



# Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan



**Eau Claire Board of Supervisors  
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**Prepared by:**

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West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

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## Chapter One: Background

### *Introduction*

The rapid conversion of agricultural and forested lands to urban and low-density rural development has become a matter of increasing public concern, both here in Wisconsin, as well as nationally. In its 2010-11 biennial report on the Farmland Preservation Program, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) indicates that the rate of farmland loss to urban development averaged 22,500 acres annually from 2002 to 2007. Other reports suggest this average annual conversion of farmland to urban development may hold true for a much longer timeframe, perhaps from 1992-2010 according to a study released by the Center for Land Use Education in Stevens Point. In an effort to make the case for concern, the American Farmland Trust provides the following facts regarding the loss of farmland to urban development:

- Every single minute of every day, America loses more than one acre of farmland to development pressure. From 1992-1997, more than six million acres of land were converted to development uses – equal to an area the size of the state of Maryland.
- The rate of farmland loss continues to increase. The rate of farmland loss for 1992-1997 was 1.2 million acres per year, or roughly 51% higher than from 1982-1992.
- Food is increasingly in the path of development. 86% of U.S. fruits and vegetables, and 63% of dairy products are produced in urban-influenced areas.
- Wasteful land use is the problem, not growth itself. From 1982-1997, the United States population grew by 17%, while urbanized land grew by 47%.
- Every state is losing some of its best farmland to development. Texas leads the nation in number of acres converted to development uses between 1982 and 2010. Wisconsin ranks 12<sup>th</sup> amongst states with the highest amount of land converted to other land uses.

However, it is not only the actual loss of productive agricultural and forest land to development pressure that causes many to be concerned. Other impacts tend to include the loss of rural lifestyle and the resulting cultural heritage; socio-economic changes to rural economies; and the change or loss of natural resources with a cumulative effect on the natural environment, both aesthetically and biologically speaking.

Over the past three decades, Eau Claire County has experienced significant changes in agriculture and rural development. These changes can mostly be attributed to technological advances in the industry, commodity pricing, and land use impacts. This planning effort will concentrate on the land use impacts, specifically growth pressures and the conversion of farmland to non-ag uses. Growth (including residential, commercial and industrial sectors) has caused an increase in traffic along with an increased strain on public facilities and school districts. While there has been some



loss of agricultural land caused by new development, growth has been only one factor in the transformation of the types of agriculture in Eau Claire County.



Although not as dominant an industry as some surrounding counties, agriculture is an important element of the social and economic characteristic of Eau Claire County. Despite the loss of farmland, the total number of farms in the County has actually increased in the past two decades. The type of agriculture in the County has also changed. There has been a decrease in the number of dairy farms, an increase in acres of corn and soybeans, a decrease in acres of hay, an increase in the number of horses, and a recent increase in direct market and organic farming. State and national agricultural policies, consumer purchasing habits, agricultural management practices, technological advances, international trade opportunities, and commodity prices have been the major reasons why Eau Claire County has seen changes in the types of agriculture.



The existing Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan certification will expire on December 31, 2014. This plan update is intended to fulfill the new statutory requirements of the farmland preservation program in accordance with Chapter 91, Subchapter II, Wisconsin Statutes. It will explore the trends and future expectations of agriculture, the balance between growth and agriculture, while identifying areas and resources worthy of protection. This plan will provide a framework to respond to the challenges and changes that agriculture and forestry face now and in the future. The goals, policies and action items identified throughout this planning document will aid in this response, while also leveraging county, state and federal resources to continue support of the agricultural industries.

To maintain DATCP certification and consistency with the Eau Claire County Code, the Farmland Preservation Plan will address the following requirements:

- All plans must clearly state the county's goals and policies related to:
  - Farmland preservation
  - Agricultural development, including development of enterprises related to agriculture
- Identification of farmland preservation areas
- The county's strategy to increase housing density outside of farmland preservation areas.

### ***What is Farmland Preservation?***

Farmland preservation is the permanent or long-term protection of high quality agricultural land that has a minimal degree of conflict with other land uses, namely existing and future development.

### ***What is the purpose of the program?***

In order to address the loss of Wisconsin's most productive agricultural lands and to promote the economic development of agriculture, the Working Lands Initiative (2009 Wis. Act 28) was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Jim Doyle in late June 2009. The





Act revised the state's existing Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) and created new programs, including the Agriculture Enterprise Areas (AEAs) and Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement (PACE) programs which are administered by DATCP.

Other changes to the existing farmland preservation program include development of new standards for farmland preservation planning. Plan updates are essential to ensure that current trends and development patterns are reflected. Additionally, plan updates are necessary to ensure eligible farmers can collect income tax credits and participate in the newly established AEA and PACE programs.

Under 2009 Wis. Act 28, as incorporated into Chapter 91 of Wisconsin State Statutes (ch. 91, Wis. Stats.), changes to farmland preservation planning include:

- Modernizing farmland preservation plans to meet current land use challenges
- Providing planning grants to counties to assist with the costs of developing updated farmland preservation plans
- Providing flexibility for designating areas planned for farmland preservation
- Requiring consistency between local plans, specifically including comprehensive plans

### ***Why is it important?***

Preserving farmland is mainly about permanently protecting the agricultural land base. For the purposes of this Plan, agricultural land base includes: crop and pasture lands, woodlands, wetlands, agricultural infrastructure and facilities, transportation corridors, and contiguous tracts with compatible uses. Real protection provides farmers the opportunity to continue their business, or grow their operations without adverse impact caused by conflicting land uses. A farmland preservation plan also strengthens the agricultural industry by:

- Providing a stable land base;
- Minimizing conflicts from incompatible uses, including the industrial sand industry;
- Reducing conflict between farms and non-farms in the rural areas;
- Protecting the rural heritage of Wisconsin;
- Preserving wildlife habitat areas;
- Maintaining groundwater recharge areas;
- Providing a taxable open space;
- Providing a means to liquidate equity while preserving land;
- Protecting high quality and prime soils from development;
- Allowing for efficient growth patterns with minimal cost to the taxpayers;
- Providing diversity in the landscape; and
- Helping to protect and buffer natural resource areas.

### ***History of the Farmland Preservation Program***

#### **Wisconsin**

Created in 1977, Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program is designed to identify and protect agricultural areas against unplanned development. The goals of the program are to preserve agricultural land and open spaces by promoting orderly land-use planning and development, to conserve soil and water, and to provide tax credit to farmers enrolled in the program. At the time, Wisconsin was considered a national leader in terms of farmland preservation efforts; however, land use pressures and impacts have changed dramatically since that time. Unfortunately, the approach to farmland preservation had not changed by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Farmland Preservation today in Wisconsin is, and needs to be, different than what was envisioned 30 years ago. Land prices have more than quadrupled, bank lending has tightened, and technology has changed. However, some of the same challenges remain for the agricultural producer including: severe weather extremes; rising health care costs; fluctuating commodity prices; rising costs of fuel, fertilizers, and herbicides; and difficulty in finding labor. All these factors can make it difficult to maintain a competitive industry in today's market.

In addition to the industry changes previously mentioned, the Working Lands Initiative also made many changes to the FPP including the process for certifying revised county farmland preservation plans. Under the former program, farmland preservation plans required certification by the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board; whereas, now they are certified directly by DATCP.

Other key changes to the FPP and Chapter 91, Wis. Stats. under the Working Lands Initiative can be found in "Transitioning from the Farmland Preservation Program to the Working Lands Initiative" (ARM-Pub-209), available on the DATCP website at: <http://workinglands.wi.gov>.

## **Eau Claire County**

Recognizing the importance the agricultural industry plays in its overall economic base; Eau Claire County adopted the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan in 1983. For more than thirty (30) years, this certified plan has 1) served as the basis to preserving the county's most productive farmland from fragmentation and development encroachment, 2) instilled sound conservation practices to protect our soils from erosion and surface waters from degradation for program participants on more than 50,000 acres, and 3) allowed eligible landowners to collect more than \$8.5 million in tax credits since the program's inception.

Eau Claire County's approach to farmland preservation has been much more than the adoption and administration of the Farmland Preservation Plan. In 1983, with a comprehensive revision to the Eau Claire County Zoning Ordinance, the A-1 Exclusive Agriculture zoning district was created to:

- Preserve those areas best suited for farming or agricultural use
- Protect the agricultural economic base of the county
- Entitle farms to tax credits under the Wisconsin (FPP)
- Minimize urban sprawl and its associated public expense, and
- Minimize land use conflicts between farms and non-farms.

The A-1 zoning district was originally adopted in eight (8) of the thirteen (13) Towns in Eau Claire County, encompassing approximately 165,000 acres of land in 1983. As a testament to the overall administration and support of the County's restrictive zoning and preservation program, more than 159,000 acres of land are still zoned under the Exclusive Agriculture designation within those original eight towns today, despite significant urban growth in the region. In addition, a ninth township, the Town of Union, adopted county zoning in 1998, designating more than 4,600 additional acres as Exclusive Agriculture and bringing the county total of lands under the certified zoning district up to 163,840 acres today, just 1,052 acres less than what was originally designated and certified in 1983.

Another component of the Farmland Preservation Program that cannot be overlooked or underestimated is the requirement to meet the statewide conservation standards for eligibility of the tax credit. Nutrient management, manure runoff control and management, and soil conservation practices are required by program participants. Ensuring long-term productivity is an essential part of ensuring preservation of farmland.



In addition to the adoption and subsequent administration of the plan, as stated before, Farmland Preservation is much more than a plan, or a zoning ordinance, or even certain conservation practices. The plan is a concerted and shared effort of town, county, and state officials along with landowners to do what is necessary and right to ensure the viability of agriculture now and in the future as a sound economic development policy. According to the community survey completed as part of this planning process, more than 70% of the respondents felt that it was important for Eau Claire County to maintain and modernize the Farmland Preservation Program, which indicates there is still strong community support for this program today. This update to the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan will continue these long-term commitments to preserve productive farms and forest while protecting our vast natural resources as a foundation to a strong local economy here in Eau Claire County.

### ***Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative (WLI)***

The Wisconsin Working Lands Program was passed as a part of the state's 2009-2011 biennial budget process. The authority for this program can be found primarily in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The goals of the State program are to achieve preservation of areas significant for current and future agricultural uses through successful implementation of the following three directives:

1. Expand and modernize the state's existing FPP; and,
2. Establish agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs); and,
3. Develop a purchase of agricultural conservation easement (PACE) matching grant program.

Specific items associated with each of these State directives include:

1. Expand and Modernize the State's Existing FPP
  - Modernize county farmland preservation plans to meet current challenges
  - Provide planning grants to reimburse counties for farmland preservation planning
  - Establish new minimum zoning standards to increase local flexibility and reduce land use conflicts (local governments may apply more stringent standards)
  - Increase income tax credits for program participants
  - Improve consistency between local plans and ordinances
  - Simplify the certification process and streamline state oversight
  - Ensure compliance with state soil and water conservation standards
  - Collect a flat per acre conversion fee when land under farmland preservation zoning is re-zoned for other uses (**NOTE**: The requirement to collect a rezone conversion fee has been removed from the statutes. The law was changed as a result of 2011 WI ACT 32, the biennial budget bill. Under these changes, any individual requesting a rezone does not need to pay the conversion fee. However, the biennial budget bill does not affect the conversion fee associated with land removed from a farmland preservation agreement. A landowner with land covered by a **new** farmland preservation agreement (signed after January 1, 2011) or a **modified** farmland preservation agreement (modified after July 1, 2009) who chooses to remove some or all covered land from the agreement must pay a conversion fee for each acre removed from the agreement)
2. Establish AEAs
  - Maintain large areas of contiguous land primarily in agricultural use and reduce land use conflicts
  - Encourage farmers, communities, and local governments to invest in agriculture



- Provide an opportunity to enter into farmland preservation agreements to claim income tax credits
- Encourage compliance with state soil and water conservation standards

### 3. Develop a PACE Grant Program

- Protect farmland through voluntary programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements
- Provide up to \$12 million in state grant funds, in the form of matching grants to local governments and non-profit conservation organizations, to purchase agricultural conservation easements from willing sellers
- Stretch state dollars by requiring grants to be matched by other funds such as federal grants, local contributions, and/or private donations
- Establish a council to advise the state on pending grants and proposed easement purchases
- Consider the value of the proposed easement for preservation of agricultural productivity, conservation of agricultural resources, ability to protect or enhance waters of the state, and proximity to other protected land
- Ensure consistency of state-funded easement purchases with local plans and ordinances

An income tax credit is available for agricultural properties that are zoned farmland preservation/exclusive agriculture and/or if a landowner signs a long-term farmland preservation agreement and is in an AEA. Whether under zoning or through an agreement, the land owner's acreage must follow a soil conservation plan or meet state soil and water conservation requirements. In order for landowners to participate in the program, their County must first adopt an agricultural or farmland preservation plan, which is certified by DATCP. Adoption of a certified zoning ordinance is optional, although it does allow landowners to automatically eligible to participate in the program, instead of the need to enter into a separate agreement.

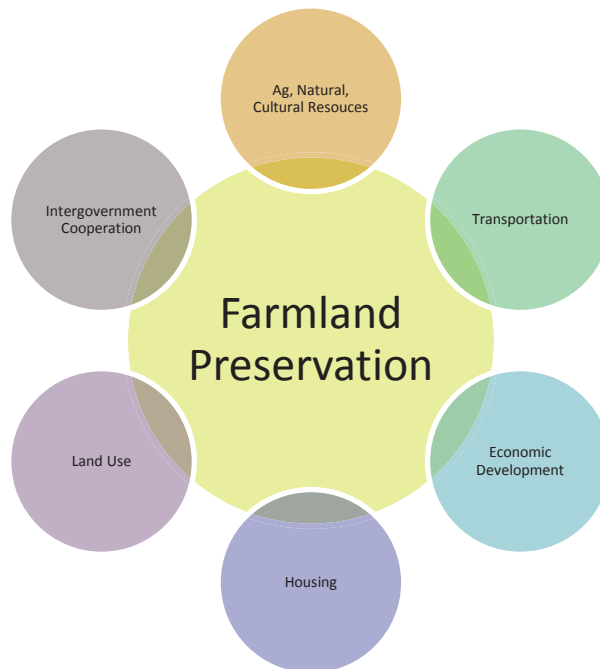
### ***Planning Process***

The following Farmland Preservation Plan document is considered an element of Eau Claire County's Comprehensive Plan, and will be adopted as an addendum thereto. The comprehensive plan, as a whole, identifies specific goals and policies in support of agriculture, balanced land use, and resource protection. The comprehensive plan also provides direction to county officials, municipal officials and landowners in terms of specific priorities and actions that should be considered to support the continued growth and development of agriculture here in Eau Claire County. As previously mentioned, the current farmland preservation plan is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2014. This document is intended to fulfill the statutory requirements of both the FPP and supplement the existing Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources section of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan. State certification of this plan will provide access to state and federal program resources for local units of government, landowners and agricultural enterprises. Once a new Farmland Preservation Plan is adopted by the Eau Claire County Board, additional changes will be developed and adopted in order to implement the approved Farmland Preservation plan. Such changes include amendments to the Eau Claire County Zoning Ordinance, specifically in relation to the farmland preservation/exclusive agriculture district, as well as related ordinances and program materials.



## CHAPTER TWO: FARMLAND PRESERVATION GOALS & OBJECTIVES

As mentioned previously, the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan is intended to compliment and supplement the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan along with the Land and Water Resource Management Plan. In this regard, the County Farmland Preservation Plan will act to advance the goals and policies of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, which shall serve as the basis for all county-developed planning documents. The following comprehensive plan elements play a direct and vital role in implementing both the comprehensive plan and the farmland preservation plan.



**Figure 1: Correlating Elements of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan**

Early in the planning process, the Farmland Preservation Steering Committee utilized a SWOT Analysis to help identify the key **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats to the future of agriculture here in Eau Claire County. The results were then compared to the existing goals, objectives, and policies of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan. Through a series of focus group meetings amongst the Steering Committee members, a review was completed that would provide a more seamless consistency between the two plans. The Steering Committee was then able to identify three major areas of emphasis for this plan, including: Natural Resources, Economic Vitality, and Land Use.

### Comprehensive Plan References

Throughout this chapter there will be several mentions of content that is already in the “Existing Conditions” section of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Since this document will be adopted as an Appendix to the comprehensive plan, all existing background information contained within the Comprehensive Plan shall be applicable here and not repeated, thereby reducing redundancy. Chapter Five of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes background information of Eau Claire County which aided in the development of this Farmland Preservation Plan. In several instances, outdated data has been supplemented and incorporated into this Plan to ensure the existing conditions and trends are more fully understood.



## Natural Resources

### Natural Resource Key Issues

Using the results of the Community Survey and the SWOT Analysis, key Issues were identified for Eau Claire County's Natural Resources. Key strengths identified for Natural Resources include water and soil quality, forestry resources, and the conservation ethic of landowners. Key weaknesses or threats identified include climate challenges, the presence of "industrial sand", and the diversity of soil and topography characteristics found throughout Eau Claire County. The following objectives and subsequent action policies set forth in this plan are meant to enhance perceived strengths and opportunities that exist in Eau Claire County while minimizing or otherwise addressing perceived weaknesses or threats.

### Natural Resource Goal

Preserve and protect our most valuable resources for the residents of Eau Claire County (both current and future), including: productive forests, farmland, sensitive environmental areas, and wildlife habitat as the foundations of our rural landscape.

### Natural Resource Objectives

- Minimize the development and fragmentation of agricultural and forest land while providing alternative land division choices for farmers and other rural landowners that promote continued agriculture and forestry uses
- Promote conservation practices to protect productive agricultural soils from erosion and deter the delivery of sediment and nutrients to the waters of our state
- Enforce policies and procedures for mineral extraction operations including required reclamation plans to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses and to minimize impacts to natural resources
- Promote a comprehensive watershed approach to address sediment delivery and nutrient impacts to the water resources of Eau Claire County
- Protect public health, productive lands, property values, and water resources through proper treatment of sewage and storm water management
- Connect with County residents and stakeholders to instill long term conservation values

### Natural Resource Background

Eau Claire County has a diverse landscape in west-central Wisconsin with prominent rivers, rolling hills, low wetlands, ridge top forest lands, and rural farmsteads. These natural features are closely linked to the agricultural producers of the region. Farmers are stewards of the land and managing these natural resources appropriately helps to preserve farmland in a sound manner.

Map 6 in "[Appendix E](#)" of the Comprehensive Plan distinguishes the types of land cover within the County. The northern and eastern parts of the County are generally level and quite flat, but are occasionally interspersed with razorback ridges and isolated outlying hills. The Chippewa River passes through the northwestern part of the County, while the





Eau Claire River passes through the eastern and north-central part of the County. These rivers and their tributaries have extensive flood plains and are often flanked by postglacial terraces. Not only do the two rivers dominate the natural scene, they also account for most of the surface water. Their flood plains are sites of major urban clusters which account for over three-fourths of the County's population. In the south, or Driftless Area, the terrain is far more severe and rugged. Loess deposits are common on the uplands.

## Forests and Woodlands

For the purposes of this planning process, forestry is a significant component of the agricultural industry here in Eau Claire County from both an economic and land base perspective. In general terms, forestland dominates two areas of the County: 1) in the east and north portions of the County along the main stem of the Eau Claire River, and 2) in the steepest hillsides of the southwestern (Driftless) part of the County. Forestry and woodlands are a unique type of natural resource worthy of preservation not just because of the biological benefits it offers but also the values pertaining to scenery, wildlife habitat, education, recreation, employment, and economy. Currently, two distinct incentive programs help to manage this important resource by encouraging sustainable forestry on private woodlands, namely the Managed Forest Law (MFL) and Forest Crop Law (FCL). In 2012 the Forest Crop Law (FCL) had 440 acres enrolled in the program in Eau Claire County. Managed Forest Law (MFL) participants had 7,533 acres "open" to public access (24% of the total agreements were in this classification) and 23,225 "closed" to public access (76% of the agreements were in this classification). In addition to the 66,547 acres of privately managed forest areas in the County, Eau Claire County (Parks and Forest Department) also manages over 52,000 of additional wooded acreage as County forest, ranking as the 15th largest County Forest in the state. Other DNR and USDA programs are also available to landowners for timber management practices and include, but are not limited to: Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

## Soil Resources

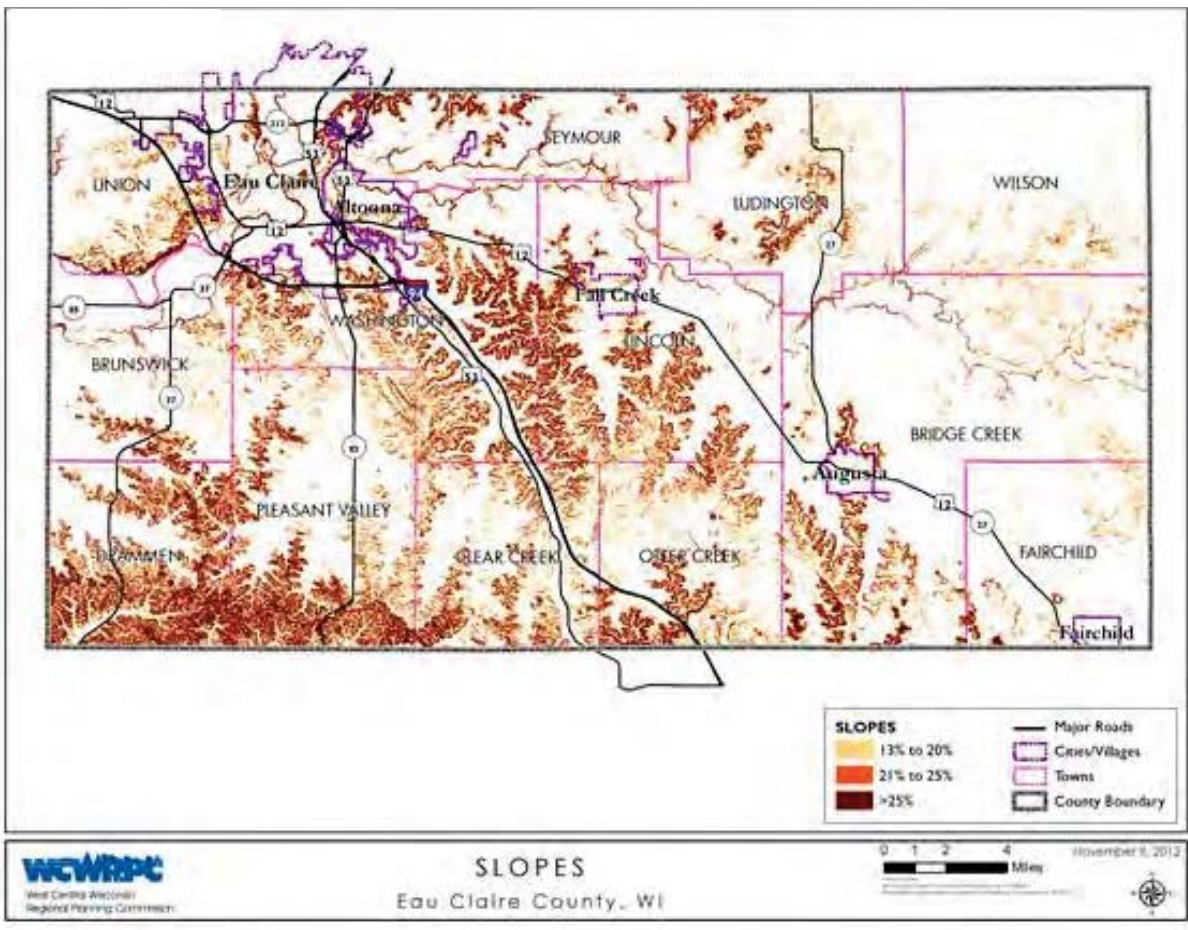
Soil properties are an important factor in how land is used. Soils determine how productive farmland can be, along with the type and amount of development that can be reasonably supported based on the various soil characteristics. Identifying and reviewing soil suitability interpretations are essential for determining the most suitable land use for farmland preservation. The 1977 Eau Claire County Soil Survey originally identified seven soil associations. Current national soil mapping has split, combined, and re-named some of these soil associations into nine associations, although Eau Claire County has yet to be re-mapped. Several soil associations that have great potential for crop productions are found in Eau Claire County, predominately in the central and southern portions of the County. This also correlates to the main agricultural areas of Eau Claire County. Capability classifications are used to relate soil limitations to needed conservation practices in order to carefully manage or protect soils from degradation. Soil loss, severe limitations and poor drainage are all soil characteristics in which an effective conservation plan is designed to address to preserve our most valuable soil resources while also protecting our water resources from degradation.

Section 5.5.1.2 ***Productive Agricultural Soils*** of the Comprehensive Plan provides more detailed information relating to prime farmland soils and soil capability classes. ***Map 3: Prime Farmland*** and ***Map 4: Soil Capability*** found in **Appendix E** of the Comprehensive Plan further illustrates soil productivity and suitability classes of the County.

## Slope Restrictions

It is generally more desirable, both environmentally and economically, to avoid steep slopes and disruption of natural drainage ways with construction or land development. The USDA defines steep slopes as areas where the gradient of the land is 12 percent or greater (each percentage of slope is measured as one unit in elevation for every 100 horizontal units). Areas having steep slopes can be categorized into three levels: 13 to 20 percent slope, 21 to 25 percent, and 25 percent and greater (**Figure 2**). Eau Claire County has regulations and policies that limit development on land that is considered an “environmentally sensitive area”, defined to include steep slopes in excess of 20%. These provisions can be found in Chapters 17 and 18 of the County Code, as well as the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.

**Figure 2: Steep Slopes**



Based on *Figure 2*, there are approximately 54,265 acres with slopes of 12 to 20 percent, 19,078 acres have slopes of 21 to 25 percent, and 33,977 acres with slopes of greater than 25 percent. The majority of these steep slopes are located in the southwestern and central portions of the county. These relief changes can be easily seen in *Figure 2*. Additional localized and site-specific variations in topography and slope may exist. Glacial activity created scenic topography in the county, but that topography is very sensitive to disturbance and development activities.





## Water Resources and Watersheds

Eau Claire County contains 20 lakes, with the total water acreage of approximately 5,600 acres. Most of the county's water resources are located in the Lower Chippewa River Basin. The most dominant water body is the Eau Claire River, which runs east to west in the eastern portion of the county.

In several annual county-wide budget surveys, the local residents identify that the quality of water resources is their main concern compared to all other resources. Two of the more prevalent issues or concerns relating to water quality are nutrient loading from fertilizers/pesticides and sediment from run-off, primarily from agricultural land and also urban areas. Farmland Preservation practices will help sustain and maintain water quality since farmers enrolled in the program are obligated to meet certain conservation standards.

Surface and ground water quality can be affected by a wide variety of point and non-point sources, including agricultural run-off, storm water from parking lots and roads, soil erosion and spills of hazardous materials. Sources and risks of contamination are important for individual communities to consider as they develop local land use and natural resources goals and strategies for their respective communities. Communities may select to participate in or support existing County or State programs to protect their water resources or implement local educational or regulatory programs. *Map 5* in "[Appendix E](#)" of the Comprehensive Plan identifies floodplains, wetlands, and water bodies found throughout Eau Claire County.

## Natural Resource Protection (Best Management Practices)

Protection of Eau Claire County's natural resources is integral to farmland preservation. Wisconsin has adopted environmental requirements to control runoff from fields, pastures, and livestock facilities. The agricultural components of the state's runoff rules include:

- Controlling soil loss on crop fields and pastures
- Developing and following a Nutrient Management Plan to prevent nutrients from entering lakes, streams, and groundwater
- No tillage next to the edge of surface waters
- Preventing direct runoff from feedlots, barnyards, and manure storage areas
- Within Water Quality Management Areas (300' from streams, 1,000' from lakes, and areas susceptible to groundwater contamination) avoid stacking manure and diverting clean water from manure
- Managing livestock with access to surface water to maintain vegetative cover and prevent erosion
- Preventing discharges of process wastewater (milk-house waste, feed leachate)
- Construct and maintain manure storage facilities according to standards, and preventing overflowing
- Properly closing of idle manure storage structures

There are many Best Management Practices that farmers and landowners can implement to preserve the soil and water resources of their land. A few of the practices include using crop rotations and tillage systems to reduce erosion, managed grazing to protect pastures, and barnyard runoff management systems to help properly manage manure.



## ***Economic Vitality & Infrastructure***

### **Economic Vitality & Infrastructure Key Issues**

Using the results of the Community Survey and the SWOT Analysis, key issues were identified for Eau Claire County's Ag-Based Economic Vitality and Infrastructure. Key strengths identified for this Goal include: product diversification, transportation infrastructure assets, brand recognition/reputation, support for locally grown foods, and production yields. Key weaknesses or threats identified include: lack of wireless service in rural areas, condition of bridge structures within highway networks, regulatory barriers to diversification, limited workforce, high costs of start-up, loss of support industries, and inflationary impacts (including health care costs). The following objectives and subsequent action policies set forth in this plan are meant to enhance perceived strengths and opportunities that exist in Eau Claire County, while minimizing or otherwise addressing perceived weaknesses or threats.

### **Economic Vitality & Infrastructure Goal**

Strengthen and diversify a predominately agricultural and forestry based economy throughout rural areas of Eau Claire County. The primary focus for economic development in rural portions of the County will be the support of agriculture (inclusive of forestry activities), agricultural-related businesses, and cottage industries. Other commercial and industrial businesses not compatible with the rural character of the County will be encouraged to locate in urban locations, or rural hamlets, where adequate transportation and utility facilities exist to serve more intensive business developments. Additional opportunities are available for distribution of agricultural products in and near population centers in the County.

### **Economic Vitality and Infrastructure Objectives**

- Promote the expansion and development of businesses which provide high wage employment opportunities for area residents without diminishing the quality of natural, historical, or cultural resources in the County
- Support the use of "buy-local" programs that focus on purchasing products and materials from area businesses
- Support new and existing businesses that utilize local agricultural products or that provide important agricultural inputs (farm equipment, new farm technologies, processors, short-line implements, co-ops, etc.).
- Encourage the development of "niche" businesses sourcing from local and regional agricultural markets (small-scale food processing, fresh produce, organics, etc.).
- Joint Planning of Roads that cross jurisdictions. The County will work with local communities, as well as adjacent counties to plan, construct and maintain those roadways that serve or promote the movement of goods and services on a regional scale, including cost sharing agreements
- Support the continued maintenance and enhancement of a strong infrastructure that serves the current and future needs of businesses and residents.
- Support the development and maintenance of a multi-faceted transportation system to include rail, air, road, bike and pedestrian travelers that meets the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses alike with an emphasis on expanding capacity and creating efficiency for the agricultural community.
- Support community food efforts to reduce the presence of food deserts and allow for effective marketing opportunities for local producers across the County.
- Encourage opportunities for loans, grants, and services that ensure profitable farming enterprises of all sizes and types.



## Economic Vitality and Infrastructure Background

Agriculture works hard for the County every day with the industry providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of economic activity while also contributing to local income and tax revenues. According to a recent report (2011) compiled by Steven Deller of UW-Extension titled *“The Economic Impacts of Agriculture in Wisconsin Counties”*, agriculture and forestry contributes more than \$80 billion in total business sales, 460,000 jobs, and \$25 billion in total income annually towards Wisconsin’s economy. That same report also provides detailed estimates of the impact agriculture has on a more local level, namely Eau Claire County. According to the UW-Extension data, the agricultural industry as a whole accounts for approximately 6% (just under 4,500) of jobs, 13% of the total business sales (\$1.1 billion), and about 7% (\$275 million) of the county’s total income. Every dollar of sales from agricultural products within Eau Claire County generates an additional \$0.43 of business sales in other parts of the County’s economy.

Even though the number of farms has grown slowly over time, the size of farms has been increasing as well. Over half of the County’s land is owned and managed by farmers (approximately 205,375 acres), with roughly 90 percent of farms owned by individuals and families. This includes cropland, pasture, tree farms, berry farms, farm forest, and wetlands. While dairy continues to be the largest sector of the ag industry in Eau Claire County with milk production generating more than \$80 million in business sales and another \$709 million in processed dairy products, several other sectors are fairly strong as well, including: grain, livestock, poultry/eggs, and vegetables. Although the agricultural industry is no longer one of the predominant employment sectors in Eau Claire County today when compared to manufacturing or the Educational/Health/Social Services sectors referenced in **Table 5.30** of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, agriculture is an extremely important industry when one considers its total fiscal impact on our local economy.

## Agricultural Businesses & Infrastructure

Spatially locating the different types of agricultural based businesses within the County is a way to understand what types of businesses are present and the effect they have on the local economy based on location. Mapped below are different types of businesses that are directly correlated to the economic Ag footprint that is within or in close proximity to Eau Claire County.

- *Community Based:* These businesses consist of apple orchards, CSA’s, community gardens, and farmers markets. These types of businesses were grouped together because of the ties they have with local communities.
- *Ag services:* These businesses offer different types of special services for farmers such as veterinarians, breeders, and bank lenders.
- *Seed/Grain/Feed:* Seed, grain, and feed suppliers are distinguished for this category of businesses.
- *Farm Amenities:* Livestock co-ops and fertilizer suppliers are mapped in this category.
- *Food Based:* Food processors and cheese/creamery suppliers are plotted within Map 2 below.
- *Forestry Based:* Timber product dealers, forestry consultants, and tree farm/nurseries are distinguished in this category of businesses.

Agricultural practices in the County have changed significantly over the past 30 years. There are numerous reasons for these shifts in agricultural activities and practices including changes in economics, population growth, societal changes, operational practices, support services and state and national policies. The county’s population increase has played a role in the loss of



farmland, most significantly in the areas surrounding the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona. However, the County remains strongly committed to agriculture, albeit changing types of agriculture.

The agricultural industry's reduction in the number of dairy farms as well as increases in dairy, corn and soybean production are perhaps the most prominent of the changes in agriculture for Eau Claire County. Changes in the dairy industry have been happening for several decades now and have been experienced in every county in the surrounding region. Even with the changes in the County's agricultural industry and the agricultural economy of the region, Eau Claire County remains one of the top counties in the state in sales of some agricultural commodities. Of Wisconsin's 72 counties, Eau Claire ranked 5th for value of horses and 14th for value of poultry and eggs in 2007. Nationally, Eau Claire County ranked in the top 200 counties for acres of oats and dairy sales.

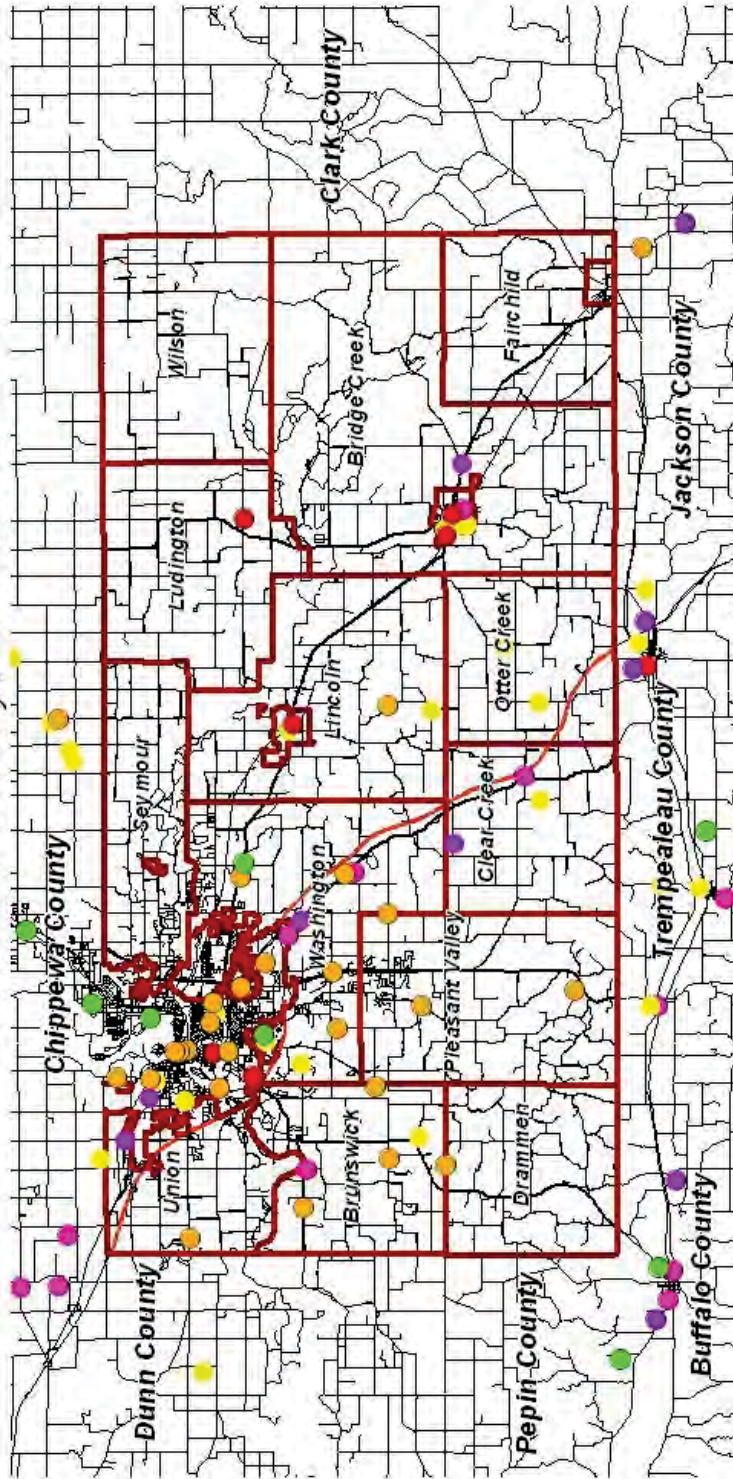
One byproduct of the changing agricultural environment in Eau Claire County is the effect on support or service type businesses. Even one generation ago, most communities in Eau Claire County had grain processing, storage and supply facilities. Many of these facilities have since closed or reduced in capacity/services. Others relocated to larger urban centers where access to better transportation networks, labor force and utilities were desired. Collectively, the contraction and migration of agricultural infrastructure may best be attributed to a combination of the increase in farm size, decrease in number of traditional agricultural operations, and increasing internet purchasing options along with other market factors. Based on analysis of this trend and discussions with industry leaders, Eau Claire County does not anticipate any changes to this trend in the near future, meaning that the trend is not expected to change or reverse in the near future. At the same time, the agricultural support industry seems to have stabilized and it is unlikely that Eau Claire County will continue to experience a decline in the overall agricultural infrastructure based on the projected number and volume of agricultural producers within this region. With that being said, Eau Claire County may wish to place an emphasis on integrating industry needs into the County's overall economic development efforts through the Eau Claire County Economic Development Commission (ECEDC).

The agriculture related businesses in the County include: seed, feed, chemical, implement, equipment repair, veterinary, greenhouse/nursery, meat and dairy processing and marketing, financial services and general farm supply (**Figure 3**). Additional equipment, supply and processing businesses that serve Eau Claire County are located in neighboring counties.

- From 2000 to 2010 total agribusiness services slightly decreased in the County, although the data is incomplete.
- There has been an increase in veterinary and farm supply whole sale trade.
- At the same time food and beverage manufacturing, along with agriculture and forestry support services, have decreased in number.
- The availability of equipment, parts, and supplies through the internet and on-farm delivery has negatively impacted local businesses while expanding farm resources and opportunities.

In recent years, agricultural storage facilities have been shifting to privately-owned, on-farm or regional facilities that are not located within Eau Claire County. This trend is expected to continue as the size of farms increase, although there is strong interest in developing a centrally-located regional load in/out facility with rail access in Eau Claire County that could potentially reverse this trend. Until this occurs, no significant changes are expected in the distribution system for agricultural products.

# Agricultural Business Map Eau Claire County, Wisconsin



Agricultural Businesses	Totals	Agricultural Businesses	Totals
Ag Services	8	Food Based	28
Community Based	26	Forestry Based	8
Farm Amenities	10	Seed/Grain/Feed	11

### Types of Ag Businesses

- Community Based
- Ag Services
- Farm Amenities
- Seed/Grain/Feed
- Food Based
- Forestry Based



FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

**Project Overview:**  
This map was developed by the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Committee. It is intended to provide a visual representation of the current agricultural business locations in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin. The map is not intended to be used as a legal document. The information on this map is for informational purposes only. The map is not intended to be used as a legal document. The information on this map is for informational purposes only.

Agricultural Business Map for Eau Claire County



## Agricultural Sales

Figure 4 outlines the 2007 agricultural sales for Eau Claire County and surrounding counties. Eau Claire County's total sales were lower than the neighboring counties of Chippewa, Clark, and Dunn. Perhaps in part to the City of Eau Claire urban environment, Eau Claire County did not have any agricultural sale categories that were higher than any of the three listed neighboring counties. In contrast, these numbers do seem to suggest that despite the county's population growth in recent years, agriculture is still financially strong with the dairy sector leading agricultural activity in both Eau Claire County and the region.

The dairy industry has seen reductions in farm and cow numbers with increasing milk production and revenues; corn and soybean acres have increased while hay and oat acres decreased; and horse numbers grew while cattle and pig sales decreased. Eau Claire County farmers sold more than \$84 million worth of agricultural products in 2007, which had a significant economic impact. Sixty-six percent of this value was in livestock, poultry, and related products while two-thirds of those sales came from dairy. Crop and nursery products accounted for 34 percent of sales with grain accounting for more than half of this amount.

**Figure 4: 2007 Agricultural Sales**

Annual Agricultural Sales, 2007				
	Chippewa	Clark	Dunn	Eau Claire
Livestock/Poultry (Total)	\$139,879,000	\$252,375,000	\$122,165,000	\$55,728,000
Dairy	\$102,379,000	\$222,648,000	\$80,354,000	\$36,974,000
Cattle & Calves	\$15,729,000	\$26,460,000	\$16,878,000	\$12,373,000
Poultry/Eggs	\$20,265,000	\$486,000	(D)	\$5,356,000
Hogs & Pigs	(D)	\$969,000	(D)	\$231,000
Horses & Ponies	\$242,000	(D)	\$490,000	\$395,000
Other Animals	\$553,000	\$1,085,000	\$781,000	\$302,000
Crops/Greenhouse/Nursery (Total)	\$25,732,000	\$26,504,000	\$51,438,000	\$28,235,000
Grains	\$20,403,000	\$19,287,000	\$39,141,000	\$15,314,000
Greenhouse/Nursery	1,893,000	(D)	314,000	(D)
Vegetables	\$513,000	\$282,000	\$8,921,000	\$2,954,000
Hay	\$1,935,000	\$3,506,000	(D)	\$1,555,000
Fruit/Berries	\$830,000	\$1,340,000	(D)	(D)
Christmas Trees/Woody Shrubs	\$158,000	(D)	(D)	\$154,000
Total All Sales	\$165,611,000	\$278,879,000	\$173,603,000	\$83,963,000

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.

The County's agricultural economy has shifted and changed since the 1980s, specifically in the last decade. Between 1997 and 2007, there was a noticeable change in the total value of agricultural sales, with the County experiencing an increase from \$74.6 million to \$84.0 million (constant 2007 dollars). It should be noted here that this increase is not necessarily indicative of an increase in productivity or even commodity pricing, but rather is a combination of several factors, including but not limited to: land rent prices, commodity prices, types of products and inflationary pressures. Another important notation is that the data provided in Figure 4 does not include any statistical information relating to the forestry industry. The Forest Industry is discussed in **Chapter 6: Existing Conditions** of this plan, although statistical data is lacking to gain a true comparison with other counties. One of the largest challenges in gaining insight into this industry is the prevalence of Amish producers in Eau Claire County, who do not report data



to state or federal agencies. Although opinions exist as to the level of production in Eau Claire County, including estimates would be more speculative in nature and therefore improper.

The secondary economic impacts of agriculture are also significant in Eau Claire County. Agriculture provides 4,481 jobs for farm owners and managers, farm employees, veterinarians, crop and livestock consultants, feed, fuel and other crop input supplies, machinery dealers, barn builders, agricultural lenders and other professionals in the food processing or other value added industries according to a report entitled “Eau Claire County Agriculture: Value & Economic Impact” prepared as a follow-up to the Deller report by the UW-Extension Cooperative Extension. This report also indicates that agriculture accounts for \$1.1 billion, or 13 percent, in business sales from direct agricultural sales of products, sales of inputs, services and equipment and earnings spent in the County. Agriculture pays over \$23 million in sales, property and income taxes. *Figure 5* shows the sales, expenses, wages and government payments for Eau Claire County agriculture producers.

**Figure 5: Economic Impact of Agriculture in Eau Claire County**

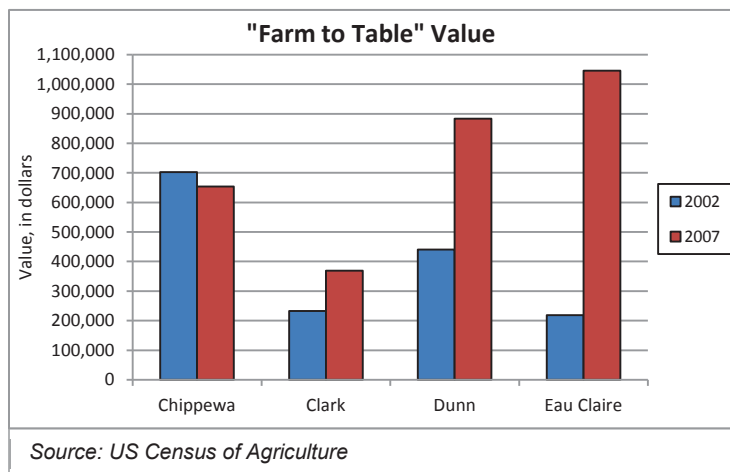
<b>Economics &amp; Labor Impact of Agriculture – 1987 to 2007</b>					
ITEM	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Total Sales	\$50,520,000	\$52,957,000	\$57,778,000	\$49,972,000	\$83,963,000
Total Sales Average per Farm	\$50,470	\$59,771	\$62,328	\$42,566	\$68,653
Total Farm Production Expenses	\$38,408,00	\$42,560,000	\$45,891,000	\$42,343,000	\$66,922,000
Total Farm Production Expenses Average per Farm	\$38,369	\$48,091	\$39,561	\$36,221	\$54,719
Hired Farm Labor (farms)	NA	351	324	247	254
Hired Farm Labor (workers)	NA	1,219	1,137	606	810
Hired Farm Labor (wages)	NA	\$4,575,000	\$4,659,000	\$2,797,000	\$5,434,000
Total Government Payments	\$3,053,000	\$1,324,000	\$1,585,000	\$2,948,000	\$3,036,000
Government Payments Average per Farm	\$7,002	\$3,719	\$3,031	\$4,864	\$3,593

*Source: US Census of Agriculture, Farms with sales Greater than \$10,000*

### Direct Market Farms

Another trend occurring in Eau Claire County and neighboring counties since 2000 is the increase in the number of farms marketing agricultural products directly to consumers. Producers are promoting the “farm to table” concept to improve profitability and capture the growing interest in fresher, healthier food alternatives. This trend has support from the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection with education and information provided to producers interested in trying direct farm marketing. The City of Eau Claire’s relatively large population

**Figure 6: Direct Market Sales in Eau Claire County**





provides a market for direct market farms that supports this trend. Even though the overall sales of direct market farms are under five percent of the total county sales, this niche market is growing.

*Figure 6* shows the increase in direct market agricultural products sold to individuals for consumption. Products include, but are not limited to, purchases from farmers' markets, road side stands, and large meat orders. Eau Claire County experienced a 378 percent increase in farm to table sales between 2002 and 2007. In fact, the entire west central part of Wisconsin experienced a substantial sales increase. In comparison, the statewide average sales increase was 50 percent. The number of direct market farms in the County increased from 57 to 108 farms from 2002 to 2007. Most of these farms are small, but larger operations are beginning to enter the market as well. These farms are producing food for the local/regional food market and selling large quantities to grocery stores and restaurants. It should also be noted that Eau Claire County is home to a significant number of Hmong farmers that sell produce at the farmers markets in Eau Claire. In fact, the Hmong population accounts for 45 percent of the vendors at the City of Eau Claire Farmers Market, growing a variety of crops on many farms close to the city.

### **Organic Farms**

According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, in 2007, Wisconsin had 1,222 certified organic farms, ranking second in the nation. Of the number of organic farms located in Wisconsin and cited in this report, Eau Claire County accounted for 24 certified farms with 4,121 acres of organic farmland while another 15 farms were in the process of transitioning to organic production. In comparison, Minnesota had 550 organic farms. Organic farming is a growing market, especially in areas like western Wisconsin with its close proximity to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area population base.

### **Economic Growth & Business Development**

Economic development trends and existing conditions are located in the "Economic Development" section and in the "Conditions and Trends Report" of the County Comprehensive Plan. As a whole, Eau Claire County has a complex economy with a wide range of important industries in both urban and rural areas, and is part of the Eau Claire metropolitan area. Regionalism and partnerships are taking on a greater role in creating a more dynamic economy and enhancing agricultural business development options.

To date, there has been one agricultural-related business that received a loan from the Regional Business Fund, Inc. (a regional revolving loan fund for a seven-county region) over the past five years. The loan was a milk-value production loan made to a dairy farm, which was used to purchase livestock and expand operations. In addition, other services, programs and financial support may be available to agricultural entrepreneurs through the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation.

In the "Agricultural Trends" section of Chapter 6 of this plan, one can find additional information relating specifically to the agriculture industry in Eau Claire County. It is important to note a few general economic themes occurring in Eau Claire County that may have some direct or indirect relation to farmland preservation:

- Eau Claire County's economy is impacted by regional, state, national and international decisions and fluctuations. This can be seen by the fluctuations in gas, commodities, home purchases, and new home construction.
- From 2000 to 2009, Wisconsin experienced a steady increase in the number of foreclosures, with a peak of 28,532 filings in 2009. Since 2009, the number of





foreclosure filings has decreased and in 2011, the number of filings was 23,243. It should be noted that Portage County is not included in those numbers. Eau Claire County had a similar pattern during that timeframe with a peak number of foreclosures of 335 filings in 2009, decreasing to 236 in 2011. As of September 2012, Wisconsin had a foreclosure rate of 1 in 745 homes, about twice Minnesota's rate of 1 in 1,495 homes but slightly lower than the nation's 1 in 730. Eau Claire County has experienced an average rate (1 in every 1,004 homes in September 2012) of foreclosures when compared with the other counties in Wisconsin.

- There is increasing demand for skilled workers in the region. Post-secondary educational attainment of County residents is significantly above the State average but lower than Twin Cities metropolitan area levels, with 91.8 percent of residents completing high school or having some type of post-secondary education.
- More than half, 52.6 percent, of the County's resident labor force works within the community in which they live, while less than 30 percent work in another Eau Claire County community. Residents commuting to other Wisconsin counties comprise 16.4 percent of the Eau Claire County population. Average travel times have been increasing for workers as well.
- Education and health service occupations are expected to have one of the greatest total job increase numbers in the region from 2004 to 2014, estimated at more than 8,000 jobs for an increase of roughly 22% according to the Conditions and Trends Report of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.
- As of 2006, only 1.6 percent of Eau Claire County jobs were in farming, of which 84.8 percent were sole proprietors.
- The primary occupation of Eau Claire County farmers changed between 2002 and 2007. In 2002, 657 farmers had "farming" as their primary occupation. This number dropped to 505 in 2007. This is a 23 percent drop. The farmers that had "other" as their primary occupation increased from 517 to 718 between 2002 and 2007, a 39 percent increase.

## **Efforts to Grow the Local Agricultural Economy**

### **Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin**

*Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin* is an economic development program administered through DATCP. The program is designed to increase the purchase of Wisconsin grown and/or Wisconsin produced food products for sale to local purchasers. When food is locally grown, food dollars stay local and keep family farms and rural communities alive. According to its website, the state program administers the following activities:

- *Producers First* – a technical assistance program for local food producers.
- *Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin (BLBW) Workshops* – day-long workshops for local food producers. Topics range from farm financing to post harvest food handling and safety.
- *Wisconsin Local Food Marketing Guide* - a step-by-step guide for local food producers interested in entering local food markets.
- *On-Farm Food Safety Web-tool* – an online site with resources and tools for fresh fruit and vegetable producers: <http://datcp.wi.gov/OnFarmFoodSafety/index.aspx>.
- *AmeriCorps Farm to School* – Launched in 2008, AmeriCorps members are placed in schools across the state with the goal of decreasing childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating habits in students and increasing access to local foods in schools.



### Western Wisconsin Farm Fresh Atlas™

In addition to the specific activities that are derived from the state *Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin* program, Eau Claire County is a part of another effort to promote locally grown food. The Western Wisconsin Farm Fresh Atlas™ is a directory of farms, farmers' markets, and businesses that provide local, sustainably grown food through a direct marketing effort. The directory covers 20 counties in western Wisconsin. Products featured include fresh fruit (including you-pick), pasture-grazed cattle and bison, and fresh, seasonal vegetables. The atlas can be found at: <<http://www.wifarmfresh.org/>>

### Something Special from Wisconsin™

This program helps Wisconsin agricultural products to stand out above the competition. By enrolling in this program any business will be able to place the *Something Special from Wisconsin™* logo on their product to signify that at least 50 percent of the value of the product or service is attributable to Wisconsin ingredients, production, or processing activities. This program provides a quick and reliable way to identify genuine Wisconsin products and services at stores, markets, and restaurants throughout the state. Surveys also indicate that over 70 percent of Wisconsin consumers are more likely to purchase a product or service that is from Wisconsin than one from outside the state.



### Savor Wisconsin

Savor Wisconsin is an online tool that is a directory listing producers and retailers of Wisconsin agricultural products. This tool helps connect the consumers with Wisconsin sellers by providing advance search engines to locate certain vendors or services. The tool has been guided by DATCP, University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the Wisconsin Apple Growers Association (WAGA).

#### *Connecting Farmers with both Farmers and Consumers*

##### *Private Business Example: Farm Match*

Farm Match ([www.farmmatch.com](http://www.farmmatch.com)) is an example of a private enterprise that is designed to connect both farmers to farmers as well as farmers to consumers. Such efforts like this, along with other local advertising options, are important parts of the local food delivery system and will likely be a fixture into the future.

##### *Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Example: Land Link-Up*

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services' online [Land Link-Up](http://mosesorganic.org/farming/land-link-up/) (<http://mosesorganic.org/farming/land-link-up/>) provides free listings to help connect farmers with farmland.

##### *Governmental Organization Example: USDA Hay Net*

The USDA Farm Service Agency Hay Net website was developed for producers to list information concerning the need for hay or the availability of hay.

[HTTP://FSA.USDA.GOV/FSA/HAYNET?AREA=ONLINE&SUBJECT=LANDING&TOPIC=HAN&SETFLAG=WELCOME](http://FSA.USDA.GOV/FSA/HAYNET?AREA=ONLINE&SUBJECT=LANDING&TOPIC=HAN&SETFLAG=WELCOME)



## Farmers Markets

Farmers markets are places where farmers; sometimes along with bakers, cheese makers or other small food producers; can sell their products directly to consumers. Farmers markets typically consist of tables or booths with producers selling products such as vegetables, fruit, pasture-raised meats and poultry, eggs, honey, cheese, jam, preserves, salsas, cut flowers, ciders, baked goods, and nursery stock.

According to the Wisconsin Farmers Market Association, there are four active farmers markets in Eau Claire County, including:

- Chippewa Valley Technical College Farmers Market, Mayo Clinic Health Systems Clinic, from mid-June to late October, Tuesdays, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm
- Eau Claire Festival Foods Sunday Market, Festival Foods Parking Lot, from late June to late October, Sundays, 8:00 am - 2:00 pm
- Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market, Downtown Eau Claire - corner of Madison Street And Riverfront Terrace - Phoenix Park Pavilion, from early May to late October, Wednesdays (starting in June) 7:30am-1:00pm, Thursdays (starting in June) 12:00-5:00pm, Saturdays 7:30am - 1:00pm
- Eau Claire Farmers Market At Oakwood Mall, Oakwood Mall, from 6/11/2011 to 10/29/2011  
Operating hours: 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Days open: Tuesday, Saturday



## Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations

According to UW-Extension, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an arrangement between local households and farmers whom share the responsibility of producing and delivering fresh food. Households purchase a “share” of the season’s harvest. Once harvesting begins, members pick-up their farm share of fresh foods which may include vegetables, fruits, cheeses, eggs, meats, poultry, flowers, herbs or preserves. Some farms offer full or half shares, every other week, worker shares, or pick-your-own shares to reach a variety of household needs. The typical CSA season in Wisconsin runs from the end of May through mid-October but many farms offer early spring shares or winter shares. The CSA model benefits farmers by improving their cash flow in the spring and it guarantees a market for their products. Members benefit by consistently receiving fresh products, delivered conveniently to a nearby drop-site. The whole community also benefits by supporting jobs at local farms and securing a healthy, affordable and accessible food supply. Some CSAs offer delivery or pick up locations that include options for your workplace to encourage wellness efforts.

A Community Supported Agriculture Coalition has recently formed called **CSAC Chippewa Valley** and can be found on Facebook. Based on a simple internet search and the Farm Fresh Atlas discussed above, Eau Claire County is home to at least six CSAs, including:

- *Breezy Knoll Farm*, Fairchild, <http://www.breezyknollfarmllc.com>
- *DragSmith Farms*, Eau Claire, <http://www.localharvest.org/drag-smith-farms-M19507>
- *Katydid Ranch*, Fall Creek, <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/M56245>
- *MoonRise Farm*, Eau Claire, <http://www.localharvest.org/moonrise-farm-M58430>
- *Sunbow Farm*, Eau Claire, <http://www.sunbowfarm.com>
- *SD Flower Farm LLC*, Eau Claire, <http://www.sdflowerfarm.com>

## Direct Farm Sales

As discussed above, another growing trend in the agricultural industry is the preference to offer agricultural products for sale directly to the public. Unlike Farmer's Markets where agricultural products are transported to a central location, Direct Farm Sales can work a couple of ways. First, some producers offer delivery services, similar to the model Schwann's has utilized for years. Still, other producers offer on-farm retail operations. The basis of the Direct Sales model is built on establishing relationships between producer and customer. Producers are also promoting the "farm to table" concept to improve profitability and capture the growing interest in fresher, healthier food alternatives. Many common types of agricultural products available by Direct Sale in Eau Claire County include but are not limited to: christmas trees, dairy (including eggs), maple syrup, honey, fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs, grains, meat (including fish and poultry), firewood, and other value-added products. As customers develop this relationship with local producers, the connections between urban populations and the rural agricultural producers are strengthened.

## Community Gardens

Community gardens are shared spaces typically owned by local governments or nonprofits where people can rent a plot and grow fresh produce and plants for their own enjoyment. Community gardens foster a sense of community and offer an opportunity for people to harvest fresh, healthy food, at a low cost. There are six community gardens in Eau Claire County, all within the City of Eau Claire:



- *Forest Street Community Garden*, Eau Claire; operated by North Riverfronts Association
- *Lakeshore Park Garden*, Eau Claire, operated by Randall Neighborhood Association
- *Jeffers Road Community Garden*, operated by Eau Claire County—care of UW-Extension Office
- *McDonough Park Garden*, Eau Claire, operated by Eau Claire County—care of UW-Extension Office
- *North Riverfronts Community Garden*, operated by Eau Claire County—care of UW-Extension Office
- *Demmler Park Neighborhood Garden*, Eau Claire, operated by the Third Ward Neighborhood Association

## Economic Development

Early in the planning process, a representative from the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (ECEDC) was invited to a meeting with the Farmland Preservation Steering Committee to discuss the role the EDC plays to support the agricultural industry. Past projects, programs, and services available to the ag industry were reviewed. Future efforts to work more closely with the agricultural sector on business planning, expansion efforts, diversification, and expansion were then considered. Several programs that could assist with the growth and development of the agricultural industry were also incorporated into the existing economic development programs offered by the ECEDC.





Cooperatives also play a significant role in economic development for rural areas as well as major contributors to the overall infrastructure that supports agriculture. Cooperatives of farmers are user-driven organizations that enable consolidation of fragmented land, investment in mechanization and irrigation, better bargaining power to purchase inputs, arrange for proper common storage and greater bargaining power in selling farm produce to traders, thereby improving the productivity of agriculture and the incomes of members. Looking forward, cooperatives are also positioned to play a larger role as agriculture transitions from local and national markets to the emerging global markets of today and tomorrow. With this in mind, it is essential for Eau Claire County to better understand the business models and plans of local agricultural cooperatives moving forward to help ensure that farmland preservation efforts are more closely aligned with emerging trends and directions of the industry in the future.

## **Land Use**

### **Land Use Key Issues**

Using the results of the Community Survey and the SWOT Analysis, key issues were then identified for Eau Claire County's Land Use issues. Key strengths identified for this Goal include: tax credits and other programs that support the agricultural community (use value, forestry programs), past farmland preservation efforts (preserve productive agricultural lands while guiding development to less productive areas), provide balance between forestry and agriculture, and location or proximity awareness. Key weaknesses or threats identified include: rising land prices, competition for limited amount of available land base, lack of zoning in eastern portions of county, rural non-agricultural development pressure, reduction of hay or other cover crops due to increase in grain commodity pricing, increase in taxation of wooded or recreational lands, and introduction of industrial sand operations in rural areas. The following objectives and subsequent action policies set forth in this plan are meant to enhance perceived strengths and opportunities that exist in Eau Claire County, while minimizing or otherwise addressing perceived weaknesses or threats.

### **Land Use Goal**

Balance the provision of adequate land and infrastructure to support new development with the protection of agriculturally productive areas, natural resources, and open spaces throughout Eau Claire County in a manner that minimizes land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

### **Land Use Objectives**

- Encourage higher-density residential land uses (i.e. conservation subdivisions) within or near existing developments as well as lower residential densities (including rural clusters) near existing agricultural lands. Such actions are recommended in order to maximize the efficiency of publicly-funded infrastructure and to minimize conversion of contiguous agricultural, forested, or open space blocks. It is intended that this will retain the predominantly rural character of the County for sustainable future use.
- Encourage farmsteads and single-family homes as the primary residential building types in unincorporated areas.
- Encourage infill of vacant lots within existing subdivisions.
- Discourage development of non-agricultural related commercial and industrial development within rural portions of the County that may conflict with agricultural operations. Direct such development to locate in more urban areas, rural hamlets, or



similar rural locations where the impacts to productive agricultural operations can be minimized and there is better access to public services or transportation facilities needed to support such developments.

- Encourage maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic areas and buildings, including barns and silos.
- Support “heritage tourism” (e.g. local festivals, fairs, farm tours, farmers markets, and agri-tourism) that celebrate or highlight the County’s agricultural heritage and rural setting.
- Strive to ensure long-term preservation of rural vistas by limiting urban sprawl and encouraging preservation of large agricultural and forested tracts of land.
- Incorporate the recommendations of City, Village, and Town land use plans into the County’s future land use plan, except in instances where County interests may not be served by such a policy due to a conflict with the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan, the County Comprehensive Plan, or generally accepted planning principles.

## Land Use Background

This section will explore the relationship of human activities on the rural landscape. Human activities are typically related to larger regional/national trends, emerging market conditions, or are the direct result of regulatory policy. In some cases, land use activities may be linked to any combination of these influences. So, what are the current land use issues affecting rural areas and efforts to preserve productive agricultural and forestry lands in Eau Claire County? Below is a list of some of the more prevalent land use issues identified within the “Conditions and Trends Report” of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan that were also identified during the development of this Plan:

1. Increased conversion of rural lands for non-farm development due to projected population growth.
2. Increased competition for rural lands due to limited land base resulting in increases in rural land values or out-pricing of agricultural interest.
3. Continued demand/supply of low-density development patterns.
4. Taxation of rural lands not considered in agricultural production and therefore not assessed under the use value rules. (i.e. recreational or forestry)
5. Introduction of industrial sand mining operations into rural areas.
6. Increased interest or pressure for business diversification in rural areas that may not be consistent with agricultural operations or “rural character”.

When combined either partly or collectively, these land use activities have a significant impact on agricultural operations and farmland preservation in Eau Claire County. However, the most prevalent issue is the continued demand for large-lot residential development within close proximity to the Eau Claire metro area. This is especially true along most principal arterial and collector transportation corridors which provide quick commuting trips for rural residents to their place of employment. Nonfarm development is and will continue to be a key land use issue in rural areas. Community leaders and officials must work together to improve land use tools to strike a balance between minimizing rural development pressures and farmland preservation.

## Urban Growth Impacts

As previously mentioned, the continued conversion of agricultural lands to other uses is most notable when one looks at the number of acres converted over a 20-year period. According to assessment data, agricultural land decreased by more than 35,000 acres between 1987 and

2007. However, this does not necessarily mean that 35,000 acres of land were converted to non-ag uses. It is possible that lands classified as “Undeveloped” (25,000 acres) were previously classified as Agricultural. This would still result in a conversion of approximately 10,000 acres of land during that time frame. This figure appears to be relatively consistent with information developed for Eau Claire County by both the UW Extension Office as well as the American Farmland Trust that suggests between 5,000 and 10,000 acres of agricultural land were converted to non-ag use between 1980 and 2000. Based on these results alone, one may argue that the Farmland Preservation Program has been very ineffective in meeting its original goals. When this data is compared to zoning data kept by the Department of Planning and Development for Eau Claire County, it shows that the use of certified zoning in conjunction with the program has been highly successful. Comparing the acreages under A-1 zoning from 2013 back to the original adoption of the certified district in 1983, Eau Claire County has only rezoned approximately 5,500 acres. This equates to roughly 170 acres per year. In this regard, the goals and policies in place have made it difficult to rezone productive lands to non-ag uses, therefore keeping them available for agricultural or forestry uses.



What does all this mean? First, please bear in mind that Farmland Preservation was never intended to be a no-growth program or policy. On the contrary, one prominent goal of the program is to direct new growth to appropriate locations where services can be more easily provided at a greater density. Such areas are also typically located in areas that are less compatible for agricultural use. Consequently, the conversion of rural lands located near urban areas is anticipated and perhaps even encouraged as an alternative to conversion of lands in predominately agricultural settings. Eau Claire County’s population increased by more than 25% between 1980-2010 (the inception of the Farmland Preservation Program), with more than 13,000 new housing units constructed (based on data contained within Chapter 6 of this plan). When compared to the total number of acres converted, this would result in an average development density of between 0.35 acres per unit and 0.8 acres per housing unit. Taking into account the population projections forecasted for Eau Claire County as contained within the County’s Comprehensive Plan, an additional 2,000 to 4,000 acres may be necessary to accommodate new development in the next twenty year period. Based on this projected need, conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural purposes seems highly likely. Where those residential units are constructed, and at what density, are important discussions within the context of this planning effort.

### Rural Land Composition

Over the past several years, the definition of both “assessed agricultural land” and “farmland”, in the various data compilation methods, as well as the definition of what constitutes a farm have changed to the point where it is challenging and oftentimes impossible to compare total farmland acres and number of farms. For the purposes of this assessment, a much more efficient way to examine how land use and the landscape have changed is to look at the changes in residential, commercial, and manufacturing acres; which we will collectively refer to as “Developed Lands”.

### Developed Lands

Figure 7 shows the increase in developed acreage in Eau Claire County from 1987 to 2011 whereas Figure 8 reflects changes over the last several years in comparison to other



neighboring Counties. The County experienced a 74 percent increase in the total acreage of these three land use types during that time period. This increase is equivalent to 19 square miles of growth in the County. Within the shorter time period of 1996 and 2011, these same land uses increased roughly 8,000 acres, or the equivalent of 12.5 square miles, accounting for 10 percent of the assessed land in the County as of 2011.

**Figure 7: Eau Claire County Land Use, by acres**

Eau Claire County Land Use Acreage								
Eau Claire County	Residential	Commercial	Manufacturing	Agricultural	Undeveloped	Forest/AG Forest*	Other	Total
1987	14,327	1,325	987	195,799	4,657	92,647	N/A	309,742
1996	17,643	2,002	1,390	186,270	5,273	88,778	2,312	303,668
2007	23,069	2,716	1,627	158,187	28,171	77,149	2,258	293,077
2011	24,322	2,889	1,762	157,005	28,834	74,779	2,309	291,900

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue based on assessment records.

\*Ag Forest was not a category in 1987 and 1996, Exempt and woodland acres are not included in these categories or the total.

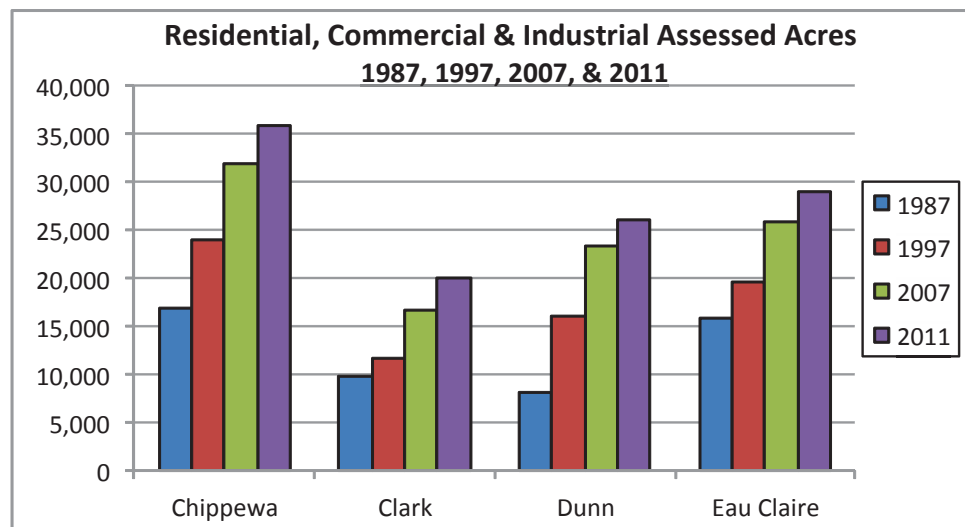
Between 1994 and 2009 there have been significant changes in how property is assessed in Wisconsin. Use-value assessment, which was implemented between 1996 and 2000, shifted land uses from the agricultural real estate classification to one of the following classifications: undeveloped (which was formerly swamp and waste), agricultural forest, and agricultural buildings and sites (other) classifications.

Undeveloped land includes areas commonly called wetlands, marshes, swamps, thickets, bogs or wet meadows. This class also includes fallow tillable land, road right-of-way, ponds, depleted gravel pits and land that, because of soil or site conditions, is not producing or capable of producing commercial forest products. Fallow-tillable land was aptly name under the assumption that agricultural use is the land’s highest and best use.

Although there seems to be a significant decrease in the amount of land in the agricultural real estate classification from 1994 to 2009, the actual acreage is reflective of the changes in how property is now assessed. The effect of use-value assessment can be seen beginning in 1997 when agricultural land value went down and the agricultural buildings and sites category was added. Use-value

assessment has shifted the tax burden from agricultural land to alternative assessment categories. The “exempt acres” category generally includes all publicly-owned local, county, state and federal land as well as land owned by

**Figure 8: Developed Assessment Acreage**



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue based on assessment records.





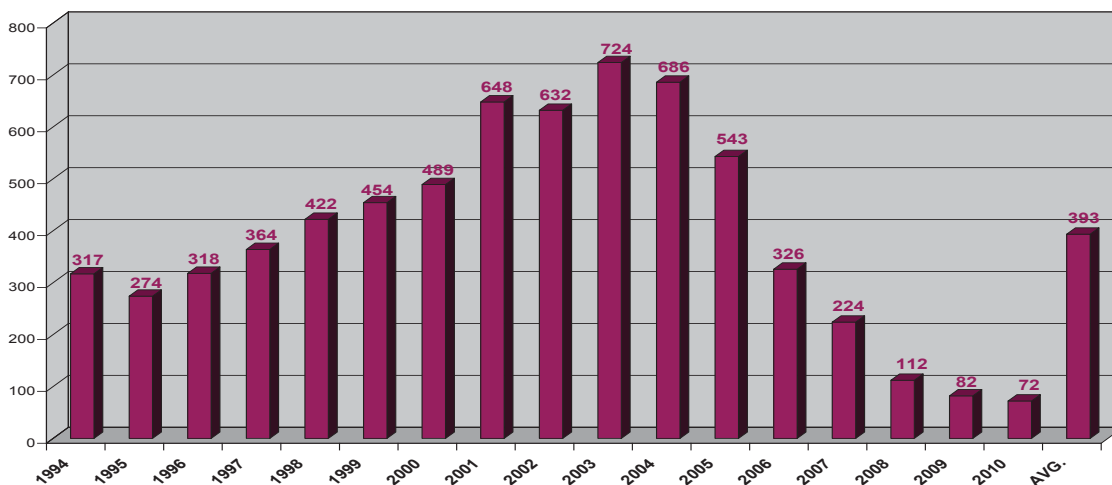
religious and educational institutions. Exempt acres are exempt from assessment but not all of this land is exempt from taxes. For instance, the WDNR and Eau Claire County Forest provides “payment in lieu of taxes” to local communities each year.

Woodland Tax or Managed Forest is another land classification not included in the general assessment categories because it is taxed at a special reduced rate. As seen in *Figure 8*, the expansion of residential, commercial and industrial assessed acres also occurred in surrounding counties.

When examining the population projections for the County, the current trend of increasing residential, commercial, and industrial land uses will likely continue. Using the same assessed acres/person ratio that existed in 1996 and 2011, the projected 2035 developed land uses increase: residential +10 sq/mi., commercial +1 sq/mi. and industrial +1 sq/mi. However, it should be noted that due to reporting methods and past changes in how property is assessed in Wisconsin, there is difficulty finding a 100 percent reliable total acreage for all categories, past and present. The above acreages are the most accurate data available.

**Figure 9: Addresses Issued for New Construction, 1994-2013**

**Addresses Issued For New Construction**



Source: Eau Claire County Planning & Development

Since 2006, Eau Claire County has been affected by an economic recession with a depressed housing market resulting numerous foreclosures and significantly less new housing starts. *Figure 9* shows new housing activity based on addresses issued in Eau Claire County towns over the past 17 years. While there are signs of economic recovery, (including the issuance of more than 200 new addresses in both 2012 and 2013), new housing construction still lags significantly behind pre-recession levels as well as the 17-year average.

**Forested Lands**

Occupying more than 40% of all the land area in Eau Claire County, forested land also plays a vital role in our local economy and contributes to our overall rural landscape. Nearly 60% (just under 120,000 acres) of all forest land is actively enrolled in a management program with approximately 2/3 of all forest land privately owned. Of that 60%, Eau Claire County manages more than 52,000 acres under the County Forest Program.



As previously discussed, forests provide essential functions in terms of supporting the overall health of our environment. They provide excellent buffers, protect steep slopes from erosion, serve as critical habitat to a diverse wildlife, contribute to air quality improvements, are a renewable energy resource, and play a vital role in our overall economy when properly managed or harvested.

### Rural Landscape

Collectively, the majority of Eau Claire County’s rural landscape consists of: agricultural land with well-maintained farmsteads, rural low-density housing, cottage industries, and forestland. Preserving this land base as a significant component of our economic base is central to the goals, objectives, and policies of both this plan and the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan. Guiding more intense development to areas where development currently exists, or is likely to occur adjacent to urban settings, is an integral component of the approach to preserve productive farmland.

### Land Prices

In conjunction with the recent downturn in economic activity cited above, land sale prices remained relatively stable from 2008 to 2012 when sold for continued agricultural use, as referenced in *Figure 10*. However, according to data obtained from the Eau Claire Register of Deeds Office, agricultural land prices, exclusive of that sold for development purposes, may begin to rise sharply in the near future. For various reasons, two farms sold in 2013 for an average of \$4,700 per acre and will most likely continue in agricultural production. Rental rates for productive farmland have also increased which is likely related to 1) recent agricultural commodity prices, 2) the high-demand/low-supply matrix for productive agricultural lands in Western Wisconsin, and 3) competition from farmers from outside of the region looking to expand their land base. In looking at other information provided by the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service (WASS), Eau Claire County is seeing prices 10-20% higher than found in the neighboring Counties of Dunn, Chippewa, Clark, Trempealeau, Jackson, and Pepin. In either case, it is likely that farmers will have to pay more per acre for productive agricultural land in Eau Claire County.

Also of note is the significant increase in cost per acre for agricultural land sold with the intention to be diverted to other uses. Between 2008 and 2010, the cost per acre for land diverted to other uses increased by more than 400% based on data obtained from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. This is indicative of agricultural land being converted for development purposes, particularly around the Eau Claire metro area and in areas near industrial sand deposits, as will be explored in the next section. This trend is likely to continue within proximity to the City of Eau Claire and near highway and rail transportation corridors.

**Figure 10: Agricultural Land Sales 2008-2012**

Agricultural Land Sales in Eau Claire County 2008-2012									
Year	Ag Land Continuing in Ag Use			Ag Land Diverted to Other Use			Total All Ag Land		
	# of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	# of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	# of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre
2008	13	824	\$3,612	3	114	\$2,003	16	938	\$3,417
2009	13	1026	\$3,458	4	122	\$5,356	17	1148	\$3,659
2010	15	1241	\$3,078	5	168	\$8,411	20	1409	\$3,713
2011	24	1572	\$3,580	2	45	\$3,736	26	1617	\$3,584
2012	31	1939	\$3,833	n/a	n/a	-	31	1939	\$3,833
Average	19.2	1320.4	\$3,512.20	2.8	89.8	\$3,901.20	22	1410.2	\$3,641.20

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service

## Industrial Sand Mining

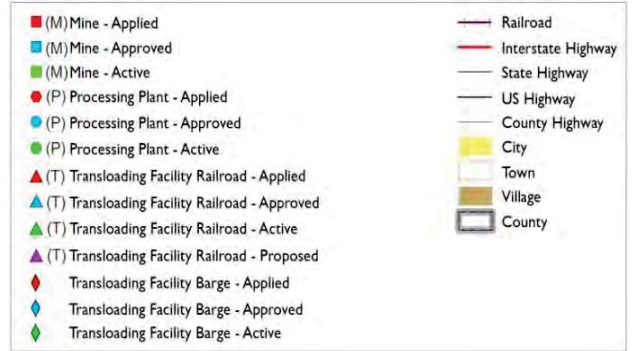
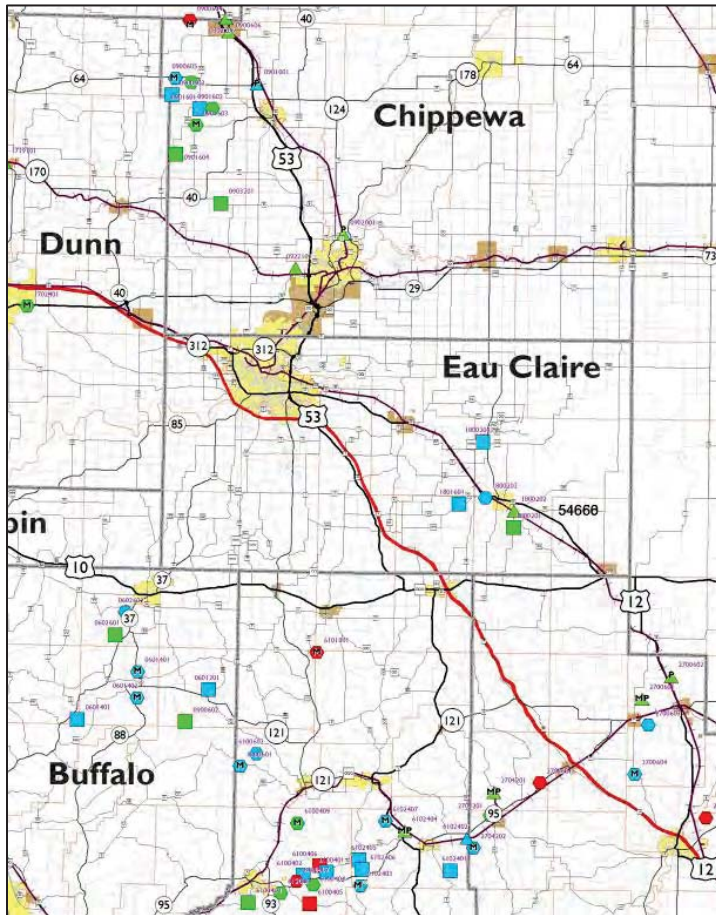
An emerging trend in Eau Claire County and throughout Western Wisconsin is the development of industrial sand facilities in rural areas as evidenced in *Figure 11*. Commonly referred to as “frac sand” operations, the emergence of these intensive mining activities in rural areas has certainly received the attention of agricultural operators in recent years. While mining has occurred throughout Eau Claire County for more than 100 years in the form of gravel and sand quarries, this particular type of mining activity is significant in terms of potential impacts to agricultural operations for a variety of reasons. In light of these impacts, any conditional use request to establish a mining activity in areas zoned as Exclusive Agriculture under the Farmland Preservation Program must meet the requirements of Wis. Stats. 91.46(6). Furthermore, industrial sand operations are not permitted if the property is already subject to an existing farmland preservation agreement or a new agreement within an officially established Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) zone.



Below is a list of real or perceived issues of the industrial sand industry related to farmland preservation, including:

- *Intensity of operations* - Unlike a sand or gravel quarry that has sporadic activity, the industrial sand mine typically operates seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. Processing facilities may be developed at or near the mine site as well.
- *Large Tracts of Land* – The industry will often purchase more than one farm with larger (i.e. 1,000 acre) block acquisitions occurring in otherwise rural areas of the community.
- *Transportation* - Industrial sand operations may require “over-the-road” trucking of the materials to a processing facility located on or near a rail line, resulting in significantly increased traffic loads (300-600 trips daily) and wear on rural roads. This model of operation has decreased more recently as 1) competition has increased and 2) the value of the commodity has declined. Siting mines near rail lines is a strategy that is pursued in lieu of highway transport. That being said, much of the desired sand deposits are located away from active rail lines, and therefore will still require some sort of highway transport.
- *Water Resource Demands* - The processing of raw sand minerals into a usable end-product requires the use of large amounts of water, typically groundwater. There is a heightened awareness of groundwater usage when areas have experienced drought conditions over a period of time, like Eau Claire County is currently experiencing. This holds true for both agricultural operations as well as rural homeowners.
- *Land Valuation* - Land Values tend to rise exponentially when demand exceeds supply, which is often the case for productive agricultural land. When those agricultural lands are then determined to contain large deposits of silica sand, agricultural operators become “priced out” of consideration to purchase.
- *Health Concerns* –Site stabilization procedures, dust control methodology, and continuous lighting/noise are some items that may have impact to neighboring properties throughout the life of the active mine. Such neighboring properties may have livestock, laborers, and farm facilities that could be impacted.

Figure 11: Industrial Sand Facility Locations - 2013



Source:

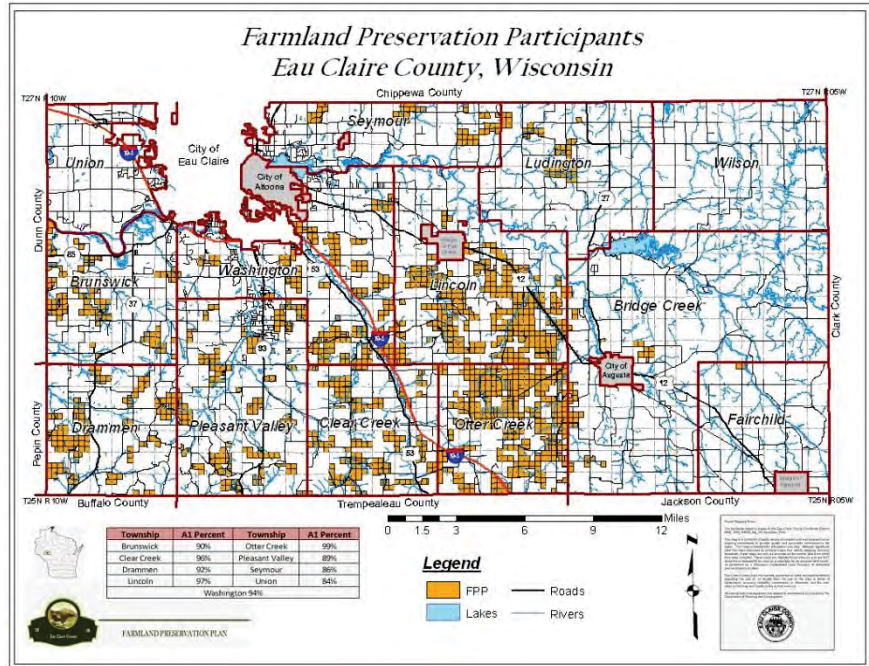




**Current Farmland Preservation Participation**

With more than thirty years of program history, Eau Claire County currently has a vast number of land owners participating in the Farmland Preservation Program. Currently 192 claimants over 39,136 acres receive credits through the program. With a strong commitment to preservation and conservation practices in place, it is Eau Claire County's preference to prioritize these lands for continued participation in the program. Eau Claire County was able to effectively map participating lands and verify continued agricultural use through aerial photography.

**Figure 13: FPP Participation**



However, it should be pointed out that some of the current participants will no longer be eligible to participate in the program. Lands that are no longer in production, or that may no longer meet the program requirements will no longer be eligible. For example, there are several landowners currently participating in the program in the Town of Washington which is now located within mapped transitional areas according to the adopted Town and County comprehensive plans. These landowners will no longer be mapped for preservation and therefore be ineligible for program participation.

**Aerial Photos**

Innovations in aerial photography have simplified the mapping process and made land use data easier to interpret. The process of using aerial photos to locate farmland preservation areas is straightforward. Utilizing current imagery for marginal or transition areas, actual use of land can be determined. Areas that are actively farmed were included in the mapped preservation areas while non-agricultural parcels were excluded. In the example below, this rationale is used to include the left parcel due to its active use, while the parcel to the east was excluded due to the fact it is a marsh and therefore not considered productive agricultural or forestry land.



**Figure 14: Illustration of Aerial Verification**

## Consistency

Consistency has several different meanings for the purposes of map development. First and foremost, it refers to the updated Farmland Preservation Plan being consistent with the Town and County Comprehensive Plans. That is to say, areas that are mapped for rural preservation within each specific comprehensive plan largely match areas that are mapped as preservation areas for Farmland Preservation. Town “Future Land Use Maps” were considered when locating parcels of land so that they can either be preserved or excluded from the program. However, consistency also refers to Eau Claire County’s desire to approach rural land use designations in a broad yet consistent manner. What does this mean or imply? Rural areas tend to be comprised of a variety of different uses and parcel sizes. Rather than creating a patchwork plan that identifies each of these specific uses, zoning designations, or varying parcel sizes; the preference is to look at the “predominant” land use in an area for purposes of designating lands as a specific use on a map. This consistent approach is important in minimizing land use conflicts and supporting the character of a particular neighborhood or region.

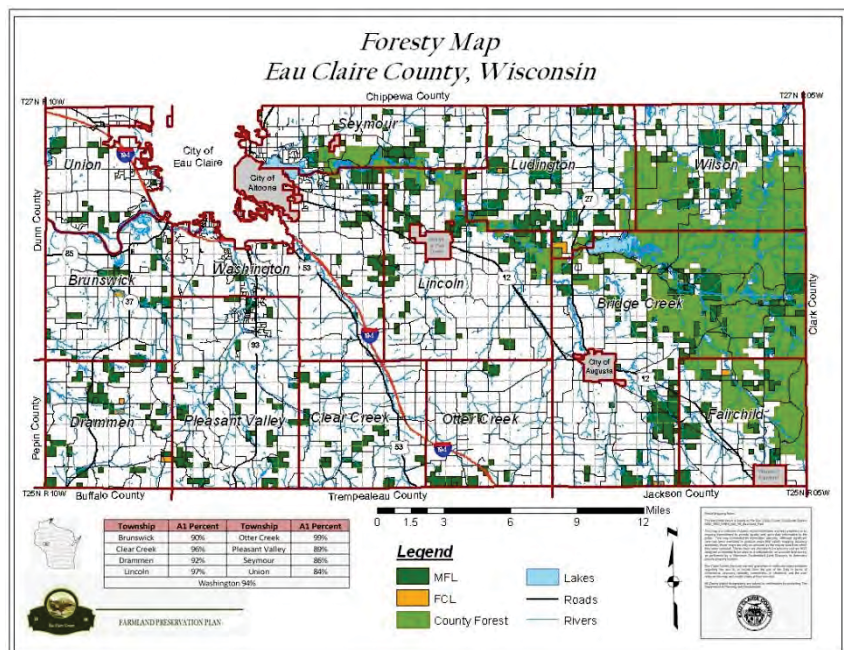
## Soils

The USDA defines prime farmland as the land best suited to grow food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Prime farmland soils produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming it often results in the least damage to the environment. The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) developed a classification system of different soil types for agricultural purposes utilizing County Soil Survey information. For purposes of mapping these areas for farmland preservation purposes, Eau Claire County prioritized three primary classifications, including: Prime Farmland, Prime Farmland if Drained, and Farmland of Statewide Importance. The classifications used are very similar in nature to the more common classification rating used by NRCS, with prime soils generally including Classes I-III.

## Forestry

Forestry plays a significant role for the agricultural industry in Eau Claire County. In recognition of that role and the importance of forestry in Wisconsin as a whole, managed forest lands were also taken into consideration during the development of preservation area maps for Eau Claire County. Two types of managed forest lands were analyzed to assist in the development of preservation areas, including MFL (Managed Forest Law) and FCL (Forest Crop Law). The two programs provide tax incentives to land owners that are enrolled in each

**Figure 15: Managed Forestry Participation**



program, similar to the Farmland Preservation program. Landowners participating within these programs are required to utilize sustainable management practices to create “a healthy and productive forest”, much like participants of the Farmland Preservation Program. As a result, parcels of land that are enrolled in either of these programs will also be incorporated into the



Farmland Preservation Program. However, it should be noted that some of the MFL and FCL land is located within transition areas, residential areas, or considered isolated properties. Forestry lands falling in one of these three categories were excluded from the mapped preservation areas. County Forest properties were also excluded from this assessment as no active agriculture, outside of timber production, is occurring within these areas and they are not assessed for property tax purposes.

### **Capital Investment**

One final consideration taken into account specifically in areas adjacent to or near existing developed areas was whether the landowner had made significant investments into continued agricultural operations. Examples of capital investments taken into consideration include: irrigation systems, grain facilities, milking parlors, free-stall barns, rural produce markets, etc.

### **Connectivity**

Once the mapping layers for each of the previous components were integrated into a preliminary preservation area map for Eau Claire County, the draft was then evaluated to consider any isolated parcels and the original reason for excluding the parcel from the eligible areas. Several isolated parcels were used as “locational connectors” during the development of the final preservation area map to ensure a consistent approach to future land use planning and regulation. The “connectors” are often wooded parcels that have the potential to be effectively managed forests, are useful as open space necessary to protect ground or surface waters, or contain other important environmental features worthy of inclusion and protection. Utilizing connectors in conjunction with the other rationale identified ensured that the cultural values identified within the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan were embraced, including “rural character” and “rural lifestyle”.

### **Final Product**

The last map combines all of the aforementioned components into a final presentable map, which identifies preservation areas as well as the areas excluded from certification (See Map 1 in Appendix D). Areas of green are considered to be certified lands derived by objectively applying the criteria above for inclusion while the non-certified lands are yellow, grey or white. (Excluded, Transition Areas, incorporated municipalities respectfully). Excluded lands include: those areas in which development currently exists or that development is planned to occur; lands that have not been historically used for agricultural production; public lands; or areas in which agriculture is unlikely to be sustained due to current zoning or development patterns that may preclude effective agricultural operations. Transition Areas (as outlined within the County and Town Comprehensive Plans) are used to identify lands in proximity to developed areas. These lands are anticipated over time to be developed and therefore excluded from participation in the Farmland Preservation program.

It is important to note however that the Farmland Preservation Area Map and the Future Land Use Map do have certain differences. The Future Land Use Map contained within the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan used a “Rural Lands” designation for much of the rural area of Eau Claire County, with little consideration of farmland preservation. Areas included within this designation include small and large lot residential development, areas covered by a non-certified zoning district, large marsh or wetland areas, and other areas that are unrelated to agricultural uses. Therefore, the Farmland Preservation Area Map contained within this plan and adopted as Appendix G of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan shall supersede the Future Land Use Map (Map 9) as it relates to the administration and implementation of the Farmland Preservation Program in Eau Claire County. The entire County Map and Town Maps are located in “Appendix D” of this plan.





## Chapter Four: Implementation Strategies

When developing the preservation area maps for Eau Claire County, staff recognized the fact that a “one size fits all” approach to farmland preservation may not best reflect the wants and needs of the entire county. The simple fact is that “agriculture” can mean many different things to many different people or areas. Although farming, in a traditional sense, might instill images of dairy barns and crop rows,



agriculture is much more diverse than that in today’s society. This is true as we consider our local landscape as well. The eastern portion of the county is fundamentally different from the south central portion of the county from a geological and sociological standpoint. As a result, six unique areas or regions were identified within Eau Claire County to allow more tailored implementation approaches to better address the unique challenges and opportunities each unique region provides.

Eastern Woodlands – Generally lying east and north of State Highway 27, the Eastern Woodlands encompasses a vast area of publicly and privately-owned land devoted largely to forestry production. With shallow water tables, the soils in the area are generally poorly suited for crop production. The Eau Claire River system is another predominate feature in this area, with Lake Eau Claire and Coon Fork County Park serving as significant recreational draws. Due to the amount of acreage owned by Eau Claire County, this area has very low housing density and development pressure. Predominate land uses in this area consist of forestry, aquaculture and certain fruit production including blueberries and cranberries due to the hydric soils. Preservation Area Maps by Town include: Bridge Creek, Fairchild, Ludington and Wilson.

Beaver Creek Uplands – This area is generally located north of the Eau Claire River, lying west of Hwy 27 and east of Highway 53. The Northern Uplands extends its way into the southern portion of Chippewa County. Soils within this region are generally supportive of agricultural practices. Much of this area is currently planned for continued agricultural use, so the area will be able to sustain this practice. The predominate agricultural land use in this area is small-to-medium dairy. Preservation Area Maps by Town include Ludington and Seymour.

River Corridor – Following the Eau Claire River west of Hwy 27, the River Corridor is best associated with floodplains, forests, and an abundance of recreational opportunities. Although forestry is also active in this region, recreational use centers around the abundant water resources. Similar to the Eastern Woodlands, sustainable forestry practices dominate the agricultural land uses in this area. Preservation Area Maps by Town include: Bridge Creek, Lincoln, Ludington, Seymour and Washington.

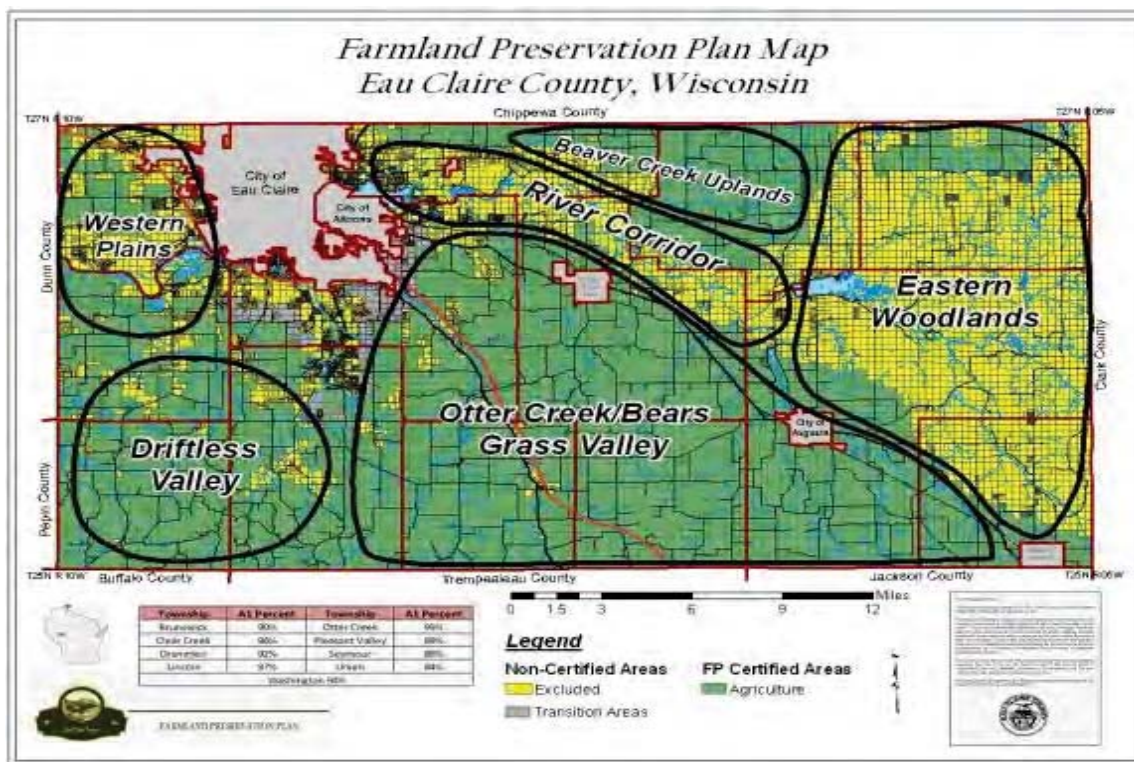
Otter Creek/Bears Grass Valley – This area is bounded by the Hwy 12 corridor on the north, the Hwy 93 corridor on the west, with the county line serving as a politically defined boundary to the south. This region contains the highest economic value for agriculture practices in all of Eau Claire County. As evidenced in Map 3 Prime Farmland in the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, this area holds the best agricultural soils in the county. Soils are defined as prime farmland which meets the nation’s short and long range needs for food and fiber. This region



also has the highest density of participants who are currently enrolled in the farmland preservation program. Small through large-scale dairy, row crops and pastured beef dominate the landscape here. Preservation Area Maps by Town include: Bridge Creek, Clear Creek, Fairchild, Lincoln, Otter Creek, Pleasant Valley and Washington.

Driftless Valley – Located in the southwest portion of Eau Claire County, this region is defined by wooded ridge tops and fertile valleys. The Driftless Southwest is a unique region in Eau Claire County due to the fact that it was spared from the last glacial period, allowing the area to retain its distinctive characteristics. Agriculture in this area is integrated within the diverse landscape. Due to the topographic changes within this region, ridge-top forests and valley streams are common and help shape the agricultural land uses in this region, consisting of small to medium dairy, fruit, vegetables and forest management. Preservation Area Maps by Town include: Brunswick, Drammen and Pleasant Valley.

Western Plains – Located in the northwest corner of the county above the Driftless Valley region. The region has been affected by past glaciation causing flat areas as well as long rolling hills. A mix of plains, woodlands, marshes dominate this area. Row crop, fruit and vegetable operations are the predominate agricultural uses in this area, although there is some scattered dairy. Preservation Area Maps by Town include Brunswick and Union.



In addition to these predominate agricultural land uses by region, niche farming geared to farmer’s markets or direct marketing exists throughout Eau Claire County, specifically within close proximity to urban centers. Implementation of this Farmland Preservation Plan will follow the stated goals and objectives as outlined in Chapter 2. In addition, key strategies have been identified and are broken down into three primary areas or approaches, including: **Regulatory**, **Incentive**, and **Other**. Implementation tools and actions are then further defined as a component of each key strategy.



## General Strategies for Farmland Preservation

### 1. Regulatory Approaches:

Nine of the thirteen Towns in Eau Claire County have County zoning rules in place. These regulations provide a means to conserve a critical mass of agricultural land within each Town. The objectives of Eau Claire County's exclusive agricultural zoning designation are to: 1) retain the agricultural viability of an area by limiting the density of development, 2) restrict non-farm uses of land, and 3) provide tax incentives for the farmers to continue their agricultural practices. Within these nine zoned Towns, more than 90% of the area mapped as a Preservation Area is currently zoned as Exclusive Agricultural. In addition to comprehensive county zoning (which is inclusive of non-metallic mining, shoreland, floodplain and wellhead protection provisions), many other regulations serve to preserve or protect the future of agriculture throughout Eau Claire County, including: land division, storm water and erosion control, sanitary, animal waste storage, extraterritorial plat review, and soil and water conservation standards. By utilizing various regulatory codes, Eau Claire County will be better positioned to preserve productive agricultural and forest lands, ensuring a stronger economy and long-term future. Specific regulatory strategies that will be utilized to implement this plan include:

#### Specific Policy/Action Items

##### ***Eau Claire County Shall:***

- Prepare and submit A-1, A-3, F-1 and F-2 zoning code updates with the intention of certifying these zoning districts under the Farmland Preservation Program by DATCP
- Develop "rural clustering" amendments for both the zoning and land division codes that permit a limited number of small residential lots in predominately agricultural areas through a density-based rezone process to the A-R zoning district (with associated deed restrictions) with the stipulation that 80% of any new lot created may not contain Class I-III soils in order to provide farmers and forest land owners a viable alternative to converting large parcels of productive agricultural and forest land to a non-agricultural use.
- Incorporate "conservation subdivision regulations" to include "density bonuses" into a code amendment. Such options will be offered as incentives for conservation subdivision developments which conserve and/or protect productive forest and farm lands along with the rural character of Eau Claire County.
- Conduct a regulatory review of existing ordinances and permitting requirements to identify potential revisions that would support diversification of ag-based business while enhancing access to and the availability of locally produced foods and other agricultural products in Eau Claire County.
- Consider the use of PDR or TDR programs as a farmland preservation tool that complements agricultural zoning and directs higher density development to more appropriate areas.
- Work with Towns that have adopted zoning to encourage enforcement of agricultural zoning. Rezoning of an agricultural district to a non-agricultural district will not be permitted unless identified as such on the County and applicable Town Comprehensive Plan (Future Land Use Map). The County will support the use of a density-based zoning program that allows for the clustering of future non-agricultural residential development on smaller parcels in exchange for permanent protection of large contiguous blocks of productive agricultural and forest lands
- Limit development in areas that have documented threatened and endangered species, or have severe limitations due to steep slopes, poor soils, or sensitive environmental



areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and streams in order to protect the benefits and functions they provide. The County shall require these natural features to be depicted on all site plans, preliminary plats, and certified survey maps in order to facilitate preservation of natural resources.

- Encourage higher density non-agricultural housing (inclusive of conservation subdivisions) in areas where necessary utility infrastructure exists or can be efficiently provided. Areas designated for future development (mapped as both Transition and Excluded areas on *Map 1 of Appendix D*) and away from Preservation Areas.
- Strongly discourage requests to create residential subdivisions (5 or more lots) within areas mapped and zoned as Preservation Areas under this Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Discourage development of non-agricultural related commercial and industrial development within rural portions of the County and encourage it in urban locations or rural hamlets, where adequate transportation and utility facilities exist to serve more intensive business developments.
- Ensure that mineral extraction operations closely follow applicable local, county, and state plans and regulatory requirements to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses (including productive agricultural and forest lands) and to minimize impacts to natural resources. The establishment of new industrial mining operations within any established AEA zone will be strongly discouraged, thereby acknowledging the commitment and preference for the long-term economic benefits that agriculture provides.
- Encourage infill of existing vacant lots and areas surrounded by existing higher density development.
- Discourage fragmentation of agricultural and productive forest land in order to protect the continuity of these resources for future use.
- The owner of any new non-agricultural residence within an agricultural district, as well as subsequent owners, shall be required to sign and record (in the Eau Claire County Register of Deeds Office) a right-to-farm disclosure at the time of construction or purchase.
- Take measures to protect both the quantity and quality of groundwater and surface water resources used in agricultural applications (i.e. irrigation, livestock watering, etc.)

## 2. Incentive Approaches

Of the implementation approaches discussed in this plan, the ability to offer financial incentives to encourage farmland preservation is perhaps the most popular and therefore effective. In many cases, the incentives are contingent upon other actions or agreements, namely: zoning, preservation agreements, and conservation plans. Specific incentive programs that are utilized to assist in the implementation of this Plan will include:

### ***Farmland Preservation Tax Credit Program***

Participating landowners with land enrolled in the Farmland preservation Program are eligible to receive income tax credits based on a flat rate per acre, as follows:

- Landowners can receive an income tax credit of \$5 per acre if their land is included within a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 and is located in an Agricultural Enterprise Area, but is not zoned under a certified farmland preservation zoning district.
- Landowners whose land is planned for and also zoned for farmland preservation are eligible to receive \$7.50 per acre.

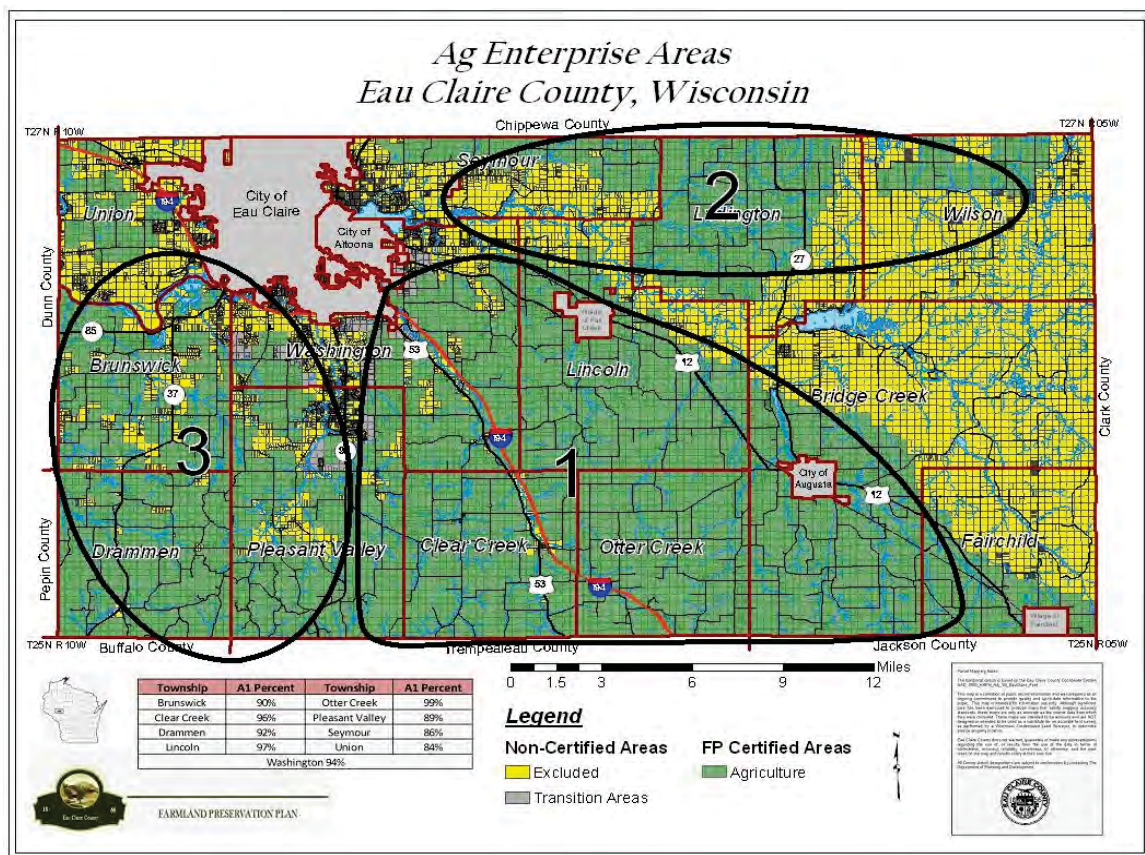


- Landowners whose land is 1) planned and zoned for farmland preservation, 2) located within an Agricultural Enterprise Area, and 3) has a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 are eligible to receive \$10.00 per acre.

**Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA)**

As of early 2014 the County does not have any established Agricultural Enterprise Areas. AEA's must originate from rural landowners and have Town Board support. As part of this planning process, Eau Claire County has identified three areas that may be logical considerations for an AEA designation (as depicted in Figure 16). Preservation areas are identified in order of priority based on program participation and the components identified in Chapter 3 of this document with the Otter Creek/Bears Grass Valley being the highest priority. Designating an area as an AEA is a significant step in terms of understanding the economic importance of agriculture, the importance of preserving productive agricultural and forest lands, along with the need to maintain or grow agricultural businesses through additional investment.

**Figure 16: Potential AEA's in Eau Claire County**



**PACE, Conservation Easements, Land Trusts**

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs that preserve or protect valuable natural resource assets (i.e. productive agricultural lands) are becoming more prevalent throughout the United States. Although less common here in Wisconsin, this incentive-based approach to rural land preservation has become more common in the last ten years. Several towns and counties have implemented PDR programs aimed at preserving specific resources through the use of conservation easements. Although funding has yet to be provided, the Working Lands Initiative also included the regulatory framework to implement a similar



program on a statewide level called the “Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements” (PACE) program. Federal, state and local funding sources could be utilized to purchase development rights via a conservation easement from willing landowners which meet certain stated criteria. Lands with an easement would have certain restrictions on current and future uses that are spelled out in detail for each property.

Specific Policy/Action Items

***Eau Claire County Shall:***

- Work to ensure continued landowner eligibility in the Farmland Preservation Tax Credit and Forest Management (MFL & FCL) programs thereby supporting utilization of best management practices to conserve and protect some of our most valuable natural resources.
- Collaborate with Towns, land owners, and farm operators to consider the creation of Agriculture Enterprise Area (AEA's) districts that will recognize the existence of significant agricultural operations and promote investment into future agricultural operations in Eau Claire County.
- Offer the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and other similar programs to landowners in order to comply with soil and water conservation standards.
- Solicit the Stewardship Program for preservation of important/unique lands in the excluded areas outlined within this Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Spend County Cost Share and State Land and Water Resource Management Cost Share funds for the installation of conservation best management practices geared towards improving water quality and reducing erosion from local farmland.
- Allocate State Joint Allocation funds for Nutrient Management and Agricultural BMP installation.

**3. Other Approaches**

In addition to the Regulatory and Incentive based approaches discussed above, there are still a number of other activities and efforts where Eau Claire County can play a role to assist with plan implementation. In many cases, these efforts can be categorized as cooperative initiatives. Still, other efforts may be purely educational in nature. Cooperative approaches are an excellent way to build support and community engagement in this discussion.

Specific Policy/Action Items

***Eau Claire County Shall:***

- Encourage all farming or forestry operations to incorporate the most current “Best Management Practices” or “Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices” (GAAMPS) that promote surface and groundwater protection, restore natural areas to their native state, and promote soil building agricultural practices in environmentally sensitive areas. Focus should be on the Eastern Woodlands, River Corridor, and Driftless Valley regions.
- Routinely offer nutrient management, soil conservation or water resource protection educational workshops to landowners to assist with their efforts to comply with state Farmland Preservation Program conservation requirements.
- Promote and educate the rural community about the benefits of participating in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) and other Working Lands Initiative programs.
- Participate in and encourage local groups to conserve, protect, and establish a variety of diverse habitats for plants, fish, reptiles, pollinators, and other native communities.



- Compete watershed inventories and continue in the spirit of the transect survey by utilizing new tools to track agricultural and rural land use trends in the County.
- Educate and utilize sustainable and environmentally friendly “best practice” approaches to land and natural resources.
- Balance the provision of adequate land and infrastructure to support new development with the protection of agriculturally productive areas, natural resources, and open space throughout Eau Claire County.
- Protect public health and high quality land and water resources through proper disposal of solid waste, proper treatment of sewage, and storm water management.
- Encourage the Eau Claire County Economic Development Corporation(EDC) or other similar economic development entities to undertake efforts to identify/coordinate back-haul opportunities and other similar opportunities for area businesses.
- Encourage current rail users to allow or support new users to gain access and/or rail service at competitive rates.
- Collaborate with the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC), Eau Claire County EDC, UW-Extension, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, and others to develop a regional marketing strategy for local agricultural products.
- Collaborate with UW-Extension and other entities to explore ways to diversify and add value to food crops and animal products raised in Eau Claire County.
- Assist in developing local markets for conservation farmers (including but not limited to” Local Food, Farm-to-School, Certified Organic/Grass-fed, and Value-added opportunities).
- Promote the use of “buy-local” programs that focus on purchasing products and materials from area businesses.
- Promote development of sustainable biomass utilization technologies for underutilized timber and permanent cover crops.
- Collaborate with UW-Extension and area farmers to find out how Eau Claire County might be able to assist farms in maintaining economic viability, and assist with the transition of farmland or operations to new farmers.
- Support efforts by the ECEDC, agricultural cooperatives or other ag-businesses, and local units of government to expand the agricultural infrastructure and grow ag-based business climate in Eau Claire County and throughout the Chippewa Valley.
- Coordinate the implementation of the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation and Comprehensive Plans with all local municipalities within and surrounding the county to develop an efficient and compatible land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between land uses and preserve farming and natural resources.
- Coordinate with the Eau Claire County Groundwater Advisory Committee to better understand the impacts of high-capacity wells on the rural environment and to correlate policy with land use decision making processes inclusive of municipal groundwater protection zones.
- Nurture, assist and support efforts to create an agriculturally-based business park with direct rail access within a centrally located area of Eau Claire County properly served by adequate transportation and utility infrastructure to meet the current and future needs of our agricultural entrepreneurs.



## **Chapter Five - CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER LOCAL PLANS**

### ***Consistency with other Applicable Plans***

Eau Claire has a strong history and tradition of supporting planning efforts for programs that protect agricultural land and the County's natural resource base. The Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan is not intended to replace any current plan approved by the Eau Claire County Board, but rather complement and supplement those plans. Furthermore, the Farmland Preservation Plan will be incorporated into the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan as an addendum and adopted by ordinance. The following are existing plans that either incorporate or supplement the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan.

#### ***Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan (April, 2010)***

The Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan was adopted on April 20, 2010. It addresses goals, objectives and policies related to the physical development of unincorporated areas in Eau Claire County. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan promotes intergovernmental cooperation between all communities in Eau Claire County. There were three primary methods used to promote or ensure consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan.

First, the pertinent goals, objectives and policies contained within the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan were used to develop the Farmland Preservation Plan, as referenced above. This allowed the Farmland Preservation Plan to be built consistently with the Comprehensive Plan, thereby eliminating conflicts in policy or strategy.

Secondly, the Preservation Area Map contained within this plan and developed in accordance with the criteria as outlined in Chapter Three was compared against the Future Land Use Map of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan to verify consistency in terms of mapped "Transition Areas" and "Excluded Areas". Areas mapped as residential or future growth areas are not mapped as farmland preservation areas. Specific policy guides new non-farm development towards the Transition Areas and away from Preservation Areas.

Finally, the Farmland Preservation Plan is adopted as an addendum to the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan (Appendix G) to help ensure that actions taken to implement either plan are well coordinated and consistent.

#### ***County Land & Water Resource Management Plans- 2012***

The County has a ten-year Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan, which was last updated in late 2012. This plan is required under Chapter 92 Wis. Stats. in order to maintain eligibility for annual funding through the State Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) Grant Program administered by DATCP. The plans must be updated every five or ten years, are recommended by DATCP, and ultimately reviewed by the State Land and Water Conservation Board. Annual updates of the work plan are required to stay consistent with current activities and to align with any new initiatives.

In terms of consistency, many of the Goals, Objectives and Policies contained within the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan and this Farmland Preservation Plan are the very same goals and strategies contained within the LWRM, by design. In fact, many of the Goals and Policies of the LWRM were reviewed and integrated into the framework of this Plan by the Steering Committee from the beginning of this process.





## ***West Central Wisconsin RPC – Comprehensive Plan***

The Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) developed by the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is meant to serve as a common vision for a seven-county region known as Western Central Wisconsin. The RCP weaves unifying themes contained within each individual community and county comprehensive plan together to create a shared vision for the region. By utilizing this approach, many of the goals and policies of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan are repeated within the Regional Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to the following strategies:

- Support the Working Lands Initiative
- Support “Right to Farm” laws and ensure that non-farm residents in farming areas are familiar with these laws and typical farming practices
- Encourage or direct new development to areas of existing urban or residential development
- Promote farming and forestry practices that incorporate current best management practices
- Encourage agricultural markets that include farm-to-table, direct market farms, organic farms, small family farms, and farms with sales of local agricultural products or that produce non-traditional products (i.e. bioenergy feedstock)
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation that reduces the loss of agricultural land and forest fragmentation
- Support and encourage agricultural and land use practices that limit nutrient or fertilizer applications to what is needed for plant growth, according to the USDA NRCS standards
- Encourage conservation design and other rural development design alternatives, and alternative density management concepts for rural development intended to enhance rural character

## ***Plan Adoption, Evaluation, and Amendments***

The first step in adopting the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan 2015 is making sure that it is implemented in a manner which supports its future use for more detailed decision making. The County included all necessary 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 Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.

Following certification by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors adopted this Farmland Preservation Plan by Ordinance No. 15-16/005 in May, 2015 as an addendum to the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.

### **Plan Evaluation**

Routine assessment of what strategies are working or not working with the plan will be monitored over the years. The Committee on Planning and Development, the Land Conservation Commission, and the County Board will evaluate the plan annually to amend the plan following review of what strategies are working or not working. The County intends to constantly evaluate the plan’s goals, objectives and policies against private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other land use actions related to the purpose and goals of this Plan.



## **Plan Amendments**

After adoption, amendments to this Plan may be appropriate necessary when the Plan becomes irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy or trends, when specific landowner requests are received, or where errors have been identified. This plan was written to provide a certain degree of flexibility to tailor the ever changing rules and regulations so that future amendments can be minimized. Petitions to amend the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan that are consistent with the Farmland Preservation Area Map may be considered in accord with the procedures to amend the Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan. Petitions to amend the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan that are inconsistent with the Farmland Preservation Area Map will necessitate an amendment and certification to the Farmland Preservation Area Map first. Amendments to either the text or Farmland Preservation Area Maps contained within this plan must be submitted to DATCP for review and certification prior to final approval.

## **Plan Updates**

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 entails. Also, 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. The County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan (Ch. 92) will also be updated every 10 years after its 2012 adoption as noted above. Given these three State requirements, it is the County's intent to update the Plan by 2024, at the latest. Any updates to the LWRM plan will be considered as part of the next Farmland Preservation Plan review process. The actual process involved to update the Farmland Preservation Plan (and for that matter the Comprehensive Plan) are largely similar to the initial development of those plans, including: a broad public process, statistical analysis, review or development of goals and actions, mapping, and formal public input/hearing process prior to adoption by ordinance amendment. The adoption procedures for both the Farmland Preservation Plan and the Comprehensive Plan are set forth in Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001(4).



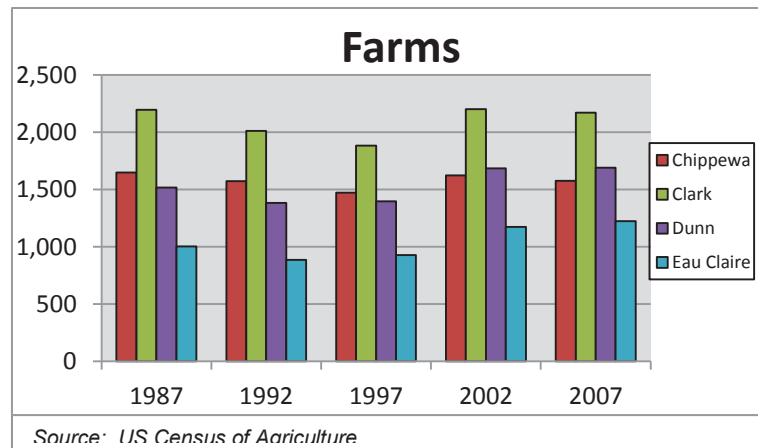
## Chapter Six - Existing Conditions

### Agriculture Statistics and Trends

#### Farms

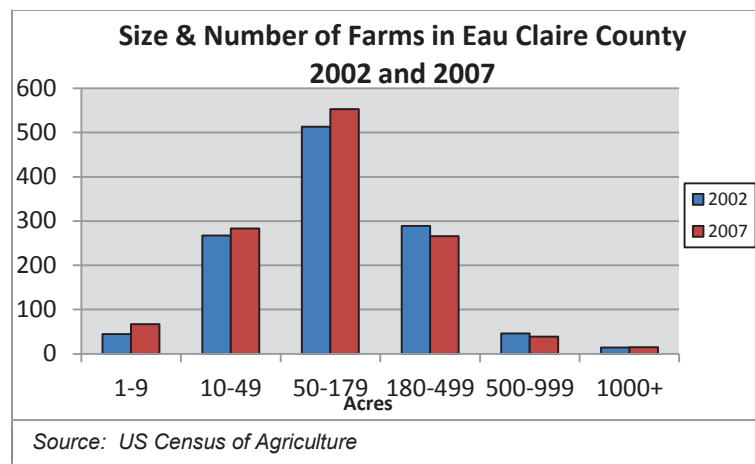
The total number of farms increased between 1987 and 2007, as shown in *Figure 17*. In 1987, Eau Claire County had a total of 1,001 farms; in 2007, the County had 1,223 farms (22 percent increase). However, there was been a small decrease (7 percent) in the number of farms from 1987 to 1997. Similar trends occurred in Chippewa, Clark, and Dunn Counties.

**Figure 17: Number of Farms 1987-2007**



In 2007, the average farm size decreased to 168 acres (3.4 percent), down from 174 acres in 2002. *Figure 18* shows a growth in the number of smaller and medium-sized farms. From 2002 to 2007, the number of farms comprised of 1-9 acres grew by 49 percent (from 45 to 67). Farms that were 10-49 acres, 50-179 acres and 1,000 or more acres all increased as well, with increases at 6 percent (from 267 to 283), 8 percent (from 513 to 553), and 7 percent (from 14 to 15), respectively.

**Figure 18: Comparison of Number & Size of Farms**



This change in the number of different sized farms is a result of several issues such as commodity prices, changes in society, the changing global economy, and state and national agricultural policies. Commodity prices, the changing global economy, and agricultural policies are always in flux and have changed the way people farm. Changes in society that have impacted farm size and type include families having less children and young people not desiring to live in rural areas, and a higher percentage of young people attending college.

There has also been a change in farm size based on the value of farm products sold. The percentage of farms that sell over \$500,000 (in constant 2007 dollars) has increased. In 2002, the County had 16 farms that had a value of sales between \$250,000 and \$499,000 and 15 farms that had a value of sales over \$500,000. These numbers increased in 2007, when the County had 40 farms with a value of sales between \$250,000 and \$499,000 and 30 farms with a value of sales over \$500,000.

It should be noted that during any Census year, the total value is partially dependent on commodity prices, which can fluctuate even during a single year. An example of this is 2007 milk prices in Wisconsin, which at one point was \$15.10 per cwt and six months later was \$21.50 per cwt. Other examples include corn and soybeans. Corn has fluctuated between \$2/bu



and \$5/bu over the past six years and soybeans between \$6 and \$12. In addition, the cost of production inputs for all products can change from year to year affecting profitability.

### Dairy Farms

There has been a decrease of dairy farms in Eau Claire County and the surrounding region (*Figure 19*). The number of dairy farms significantly dropped between 1987 and 2007. Eau Claire County had 494 dairy farms in 1987 and 236 in 2007, a 52 percent decrease. Between 2002 and 2007, there were 25 fewer dairy farms, an 11 percent decrease. This trend is consistent with what is happening in neighboring counties, the region and the state; all have lost numerous dairy farms. Chippewa County had the most dramatic numeric decrease moving from over 1,100 dairy farms in 1987 to 470 in 2007, a 57 percent decrease, while Dunn County had the largest percentage decrease, 71 percent over the same timeframe. Clark County had the largest number of dairy farms in 1987, and the fewest losses, dropping from over 1,500 to 995 farms from 1987 to 2007, a 34 percent decrease. During this timeframe, 1987-2007, dairy farms in Wisconsin decreased by 62 percent.

### Cows & Milk Production

The County and region have also experienced a decrease in the total number of cows, although not as dramatic as the loss of dairy farms. As seen in *Figure 20*, there were approximately 20,200 dairy cows located in Eau Claire County in 1985. This number dropped to 10,400 in 2010, a reduction of roughly 49 percent. A significant reduction of cows occurred between 1995 and 2000, with a decrease of more than 5,700 or 25%). Again this trend is not specific to Eau Claire County. Dairy cow numbers in the surrounding counties dropped by 44 percent in Chippewa and 50 percent in Dunn during this same period. However, Clark County lost only approximately 4,000 cows (6 percent) over the same timeframe. Although these counties are still losing dairy cows, the dairy industry seems to have stabilized in the past few years.

Since milk production per cow has significantly increased, total milk production in Eau Claire County and the region has not decreased as rapidly as dairy farms and cows. Between 1985 and 2010, the County experienced a reduction from 259 million pounds to 178 million pounds (*Figure 21*). This decrease of 81 million pounds

Figure 19: Number of Dairy Farms

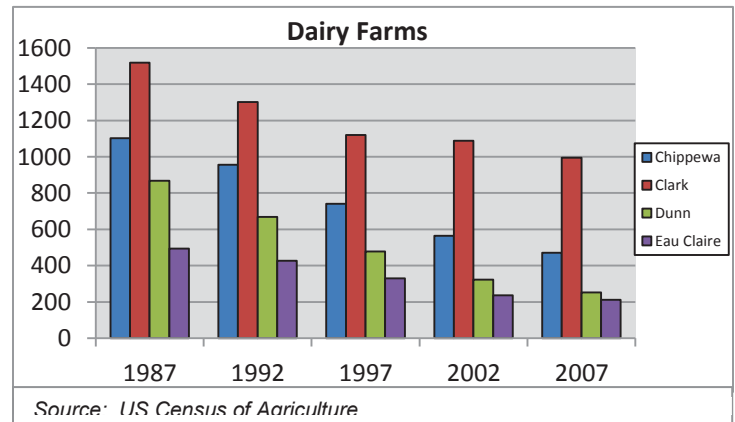


Figure 20: Number of Dairy Cows

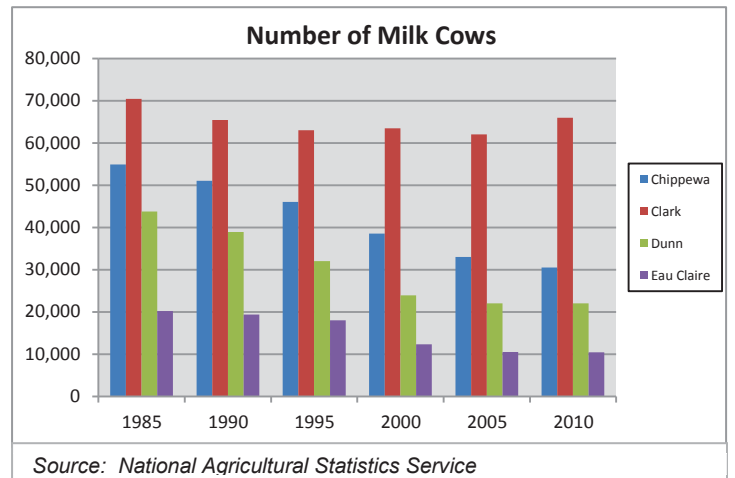
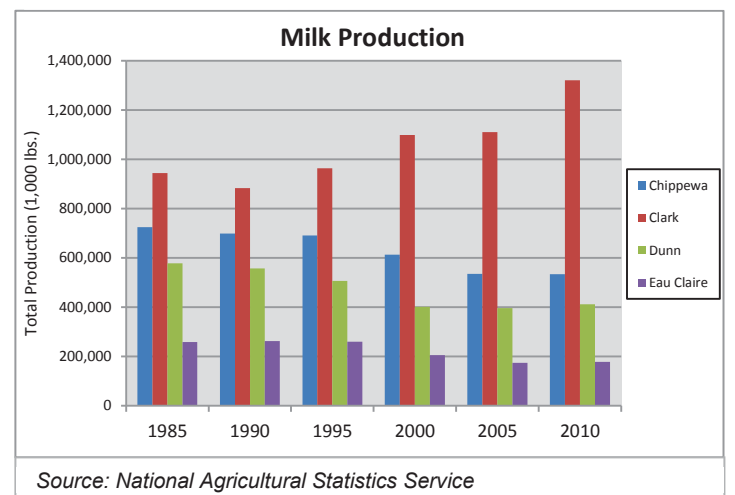


Figure 21: Milk Production





equates to a 31 percent decrease in total milk production over 25 years. More recently, the County experienced a reduction of 28 million pounds (13 percent) between 2000 and 2010. Neighboring counties Chippewa and Dunn also experienced reductions in total milk production. On the other hand, Clark County experienced a slight dip in production between 1985 and 2000 but has increased ever since.

Figure 22 depicts Eau Claire County's increase in average milk production per cow from 1975 to 2010. This is a result of industry changes including diet, genetics and management. These changes in the dairy industry are strongly influenced by federal policies, higher grain prices and economies of scale.

Figure 22: Milk Production in Eau Claire County

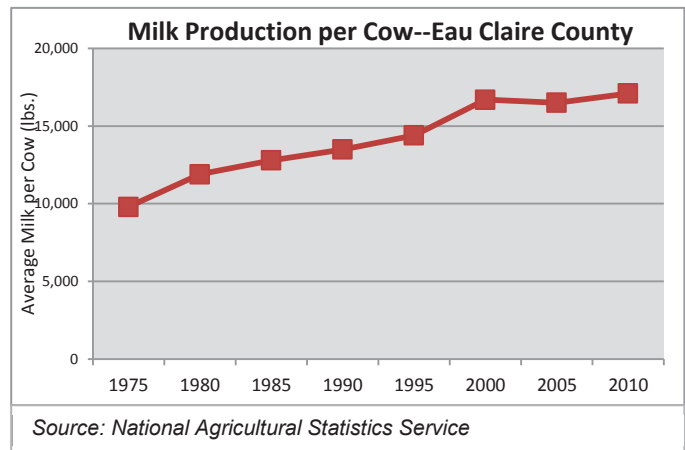
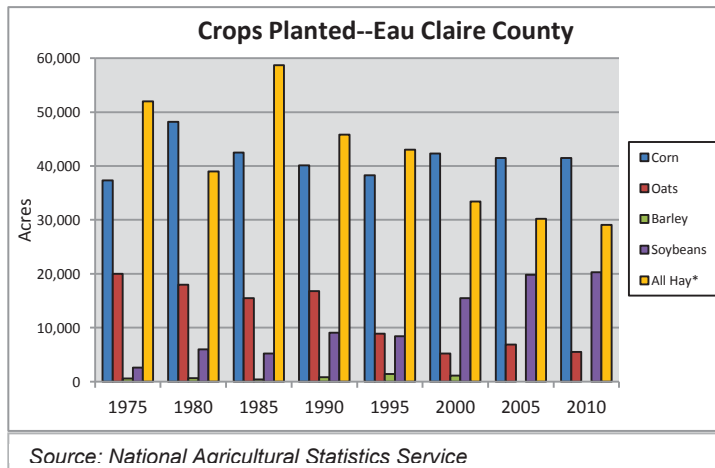


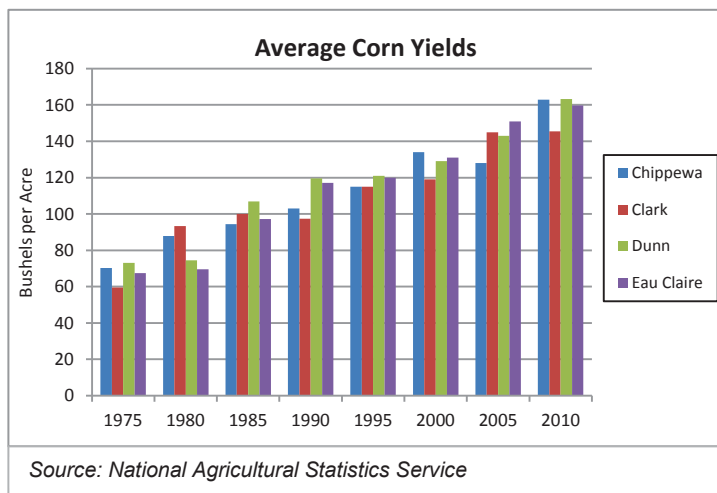
Figure 23: Crops Planted – Eau Claire County



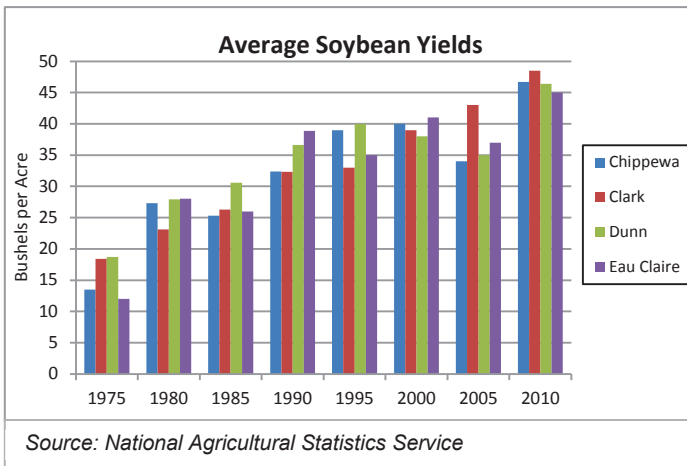
### Crops

Figure 23 depicts which crops were planted in Eau Claire County from 1975 to 2010. Corn replaced hay (acres harvested) in the County in crop acres planted in 2010 with 41,500 acres. There was an 11 percent increase in the amount of corn being grown from 1975 to 2010. However, from 1990 to 2010, the increase was a more modest 3 percent. In 2010, hay was the second leading crop, with 29,100 acres in production, decreasing from 52,000 acres in 1975. Soybeans was the third leading crop in the County, with 20,300 acres in production. The change in soybean production was the most significant; in 1970 there were 2,600 acres of soybeans grown in the County and by 2010, there were 20,300 acres in production, an increase of over 680 percent. As shown, the number of acres of oats decreased dramatically, with 5,500 acres in 2010 compared to 20,000 acres in 1975. Data were not available for barley in recent years. The significant increases in corn and soybean production can mostly be attributed to federal policies and economic incentives.

Figure 24: Average Corn Yields in Region



**Figure 25: Average Soybean Yields in Region**



In addition to looking at the total number of acres planted and harvested, another important aspect of total crops in the County is the yield generated. The average corn and soybean yield can be seen in *Figure 24 & Figure 25*. Since 1975, the average yield per acre has increased by 137 percent for corn and 275 percent for soybeans. The increased yields are a result of advances in crop genetics, better farm management and improved planting, production and harvesting technology.

### Forestry Industry and Statistics

As a prominent industry, forestry is a \$20 billion industry throughout Wisconsin which has played a vital role in our local economy, both historically as well as today. Eau Claire County’s own forest management program has an average annual gross revenue of \$600,000, contributing to more than 350 sector jobs. In light of its overall economic impact, the Working Lands Initiative recognizes the importance of the forestry sector as a component of the agricultural industry covered under Farmland Preservation. With this in mind, the importance of the forestry industry in Eau Claire County should not be understated.



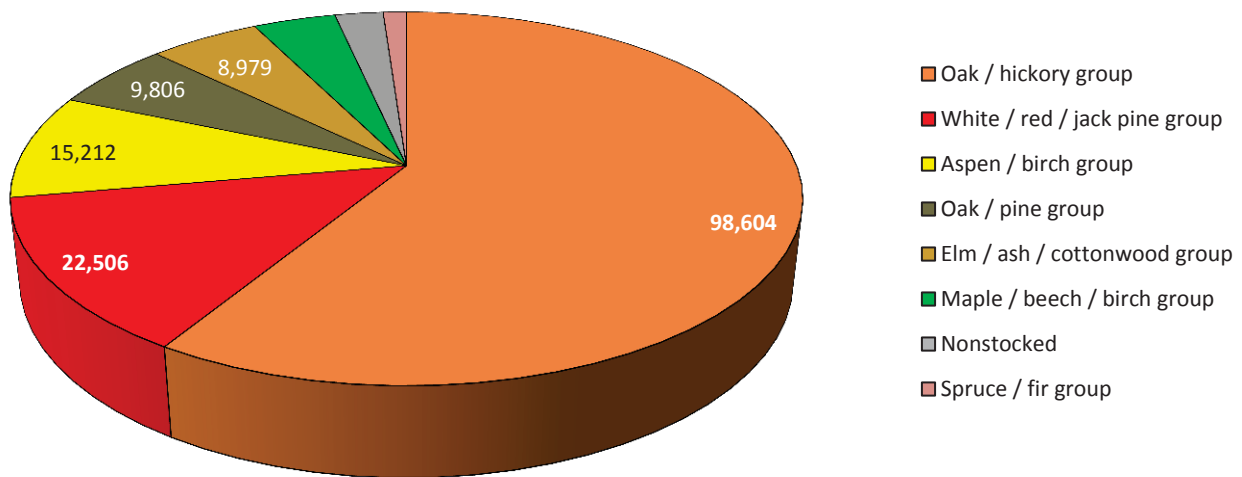
The County consists of 168 thousand acres of timberland of which two thirds is privately owned while the rest is either owned by the County or municipal entities. These forests are primarily located along the Eau Claire River heading east where a vast majority of the forests reside in the townships of Wilson, Bridge Creek, and Fairchild. This region is where most of the County owned forests presides as well. These vast forests contain several different species but red oaks, white oaks, and pines make up around 62 percent volume of the wood present. Below is a pie chart showing the different forest type distribution in *Figure 27*.

**Figure 26: Employment Statistics in Forestry**

Sector of forestry economy	Number of establishments	Average annual wage	Number of employees
Forestry and logging	8	NR*	NR
Paper Manufacturing	3	\$54,496	299
Wood furniture manufacturing	1	NR	NR
Wood product manufacturing	1	NR	NR

2012 data from the Worknet website: <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/datablist.aspx?menuselection=da>  
 \* NR Not reported

**Figure 27: Acres of Timberland by Forest Type 2012**



Source: Wisconsin DNR

### Forestry Economics

The importance of forestry to Eau Claire County’s economic health continues to rise. This industry offers different job opportunities and different services that local residents can take advantage of. Logging, trucking, sawmills, paper production, and timber materials are a few of the different jobs or services that come from the forestry industry. In 2012 there was a total of thirteen different forestry-based producers within the County, although this data does not account for Amish producers who do not report data to the Department of Workforce Development. The only reported employee salary data was from paper manufacturing, where the average annual wage was \$54,496 and the total number of employees was 299. The highest number of employers in the forestry was logging sector, with eight different establishments throughout the County, although specific salary data for this sector is unreported. By looking at solely at the reported data, it is difficult to truly understand the significance forestry plays in Eau Claire County. A large Amish community is located primarily near the communities of Augusta and Fairchild. Numerous saw mill, millworks, and other production facilities are operated by Amish entrepreneurs. However, number of employees, income and other valuable data is unknown and unreported.

### Forestry Products

According to a report called “The Daily Telegram, Progress Edition” published by the Eau Claire Leader in 1968, the lumber industry produced more than 200 million feet of sawn lumber through the mills located in the City of Eau Claire along with an additional 20 million at the N.C. Foster mill located in Fairchild in 1890. This amounted to roughly 2/3 of all lumber produced in the Chippewa Valley that year and made the City of Eau Claire one of the most prominent lumber communities of the upper midwest in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, earning the nickname of “Sawdust City”. With the prevalence of lumber in the area, the production of other wood products soon began to grow, including furniture factories and other wooden wares. The forestry industry served as the early foundation to the establishment of the City, giving way to other emerging industries as resources dwindled and other industries began to flourish by the 1920’s. Today, forestry products primarily consist of railroad ties, pallet material, and grade lumber. In

addition, the production of Amish Furniture remains prevalent in the eastern portion of the County. Again, due to the lack of data from the Amish community, it is extremely difficult to quantify the volume or value of forestry production in Eau Claire County.

## Specialty Products

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004, as amended by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Farm Bill) defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” This definition, although more exact than previous legal definitions, leaves a certain amount of latitude in interpretation. Fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, nursery crops and floricultural crops are all considered to be horticultural crops. Regardless, the specific mention of these crop groups means that plants so classified automatically qualify as specialty crops. Where interpretation is needed is in which plants, not specifically mentioned in legislation, can be classified as horticulture (sic) crops.

With that being said, a large majority of the key agricultural commodities produced in Eau Claire County tend to be traditional goods, including: grain, dairy, forestry, and meat. However, as we have indicated throughout this plan, the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and other specialty products has significantly increased within the last decade. One of the primary drivers of increased product demand is the emergence of local farmers markets or produce stands. Increase in consumer awareness and support of locally produced food has also led to the emergence of other operations like: community-supported agriculture (CSA’s), pick your own, direct marketing, and niche farming. According to the specialty crop tables provided by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, primary specialty crops grown in Eau Claire County include: apples, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, asparagus, beans, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, peas, onions, potatoes, pumpkins, squash, rhubarb, spinach, garlic, melons, sweet corn, and tomatoes. Eau Claire is also home to one horseradish operation, Silver Springs located in Eau Claire. Other specialty products include: herbs, honey, maple syrup, cut flowers and Christmas trees. In terms of volume and acreage, apple orchards and Christmas trees operations are two of the more prevalent specialty crops grown in Eau Claire County.



Although dairy, grain, meat and forestry are by and far the key products produced in Eau Claire County, the production, supply and marketing of specialty products continues to rise and take form in our agricultural landscape. The University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension released a report entitled “Eau Claire County Agriculture: Value & Economic Impact” in 2011. According to the report, horticulture (which includes Christmas trees, fruits and vegetables, greenhouse, nursery and floriculture products) add more than \$3 million annually to our economy. Direct



marketing sales account for roughly \$1 million annually in sales. Although specialty crops are still only a small portion of our overall economy, efforts should be made to promote the continued growth of this sector. Coordination and integration with our economic development initiatives, updates to regulatory codes, and cooperative marketing efforts are just a few methods of support that are incorporated within the implementation actions contained within this plan to aid in the continued growth of the specialty crop market.





## Population and Housing Statistics

Figure 28: Population Statistics

Town Farm & Non-Farm Population		
County	% of 1970 Population	% of 2000 Population
Chippewa	53.8	56.3
Town Farm	20.6	5.6
Town Non-Farm	33.2	50.7
Clark	63.9	63.5
Town Farm	40.8	16.5
Town Non-Farm	23.1	47.0
Dunn	50.3	51.9
Town Farm	27.1	7.3
Town Non-Farm	23.2	44.6
Eau Claire	26.9	25.1
Town Farm	6.5	2.2
Town Non-Farm	20.4	22.9

Note: Town is defined as not in a city or village.  
Source: U.S. Census

## Demographic/Population Trends

Eau Claire County has experienced growth over the past 20 years. Growth has not been limited to the County’s cities and villages; population growth in rural areas has occurred throughout the County as well. The most dramatic population increases have happened in the northwestern part of the County, near the City of Eau Claire, and in communities along Interstate Highway 94 and U.S. Highway 12. The population increase has resulted in growth pressures and has impacted land use in the County.

Figure 28 shows the percent of population that lived in a town (not a city or village) in 1970 and 2000 in Eau Claire County as well as neighboring counties. The percent of population in Eau Claire County that lived in towns stayed relatively the same from 1970

to 2000 (26.9 percent vs. 25.1 percent). However, in 1970, 6.5 percent of the County’s population lived on a farm in a town. In 2000, this percent dropped to 2.2 percent. Thus, 22.9 percent of the County’s 2000 population lived in a non-farm residence in a town. There were similar, albeit more drastic, trends in neighboring counties as less population lived on farms. With the large increase in population between 2000 and 2010 and the number of farms being relatively stable (~1,223), it is anticipated that Town Non-Farm population will continue to increase in the future. In addition, and just as important, some of the new Town Non-Farm population will be from urban areas where they are not accustomed to living in close proximity to agricultural operations. This change increases potential conflicts between farmers and non-farmers such as odor, traffic, and noise.

Figure 29 shows the population increase in several counties over the past century. All four counties had roughly similar populations earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1930. Starting in the 30’s, Eau Claire County began to grow at an increasingly faster rate than the surrounding counties. Since then, Eau Claire’s population has accelerated, reaching almost 99,000 people in the 2010 Census. By 2035, it is projected that the County will have over 118,728 people. By contrast, Chippewa (13,500), Clark (6,400), and Dunn (+12,000) counties will experience smaller increases in population between 2010 and 2035. Figure 29 illustrates the change in population growth for the region.

Figure 29: Regional Population Trend Comparison

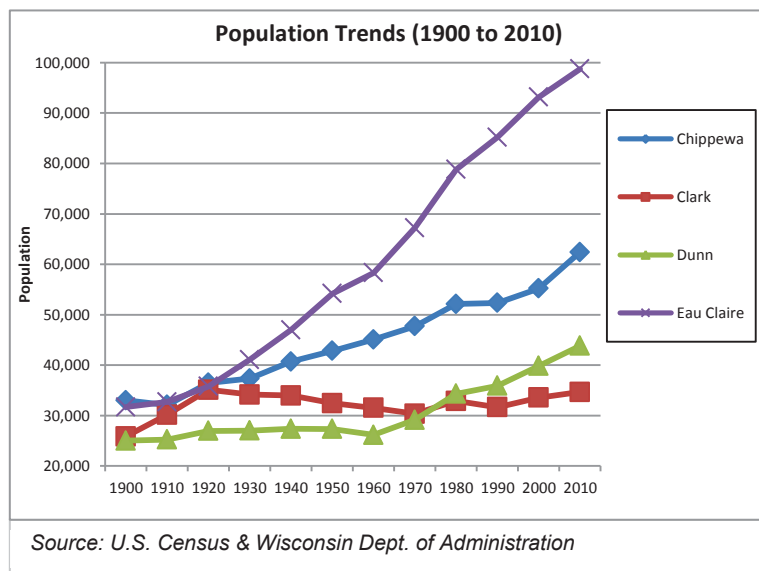


Figure 30 depicts which cities, villages, and towns have changed in population from 1970 to 2010. It identifies the larger population gains in northwestern part of Eau Claire County, near the City of Eau Claire and in cities and villages along the U.S. Highway 12 corridor. The highest growth during this period occurred in the Cities of Altoona and Eau Claire along with the Towns of Pleasant Valley and Bridge Creek. The Towns of Brunswick, Fairchild, Ludington, and Seymour as well as the Village of Fall Creek also saw significant growth. The figure shows how a majority of towns throughout the County experienced no growth or very little growth. It also shows the Town of Otter Creek and the Village of Fairchild lost population during this 40-year timeframe.

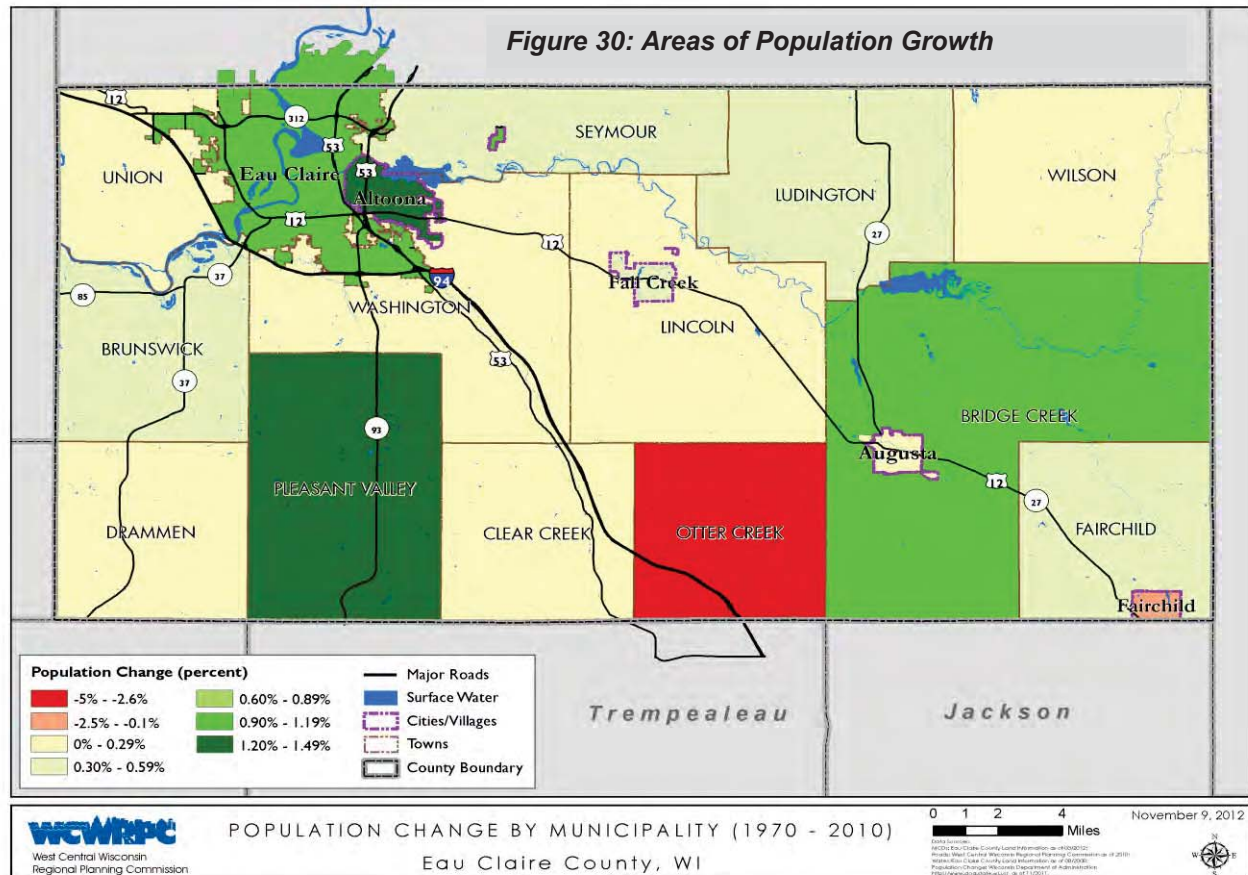


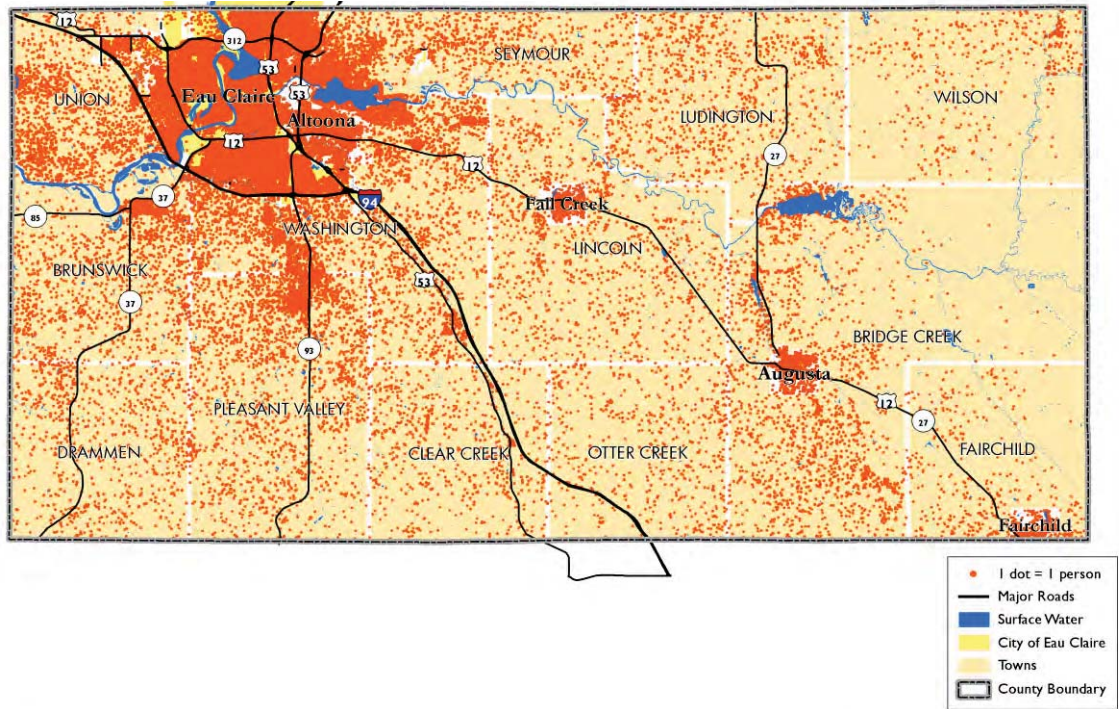
Figure 31 provides data on the actual populations and percentage changes from 1970 to 2010 by municipality in Eau Claire County. The City of Eau Claire had the largest number of new residents (4,108) between 2000 and 2010. The Village of Fairchild and three towns, Otter Creek; Fairchild; and Drammen, saw population decreases between 2000 and 2010. Figures 32 and 33 are depictions of population density during this same time period.



Figure 31: Population Change 1970-2010

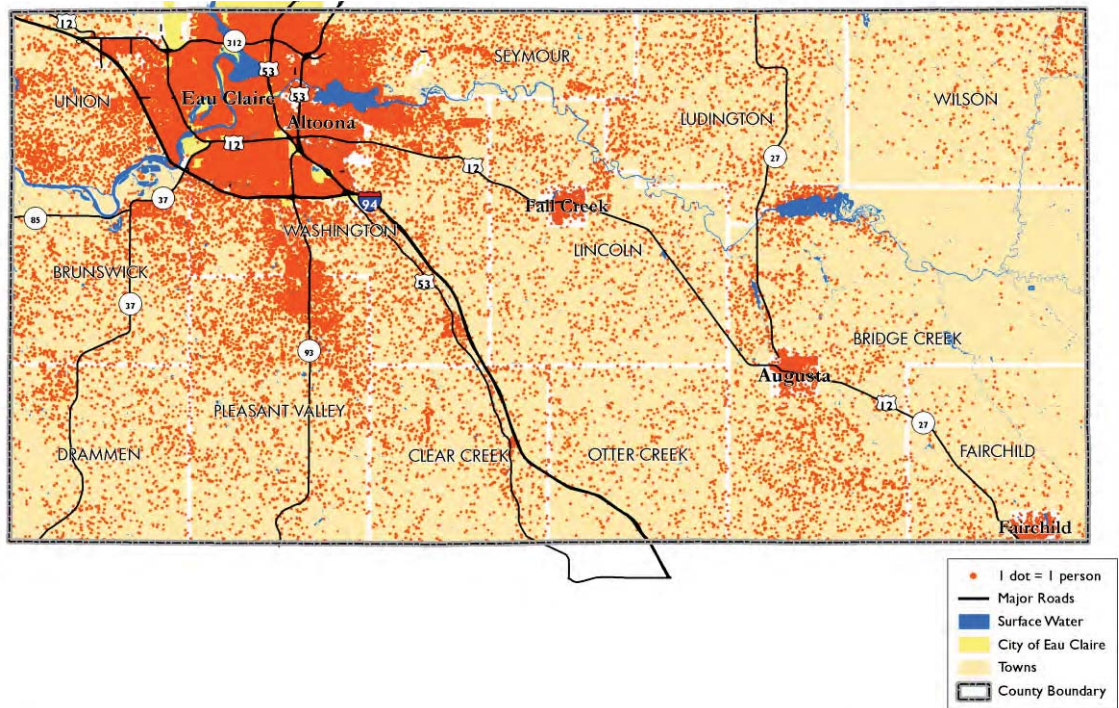
	Year					Percent Change			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	'70-'80	'80-'90	'90-'00	'00-'10
<b>Towns</b>									
Bridge Creek	935	1,206	1,440	1,844	1,900	29.0%	19.4%	28.1%	3.0%
Brunswick	1,092	1,411	1,506	1,598	1,624	29.2%	6.7%	6.1%	1.6%
Clear Creek	773	798	692	712	821	3.2%	-13.3%	2.9%	15.3%
Drammen	672	725	767	800	783	7.9%	5.8%	4.3%	-2.1%
Fairchild	238	278	312	351	343	16.8%	12.2%	12.5%	-2.3%
Lincoln	962	1,012	956	1,080	1,096	5.2%	-5.5%	13.0%	1.5%
Ludington	761	969	906	998	1,063	27.3%	-6.5%	10.2%	6.5%
Otter Creek	526	497	459	531	500	-5.5%	-7.6%	15.7%	-5.8%
Pleasant Valley	1,223	1,908	2,076	2,681	3,044	56.0%	8.8%	29.1%	13.5%
Seymour	2,362	2,824	2,754	2,978	3,209	19.6%	-2.5%	8.1%	7.8%
Union	2,355	2,689	2,456	2,402	2,663	14.2%	-8.7%	-2.2%	10.9%
Washington	5,757	6,489	6,269	6,995	7,182	12.7%	-3.4%	11.6%	2.7%
Wilson	430	469	477	420	485	9.1%	1.7%	-11.9%	15.5%
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>18,086</b>	<b>21,275</b>	<b>21,070</b>	<b>23,390</b>	<b>24,713</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Villages</b>									
Fairchild	562	577	504	564	550	2.7%	-12.7%	11.9%	-2.5%
Fall Creek	825	1,148	1,080	1,236	1,315	39.2%	-5.9%	14.4%	6.4%
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>1,387</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>1,865</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>-8.2%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Cities</b>									
Altoona	2,842	4,393	5,889	6,698	6,706	54.6%	34.1%	13.7%	0.1%
Augusta	1,242	1,560	1,510	1,460	1,550	25.6%	-3.2%	-3.3%	6.2%
Eau Claire	43,662	49,852	55,130	59,794	63,902	14.2%	10.6%	8.5%	6.9%
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>47,746</b>	<b>55,805</b>	<b>62,529</b>	<b>67,952</b>	<b>72,158</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,219</b>	<b>78,805</b>	<b>85,183</b>	<b>93,142</b>	<b>98,736</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>

**Figure 32: Population Density 2000**



**WCVRPC** POPULATION DENSITY (2000) November 9, 2012  
 West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Eau Claire County, WI

**Figure 33: Population Density 2010**



**WCVRPC** POPULATION DENSITY (2010) November 9, 2012  
 West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Eau Claire County, WI



## Housing

The number of housing units in Eau Claire County has steadily increased in recent decades. As seen in *Figure 34*, Eau Claire County experienced a 45 percent increase in the number of housing units between 1980 and 2010. There were 28,973 units in 1980 and 42,151 units in 2010, an increase of 13,178 units. It is projected that by the year 2030 Eau Claire County will contain 50,227 housing units, a 19 percent increase from 2010.

*Figure 34* shows the historic and current county of housing units and percent change for the County municipalities from 1980 to 2010. Between 1980 and 1990, 3,768 units were added countywide. Between 1990 and 2000, 4,733 housing units were added in the County. Between 2000 and 2010, 4,677 housing units were added.

Between 1980 and 2010, all but one municipal unit saw growth of 10 percent or greater. Thirteen municipal units saw an increase in housing units of over 30 percent. Communities experiencing the largest percentage increases were not necessarily the same as those communities with the largest numeric increase in housing units. The City of Altoona had the largest housing growth at 96 percent and the second largest numeric growth at 1,611 housing units. Other areas with large percentage increases included the towns of Pleasant Valley (85 percent) and Fairchild (74 percent); and the City of Eau Claire (47 percent).

Other communities experiencing significant numeric increases in housing units between 1980 and 2010, included the City of Eau Claire (8,704); and the towns of Washington (730), Pleasant Valley (512) and Seymour (311). More specific discussion of housing and household trends can be found in the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, Housing section.

## Infrastructure & Community Facilities Trends

Transportation facilities, which include highways, rail, airports, bike facilities, pedestrian facilities and transit, have a significant influence on land use, development and quality of life for Eau Claire County residents (*Figure 35*). A well-maintained and planned transportation system can support a variety of land uses, facilitate the provision of various public services, as well as provide linkage among residents, agricultural producers, manufacturers and businesses. Therefore, in order to ensure safety and efficiency of the transportation system, identifying the County's existing and proposed road network and figuring out major transportation needs

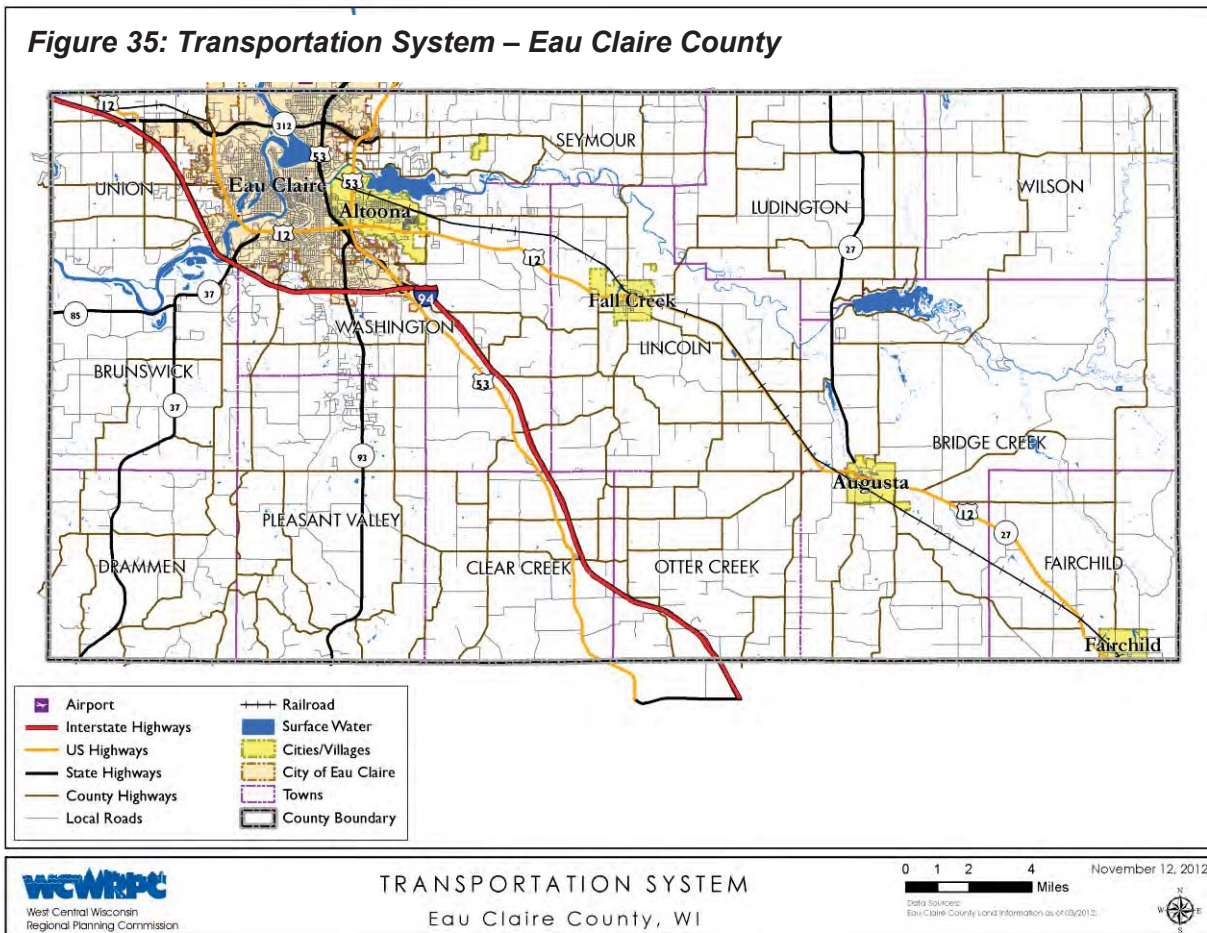
**Figure 34: Percent Change in Housing Units 1980-2010**

Municipality	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent change	
					1980-2010	2000-2010
<b>Towns</b>						
Bridge Creek	588	634	703	832	41.50	18.35
Brunswick	483	552	652	702	45.34	7.67
Clear Creek	249	253	278	307	23.29	10.43
Drammen	243	275	318	334	37.45	5.03
Fairchild	113	144	153	197	74.34	28.76
Lincoln	314	325	380	409	30.25	7.63
Ludington	344	357	407	465	35.17	14.25
Otter Creek	163	168	183	181	11.04	-1.09
Pleasant Valley	605	705	931	1,117	84.63	19.98
Seymour	982	1,025	1,151	1,293	31.67	12.34
Union	907	891	878	1,014	11.80	15.49
Washington	2,158	2,193	2,615	2,888	33.83	10.44
Wilson	194	212	185	264	36.08	42.70
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>7,343</b>	<b>7,734</b>	<b>8,834</b>	<b>10,003</b>	<b>36.22</b>	<b>13.23</b>
<b>Villages</b>						
Fairchild	216	222	236	275	27.31	16.53
Fall Creek	422	415	495	553	31.04	11.72
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>29.78</b>	<b>13.27</b>
<b>Cities</b>						
Altoona	1,677	2,397	3,063	3,288	96.06	7.35
Augusta	649	657	632	662	2.00	4.75
Eau Claire*	18,666	21,316	24,214	27,370	46.63	13.03
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>20,992</b>	<b>24,370</b>	<b>27,909</b>	<b>31,320</b>	<b>49.20</b>	<b>12.22</b>
<b>County Total</b>	<b>28,973</b>	<b>32,741</b>	<b>37,474</b>	<b>42,151</b>	<b>45.48</b>	<b>12.48</b>

Source: U.S. Census

should be evaluated for potential impacts on farmland and agricultural businesses. More information is located in **Chapter 5.3 Transportation** of the comprehensive plan.

**Figure 35: Transportation System – Eau Claire County**



## Highways

Eau Claire County is served by 1,567 miles of roads under state, county and local jurisdiction. Major north/south highways include US 53, STH 37, STH 93, and STH 27. Interstate Highway 94 and US 12 are major east/west highways. Traffic on the Eau Claire-Hudson portion of the Interstate, which runs through Eau Claire County, has been growing significantly. This stretch of Interstate 94 experiences traffic volumes of 40,000 to 70,000 vehicles a day and is the second most-traveled segment of interstate highway in the State of Wisconsin. By 2020, average daily traffic volumes at the I-94 bridge over the St. Croix River are projected to exceed 85,000 vehicles per day. Various construction and repair projects are planned for the State highways in Eau Claire County between 2012 and 2017, with a total of 64 miles scheduled for improvement over this five-year period.

## Designated Truck Routes/Agricultural Equipment/Railroads

Truck routes are designed to accommodate semi-trucks and include roadside accommodations at rest areas for temporary parking. Long truck routes also often include private truck parking and fueling stations along the routes.



The following highways are designated as long truck routes in Eau Claire County:

- Interstate 94 (all)
- US 12 (all)
- WIS 53 (north of I-94)
- WIS 37 (US 12 to US 10, in Mondovi)
- WIS 85 (all)
- WIS 93 (all)
- WIS 128 (WIS 29 to WIS 170/Glenwood City)
- WIS 170 (WIS 128 to Boyceville)
- County R (US 12 to US 10)

There are additional highways, or portions thereof, designated as restricted truck routes, such as US 53, south of I-94, and WIS 124, between US 53 and US 12.

Agricultural equipment needs to utilize state, county and town roads to access fields. Operating farm vehicles on Wisconsin roads involves a specific set of regulations and other requirements. Specific rules regarding length, height and width of agricultural equipment; driver requirements; hazardous materials; safety and vehicle registration; and weight restrictions can be found on the WisDOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/statepatrol/inspection/farm.htm>.

Farmers are not exempt from highway weight restrictions except during harvest time. Wisconsin Statutes §348.17(5) annually lifts weight limits on Class A highways from September 1 to November 30 to harvest corn, soybeans, potatoes, vegetables or cranberries. The law allows weight limits to be exceeded by up to 15 percent for transport from farm field to initial storage or initial processing point. Farmers must meet all other vehicle requirements for size, operation and driver qualifications, and cannot travel on roadways or bridges with special weight restrictions or on most interstates.

Rail service has become an increasingly important component of infrastructure for the agricultural industry in recent years. The ability to receive agricultural inputs and ship outputs via rail has improved the overall efficiency of the marketplace. With surges in fuel prices, the utilization of rail has been instrumental in ensuring favorable price points for producers. Rail service in Eau Claire County is provided by the Union Pacific Railroad. Additional information regarding rail and other transportation facilities in Eau Claire County can be found in **Chapter 5.3 Transportation** of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.

### **Utilities, Sanitary Sewer & Wastewater Treatment**

Utilities, sanitary sewer, and wastewater treatment provide the foundation, on which a community is built and maintained, and contribute to the quality of life in Eau Claire County. The location of a community's utilities, sewer and wastewater treatment facilities will affect future growth and development in the County. Currently, there are four Eau Claire County communities that have collection and treatment facilities for the proper treatment of wastewater, which includes one sanitary district. See **Chapter 5.4 Utilities Community Facilities** of the County Comprehensive Plan.

### **Water Supply**

Agricultural practices can have an impact on ground and surface water. In many cases, chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides) that are used in agricultural operations, manure, and sedimentation can impact water quality above and below the ground. This can have a significant impact on drinking water and habitat.



Eau Claire County communities receive their water from groundwater sources including drilled and dug wells. Cities and villages in the county are served by municipal water systems while non-municipal community water systems serve trailer courts and other developments located in the County. Eau Claire County residents in the remaining unincorporated areas depend on individual private wells for their water supply.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource's **Groundwater Susceptibility Model Map**, Eau Claire County has a moderate groundwater susceptibility rating. There are noticeable high groundwater susceptibility ratings along the Eau Claire River and the Chippewa River.

The quality of groundwater in Eau Claire County is generally very good with some exceptions:

- The Wisconsin DNR has designated the former Papermill Sludge landfill in the Town of Washington as a “deep-well casing area” due to groundwater contamination from volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- There are two Atrazine (a pesticide) prohibition areas within Eau Claire County. One is outside the Village of Fall Creek and the other is in the far southeast corner of the County, in the Town of Fairchild. No other Atrazine restriction areas have been designated in the County since the mid-1990s.
- There are two water bodies listed for Eau Claire County as impaired waters—Chippewa River and Half Moon Lake. There are also two water bodies that are proposed as impaired—Lowes Creek and Otter Creek.
- Continuing Nitrate concentrations in the water are localized but are becoming more of a problem throughout the county.
- The WDNR has verified that there are currently no special areas of well compensation eligibility in Eau Claire County at this time. However, microbial-source testing (which determines the specific type of bacteria) is available through the Wisconsin-DNR for those wells that have obvious odors or smells and tested positive for e-coli bacteria. Additionally, private well tests can be performed by the Eau Claire County Health Department to test for nitrates, pH, alkalinity, hardness, chloride, VOC's, selective pesticides and heavy metals such as arsenic.

Eau Claire County has established the Eau Claire County Groundwater Advisory Committee, a separate advisory committee that consists of County Board members, local community members, and professional technical staff. The committee meets quarterly to address potential concerns or issues that may be a threat to groundwater.

In 2012, municipalities in Eau Claire County revisited their ordinances and those with public drinking water supply wells requested County code protections for those capture zones outside of their area of jurisdiction. The County Zoning ordinance includes Groundwater Protection Overlay Districts that outline parameters for land uses within those areas.

The USGS has completed a groundwater report for Eau Claire County. It can be accessed at [http://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/find/eauclaire/index\\_full.html](http://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/find/eauclaire/index_full.html).

## Communications

In broad terms, telecommunications facilities allow users to communicate and share data over long geographic distances. Access to wireless, seamless communication networks is becoming increasingly important in the modern world. Due to the increase in use of wireless communication for public safety, business, and personal use, constructing telecommunication towers is an issue that many municipalities are addressing more often than in the past. Eau





Claire County has adopted a wireless communications ordinance as part of Chapter 18.50 of its Code of Ordinances. Most of Eau Claire County has access to broadband (high-speed) Internet via telephone or cable lines, though some gaps do exist primarily in the eastern and more rural portions of the County. As an alternative, some of these areas may have broadband access via other means (e.g. satellite).

Access to telecommunications facilities is becoming more important for farmers and others working in the agriculture business. As with any business owner, having accessible information on new programs, policies and innovative strategies will only help expand one's business.

## **Energy**

The abundance of farmland and natural areas in Eau Claire County provide opportunities in the growing renewable energy and bio-energy industries. Eau Claire County industries, public entities, farms, and individuals are utilizing farmland and other natural areas to profit from and/or conserve resources by manufacturing renewable energy and bio-energy. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, four agriculture operations were generating energy or electricity on the farm. In addition, the emergence of ethanol and other cellulosic operations in the region (i.e. ACE Ethanol in Stanley) play an important role in stabilizing commodity pricing and ensuring demand for farm commodities. This trend is expected to continue to grow as energy costs increase.

## **Waste Management**

Eau Claire County assists local municipalities in operating their recycling programs; provides education and information to the public; manages, disperses funds and completes reporting on grant programs; and holds special collections throughout the year for household and agricultural hazardous waste, tires, appliances, electronics, toner cartridges and cell phones. Additional information regarding waste management in the County can be found in the County Comprehensive Plan.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTION - SUMMARY

**Natural Resource Goal:** Preserve and protect our most valuable resources for the residents of Eau Claire County (both current and future), including: productive forests, farmland, sensitive environmental areas and wildlife habitat as the foundations of our rural landscape.

### **Objectives:**

- Minimize the development and fragmentation of agricultural and forest land, while providing alternative land division choices for farmers and other rural landowners that promote continued agriculture and forestry uses
- Promote conservation planning and practices to protect productive agricultural soils from erosion and deter the delivery of sediment and nutrients to the waters of our state
- Enforce policies and procedures for extraction operations including required reclamation and erosion control plans to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses and to minimize impacts to natural resources
- Promote a comprehensive watershed approach to address sediment delivery and nutrient impacts to the water resources of Eau Claire County
- Protect public health, productive lands and water resources through proper treatment of sewage and storm water management
- Connect with County residents and stakeholders to instill long term conservation values

**Economic Vitality & Infrastructure Goal:** Strengthen and diversify a predominately agricultural and forestry based economy throughout Eau Claire County. The primary focus for economic development in rural portions of the County will be the support of agriculture, agricultural-related businesses, and cottage industries. Other commercial and industrial businesses not compatible with the rural character of the County will be encouraged to locate in urban locations, or rural hamlets, where adequate transportation and utility facilities exist to serve more intensive business developments.

### **Objectives:**

- Promotes the expansion and development of businesses which provide high wage employment opportunities for area residents without diminishing the quality of natural, historical, or cultural resources in the County
- Support the use of “buy-local” programs that focus on purchasing products and materials from area businesses
- Support new and existing businesses that utilize local agricultural products or that provide important agricultural inputs (farm equipment, new farm technologies, **short-line implements**, co-ops, etc.).
- Encourage the development of “niche” farm-based businesses focused on food for local and regional markets (small-scale food processing, fresh produce, organics, etc.).
- Work with local communities, as well as adjacent counties to plan, fund, construct, and maintain those roadways that serve or promote the movement of goods and services on a regional scale.
- Support the continued maintenance and enhancement of a strong infrastructure that serves the current and future needs of businesses and residents
- Support the development and maintenance of a multi-faceted transportation system to include rail, air, road, bike and pedestrian travelers that meets the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses alike.



**Land Use Goal:** Balance the provision of adequate land and infrastructure to support new development with the protection of agriculturally productive areas, natural resources, and open spaces throughout Eau Claire County in a manner that minimizes land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

**Objectives:**

- Encourage higher-density residential land uses (i.e. conservation subdivisions) within or near existing developments and lower residential densities (including rural clusters) near existing agricultural lands in order to maximize the efficiency of publicly funded infrastructure and to minimize conversion of contiguous agricultural, forested or open space blocks in order to retain the predominantly rural character of the County for sustainable future use.
- Encourage farmsteads and single-family homes as the primary residential building types in unincorporated areas.
- Encourage infill of vacant lots within existing subdivisions.
- Discourage development of non-agricultural related commercial and industrial development within rural portions of the County and instead directs it to more urban areas, rural hamlets, or similar locations where there is better access to public services and transportation facilities needed to support such developments.
- Encourage maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic areas and buildings, including barns and silos.
- Support “heritage tourism” (e.g. local festivals, fairs, farm tours, and farmers markets) that celebrate the County’s agricultural heritage and rural setting.
- Strive to ensure long-term preservation of rural vistas by limiting urban sprawl and encouraging preservation of large agricultural and forested tracts of land.
- Incorporate the recommendations of city, village, and town land use plans into the County’s future land use plan, except in instances where County interests may not be served by such a policy due to a conflict with the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan, the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, or generally accepted planning principles.

**Plan Actions/Work Plan:** The following actions are intended to realize and reinforce the goals and Objectives of this Farmland Preservation Plan consistently with those of the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan, along with the anticipated timelines for implementation.

**TIMELINES:**

Continual: This action does not require a specific task to be completed. It is enforced through continued conscious decision making, existing ordinances, or by following the policies of this Plan, which is adopted by ordinance as an addendum to the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan.

Short Term: This indicates that action should be taken within the next year. (Highest Priority)

Mid Term: This indicates that the action should be taken in the next 2-5 years. (Medium Priority)

Long Term: This indicates that the action should be taken in the next 6-10 years (lowest priority)



## Continual

- Work with Towns that have adopted zoning to encourage enforcement of agricultural zoning. Rezoning of an agricultural district to a non-agricultural district will not be permitted unless identified as such on the County and applicable Town's Comprehensive Plan (Future Land Use Map). The County will support the use of a density-based zoning program that allows for the clustering of future non-ag residential development on smaller parcels in exchange for permanent protection of large contiguous blocks of productive agricultural and forest lands
- Limit development in areas that have documented threatened and endangered species, or have severe limitations due to steep slopes, poor soils, or sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and streams in order to protect the benefits and functions they provide. The County shall require these natural features to be depicted on all site plans, preliminary plats, and certified survey maps in order to facilitate preservation of natural resources.
- Encourage higher density non-agricultural housing (inclusive of conservation subdivisions) in areas where necessary utility infrastructure exists or can be efficiently provided, which is designated for future development (both mapped Transition and Excluded areas on *Map 1 of Appendix D*) and away from Preservation Areas.
- Strongly discourage requests to create residential subdivisions (5 or more lots) within areas mapped and zoned as Preservation Areas.
- Discourage development of non-agricultural related commercial and industrial development within rural portions of the County and encourage it in urban locations or rural hamlets, where adequate transportation and utility facilities exist to serve more intensive business developments.
- Encourage infill of existing vacant lots and areas surrounded by existing higher density development.
- Discourage fragmentation of agricultural and productive forest land in order to protect the continuity of these resources for future use.
- Ensure that mineral extraction operations closely follow applicable local, county and state plans and regulatory requirements to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses and to minimize impacts to natural resources, inclusive of productive agricultural and forest lands. The establishment of new industrial mining operations within any established AEA zone will be strongly discouraged, thereby acknowledging the commitment and preference for long-term economic benefit that agriculture provides.
- The owner of any new non-ag residence within an agricultural district shall be required to sign and record (in the Eau Claire County Register of Deeds Office) a right-to-farm disclosure at the time of construction or purchase, and well as all subsequent owners.
- Support efforts by the ECEDC, agricultural cooperatives or other ag-businesses, and local units of government to expand the agricultural infrastructure and grow ag-based business climate in Eau Claire County and throughout the Chippewa Valley.
- Coordinate the implementation of the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation and Comprehensive Plans with all local municipalities within and surrounding the county to develop an efficient and compatible land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between land uses and preserve farming and natural resources.
- Routinely offer nutrient management, soil conservation or water resource protection educational workshops to landowners to assist with their efforts to comply with state Farmland Preservation Program conservation requirements.



### **Short Term**

- Prepare and submit A-1, A-3, F-1 and F-2 zoning code updates with the intention of certifying these zoning districts under the Farmland Preservation Program by DATCP
- Develop “rural clustering” amendments for both the zoning and land division codes that permit a limited number of small residential lots in predominately agricultural areas through a density-based rezone process to the A-R zoning district (with subsequent deed restriction) with the stipulation that 80% of any new lot created shall not contain Class I-III soils in order to provide farmers and forest land owners a viable alternative to converting large parcels of productive agricultural and forest land to a non-agricultural use.
- Incorporate “conservation subdivision regulations” to include “density bonuses” into a code amendment to be offered as incentives for conservation subdivision developments that preserve and/or protect productive forest and farm lands along with the rural character of Eau Claire County.
- Collaborate with Towns and farm operators to consider the creation of Agriculture Enterprise Area (AEA’s) districts that will recognize the existence of significant agricultural operations and promote investment into future agricultural operations in Eau Claire County.

### **Mid Term**

- Conduct a regulatory review of its various ordinances and permitting requirements to identify changes that could be made that would support diversification of ag-based business and the availability of locally produced foods or other ag-products in Eau Claire County.
- Encourage the Eau Claire County EDC or other similar economic development entities to undertake efforts to identify/coordinate back-haul opportunities and other similar opportunities for area businesses.
- Encourage current rail users to allow or support new users to gain access and/or rail service at competitive rates.
- Collaborate with the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC), Eau Claire County EDC, UW-Extension, and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection to develop a regional marketing strategy for local agricultural products.
- Collaborate with UW-Extension and other entities to explore ways to diversify and add value to food crops and animal products raised in Eau Claire County.
- Promote the use of “buy-local” programs that focus on purchasing products and materials from area businesses.
- Collaborate with UW-Extension and area farmers to find out how Eau Claire County might be able to assist farms in maintaining economic viability, and assist with the transition of farmland or operations to new farmers.
- Coordinate with the Eau Claire County Groundwater Advisory Committee to better understand the impacts of high-capacity wells on the rural environment and to correlate policy with land use decision making processes inclusive of municipal groundwater protection zones.



- Nurture, assist and support efforts to create an agriculturally-based business park with direct rail access within a centrally located area of Eau Claire County properly served by adequate transportation and utility infrastructure to meet the current and future needs of our agricultural entrepreneurs.

### **Long Term**

- Consider the use of PDR or TDR programs as a farmland preservation tool to complement agricultural zoning and direct higher density development to more appropriate areas.
- Continue to work with perpetual easement programs that will ensure long term protection of resources and open space where these protections are determined a priority.



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – FARMLAND PRESERVATION SURVEY REPORT

#### Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Eau Claire County. Eau Claire County officials identified two populations to include in the survey: agricultural stakeholders (farm operators and persons involved in businesses related to agriculture) and rural residents (households outside of the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona). The questionnaires for these two populations were very similar. The primary difference was the addition of several questions on the agriculture stakeholder version.

In January 2013, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to a random sample of 1,130 Eau Claire County rural residents and to 375 agricultural stakeholders on a list provided by Eau Claire County officials. The response rate from agricultural stakeholders was 53 percent (199 completed returns). The response rate from rural residents was 36 percent (410 completed returns). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.7 percent with 95 percent confidence for the agricultural stakeholders and plus/minus 3.9 percent with 95 percent confidence for the rural residents.

The report identifies questions in which notable differences exist between the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and rural residents. Unless otherwise noted in this summary, the responses of rural residents and agricultural stakeholders align with each other.

Majorities of respondents said the conversion of blocks of agricultural to other uses is a problem or a major problem. Likewise, majorities of respondents believed that it is important for the County to maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and its associated tax credits.

The most highly valued aspects of the farmland preservation program are the per acre tax credits, the discussion of the future of agriculture in Eau Claire County as part of the official planning process, and the protection of large, contiguous blocks of productive farmland and forested land. At least three-fourths of respondents said these were valuable or very valuable.

A majority of respondents favored the Agricultural Enterprise Area program. A quarter of respondents said that they do not know if they favor the program, which suggests that they need more information prior to forming an opinion.

Respondents prefer the cluster design for rural subdivisions by a two-to-one margin, and many suggested reducing the current density standard.

Tax credits for agricultural land and exclusive agricultural zoning were viewed as effective ways to protect farmland in Eau Claire County by over two-thirds of respondents. A majority believed that direct marketing is effective as a farmland protection tool. About half of respondents said use-value assessment and comprehensive planning are effective. A high percentage of respondents said they don't know about the effectiveness of purchase of development rights programs and transfer of development rights programs, which suggests that additional information is needed.



About three-fourths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they need more opportunities to purchase local food. Nearly as many agreed or strongly agreed that development should be concentrated in or near existing cities/villages. Half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of farmland is having a negative impact on the economic viability of agriculture in the County. Half of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements, but a third were neutral or had no opinion. There were split opinions with respect to whether there is enough farmland to support the long-term viability of agriculture in the County.

The most frequently cited barrier to purchasing locally produced food is lack of availability in the respondent's grocery store, which was identified by slightly over half of respondents. About a third of respondents said that inconvenient sales locations are a barrier. About a third also said that being required to buy local meat in large quantities is a barrier in terms of cost and storage concerns.

When asked to rank policy priorities for the County, the top priority was to protect groundwater and surface water quality. Keeping productive land in agriculture ranked second, followed by preservation of rural and small town character, reducing land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, and limiting non-agricultural development to areas adjacent to existing cities/villages.

Majorities of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements about agricultural resources in Eau Claire County: groundwater quality is good, groundwater supply is adequate, and surface water quality is good. Half of respondents believe that land fragmentation is a problem for agriculture, and half said that finding land for manure spreading is not hard. There was no majority view with respect to the availability of farmland to buy/rent and whether productive farmland would be available in 20 years.

Majorities of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that global markets will become more important in the next 20 years, that mergers of input suppliers have seriously reduced competition and have caused increases in prices, that the income and benefits from an off-farm job are needed for their operation, and that mergers of processors have reduced competition and lowered prices paid to farmers. Half believed that environmental regulations are reasonable and that direct marketing to consumers will become increasingly important.

When asked about the importance of potential programs and regulations, at least 80 percent of respondents said the following are important or very important: keeping land in agriculture, promoting farming to the next generation, keeping/attracting family farms, and providing financial assistance to aid farm asset transition to the next generation.

Majorities also said programs to ensure a supply of qualified agricultural labor and to recruit input suppliers for small farms are important or very important.





## Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from agriculture stakeholders and rural residents with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Eau Claire County. The County chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to collect these data and analyze the results.

## Survey Methods

Eau Claire County officials identified two populations to survey. The first group was agricultural stakeholders, which included farm operators and persons involved in businesses related to agriculture. County officials provided a mailing list of 375 agricultural stakeholders. The second population consisted of rural residents in Eau Claire County. The rural area was defined as all areas of the County outside of the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona. The SRC drew a random sample of households from this area. The survey instruments for two populations were very similar. The primary difference was the addition of several questions on the agriculture stakeholder version. These questions addressed topics and issues specific to farm operations and businesses.

In January 2013 the SRC mailed surveys to 1130 randomly selected rural residents and to all 375 names on the agricultural stakeholder list provided by Eau Claire County officials. The surveys were followed at roughly 10 day intervals with reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The response rate from agricultural stakeholders was 53 percent (199 completed returns). The response rate from rural residents was 36 percent (410 completed returns). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.7 percent with 95 percent confidence for the agricultural stakeholders and plus/minus 3.9 percent with 95 percent confidence for the rural residents.

The responses from the two populations are compiled as one set of data throughout the report. The SRC used analytical tests to compare the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and the rural residents on questions common to both versions. The report will identify instances when there were notable differences between the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and rural residents. Unless otherwise noted in this report, the responses of rural residents and agricultural stakeholders align with each other. Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in Appendix A, the SRC concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this study.

In short, the data gathered in this survey is expected to accurately reflect the opinions of Eau Claire County agricultural stakeholders and Eau Claire County rural residents. For more detailed information regarding the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Community Survey, please visit the following website link:

[HTTP://WWW.CO.EAU-CLAIRE.WI.US/HOME/SHOWDOCUMENT?ID=2572](http://www.co.eau-claire.wi.us/home/showdocument?id=2572)



## APPENDIX B– ACRONYM GLOSSARY

AEA	Agriculture Enterprise Areas
BLBW	Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DATCP	Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
EAZ	Exclusive Agricultural Zoning
EDC	Economic Development Corporation
ETJ	Extraterritorial Jurisdiction – for cities or villages
FCL	Forest Crop Law
FP	Farmland Preservation
GAAMPS	Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices
MFL	Managed Forest Law
NRCS	National Resource Conservation Service
PACE	Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement
PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
SSA	Sewer Service Areas
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds
WisDOT	Wisconsin Department of Transportation
WLI	Working Lands Initiative



## **APPENDIX C – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Numerous public participation activities were provided to give ample opportunity for property owners, producers, agribusinesses, elected officials and citizens to provide input and comments during plan development and review. County staff developed a public participation plan for Farmland Preservation, which was subsequently approved by the Planning and Development Committee in the fall of 2012. Public Participation can generally be broken down into three categories, including:

### **Part A – Direct Engagement with Local Leaders**

#### ***Town Farmland Preservation Surveys***

In October of 2012, staff from the Planning and Development Office made a presentation to town officials at an Eau Claire County Towns Association Meeting. As a follow up to that presentation, a short survey was subsequently sent to each Town to ask a few simple questions to gauge support and interest in farmland preservation in Eau Claire County. Of the 13 surveys mailed out, ten surveys were returned with all but one indicating a strong continued support for the program. With Town support for the program still strong after 30 years, staff from the Planning and Development began developing a public engagement strategy that would ensure continued dialogue with these local officials throughout the planning process.

#### ***Town Board engagement***

In summer of 2013, staff from the Planning and Development Department attended a second Town's Association Meeting to discuss the mapping and consistency requirements of the farmland preservation program. Throughout the 2013 summer, staff from the Planning and Development Department attended one or more meetings for each town in Eau Claire County to discuss farmland preservation and present draft farmland preservation area mapping products. Following these meetings, each town was asked to pass a resolution approving of the draft preservation area maps for inclusion in the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan.

In May 2014, draft plans were distributed to each Town Board at a third Eau Claire County Towns Association meeting for review and comment. Comments and/or input were received from Towns from June thru September of 2014. Corrections and additions were made to the plans in the fall of 2014 in response to comments received.

### **Part B – Direct Engagement of Stakeholders**

#### ***Farmland Preservation Steering Committee***

In the fall of 2012, a committee of stakeholders throughout Eau Claire County was created to commence the development of the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan update. This 15-member group met numerous times during the months of January through March of 2013 to create the strategic policies and action items that were incorporated into the new plan. The Steering Committee also discussed zoning ordinances amendments that would help achieve the desired outcomes. After allowing time for staff to draft the plan and develop the proposed preservation area maps with town guidance, the steering committee then reconvened in the spring of 2014 to review and provide input into the final draft plan before forwarding to each Town for consideration and comment.



## **Part C – Public Engagement**

### ***Community Survey***

Through its contract with West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, a random county-wide survey was conducted through the Survey Research Center at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls. In January of 2013, more than 1,500 surveys were distributed either randomly or to identified stakeholders to gather opinions on agricultural issues in Eau Claire County. In March, a report of the survey results was made available to the Steering Committee members and posted on the Eau Claire County website under Farmland Preservation. Survey results were used in the development of specific policies and implementation actions included within the plan. Survey data was distributed to Town Boards at a series of meetings throughout the summer of 2013. A full copy of the survey report is provided in Appendix A.

### ***Website***

*A webpage was utilized to provide access to all drafts, reports, survey results and background data, <http://www.co.eau-claire.wi.us/departments/departments-l-z/planning-development/farmland-preservation>.*



### **Public Forums**

*The final draft of the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan, inclusive of the Farmland Preservation Areas Map; goals, objectives and policies; conditions and trends report; and other project materials were presented and discussed at two public forums in March of 2015 (Town of Lincoln and the Agriculture and Resource Center in Altoona).*

### **Public Hearing/Adoption**

*A duly noticed public hearing in compliance with Wis. Stats. 66.1001 will be held in front of the Eau Claire County Planning and Development Committee on April 28, 2015. Following the public hearing, a resolution will be approved by the committee and forwarded to the Eau Claire County Board for consideration in May 2015, whereby the Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Plan will be considered for adoption as an addendum to the Eau Claire County Comprehensive Plan by ordinance.*



**APPENDIX D – FARMLAND PRESERVATION AREA MAPS**

**MAP 1: EAU CLAIRE COUNTY PRESERVATION AREAS**

**MAP 2: TOWN OF BRIDGE CREEK PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 3: TOWN OF BRUNSWICK PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 4: TOWN OF CLEAR CREEK PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 5: TOWN OF DRAMMEN PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 6: TOWN OF FAIRCHILD PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 7: TOWN OF LINCOLN PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 8: TOWN OF LUDINGTON PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 9: TOWN OF OTTER CREEK PRESERVATION AREA**

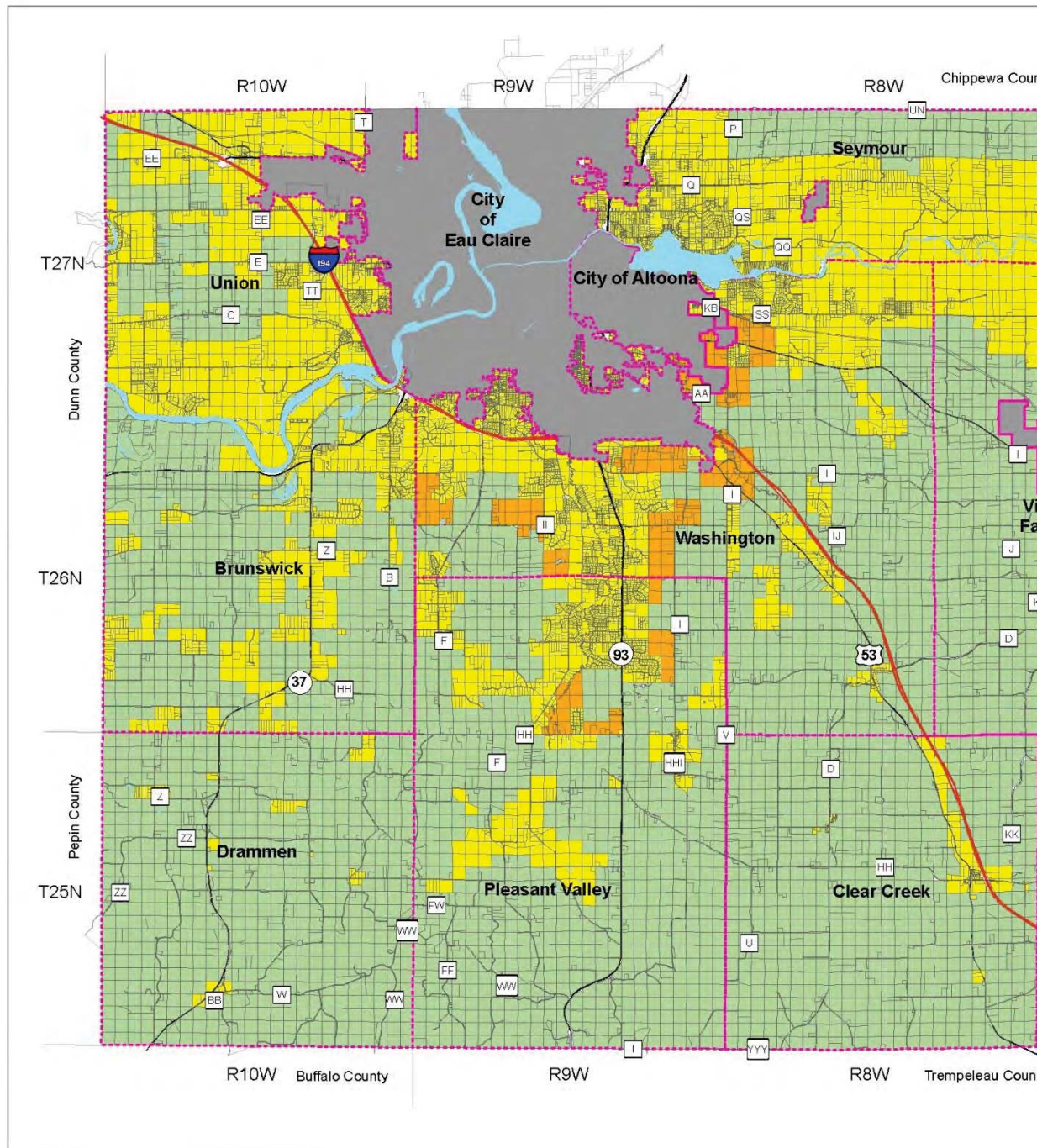
**MAP 10: TOWN OF PLEASANT VALLEY PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 11: TOWN OF SEYMOUR PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 12: TOWN OF UNION PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 13: TOWN OF WASHINGTON PRESERVATION AREA**

**MAP 14: TOWN OF WILSON PRESERVATION AREA**



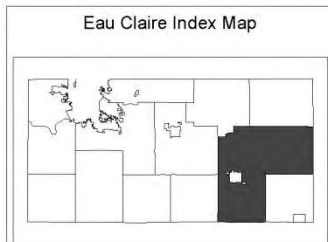
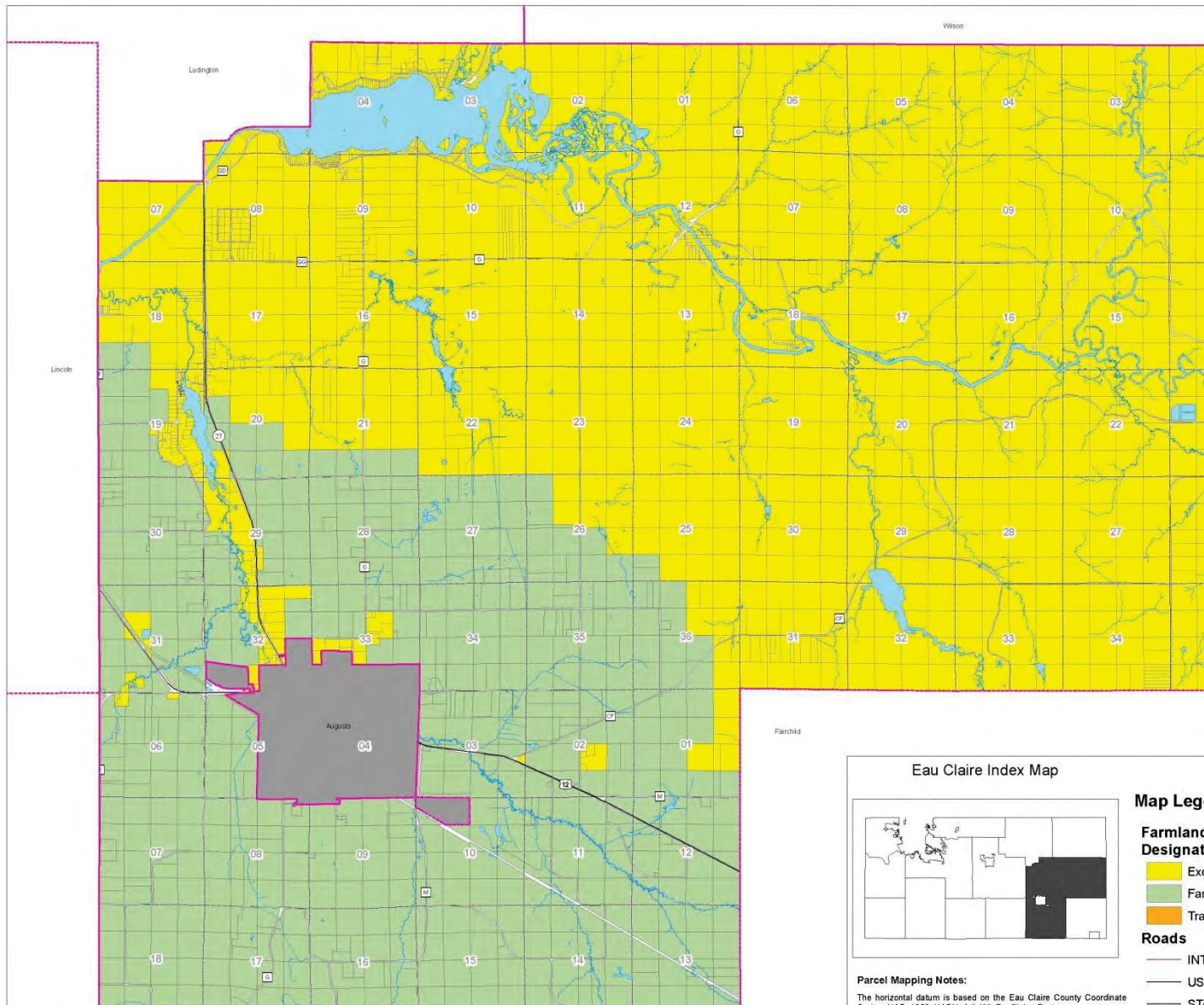
Map Legend		
<b>Farmland Preservation Designation</b>	<b>Roads</b>	<b>Civil Divisions</b>
Excluded	INTERSTATE	Civil Boundary
Farmland	US HWY	Incorporated Area
Transition	STATE ROAD	<b>Water Features</b>
<b>Parcel</b>	PRIVATE DRIVE	Rivers & Streams
Parcel Line	RAMP	Lakes & Ponds

Special Note - this Farmland Preservation Area Map shall supersede the Future Land Use Map (Map 9) to the implementation and administration of the Farmland Preservation Program in Eau Claire County





# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 2 TOWN OF BRIDGE CREEK

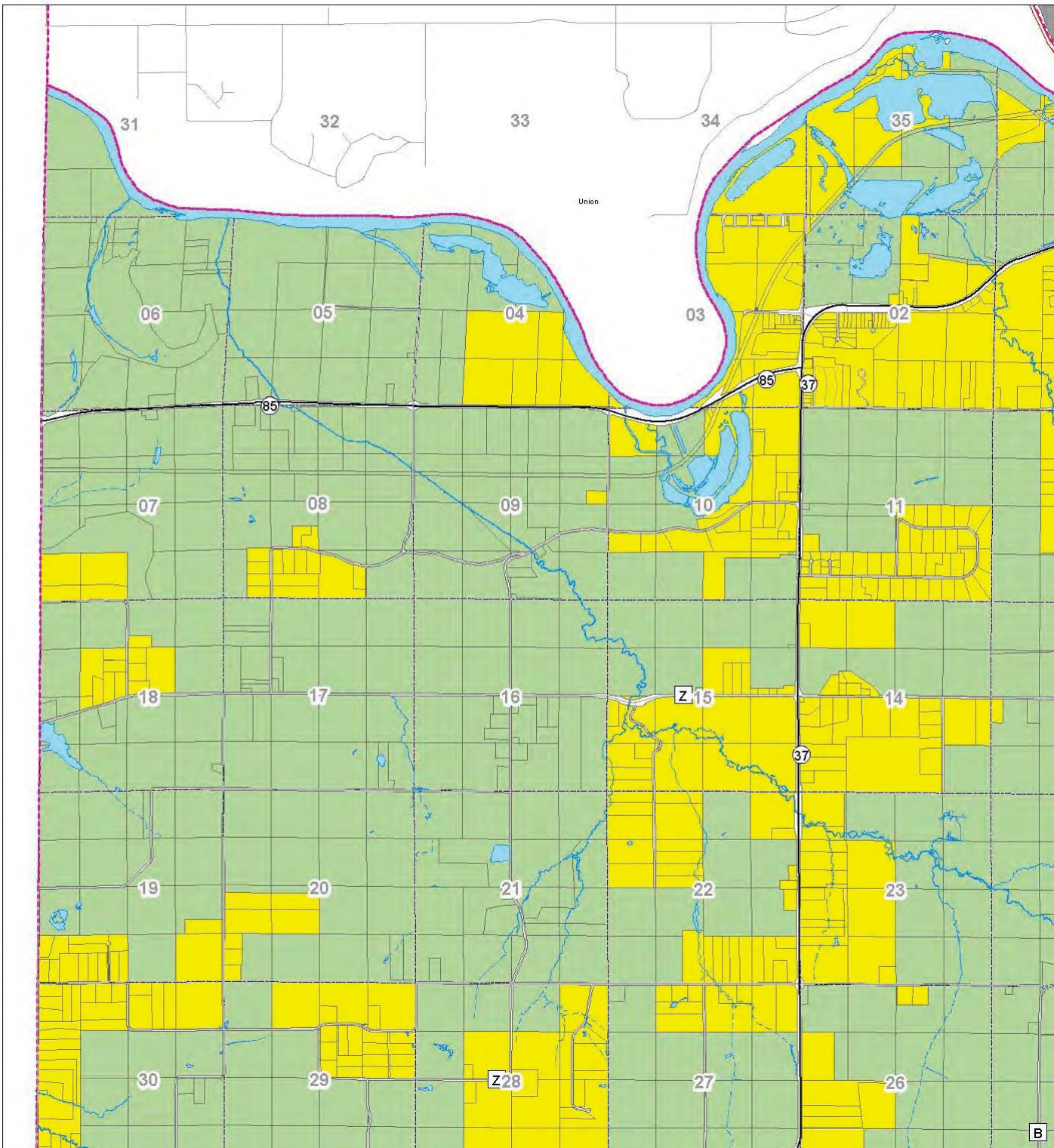


- Map Legend**
- Farmland Designation**
- Exclusive Farmland (Yellow)
  - Farmland (Green)
  - Transition (Orange)
- Roads**
- INT (Interstate)
  - US (U.S. Highway)
  - ST (State Road)
  - CR (County Road)
  - TR (Township Road)

**Parcel Mapping Notes:**  
The horizontal datum is based on the Eau Claire County Coordinate



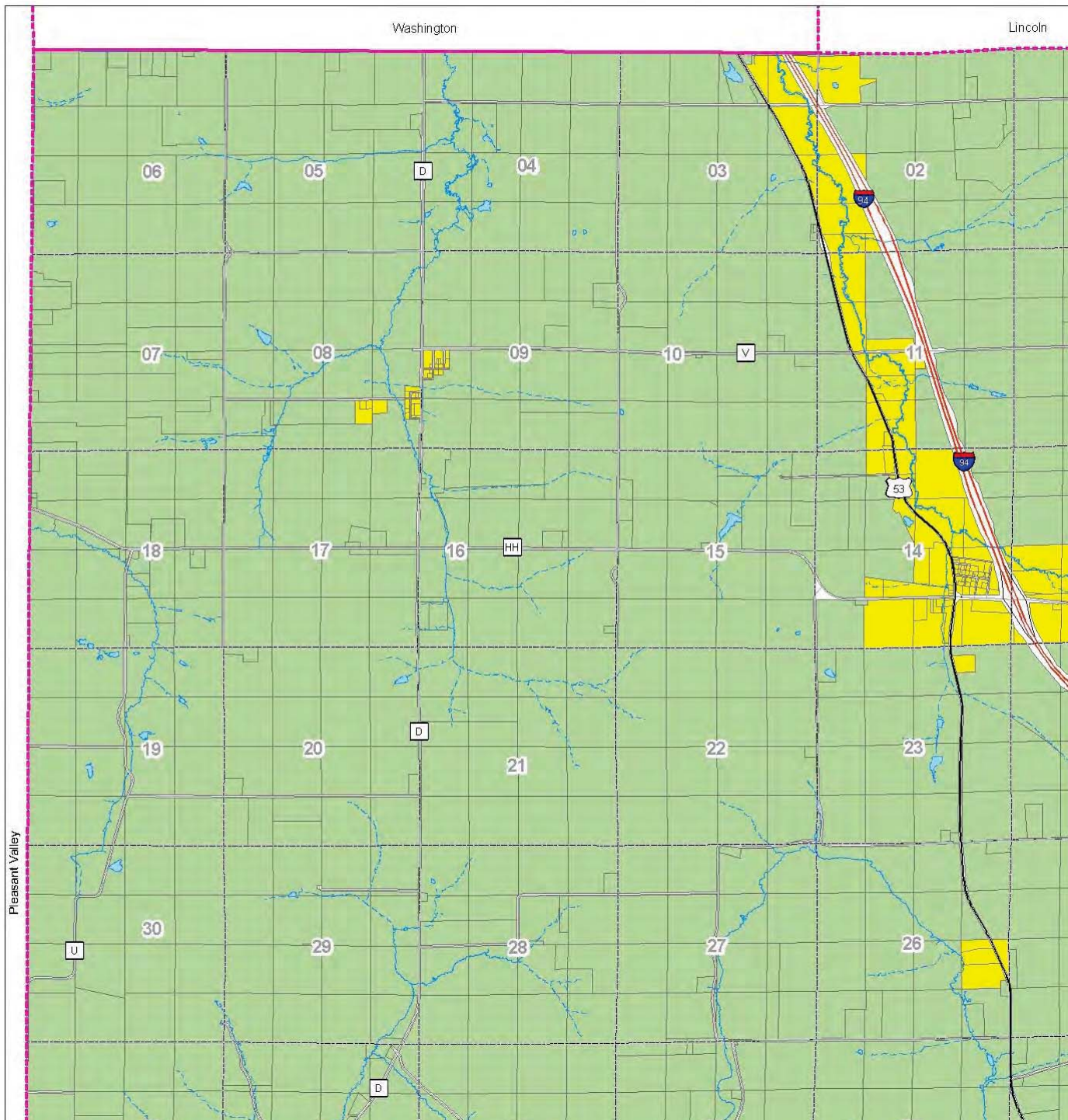
# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 3 TOWN OF BRUNSWICK





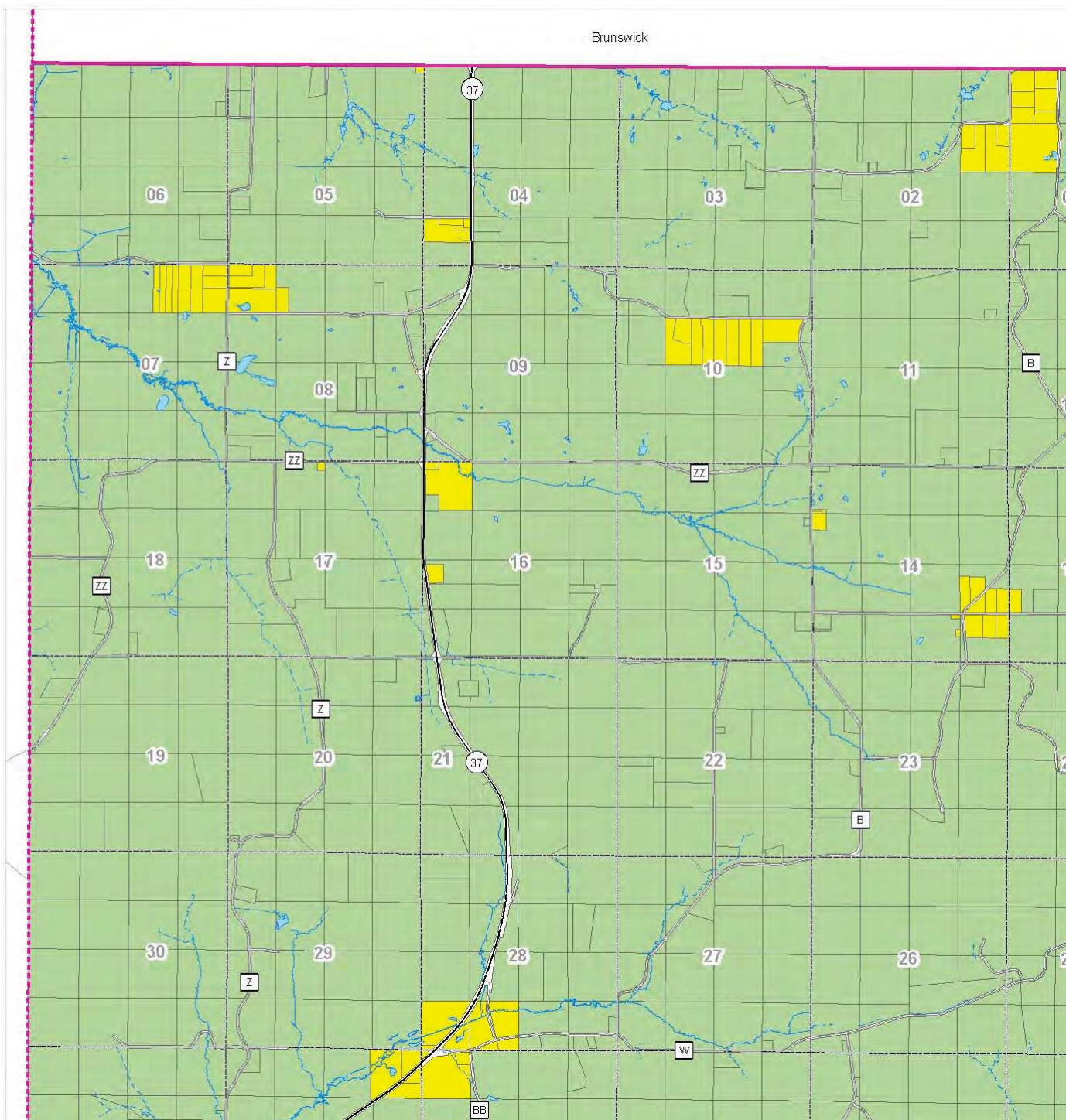


# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 4 TOWN OF CLEAR CREEK



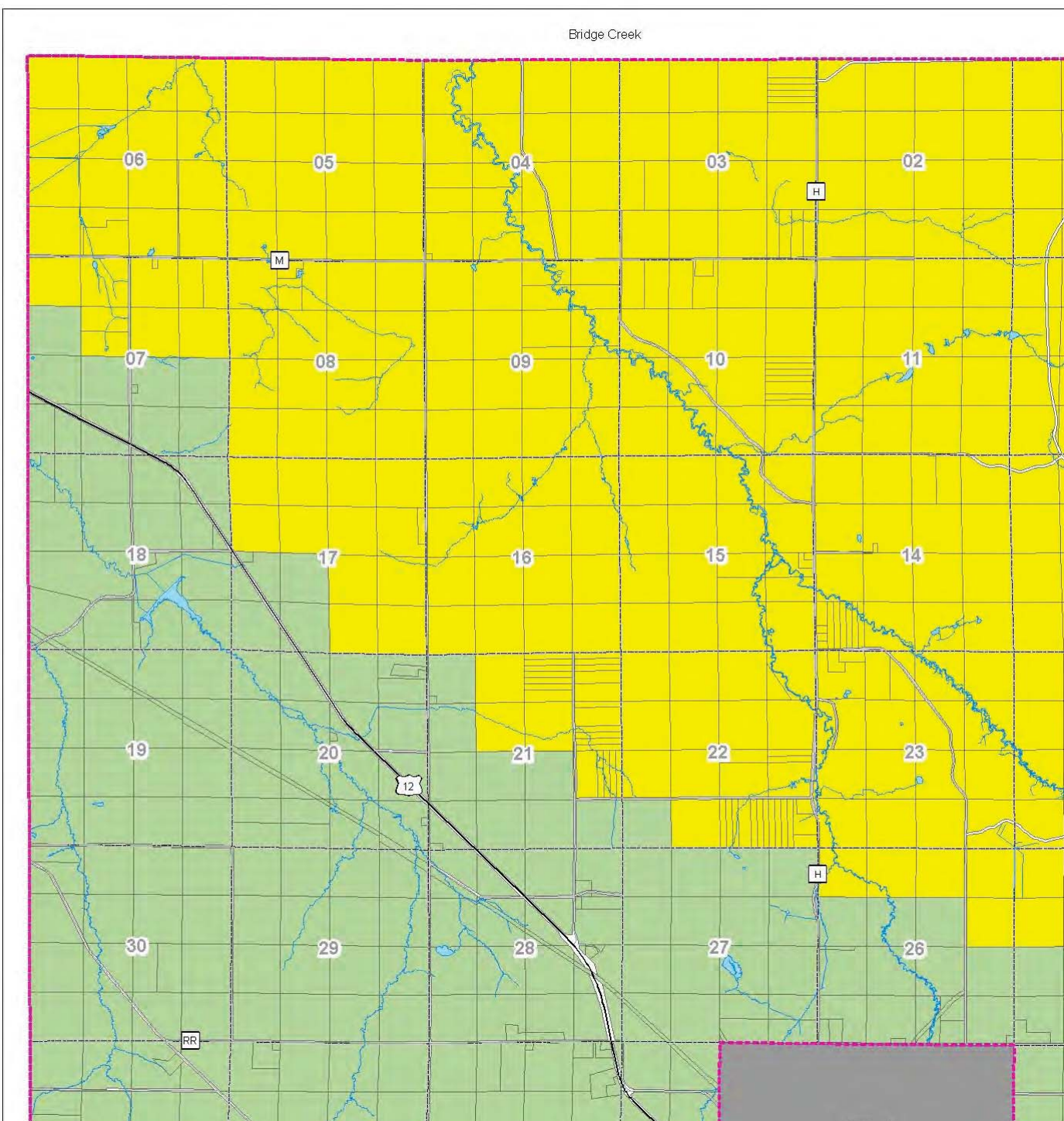


# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 5 TOWN OF DRAMMEN



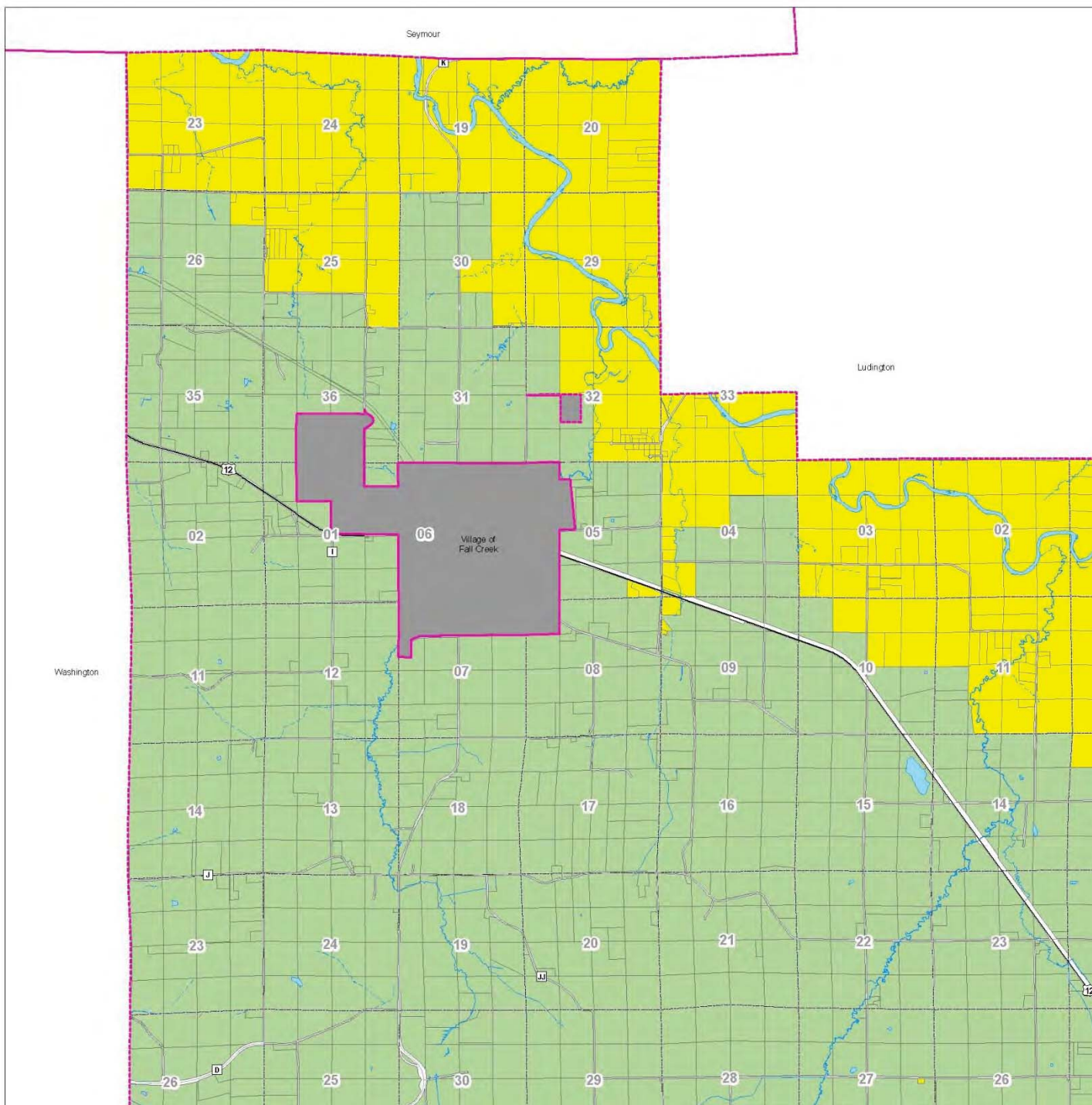


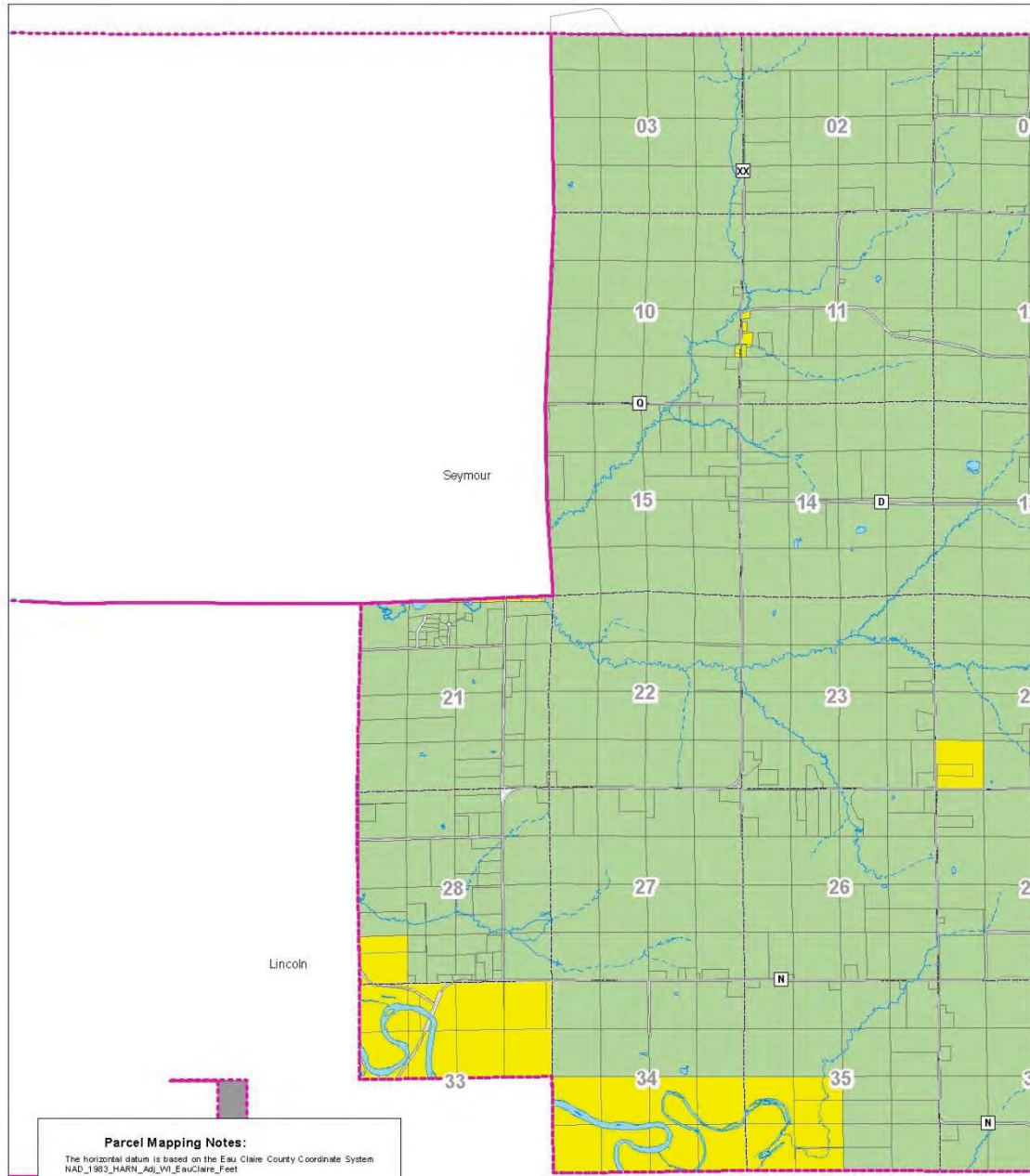
# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 6 TOWN OF FAIRCHILD





# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 7 TOWN OF LINCOLN





**Parcel Mapping Notes:**

The horizontal datum is based on the Eau Claire County Coordinate System NAD\_1983\_HARN\_Adj\_VI\_EauClaire\_Feet

This map is a collection of public record information and was prepared as an ongoing commitment to provide quality and up-to-date information to the public. This map is intended for information use only. Although significant care has been exercised to produce maps that satisfy mapping accuracy standards, these maps are only as accurate as the source data from which they were compiled. These maps are intended to be advisory and are NOT designed or intended to be used as a substitute for an accurate field survey, as performed by a Wisconsin Credentialed Land Surveyor, to determine precise property location.

Eau Claire County does not warrant, guarantee or make any representations regarding the use of, or results from the use of the data in terms of correctness, accuracy, reliability, currentness, or otherwise, and the user relies on the map and results solely at their own risk.

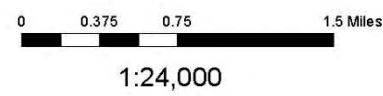
**Eau Claire County Wisconsin**

The Department of Planning & Development  
 Eau Claire County Courthouse  
 721 Oxford Avenue, Room 1518  
 Eau Claire, WI 54703-5481

Map Producer: Peter Strand  
 Map Date: 03-17-2015

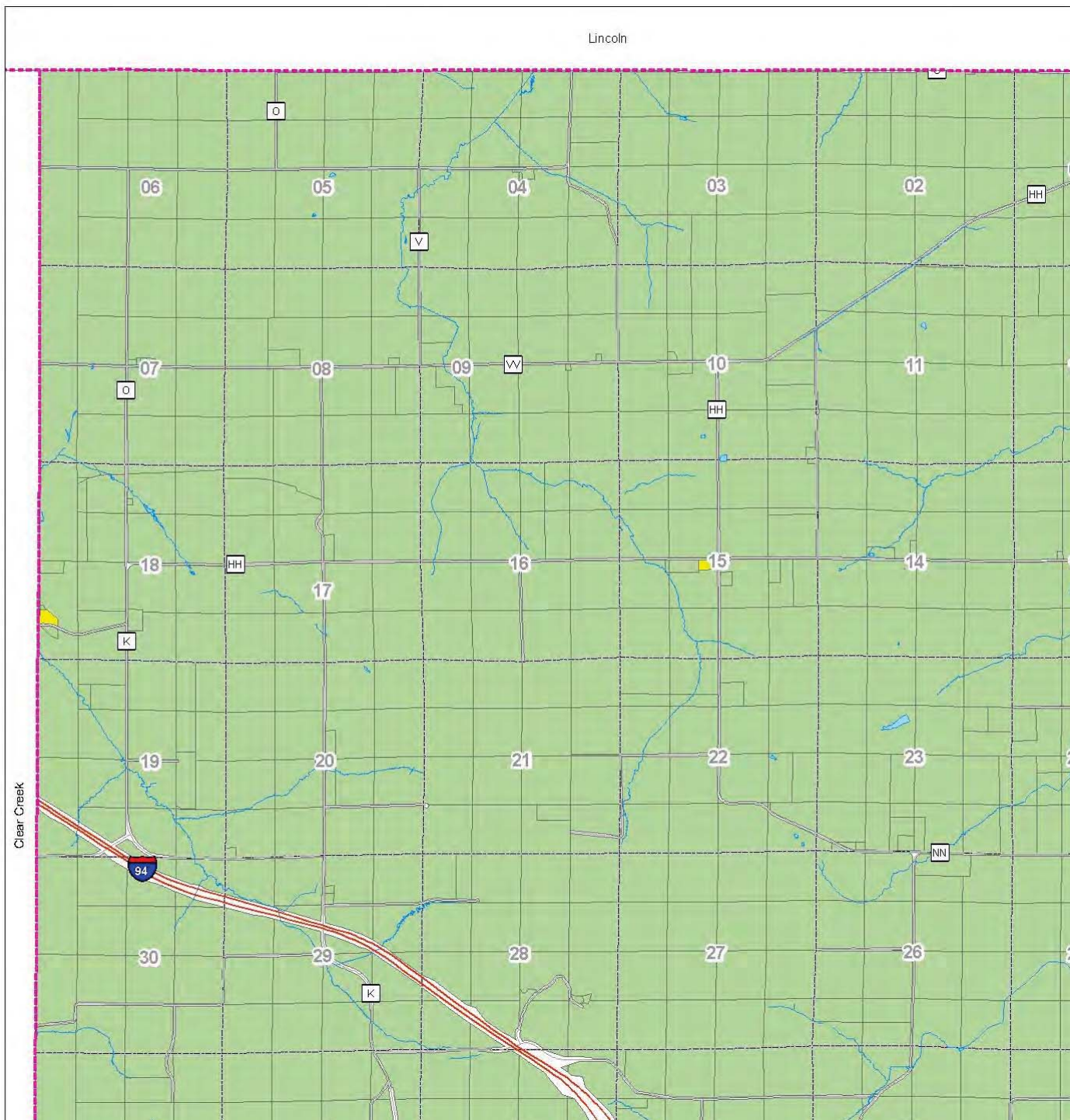
**Map Legend**

<b>Farmland Preservation Designation</b>	<b>Roads</b>	<b>Civil Divisions</b>
Excluded	INTERSTATE	Civil Boundary
Farmland	US HWY	Incorporated Area
Transition	STATE ROAD	<b>Water Features</b>
<b>PLSS</b>	PRIVATE DRIVE	Rivers & Streams
PLSS Sections	RAMP	Lakes & Ponds
	<b>Parcel</b>	
	Parcel Line	



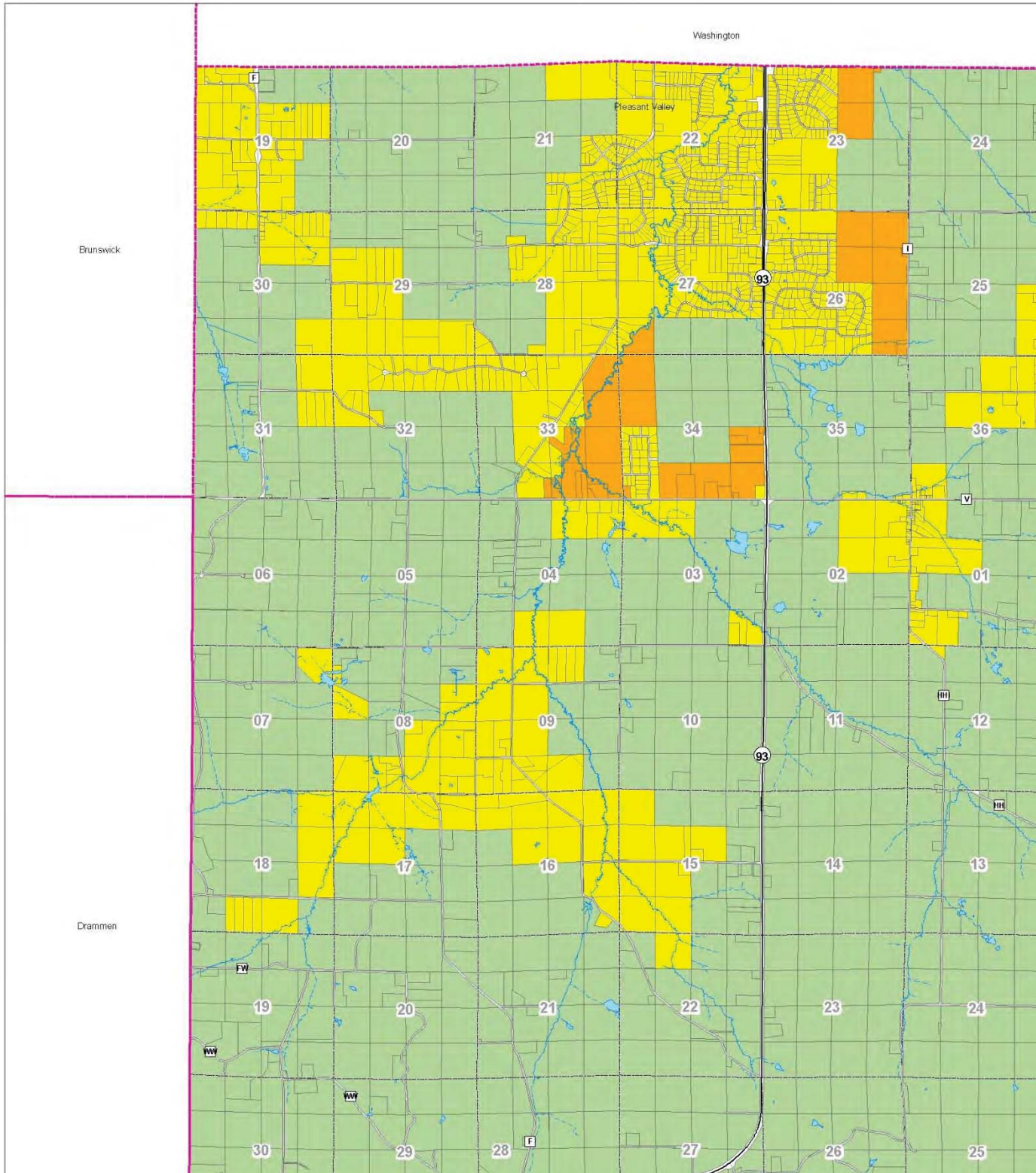


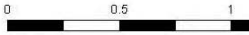
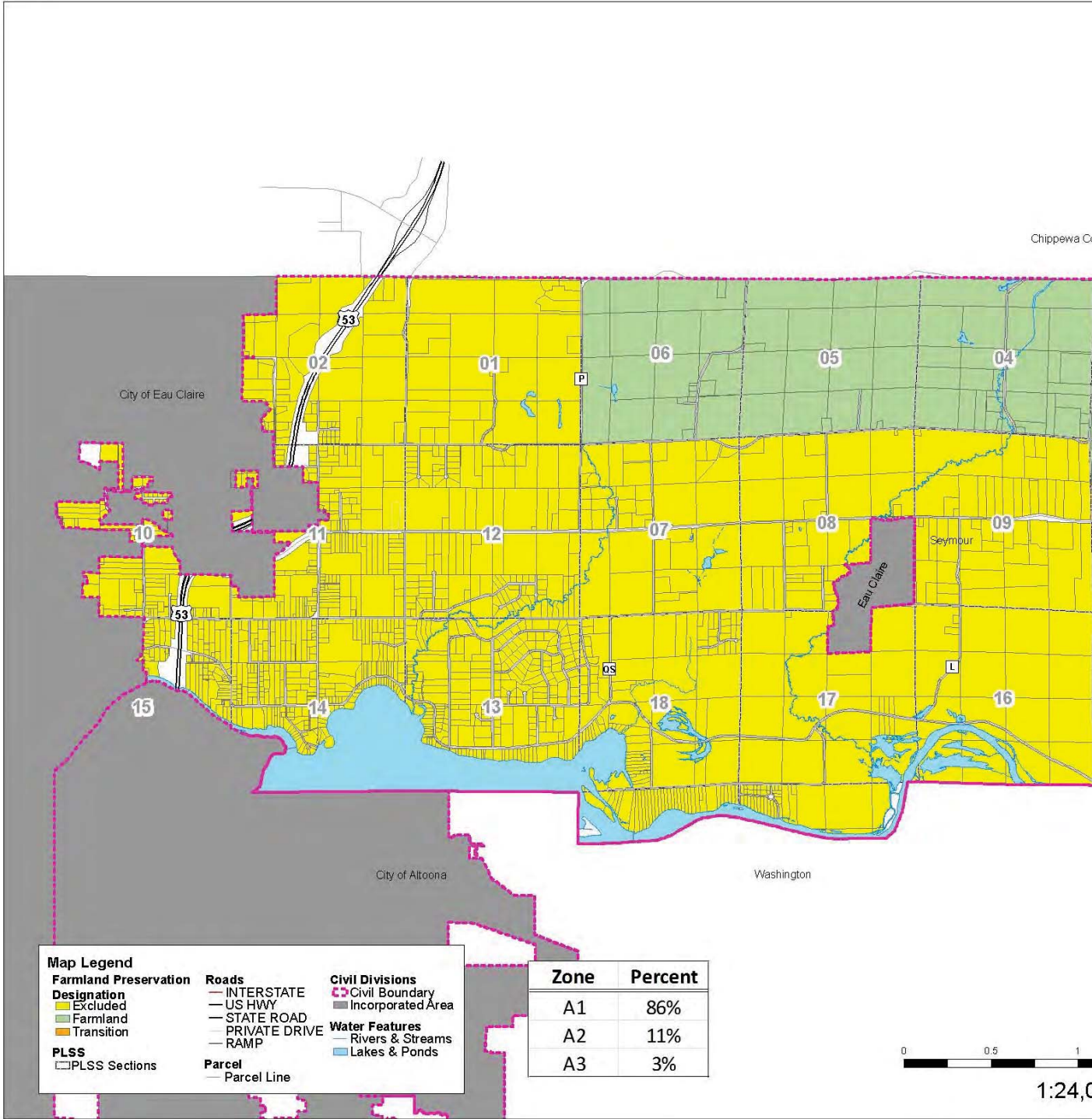
# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 9 TOWN OF OTTER CREEK





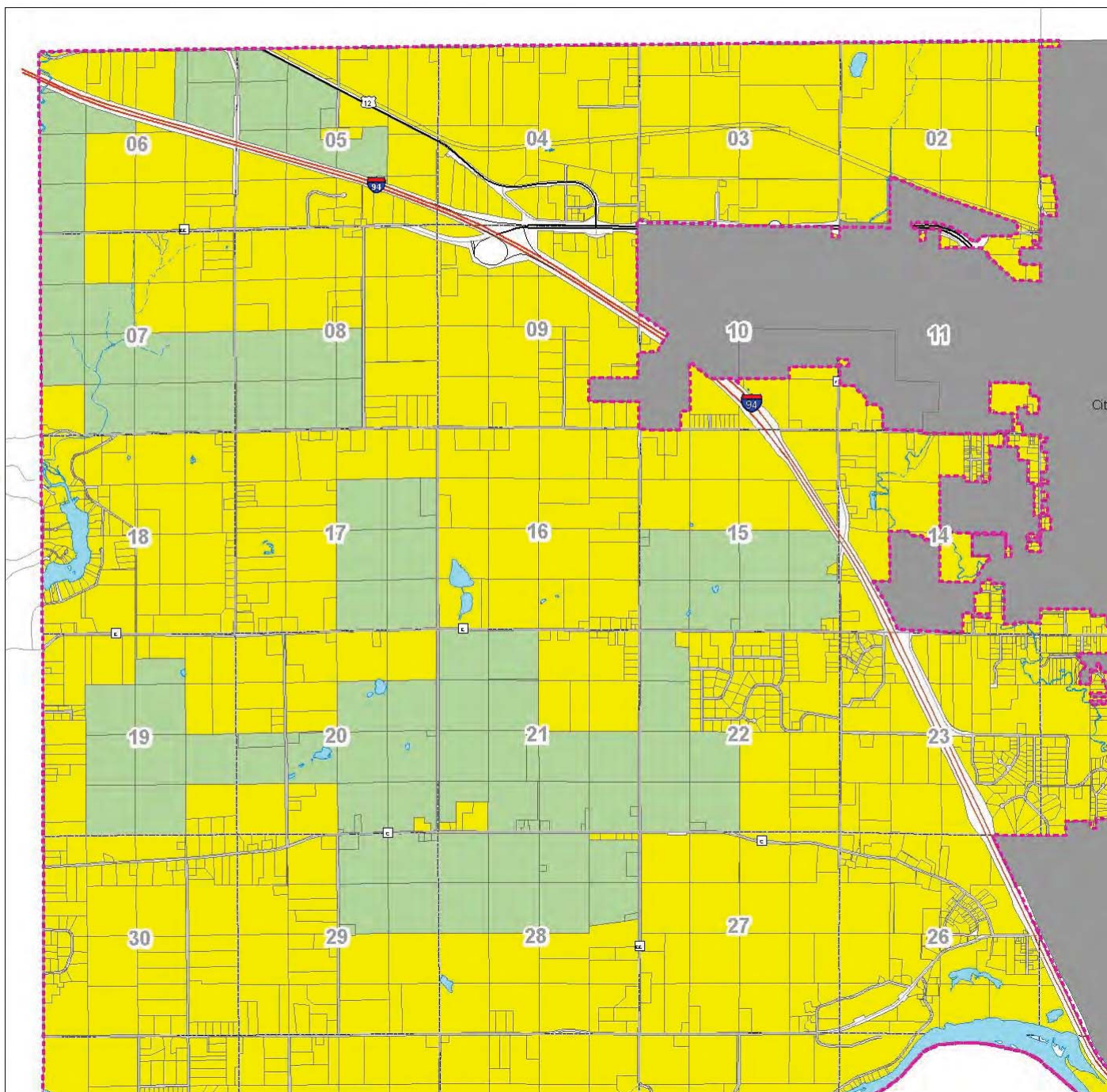
# FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN – MAP 10 TOWN OF PLEASANT VALLEY

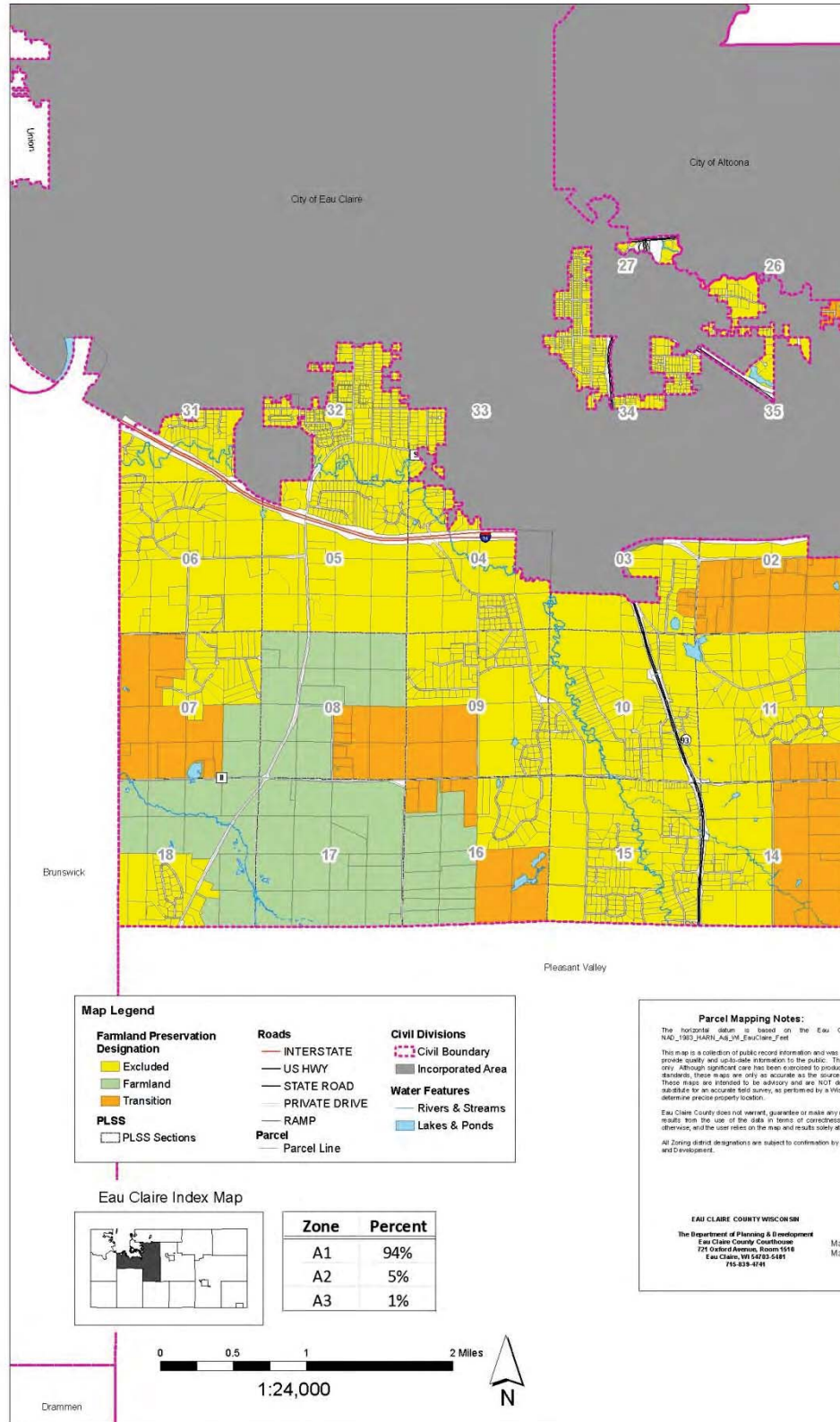


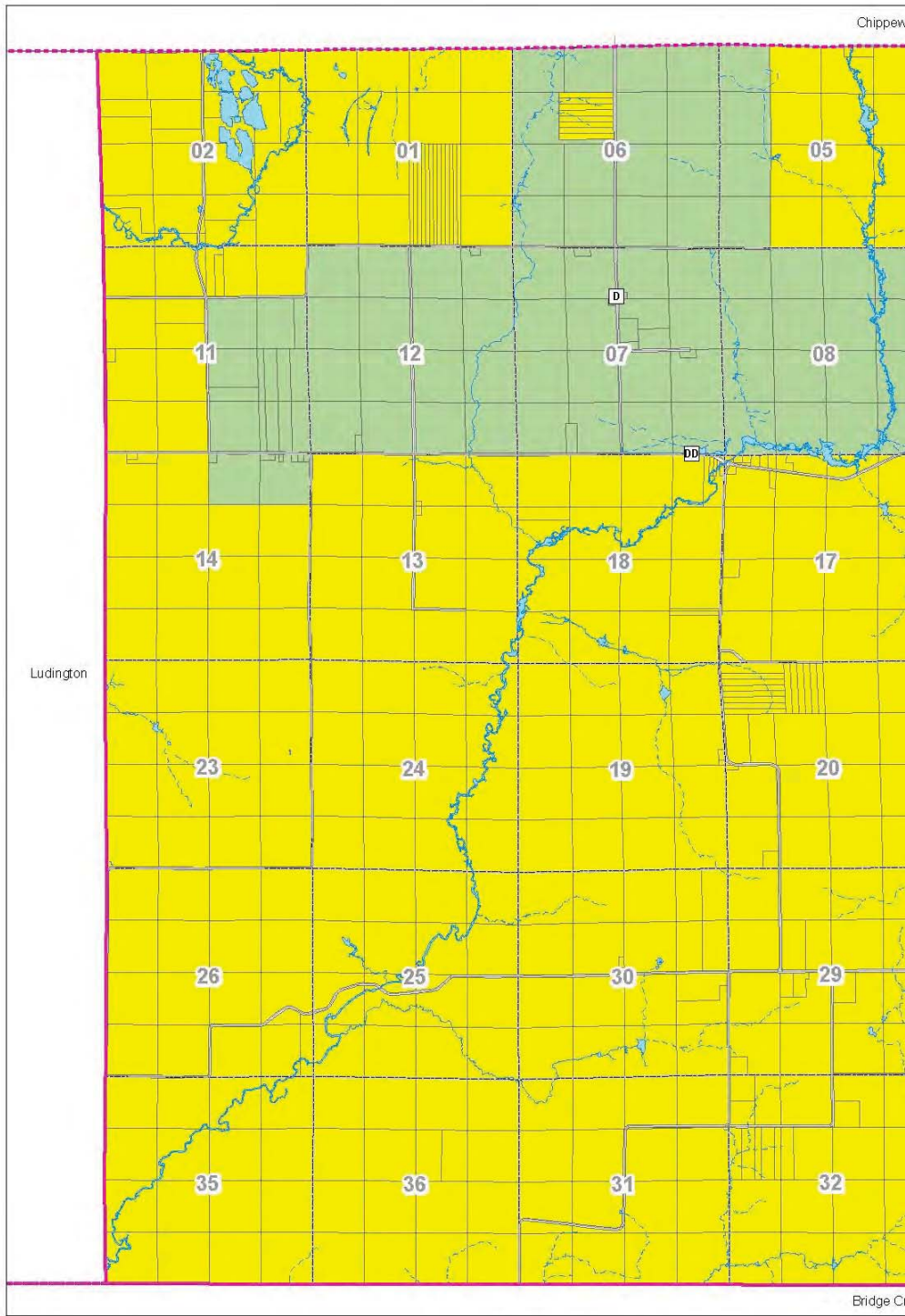


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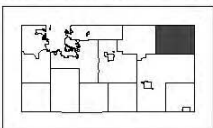




**Map Legend**

<b>Farmland Preservation Designation</b>	<b>Roads</b>	<b>Civil Divisions</b>
Excluded	INTERSTATE	Civil Boundary
Farmland	US HWY	Incorporated Area
Transition	STATE ROAD	
<b>PLSS</b>	PRIVATE DRIVE	<b>Water Features</b>
PLSS Sections	RAMP	Rivers & Streams
	<b>Parcel</b>	Lakes & Ponds
	Parcel Line	

**Eau Claire Index Map**



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