

Town of Dunn PDR Program Accomplishments

The Town Protects its First Farm

On April 22, 1997 (Earth Day) the Town of Dunn protected its first property, the Sinaiko Farm, under the Purchase of Development Rights program. Working with a resident farmer, the Dane County Parks Department, and two local land trusts, the town played a key role in protecting a 240-acre farm with parcels in the City of Madison, and the towns of Blooming Grove and Dunn. Specifically, the Town of Dunn purchased the development rights to the 174-acres of the farm located within the town's borders. This farm, with views of Lake Waubesa and the state capitol and in a position to be annexed by the City of Madison, was seriously threatened by development but will now remain a farm forever.

The Town is Awarded \$100,000 Grant from USDA for PDR Program

In September, 1997 the town received a \$100,000 matching grant from the USDA's Farmland Protection Program. This money is to be used over the next two years to purchase agricultural easements on prime farmland in the town as part of the PDR program. The town plans to use the USDA funds to protect a large farm near the Village of McFarland and is currently negotiating the terms of an easement with the owners of the farm.

The Town is Awarded \$515,000 from USDA for PDR Program

In September, 1998 the town received a second matching grant from the USDA's Farmland Protection Program. The Town plans to use the money to purchase development rights on over 1,000 acres of prime farmland.

Town Protects 150-acre Lalor Farm

On April 19, 1999 the Town of Dunn purchased the development rights to a 150-acre farm on rustic Lalor Road. "It gives me a good feeling to know that the land that has been in our family for well over 100 years will be protected from development," says owner

Margaret Lalor.

Thanks to the work of many partners and grant money from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 150 acres of woods, wetlands and rich farmland only 15 minutes from the State Capitol will remain a farm forever. The development rights will be separated from the farm and held in perpetuity by the Town of Dunn along with a co-holder organization, the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation. The Foundation is a small, local, private non-profit land trust that has been protecting lands in Dane County for over 15 years.

"We are pleased to help the Town of Dunn preserve its agricultural community," said Pat Leavenworth, NRCS State Conservationist. "This land is prime farmland, and without development pressure, will continue to be productive for the future."

Town Protects 198-acre Jacob Farm

On August 25, 1999 the Town of Dunn purchased the development rights to a 198-acre farm on County Highway MN just outside the Village of McFarland. "The Jacob Farm has prime farmland, three registered Indian Mounds and important wetlands that are now protected from development," said Renee Lauber, the Town of Dunn's Land Use Coordinator. The farm's development rights have been separated from the farm and will be held in perpetuity by the Town of Dunn along with a co-holder organization, the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation. "Grant money from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) made this deal possible," said Lauber.

DNR and Town Protect 67.2-acre Manson Farm

On September 15, 1999 the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Town of Dunn purchased the development rights to the 67.2-acre Manson Farm adjacent to Hook Lake. The Farm is in the DNR's Hook Lake - Grass Lake Natural Area Project Boundary. It has approximately 1,400 feet of lake frontage, prime farmland, and a registered Indian Mound. "The Town facilitated the deal and will co-hold the conservation easement," said Renee Lauber, Town of Dunn Land Use Coordinator, "but the DNR, with partial grant money from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, funded the purchase and made the protection of this farm a reality."

DNR and Town Protect Second Farm

October 1999 - The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Town of Dunn have purchased a conservation easement on the 40-acre Molloy Farm on rustic Lalor Road. The easement acquisition is the result of a unique partnership between the DNR, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farmland Protection Program and the Town of Dunn's Purchase of Development Rights program. The Town of Dunn was instrumental in helping to secure the land option and paid for the necessary survey of the property. The Town is a co-holder of the easement for inspection and enforcement purposes. The property is in the Lake Waubesa Fishery Area, established by the DNR in 1969. The Fishery Area is located about two miles south of Madison in an area that is highly desirable for residential development. Purchase of this easement will protect the property from further development and help protect Lake Waubesa, and the DNR's South Lake Waubesa Natural Area which is adjacent to the Fishery Area. The NRCS program will reimburse the DNR for half of the purchase price of the easement.

The area within and surrounding the Molloy Property has been also recognized as an important resource area by The Nature Conservancy, Town of Dunn and the American Farmland Trust which all hold land ownership or easement rights protecting over 700 acres of land. The South Waubesa Wetlands are at the center of this area. This wetland, which borders Lake Waubesa is one of the highest quality and most diverse wetlands remaining in southern Wisconsin. The complex of fen, sedge meadow, and shrub-carr communities are underlain by deep peat deposits (up to 95 feet deep) and fed by numerous springs of excellent water quality. The unusual hydrologic system of the area allows an unusual diversity of species and abundance within the fen and sedge communities. Micro-communities include the deep spring cones lined with filamentous algae and purple-colored bacteria, submerged aquatics in springs and streams, quaking sedge-forb mats overlying spring sources, and occasional calcareous fens. Least and American bitterns, marsh and sedge wrens, black terns and willow flycatchers are among the more uncommon birds found in the area. The state-threatened Blandings turtle is found in the wetland and adjoining lands.

The 40-acre Molloy property includes some wooded upland but is primarily cropland. The cropland has been under CRP and was planted to prairie. The property is very aesthetically pleasing, with high rolling hills and a view of Lake Waubesa. The conservation easement will protect water quality and the property from further development or other incompatible land uses. The easement will allow the cropland portion of the property to continue in agricultural use, but the owners intend for now to continue restoration of the prairie. The land must be managed according to a Farm Plan that sets up a sound land use and conservation plan for the farm. Should the land be converted back to farmland, the owners would need to use agricultural practices that are consistent with the plan.

Town Receives National Award for PDR Program

April 2000 - Town receives Renew America award. [Photos and award information.](#)

\$2.4 Million Bonding Initiative Approved

April 2000 - At the April Annual Town Meeting, town electors approved a \$2.4 million bonding initiative to increase PDR program funding. Town Chair, Ed Minihan, points out, "This was done without increasing taxes. The town is using the current PDR tax (50 cents per \$1,000 equalized valuation approved in a 1996 town referendum) to make payments on a 20-year bond. This gives us cash now and takes advantage of the time value of money. The infusion of funds will help us permanently protect the town's farmland and open spaces," adds Minihan.

Year 2000 Accomplishments

The Town of Dunn protected over 365 acres of land in the year 2000. Farms protected through the PDR Program in 2000 are Carroll and Lorraine Hawkinson's 80-acre farm on Rutland-Dunn Townline Road; over fifty-one acres of the Wick Farm at the corner of Lake Farm and Alma Roads; and 234 acres of the Gustrowsky Dairy Farm on County Road B.

Year 2001 Accomplishments

August-September 2001. The Town of Dunn protected over 725 acres of land (three farms) this summer. Farms protected are the 256-acre Ace Dairy Farm, the 145-acre Bruce Horse Farm and the 324-acre Kramper Farm along Hwy 51. The town received \$704,462 in grants for these purchases - 55% of the purchase cost (\$1,282,800) of the 3 farms. The town used \$256,917 of its USDA-NRCS Farmland Protection Program Grant on these purchases. In addition, the town received \$235,200 from a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Stewardship Grant and \$212,344 from a Dane County Conservation Fund Grant.

PDR Program Marks 5 Years of Success

Beth Hastings, Land Trust Commission Chair

Article from Town of Dunn Newsletter, November 2001

Over eight years ago, a group of Dunn residents got together to discuss ways to permanently protect the town's open space and farmland. Their efforts resulted in the town's creation of a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in 1996. The town of Dunn now boasts over 1,700 acres of permanently protected farmland and open space. This land protection has been accomplished by buying "development rights" from willing landowners. Often compared with mineral rights, development rights are a landowner's rights to develop his or her property. Like mineral rights, development rights can be separated from the land itself. When the town purchases development rights to a piece of property, it buys only the right to develop that land. The landowner retains all other rights and responsibilities associated with being a landowner.

The sale of development rights is recorded as an easement attached to the property deed. The easement stays with the deed, even if the land is sold or passed on through inheritance, thereby assuring that development will not occur on that particular property. The landowner is compensated for the value of the development rights, which is the difference between the land's fair market value and its agricultural or open space value.

Wise use of your tax dollars

When the PDR program was created in 1996, town residents voted for a property tax increase to fund the program. The tax increase raised the mill rate by \$.50 per \$1,000 equalized valuation, which increased the tax on a \$100,000 home by \$50. The town has used these funds to purchase development rights from 11 landowners and protect over 1,700 acres of land. The town has accomplished this in partnership with several land protection organizations including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, US Department of Agriculture, Dane County Parks, and Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation.

These partnerships have enabled the town to bring in a significant amount of grant dollars and offset the town's cost of buying development rights. So far, grant funds have enabled the town to more than double every tax dollar. On average, this means that each time the town has purchased development rights to a property only 48% of the cost of the purchase has come from town PDR tax dollars.

<u># of Properties</u>	<u>Acres Protected from Grants</u>	<u>Price of Development Rights</u>	<u>Total Grants Received</u>	<u>Percent of Expenditure</u>
11	1,719.20	\$2,861,602.00	\$1,486,657.00	52%

Program Financing

The town has been able to leverage these large grants because of a bond approved last April at the 2000 Annual Town Meeting. This \$2.4 million bond gives the PDR program up front cash and program funding and has enabled us to apply for and receive federal, state and county grants. This bonding was done without increasing the PDR tax. The town uses the current yearly PDR tax income to make payments on the 20-year bond. This gives the PDR program necessary up front cash and takes advantage of the time value of money. As we look forward to our sixth year of the PDR program, we are working from a list of 26 applicants who are interested in selling their development rights to the town. The applicants represent 1,760 acres of land in Dunn. We hope to purchase the development rights to 5 more farms this year and continue to use your money wisely to protect agricultural and open land in our town.

September 2002 - Town of Dunn Receives 3rd USDA Farmland Protection Grant

The town of Dunn, Dane County, WI will receive \$851,850 in a cost sharing grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The money will be used over the next two years to purchase agricultural easements on prime farmland in the town as part of the town's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

The grant is being awarded to the town of Dunn as part of the USDA's Farmland Protection Program. This program, created in the 1996 Farm Bill, helps relieve some of the development and financial pressure farmers are under, according to Pat Leavenworth, State Conservationist for the USDA-NRCS in Wisconsin.

"The USDA's Farmland Protection Program has been very supportive of our program in the past. I want to thank them for continuing to make money available to local governments," says Ed Minihan, Town Chair. To date the town has protected 12 farms (over 1,763 acres). "We currently have a waiting list of 29 landowners interested in selling their development right," says Renée Lauber, the town's Land Use Coordinator. NRCS received over \$1.6 million for Farmland Protection in 2002. These funds will be used to help keep 1,620 acres on 13 farms permanently in agriculture. The Town of Dunn, as well as Dane, Jefferson, Columbia and Pierce Counties were successful in obtaining these funds.

November 2003 - Purchase of Development Rights Program Year End Summary

*Beth Hastings, Land Trust Commission Chair
Newsletter Article, Fall 2003*

This has been another good year for the Town's Purchase of Development Rights Program. We continue to move forward with our plans to preserve as much farmland and open space in the Town of Dunn as we can.

We closed on two farms this past year, adding another 172 acres to the protected land in the Town of Dunn. These purchases were the 105 acre Nelson farm on Hawkinson Road and the 65 acre Graber property along the Yahara River. Both of these transactions are good examples of our plan to make the best use of our limited PDR funds by using grants and partnering with other agencies. We facilitated the Nelson purchase, but all the funding came from the Department of Natural Resources and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. For the Graber deal, we partnered with the USDANRCS and Dane County. The owner also gave us a 15% discount on the appraised price. The grants covered 55.7% of the purchase price. The town paid the rest out of the PDR fund, which is the revenue for the program that comes from your tax dollars. Through the good work of Renee Lauber, the Town's Land Use Manager, the PDR program was awarded another matching grant from the USDA-NRCS Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program. The 2003 grant is for \$319,250. This is our 5th grant from them!

We are currently working with four landowners to purchase their farms' development rights and have ambitious plans for next year. The Land Trust Commission would like to close on the four purchases that we are currently working on plus an additional four. That would be eight total purchases of development rights for next year. As always, the meetings for town residents to approve PDR deals will be posted at the Town Hall, announced on our web page, and when possible in the town newsletter.

Even though our program is now seven years old and quite well established, we are finding that there are always new policy and program issues to address. This year we have discussed and created policies on lot line adjustments and easement donations, continued to review and refine the application ranking criteria, and reviewed property appraisals. Reviewing appraisals is an important part of our process for purchasing development rights. Before we can begin to discuss buying development rights with a landowner, the Commission must decide if it will accept an appraisal: does the value seem high, low, consistent with others; are the comparable properties appropriate, etc.

We have also begun a yearly reporting process on grant activity, completed PDR transactions and easement monitoring (going out to the property and verifying that the landowner is complying with the conditions listed in the conservation easement). The Commission also completed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Natural Heritage Land Trust that outlines our relationship with them along with our mutual responsibilities. The Natural Heritage Land Trust is a co-holder of the easements that are placed on each piece of land whose development rights the Town purchases.

We have been doing some strategic planning, as well. As we continue to increase the amount of preserved farms and open space, the Commission periodically reviews our vision and goals for the program to determine if they still meet current needs. For

instance, we look at where development pressure is coming from and decide if we should focus our efforts on purchasing development rights on properties that are close to the areas being developed. We have been very aware of McFarland's interest in some of the land on the village's southern border.

The Town of Dunn has a nationally known PDR program. Our Commissioners are enthusiastic and eager to continue its success. I am proud to be a part of such a wonderful concept and really enjoying helping to make it work.

2005 Accomplishments

Newspaper Article, Spring 2005

JMS Farms

JMS Farms owns 166-acres of land in the northwestern corner of the town of Dunn (land formerly owned by H&S Corporation). Approximately 130 acres are rented to a local farmer. The entire property is currently zoned A-1 Exclusive Agriculture and contains excellent soils for farming and a significant size woodlot. The property is under development pressure because of its proximity to the Cities of Fitchburg and Madison and views of the State Capitol and Lake Waubesa.

The town has negotiated a deal that would restrict non-agricultural development on 162 acres. Two clustered single-family lots would be created on Goodland Park Road.

The property's development rights were appraised at \$640,000. The landowner has agreed to sell for \$630,000 (a \$10,000 discount sale). An United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) Grant would cover \$320,000 of the acquisition cost. The additional \$310,000 would come out of the town's PDR program budget.

Schneider Farm – West

The Schneider family owns 106-acres of farmland on the west side of Hawkinson Road. This land has been in the Schneider Family for over 100 years. There is a farm house and out buildings on Schneider Drive. The entire property is zoned A-1 Exclusive Agriculture with about 85 acres rented to a local farmer.

The town has negotiated a deal that would allow continued use of the farm house and restrict all other nonagricultural development of the property.

The farm's development rights were appraised at \$275,600. An USDA-FRPP Grant would cover 50% of the purchase price. The remaining \$137,800 would come out of the town's PDR budget.

Schneider Farm – East

The Schneider family also owns this 60-acre parcel. There are no buildings on the property. The property is zoned A-1 Exclusive Agriculture and is rented to a local farmer.

The town has negotiated a deal that would allow one new single-family residence on the property. All other nonagricultural uses would be restricted.

The farms' development rights were appraised at \$130,000. An USDA-FRPP Grant would cover 50% of the purchase price. The remaining \$65,000 would come out of the town's PDR budget.

2006 Accomplishments

The town protected two farms in 2006. Working with Dane County Parks, the town purchased the development rights on the 68-acre Everson Farm on Dyreson Road. This farm abuts Dane County Park lands. Future county plans include the Lower Yahara River Bike and Pedestrian Trail crossing the property. The town also protected the 93-acre Outhouse Farm on Schneider Drive. This farm is adjacent to several other conservation easements on County Road B. The purchase of development rights on this property creates an 800-acre block of permanently protected farmland.

2007 Marks the 10 Year Anniversary of PDR

From Spring 2007 Newsletter

The Purchase of Development Rights program in the Town of Dunn is now ten years old! Unique at inception because no other town in Wisconsin had such a program, Dunn's PDR program continues to be recognized as a national leader in preserving farmland and open space. As we begin our eleventh year, we have many accomplishments to look back on and some interesting new challenges to look forward to.

The Land Trust Commission, which administers the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, held its first meeting in January 1997. The commissioners were immediately presented with a PDR opportunity that needed to be completed practically before we had time to put together the policies and processes we needed to get the PDR program going. The Sinaiko purchase was probably the most complicated deal the Land Trust Commission has ever done, involving the Town, Dane County, a local land trust and two local landowners.

Since that first purchase of development rights, the PDR program has steadily moved forward, working with Town of Dunn citizens, the USDA, Dane County and the DNR to preserve 2,662 acres of farmland and open space in 21 properties in the Town.

By giving farmers and other property owners the ability to retain ownership of their land while receiving some monetary value, the PDR program provides benefits to the landowner, all town residents and others who enjoy having rural space near a city like Madison. The initial set of landowners who applied to have the development rights on their land purchased by the town were particularly interested in participating in an opportunity to preserve land in the town. Then, as the program grew and became better understood, other landowners were attracted by the idea that they could realize some value from their land and still continue to own it.

In the past year or so, we have begun to feel significant development pressure from other localities bordering the town. This pressure is leading the Land Trust Commissioners to reexamine the direction of the PDR program. As most Dunn residents know, McFarland, Fitchburg, Stoughton and Oregon all have growth plans that will have some impact on the town of Dunn. Wal-Mart, North East Neighborhood, Oregon business park. These are all development efforts that are expected to be under consideration over the next few years.

The Land Trust Commission is looking at ways that the PDR program can help protect the town from this development pressure. We will be considering what proactive steps we can take to use the town's funds in the best way possible to preserve the things that make Dunn such a wonderful place to live.

2007 Accomplishments

2007 was good year for the Town's PDR Program. We closed on two farms, adding another 160 ½ acres to the protected land in the Town of Dunn. The town partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), and the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) to purchase the development rights on the 67.5 acre Everson farm. The farm is on rustic Dyreson Road adjacent to land owned by Dane County Parks. After the development rights were secured, Dane County bought the farm and hopes to someday extend the Lower Yahara River Bike Path through the property. The town also partnered with the USDA-NRCS and NHLT on the 93 acre Outhouse property along Schneider Drive and County Road B. The farm is adjacent to several other farms protected through the town's program on County Road B. Altogether, they create a swath of permanently preserved farmland covering 800 acres of land that will always be available for farming. Since the PDR program started in 1997, the town has protected 23 farms totaling 2,823 acres of land

2009 Accomplishments

In 2009, the Town of Dunn, with assistance from the DNR in the form of a \$128,100 grant, protected the 20 acre Madison Retriever Club property. This piece of land contains 17 acres of oak woodland (a very rare natural community) and has 1,400 feet of frontage on Hook Lake (one of the highest quality wetlands in Dane County). Beyond the extinguishment of any building rights, the stipulations of this conservation easement specify that if the present buildings are replaced, the new buildings must be built away from the lakeshore in order to protect the viewshed of Hook Lake.