



# County Land and Water Resource Management Plans and the 9 Key Elements

*Watershed scale planning to help focus efforts and increase funding opportunities*

## What are 9 Key Element Plans?

The EPA has identified nine key planning elements that are critical for protecting and improving water quality. Plans that reflect the nine key elements help assess the contributing causes and sources of nonpoint source pollution within a defined watershed area and then prioritize pollutant reduction strategies to restore or protect water quality. Nine key element watershed plans can be used to restore impaired waters or help protect unimpaired waters. In order to be eligible for Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319 and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding from US EPA, the following nine elements must be addressed in a watershed plan:

**1 Identify the causes and sources** that need to be controlled to achieve pollutant load reductions. This includes quantifying significant sources and background levels using maps and tables.

**2 Estimate the pollutant load reductions** expected from selected management measures.

**3 Describe management measures** that need to be implemented to achieve load reductions. Map priority areas for implementing practices.

**4 Estimate amounts of technical and financial assistance needed,** associated costs, and/or the sources and authorities that will be relied upon, to implement the Plan.

**5 Develop an information & education component** to encourage participation and Plan implementation.

**6 Develop a schedule** for implementing the management measures identified in the Plan.

**7 Describe interim, measurable milestones** to assess if the Plan is being implemented.

**8 Identify a set of criteria** to determine whether Plan objectives are or are not being achieved over time. Outline how and when the Plan will be revised if progress is not being made.

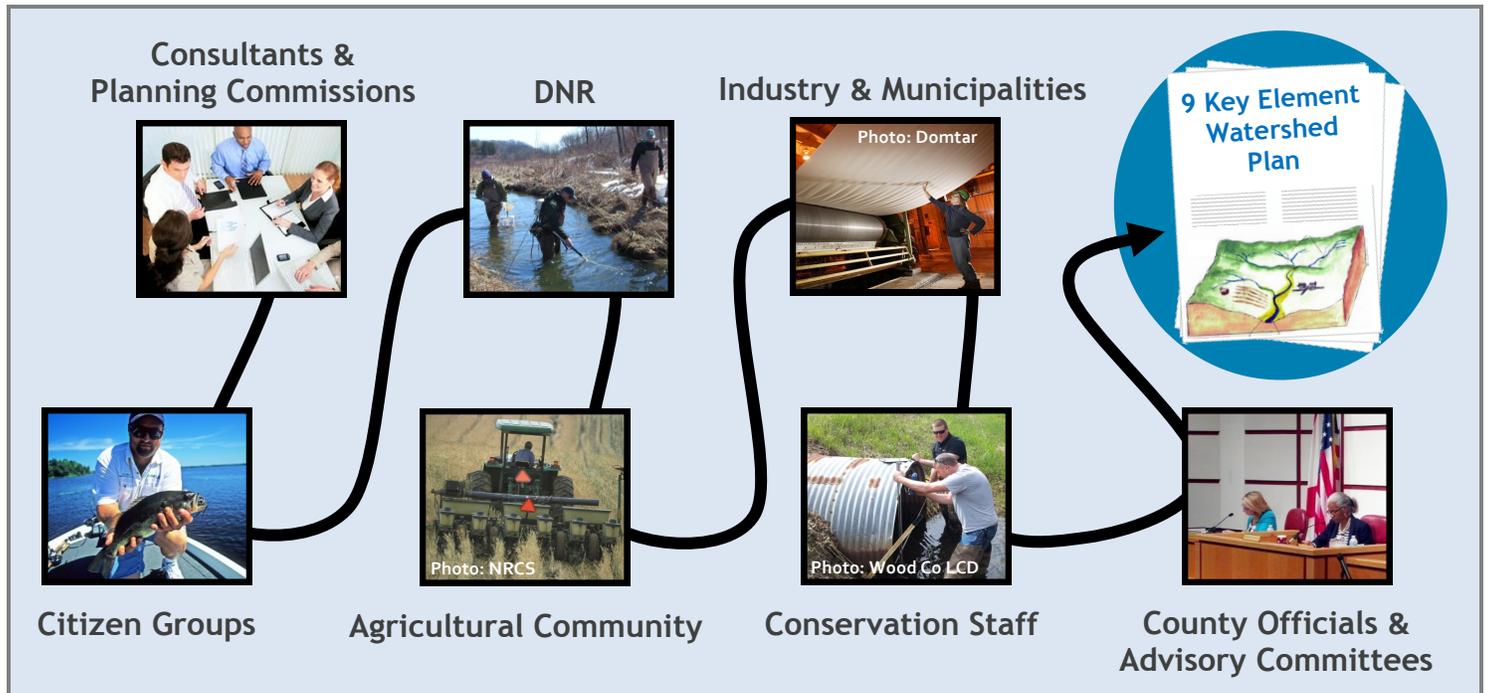
**9 Develop a monitoring component** to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts over time using criteria from elements 6, 7 and 8.

*Many LWRM Plan requirements are consistent with the nine key elements. See Page 4 for a comparison of LWRM Plan components to the nine key elements.*

# Myths and Facts about Land and Water Resources Management Plans and the 9 Key Elements

**Fact:** *Nine key element plans are meant to be a team effort.*

Federal, state, and local agencies, and other key stakeholders that reside within the selected watershed, should all be involved in developing and implementing the plan. **Collaboration is key!**



**Myth:** *County Land and Water Resource Management Plans must contain the nine key elements and must be approved by the EPA.*

**Fact:** Section ATCP 50.12, Wis. Adm. Code, was revised in 2014 and included changes to the Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) plan content requirements. These revisions **DO NOT** require that LWRM plans meet the nine key elements or have EPA approval. However, many plan requirements are **consistent** with the nine key elements (*see comparison on next page*). Accordingly, when counties update their LWRM plans to meet s. ATCP 50.12, the county's plan may also meet the nine key elements within a specific watershed(s), thereby avoiding duplication of planning efforts and ensuring that goals and targeted activities are aligned. DATCP will confirm if the plan meets all ch. ATCP 50 requirements. DNR and EPA will confirm if the plan is consistent with the nine key elements.

**Federal and state grant funding, the nine key elements, and your LWRM Plan.** The EPA requires that at least 50 percent of CWA Section 319 grant be used by states to fund the implementation of EPA approved nine key element plans. Along with state funding sources, the DNR currently allocates a total of \$1.2 million of CWA Section 319 funding through the Targeted Runoff Management (TRM), Notice of Discharge (NOD), Lake Protection and River Management Grant Programs. TRM Grant applicants receive 10 bonus points for projects that implement nine key element plans. To be eligible for the CWA Section 319 portion of these grant programs counties have two options:

1. *Revise their LWRM Plan to reflect the 9 key elements for specific watersheds.*
2. *Develop a separate 9 key element plan and reference it in the LWRM Plan.*

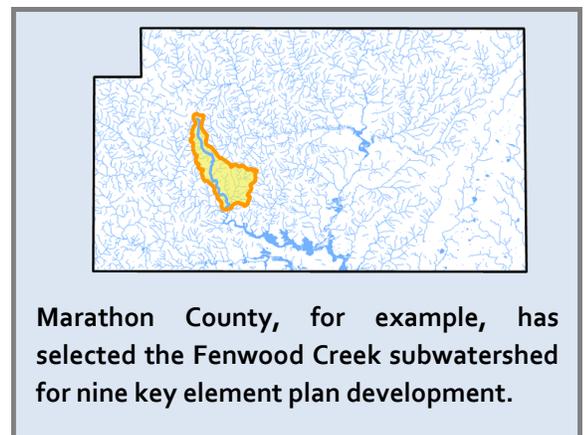
## Myths and Facts Continued...

### **Fact: Nine key element plans do not need to be massive, long documents.**

With that said, some of the current/active nine key element plans in Wisconsin posted on the [DNR website](#) include a robust amount of background information, history, and additional detail. In these cases, the plan developers already had the information readily available and included it in their plan. This level of detail is **NOT** required for all plans. Plan developers are encouraged to present plan information in a clear and concise manner that is easily understood by watershed partners and stakeholders. The nine key elements provide a framework for incorporating existing activities, plans, and information. Much of the required information can be pulled or referenced from readily available sources, such as County Land and Water Resource Management Plans, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), ordinances, grant applications, and habitat and water quality monitoring data.

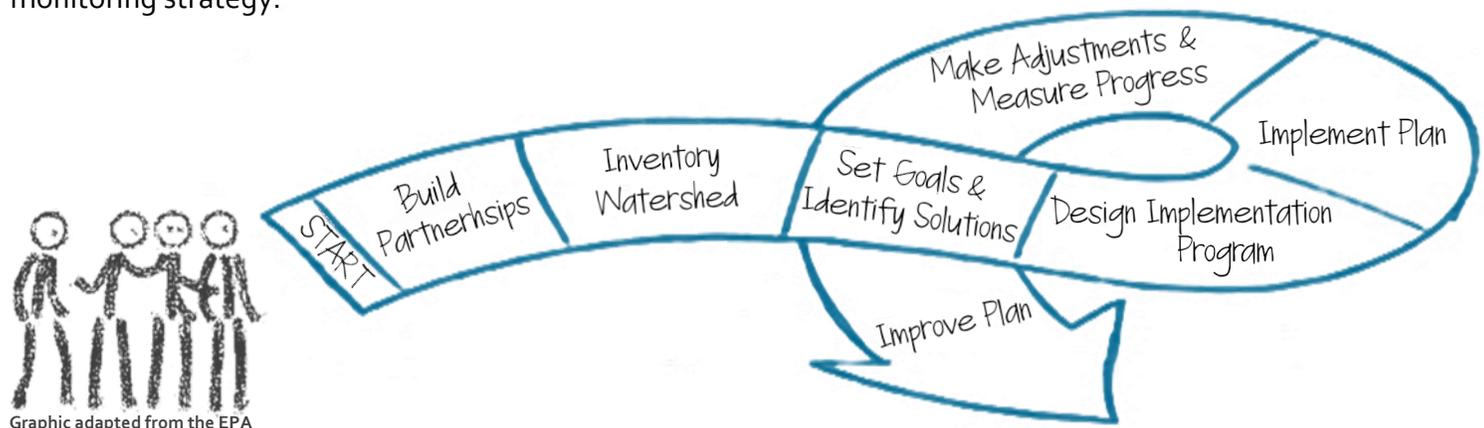
### **Fact: Nine key element plans do not need to cover the entire county.**

It is possible to develop a nine key element plan for an entire county if the necessary information is available. However, it is more likely a county will have the data available for some, but not all, watersheds within its boundaries. The DNR recommends identifying one or more priority areas within a county to develop a nine key element plan (at the HUC-12 scale, approximately 35 square miles). The scale of nine key element plans can be larger or smaller than this and should be determined based on available information, staff resources and funding to reduce nonpoint pollution sources within the selected area(s).



### **Fact: Element No. 9 (follow-up monitoring) should be a team effort.**

The monitoring component (element No. 9) of a nine key element plan can be met, at a minimum, by tracking if the plan schedule and milestones (elements Nos. 6 and 7) are implemented over time. Monitoring can also be accomplished using water quality sampling, computer modeling and tallying the number of practices (and calculating pollutant load reductions) implemented in specific areas. Monitoring should be a team effort at the state and local level and will be implemented as available resources allow. Counties are encouraged to consult with regional DNR water quality biologists to help craft the monitoring strategy for the watershed plan. Other federal, state, and local agencies and groups should also be involved in developing and implementing a monitoring strategy.



Graphic adapted from the EPA

# Comparing the 9 key elements to s. ATCP 50.12 requirements

Key  
element  
#

## ATCP 50 LWRM Plan Content Requirements *(abridged)*

A Land and Water Resource Management Plan shall describe all of the following in reasonable detail:

1

(a) Water quality and soil erosion conditions throughout the county, including **identification of the causes of water quality impairment and pollutant sources**. The Plan shall include water quality assessments for each watershed in the county available from DNR, if any.

4

(b) **State and local regulations that the county will use** to implement the county Plan. DATCP may require the county to provide copies of relevant local regulations, as necessary, and may comment on those regulations.

2

(c) **Water quality objectives for each watershed, including any available pollutant load reduction targets**, consistent with conditions identified in par. (a). The county shall consult with DNR to determine water quality objectives and to identify pollutant load reduction targets.

1&3

(d) **Key water quality and soil erosion problem areas**. The county Land Conservation Committee shall identify key water quality problem areas in consultation with DNR.

2&3

(e) **Conservation practices needed** to address key water quality and soil erosion problems.

1&3

(f) A strategy to **identify priority farms** in the county.

4

(g) County strategies to encourage voluntary implementation of conservation practices under s. ATCP 50.04. A county shall **estimate the amount of information and education, cost-sharing and other financial assistance, and technical assistance needed** to implement its Plan.

(h) **Compliance procedures**, including notice, hearing, enforcement, and appeal procedures, that will apply if the county takes action against a landowner for failure to implement conservation practices required under ch. ATCP 50, ch. NR 151 or related local regulations.

4&6

(i) The county's **multi-year workplan** to implement the farm conservation practices under s. ATCP 50.04, and achieve compliance with performance standards under ch. NR 151. The Plan shall **identify priorities, benchmarks for performance, and expected costs**, including an estimate of costs to implement conservation practices to achieve the objectives identified in par. (c).

7,8,9

(j) The **measurable annual and multi-year benchmarks** the county will utilize to periodically monitor and measure its progress in meeting performance targets and achieving plan goals and objectives under the workplan in par. (i).

5

(k) How the county will **provide information and education** related to land and water conservation, including information related to farm conservation practices and cost-share funding.

1-9

(l) How the county will **coordinate its land and water conservation program with federal, state, and local agencies**.



For more information on nine key element plans, contact:

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Or visit: [dnr.wi.gov/topic/nonpoint/9keyelementplans.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nonpoint/9keyelementplans.html)

