

Crawford County Land Conservation Department

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Working Lands Initiative & Ag Enterprise Zones (formerly the Farmland Preservation Program)

Although the Crawford County Land Conservation Department will continue to work with farmers who have an active contract in the old Farmland Preservation Program to ensure the lands under the program conform to state performance standards, once these contracts expire this program will cease to exist in Crawford County and the State of Wisconsin. Replacing the program is a new state program called the Working Lands Initiative (WLI).

Under WLI, groups of farmers can request their lands be designated as an agricultural enterprise area (AEA). Once designated, these areas enable eligible farmers to enter into a farmland preservation agreement with the state to claim a farmland preservation tax credit. The state may designate a maximum of 15 AEAs, or 200,000 acres by January 1, 2012, and one million acres statewide after January 1, 2012.

To receive designation, a petition must be jointly filed by at least five eligible farmers in the proposed AEA, and by each County, town or municipality in which any part of the proposed AEA is located. If the petition is selected by the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection through a competitive evaluation process, the area must be officially designated through Wisconsin's rule process. After completing the expedited rule process, designation goes into effect January 1 of the following year.

Prior to submitting a petition, farmers are asked to contact Coreen Fallat at Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov or call (608)224-4625 for additional guidance.

Interested parties must complete the petition form available on the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection web site at <http://workinglands.wi.gov>

There is no minimum acreage requirement for submitting a petition, although the state will give preference to areas that are at least 1,000 acres.