

## Appendix T – Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 2009, the 2009 Wisconsin Act 28, often referred to as the Working Lands Initiative, repealed and recreated Wisconsin's farmland preservation law under Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* and related tax credits under subchapter IX of Chapter 71 of the *Statutes*. It also created a new program, under Section 93.73 of the *Statutes*, for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements. The new law requires counties to update their farmland preservation plans. As stated in Chapter 91, due to the fact that Washington County experienced an increase in population density of more than nine persons per square mile from 2000 to 2007,<sup>1</sup> Washington County must update the 1981 Farmland Preservation Plan and have the plan certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) before it expires on December 31, 2011.<sup>2</sup> Washington County was awarded a \$30,000 farmland preservation planning grant to provide reimbursement for up to 50 percent of the County's cost of preparing the plan. A Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee was established to guide plan development. This farmland preservation plan is a result of the new State laws and replaces the farmland preservation plan adopted by Washington County<sup>3</sup> in 1981.

### History of Farmland Preservation Planning in Washington County

Enacted in 1977, the original Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program was designed to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to eligible farmland owners. The program was administered by County and local governments, but the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) had to first certify that the County farmland preservation plan met the standards specified in Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. Of the 72 counties in Wisconsin, 70 have certified farmland preservation plans. Washington County's Farmland Preservation Plan was adopted by the Washington County Board and certified in 1981.



Wisconsin's original Farmland Preservation Program was enacted in 1977 and Washington County's Farmland Preservation Plan was adopted by the Washington County Board of Supervisors and certified in 1981.

<sup>1</sup> A county's increase in population density is the number by which the county's population per square mile based on the Department of Administration's 2007 population estimate exceeds the county's population per square mile based on the 2000 federal census.

<sup>2</sup> On December 22, 2011, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection approved an extension of the certification of the Washington County Farmland Preservation Plan to December 31, 2012 (See Attachment A).

<sup>3</sup> Documented in Farmland Preservation Plan, Washington County, Wisconsin, August 1981, prepared by the firm of Stockham and Vandewalle under the direction of the Washington County Park and Planning Commission and the Washington County Farmland Preservation Planning Technical Advisory Committee.

Farmland Preservation Areas were identified by Washington County's 1981 Farmland Preservation Plan. The plan defined farmland preservation areas as contiguous blocks of farmland at least 640 acres in size that were relatively uninterrupted by conflicting uses, with at least 50 percent of the soils on each farm meeting Soil Conservation Service (now the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) criteria as "Prime Farmland" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance." Prime agricultural lands are those lands which, in terms of farm size, the aggregate area being farmed, and soil characteristics, are best suited for the production of food and fiber. Generally, prime farmlands are Class I or II soils and farmlands of statewide importance are Class III soils.



Washington County's 1981 Farmland Preservation Plan defined farmland preservation areas as contiguous blocks of farmland at least 640 acres in size that were relatively uninterrupted by conflicting uses, with at least 50 percent of the soil identified as "Prime Farmland".

Map 70 in Washington County's comprehensive plan shows prime agricultural lands recommended to be preserved under the County's 1981 farmland preservation plan, with updates made as part of the 2020 Washington County Park and Open Space Plan to remove lands developed with urban uses between 1981 and 1995. Map 70 also shows prime agricultural lands in the Village of Germantown, which were not included in the County's 1981 farmland preservation plan. The Washington County Farmland Preservation Plan was amended in 2004. The amendments included a change in the advisory guidelines for secondary farmland areas, advising that housing developments should be primarily limited to farm related dwellings, and updates to the maps identifying farmland preservation areas in the Towns of Hartford and Kewaskum. The amendments were approved by the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board on December 30, 2003.

### Overview of the Working Lands Initiative

The preservation of Wisconsin's working lands is critical for the health and success of the State and its residents. These lands provide homes for people, flora, and fauna, and produce food, fiber, and sources of biomass for fuels and energy. Preservation of this resource base is vital for the future of agriculture, the health of our environment, and to sustain a healthy economy in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's farms and agricultural businesses generate \$59.16 billion in economic activity and provide jobs for 353,991 people, according to a recent study conducted by University of



In 2007, Wisconsin's farms and agricultural businesses generated \$59.16 billion in economic activity and provided jobs for 353,991 people.



The Working Lands Initiative (WLI) was created to protect the best agricultural lands from non-agricultural development and ensure agriculture remains a strong aspect of Wisconsin's economy.

Wisconsin-Extension based on data for 2007. Over recent decades, Wisconsin's working lands have been threatened by the pace and the fragmented fashion that farmland has been converted to other forms of development, often referred to as "sprawl," as local governments approve subdivision plats according to their land use plans and comprehensive plans to accommodate a growing population. Recognizing that housing development is needed as populations increase, the Working Lands Initiative (WLI) was created to protect the best agricultural lands from non-agricultural development and ensure agriculture remains a strong aspect of Wisconsin's economy, while encouraging strategies to increase housing density in areas outside of the farmland preservation areas.



Farmland has been threatened by rapid conversion of agricultural land to development to accommodate population growth.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) launched the WLI in 2005 and established a steering committee to develop a consensus vision on managing Wisconsin's farm and forest lands. In August 2006, the WLI Steering Committee issued a report with a set of recommendations intended to update and expand policies and programs affecting Wisconsin farmlands and forests. The report recommended an update to the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program. Proposed changes to the Farmland Preservation Program were included in DATCP's 2007-09 budget request. The Committee's report recommended establishing a number of new programs, including an Agricultural Enterprise Areas program and a purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program. The main components of the WLI expand and modernize the State's existing farmland preservation program through the development of a PACE matching grant program<sup>4</sup> and tax credit incentives made eligible through the use of farmland preservation zoning or establishment of agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs). These components incorporate more specific goals of the WLI, including:

- Enabling county farmland preservation plans to meet current challenges through modern strategies and establishes minimum zoning standards to increase local flexibility and reduce land use conflicts (though local governments are entitled to apply more stringent standards).
- Helping to maintain large areas of contiguous land primarily in agricultural use and to reduce land use conflicts through AEAs, providing landowners with an opportunity to enter into farmland preservation agreements to claim income tax credits and encouraging farmers and local governments to invest in agriculture.
- Protecting farmland by providing State funds in the form of matching grants to local governments and non-profit conservation organizations for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements from willing landowners through PACE. The 2011 WI Act 32, enacted by the State on June 26, 2011 removed the bonding authority for this program. DATCP is required to evaluate the PACE program and provide a report by June 30, 2012. The program considers 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 while evaluating applications for PACE funds.<sup>5</sup>



One of the goals of the WLI is to maintain large areas of contiguous land primarily in agricultural use and to reduce land use conflicts through Agricultural Enterprise Areas.

<sup>4</sup> 2011 WI Act 32, 2011-2013 State Biennial Budget Bill requires DATCP to evaluate the PACE program, including but not limited to the local administration of the program, source of funding, State participation and requirements for local match. DATCP is required to include options to replace PACE with a less costly and more efficient program for preserving farmland and report its findings to the State Joint Financing Committee and the standing agricultural committees in each house of the Legislature by June 30, 2012. Sixteen PACE easements approved in 2010 will be honored.

<sup>5</sup> Program Summary: Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative. Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, July 2009. (<http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/workinglands/pdf/ProgramSummaryJuly2009.pdf>). See footnote 3.

There are many differences between the old farmland preservation program and the new State laws. A comparison of the requirements to develop a farmland preservation plan under the old Farmland Preservation Program prior to July 1, 2009 and Wisconsin's new farmland preservation law under Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* is displayed in Table T-1.

**Table T-1  
COMPARISON OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Farmland Preservation Program (Prior to July 1, 2009)</b>	<b>Working Lands Initiative (July 1, 2009)</b>
Plan Certification Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Required certification by the Land and Water Conservation Board.</li> <li>- DATCP staff review all submissions and make recommendations for certification, denial or certification with conditions.</li> <li>- Minor plan amendments are subject to same review requirements as complete plans.</li> <li>- There is no deadline for turnaround of plan review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Required certification by DATCP. DATCP staff have discretion to review plans or to accept self-certification by county.</li> <li>- Certification with conditions is avoided, except where county board has not yet adopted plan at time of review.</li> <li>- Staff have discretion to avoid certification review of minor plan amendments.</li> <li>- There is a 90-day turnaround time for plan review.</li> </ul>
Certification Expiration Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No expiration date on original plans. Those submitted since 1995, and approved, were granted 10-year certification terms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May be certified for up to 10 years.</li> </ul>
Public Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public hearing under s. 59.69 required prior to plan adoption. Copies of the plan or plan amendment must be submitted, at least 60 days prior to the public hearing, to all cities, villages and towns within the county, to the Regional Planning Commission, and to all adjoining counties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires county to follow 66.1001(4) (comprehensive planning process) for plan adoption. This includes sending copies of the plan or amendment to all cities, villages and towns within the county, to the Regional Planning Commission, and to all adjoining counties.</li> </ul>
Focus of Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preservation of agricultural land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preservation of agricultural land, and economic development of agriculture.</li> </ul>
Consistency Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ag Preservation Plan must be consistent with and a component of county development plan under s. 59.69.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Farmland Preservation Plan must be included in and consistent with county comprehensive plan under s. 66.1001.</li> </ul>
Inclusion of Town Ag Preservation Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ch. 91 recognizes only county ag preservation plans. However, the county ag preservation plan must include municipal ag preservation plans if these comply with requirements under s. 91.55 and s. 91.57, Stats. (2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ch. 91 recognizes only county ag preservation plans.</li> </ul>
Preservation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish minimum size of 100 acres for each contiguous agricultural preservation area, and 35 acres for each contiguous ag transition area in plan.</li> <li>- Areas must be devoted to agricultural use, though natural resource and open space areas are allowed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No minimum size for farmland preservation areas.</li> <li>- No transition areas allowed.</li> <li>- Areas must be devoted to either primarily ag use, primarily ag-related uses, or both, though natural resource and open space areas are allowed.</li> </ul>
Rationale for Exclusion Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under s. 91.05, Stats. (2007), reasons for excluding areas previously mapped for FP must be provided, and meet one of four criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All that is required is a general statement identifying differences from the previous plan; no specific rationale for removal of ag preservation lands in previous plan is required.</li> </ul>
Planning Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No grant funding available for plan development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning grants available to reimburse counties for up to 50% of eligible costs to develop plan, not to exceed \$30,000 in State funding.</li> </ul>

Source: DATCP and Washington County.

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 91, Subchapter II of the *Statutes* specifically identifies planning requirements to obtain State certification of a county farmland preservation plan. All plans must clearly state the county policy related to:

- Farmland preservation, and
- Agricultural development, including development of enterprises related to agriculture.

### Plan Certification Expiration

Nearly all counties in the State have an existing county farmland preservation plan. According to Ch. 91 of the *Statutes*, certifications of all existing county farmland preservation plans are scheduled to expire by December 31, 2015. The statute establishes a staggered time frame for plan expirations based upon population growth per square mile from 2000 to 2007. Due to Washington County experiencing an increase in population density of more than nine persons per square mile, the County's existing plan expires December 31, 2011.<sup>7</sup>

DATCP has granted Washington County's request to extend the certification of the Washington County Farmland Preservation Plan Map for the Towns of Kewaskum and Hartford. The certifications were scheduled to expire on December 31, 2009. The certification for the Washington County plan map for the Towns of Kewaskum and Hartford will now expire on December 31, 2011 based on provisions of Wisconsin Statute 91.14(4), 2009 WI Act 28. The extension to the certification will allow Washington County to update the plan map for the Towns of Kewaskum and Hartford based on new statutes implementing the working lands initiative.

### Plan Certification Process

Once a farmland preservation plan is developed, the county must apply to DATCP for plan certification. By completing the "County Application for Farmland Preservation Plan Certification,"<sup>8</sup> a county self-certifies to DATCP that the plan meets the applicable requirements for certification identified in State law. Based on a county's self-certification, DATCP can certify the plan if all certification requirements are met. DATCP must make a certification decision within 90 days if the application submitted was complete. There is no requirement to seek certification from a State level board such as the Land and Water Conservation Board, and a farmland preservation plan may be certified for a period of up to 10 years.

Self-certification of the plan requires the county corporation counsel and county planning director or county chief elected official to review the farmland preservation plan and certify that it meets State law. DATCP has the authority to conduct additional review of the plan to ensure that the plan meets the Working Lands Initiative standards. If a county plan is denied certification, the county can re-submit a revised application that addresses the issues cited by the department in denying the earlier certification request.

### Key Inventory and Trends

Statutory requirements call for a farmland preservation plan to identify, describe, and document:

- Agricultural uses of land in the county at the time that the farmland preservation plan is adopted, including key agricultural specialties, if any.
- Key infrastructure for agriculture, including facilities for processing, storage, transportation, and supply.
- Key agricultural resources, including available land, soil, and water and resources.

A farmland preservation plan must also identify, describe, and document significant trends in the county related to agricultural land use, agricultural production, enterprises related to agriculture, and the conversion of agricultural land to other uses and anticipated changes in the nature, scope, location, and focus of agricultural production,

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<sup>6</sup> County Farmland Preservation Planning requirements are outlined in Subchapter II of Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

<sup>7</sup> DATCP approved an extension of certification of the Farmland Preservation Plan to December 31, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://workinglands.wi.gov>.

processing, supply, or distribution. The plan must also identify, describe, and document development trends, plans, or needs that may affect farmland preservation and agricultural development in the county related to the following:

- population growth
- economic growth
- housing
- transportation
- utilities
- communications
- business development
- energy
- community facilities and services
- waste management
- municipal expansion
- environmental preservation



**Development of Farmland Preservation Areas**

A key component to development of a county farmland preservation plan is the identification of “farmland preservation areas.” A farmland preservation area (FPA) is an area where the county plans to preserve agriculture and agricultural related uses. These areas may also include natural resource areas such as wetlands. Counties must develop an objective rationale to explain the areas chosen for farmland preservation. The mapping of FPAs has direct implications for development of farmland preservation zoning ordinances since certification of farmland preservation zoning districts requires that the district be located within a FPA. Similarly, agricultural enterprise areas and PACE easements that receive DATCP grants may only be located in an area identified as a FPA.

**Development of Vision, Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

A farmland preservation plan must state the county's policy related to farmland preservation, agricultural development, and the development of enterprises related to agriculture. In addition, the plan must identify, describe, and document the following:

- Goals for agricultural development in the county, including goals related to the development of enterprises related to agriculture.
- Actions that the county will take to preserve farmland and actions that the county will take to promote agricultural development.
- Policies, goals, strategies, and proposed actions to increase housing density in certain areas planned for non-agricultural development within 15 years after the date on which the plan is adopted (possibly excluding undeveloped natural resource and open space areas).
- Key land issues related to preserving farmland and promoting agricultural development and plans for addressing these issues.

**Public Participation**

As stated in Section 91.10(3) of the *Statutes*, “To adopt a farmland preservation plan, a county shall follow the procedures under s. 66.1001(4) for the adoption of a comprehensive plan” which includes the adoption of a public participation plan. On March 16, 2010, the Washington County Board of Supervisors adopted 2009 Resolution 74 establishing public participation procedures for the development and amendments to the Farmland Preservation Plan for Washington County meeting the requirements of 66.1001(4)(a) of the *Statutes*. The public participation plan describes the methods the County will use to distribute proposed, alternative, or amended elements of this farmland preservation plan, and the opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the County and for the County to respond to such comments.

Techniques to obtain public opinion included news releases, fact sheets, newsletters, a County website, local government websites, display exhibits, a landowner survey, focus groups, public open houses, a public hearing, local government meetings, and six advisory committee meetings. Initial events include:

- A joint workshop with DATCP and staff from Washington and Ozaukee Counties was held at Riveredge Nature Center on March 25, 2010 to present information and discuss the farmland preservation program requirements and updates to the two county farmland preservation plans with local officials.
- A public countywide kickoff and informational meeting was held at the Washington County Fair Park Pavilion on June 29, 2010 to present information and gain public opinion about the Working Lands Initiative programs and the County Farmland Preservation Plan planning process.

A countywide open house and public hearing was held at the Washington County Fair Park Pavilion on October 24, 2011 to solicit public comment regarding the farmland preservation plan.



A joint workshop with DATCP and staff from Washington and Ozaukee Counties was held at Riveredge Nature Center on March 25, 2010 for local officials.



An overview of the Working Lands Initiative and planning process was presented at Washington County Fair Park on June 29, 2010.

### **Plan Review and Adoption**

Section 91.10(3) of the Wisconsin *Statutes* requires that the County shall adopt the Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) following the procedures under s. 66.1001(4) for the adoption of a comprehensive plan. On October 26, 2011, Washington County’s Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee (PCPC) recommended the adoption of this farmland preservation plan to the Washington County Board of Supervisors by approving a resolution and ordinance by a majority vote of the entire committee. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) certified the FPP on May 17, 2013.<sup>9</sup> Changes based on DATCP’s recommendations were presented to the PCPC on September 30, 2013 and they recommended adoption of the FPP to the Washington County Board of Supervisors by approving a resolution and ordinance. The County’s FPP was made a part of the Comprehensive Plan by adoption of an amendment known as Amendment No. 2: Appendix T – A Farmland Preservation Plan for Washington County to A *Multi-jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Washington County: 2035* on **(insert date)**.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLANNING**

### **Comprehensive Planning Overview**

In 1999 the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a new comprehensive planning law, set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, requiring County and local governments that enforce general zoning, shoreland zoning, subdivision, or official mapping ordinances to have an adopted comprehensive plan by January 1, 2010. To address the State comprehensive planning requirements, a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process was undertaken by Washington County, 11 local government partners, UW-Extension, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). As a result of the multi-jurisdictional process, comprehensive plans that satisfy the planning requirements set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Statutes* were developed for the County and each of the 11 local government partners.

On April 15, 2008, the Washington County Board of Supervisors adopted *A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Washington County: 2035*. Washington County's Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan provides long-range goals and objectives for Washington County officials and citizens to effectively address future development and natural resource protection in the County through the year 2035.

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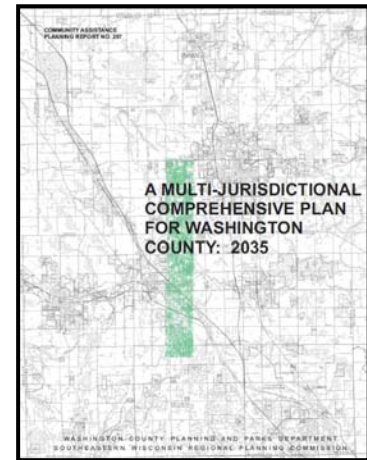
<sup>9</sup> DATCP’s certification order is included as Attachment B at the end of this plan appendix.

Farmland preservation was one of many issues identified during the comprehensive planning process in Washington County. Valuable agricultural information can be found throughout the County’s comprehensive plan including an inventory of agricultural resources (Chapter III); general goals and objectives (Chapter VII); and specific goals, objectives, policies, and programs developed for agricultural (Chapter VIII), land use (Chapter IX), and economic development (Chapter XIII) planning. This plan frequently references tables and maps found in Washington County’s comprehensive plan.

**Farmland Preservation Plan as Part of Comprehensive Plan**

Section 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* states that “If the county has a comprehensive plan, the county shall include the farmland preservation plan in its comprehensive plan and shall ensure that the farmland preservation plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan. The county may incorporate information contained in other parts of the comprehensive plan into the farmland preservation plan by reference.” Therefore, this plan is being developed as a part of Washington County’s comprehensive plan as an appendix. The County Farmland Preservation Plan should also be consistent with local government comprehensive plans.

Counties should strive to ensure consistency between all county plans during development of a farmland preservation plan. Washington County’s Land and Water Resource Management Plan addresses issues related to soil and water conservation compliance, a requirement for claiming a tax credit under the farmland preservation program. The County has a strategy to monitor the compliance of farmland preservation participants with these standards as a part of land and water resource management workplan. County departments should communicate with each other to ensure that there is consistency between plans. County and Regional plans are discussed in Chapter V of this plan.



The County must include the farmland preservation plan in its comprehensive plan and the two documents must be consistent.

**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

The County farmland preservation planning effort was coordinated through the Washington County Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee (PCPC) of the County Board. The PCPC provided oversight of the County planning effort and approval of the recommended farmland preservation plan for consideration for adoption by the full County Board. A Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee was established by the PCPC to guide preparation of the County FPP, including:

- Development of planning goals and objectives
- Development of a vision for the future of farmland preservation in the County
- Review draft plan chapters and other plan materials
- Identification of Farmland Preservation Areas
- Development of a recommended plan for consideration by the PCPC



A Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee (FPPAC) was formed to guide development of the Farmland Preservation Plan.

During the summer of 2010, Washington County staff attended Plan Commission and/or Board meetings in all Towns in Washington County and also the Villages of Richfield and Germantown to present an overview of the Working Lands Initiative and the County’s plan of action to develop its farmland preservation plan. All cities, villages, and towns within the County were invited to appoint a representative to serve on the Advisory Committee. Members of the Advisory Committee are listed in the front of this report.



## **FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN REPORT FORMAT**

This planning report consists of eight chapters, which have been adopted as Appendix T of *A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Washington County: 2035*. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II presents population, housing and employment trends and projections. Existing recommendations for farmland preservation in Washington County follow in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains an inventory of agricultural resources while Chapter V describes trends, plans or needs that may affect farmland preservation. Chapter VI discusses tools for preserving and supporting farmland preservation. Chapter VII includes issue identification, an explanation of farmland preservation areas, and recommendations describing proposed goals and actions for preserving farmland. The final chapter, Chapter VIII, describes programs and actions to undertake for the implementation of the farmland preservation plan.

As is required by the Working Lands Initiative, the farmland preservation plan must be consistent with the County's comprehensive plan. To avoid the repetition of much information, such as the extensive inventory of agricultural resources, and to conveniently include the farmland preservation plan as an appendix to the comprehensive plan, portions of the farmland preservation plan will reference the comprehensive plan. The reference includes a general description of where the relevant information can be found within the comprehensive plan.

## **FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLANNING PROCESS**

### **Planning Area**

The planning area includes all of Washington County and those portions of the City of Hartford and Village of Newburg that extend outside Washington County. The County is bordered on the north by Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties, on the west by Dodge County, on the east by Ozaukee County, to the south by Waukesha County, and by Milwaukee County to the southeast. Washington County encompasses a total of 278,756 acres, or about 436 square miles.

### **Planning Process**

The farmland preservation plan presented in this report was developed through a two-year planning process consisting of the following steps: 1) start up tasks, 2) inventory, 3) issue identification, visioning, and establishment of goals, 4) identification of strategies and action, 5) preparation of implementation elements, 6) plan review, refinement, and adoption. Another key step in the farmland preservation planning process will be the implementation of the plan by Washington County and each local government. Throughout the planning process, the active participation of citizens, landowners, County and local government officials, and interest groups was essential for identifying important issues and preparing a plan with realistic goals for the County and local governments.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

While planning provides many important public benefits, it is important to recognize that an adopted plan is not an “end result,” but rather provides recommendations for future action. Plan recommendations will be fulfilled over time in generally small, incremental steps. A farmland preservation plan provides a foundation and guide for implementing numerous preservation tools, which may include community zoning ordinances and maps, subdivision ordinances, capital improvements programming, detailed facilities planning, and other County and local ordinances, programs, and policies. The implementation of new County programs identified in the plan will require the review and approval of appropriate County Board liaison committees and the County Board of Supervisors through the annual budget process.

Suggestions for local government consideration are included in various parts of this plan and under each planning element in Washington County's comprehensive plan. Local governments will have a greater influence over farmland preservation than County government, especially with regard to providing protection for agricultural lands through local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Each community should consider and refine the

suggestions as they relate to their farmland preservation goals, objectives, policies, and programs in their local comprehensive plans. Local governments may also choose not to consider suggestions that are not relevant to their community's needs, or are not consistent with their local comprehensive plan.