

Landowner Responses to Farmland Preservation Survey

~ WASHINGTON COUNTY, WI ~



Submitted by

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PHOTO CREDITS: Cover, front of survey instrument- Kevin Struck;
p.8 - Jamie Simon; pgs.9, 10 - Josh Glass

Acknowledgements

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Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of the survey was two-fold:

- 1) Provide a means to foster public participation in Washington County's farmland preservation planning process, specifically to gather the opinions of key stakeholders, in this case, landowners with more than 20 acres.
- 2) Help local communities gauge the needs and wishes of their major landowners, especially in regard to whether landowners were interested in participating in any of the components of Wisconsin's new Working Lands Initiative.

Methodology

At the end of November 2010, the survey instrument, cover letter, and Frequently Asked Questions document were mailed to **1,954** landowners in Washington County. Landowners were selected from Real Property Listing records based on whether they owned 20 acres or more (the City of West Bend was not included). Responses were accepted until January 4, 2011 and entered into Excel spreadsheets, one for each community, as well as a combined County spreadsheet. In total, **344** surveys were returned — a response rate of **17.6%**.

Figure 1: Response Rates

MUNICIPALITY	NUMBER MAILED	RESPONSES ¹ AND RATE
Addison, Town	175	36 / 21%
Barton, Town	110	18 / 16%
Erin, Town	175	25 / 14%
Farmington, Town	200	36 / 18%
Germantown, Village and Town ²	139+7 = 146	32 / 22%
Hartford, Town and City ²	141+4 = 145	41 / 28%
Jackson, Town and Village ²	165+5 = 170	38 / 22%
Kewaskum, Town and Village ²	109+3 = 112	22 / 20%
Newburg, Village	2	0 / 0%
Polk, Town	132	24 / 18%
Richfield, Village	129	14 / 11%
Slinger, Village	14	1 / 7.1%
Trenton, Town	197	24 / 12%
Wayne, Town	191	34 / 18%
West Bend, Town	56	8 / 14%
No identifiable municipality	n/a	2 / 0.6%
COUNTY-WIDE	1,954	[355] 344 / 17.6%

¹ Municipal responses do not equal County-wide total due to some respondents with property in multiple communities. ² See Technical Note III on page 19 for more information on combined reporting.

Respondent Characteristics

What community are they from?

Please see Figure 1 on page 3.

What percentage come from the more rural northern half of the county vs. the more developed southern half?

- ◆ 50.1% from north
- ◆ 49.9% from south

How much land do they own in Washington County?

105.4 acres on average

How much land do they farm themselves? How much do they rent?

- ◆ 50.05 acres farmed themselves (average)
- ◆ 37.6 acres rented out (average)

How many respondents neither farm nor rent out their land?

33 landowners (9.6%)

What's the largest landowner? The smallest?

- ◆ Largest: 1,100 acres
- ◆ Smallest: 20 acres

What's the most amount of land being farmed? The least amount?

- ◆ Most: 1,100 acres
- ◆ Least: 1 acre

What's the most amount of land being rented out? The least amount?

- ◆ Most: 515 acres
- ◆ Least: 3 acres

How many currently receive farmland preservation tax credits?

61 landowners (17.7%)

County-wide Survey Results

Two questions (#5 and #6) focused on the potential **interest of landowners in participating in certain incentive-based programs** within the Working Lands Initiative. In each case there was some interest, but the majority of respondents need more information before making a commitment.

Figure 2: Landowners Interested in Receiving Tax Credits for Preserving Their Farmland

Q: 5 - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Yes	111	32.3%
No	98	28.5%
Not sure	120	34.9%
(No response)	15	4.4%
TOTALS	344	100%

Figure 3: Landowners Who Would Consider Participating in an Agricultural Enterprise Area

Q: 6a - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Yes	55	16.0%
No	97	28.2%
Not sure	175	50.9%
(No response)	17	4.9%
TOTALS	344	100%

Figure 4: Landowners Who Would Consider Participating in the PACE Program

Q: 6b - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Yes	44	12.8%
No	111	32.3%
Not sure	168	48.8%
(No response)	21	6.1%
TOTALS	344	100%

Agricultural infrastructure was the subject of two questions (#7 and #8). Ag infrastructure does not appear to be a major concern, since a clear majority of respondents indicated everything they needed was close enough to their farm site. This being the case, it is not surprising that most of these landowners did not respond to the follow-up question.

Figure 5: Proximity of Agricultural Infrastructure

Q: 7 - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Everything is close enough	182	52.9%
Most of what's needed is close enough	87	25.3%
Most of what's needed is NOT close enough	7	2.0%
Nothing is close enough	5	1.5%
(No response)	63	18.3%
TOTALS	344	100%

Figure 6: Infrastructure That Would Increase Efficiency of Farm Operation

Q: 8 - RESPONSE (Respondents could check more than one)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Food processing facilities	19	4.9%
Storage facilities	31	8.0%
Co-ops	21	5.4%
Transportation facilities	12	3.1%
Agricultural suppliers	34	8.8%
Veterinarian services	10	2.6%
Other	21	5.4%
(No response)	240	61.9%
TOTALS	388	100%

The survey included one land use related question about **non-ag development patterns** in rural areas.

Figure 7: Preferred Non-Ag Development Strategy in Rural Areas

Q: 9 - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Scattered where appropriate	112	32.6%
Concentrated in a few specified areas	54	15.7%
There should be little or no non-ag growth in rural areas	94	27.3%
Not sure	40.5	11.8%
Other	30.5	8.9%
(No response)	13	3.8%
TOTALS	344	100%

There were two questions on the survey that focused on **the future of agriculture in Washington County** and the rural areas that host various farming activities. It is reasonable to conclude from the responses that there is certainly a desire for agriculture to continue to be an important part of Washington County into the future. (See Figure 8 below and Figure 9 on the next page.)

Figure 8: Preferred Future of Agriculture in Washington County

Q: 10 - RESPONSE (Respondents could check more than one)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Same as today	112	17.4%
Hobby farms predominate	37	5.7%
Organic or niche farming play a significant role	76	11.8%
Several AEAs in existence	55	8.5%
Multiple easements or similar farmland protections in place	74	11.5%
Farming gradually phased out	16	2.5%
Larger farms	17	2.6%
Farm-friendly, in general	197	30.6%
Not sure	23	3.6%
Other	30	4.7%
(No response)	7	1.1%
TOTALS	644	100%



Figure 9: Preferred Vision of “Rural Character” in Washington County

Q: 11 - RESPONSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Plenty of small and medium-sized farms	84.07	24.4%
Farms of all sizes and types, including larger operations	102.33	29.7%
Scattered, large-lot, well-landscaped subdivisions	4.66	1.4%
Green space consisting of a mix of woodlands, wetlands, etc.	35.07	10.2%
A mix of uses including farms, subdivisions, home businesses, and nurseries	85.74	24.9%
Not sure	9	2.6%
Other	12.08	3.5%
(No response)	11	3.2%
TOTALS	344	100%

Of the three most frequent responses, two exclusively cited a variety of farm operations. The third added other types of development to the farm operations, creating more of a mix of uses.



The survey concluded with a pair of questions for farm owners. The first focused on current land use or other **conflicts** (Figure 10 below), and the second asked farm owners to share **future plans** for their operations (Figure 11 on the next page). Since “Pass the farm on to children or others in next generation” was the most frequent responses, there is evidence that farming will continue to be a viable, productive and desired industry in Washington County for years to come.

Figure 10: Current Issues with Non-Ag Landowners

Q: 12 - RESPONSE (Respondents could check more than one)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Traffic	116	16.0%
Stormwater flow problems	39	5.4%
Encroaching non-ag development pressures	70	9.7%
Lack of tolerance for ag-related noises, odors, activities	106	14.7%
Loss of prime farmlands	119	16.5%
Vandalism or other crimes	50	6.9%
Change in “fabric” of rural community	68	9.4%
No significant issues	84	11.6%
Other	19	2.6%
(No response)	52	7.2%
TOTALS	723	100%



Figure 11: Future Plans for Farm Operation

Q: 13 - RESPONSE (Respondents could check more than one)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Continue farming within County until retirement	107	17.2%
Move elsewhere in order to continue farming until retirement	4	0.6%
Pass the farm on to children or others in next generation	154	24.8%
Get out of farming as soon as practical	16	2.6%
INCREASE the size of the farm	42	6.8%
DECREASE the size of the farm	3	0.5%
Seek to put/keep farm in a Farmland Preservation zoning district	64	10.3%
Seek to put farm in an AEA	27	4.3%
Preserve the farm with a conservation easement on all or part of it	51	8.2%
Split off part of the land for development	52	8.4%
Other	51	8.2%
(No response)	50	8.1%
TOTALS	621	100%

Several of the questions included an option for respondents to check an "Other" response and then comment accordingly. All legible comments received on the survey instrument are included below and on the next five pages.

(Reviewers of the survey results should keep in mind that while a comment may be thought-provoking and by its nature leave more of an impression than statistical results, each comment was written by a single individual and therefore should not be given more weight than it is due.)

8. What type of infrastructure, if not already present, would help increase your operation's efficiency?

- Rail
- Keep government out
- Community kitchen and butchering facility
- All facilities adequate
- Private businesses not co-ops
- All within 30 minutes
- Would be nice to have a local slaughterhouse for poultry
- Less government
- Cold storage
- Wider roads
- Non-active informing
- (illegible) for horses
- My operation is fairly efficient. I could see more opportunities for small growers
- No forced farmland preservation
- Technical assistance/consulting
- Better and wider roads
- A person should be able to develop their land as they please, as long as it complies with the municipal's master plan
- Organic practices for all
- Fiber alcohol plant
- None or lower taxes
- Solar, wind, fiber alcohol mill

9. How should non-ag development occur in rural areas?

- Follow 2020 plan for Germantown
- No opinion
- PUD's
- No curbs on development

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9. How should non-ag development occur in rural areas? (continued)

- Non-Ag expansion should not be scattered. Effort needed to preserve both high quality farm acreage and farm related business. The business side of farming also needs to be supported.
- Let land owner decide
- If you own the land you should be able to do what you want with it.
- Up to property owner
- Up to the current land owner (willing buyer - willing seller)
- South of Hartford - there is no dairy there
- It should be allowed
- Anywhere
- Locate growth in poor soil areas of county
- At the owner and town decision
- Use unfertile land or depleted land
- Where the market determines
- I prefer non-ag development but that is not realistic
- In the course of a farmer's life, tough times (financial) for the family could perhaps save the farm. If a small operation could sell (illegible) lots. As to large corporate farms. They are equal to a factory and housing for employees may be needed
- It should be left up to us landowners
- Should be up to landowner
- Where the market bears it to be
- Up to land owner - This is America!
- Wherever someone chooses should be able to sell your land when you want
- Within existing urbanized areas
- Let home/land owner make these decision
- Government should stay out of it!
- There were no restrictions when my property was purchased - and there should not be any when it is sold. This is America - I believe in the free market system
- Food plains
- Land owner should be allowed to do whatever with their land
- Free market
- Is already scattered all over the place especially around major towns and cities
- Lots should be small enough to be manageable. 2+ acres - so these large weed patches and junk yards could be curbed in the Polk township. It destroys land values in some areas
- Keep it rural

10. How would you like to see the future (next 10-20 years) of agriculture in Washington Co.?

- More development of businesses and homes would be fine and good for the economy
- Diversity in different farming areas best
- Don't want the large herds over 1,000 head
- Farming and areas for home building
- Let economy decide - not government

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10. How would you like to see the future (next 10-20 years) of agriculture in Washington Co.?

(continued)

- No AEA or easements - when will farmers realize that with less controls on their operations the more opportunity for advancement and profit they will have! Enough has been done with use-value assessment unfortunately taxpayers are tired of providing tax credit to farmers. free enterprise is the answer not easements and controls
- Whatever the market dictates (free enterprise)
- Years ago things were pretty good, before all the programs tried to take over
- Ag Enterprise: I don't think this is possible in my area anymore
- Reduce farms and add density of development
- Wildlife restoration
- Farms that are here should be cultivated and allowed to prosper. Less regulation from government - county and federal.
- Policy preference towards smaller family farms and away from larger factory farms
- 5-10 acre small-part time farms, not as much hobby as sustainable lifestyle
- Choice should be left to landowners
- Should be up to landowners
- Farmland should be used for growing or preservation for future growing need - not development
- Whatever the market bears
- No forced farmland preservation
- Up to land owner
- We have two different areas in the county - North and South will develop in much different ways
- Whatever someone wants to do with their land
- More cooperative at the local government level
- What's the who cares anyway
- Allow residential development with minimum 5 acre parcels
- Whatever happens should be allowed to happen within current zoning laws
- Landowners free choice
- Same as it is today with some allowance for residential development
- Those that want to farm should have that choice

11. What is your preferred vision of “rural character”?

- Large lots create more sprawl
- Concentrated residential growth to minimize impact on school and muni services
- Small and medium sized farms with woodlands, wetlands, and environmental corridors
- let economy decide - not government
- Keep houses near town
- Whatever the market dictates (free enterprise)
- Get AEA, Pace, PDR, and preservation programs out of people's mind set. They just don't work long term - 30+ years
- Take a picture it will last longer

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11. What is your preferred vision of “rural character”? (continued)

- Farms, green space, 10 acre lot parcels for homes
- Zoning regs to require businesses to fit the "rural character"
- Average size farms, with preserved woods and wetlands splitting rural, non farm housing. Scattered and cluster with under an acre each, clustered with rural ag area where 5-10 acre farmettes are permitted
- Rural character is the character of how the land owner wants it to be
- Whatever someone wants to do with their land
- More definition between rural and residential
- Scattered, SMALL lot well-landscaped subdivisions

12. If you own a farm, please identify current issues you have, if any, with non-ag landowners?

- 4-wheeler trespassing
- Salt from roads
- Garbage along the road
- Trespassing
- My nicest and best friends are non-ag landowners!
- Dumping
- Taking over - eminent domain
- Too many people don't tolerate farm operation, noise, smells, equipment on roads
- Loss of available rental land
- Deer hunters
- Missing neighbor to neighbor communication. Hard to get to meet your non farm new neighbors
- Littering along roadways
- Trespassing
- Pressure to build too many homes and subdivisions
- People who move in around start to tell you what you can do when myself and father were born on this farm
- Train horns
- Landowners property rights
- Poachers
- Too many cattle on land with runoff going to ditches

13. If you own a farm, what, generally speaking, are your future plans?

- Already retired - very likely sell to a hobby farmer when I no longer can maintain the property
- Hang onto land as long as possible, then sell for retirement money
- Undecided. We oppose the use of town tax revenues to be used for (illegible) lands programs.
- I'm 81 and rent out my land. I hope they continue.
- Keep it as long as I can afford the taxes, may "have to" sell it!
- We rent our land and hobby farm ourselves - will continue until retirement.

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13. If you own a farm, what, generally speaking, are your future plans? (continued)

- Sell as a whole for farming - next generation
- Don't yet know.
- Development and wetland preservation. Marginal farm land in areas of development pressure should be developed efficiently to stop leapfrogging out onto good farmland. Large area of good soil land should be preserved.
- I have 20 acres tamarack, bog. Are there any programs to preserve these types of properties
- Keep all options open when time to sell as in the past
- Will never retire - enjoy farming. Washington County is an URBAN county! Not a farming county. It is too late for Washington County to return to an agricultural county.
- Most of my farm is in a hamlet
- Sell the farm when land prices go up
- Sell as a small farm in total
- Conservation easements - a bad bad deal
- To sell it all for commercial
- Totally dependent on financial security
- Develop the entire farm
- Remaining acreage is swamp. Would like zoning maintained so that we can continue to have animals.
- Donate to charity such as Ride & Reins
- My land is already preserved with a conservation easement
- Go back to old plan
- Land is all wooded, not tillable
- Land has not been rented in 12 years
- Will try to move out once it becomes too regulated or congested to farm. While I'm here I need to preserve ag land but if the opportunity exists for me to leave I don't want to be fined for selling my own valuable asset.
- You are 40 years too late to be talking farmland preservation in Richfield. There might have been a chance in the early 70's before the subdivisions started. Not now. Richfield doesn't care about the farms. In their smart growth plan they have our farm listed as single family homes. Without even asking us. They appear to be as happy as a bedroom community of Milwaukee.
- I think the main thing here is preservation of farm land to feed the people
- Presently land is up for sale
- Transition to horse business enterprises and/or organic crops and perhaps goats
- No plans at this time
- Not sure. Do not use taxpayers money for this!
- We own land/no buildings
- Whatever the market bears
- Gradually convert to a tree farm
- Washington county North or South of Hwy 33 is no longer rural - what did the 35 acre preservation do in the past other than have someone build a home on it (usually in the middle) which took it out of farming. If you want to tell the farmer what to do with his land - buy it and then you can do what you want with it.

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13. *If you own a farm, what, generally speaking, are your future plans? (continued)*

- Go with the flow of change for southern Washington county
- 22 acres are forest. Sell property prior to passing it onto child
- Note: this is a Christmas tree farm
- Continue renting land out
- No plans - the town tells you what you can and cannot do
- Wooded - not farmland acreage
- Keep farm as is and continue to rent land for farming
- Perhaps subdivide for children only
- Assuming aquaculture is considered Agriculture. Keep property as pristine as possible (possible conservancy)
- You can't farm with houses all around you
- It's all hunting land with a river running through it
- Why pay people to keep farming? My ice cream stand doesn't get a tax break.
- Keep options open for property sale
- Need more information
- Seek the highest price
- Except for our dwelling our acreage is woodland, swamp, and water. It is not suitable for agriculture

Local Community Results

Local community response rates were respectable, ranging from 11% in the Village of Richfield to 28% in the Town of Hartford (see Figure 1 on page 3).

The raw totals on several questions contain useful information regarding possible participation in various aspects of the Working Lands Initiative. For example, in the Town of Hartford 17 landowners indicated they would like to receive tax credits, 10 would consider participating in an Agricultural Enterprise Area, and 7 would consider participating in the Purchase of Agricultural Easement program. An average of 14 individuals were “Not sure” about these options, which indicates a need for additional information. Written comments from these surveys might also contain useful opinions.

In addition to this County-wide report, each community was sent a separate tabulation of its individual results.

Technical Notes

I. Fractional results on Questions 9 and 11

The raw number results on Questions 9 and 11 that contain fractions of whole numbers are due to a tiny number of respondents checking more than one answer even though the question instructed respondents to “check one” of the choices listed.

Since no assumption could be made as to which response was the primary response, a decision was made to allocate the respondent’s answers in proportion to the number of answers he/she gave. This was deemed to be more fair than eliminating the response altogether or giving the respondent multiple “votes.”

II. Calculating percentages for “check all that apply” questions

Percentages for Questions 8, 10, 12 and 13 — where respondents were invited to “check all that apply” — were calculated by dividing the number of responses for each choice listed by the total number of responses to the question rather than the total (344) respondents.

Dividing the response numbers by the total respondents would have yielded percentage totals for these questions that would have exceeded 100%. This might have been confusing.

III. Differentiating between towns, cities, and villages

If respondents from Germantown, Kewaskum, or Hartford did not circle or otherwise indicate “Town,” “Village” or “City” on the survey’s first question, it was difficult or impossible to determine in which municipality the respondent’s land was located. Since so few surveys went to the Village of Kewaskum, all surveys marked by the respondents as “Kewaskum” were tabulated for the Town of Kewaskum. The same procedure was followed for Hartford. In Germantown, thanks to the small number of properties that exist in the Town, an effort was made to determine which surveys actually came from the Town.

IV. Handling surveys in which a landowner held properties in more than one community

In cases where a respondent indicated more than one community for Question 1, a duplicate record was made of the original and one set of survey responses was allocated to each community indicated. However, only one record was allocated to the combined County tabulation.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION SURVEY



Washington County, in cooperation with the local UW-Extension Office, has developed this survey to obtain your opinions about farmland preservation in your municipality. The results will help guide your town or village as it decides whether to participate in Wisconsin's new Working Lands Initiative. Thank you for your input!

1. Where do you own most or all of your land?

Town/Village of _____

2. Approximately how many total acres do you own within Washington County? _____

3. In the last few years, how many of these acres have you:

A. Typically farmed yourself _____ B. Rented out for farming _____

4. Do you currently receive farmland preservation tax credits?

___ Yes ___ No

5. Would you like to receive tax credits in the future for preserving your farmland?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure

6. Would you consider participating in one or both of the following?

A. Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure

B. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure

7. Is the agricultural infrastructure (co-op, veterinarian, etc.) you need close enough to your operation? (check one)

- ___ Everything my operation needs is close enough
- ___ Most of what's needed is close enough
- ___ Most of what's needed is NOT close enough
- ___ Nothing my operation needs is close enough

8. What type of infrastructure, if not already present, would help increase your operation's efficiency? (check all that apply)

- ___ Food processing facilities
- ___ Storage facilities
- ___ Co-ops
- ___ Other (please specify) _____
- ___ Transportation facilities
- ___ Agricultural suppliers
- ___ Veterinarian services

9. How should non-ag development occur in rural areas? (check one)

- ___ Scattered where appropriate
- ___ Concentrated in a few specified areas
- ___ There should be little or no non-ag growth in rural areas
- ___ Not sure
- ___ Other (please specify) _____

10. How would you like to see the future (next 10-20 years) of agriculture in Washington County? (check all that apply)

- Same as it is today Gradually phase out farms
 Hobby farms predominate Larger farms
 Organic or niche farming play a significant role In general, a farm-friendly environment
 Several Agricultural Enterprise Areas in existence
 Multiple easements or similar farmland protections in place
 Not sure
 Other (please specify) _____

11. What is your preferred vision of "rural character"? (check one)

- Plenty of small and medium-sized farms
 Farms of all sizes and types, including larger operations
 Scattered, large-lot, well-landscaped subdivisions
 Green space consisting of a mix of woodlands, wetlands, etc.
 A mix of uses including farms, subdivisions, home businesses, and nurseries
 Not sure
 Other (please specify) _____

12. If you own a farm, please identify current issues you have, if any, with non-ag landowners? (check all that apply)

- Traffic Loss of prime farmlands
 Stormwater flow problems Vandalism or other crimes
 Encroaching non-ag development pressures Change in "fabric" of rural community
 Lack of tolerance for ag-related noises, odors, activities No significant issues
 Other (please specify) _____

13. If you own a farm, what, generally speaking, are your future plans? (check all that apply)

- Keep farming in Washington County until my retirement
 Move elsewhere in order to keep farming until my retirement
 Pass the farm on to my children or others in the next generation
 Get out of farming as soon as practical
 Increase the size of the farm
 Decrease the size of the farm
 Seek to put/keep farm in a Farmland Preservation zoning district
 Seek to put the farm in an Agricultural Enterprise Area
 Preserve the farm with a conservation easement on all or part of it
 Split off part of the land for development
 Other (please specify) _____

Drop off survey in person by December 13, 2010 at either of these locations:

- ◆ Your local town or village hall
- ◆ The Public Agency Center in West Bend at the corner of Washington St. and Indiana Ave.
(Drop off at UW-Extension Office on First Floor or the Planning & Parks Dept. on the Second Floor)

- OR -

Fold and insert survey into enclosed envelope, attach stamp, and mail.