

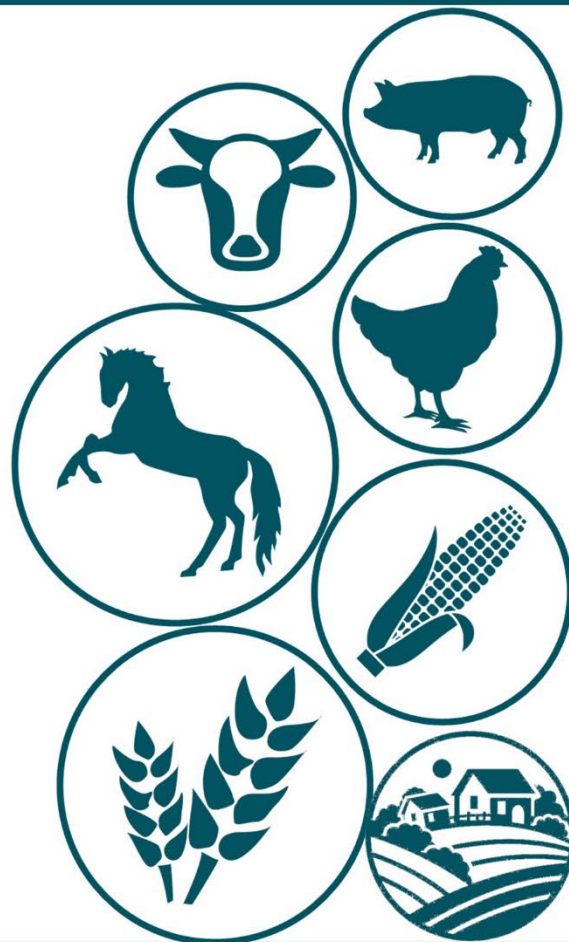


THE UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS and GRENVILLE

AGRICULTURAL AREA REVIEW STUDY

APPENDIX G - INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION INFORMATION PACKAGE

March 15, 2024





United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Public Works Division
Consent Granting Authority
Forestry
Planning
Roads

25 Central Ave. W., Suite 100
Brockville, ON K6V 4N6
T 613-342-3840
800-770-2170
TTY 800-539-8685
F 613-342-2101
www.leedsgrenville.com

September 29, 2023

Dear Property Owner:

Re: Agricultural Area Review

The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville is undertaking an Agricultural Area Review (AAR). This process has involved several consultation opportunities and has reached the final stages of confirming the recommended agricultural areas. Counties Council requested that all impacted landowners be individually notified to ensure residents are fully informed of the study and of any changes in designation to their specific property. Ensuring you are well informed and have the opportunity to discuss any concerns is a priority for the project team and your local elected representatives.

You are receiving this letter because your property, or a portion of your property, is proposed to change its designation in the Counties Official Plan **from RURAL LANDS to AGRICULTURAL AREA** as a result of the AAR recommendations. This change, if approved, will be implemented through an amendment to the Counties' Official Plan.

You can continue to use your property as you are today. This potential change will not affect your taxes. Your ability to sever your property and create further lots may be impacted.

Additional Information: We have enclosed additional information that we hope answers any questions you may have. We encourage you to visit www.leedsgrenville.com/agriculture to read project information and to access maps which will allow you to review your property relative to the recommended agricultural area system. Large maps of the recommended system are also available for viewing in your local municipal office or at the Counties' office in Brockville.

Upcoming Public Meeting: A public meeting on the proposed Counties' Official Plan Amendment to change the Agricultural Area designation will be held at a future date. Please email or call Ms. Mallory to request direct notification of the public meeting. If you have already provided your email and/or mailing address to the Counties earlier in the process, no further action is required.

Who to Contact: Questions and/or comments are welcome and would be appreciated by **October 30, 2023** to allow their consideration as part of the final recommendations.

Please contact:

Elaine M. Mallory, Planner I

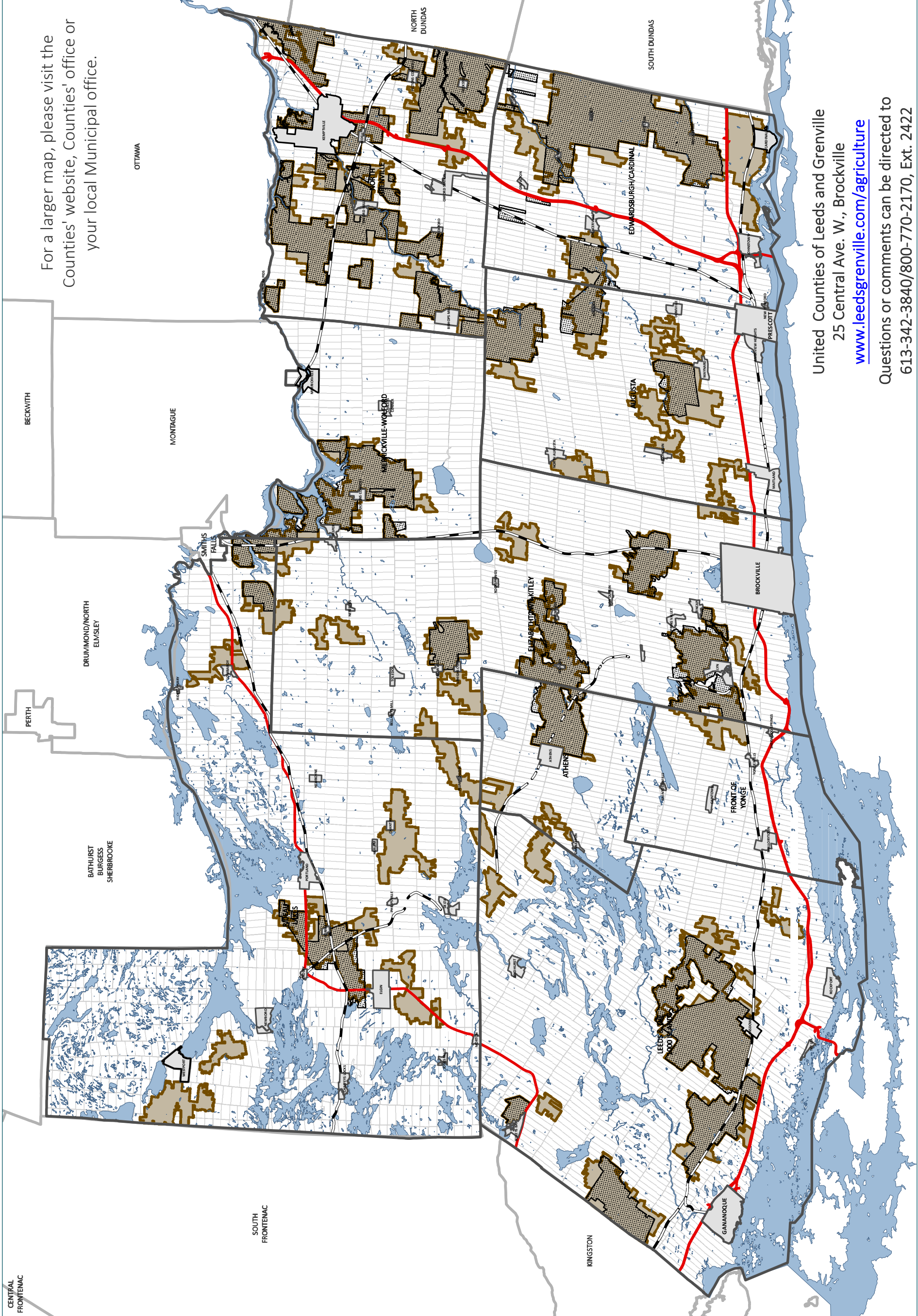
elaine.mallory@uclg.on.ca

800-770-2170/613-342-3840 ext. 2422

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UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS & GRENVILLE
PRIME RECOMMENDATION & EXISTING PRIME AGRICULTURAL DESIGNATION



For a larger map, please visit the Counties' website, Counties' office or your local Municipal office.

OTTAWA

CENTRAL FRONTENAC

SOUTH FRONTENAC

KINGSTON

SOUTH DUNDAS

NORTH DUNDAS

BECKWITH

MONTAGUE

DRUMMOND/NORTH ELMISLEY

BATHURST BURGESS SHERBROOKE

SMITHS FALLS

WICKVILLE-WOLFORD

ATHENS

ELIZABETHVILLE

WITLEY

FRONTIÈRE YONGE

BROCKVILLE

ALBUSTA

EDWARDSBURGH/CARDINAL

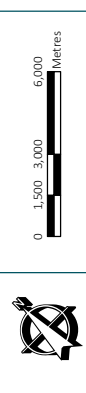
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
25 Central Ave. W., Brockville
www.leedsgrenville.com/agriculture
Questions or comments can be directed to
613-342-3840/800-770-2170, Ext. 2422



RECOMMENDATION
Prime Agriculture

OFFICIAL PLAN DESIGNATION
Prime Agricultural Lands
(Current Official Plan)

The information displayed on this map has been compiled from various sources. While every effort has been made to accurately depict the information, this map should not be relied on as being a precise indicator of locations.
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What is the purpose of the AAR?

The goal of this study is to identify Agricultural Areas for long-term protection.

What are Agricultural Areas?

The Province provides that agricultural areas are areas where prime agricultural lands (Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands) dominate and includes associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4 through 7 lands as well as areas with a local concentration of farms exhibiting characteristics of ongoing agriculture. An agricultural system may include rural lands that help create a connected productive land base for agriculture.



Why are Agricultural Areas important?

Only about 7 per cent of Canada's land can be farmed.¹ Ontario makes up 7.7 per cent of this total farm area, but accounts for 25.5 percent of total farms in Canada, having a significant economic impact.² In 2021, Canada exported nearly \$82.2 billion in agriculture and food products.³ However, Ontario loses agricultural land every day, losing over 20% between 1976 and 2021.⁴ Agricultural land is finite and non-renewable. Great care must be taken to make sure we have this resource for generations of farmers to come.⁵

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¹ Agriculture in Canada, The Canadian Encyclopedia, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/agriculture-in-canada>

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/96-325-x/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm>

³ <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/overview-canadas-agriculture-and-agri-food-sector>

⁴ Farmland Policy, Ontario Farmland Trust, <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/what-we-do/farmland-policy>

⁵ <http://omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/permitteduses.html>

Why is the Counties doing an AAR?

This study is being undertaken because protection of agricultural resources is a Provincial public interest. This study, using a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) Assessment approach or modified LEAR approach, was a Provincial requirement of approval in the Counties' Official Plan. The Province requires the Agricultural Area mapping be verified through a comprehensive process at the Counties level.

What does this mean?

The result of the study will be a revised prime Agricultural Area designation on a map for adoption by amendment to the Counties' Official Plan. Some lands will remain in their current designation, some lands will change from Rural Lands to Agricultural Area and some lands will change from Agricultural Area to Rural Lands. Policies applicable to the recommended designation will guide development on the subject lands.

Agricultural Area Review (AAR)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Generally, uses permitted under the Agricultural Area designation include:

- Agriculture;
- Agriculture related (including farm-related commercial and industrial uses);
- Aggregate operations;
- Home occupations and home industry;
- On-farm diversified uses (e.g. sales outlets, agri-tourism); and/or
- Secondary farm residence and additional dwelling units.

Uses permitted under the Rural Lands designation are broader and include the uses permitted under the Agricultural Area designation as well as:

- Limited locally appropriate residential uses;
- Cemeteries;
- Rural industrial/commercial uses that are resource based or located along a rural commercial area/corridor; and/or
- Recreational and tourist commercial uses.

Can I still build a dwelling on my vacant lot of record in the Agricultural Area?

Your ability to construct a dwelling will not be altered from its current rights.

Will I lose severance rights?

For some properties (generally those changing from Rural Lands to Agricultural Area), severance policies will be more restrictive than before. For other properties (generally those lands changing from Agricultural Area to Rural Lands), more permissive severance rights will apply. The impact to your property will depend on a

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number of factors, including whether all or only part of the property is impacted by the designation changes, past severance activity on the property and the ability to comply with all applicable severance and general policies.

In the Rural Lands designation, severance policies vary by municipality and eligibility will depend on the severance history of the property as well as other policy considerations such as compliance with Minimum Distance Separation formula, entrance permissions, other designations on/in proximity to the property, ability to be considered limited locally appropriate rural development, etc..

Generally, within the Agricultural Area designation, landowners can only sever a lot for a farm use (100 acres or 40 hectares minimum lot size) or for a surplus farm dwelling as a result of farm consolidation. This is a long-time Provincial restriction through the Provincial Policy Statement intended to prevent agricultural lands from being lost to residential or other non-agricultural uses.

Will this change impact my taxes?

No, you will not pay more in taxes because of changes from the Agricultural Area to the Rural Lands designation or vice versa. Property taxes are based on use and not the land use designation under the Counties' Official Plan. For information about how property assessments are conducted, please visit the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation link – www.mpac.ca/en/PropertyTypes

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Agricultural Area Review (AAR)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the next steps?

Property owners are encouraged to speak with Counties' staff and/or the consultant regarding the proposed mapping over the next month. Minor amendments may be made to the mapping resulting from these conversations.

A public meeting will be held for a proposed Official Plan Amendment to implement the final recommended mapping. This meeting will be held before the Counties' Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and is anticipated to be held in early 2024. **Contact elaine.mallory@uclg.on.ca or 613-342-3840/800-770-2170 ext. 2422 to be directly notified of that meeting.**

The PAC will provide a recommendation to Council regarding the proposed amendment. Council will make its decision at a Council meeting following consideration of PAC's recommendation. Notice of the decision of Council will be shared with all those who have provided their email and/or mailing addresses to the Counties.

If the Amendment is approved, there will be a 20-day appeal period following Council's decision. Anyone who participated in the Official Plan Amendment process can submit an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). Details on the appeal process will be outlined in the notice of adoption that is distributed following the final decision.

The designation changes will be final if there are no appeals or after a decision by the OLT on any appeals. The relevant policies will then apply to the affected lands. Local Official Plans and zoning by-laws will be updated to reflect the new designations in the following years.



What if I do not agree with the evaluation of my land?

If you do not agree with the proposed designation or score, you should speak with Counties' staff and/or the consultant over the next month to confirm your understanding of the evaluation, scoring and any special considerations regarding your property. If you continue to disagree with the proposed designation or scoring:

1. Provide an oral or written submission expressing your concerns which will be considered by Counties' staff and the consultants as part of the recommendation to PAC. Comments are appreciated on/before **October 30, 2023**, but will be considered up to the date of decision.
2. Attend the public meeting to provide a written or oral submission to the Planning Advisory Committee.

How was my property evaluated?

STEP 1 – Background & Information

Gathering

The Counties retained Planscape Inc. in conjunction with The Soil Resource Group (SRG) to undertake this review. The consultants hosted meetings with the public, the technical advisory group (a group of municipal staff, provincial representatives and farming community representatives), stakeholders and the Counties' Planning Advisory Committee to review the project, its scope and its proposed evaluation approach and receive early input which was reflected in the technical methodology.



STEP 2 - Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) Evaluation

All the lands in the Counties, excluding settlement areas, were evaluated on a 40 hectare (100 acre) block-by-block basis by the consulting team using a LEAR assessment methodology. A LEAR is a Provincial agricultural system evaluation tool where scores are assigned to the 100 acre blocks of land to represent their agricultural potential for inclusion in an agricultural system.

The Land Evaluation (LE) component of the methodology represents soil quality based on the Canada Land Index (CLI), which ranks lands as Classes 1 through 7. Class 1 is the best soil for agricultural purposes, whereas Class 7 has little or no agricultural value. The CLI score assigned to each 100 acre block comprises 60% of the overall score to reflect the importance of soil quality when assessing agricultural potential. Effectively, the better the Class of land(s), the higher the LE score of that 100 acre block.

To represent a systems approach, more than just the soil score needs to be considered. The Area Review (AR) factors provide the opportunity to customize the evaluation to represent the characteristics of the Counties. Two factors were included: lands in agricultural production and fragmentation. The lands in production represent the added value of a connected block of active farmland in an area versus one single farmed lot surrounded by non-agricultural land uses. Fragmentation of lands reflects the value of larger tracts of land in the system.

Agricultural Area Review (AAR)

EVALUATION PROCESS

Higher fragmentation occurs where there are more rural residential lots. The lands in production factor represents 30% of the overall score and the fragmentation factor is valued at 10%.

The LEAR methodology formula is:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{LE Score (soils)} & + & \text{AR Score (lands in production + fragmentation)} & = & \text{LEAR score} \\ 60\% & & 30\% & & 10\% & & \text{(out of 100\%)} \end{array}$$

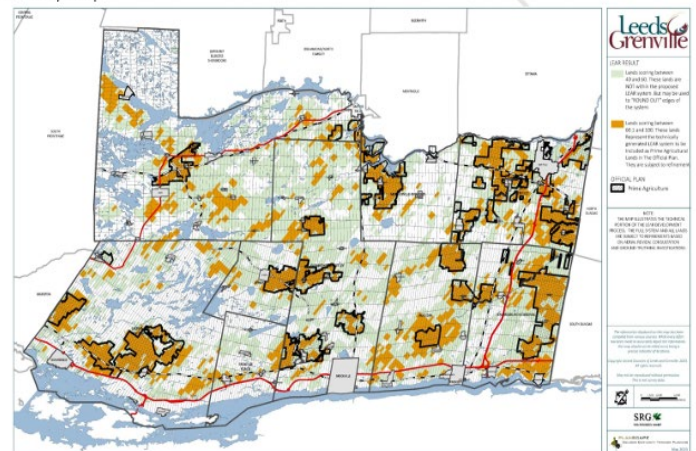
NOTE: Scores are provided for the evaluated 100 acre blocks. Each property was not specifically reviewed. As an agricultural area system encompasses more than just typically farmed lots in order to ensure the larger system is protected into the future, some properties with more rural characteristics (such as a rural residential lot) may be included in the Agricultural Area designation as:

- the lands are in a highly evaluated block;
- the lands help create a connected land base (system) which is the Provincial direction; and/or
- the lands are in an area where there is a local concentration of farms.

STEP 3 – Evaluation Mapping

Through the evaluation and consultation process, a threshold score of greater than 60 was selected as the most appropriate score for lands to be included in the system. This scoring most closely represents the agricultural designations currently in the Counties' Official Plan. The 60 score threshold balances the Counties relative soil composition with previous efforts to identify agricultural lands, all in the context of the current actively farmed lands throughout the Counties.

Figure 11: Draft County LEAR Map



The LEAR scores were mapped by block to create the base system of lands that scored above 60. Lands scoring between 40 and 60 were also illustrated to show additional lands that may be appropriate to “refine” edges of the base system mapping. Public consultation was held to obtain feedback regarding the evaluation mapping.

Agricultural Area Review (AAR)

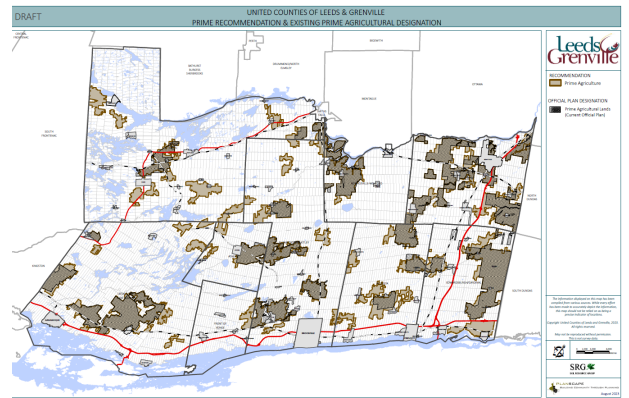
EVALUATION PROCESS

STEP 4 – Refinements

To align mapping with identifiable boundaries, respect comments regarding the impact of the system on individual properties and to give added assurance of the agricultural area system, boundaries refinements to the mapping were undertaken. These refinements were made using a consistent framework to ensure the integrity of the system (i.e. that all properties were treated the same). While each refinement was assessed in context of all considerations as opposed to individually, the following guidance was established.

Refinements generally included lands that:

- Are within the current Agricultural Area designations as it was generally found these lands are comprised of Class 1-3 soils, are actively used for agriculture, are connected to evaluated lands, meet the size thresholds, and/or went to identifiable boundaries;
- Were at the request of a landowner, where appropriate. This allows the protection of pasture lands on an as-requested basis and reflects local knowledge and desire to be included in the agricultural system; and/or
- Are required to form system connections or allow logical refinements to a boundary of the system on lands that scored less than 60.



Refinements generally excluded lands that:

- Scored less than 60 in the LEAR assessment;
- Scored 60 or above, but are isolated from other agricultural lands. This follows the Provincial methodology that agricultural areas be composed of a minimum 250 hectares (617 acres);
- Have identifiable natural heritage features along the edges of system areas. Where small natural heritage features (like a woodlot or small wetland) are in the middle of a block, they are left in the system so no “holes” or voids in the system were created due to their removal; and/or
- Are fragmented along road frontages where it is appropriate to use the road as the agricultural system boundary.

The 4 steps of the evaluation process sought to identify a viable agricultural system, as per Provincial directive, that creates the foundation for protecting agricultural potential and resources into the future.