts to conserve a critical mass (acres) of agricultural land, protect soil and water resources, keep individual farms from becoming isolated among residential neighborhoods and ensure enough farms to support the critical mass of local agricultural service businesses.

2. Land Division Ordinance:
   The purpose of this ordinance is to control the division of land, encourage the most appropriate use of land (including agriculture), minimize land use conflicts, provide the best possible environment for human habitation and to conserve the value of buildings.

3. Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA)
   Designation of an AEA signifies a community’s understanding of the economic importance of agriculture, value and purpose of existing soil resources and infrastructure (drainage, conservation BMP’s, and transportation) to support agriculture, and the need to sustain and grow agricultural businesses. The AEA provides a program commitment by local officials and landowners and may encourage investment in agriculture.

4. Purchase Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE Program)
Activities and Incentives

1. Education:
   Farmer, farm business, tax accountants, town and county officials, and residents will be engaged in an active and on-going outreach effort to support participation in farmland preservation activities and implementation.

2. Comprehensive Planning:
   The County and Towns use their comprehensive plans to develop strategies and outcomes for farmland preservation. Specifically, plans identify areas to protect for agricultural use, increase housing density, and protect natural resources.

3. Zoning and Land Division Ordinance Compliance:
   These ordinances provide reasonable standards that regulate and restrict lot coverage and population density, guide the proper distribution and location of various land uses by the establishment of zoning districts, conserve natural resources, control the division of land, and conserve the value of buildings.

4. Implementation:
   a. Conservation standards compliance: All landowners participating in the farmland preservation program thorough zoning and/or AEA contract are required to meet state conservation performance standards for erosion, nutrient management and runoff. On farm status reviews will be conducted every 4 years. (NR 151).

   b. Technical and financial assistance to landowners: Landowners participating may access state, federal and local technical and cost-share assistance for the implementation of best management practices to meet performance standards.

5. Monitoring: BMP performance and Indicators:
## Farmland Preservation Program: Performance Indicators

**Figure 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Outcome</th>
<th>Short Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Key Performance Indicators (Short Term)</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Land use activities are well planned to minimize conflicts, maximize infrastructure investments, and protect the rural character. | Local officials understand the regional land use and demographic trends of their respective communities and the value of comprehensive planning and zoning to implement community and economic development goals. | • Preserve Farmland from being converted to other land uses  
• Number of Towns utilizing comprehensive zoning and farmland preservation district  
• Number of communities provided farmland preservation assistance | <1500 acres  
+2  
+2 |
| The soil and water resources are maintained as a productive asset through topsoil and organic matter conservation. | Individual landowners and agricultural producers understand the performance status of their soil and water resources, the regional implication of resource concerns, and best management practices that would benefit their operation. | • Number of cropland and pastures acres under nutrient management | +5000 acres |
| Improve and protect the surface and ground water assets for public health and safety, recreational opportunities and economic viability. | Local officials and land users understand the specific soil and water resource concerns of the community and the impact on community and economic development. | • Percent of participants receiving farmland preservation conservation status reviews | 25% |
| Marathon County Agricultural and Woodlot producers are economically viable.       | Local officials and landowners understand the value and opportunity of Marathon County programs to protect the long term sustainability and economic viability of woodland and farmland. | • Number of communities participating and developing in Agricultural Enterprise Areas | +2 |
Suggested Actions For Plan Implementation

**Implementation of Land Use Initiatives—Immediate Zoning Ordinance Considerations**

The focus of this Plan has been to establish policies for future land use decision making related to farmland preservation. These policies will be used as one basis to make decisions on future requests for actions like rezoning lands for development, acquiring land or easements for open space purposes, directing intensive development to areas with urban services, and interacting with local units of government on land use issues.

Under Ch. 91, Wis. Stats., the County is required to amend its zoning ordinance to implement the recommendations in this Farmland Preservation Plan. Such ordinance amendments must be certified by DATCP. As a result, close coordination with both DATCP and the towns is essential.

**Plan Adoption, Evaluation, Amendments, And Update**

**Plan Adoption**

A first step in implementing the 2013 Marathon County Farmland Preservation is making sure that it is adopted in a manner which supports its future use for more detailed decision making. The County included all necessary process steps and substantive elements for this Plan to be adopted as a farmland preservation plan under Ch. 91, Wis. Stats., and as another detailed component of the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan under Section 66.1001.

Following certification by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and a recommendation from the County’s Environmental Resources Committee (ERC), the Marathon County Board adopted this Farmland Preservation on January 21, 2014.

**Plan Monitoring**

The plan monitoring step enables the routine assessment of what is working or not working with the Plan. The ERC, Land Conservation & Zoning Committee and County staff intend to specifically evaluate this Plan annually, even if the Plan is not actually amended following such evaluations. The County intends to constantly evaluate its decisions on private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions with the recommendations of this Plan. Further, the County will work to assure that this Farmland Preservation Plan remains consistent with and helps advance other components of the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

Program outcomes and indicators, as well as the citizen perspective will be assessed annually to ensure that the citizens find value in the programs and the Marathon County Strategic Plan’s goals and objectives are realized.

**Plan Amendments**

Amendments to this Plan may be appropriate in the years following initial adoption, in instances where the Plan becomes irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy or trends,
or where errors or omissions have been identified. Frequent amendments to accommodate specific development proposals should be avoided. This Plan was written to provide a certain degree of flexibility for a range of future decisions to implement it, which should minimize the need for a number of future amendments. The fairly complex process to amend the Plan – outlined below – may also deter frequent amendments.

**Plan Update**
The State’s comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001) requires that the County’s comprehensive plan be updated at least once every 10 years, but does not provide specific guidance of what an update shall entail. Further, the State’s farmland preservation law (Ch. 91) specifies that DATCP may certify a farmland preservation plan for a period that does not exceed 10 years.

Given these two State requirements, it is the County’s intent to update the Plan by 2023, at the latest. As opposed to a Plan amendment, this update would constitute a substantial re-write of this Plan document and maps. Like the 2013 Plan, this re-write need not significantly affect the vision, goals, and policy direction of its predecessor, if decision makers consider the prior directions sound.