Polk County Farmland Preservation Survey Report, 2012

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary ......................................................................................................................... 2
Survey Purpose ................................................................................................................................. 4
Survey Methods ............................................................................................................................... 4
Profile of Respondents .................................................................................................................... 5
Key Agricultural Resources ............................................................................................................ 7
Impact of Agricultural Trends ........................................................................................................ 10
Agricultural Infrastructure .............................................................................................................. 13
Land Issues ..................................................................................................................................... 15
Policy Options: Agricultural Goals for Polk County .................................................................... 18
Policy Options: Infrastructure Issues ............................................................................................ 21
Policy Options: Ag–Related Enterprise Issues .............................................................................. 24
Policy Options Summary ............................................................................................................... 25
Additional Comments ..................................................................................................................... 27
Conclusions .................................................................................................................................... 28
Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test .......................................................................................... 29
Appendix B – Polk County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey Comments .......................... 30
Appendix C - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question .................................................. 33
Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from agricultural stakeholders with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Polk County.

In October, 2012, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to a list of 407 agricultural stakeholders provided by Polk County. The initial mailing was followed by reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 36 percent (146 completed questionnaires). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 6.5 percent with 95 percent confidence. Statistical tests do not indicate that “non-response bias” is a problem in this sample.

Questions in the survey were based on information gathered from the public during a series of Farmland Preservation Workshops in 2012. The questionnaire was divided into two broad categories of questions. The first section asked respondents for their level of agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree) with statements about various farmland and agricultural issues. The second set of questions dealt with policy options and asked respondents to rate the importance of each option on a scale of very important to very unimportant.

Section 1: Farmland and Agricultural Issues. Majorities of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that Polk County groundwater quality is good, its groundwater supply and availability is adequate, and its surface water quality is good. At the same time, a majority said that fragmentation of land is making farming in the County more difficult. Fewer than half believed they could find productive farmland to buy or rent in the County and that productive farmland generally will be available in the County in 20 years. Only a quarter said it is currently difficult to find land on which to spread manure.

When asked about the impact of agricultural trends, a majority reported that they purchase local foods from outlets such as farmer’s markets. Half the respondents said mergers among input suppliers have hurt competition, while 40 percent said mergers among processors have seriously reduced competition. Half the respondents also said off-farm employment is necessary to support their farm operations. Half the respondents felt that global markets benefit them, that direct marketing to consumers will become more important to their farm over the next 20 years, and that government regulations are reasonable. Among the 29 percent who disagreed that government regulations are reasonable, several used the open-ended comment boxes in the questionnaire to express their preference for free market and less government.

With respect to agricultural infrastructure, two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate access to farm co-operative services, to financial services, and to veterinary services. Six in ten said the current County road network is adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years. Half of respondents said there is a need to improve the availability of direct farm marketing facilities/locations and that more local machinery repair/supply businesses are needed. About four in ten respondents said more agricultural processing facilities are needed in the County. Respondents had evenly split opinions about the likelihood of a shortage of grain storage facilities in the future. With respect to start-up capital for agriculture, only 27 percent agreed or strongly agreed that access is adequate.

Transitioning farm ownership to the next generation was seen as a major concern among three-fourths of respondents. Looking to the future, over 70 percent of respondents agreed that the demands of population growth and development in Polk County will significantly reduce farmland in the County. Two-thirds said exclusive agriculture zoning is an important tool for farmland preservation.
Conflicts between farm operations and nearby non-farm uses are a major concern among half of respondents.

Respondents had equally split opinions about their interest in selling the development rights on their farmland. A third said they agreed or strongly agreed, while 27 percent were neutral and 26 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. At the same time half the respondents said they do not intend to sell their land for development at retirement age, while 27 percent were neutral, and 19 percent said they intend to sell their farmland for development at retirement.

Section 2: Policy Options. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of policy options meant to address infrastructure and agricultural resource issues.

Respondents strongly supported a plan for residential development in specific areas, with 77 percent saying it is important or very important.

Majorities of respondents said the following policies and programs are important or very important: programs/regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years (69%), policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas (67%), programs to expand markets for agricultural products (66%), programs to educate the non-farm public about agricultural practices (65%), policies to manage nutrient applications on agricultural land (64%), financial resources for farm start-ups (62%), cost sharing for conservation practices (60%), programs to increase local food initiatives (57%), financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation (56%), and Town, Village, or County administered programs to support permanent farmland preservation (56%).

A majority of respondents also support programs to ensure an adequate supply of qualified agricultural labor, and half said programs to ensure a supply of agricultural managers are important or very important.

Slightly less than half of respondents said that attracting/expanding input supply enterprises is important or very important. But support for encouraging local suppliers increased to over 60 percent when focused on small farm operations. Attracting or expanding processing facilities was seen as important or very important by half of respondents.

Four in ten said programs to recruit machinery and equipment supply businesses are important or very important.

Opinions about second language programs for workers and managers were split. The largest portion said second language training is unimportant or very unimportant (39%), while a third said it was important or very important and a fifth said it was somewhat important.

In conclusion, respondents identified particular concerns and threats to agriculture in Polk County on the horizon and support specific policy options included in the questionnaire.
Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from agricultural stakeholders with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Polk 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

In October, 2012 the SRC mailed surveys to a list of 407 agricultural stakeholders on a list provided by Polk County officials. Questions in the survey were based on information gathered from the public during a series of Farmland Preservation Workshops in 2012. The surveys were followed with reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 36 percent (146 completed questionnaires). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 6.5 percent with 95 percent confidence.

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 sample.

In short, the data gathered in this survey is expected to accurately reflect the opinions of Polk County agricultural stakeholders included in the mailing list.

In addition to the numeric responses, respondents provided written comments to open-ended questions, which the SRC compiled. Appendix B to this report contains these comments.

Appendix C contains a copy of the survey questionnaire with a quantitative summary of responses by question.
Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents to the Polk County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey.

- Eight in ten respondents were men and were long-term residents of Polk County (over 20 years).
- Nearly nine in ten respondents were age 45 and above, and 25 percent were retirees.
- Eighty percent had some formal post-secondary education, and 52 percent had completed a post-secondary educational program (technical college through graduate degree).
- Eight in ten respondents did not have dependent children living at home.
- Eighty-six percent of respondents earned at least some of their household incomes from farming, and 43 percent earned more than half of their household incomes from farming.

As we analyze the data, we will identify when various demographic groups have significantly different views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 18+</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<td>Length of Residency</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Education</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<td>Children in Household</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acres Operated</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cropland Status</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of Acres Rented</td>
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<td>Sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household Income from Farming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
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</table>
Respondents were asked to indicate the types of farming activities or enterprises in which they are engaged. The results are in Table 2. The percentages total over 100 percent because multiple answers were permitted. Row cropping was by far the most frequent farm enterprise and was selected by 45 percent of respondents. Beef operation was a distant second at 21 percent, followed closely by forestry (19%), dairy (18%), conservation programs (18%), and fruit/vegetable (16%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Enterprise</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Row Crop</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Programs</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Livestock</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit/Vegetable</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree Farm</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Crop</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (See Appendix B)</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were shown a County map and asked to indicate the quadrant of the County in which the majority of their farm acreage/business is located. As shown on the map below, over seven in ten respondents are from either quadrant C (40%) or quadrant D (32%). In general, there was consistency among the responses from the different quadrants. Only three questions contained noteworthy differences based on the respondent’s location. These will be noted in the text.
Key Agricultural Resources

The initial section of the survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with seven statements using the following scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or no opinion. Chart 1 summarizes the results. The top bar shows the sum of the percentages of the “strongly agree” plus the “agree” responses. The second bar is the percentage of the “neutral” responses. The combined percentages of the “disagree” plus “strongly disagree” responses are shown in the third bar. The “no opinion” responses are shown in the bottom bar (Chart 1, Chart 2, Chart 3, and Chart 4 use the same rating scale and display format).

With respect to groundwater and surface water, three-fourths of respondents agreed that groundwater quality in Polk County is good, and two-thirds of respondents agreed there is an adequate supply of groundwater. A smaller majority (55%) agreed that surface water quality is good.

Two-thirds of respondents also agreed that fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in Polk County.

![Chart 1. Key Agricultural Resources](chart)

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1 A “neutral” response suggests that the respondent has considered the issue and concluded that he/she neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement. In contrast, a “no opinion” response suggests the respondent has not reached a conclusion and likely would want additional information before forming an opinion.
There was no majority within the remaining three questions in this section of the survey. Although the largest percentage of respondents (plurality) said they could find productive agricultural land to buy or rent in Polk County, the total was less than half of the respondents (42%). Only 23 percent disagreed, but 15 percent were neutral. When asked their opinion about the availability of productive farmland in Polk County in the future, the largest portion (43%) of respondents disagreed that productive farmland will generally not be available in twenty years, while a third of respondents agreed and 12 percent were neutral.

Respondents had mixed opinions with respect to the difficulty of locating suitable land for manure spreading. The largest portion of respondents (33%) disagreed that finding suitable land for spreading of manure is difficult, 27 percent said it is difficult, 24 percent were neutral, and 16 percent had no opinion.

Demographic Comparisons.

Respondents with post-secondary education were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that productive farmland will generally not be available in 20 years.

A larger majority of males said groundwater supply and availability are adequate.

A larger majority of respondents with farms over 500 acres and respondents from the southeastern quadrant of the County agreed that surface water quality is good.

Respondents from the southeastern quadrant of the County were more likely to agree or strongly agree that fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult.

Respondents with beef operations were more likely to agree or strongly agree that productive farmland will not be available in 20 years.

A larger majority of those who reported having row crops agreed or strongly agreed that surface water quality is good.

A smaller majority of those with horses agreed or strongly agreed that groundwater supply and availability is good. Horse owners were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that surface water quality is good. A higher percentage of horse owners said they were neutral with respect to finding productive farmland in Polk County.

Comments:

Twenty respondents (14%) added comments at the end of this group of questions. The most frequent topic concerned groundwater and surface water issues.

Water quality:
- Do not know about ground water supply.
- Forces in the ag industry induce operations to get larger and absorb more land base. This pushes out small efficient and clean operators. Industrial agriculture will become less regulated and more polluting.
- I have a very different operation in which clean ground water is a very important need. I feel clean surface water is also a very important issues. Soil quality is not the best, but that's geology. I run a CSA, vegetable farm.
• Increasing planting of row-crops threatens topsoil which increases possibility of soil erosion. Herbicides and pesticides tolerance could be a problem.
• Rivers and creeks have good water quality, lakes are generally eutrophic.
• Run off in small areas. Large equipment on roads.
• Some farmers still have cattle in streams.
• Surface water seems to have more algae in it then past few years. May be weather related. We should find a way to clean it up.
• The current drought is a strong wake up call for conservation. The MN-DNR has recently issued a call for commercial, municipal and industrial users to start conservation measures ASAP. Polk County should do the same!
• The drought is hurting most surface water quality.
• Water in ag areas is not good.

Land availability:
• Government requirements for nutrient management plans will make it increasingly more difficult to find qualifying land to spread on.
• I am not in the market to buy or rent good farmland.
• If you want to rent 1,000+ plus acres in a single parcel, I would agree finding rental property is tough. When corn was $2.50 per bushel it wasn't so tough.
• Lots of land that has been idle is now being farmed. There is a lot more interest in land being used for crops it seems than building a house on it. Farmers are a lot more concerned about keeping their manure on their fields- I see farmers doing a great job.
• Polk County should remain as agriculturally oriented as possible. We need incentives to keep farm land, farm land. Have you seen the 20 year plans each township has put to together? I was active in Eureka township's. We surveyed our township and developed our own plan from that too! We supported ag land.
• The big farms control land values/rent money. Given the fact that the income deficiency payments and direct subsidies the big can't lose. There is a significant land grab in our country-driven by ethanol and high commodity prices.

Other:
• I am a rural resident, but not a farmer. My answers throughout reflects this. Never mind, I don't really feel qualified to answer this survey. I do believe we need a good balance of ag/non ag land/use to accommodate land use desires. This does not mean incompatible uses should be allowed.
• I do not own any farm land.
• I don't think my input would be practical only helpful since I am no longer involved in any farming operations and have not been for the past ten years.
Impact of Agricultural Trends

As shown in Chart 2, nearly two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they purchase local foods and half said that direct marketing will become more important to their farm/business. Half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mergers among input suppliers and processors have hurt competition (increased input costs), while 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed that mergers among processors have reduced competition (reduced prices paid). Half of respondents also agreed that off-farm jobs are needed for income and benefits and that government environmental regulations are reasonable. At the same time a significant minority (29%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that government regulations are reasonable, which is the largest level of disagreement among all the questions in this group.

Respondents were not so sure about the impact of global agricultural markets. Although only 16 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that global agricultural markets benefit their farm/business, less than half agreed or strongly agreed (40%). A quarter had a neutral opinion, and 21 percent had no opinion.

![Chart 2. Impact of Agricultural Trends](chart2.png)

Demographic Comparisons.

The following groups were more likely to agree or strongly agree that global markets are a benefit to their farm or business: long-term residents (20+ years), respondents who both own and rent cropland, and farmers with larger total acreages. Those with horses were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree.
Long-term residents were more likely to be neutral or disagree that mergers among processor/buyers have hurt competition and reduced prices paid to farmers.

Respondents who earn between 26 percent and 75 percent of their household income from farming were less likely to agree or strongly agree that mergers among input suppliers have seriously reduced competition (raised prices paid by farmers). One the other hand, respondents who earn between 1 percent and 25 percent of their household income from farming were more likely to agree or strongly agree that mergers among input suppliers have seriously reduced competition.

A larger percentage of respondents with children under 18 years disagreed or strongly disagreed that environmental regulations are reasonable.

As farm size decreases, the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that off-farm income is necessary to maintain the farm operation increases. In addition, respondents who do not rent cropland were more likely to agree that off-farm income is necessary. Not surprisingly, as the percentage of total household income from farming decreases, a larger portion of respondents agreed that off-farm income is necessary.

A larger majority of respondents who farm less than 40 acres or who farm over 1,000 acres said they purchase local foods from farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture, or other local suppliers.

Dairy operators were more likely to disagree that direct marketing will become more important to their operations and that the income from an off-farm job is necessary for their farm operation.

Respondents with row crops were more likely agree or strongly agree that global markets benefit their farm.

A larger majority of fruit/vegetable operators agreed or strongly agreed that they purchase local foods from farmers markets or other local sources.

Comments:

Twelve respondents (8%) added comments after this group of questions. The most frequent comments were with respect to changing farm size and direct marketing, including organic farming.

Farm size:
- I feel that organic farming on a relatively smaller scale is a huge part of the agricultural future. I would like to see this championed in Polk Co.
- I would like to see the return of the smaller farms and businesses. Much better for Polk Co.
- Small farms getting phased out.
- We are seeing farming sizes push towards the ends of the countries. The super big farms and the super small direct marketing farms. The family farms in the middle are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Direct marketing:
- CSA’s etc, are a nice idea, but they cannot feed our hungry world.
- We need to promote direct-market and organic farms for the future & Twin Cities. We can feed our own people here in Polk County. Keep food dollars local. That is economic development.
Mergers:
- Mergers of supply/input co-ops has helped. Monitored or slow the rate of growth in prices.
- Trends are for larger more efficient cooperatives, predictions are for about 15 in WI by 2015, looking 15 years back this could happen.

Other:
- Government regulation especially in Polk County are not applied every day.
- I am not a farmer.
- I see more people raising their own meat and produce than ever. Not for sale so much but for their own use.
- Impact of people and organizations from outside of agriculture is a growing concern, ex: animal rights, new rural residents, etc.
Agricultural Infrastructure

As shown in Chart 3, at least two-thirds of respondents said they have adequate access to farm co-op services, financial services, and veterinary services. A majority believed the County’s road network will be able to adequately serve agricultural needs for the next 20 years.

Half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that additional outlets and locations for direct farm marketing are needed, which is consistent with the earlier question regarding the growing importance of direct farm marketing. Additionally, half the respondents agreed that more agricultural repair businesses are needed.

There was no majority sentiment among respondents regarding the future adequacy of grain storage facilities in Polk County. Equal percentages said there is likely to be a future shortage of grain storage (28%) as those who did not foresee a shortage (29%), while 23 were neutral and 20 percent had no opinion.

Access to start-up capital is an item of concern among respondents. Only 27 percent believe it to be adequate, 36 percent said it is inadequate, and 18 percent were neutral.
Demographic Comparisons.

As farm size increases, a larger majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have adequate access to financial services.

Larger percentages of respondents who earn between 1 percent and 25 percent of the household income from farming and those that earn 76 to 100 percent of their income from farming agree or strongly agree that more local machinery repair, supply, and part businesses are needed.

A larger majority of row crop operators agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate access to farm co-op services.

A smaller majority of horse owners agreed or strongly agreed that the availability of direct farm marketing facilities and locations should be increased. Larger majorities of horse owners agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate access to veterinary services and farm co-op services.

Comments:

Twelve respondents (8%) added comments at the end of this section. Topics included transportation issues, finance, and government regulations. The most frequent topic concerned availability of farm-related services.

Availability of farm-related services:
- #21 [Polk Co. needs more local machinery repair, supply and parts businesses]. Less consolidated, not necessarily more (#22 [Polk Co. needs more agricultural processing facilities], same response)
- I am not currently in the need of most of these services.
- There used to be 3 feed mills in Amery, 1 in Balsam Lake, 1 in Milltown, 1 in Luck and 1 in Range. Now all are gone. The ones in Milltown, Luck and Amery by the same Co-op entity. This shows the bottom line is more important to the "farmer owned" co-ops than the needs of the members they serve.

Access to start-up capital:
- Better access to start-up capital for individuals entering agriculture is of utmost importance.
- The current economic supply will definitely hamper young folks with no collateral to start up.

Government regulations:
- Not government's job to interfere.
- Polk Co zoning is designed to stop all expansion on agriculture (Ex) Turkey barns, dairy barns, processing plants, and other ag business.

Roads:
- As farm increase in size so does the equipment. Large equipment and semi traffic is already beyond the load most rural roads were designed to handle.
- Need to have the train's running in Polk County. North East. Cash in on sand mining. Route from east to west, get rail road back and save our roads.

Other:
- I see farmers building their own storage and working together more than in the past.
- More food education for consumers in Polk County is needed.
- My knowledge on the matter is limited having never been a farmer.
Land Issues

Farm succession emerged as a significant issue in this group of questions. Chart 4 indicates that more than three-fourths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the farm succession to the next generation is a major concern.

The impact of an increasing population is also a source of concern, with seven in ten respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that population growth and related development will significantly reduce farmland in Polk County in the next 20 years. Two thirds of respondents see exclusive agricultural zoning as an important tool for farmland preservation.

With respect to conflicts between farm operations and nearby non-farm uses, about half of respondents said this is a major issue.

Respondents expressed split opinions about their interest in selling the development rights of their land. Slightly more said they are interested in this option (32%) than said they are not interested (27%), while a quarter were neutral and 15 percent had no opinion. When they retire, only 6 percent planned to sell their land for development at retirement. Half the respondents said they do not intend to sell their farmland for development, while 27 percent had a neutral opinion about their future intent and 19 percent had no opinion.
Demographic Comparisons.

Intent to sell their land for development upon retirement decreases with the size the farm. Respondents who both own and rent their cropland are more likely to agree or strongly agree that conflict between farms and nearby non-farm uses is a major concern.

A larger majority of beef operators disagreed or strongly disagreed that they intend to sell their land for development upon retirement.

A smaller majority of respondents who grow fruits/vegetables agreed or strongly agreed that transitioning farm ownership to the next generation is a major concern.

Among horse owners, a smaller majority agreed or strongly agreed that population growth and development will significantly reduce farmland in Polk County over the next 20 years.

Comments:

Fifteen respondents (10%) added comments to the end of this group of questions. The most frequent subject was opposition to current land use regulations. A smaller number of comments supported agricultural zoning.

Agricultural zoning:

- Opposition to agricultural zoning:
  - As long as grain prices are high, development and ag zoning are non-factors as they should be, let the market decide.
  - I think the free market system should dictate what happens to the farmland, not the government. A lot of farmers land is theirs or their near retirement why have the government muck it up like it they usually do (Polk Co).
  - Not government’s job to interfere with private enterprise system.
  - Not government’s job to interfere.
  - There is plenty of land-get the people who own it make the decisions.
  - What a farmer does with his land is his business not the government’s.

- Support agricultural zoning or make it more restrictive:
  - Ag zoning still allows industrial applications such as mining
  - Define ag land use for what it should be intended. NOT industrial use i.e. mining
  - I am a big supporter of the exclusive ag zoning. For some years I was in the farmland preservation program and was on our town board in McKinley when we opted for exclusive ag zoning. I think highly of the program.
  - We need to keep ag land in ag protection and reduce acreage converted to housing.

Impact of population growth and related development:

- I used to be in the Osceola area where development had made buying a farm unrealistic. I'm now in Frederic where development is not a major concern. For South West Polk County, development is a major concern and that is some of Polk County’s best land.
- We have a lot of weekend people running our fields with trucks and ATV's, a lot of this is from new houses and new people coming into a farming community.
Other:

- Again, we need incentives to keep farm land farm land and incentives to be able to keep our farm still functioning, i.e. tax relief instead of increase as we try to maintain the farmstead.
- Know very little about Ag land zoning.
- Marginal land using no-till or left, idle, trees, pasture.
Policy Options: Agricultural Goals for Polk County

The next section of the questionnaire asked respondents to rate the relative importance of policy options relating to agricultural goals on a scale of “very important” to “very unimportant,” plus “no opinion.” The results are shown in Charts 5, 6, and 7.

The top bar in each chart shows the sum of the percentages of the “very important” plus “important” responses. The next bar is the percentage of the “somewhat important” responses. The combined percentages of the “unimportant” plus “very unimportant” responses are shown in the third bar. The percentages of “no opinion” responses are shown in the bottom bar.

As shown in Chart 5, at least half the respondents said all nine items are important or very important. A plan for residential development in specific areas rated the highest, with 77 percent saying it is important or very important, and two-thirds want policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas.

Respondents also believe programs to expand markets for ag products and programs to support educating non-farmers about agricultural practices are important or very important (66% and 65% respectively).

No more than 16 percent of respondents rated any of these items as unimportant or very unimportant.

![Chart 5. Agricultural Goals for the County](image)

- Plan for residential development in specific areas: 77% (7% very important, 13% important, 3% somewhat important, 19% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas: 67% (4% very important, 10% important, 19% somewhat important, 10% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Programs to expand markets for agricultural products: 66% (9% very important, 18% important, 7% somewhat important, 10% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Programs to support education of non-farm public about agricultural practices: 65% (11% very important, 20% important, 7% somewhat important, 11% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Policies to manage nutrient applications on ag land: 64% (6% very important, 25% important, 6% somewhat important, 9% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Provide financial resources for new farm start-ups: 62% (11% very important, 20% important, 6% somewhat important, 8% unimportant, 6% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Cost sharing programs for soil conservation practices: 60% (6% very important, 15% important, 6% somewhat important, 19% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Programs to increase/expand/support local food initiatives: 57% (4% very important, 13% important, 25% somewhat important, 13% unimportant, 4% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
- Financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation: 56% (6% very important, 21% important, 16% somewhat important, 16% unimportant, 6% very unimportant, 2% no opinion)
Nearly as many respondents said policies to manage nutrient applications (64%), financial resources for new farm start-ups (62%), and cost-sharing support for soil conservation (60%) are important or very important (62%).

Programs to support local food initiatives and financial incentives for permanent farmland perseverance were viewed as important or very important by majorities (57% and 56% respectively).

**Demographic Comparisons.**

A larger majority of retired respondents said developing a plan for residential development in specific areas is important or very important.

A larger majority of women said educating the non-farm public is important or very important.

Long-term residents (20+ years) were more likely to say that cost-sharing programs for soil conservation practices are somewhat important instead of very important or important.

A larger majority of respondents who own all the land they farm said policies to manage nutrient management are important or very important.

Respondents with post-secondary educational attainment were more likely to say that financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation and programs to increase/expand/support local food initiatives are important or very important.

Among row crop operators, a larger majority said financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation are important or very important.

A larger majority of respondents with forestry operations said financial resources for new farm start-ups are important or very important.

**Comments:**

Sixteen respondents (11%) added comments at the end of this group of questions. Half the comments expressed concerns about government regulations.

**Government regulations and programs:**

- Eliminate roadblocks, regulations that inhibit market growth.
- I don't believe it is the county’s jobs to preserve and support private business (farms). If farming is not a sustainable business then people should not be doing it.
- Leave the farmers alone- they know what they are doing. If more people want to get into farming and sell their produce, that's a good thing, go easy on the policies and plans unless the farmers are making them.
- Less government regulations.
- Less intrusion with farmers. Farmers have incentive to take care of their land, they don't need/want the government telling them what to do. Every regulation costs the farmer money and contributes to higher food costs. Non farmers are telling farmers what to do and have no practical experience. Keep government out of farming! Period!
- Let the market make most of these decisions.
- Not government's job to interfere with the private enterprise system.
• When the "programs" that support the farmer not the people administering them, they may be something to look at.

Plan for residential development:
• I think it’s important to steer non-ag development away from our productive soils and key natural habitat areas.
• I used to believe in 5 acres minimum after being a member on a planning commission, I feel more strongly about low density "cluster" type housing with adjacent land, i.e., 3&5 or so housing [units] fairly close together then acreage that is required to accompany them.

Direct farm marketing:
• We have a 200 member CSA farm and we have been in Polk County for 18 years. Dairy is still the main focus of Ag policy in the city and state. We need to do what we can to show how diverse Wis. Ag is and can be.
• We need to promote Polk County and open for business for direct market and organic farms.

Financial assistance:
• Q42 [Provide financial resources for new farm start-ups]. Generational farm family's should have enhanced financial backing.
• Financial resources should only be available to small farmers, not to any corporate farming facilities.

Other:
• I am not active farming at this time, but still have land.
• New farmers and local foods education/nutrition education is very important to me.
Policy Options: Infrastructure Issues

As shown earlier in Chart 4, a large majority (72%) of respondents said that population growth in Polk County would limit available farmland over the next 20 years. When asked in this section to rate the importance of programs and regulations to keep land in agriculture, respondents’ responses were consistent with this concern. Chart 6 indicates nearly seven in ten respondents rated such programs and regulations as important or very important.

Majorities of respondents said programs to ensure a supply of qualified agricultural labor (56%) and locally administered programs to support permanent farmland preservation (56%) are important or very important. An additional quarter of respondents said these were somewhat important programs.

Programs to ensure a supply of qualified agricultural managers was viewed as important or very important by half of respondents, with an additional 26 percent rating it as somewhat important.

Although less than a majority, the largest portion (39%), views programs to recruit equipment and machinery supply businesses as important or very important, followed closely by 34 percent who said it is somewhat important.

Programs for second language attainment received the lowest important ratings among this group. Slightly more viewed second language instruction as unimportant or very unimportant (39%) than viewed it as important or very important (34%). This was the only question in this group where the percentage of unimportant or very unimportant responses exceeded the other choices.
Demographic Comparisons.

A larger majority of retired respondents said programs/regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years are important or very important.

Women were more likely to have rated second language programs for agricultural workers and managers as important or very important. On the other hand, a higher percentage of respondents from the southeast quadrant said second language programs are unimportant or very unimportant.

Respondents with post-secondary educational attainment were more likely to say that programs to ensure a supply of agricultural managers over next 20 years that Town, Village, or County administered programs to support permanent farmland preservation are important or very important.

Forestry operators were more likely to agree or strongly agree that programs to ensure a supply of agricultural managers are important or very important.

Beef operators were less likely to view programs to ensure a supply of farm labor and farm managers are important or very important.

A larger majority of fruit and vegetable growers said programs to ensure a supply of agricultural labor are important or very important. Fruit and vegetable growers were also more likely say that Town, Village, or County administered programs to support permanent farmland preservation are important or very important.

Comments:

Eighteen respondents (12%) added comments after this group of questions. Over half of the comments expressed opposition to governmental involvement in farmland preservation, business recruitment, and second language training.

Government regulations:

- Again, the market will make these decisions. Town, villages and county need to focus on roads.
- Farmland will be preserved if farmers have a good income. If they can't then they should be able to divide their land.
- Government is not big brother.
- Not government's job to interfere with the private enterprise system.
- Not government’s job.
- The farms have always been able to support thousands without needing more regulations and programs. They operate on an as needed basis.
- The questions asks "is of Polk County" I do not feel any of these should be administered by a county that has so much difficulty doing what it does now.
- The word "Program" scares me. The word program means more government! Polk County should downsize and hire smart experienced staff. Agriculture can be best saved by free men and free enterprise.
- There are too many programs now. Save the government money- no more programs and cut the programs that are not working. Take a real look at that and ask the farmers, not government.
- We should not over regulate, but should somehow encourage programs to support ag land. I do think some regulation is necessary or de-incentivize taking land out of Ag use. We need to think outside the box.
Agricultural zoning:
- Town needs to take the lead on farmland preservation, especially since some may be taking over their own zoning (from the county).
- Would like to get Johnstown to go exclusive ag zoning.

Impact of large farms:
- Good luck with this one. Our town board is controlled by large farmers who have developed their own land at will and then complain about non-rural people not understanding their operations.
- I feel the large dairies have made it harder for young people to start farming. Large dairies don't seem to know when large enough is enough.

Second language programs:
- Everyone in America needs to speak English!
- Regarding Q47. There's not a labor shortage. Teaching Spanish encourages illegal immigration and under mines our local economy.

Other:
- A manager is a person that adds to cost and provides nothing in value to product. No value added, just cost.
- Subsidizing new equipment business by "recruiting" them would severely hurt the existing equipment dealers already in Polk County.
Policy Options: Ag–Related Enterprise Issues

This group of questions asked respondents about the importance of developing programs to increase the availability of three types of ag-businesses that support farm operations: ag input suppliers in general, suppliers specifically for small farms, and ag product processors.

As shown in Chart 7, programs to encourage suppliers for small farms received the highest importance ratings, with 63 percent saying it is important or very important.

Half of respondents said attracting/expanding ag processors is important or very important, which is slightly higher than the 42 percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that Polk County needs more ag processing facilities (see Chart 3).

Slightly less than half (46%) said attracting/expanding ag input suppliers (without reference to farm size) is important or very important.

About a third of respondents rated attracting processors or suppliers is somewhat important.

No more than 13 percent rated any of these three items as unimportant or very unimportant.

Demographic Comparisons.

A larger majority of beef operators and retirees said policies to attract/expand ag processing enterprises are important or very important.

Comments: Ten respondents (7%) added written comments to this group of questions. The most frequent comments were evenly split between two topics. One topic supported encouragement for small farms, specialty products, direct marketing, and organic production. The second topic was the belief that government should not interfere with the free market and has no role in attracting these businesses.

Government regulations and programs:
- Not government’s job to interfere
Not government's job to interfere with the private enterprise system.
Go easy on the policies and programs. Let the market and the need dictate the business.
Tax incentives would be of greater value than "programs." Programs are an added cost (taxes) replace "programs" with "incentives" i.e., tax breaks.

Small scale and specialty agriculture:
- Small, direct-market, organic is the future.
- They don't all have to be large corporate entities; we need to encourage smaller diverse enterprise that is ag based.

Other:
- Fix the roads, all these other things will fall into place.
- Local coops in Polk County I feel take care of our needs fine.
- Would like to see compost operations on local dairy farms

Policy Options Summary
As measured by the combined percentages of very important an important responses in the three previous groups of questions, the following are the top three policies identified by respondents.
- Plan for residential development in specific areas (77%)
- Programs/Regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years (69%)
- Policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas (67%)

Among the 18 items in the previous three questions, nine had majorities of at least 60 percent of respondents who said they are important or very important.
Rural Subdivision Design

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred layout for rural housing lots. The questionnaire included a drawing of a hypothetical traditional rural housing development with large lots and an alternative design of the same site containing the same number of smaller lots (½ acre) with preserved open space. As shown in Figure 1, respondents preferred the alternative design by a margin of three to one. The SRC has used the graphic in Figure 1 in dozens of jurisdictions around Wisconsin and the results are generally similar to these Polk County results. Respondents consistently favor more compact and denser development designs.

**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic Comparisons.

Larger majorities of women and respondents with post-secondary education chose the alternative design option.
Additional Comments

About one in six respondents to this survey completed an open-ended question near the end of the questionnaire asking if the respondent had any additional comments with respect to farmland issues in Polk County. The SRC placed those comments into five categories plus a miscellaneous group. Appendix B contains the complete list of comments.

As shown in Table 3, the most frequent comment was that the respondent is not active farmer (23%).

The second largest number of comments was evenly split between two opposing points of view, each with five (19 percent) comments.

One point of view stated a belief in programs to preserve farmland. The following comments are representative of this group.

“I think that the program is a very good incentive to keep ag land in production. I hate houses in the middle of good crop land.”

“The farmland preservation act must be preserved and all its covenants”

The opposite point of view is that there is too much government involvement in agriculture. The following comments illustrate this point.

“Not government’s job to interfere with the private enterprise system. Our government officials believe they have to do something. The private citizens do not agree.”

“The county can’t afford to preserve farmland. Leave it alone and free enterprise will take its course.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not active farmer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much government/regulations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to preserve farmland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation subdivision design</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large farms</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous /single topics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

Respondents identified particular concerns and threats to agriculture in Polk County on the horizon and support specific policy options included in the questionnaire.

With respect to farmland issues and concerns, respondents identified three particular issues with which they agree or strongly agree.

- Transitioning farm ownership to the next generation is a major concern (78%). Only 27 percent agreed or strongly agreed that access to start-up capital for individuals entering agriculture is adequate.
- Population growth and development in the County will significantly reduce farmland in Polk County in the next 20 years (72%)
- Fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in Polk County (65%)

When asked about the importance of policy options related to farmland preservation, respondents’ priorities were consistent with the concerns identified earlier in the survey. Majorities ranging from 56 percent to 77 percent said the following policies were important or very important.

- A plan for residential development in specific areas (77%)
- Programs/regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years (69%)
- Policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas (67%)
- Providing financial resources for new farm start-ups (60%)
- Financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation (56%)

Additionally, two thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that exclusive agriculture zoning is an important tool for farmland preservation.

While majorities of survey respondents said they support selected governmental intervention to address concerns about agriculture and farmland, there was a significant minority of respondents who believe that it is not the role of government to intervene. As shown in Chart 2, 29 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that government regulations are reasonable. In a similar vein, respondents who believe that is not the role of government to intervene in these situations frequently wrote statements to that effect in the comment boxes throughout the survey.

Therefore, the context for developing a farmland preservation program in Polk County is likely to be done in a somewhat charged environment.
Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test

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. For example, suppose most non-respondents do not agree that groundwater quality in the County is good (Question 6), whereas most of those who returned their questionnaire believe groundwater quality is good. In this case, non-response bias would exist, and the raw results would overstate the opinion of the population of individuals on the mailing list regarding the quality of groundwater Polk County.

The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who return the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who return the second mailing. Those who return the second questionnaire are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group. In this survey, 94 people responded to the first mailing, and 52 responded to the second mailing.

We found five variables with statistically significant differences between these two groups out of 48 tested. Responses in the no opinion category were excluded included from the analysis. Table A1 indicates that even when statistical differences exist, the magnitude of this difference is very small. Smaller majorities of respondents to the second mailing said Q13, Q18, Q22 and Q23 were important or very important. A larger percentage of Mail 2 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with Q29. These differences do not affect the results. The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
<th>Mean First Mailing</th>
<th>Mean Second Mailing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Global agricultural markets benefit my farming operation/ag business</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In the future there is likely to be a shortage of grain storage facilities in Polk County</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Polk Co. needs more agricultural processing facilities</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Polk County needs to increase availability of direct farm marketing locations/facilities</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I would be interested in selling the development rights on my farm land</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B – Polk County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey Comments

Question 55. Other activities/enterprises (32 comments)

- None, I do not farm.
- Not into farming.
- Pigs and chickens.
- I do not have a farm or a farm business.
- Woodland pasture.
- Chickens.
- Feed dealer.
- Alfalfa.
- Feed store business.
- Rent to neighbor.
- 58 continued: stewardship and neighboring mess.
- Fertilizer Business.
- Hardware-I serve the ag business.
- Rotational/grazing/hay crop.
- I have no farm business.
- Hay.
- Small Hay Crop.
- Park and recreation facilities.
- Habitat.
- CSA/Farmers Markets.
- Forage/Hay.
- I don't own any land.
- NA
- Sheep.
- Ag retail.
- Hay.
- Pasture/Forage.
- Equipment Repair.
- Retail seed.
- I don't own ag land. Not sure why I got this survey.
- No Farm/Business.
- Hay.
Question 58. Additional comments about farmland preservation (26 comments)

- Concern over lack of severance taxes on mineral products such as frac sand, lime and trap rock besides traditional mining production. Improve rail freight and transfer service in Polk County.
- Any program to preserve land for ag use is encouraged.
- Conservation design looks good in Woodbury, but is not needed in Polk County. Maintain a community septic system is an oversight and compliance challenge for all concerned.
- Farmers are over regulated. So many government agencies are feeding off farming, including various departments in Polk Co. Some of the people who speak have not experienced farming. Growing up rural is not an agricultural background. Just feelings and book smart. I think Tim, Bob and Eric need to spend less time impressing one another and get real jobs.
- Farmland is very limited and needs to be preserved. The farmer needs to be able to retire and not have to sell the land for development in order to do so.
- Government programs and policies. As well as co-op/supplier/processor policies are, in my opinion, all focused on the large agricultural producer. Federal crop insurance keeps many of the large grain operators a float year after year. Large dairies couldn't care less about local labor supplies because they bring their employers in from foreign countries. Meanwhile if you're a small producer you have to drive 30 miles to a feed mill because the co-op you're a member of has closed down all of its feed mills while maintaining a "farm" store that will gladly sell you feed in paper bags for twice the price. I don't see how local government policies will change these market facts. A zoning regulation that requires ag land to stay ag land will only benefit the "big guys" by keeping bigger fields available for them to run their foreign built equipment on.
- I am retired, renting to a neighbor who grazes beef and crops.
- I do feel that there was a lot of fallow lands that were turned up for corn production. Though this is a short term gain for farmers, I would like to see what can be done to make farming in Polk County productive and financially rewarding, enough that farmers feel that they can preserve land and fallow land instead of plowing everything for short term gain.
- I don’t live in Polk Co and I am not a farmer. In this age of technology, I would think you could find out who should get these questionnaires. Good luck.
- I have not completed any of the prior questions. My husband passed away in March of this year. We have rented out our land for about 15 years and I will continue to do this, but I don't have much other input.
- I live in quadrant A (Town of Luck). In my opinion, a majority of the acreage in Luck Town probably should not have been converted to farm land by the pioneers. Much of the farmer cropland in our town has reverted to wetland acres/or housing development. There does not seem to be large tracts of land that could be considered prime cropland in the town of Luck.
- I think that the program is a very good incentive to keep ag land in production. I hate houses in the middle of good crop land.
- Local governments need to focus limited resources on roads.
- My business has no farming aspect. I have clients who are farmers.
- Not a farmer, we are a land trust in Chippewa City.
- Not government’s job to interfere with the private enterprise system. Our government officials believe they have to do something. The private citizens do not agree.
On Oct 15, 2012 we sold our home in Polk County and bought a home in Burnett County.

Option A spreads out the sewers over a larger area and some parts may not be usable so possible less net houses. Option B clusters all the sewers on the best areas. Also who owns and maintains the open land in option B, that is left over.

Our regulation is not good. We need to preserve our very good crop land and protect out woods, lakes, streams. Regulation of intermittent wetlands is not good public policy. Tiling and drainage are common practices in other parts of the country and could be more widely used in Polk County.

Southern Polk County is so much different than Northern Polk County. I don't believe they will even be the same. What can be good for the Southern half can be good for the Northern half. Polk County is different from a lot of other counties (Barron) for example, no Twin Cities bedroom towns.

The farm bill drives everything. When prices are up land will stay in Ag, when prices fall, land will be sold to the highest bidder outside of ag. The 4 or 5 big mega farms in our township act as if they own the township. They farm all night long and then take down neighbors who question their scale and practices. They plow up wetland at will-trying to squeeze more bushels of corn out of every acre. They spray without regard to wind speed and direction and then call people who question them standing in the way of agriculture. We need to have a community wide dialogue about land and food and not let the farm bill and big farms drive everything. Good luck with drainage–local government agencies have less and less influence in our commodity driven food system. Sorry for being so honest and blunt. When we stand in the way of programs-watch out, my big family neighbors will make my life hell. The last time I attended a county ag meeting, I was almost run out of the room when I asked questions about ag practices.

The farmland preservation act must be preserved and all its covenants.

These questions and the entire survey are slanted in the favor of government. This is not your job. The private enterprise system will take care of itself without government interference.

They used to be a lot of small farms in Polk County. No one made any real money farming, things changed. Now farmers can make money with crops, the price of rent is going up-land has value-many farms are being sold and there are fewer people buying up the land. People want to live in the country-it hasn't effected farming so much. Maybe hunting. The county can't afford to preserve farmland. Leave it alone and free enterprise will take its course.

This survey did not take into account non-farms. With farms in the minority in the county, does the opinions come from non-farms. What is important to them? Where are the conflicts and common grounds? Farms will need support from non-farm to preserve farm land.

Question 61. Other employment status (3 Comments)

- Self-employed on farm.
- Semi-Retired.
- Still farming.
Appendix C - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question

Polk County Farmland Preservation Survey – 2012

**Please return by November 29, 2012**

Using blue or black ink, please fill the circle that most closely matches your response on the following questions.

Like this: ● Not like this: ☐ ☒

**IN THIS SECTION WE WANT YOUR OPINION ABOUT A RANGE OF FARMLAND ISSUES**

### KEY AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion about the following agricultural resource issues/concerns?</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I could currently find productive/quality farmland to rent or buy in Polk County</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Productive farmland will generally NOT be available in 20 years in Polk County</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finding suitable land on which to spread manure is difficult</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in Polk County</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Groundwater supply and availability in Polk County are generally adequate</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Quality of <strong>groundwater</strong> in Polk County is good</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quality of <strong>surface water</strong> in Polk County is good</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Please add any comments about key agricultural issues in the box below.

See Appendix B

### IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL TRENDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion about the future agriculture issues/concerns in Polk County?</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Mergers among input suppliers (feed, seed, chemical, etc), have seriously reduced competition (raised prices paid)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mergers among processors/buyers have seriously reduced competition (lowered prices received)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Government environmental regulations to protect air, soil and water resources are reasonable</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Direct marketing to consumers will become more important to my farm/ag business over the next 20 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Global agricultural markets benefit my farming operation/ag business</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The income and benefits from an off-farm job are necessary to maintain my farm operation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I purchase local foods from farmers markets, community supported agriculture, community gardens, or other local suppliers</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Please add any comments about impact of agricultural trends in the box below.

See Appendix B
### AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion about the following infrastructure issues/concerns?</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. The current road network in Polk County is adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In the future there is likely to be a shortage of grain storage facilities in Polk County</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I have adequate access to financial services</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Access to start-up capital for individuals entering agriculture is adequate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Polk Co. needs more local machinery repair, supply and parts businesses</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Polk Co. needs more agricultural processing facilities</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Polk County needs to increase availability of direct farm marketing locations/facilities</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have adequate access to veterinary services</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I have adequate access to Farm Co-op services</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Please add any comments about agricultural infrastructure in the box below.</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LAND ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion about the following land issues/concerns</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Population growth and related development will significantly reduce farmland in Polk County over the next 20 years</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Transitioning farm ownership to the next generation is a major concern</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I would be interested in selling the development rights on my farm land (would prohibit future non-agricultural development on your land)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. When I reach retirement age I intend to sell my land for non-agriculture development</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Conflict between farm operations and nearby non-farm uses is a major concern.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Exclusive Ag Zoning is an important land use tool for Farmland Preservation</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Please add any comments about land issues in the box below.</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IN THIS SECTION WE WANT YOUR OPINION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FARMLAND POLICIES

### AGRICULTURAL GOALS FOR POLK COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it for Polk County to have policies/programs on the following:</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34. Policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Plan for residential development in specific areas</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Policies to manage nutrient applications on ag land</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Cost sharing programs for soil conservation practices</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Programs to support education of non-farm public about agricultural practices</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Programs to expand markets for agricultural products</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Programs to increase/expand/support local food initiatives (Farmers Markets, Community Supported Agriculture, Community Gardens, etc.)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Provide financial resources for new farm start-ups</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43. Please add any comments about agricultural goals for Polk County in the box below.

See Appendix B

### INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS FOR POLK COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it for Polk County to have policies/programs on the following:</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44. Programs/Regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Programs to ensure supply of qualified agricultural labor over next 20 years (e.g. ability to run large equipment),</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Programs to ensure supply of agricultural managers over next 20 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Second language programs for agricultural workers and managers over the next 20 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Programs to recruit equipment &amp; machinery supply businesses</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Town, Village, or County administered programs to support permanent Farmland Preservation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50. Please add any comments about infrastructure goals in the box below.

See Appendix B

### AG-RELATED ENTERPRISE GOALS FOR POLK COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it for Polk County to have policies/programs on the following:</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51. Policies to attract/expand ag input supply enterprises (feed, seed, chemical, etc.)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Policies to attract/expand ag processing enterprises</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Programs to encourage local suppliers for small farms</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54. Please add any comments about agricultural enterprise goals for Polk County in the box below.
55. Which of the following activities/enterprises do you have on your farm/business? **(check all that apply)**

- Dairy: 18%
- Row Crop: 45%
- Forestry: 19%
- Beef: 21%
- Tree Farm: 8%
- Other Crop: 12%
- Horses: 11%
- Nursery: 2%
- Conservation Programs: 18%
- Tree Farm: 12%
- Other Livestock: 16%
- Fruit/Vegetable: 18%
- Other: ________________

56. Would you prefer housing built in a **traditional design (Option A)** with larger individual lots (e.g., 1 acre) and no shared open space or a **conservation design (Option B)** with smaller individual lots (e.g., ½ acre) and shared open space? Please fill the circle for either Option A or Option B below to indicate your preference.

- Option A: 24%
- Option B: 76%

57. Please use the following map to fill in the bubble matching the quadrant (A, B, C or D) of Polk County in which a **majority** of your farm acreage/business is located.

- A: 16%
- B: 11%
- C: 40%
- D: 32%

58. Please add any additional comments about farmland preservation in Polk County in the box below:

See Appendix B
### DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>59. Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>60. Age</th>
<th>18–24</th>
<th>25–34</th>
<th>35–44</th>
<th>45–54</th>
<th>55–64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>61. Employment Status</th>
<th>Employed full-time</th>
<th>Self-employed</th>
<th>Employed part-time</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Retired</th>
<th>Other:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>62. Highest level of Education</th>
<th>Less than high school</th>
<th>High school diploma</th>
<th>Some college/tech</th>
<th>Tech college graduate</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Grad or professional deg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>63. How many years have you lived in Polk County?</th>
<th>0 to 5 years</th>
<th>5.1 – 10 years</th>
<th>11 to 20 years</th>
<th>Over 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

If you farm, please continue. If you do not farm, please stop here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>64. Number of children (under 18) in household</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>65. How many acres do you operate?</th>
<th>&lt;40 acres</th>
<th>40-150 acres</th>
<th>151-500 acres</th>
<th>501-1000 acres</th>
<th>&gt;1000 acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>66. Crop Land Status</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>67. What percentage of acres farmed are rented?</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>1% – 25%</th>
<th>26% - 50%</th>
<th>51% - 75%</th>
<th>76% - 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>68. What percentage of last year’s annual household income came from farming?</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>1% – 25%</th>
<th>26% - 50%</th>
<th>51% - 75%</th>
<th>76% - 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>