

Community Involvement

How we use land and the land decisions we make today are perhaps the most important, long-term environmental issues facing Wisconsin. The vast majority of land in Wisconsin is, and will remain, privately owned. Individual landowners, developers, and local governments are the principal land use decision-makers. Whether land is public or private, we are all stewards of the land.

Broad public involvement is critical throughout the planning process and is a requirement of the comprehensive planning law. Successful implementation of a community's comprehensive land use plan is dependent on public acceptance.

How the public can become involved:

- ✓ Connect with community planners. Keep informed of the planning process.
- ✓ Determine public participation timetable.
- ✓ Find out how your community plans to include the public in its planning efforts.
- ✓ Identify potential participation needs or opportunities.
- ✓ Participate in the planning process, to make it a success!
- ✓ Help identify important natural resources in your community.
- ✓ Participate in vision development and goal setting.

Community Analysis of Natural Resources

The development of the natural resources element of a comprehensive plan should include public involvement in the inventory and analysis of current natural resources conditions. This analysis will help determine whether protection, enhancement, or restoration is needed. Questions to ask when analyzing the inventory might include:

- ✓ What are our community resources?
- ✓ What is the quality (current and future status) of our resources?
- ✓ What community value (impacts) do these resources have?

Land Use Planning Assistance

Wisconsin DNR staff are available to assist with natural resources and environmental issues in the comprehensive planning process. Staff can provide information and expert opinions, comment on drafts, and suggest alternatives. If you are looking for specific expertise, department staff will help you contact the appropriate person.

- Northeast Region: Shelly Schaetz, Green Bay, Phone: 920-492-5819
Email: michelle.schaetz@dnr.state.wi.us
- Northern Region: Kirstie Larsen, Rhineland, Phone: 715-365-8983
Email: kirstie.larsen@dnr.state.wi.us
- South Central Region: Russ Anderson, Fitchburg, Phone: 608-275-3467
Email: russell.anderson@dnr.state.wi.us
- Southeast Region: Mike Thompson, Milwaukee, Phone: 414-263-8648
Email: michael.thompson@dnr.state.wi.us
- West Central Region: Tom Lovejoy, Eau Claire, Phone: 715-839-3747
Email: tom.lovejoy@dnr.state.wi.us

Visit the DNR's land use web site for useful information, data about land use, and other comprehensive planning information at:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/landuse/index.htm>

*"When we see land as a community to which we belong, we begin to use it with love and respect."
— Aldo Leopold*

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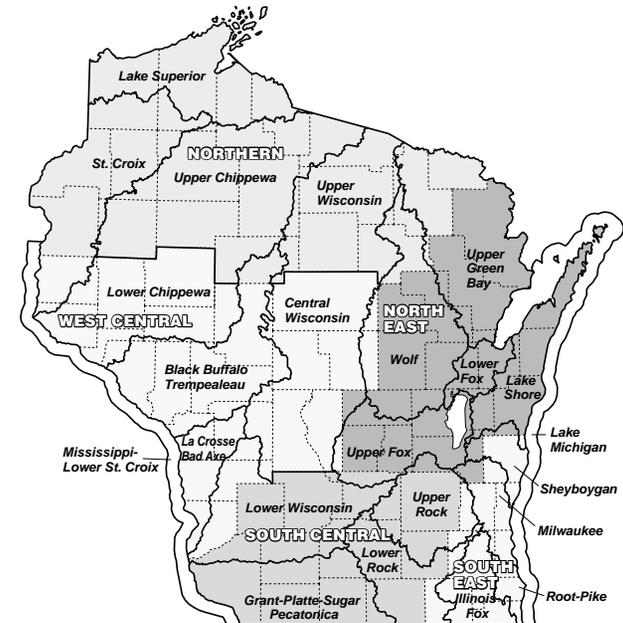


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A Sound Land Use Vision and Natural Resources Planning



DNR administrative regions and major water basins

**Including Natural Resources in
Local Comprehensive Planning**

A Vision of Sound Land Use

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) protects and manages natural resources to sustain and encourage healthy ecosystems for current and future generations. The DNR's vision for sound land use is based on sustainability of natural resources and environmental protection.

Including natural resources in local comprehensive land use planning is one tool available for sharing environmental knowledge to protect ecosystems and manage natural resources. Significant ecological, economic, and social benefits can be realized when developing and implementing a comprehensive plan.

Background and Guidance

In 1995, the Natural Resources Board adopted the report *Common Ground*, which stated: "The DNR desires to work toward strong public policies that not only protect Wisconsin's environment, but [also] help enhance the state's economy and maintain a high quality of life."

According to the report, sound land use:

- ✓ Minimizes negative environmental impacts.
- ✓ Considers long-term consequences.
- ✓ Is suitable for the location.
- ✓ Maximizes use of existing and future infrastructure and services.
- ✓ Considers community costs.
- ✓ Results from broad public consensus.
- ✓ Strengthens or enhances community and regional character.

Sound land use results when people make decisions that carefully consider plans for Wisconsin that provide healthy ecosystems and economies, with a high quality of life for all people today and into the future!

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning ("smart growth") law provides a framework for developing local comprehensive plans. Under this law, local governments continue to control their own planning and land use decision-making efforts. Comprehensive plans help provide a rational basis for land use decision-making at the local level. By 2010, all communities that make land use decisions will need to base those decisions on an adopted comprehensive plan derived from the statutory language.

The "Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources Element" is one of nine elements that a comprehensive plan must address. This element is defined as "A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation, and promotion of the effective management, of natural resources." A beginning list of natural resources to inventory could include:

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| ✓ Groundwater | ✓ Parks |
| ✓ Forests | ✓ Open / Green Space |
| ✓ Agricultural Areas | ✓ Air Quality |
| ✓ Stream Corridors | ✓ Environmentally Sensitive Areas |
| ✓ Surface Water | ✓ Threatened and Endangered Species |
| ✓ Floodplains | ✓ Metallic / Nonmetallic Mineral Resources |
| ✓ Wetlands | |
| ✓ Wildlife Habitat | |



Natural resources and the need for environmental planning and protection relate to practically all aspects of community life. As a result, natural resource issues should be addressed early and frequently in the comprehensive plan. Other elements with environmental and natural resources emphasis include:

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ Land Use | ✓ Housing |
| ✓ Utilities and Community Facilities | ✓ Transportation |
| ✓ Economic Development | ✓ Intergovernmental Cooperation |



A Guide to Including Natural Resources in Local Comprehensive Planning

The DNR developed a planning guidebook, *Planning for Natural Resources*, that provides reference information available through federal, state, regional, county, and local programs that can help communities make informed decisions about environmental topics. This guide may be viewed or downloaded from the DNR's land use and comprehensive planning web site at:

http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/landuse/smart_growth/urbplan_bk.pdf



Planning for Natural Resources provides an overview of the planning process for natural resources to help communities establish goals, priorities, and policies for protection, restoration, and management of their natural resources. The guide also identifies specific resources and addresses some of the issues and concerns related to those resources. In addition, the guide provides an overview of laws, programs, and actions to help communities conserve and promote the effective management of natural resources found in their community.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to balance the needs of development while maintaining a healthy environment. *Planning for Natural Resources* offers direction for communities to:

- ✓ Identify and protect natural resources within their boundaries.
- ✓ Identify potential environmental conflicts and issues in a land use context.
- ✓ Identify strategies for preparing a comprehensive plan that enhances the natural environment of our communities.