

Green County Board of Supervisors Set into Motion **Agricultural Tourism in Green County**

As family farms continue to be squeezed, Agricultural Tourism offers an economic engine to help diversify income to sustain farmers and rural communities. By allowing farm-based adventures, learning opportunities, recreation and food experiences that attract visitors to Wisconsin's working farms, Agricultural Tourism provides a unique connection with agriculture through entertainment, education and farm products.

Under the direction of Green County Supervisor and Land Use & Zoning Committee Chair Dennis Schwartz, the Green County Board of Supervisors voted on Tuesday, April 18 to approve the final zoning changes needed for farmers in Green County to host Agricultural Tourism events on their land. With the goal of allowing every working farm the opportunity to develop additional revenue streams through agricultural tourism enterprises, these new zoning regulations, championed by Supervisors and Land Use & Zoning Committee members Sue Nelson and Kathy Pennington, allow for a robust list of allowable and conditional uses within the Agricultural District.

"Agriculture is a vital part of the Green County economy. With the passage of the recent Agricultural Tourism zoning codes, we are helping to leverage this growing industry to set these business owners and our rural community up for success in the future," Olivia Otte, Executive Director, Green County Development Corporation.

The updated sanitation code passed Tuesday support the Agricultural Tourism zoning changes made last year that include allowable uses with no permit required for roadside farmstands, wineries, breweries, distilleries and more. Conditional use permit activities include Agricultural Entertainment and Seasonal Event Centers.

"Green County welcomes Agricultural Tourism opportunities by repealing and recreating Green County's Sanitary Regulations. The new ordinance includes allowing holding tanks and portable restrooms. These positive changes will provide agricultural land owners different sanitation options based on their Agricultural Tourism use," reports Pennington

Three years in the making, a local alliance of organizations including the Green County Economic Development Corporation, Farm Bureau of Green County, Wisconsin Farmers Union South Central Chapter, Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association, Green County Women in Sustainable Ag (Soil Sisters) and others worked together to support the adoption of this important economic driver.

"The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association would like to thank the Green County leadership for working collaboratively with farmers to bring the Ag Zoning Ordinance up-to-date

to meet both the consumers and farmers desires,” Jean Bahn, Advocacy Chair, Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association.

The average on-farm, non-commercial venue wedding generates \$3,000-\$5,000 in rental income for the farm and roughly \$22,500 per event for the surrounding rural businesses. This includes revenue for local businesses such as the bakery, catering, hotels, gas stations, restaurants, hair stylists, photographer, DJ, florist and more.

“Given Green County's proximity to Chicago and Madison, it is a perfect destination for families seeking to visit and experience our unique brand of farming. Thanks to the Green County Board, local farms can now welcome visitors onto their farms and host events. We thank them for their continued support of our farming community,” Matt Scheaffer, president, South Central Chapter of Wisconsin Farmers Union.

Wisconsin is widely recognized as America's Agricultural Tourism Destination. The total tourism impact for Green County is \$72 million with direct consumer spending \$40.9 million employing nearly 700 people contributing to labor income of \$20.9 million adding \$44 million in state and local taxes.

“It’s great to know that Green County has removed the barriers to new agricultural experiences on the farm. Agritourism is a key tool for farmer-entrepreneurs to diversify their businesses to sustain their families while connecting with people hungry for a taste of rural life,” tells Andy Larson, UW Food Finance Institute and Small Business Development Center Farm Outreach Specialist.

At the core of this call for change has been family farmers looking to help themselves. With the passage of the new codes, farmers now have new economic tools to help sustain their farms and rural communities. For additional details on all that the new zoning codes allow contact the Green County Land Use & Zoning office at 608-328-9428 or visit <https://wi-greencounty.civicplus.com/>

“Green County is open for Agricultural Tourism Business!” says Phil Molina, owner, Still Point Flower Farm and Agricultural Tourism Advocate. “Let’s continue to recognize and grow agricultural tourism as the farm-saving economic engine that it is for Green County and Wisconsin.”