

AGRICULTURAL VISION

In the year 2035, the farms and agricultural enterprises operate efficiently and effectively, and the farmers are good stewards of the land, preserving it for future generations. St. Croix's agricultural sector is particularly important to its residents. The County works to maintain farming as an occupation for families and as an active land use. The County recognizes that agricultural land is not undeveloped land waiting for other uses, but is a valuable and productive resource that supports a healthy agricultural industry. The County's agricultural industry includes farms of all types and sizes supported by a variety of economic and land use techniques.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, St. Croix County has experienced significant changes in agriculture. These changes are primarily a result of growth pressures from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, which have contributed to the largest percent population growth in the State, a significant change in who lives in the County and where they work, and the loss of farmland. This growth has caused an increase in traffic and an increased strain on public facilities and school districts. While there has been some loss of agricultural land caused by new residential, commercial, and industrial development, growth has been only one factor in the transformation of the types of agriculture in St. Croix County.

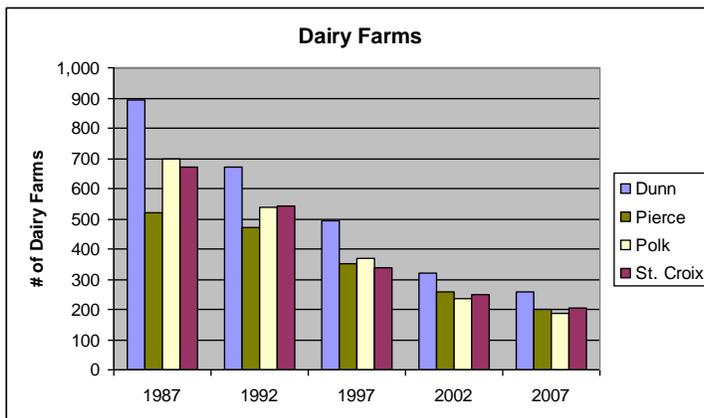
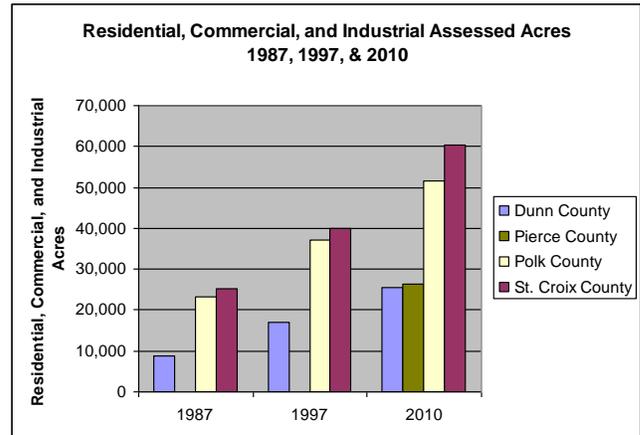


The western part of St. Croix County has experienced a reduction in the amount of agricultural land. At the same time, agriculture is still a substantial part of the fabric of St. Croix County. The eastern half of the County is predominantly rural and agriculture continues to be an important part of the economy and society. Despite the loss of farmland, the total number of farms in the County has not significantly changed. But the type of agriculture in the County has changed. In the last three decades, St. Croix County has been part of a nation-wide trend of larger-sized farms. 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, purchasing habits, agricultural practices, international trade, and commodity prices have been the major reasons why St. Croix County has seen changes in the types of agriculture.

Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- Agriculture provides 3,605 jobs, accounts for \$532 million in business sales, contributes \$158 million to the county's economy and pays over \$15 million in taxes.
- Between 1997 and 2007, agricultural sales increased 15 percent, from \$124.0 million to \$142.5 million.
- Dairy is the county's major agricultural commodity; there have been considerable decreases in the number of dairy farms and cows but increases in milk production and revenues.
- Corn and soybean production have been extensively expanded while vegetable and nursery production and direct farm marketing have grown steadily.



Top Issues

- Population growth and development in the County could significantly reduce farmland in the next 20 years.
- Fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult.
- Mergers among input suppliers and processors have hurt competition and have raised the prices paid by farmers.
- Farm succession to the next generation is very challenging.
- Off farm employment is necessary to support farm operations.

Implications

- The County will continue to be a regional leader in dairy production as well as farm income and agricultural sales.
- As residential, commercial, and industrial land uses expand agricultural and other undeveloped lands will be displaced. A substantial amount of farmland loss is the result of land-use policies and economic decisions in the County. These trends will continue if policies do not change.
- More direct marketing and agricultural processing facilities may be needed.
- Agricultural businesses, suppliers, equipment, finances, etc. will continue to be important contributors to the county's economy.
- The increased interest in organic food, direct marketing from local farmers, retail outlets and CSA could provide St. Croix County the opportunity to be a food supplier to the greater region.

Special Subsections

Agricultural-related analysis, programs and policies applicable to the County are identified within the *St. Croix County Conditions and Trends Report*.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve farmland to maintain and grow St. Croix County's agricultural industry and to enhance the rural landscape.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Preserve productive soils identified by county land evaluation system.
- 1.2 Support public and/or private initiatives that preserve farmland.
- 1.3 Minimize the loss and fragmentation of farmland in rural areas.

Goal 2: Promote agricultural development to support St. Croix County producers, businesses, and communities.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Maintain and strengthen a farm operator's right to farm using accepted practices that do not threaten public health or safety.
- 2.2 Support economic incentives for landowners to keep productive agricultural land in agricultural use.
- 2.3 Support efforts which increase the viability and diversity of agriculture throughout the county.
- 2.4 Support agricultural processing and marketing initiatives for local, regional, and global markets.
- 2.5 Maintain and strengthen the county farm economy.
- 2.6 Identify, develop, and maintain agricultural infrastructure to support agricultural operations.
- 2.7 Provide technical assistance to farmers seeking to innovate or modernize their operations.

Goal 3: Guide or manage development patterns that will preserve farmland and promote agricultural development.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Guide urban growth into developed areas consistent with the community's willingness and ability to accommodate growth.
- 3.2 Guide rural development to locations that will not convert productive agricultural land.
- 3.3 Encourage conservation design development and private conservancy as methods for preserving productive agricultural land.
- 3.4 Discourage isolated non-agriculture commercial and industrial uses in agricultural areas.

Goal 4: Conserve availability and quality of natural resources for agriculture.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Encourage the conservation of groundwater and surface water quality and quantity.
- 4.2 Encourage and promote farming and forestry operations to follow best management practices and maintain strong stewardship principles.
- 4.3 Maintain soil productivity through appropriate agricultural practices.
- 4.4 Encourage the establishment and maintenance of agricultural crops and pasture for agricultural land adjacent to public habitat areas.

Policies

Preserve Farmland

- 1.1 St. Croix County will use the county Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system to identify and protect productive farmland.
- 1.2 Lands planned for development in local comprehensive plans will not be included in farmland preservation areas and will not be eligible for state Farmland Preservation tax credits.
- 1.3 The county will establish a producer advisory group to evaluate the LESA scoring system and make recommendations based on LESA system.
- 1.4 The county will develop and maintain a county Farmland Preservation Plan and ordinance that can be certified by the state to make St. Croix County producers eligible for state Farmland Preservation tax credits.
- 1.5 The county will encourage the use of the Farmland Preservation Program as one tool to protect agricultural land.
- 1.6 The county will establish a farmland preservation area consistent with the Chapter 91, Wisconsin Statutes and the Farmland Preservation program. The farmland preservation area will be countywide, consisting of all parcels with a LESA composite score of 118 or above that are eligible to be included based on Chapter 91 standards. In implementing the plan, the farmland preservation area will be land that is eligible and recommended for farmland preservation zoning, Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) and/or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE).
- 1.7 The delineation of the farmland preservation zoning districts to implement the plan shall be developed cooperatively between the county and towns that are willing to adopt it.
- 1.8 The county will support local landowner petitions to establish AEA's.
- 1.9 The county will support the PACE program.
- 1.10 The county will support and encourage 3-party agreements to preserve farmland that include multiple partners such as land-trust, government, and land owner.
- 1.11 The county will advise legislators about policy impacts on St. Croix County agriculture.
- 1.12 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish and make available zoning districts with residential densities of 1 unit/40 acres and 1 unit/20 acres based on the productivity of the farmland as rated by the LESA system.

- 1.13 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish zoning standards to set a minimum lot size of 1.5 acres and a maximum lot size of 5.0 acres in farmland preservation areas.

Support & Promote Agriculture

- 2.1 The county will favor existing agricultural land uses over newly established non-agricultural land uses when considering land use conflicts in the Farmland Preservation Area.
- 2.2 The county will adopt a notification ordinance to inform new residents about the state right to farm law.
- 2.3 The county will update and promote the use of the Rural Living Guide.
- 2.4 The county will promote programs/awards in the county that recognize quality agricultural producers such as the master agriculturalist.
- 2.5 The county will promote the development and distribution of a county wide newsletter/information bulletin focusing on agriculture updates/current/programs, such as Facebook or other social media.
- 2.6 The county will educate the public on why preserving agricultural land is important, including food production, wildlife habitat, and economic importance to community.
- 2.7 The county will consistently administer the agricultural use-value conversion charge in all Towns through town assessors and County Treasurer.
- 2.8 The county will recommend utilizing the agricultural use-value conversion charge to support county farmland protection programs that leverage other public and private investment.
- 2.9 The county will support financial incentives for beginning farmers and farm succession programs for existing operations.
- 2.10 Agricultural uses should include a broad range of activities such as livestock and crop production, plant nurseries, tree farms, orchards, community-supported agriculture, hobby farms, organic production, vineyard, bio-energy production and all current alternatives.
- 2.11 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish multiple agricultural zoning districts to accommodate diverse agricultural activities and related businesses.
- 2.12 The county will provide and maintain networking with producer peer groups, farmers' markets for specialty crops and educational/promotional events such as Farm City Day.
- 2.13 Zoning should adapt to innovations in agriculture in the farmland preservation areas.
- 2.14 The county will work with St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation and other economic development agencies to implement economic development programs that support agriculture and related businesses.
- 2.15 The county will encourage bio-energy production to diversify energy resources and therefore enhance the agricultural economy.
- 2.16 The county will encourage young people to seriously consider pursuing an agriculture-related education and to also consider entering agriculture as a profession.
- 2.17 The county will support the construction and/or maintenance of physical infrastructure including roads, rail, high-speed telecommunications, and the utility grid.
- 2.18 The county will develop and distribute electronic and print publications such as the Rural Living Guide, Farm Fresh Atlas, UWEX newsletter.

- 2.19 Maintain educational agencies in or near St. Croix County.
- 2.20 Maintain county, state, and federal agricultural agencies to provide technical and financial assistance to the agricultural community.

Guide/Manage Development

- 3.1 The county will establish incentives/regulations to encourage development in existing areas that are able to accommodate new development, such as zoning, density bonus in areas other than farmland preservation areas, etc.
- 3.2 The county will consider a feasibility study to evaluate the creation of transfer of development rights (TDR) programs to encourage the preservation of productive farmland.
- 3.3 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish and make available zoning standards in conformance with Chapter 91 to guide non-farm development to locations outside of farmland preservation areas.
- 3.4 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish and make available zoning standards to prohibit major subdivisions in the farmland preservation areas.
- 3.5 The county will prohibit non-farm development on productive farmland as identified by St. Croix County's LESA system wherever the respective town will support it.
- 3.6 The county will amend the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance to establish and make available zoning standards in conformance with Chapter 91 to guide any non-farm development in farmland preservation areas to non-productive soils.
- 3.7 The county will use agricultural preservation tools such as farmland preservation zoning to guide town/county/city decisions to preserve productive farmland.
- 3.8 The county will establish multiple zoning agricultural districts to accommodate a variety of agricultural operations.
- 3.9 Only commercial and industrial uses clearly related to agricultural production should be allowed in the farmland preservation area wherever the respective town will support it.
- 3.10 The county will encourage conservation site design on land located at the edges of the farmland preservation area to serve as a buffer between farmland and non-farm development.
- 3.11 The county will encourage and support private conservancy efforts to protect and preserve productive agricultural land.
- 3.12 The county will support and encourage commercial and industrial land uses that are agriculturally related and support local agriculture.
- 3.13 The county will establish zoning standards for commercial and industrial land uses clearly related to agricultural production in the farmland preservation areas wherever the respective town will support it.
- 3.14 The county will limit to locations outside of the farmland preservation area commercial and industrial land uses that are not clearly related to agricultural production.
- 3.15 Agriculture-related commercial and industrial development should be compatible with adjacent land uses and located on non-productive soils.

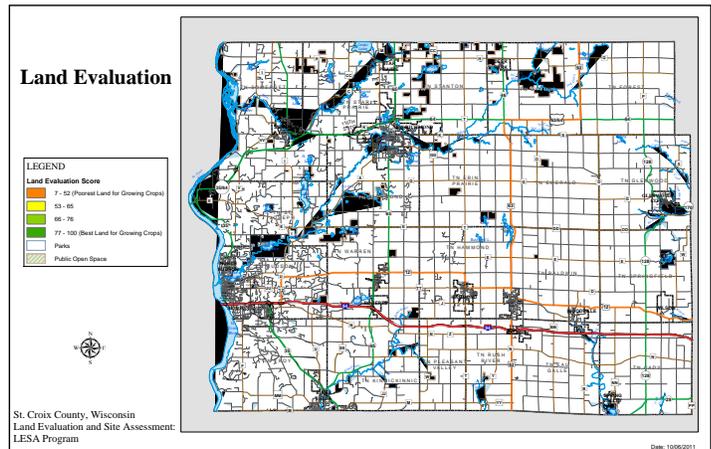
Conserve Resources

- 4.1 The county will promote conservation programs and best management practices so as to increase the infiltration of storm water runoff.
- 4.2 The county will promote conservation programs and best management practices for agricultural uses that consume ground water resources.
- 4.3 The county will promote conservation programs and best management practices to reduce soil erosion.
- 4.4 The county will encourage the implementation of best management practices for agriculture, which conserve soil and water, and reduce the use of pesticides.
- 4.5 The county will encourage the development and implementation of nutrient management plans to limit nutrient runoff and soil erosion.
- 4.6 The county will promote participation in local, state, and federal conservation programs.
- 4.7 The county will encourage cooperation between agricultural producers and public resource managers.

Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA)

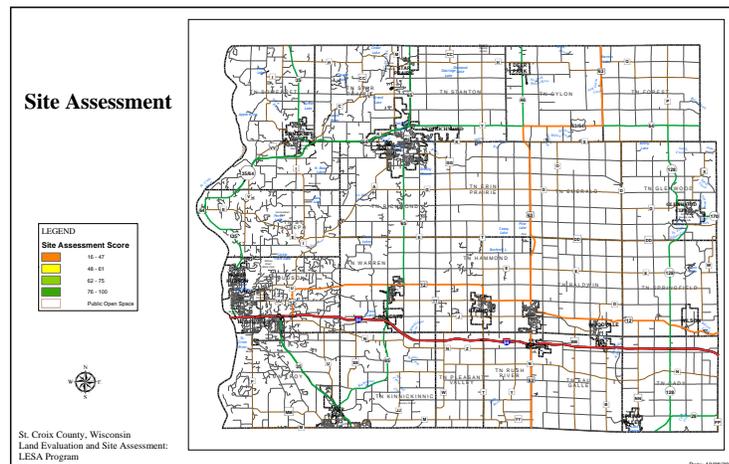
Land Evaluation (LE)

- The LE is based on soils and their characteristics; it reflects soil productivity and the economic and environmental cost of producing a crop.
- The LE was refined to meet county soil conditions.
- Three soil property indexes are combined to produce the LE rating.
 - Prime Farmland, weighted at 10% of the total.
 - Land Capability Class, weighted at 30% of the total.
 - Productivity for corn and alfalfa, weighted at 60% of the total.
- The possible ratings for all soils in the county range from 0 to 100 points, higher ratings have a greater value for agriculture.



Site Assessment (SA)

- The SA measures non-soil characteristics and development pressure based on adopted plans and policies and other social, economic and geographical attributes.
- The St. Croix County SA rating is based on 10 factors that are specifically of concern in the county, worth a maximum of 10 points each. None are weighted.
- The two Future Land Use Policy factors are based on local comprehensive plans.
- The possible SA ratings range from 0 to 100 points; higher ratings have a greater value for agriculture.



Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA)

- The two components of the system, Land Evaluation, LE, and Site Assessment, SA, are each 50% of the total composite score.
- As depicted in the LESA map (see map next page), the higher Composite Scores, 118 and above, are shown in light and dark green and are the best sites for farmland preservation. The lower composite scores, 117 and below, are shown in yellow and orange and are the poorer sites for farmland preservation.
- Overall the final LESA map follows the patterns laid out in the LE and SA maps; the more productive soils have been less impacted or encroached on by development pressure because of their greater value for farming.

Land Evaluation Site Assessment

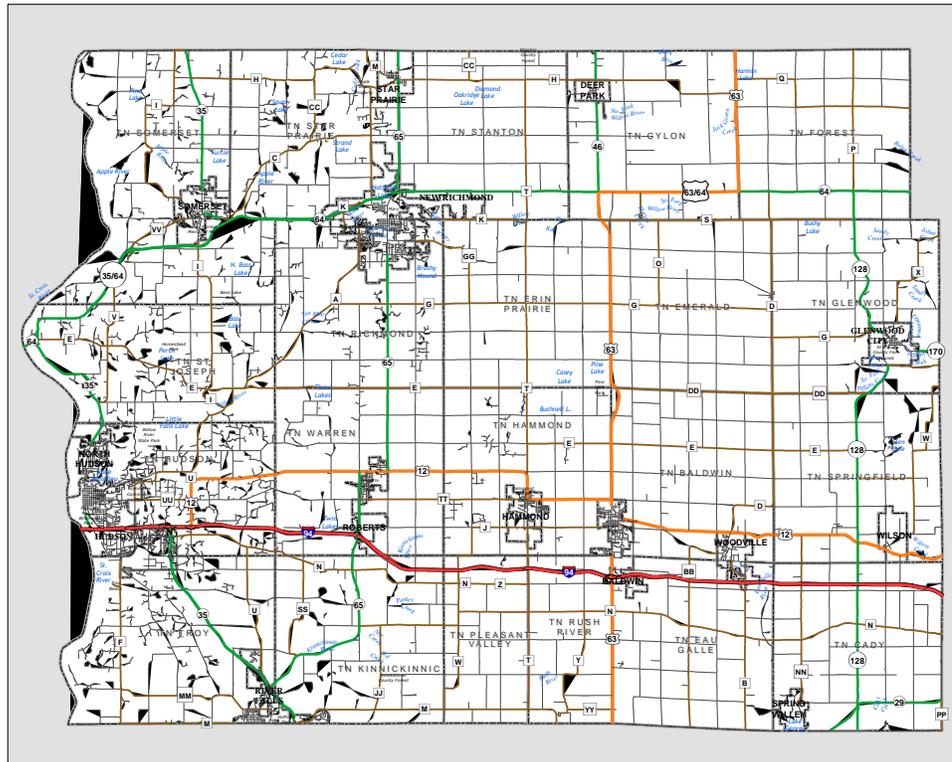
LEGEND

LESA COMPOSITE SCORE

	50 - 90
	91 - 117
	118 - 142
	143 - 184
	Parks
	Public Open Space



St. Croix County, Wisconsin
Land Evaluation and Site Assessment:
LESA Program



Date: 10/06/2011

Generalized Future Local Land Use ST. CROIX COUNTY FUTURE LAND USE - RURAL AREAS

Legend

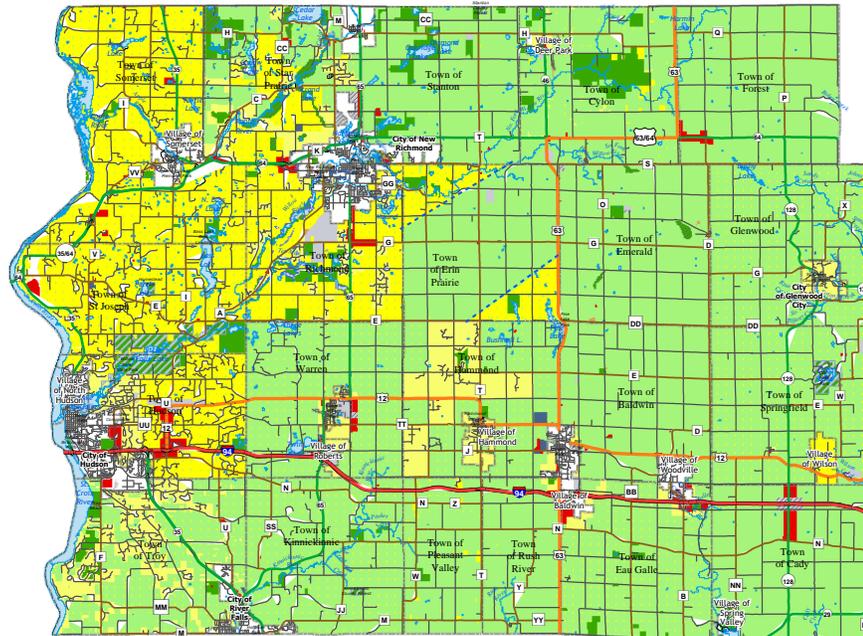
FUTURE LAND USE FOR LESA

Land Use

	Residential
	Mixed Rural Residential
	Mixed - Rural Agriculture
	Agriculture
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Future Industrial
	Utilities
	Institutional
	Recreation Open Space
	Future Open Space
	Wetland
	Water
	Parks



0 2 4
Miles



Date: 8/25/2011

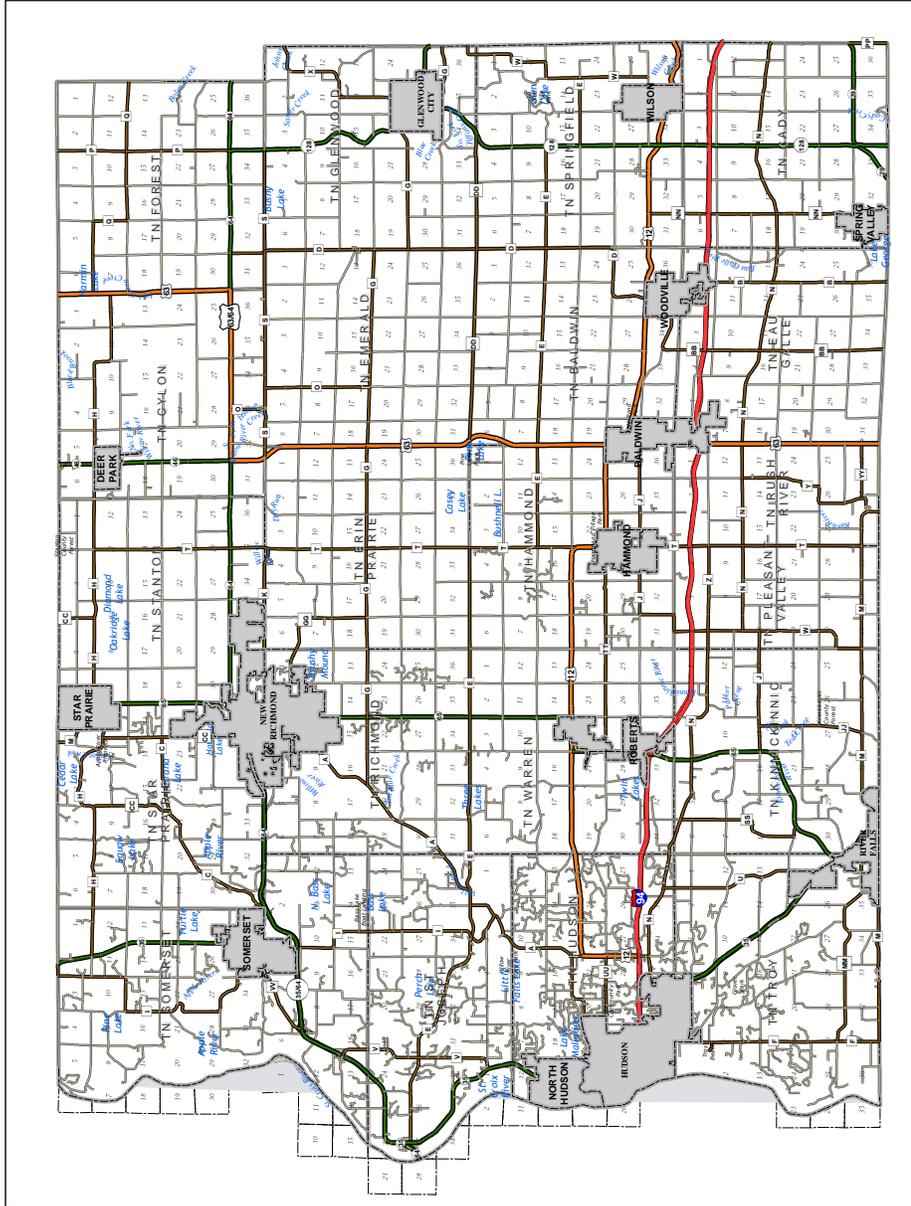
Farmland Preservation Areas

The Farmland Preservation Areas map combines data from the LESA system map and the St. Croix County Future Land Use-Rural Areas map (see map previous page). Only sites in a shade of green on both maps are identified as Farmland Preservation Areas. The distribution of farmland preservation areas clearly shows the results of combining both the LESA and Future Land Use data. Those communities, especially in the central and eastern areas of the county, with the productive soils have identified agriculture as an important future land use. Those communities most impacted by development, in the western end of the county, have designed their future land uses as a combination of rural residential and agriculture. The resultant Farmland Preservation Areas map excludes those areas of the county where development is expected and includes those areas with a commitment to agriculture. It follows the historic development pattern while preserving the most productive soils in communities that have determined agriculture and farming will be an important part of their future.

All sites in the county with a majority of the site in agricultural use or a compatible adjacent land use were analyzed by the LESA system. The County's 2010 tax assessment parcels were used to make these determinations. These sites encompassed about 385,000 acres of agricultural, open or wooded land. Of that, 295,000 acres were determined to be most suitable for long-term agriculture and 90,000 acres least suitable for long-term agriculture. An additional 24,000 acres was removed from the most suitable category because it is planned for long-term development in local comprehensive plans. Of the existing sites in the county where a majority of the site is in agricultural use, approximately 270,000 acres of land were included in the Farmland Preservation Areas and approximately 114,000 acres of land were not. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, St. Croix County's population and housing projections through 2035 would need approximately 47,000 acres.

Farmland Preservation Areas will be eligible to participate in Agriculture Enterprise Areas (AEA), Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) and Farmland Preservation Zoning through the WI Farmland Preservation Program if properties meet the program requirements. Areas in white on the Farmland Preservation Areas Map will not be eligible to participate in Agriculture Enterprise Areas (AEA), Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) and Farmland Preservation Zoning through the WI Farmland Preservation Program. Participation in AEAs, PACE, and Farmland Preservation Zoning will require additional, subsequent actions by the County, towns and landowners.

Farmland Preservation Plan Map for St. Croix County, Wisconsin



LEGEND

Farmland Preservation Area	Roads
Farmland Preservation Areas	Interstate
Political Boundaries	US Highway
PLS Section Lines	State Highway
Water Bodies	County Trunk Highway
Public Open Space	Local Road
Parks	Ramps



1:190,000

Coordinate System: NAD 83/HARN/WGS84 S. Croix County Feet
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983
 False Easting: 1000000
 False Northing: 0.0000
 Scale Factor: 1.00000
 Latitude Of Origin: 44.0881
 Units: Feet US

St. Croix County, Wisconsin
 Farmland Preservation Plan

St. Croix County Planning & Zoning
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 Date: 10/25/2012