

MARATHON COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN



***Celebrating Our
Diversity
2013-2028***



Adopted on January 21, 2014
Marathon County Board of Supervisors
Resolution #R-1-14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Environmental Resources Committee

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State of Wisconsin

Department of Administration and

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November 5, 2013

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by Marathon County on **November 5, 2013 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau, Wisconsin** for the purpose accepting public comment on the draft *Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – Celebrating Our Diversity, 2013-2028*. The purpose of the plan is to guide growth and development, and preserve agricultural land and natural areas into the future through land use planning and zoning regulations.

Marathon County's Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) will be hosting Farmland Preservation Plan open houses in October for the public to learn more about the importance of agriculture to our community, to understand the plan strategies and to provide comments. ERC representatives and Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department staff will be available to answer questions about this plan.

October 10, 5–7 pm	North Central Health Care Center, 1100 Lake View Drive, Wausau
October 17, 6–7:30 pm	Knowlton Municipal Center, 1243 Old Highway 51, Mosinee (prior to <i>Eastern Towns and Villages Association</i> meeting)
October 24, 6:30–7:30 pm	Athens Community Hall, 221 Caroline St., Athens (prior to <i>Western Towns and Villages Association</i> meeting)

At the hearing, interested persons will have an opportunity to be heard with respect to the draft plan. Interested persons may submit oral or written comments regarding the draft plan at the hearing, or may submit written comments to Rebecca Frisch, Conservation, Planning & Zoning Director, 210 River Drive, Wausau, Wisconsin, 54403 until November 5, 2013. Any person planning to attend the hearing needing special accommodation in order to participate should call the Conservation, Planning & Zoning Department at 715-261-6000. For TDD telephone service, call the Employee Resources Department at 715-261-1451.

Copies of the draft plan will be available for public inspection at the offices of the Conservation, Planning & Zoning Department at 210 River Drive, Wausau; the Marathon County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, 500 Forest Street, Wausau, Wisconsin 54403; and Marathon County Library Headquarters, Wausau, Wisconsin 54403 and all Branch Libraries.

For additional information please contact Andy Johnson, Environmental Resources Coordinator or Diane Wessel, Planner at (715) 261-6000.

Rebecca J. Frisch
Marathon County
Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department
Published in the Wausau Daily Herald on October 5, 2013
Also published in the Mosinee Times, Record-Review, and Marshfield News Herald



State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Ben Brancel, Secretary

November 5, 2013

Andrew Johnson and Diane Wessel
Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department
210 River Drive
Wausau, WI 54403

Dear Andy and Diane:

Re: Certification of the Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan

Attached is a department order certifying Marathon County's Farmland Preservation Plan under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. Please send a letter confirming County Board adoption of the Comprehensive Plan incorporating the Farmland Preservation Plan.

We look forward to working with you in the future on farmland preservation in Marathon County. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Keith Foye, Chief
Land Management Section
608-224-4603

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STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

MARATHON COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN	DATCP DOCKET NO. 13-F-34-37-PC DARM DOCKET NO. 073-00000-P-13 F-1113 ORDER CERTIFYING PLAN THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023.
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INTRODUCTION

Marathon County has asked the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (“DATCP”) to certify a proposed comprehensively revised county farmland preservation plan pursuant to s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. DATCP has considered the request and adopts the following decision:

FINDINGS OF FACT

- (1) DATCP is an agency of the State of Wisconsin, and is responsible for administering Wisconsin’s farmland preservation law under ch. 91, Wis. Stats., as repealed and recreated by 2009 Wis. Act 28.
- (2) Marathon County is a county of the State of Wisconsin.
- (3) In order for a county and its residents to participate in the farmland preservation program, a county must have a state-certified farmland preservation plan. Among other things, the certified plan must clearly designate farmland preservation areas that the county plans to preserve for agricultural use.
- (4) Marathon County has a state-certified farmland preservation plan that expires on December 31, 2013.
- (5) Under s. 91.16(8), Wis. Stats., the certification of a farmland preservation plan does not cover any subsequent plan revision (adopted after July 1, 2009) unless DATCP certifies that plan revision.
- (6) On September 27, 2013, DATCP received from Marathon County a request to certify a comprehensively revised county farmland preservation plan under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. The county submitted the application in the form required under s. 91.20, Wis. Stats. The application included the certifications required under s. 91.20(3), Wis. Stats.
- (7) Under s. 91.16(3)(a), Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify a county plan based on the county’s certification under s. 91.20(3), Wis. Stats., that the plan meets applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.
- (8) DATCP may certify a farmland preservation plan if the plan meets applicable statutory standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats. DATCP may certify based on the representations contained in the county’s application, but may conduct its own review and verification as it deems appropriate.
- (9) Under s. 91.10(2), Wis. Stats., the farmland preservation plan must be consistent with the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, and the County must include the farmland preservation plan in the County Comprehensive Plan.

(10) Under s. 91.16(2)(a), Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify a county farmland preservation plan for a specified period of up to 10 years. Under s. 91.16(6), Wis. Stats., DATCP may make its certification contingent upon the county adoption of the certified plan text and maps, in the form certified.

(11) Under s. 91.16(9), Wis. Stats., DATCP may withdraw its certification at any time if DATCP finds that the certified plan materially fails to meet applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

(1) Based on Marathon County's certification that the attached county farmland preservation plan meets applicable certification requirements under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify that plan for up to 10 years.

(2) DATCP may make its certification contingent upon the county adoption of the certified plan text and maps, in the form certified, and contingent upon its adoption as part of the County comprehensive plan.

(3) Certification does not apply to plan amendments made after the certification date, unless DATCP certifies those amendments.

(4) DATCP may withdraw its certification at any time if DATCP finds that the certified plan text and maps materially fail to meet applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

(1) The attached Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan text (October 24, 2013) and maps (September 23, 2013) are hereby certified under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats., contingent upon county adoption of the plan, included as part of the County comprehensive plan, in the form submitted, before December 31, 2013.

(2) The certified farmland preservation plan area for Marathon County is titled "Farm Preservation Areas."

(3) This order takes effect on the date on which the county adoption of the plan text and maps, in the form submitted, takes effect.

(4) This certification expires at the end of the day on December 31, 2023.

Dated this 1st day of Nov, 2013.

STATE OF WISCONSIN,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

By Ben Brancel
Ben Brancel, Secretary

Parties for Purposes of Review Under s. 227.53, Wis. Stats.:

Andrew Johnson and Diane Wessel
Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department
210 River Drive
Wausau, WI 54403

RESOLUTION #R- 1 -14

Resolution adopting the November 5, 2013, Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) and the incorporation of FPP and maps into the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan under Wis. Stats 59.69(3)

WHEREAS, under 2009 Wisconsin Act 28, found in Chapter 91, Wis. Stats., the Working Lands Initiative was adopted to encourage changes to farmland preservation planning, which includes modernizing county-wide farmland preservation plans to meet current land use challenges; and

WHEREAS, the current farmland preservation plan for Marathon County was adopted in 1982 and must be amended pursuant to s. 91.10(1), Wis. Stats., by January 1, 2014; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County is authorized to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan and farmland preservation plan; and

WHEREAS, the farmland preservation plan must be a part of the adopted comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee conducted extensive community engagement, as required by s. 66.100(4)(a) Wis. Stats., with local officials, landowners, agricultural businesses, and citizens to guide the vision and policy for agriculture now found in the Farmland Preservation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Farmland Preservation Plan is consistent with the Marathon County strategic plan in developing policies that promote zoning, resource protection and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee conducted a public hearing on November 5, 2013, to solicit public input; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on November 5, 2013 certified the Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan pursuant to s. 91.16 Wis. Stats.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon hereby adopts the plan entitled "Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan: 2013-2028" as an amendment to the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan.

Dated this 21 day of January 2014.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

[Handwritten signatures]

Fiscal Note: With DATCP certification and Marathon County adoption of the Farmland Preservation Plan, landowners will be eligible to participate in income tax credits. In 2012, 278 Marathon County landowners received tax credits totaling \$356,985.

Financial Investment	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Projected Total County Cost	\$73,320	\$96,340	\$112,000	\$132,800	\$153,500	\$174,100

MARATHON COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN
Executive Summary
 January 16, 2014

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Farmland Preservation Plan is to guide and manage growth and development of land use in a manner that will preserve the rural character, protect the agricultural base and natural resources, and contribute to the safety, health, and prosperity of Marathon County's communities.

BROAD DIRECTION

Priorities for services can be defined by availability of resources and program criteria. The criteria developed by the Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) will guide department staff and partners in providing service. Priority criteria are presented in 5 main categories:

- Areas of low human and housing density
- Property ownership: focus on privately owned productive agricultural and forest lands
- Land use factors: focus on land currently in agricultural production
- Program Involvement: focus on landowners, producers and communities actively engaged in farmland preservation and land use planning programs (Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) and zoning)
- Resources/physical environment: focus on resource concerns identified in Land and Water Resource Management Plan

COMMITMENTS

Marathon County committed to actively assist towns in development of AEA petitions, promote zoning of farmland preservation districts, and performance standards implementation. The cost of these services and the county's financial investment are projected below (2013 is base year).

Inputs	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
County Investment	\$64,420	\$59,880	\$73,320	\$96,340	\$112,000	\$132,800	\$153,500	\$174,100
DATCP Investment	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
User Fees	\$8,500	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,500	\$8,800	\$9,000	\$9,300	\$9,700
Total Staff Cost	\$157,920	\$152,880	\$166,320	\$189,840	\$205,800	\$226,800	\$247,800	\$268,800

PARTNERSHIPS

Through extension of Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) in Marathon County, the County has partnered with the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP); Clark County; Langlade County; and the towns of Brighton, Hull, Frankfort, Johnson, Holton, and towns in Clark and Langlade counties. As the AEAs grow, these partnerships will expand to other towns and surrounding counties.

Through farmland preservation zoning, Marathon County partners with county zoned towns that have, or are interested in, exclusive farmland preservation zoning districts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Opportunities and Challenges.....	2
Purpose and Relationship to Past Planning	3
 CHAPTER 2: PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	 5
Vision Statement and Goals	6
General goals (refer to strategic plan objectives)	6
Agricultural preservation	6
Housing and Development.....	6
Regional Food Distribution and Networks	6
Marathon County Farmland Preservation Survey.....	7
 CHAPTER 3: POLICY STATEMENT	 9
Marathon County Strategic Plan goals addressed by the Farmland Preservation Plan.....	9
Antigo Flats	17
Heart of America	18
Wisconsin River Influence.....	19
Wisconsin Central	20
Lumberjack.....	21
Eastern Lakes	22
 CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVING FARMLAND	 23
Increasing housing density in non-farmland preservation areas	23
Farmland Preservation Areas	23
Landowner Incentives	24
Farmland preservation tax credits	25
Farmland Preservation Zoning.....	25
Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs).....	33
 CHAPTER 5: CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS AND POLICIES	 37
Marathon County Comprehensive Plan	37
Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan (2010-2025)	37
Central Wisconsin River Basin Plan	38
Marathon County Groundwater Plan	38
Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2006-2020.....	38
Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan.....	38
Livestock Siting Ordinance	39
Waste Storage Facility and Nutrient Management Ordinance.....	39
Floodplain and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance	39
Non-metallic Mining Ordinance	39
General Zoning	39
Land Division Ordinance	40
 CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL TRENDS AND DEMOGRAPHICS.....	 41
The Growth and Preservation Challenge.....	41
Farms.....	42
Soil Resources	49
Water Resources	53
 CHAPTER 7: POPULATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND USE TRENDS...57	 57
Population and Housing Trends.....	57
Transportation System (Roads and Bridges	63

Railroads	64
Agricultural Equipment	64
Water Supply.....	64
Energy	65
Utilities, Sanitary Sewer and Wastewater Treatment	65
Solid Waste Management.....	66
Land Use Trends.....	66
Economic Growth and Business Development.....	69
Community Facilities and Services	71

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION.....	73
STRATEGIES	73
ACTIVITIES AND INCENTIVES	74
SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.....	76
PLAN ADOPTION, EVALUATION, AMENDMENTS, AND UPDATE	76

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1 – Farmland Preservation Programs Regions – Marathon County WI
Map 2 – Marathon County Zoning Status
Map 3 – Marathon County WI – Exclusive Agricultural Zoning – Current Status
Map 4 – Agricultural Enterprise Areas in Marathon County WI
Map 5 – Large Farm Operations – Marathon County WI
Map 6 – Dairy and Meat Operations – Marathon County WI
Map 7 – Soil Associations – Marathon County WI
Map 8 – Households per Square mile by FPP Region – Marathon County WI
Map 9 – Agricultural & Forested Areas – Marathon County WI

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Prioritization of Five Policy Concerns
Figure 2 – Building Blocks of Policy
Figure 3 – CPZ staffing relative to service activity
Figure 4 – Estimated cost of services
Figure 5 – Spatial relationship of farmland preservation areas, strategies and incentives
Figure 6 – Marathon County Farm Operations
Figure 7 – Wisconsin Dairy Herd Structure - 2007
Figure 8 – Annual Soil Erosion Rates
Figure 9 – Marathon County Urban Fringe Population and Housing Density Trends: 2000-2010
Figure 10 – Population & Housing Change, 2000-2010
Figure 11 – Estimated land use cover of Marathon County in 2008
Figure 12 – Largest Industries
Figure 13 – Largest Employers
Figure 14 – Farmland Preservation Program: Performance Indicators

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Case Study
Appendix B – Community Engagement
Appendix C – Regionalization Report
Appendix D – Farmland Preservation Area Maps

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Marathon County has a strong attachment to the area's cropland and woodland. These are our working lands and the foundation of local agricultural industry. Although only 3% of the county population is directly engaged in farming, the region's cultural identity with farming is expressed in our local celebrations and community values. Based upon the opportunities and challenges facing the agriculture community, Marathon County is faced with the decision of how to respond through programs and policies to support agriculture and the businesses that rely upon it. Sound policies will provide the rationale to leverage the federal, state, and local resource opportunities provided by the Farmland Preservation Program to realize the County's community and economic development goals.

In response to the challenges and opportunities in the short term, the *Marathon County Strategic Plan 2012-2017* (www.co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/Administrator) identifies specific goals and objectives to direct the county organization in support of agriculture, private business growth, balanced land use, and resource protection. The strategic plan also gives direction to Marathon County committees and departments to provide leadership and collaboration with both public and private partnerships, to establish meaningful and trackable program indicators of success, and to communicate program work to customers and citizens to improve program value.

The following farmland preservation plan document is an element of Marathon County's Comprehensive Plan. On December 31, 2013, the current farmland preservation plan is set to expire. This document is intended to fulfill the statutory requirements of both the farmland preservation plan (Chapter 91, Subchapter II, WI Statutes) and the agricultural element of the comprehensive plan (s 66.1001(2), WI Statutes) (www.co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/ConservationPlanningZoning/PlanningServices/ComprehensivePlanning/CountyComprehensivePlan.aspx). Certification will provide Marathon County, local communities, agricultural producers, agri-business, and landowners access to program opportunities.

To set the context for the farmland preservation plan and to establish the compelling need for Marathon County to develop policy, the Environmental Resources Committee identified the following opportunities and challenges facing agricultural producers, local communities, and agricultural support businesses:

Opportunities and Challenges



During 2000-2010, the number of households in the unincorporated areas of the county increased more than the population. Low residential density in rural areas and at the urban fringe is a trend that promotes nonproductive use of prime farmland.



During 2000-2010, 22,000 acres of cropland were converted to other uses. Land use conversion of cropland is a trend that threatens the region's agricultural economic growth. A stable, productive land base provides certainty to production and processing industries to invest in agricultural opportunities.



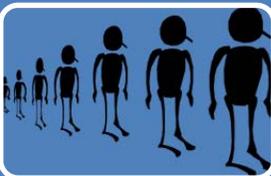
Low density residential development is fragmenting large blocks of farmland and requiring extension of infrastructure in an inefficient and costly manner.



Economic development is most effective through regional clusters. Industrial interests such as ginseng, dairy, vegetables, and timber and their supporting service providers benefit where there is a regional concentration of common industry interests.



Agriculture must produce goods with best management practices that protect soil and water resources to ensure healthy and safe communities.



Agriculture must respond to the challenge of producing food and fiber for a growing world population. Agricultural land must double its productivity over the next 3 decades to meet the food needs of the world population.



Over the past three decades, Marathon County has been part of a nationwide trend of consolidation of production and processing enterprises. The larger farm size has increased demands on local infrastructure capacity

Purpose and Relationship to Past Planning

This Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan provides a vision and guidelines for growth, development, and land preservation in Marathon County in the future. It focuses on Marathon County's land use planning and zoning approach to farmland preservation. This plan functions as the primary policy document setting forth directions for how Marathon County intends to preserve agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character. At the same time, this plan was designed to accommodate compatible growth in planned locations, forms, and densities—particularly focused in places with sufficient infrastructure and physical characteristics to sustain development. The overarching objective of the plan is to contribute to the health, safety, and prosperity of the County.

The adoption of the Farmland Preservation Program in 1977 initiated Wisconsin's first statewide attempt to address agricultural preservation. In 1982, Marathon County adopted its first Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) Plan with the following goals:

1. Land use: Minimize the conversion of farmland to other uses in order to minimize residential/farming conflicts and extension of costly infrastructure.
2. Food security: Assure food production capacity of Wisconsin and the United States.
3. Economic impacts: Assure the value and sustainability of agriculture to the area's economy is maintained and enhanced.
4. Soil and water conservation: Establish soil and water conservation standards and provide technical support to farmers to protect the environmental resources.
5. Population density: Provide towns the tools to control population density and control.

As Marathon County and its partners looked to implement local Comprehensive Plans and to develop new farmland preservation policies, the program's effectiveness and historical participation record was assessed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program and guide the development of the 2013 plan. The following points provide a basis of evaluation for the past program. See Appendix A for a complete review of case study.

1. Program outcomes and indicators: No goals or indicators were established for the program. The initial program focus was to lessen property tax burden. With adoption and implementation of use value assessment in the late 1990's, the value of property tax relief as a program indicator gave way to a focus on land value trends.
2. Decline of tax credits: In the late 1980's the program tax credits exceeded \$35 million dollars. At the end of the program, available credits were reduced to \$12.5 million with an average credit for participants of \$3.50 per acre.

3. Targeting of participation: Program efforts failed to target landowner participation in urban transition areas where the greatest conversion pressure exists. The program achieved its greatest value in communities implementing Exclusive Agricultural Zoning. Landowner participation averaged only 16% of the potential landowners.
4. Expanding scope of conservation compliance: With the initial adoption of the program, the conservation compliance requirements were minimal. Participants were required to manage cropland according to a conservation plan at acceptable soil erosion rates. With the adoption of State Agricultural Performance Standards and Prohibitions in 2002, the scope of conservation compliance requirements for participants greatly increased. The impact of increased conservation compliance expenditures by program participant and County has not been evaluated relative to program goals and benefits.
5. Program accountability: The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has only limited participation and performance data for the program. The state has tracked the number of participants, tax credits, average credit, and participation rate.
6. Education & information outreach: No sustained educational or promotional efforts were offered landowners, local officials, or tax consultants in the County since the late 1980's.
7. Land conversion trends: The Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service (WASS) has tracked the conversion of agricultural acres to other uses for many years. However, the definition of agricultural land has changed many times. Developing a consistent method of tracking local land conversion and performance standard compliance will be needed to track success.

In 2009, the State of Wisconsin adopted the Working Lands law as part of the state's 2009-2011 biennium budget process. The law is specified in Chapter 91 of Wisconsin State Statutes. The main components include:

1. Modernization of the state's farmland preservation and zoning program;
2. Establishment of agricultural enterprise areas;
3. Increased tax credit opportunities and certainty of credit value; and
4. Development of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

The 2013 Farmland Preservation Plan will take the lessons of past programming along with the new opportunities found in the current Working Lands law to support local economic and community development.