

Request for Participation Targeting Working Lands and Operations Pilot Project

The Center for Land Use Education (CLUE), Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility (LICGF), and the University of Wisconsin – Cooperative Extension (UWEX) are seeking proposals for participation in the Targeting Working Lands and Operations Pilot Project. The project will help researchers test technical and educational approaches intended to help local communities identify and prioritize agricultural lands and operations that meet local agricultural protection objectives. Geographical Information Systems (GIS)¹ and the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)² model will be utilized to identify and prioritize agricultural lands and operations based on input provided by pilot communities.

This project aims to provide local decision-makers with the tools and education necessary to protect locally appropriate agricultural lands and operations. By coordinating citizen stakeholders, government officials, and conservation professionals, this project will enhance public-private partnerships to advance Wisconsin's bio-based economy. If implemented, our methods will help communities address rural development issues and help to optimize the performance of agricultural resources to nurture a sustainable bio-based economy.

Community Selection

Two communities will be selected based on the following criteria. Counties and towns are eligible for participation, but county-wide participation is preferred.

Community Typology: Agriculture should be a significant land use measured by percent of agricultural land use. Communities threatened by farmland conversion to non-agricultural development, as identified by the American Farmland Trust, will be preferred (AFT, 2003b).

Data Accessibility: Pilot communities must have and provide free access to modernized land information for which they are responsible. These data, include, but are not limited to tax parcels, orthophotography, soils, topography, and land use. Communities should provide access to farm tracts and fields and other farm enterprise data, as appropriate or as privacy agreements allow.

Comprehensive Plans: Only communities that have completed or are committed to completing a comprehensive plan that complies with Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (Wis. stat. 66.1001) will be considered in the selection process.

¹ GIS is a tool to create, analyze, and present spatial data.

² LESA is a model developed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to prioritize agricultural lands and operations based on soil properties and various site characteristics.

Favorable Relationships: Support from local participants is necessary to contribute to the success of the project. Support from the county or town board, County UWEX participation, a strong history of working together, and distance from project headquarters will be considered when selecting among communities meeting all other criteria.

Expectations

Individuals from the community will be selected to serve on a local panel. The local panel should consist of local stakeholders (e.g. farmers, rural landowners, plan commissioners) and professionals (e.g. conservationists, planners, educators, assessors). The local panel will be responsible for selecting locally appropriate model criteria and will verify that the model meets local goals and objectives. The local panel should expect to attend six meetings over a period of approximately 12-18 months. The pilot study is anticipated to begin Fall 2007.

The county UWEX Agricultural or Community Resource Development Educator or another county representative is expected to help select locally appropriate individuals to serve on the local panel. County board (town board) members are encouraged to participate in the panel selection process.

Education and training will be provided to community participants and panel members per grant objectives and approach. The LESA model resulting from panel feedback will be provided to a representative of the community to help implement community agricultural protection objectives, such as with agricultural zoning, a purchase/transfer of development rights program, or other implementation strategy.

Please submit a letter of interest and supporting materials to:

Center for Land Use Education
Targeting Working Lands and Operations Study
800 Reserve Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481
landcenter@uwsp.edu

For more information:

Visit www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/workinglands

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