



# THE LAND USE TRACKER

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## Meaningful to Citizens – Functional for Planning: Using Public Participation Tools to Accomplish Planning Tasks

*By Douglas Miskowiak, Project Planner*

Is your community getting what it needs from efforts to involve the public? Are your citizens satisfied with their opportunities to become involved in planning? When participation can be expensive and time consuming, citizens, planners, and local officials expect a return from the time or money they invest (Heberlein, 1974). Planners and local officials want participation to be functional for planning. They want participation to instill trust with citizens and want the community-plan to enjoy public acceptance. Citizens want their involvement to be meaningful. They want to influence the plan that ultimately affects their property and quality of life. Planners, officials, and citizens get what they want when the public is involved to accomplish planning tasks. This article is intended to help local officials and plan committee/commission members better understand the purpose for citizen involvement and how citizens can be productive for planning. Commissioners and officials may not be expected to create a public participation plan after reading this article, but will know better how to make public involvement functional for planning yet meaningful to citizens.

### Blueprint for Results: The Planning Process

A typical planning process is much like a blueprint, and is a good place to begin when thinking about how to involve citizens. The plan process describes a set of stages to follow, a set of topics to cover, and a set of tasks to achieve, or products to create (see Insert).

- **Planning stages** illustrate the broad path where planning is headed. Stages describe most generally what happens first, next, and last, such as setting goals, setting objectives, and forming strategies.
- **Planning issues** are possible topics to cover. In Wisconsin, issues are called elements, and nine must be covered to consider a plan comprehensive. Natural resources, housing, and transportation are some examples of planning issues.
- **Planning tasks** are assignments to accomplish to create a plan and are

*(See Planning on page 3)*

## What's New at the Center

On the web: click on "What's New at the Center" on our homepage.

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## CLUSTER: Creative Land Use Series for Teachers and Educator Resources

Land use environmental education is aimed at developing an understanding of the relationship between land use decisions and the environment, along with the realization that the way in which land is used directly affects the environment. The ultimate goal of CLUSTER, a Creative Land Use Series for Teachers and Educator Resources, is to make resources, lessons and materials readily available to teach land use environmental education. The project aims to assist in the education of the next generation in order to produce thoughtful, engaged citizens that will see the connection between land use and the environment and will be compelled to act. Through this process we will generate a responsible citizenry that can make educated and sustainable, local and global decisions about future land use.

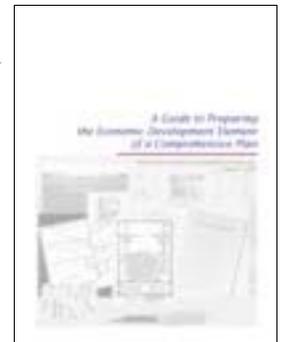
### CLUSTER Project

The CLUSTER project is being designed to help educators integrate land use environmental education as a supplementary program that could be used in the social studies curriculum. This project is also meant to give educators, both traditional and non-traditional, a primary resource to use, build, and create a more comprehensive land use curriculum. This resource will contain the scope and sequence along with a lesson framework. The lesson framework will contain the, "lessons in a nutshell", or an overview of a lesson, the process, the objectives, and the locations of available resources and materials. This resource can be an invaluable asset, especially to social studies teachers, because it shows how to work land use education into a social studies activity that will fulfill the mandatory compliance provided by the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards.

<http://www.uwsp.edu/landcenter/specialprojects/cluster/cluster.html>. ■

## Economic Development Planning Guide Published

This latest planning guide address Economic Development. The guide covers such issues as the need for economic development and planning for it and then delves into specific topics, such as organizational development, infrastructure, business development, workforce development, community cash flow, and regional collaboration. In addition, there are references, resources, a glossary, and three appendices to assist communities with this element of their comprehensive plan. The url is [www.wi-edi.org/docs/WEDI-ED-Handbook.pdf](http://www.wi-edi.org/docs/WEDI-ED-Handbook.pdf) ■



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**Planning** (continued from page 1)

more specific than issues and stages. Planning tasks tell the planner, step by step, what must be done to ultimately create a plan. In Stage I, data collection and analysis, tasks include, among others; identifying data needs, gathering data, and analyzing data for patterns or trends.

It is important to note that participation does not happen at any one stage or isn't a single task, but rather happens concurrently, or runs parallel to the plan process to achieve many tasks. When a planning task must be completed, participation is considered along with other planning tools to achieve it. Planning tasks provide great cues about how to involve citizens for planning.

**Choosing Appropriate Public Involvement**

A thorough plan process not only illustrates what must be accomplished and when, but also prompts planners to ask, "What is needed to accomplish this task?" The answer includes public participation when the following is needed:

- 1) **Public Opinion:** Planners need more information about what citizens value, desire, or believe, so decisions made or planning products created represent citizen interests.
- 2) **Public Expertise:** Citizens can verify or supplement factual information with their practical experiences, so more credible, locally realistic solutions are reached.
- 3) **Public Acceptance/Influence:** Before decisions or planning products are acceptable, planners need the public wants to share influence over decision-making between local officials and citizens.

**Five Categories of Involvement**

Identifying what is needed from citizens, whether it is their opinions,

expertise, acceptance, or some combination, helps define the purpose for citizen involvement in planning. Citizen involvement is often classified into five categories: Awareness, Education, Input, Interaction, and Partnership (UWEX, 2001).

1. **Awareness:** Awareness approaches are used to publicize upcoming participation events or decisions/products already made. Awareness techniques are always needed for successful citizen involvement. Citizens cannot be involved if they don't know about an event or are unaware about how to participate. Effective awareness tools not only state the 'when,' 'where,' and 'what' of the event, but also stimulate interest.

**Example Awareness Tools**

*Public notice:* the minimum legal requirement necessary to advertise opportunities for public participation. Notice is usually posted in public places and newspapers.

*Direct Mail:* mass mailing of letters, brochures, or other promotional pieces to increase awareness or advertise a particular event. This method works well to target specific groups, but is cost prohibitive as a general awareness raising tool.

*Mass media:* the use of radio, television, newspapers, local publications, and other media sources to disseminate information. Used to keep the planning project in the public eye and inform the public regarding developments and decisions in the planning process. Able to reach a large number of people, but may suffer from editing or bad coverage.

2. **Education:** Educational approaches provide citizens with balanced and objective

information. Education is used to build citizens' capacity to become further involved to help achieve tasks. Education should be used before citizens participate in decision-making (Thomas). Just as a general shouldn't send an ill-equipped, untrained soldier to battle, untrained citizens shouldn't be involved to make complex or significant decisions. Untrained citizens may feel uncomfortable participating or may wed themselves to decisions made from poor information, or worse, speculation.

**Example Education Tools**

*Newsletter:* a local publication and consistent source of information used to keep the public informed and educated about the stages of the planning project.

*Open house:* a semi-informal setting in which technical experts and displays are used to inform the public about the planning effort. Also serves as an opportunity for the public to ask questions, express concerns and provide feedback about proposals.

3. **Input:** Public input provides a means for decision-makers to learn more about public sentiments and capture citizen values. Decision-makers use public input to gather information about the public before moving on to accomplish tasks that fit citizens' desires, values, or beliefs.

**Example Input Tools**

*Survey:* used to systematically collect data or viewpoints from many people. Sample must be chosen carefully to represent appropriate population. Questions should be simple, jargon-free, and brief.

*Visual Preference Survey:* a tool to

gauge citizen preferences of various visual alternatives. Best used for site-specific applications, such as selecting building types for a subdivision.

4. **Interaction:** Interaction tools provide an opportunity to exchange information and expertise openly between planners and citizens. Interaction provides planners with more information, derived from citizen experiences, to make better-informed decisions.
5. **Partnerships:** Citizens are invited to help make decisions collaboratively with local officials. The result is citizen ownership and acceptance of planning decisions or products, and often, more thoughtful decisions.

### Example Interaction or Partnership Tools

*Workshop:* interactive meeting where a facilitator stimulates the flow of ideas among participants. Multiple methods may be used including brainstorming, small group discussions, and a variety of group process techniques. Presenters, panels, videos, maps, models and other visual or active devices may also be used to stimulate discussion.

*Citizen Commission:* citizen committee designed to make decisions and make decisions regarding community planning. Makes recommendations to the governing body for final decision.

When public opinion is needed, input methods or tools are used to gather them. If citizen expertise is required, then citizens are best involved through interaction. If the purpose is to share influence or gain public acceptance, then citizens can be directly involved in decision-making through partnerships. Whereas, input, interaction, and partnerships use citizens to directly accomplish tasks,

### *Box 1: Accomplishing Tasks with Participation*

#### Scenario 1

**Task:** Analyze population data in the lakes and forest regions of Wisconsin.

**Data show:** Population forecasts reveal that population will decline by six percent in the next 20 years.

**Planner's need:** Planners are suspect of the population information and need to supplement it with citizen expertise. Planners know that bad information could negatively affect their reputation.

#### **Public Involvement Strategy:**

- 1) Identify citizen focus group members and invite them using a letter (Awareness).
- 2) Send out notice for open meetings (Awareness).
- 3) Provide invited focus group citizens with background information (Education).
- 4) Conduct focus group to gather factual information from citizens (Interaction).

**Result:** The citizen focus group reveals that yes, permanent population is declining, but seasonal residency (residents who live permanently elsewhere, but recreate here) is increasing adjacent to lakes and in the forests.

#### Scenario 2

**Task:** Set agricultural goals and objectives for a rapidly urbanizing town.

**Data show:** A complex mix of agriculture and housing exist. 7,300 acres of agricultural land remain in the town. 3,000 acres are on prime agricultural soils. The remaining farmland is on rolling, mixed soils. Housing development consumes over 500 acres of farmland a year, mostly on the easier to develop, prime soils.

**Planner's need:** Planners must grasp how citizens value remaining agriculture and their attitudes toward new development, so the plan they create will reflect citizen interests.

#### **Public Involvement Strategy:**

- 1) Advertise the community survey in the local paper, its purpose, and how the results will be used to create the community plan (Awareness).
- 2) Work with the local plan commission to create relevant survey questions (Partnership).
- 3) Send a community survey to a scientific cross section of the community (Input).
- 4) Have plan commissioners "follow-up" to get a better response rate (Partnership).

**Result:** 76 percent of respondents answered that agriculture is important for the local economy and the very best farmlands should be protected. 56 percent responded that they are willing to pay extra taxes to protect farmland (25 cents per 1000 dollars). The plan commission is able to generate goals and objectives based on input generated from the community survey.

**Box 1: Accomplishing Tasks with Participation (continued)****Scenario 3**

**Task:** Develop a future land use scenario that meets stated goals and objectives.

**Data show:** Clear and measurable objectives have been developed for each planning issue. Current land use, population, housing and employment projections have been verified and are credible.

**Planner's need:**

Citizens reject original future land use scenario. Planners need to include citizens in decision-making to develop an understanding of the procedures.

**Public Involvement Strategy:**

- 1) Local government officials choose a panel of citizens to help create land use scenarios (Partnership).
- 2) Fliers, presentations and materials are provided to discuss how future land use alternatives are derived, and how citizen input and interaction are used to make decisions (Awareness, Education).
- 3) Citizen panel is provided background information (projections, current land use statistics, remaining land statistics) and the process for how to delineate future land uses is described (Education).
- 4) Citizen panel provides criteria for developing future land use scenarios (Partnership).
- 5) Alternatives are presented by citizen panel and planners at an open house (Partnership).
- 6) Public hearing is announced and held to determine preferred future land use alternative (Input).

**Result:**

Realistic alternative is created (even if it didn't differ much from the original) that enjoys public support and ownership. Resulting plan is implemented and is used to direct future growth.

awareness and education do not. Rather, their purpose is to create an opportunity for more effective involvement by building the capacity of citizens to participate (Thomas, 1995).

**Choosing Tools to Involve Citizens and Achieve Tasks**

Once the purpose for citizen involvement is identified, specific public participation tools can be chosen to accomplish tasks. Participation methods are like any other planning tool (population projections, geographical information systems (GIS), multiple regression statistics). They help planners

achieve tasks concurrent to the planning process (see Figure 1, Planning Tools). For example, employing GIS tools and soils data help planners identify productive areas for corn. A workshop, a participation tool that stimulates ideas from participants, could invite local farmers to identify locally productive agricultural locations. Used concurrently, both tools, the GIS and the workshop, help achieve a planning task, locating productive agricultural areas. The participation tool, not only achieves the task, but also builds public ownership and acceptance of the decision. Citizens have influence over the decision-made, and planners

achieve a task. By involving local farmers, a better, more politically salient solution emerges, than by using GIS alone. See Box 1 for more examples of selecting participation tools to achieve planning tasks.

**Document Participation Activities and Results:**

A final, yet important step in a public participation program is to document how the public has participated in planning, and how that involvement has influenced the plan. For example, if a community survey was conducted, planners should document both the survey and results. They should make it openly available to the public, whether on-line, in paper copy, through media coverage, or a combination of outlets. Be explicit so citizens see in plain language how their involvement was used to influence the plan. Documentation also works to satisfy those citizens that haven't had a chance to participate (Heberlein). Citizens can examine past activities that involved the public, see how that participation influenced the plan, and perhaps feel that their points of view were accounted for (Sanoff, 2000). Participation that actually engages citizens to functionally achieve tasks is an indicator of success and well worth documenting.

**Conclusion**

Participation is an investment made by planners, officials, and citizens, and all expect to see a substantial return on their investments. Using public participation, like any other planning tool to achieve tasks, is functional for planners. Through citizen involvement, more thoughtful decisions emerge and a more credible plan is created. Citizens can be involved many ways to influence decision-making, and planners value the information or partnerships that result. Documenting participation

(See *Planning* on page 11)

# Watersheds and the Comprehensive Plan

Adapted by Anna Haines

Everyone lives, works, and plays within watersheds. However, we don't usually identify with a watershed; instead, we identify with a particular community or local government, such as Stevens Point, Reedsburg, or Ashland, in terms of schools, shopping, voting, etc. This article explains the concept of a watershed and the benefits of planning with a watershed approach, and identifies some key principles for a successful planning process using a watershed approach. This article is adapted from EPA's Watershed Management Training Academy. [www.epa.gov/watertrain/watershedmgt/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/watershedmgt/index.html)

## What is a watershed?

A watershed is simply the land that water flows across or through on its way to a common stream, river, or lake. A watershed can be very large (e.g., draining thousands of square miles to a major river or lake or the ocean), or very small, such as a 20-acre watershed that drains to a pond. A small watershed that nests inside (see Figure 1) of a larger watershed is sometimes referred to as a subwatershed (see Figure 2).

Importantly, no matter where we live or work, we are in a watershed teeming with unique, inter-related natural processes. These natural

forces help shape the watershed landscape, its water quality, and--in turn--our lives.

Once we better understand these processes, we can better appreciate how the watershed's ecological processes help sustain life. For example, a healthy watershed provides:

- habitat for fish and other life
- food sources for animals and people
- temporary living quarters for migratory birds
- drinking water for people and other living organisms

There are other benefits including:

- purifying air of contaminants our communities emit
- assimilating contaminants that enter the water
- transporting goods and people

Understanding these processes, also means understanding how most human activities in the watershed can occur in harmony with natural processes. Communities located along streams and rivers, for example, are faced with basic choices: they can learn how the river functions and learn to draw benefits from it while staying out of harm's way -- or, they can try to significantly change the river's behavior in order to accomplish their plans. It may be feasible to change the way a river acts, but this usually means taking on costly and never-ending maintenance

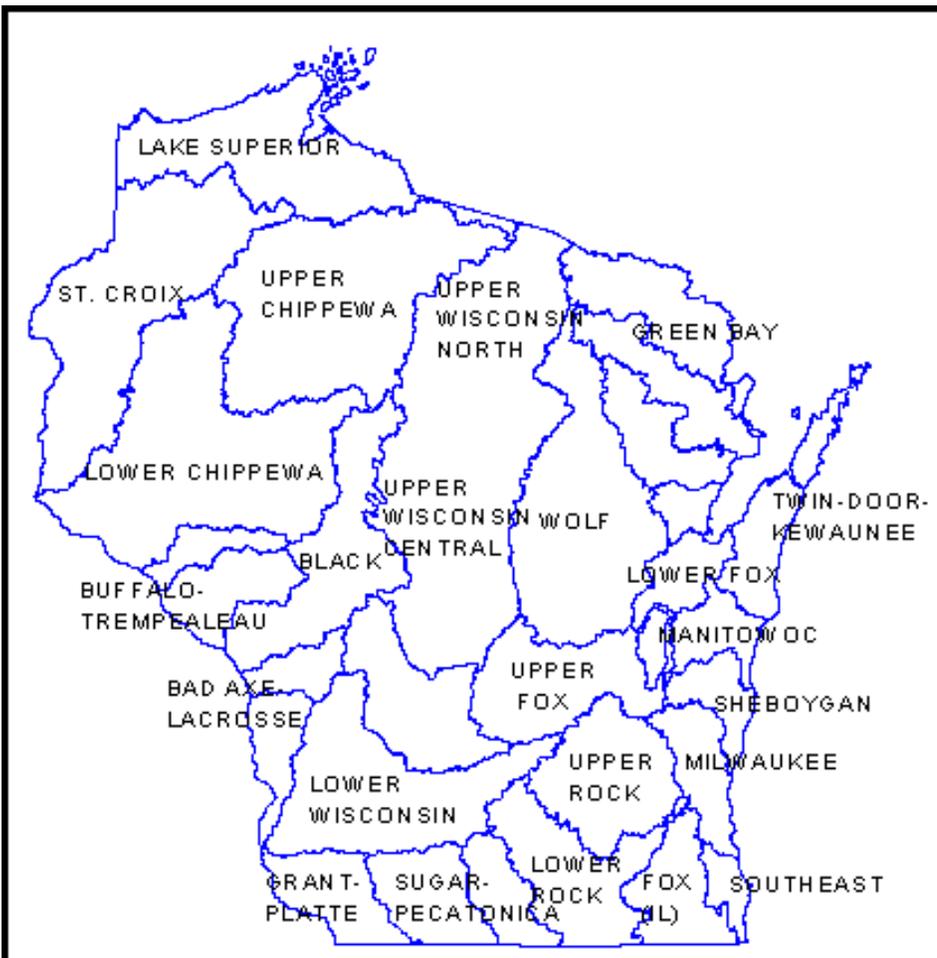


Figure 1:  
Major Watersheds in Wisconsin

of those man-made changes; and, despite all the maintenance, communities still may remain vulnerable to floods and other disasters. In contrast, a community that has made sensible decisions on activities near the river can avoid a costly maintenance burden while sustaining their community's use and enjoyment of a healthy river system. In which type of community would you rather live and pay taxes?

Why is it important to know about these human activities and where they occur in the watershed? **Human forces interact with natural forces to directly shape the condition of the land and water**, and subsequently, can negatively impact our quality of life. For example,

- increasing impervious surfaces in urban areas leads to increased water and contaminant runoff (see Tracker Volume for articles on imperviousness);
- removing vegetation along drainage areas and increased stormflows lead to erosion of soils which can change the landscape to more arid conditions;

- increasing the velocity of the water and contaminants it contains can be lethal to living things; or
- it can create health hazards, reducing our quality of life.

### A Watershed Planning Approach

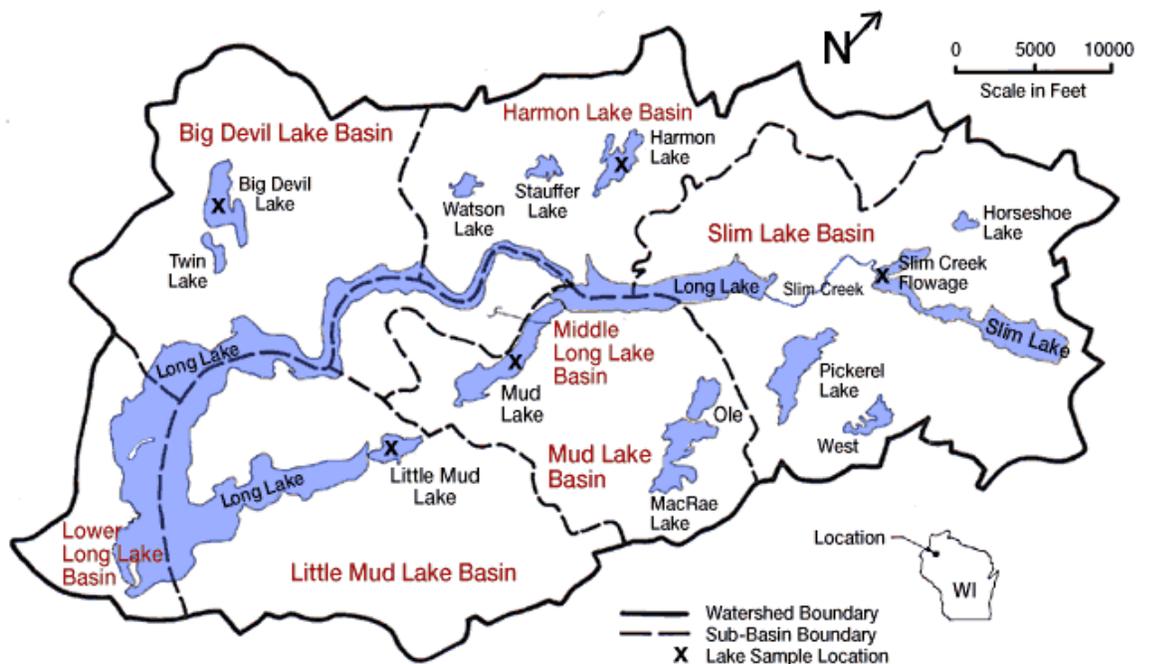
Planning is often much more variable than most people might expect. In practice, it may not follow logical, consistent steps, or necessarily result in a published plan.

A classic paper from the planning literature is *The Science of "Muddling Through"* by Charles Lindblom (Public Admin. Review, 1959). In this paper the author points out that despite common guidance to make decisions methodically, the decision process in reality seldom follows a set pattern. This remains true today: multiple viewpoints come into play in planning and executing any action. Perhaps the best way to view modern-day watershed planning, and most other types of community planning, is not as a cookbook with consistent recipes for success, but as a very flexible

framework for hearing, evaluating, integrating, and building support from numerous viewpoints and proposals. The planning framework has a logical structure and steps, but its flexibility may be more important than taking every step literally and in sequence. Thus, the principles that guide a watershed planning approach are much the same as those that guide a comprehensive planning approach.

Keep in mind that what appears to be the orderly progression of steps may not be quite so neat when the process is actually carried out. Be careful not to jump to conclusions about solutions before information is completely analyzed. However, it may be difficult to persuade planning committee members to delay addressing their goals and their proposed solutions early in the process. Maintain as much flexibility as possible, consistent with working out solutions carefully. The planning committee may even take on part of the problems (perhaps the easier part) on a first time through the planning process, reserving some more difficult problems for a second round after the committee has had some

Figure 2 : Long Lake Watershed and Subwatersheds



success, comfort and confidence.

Comprehensive planning and a watershed approach

Advice for watershed planning often concerns assembling a group of stakeholders or concerned individuals, agencies and organizations. Wisconsin communities have the opportunity as they move forward with multi-jurisdictional efforts to establish watersheds as their organizing unit, because watersheds do not adhere to governmental boundaries.

A comprehensive plan identifies broad goals and objectives, describes a range of community issues, which can include watershed issues, outlines specific alternatives for addressing those issues, and documents where, how and by whom these action alternatives will be evaluated, selected and implemented. Including watershed issues within a comprehensive plan may be both desirable and useful. If the community values the lakes, rivers, and streams (and groundwater) in its midst, not only as an amenity, but as an essential component of that community, addressing watershed issues would add a dimension to a comprehensive plan that otherwise would be missing. A key aspect of including a watershed approach into a comprehensive planning process is to include all the watersheds within a community's boundaries into the process. More than likely no single jurisdiction, especially a town, village, or city will fully encompass an entire watershed within their boundaries. It is likely that several watersheds will cross a single jurisdiction's boundaries.

Within a comprehensive plan, at least four elements are appropriate "chapters" within which to include watershed issues: 1) agricultural, cultural and natural resources, 2) land use, 3) intergovernmental

cooperation, and 4) implementation.

#### ***The agricultural, cultural and natural resources element***

It is appropriate to examine watershed issues within this element. Here is where (and perhaps when in the planning process) information is displayed about the watersheds within a community. Here are a few points that EPA has outlined:

- Obtain consensus on the most important water resource goals in the watershed.
- Select the most appropriate combination of watershed protection tools to apply to individual sub-watersheds.
- Devise an ongoing management structure to adopt and implement the watershed plan.

#### ***The land use element***

Within this element, the plan addresses current and future land uses. Under a watershed approach, land uses are critical factors affecting water quality and quantity. The key indicator to examine is impervious cover. Since impervious cover has such a strong influence on watershed quality, a watershed manager must critically analyze the degree and location of future development (and impervious cover) that is expected in a watershed. The land use element is a critical place to consider watershed protection. The land use element could:

- Predict the impacts of future land use change on water resources.
- Develop a future land use plan that can help meet selected community goals.
- Select the most acceptable and effective land use planning techniques to reduce or shift future impervious cover.

Land use planning is best conducted at the sub-watershed scale, where it is recognized that stream quality is related to land use and impervious

cover. One of the goals of land use planning under a watershed approach is to shift development toward sub-watersheds that can support a particular type of land use and/or density. The basic goal under the land use element then is to apply land use planning techniques to redirect development, preserve sensitive areas, and maintain, or limit the impervious cover within a given watershed.

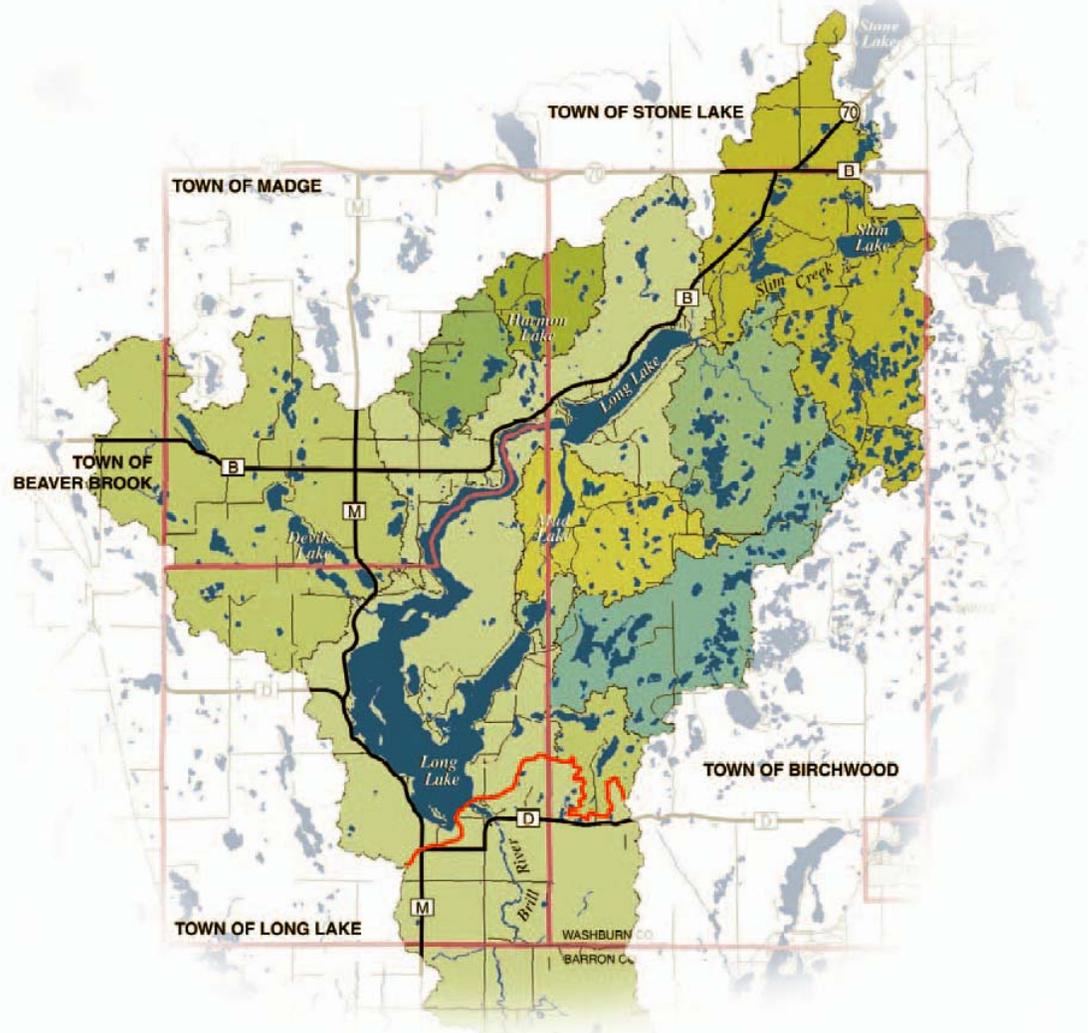
#### ***Intergovernmental cooperation***

One could argue that intergovernmental cooperation is the most critical of the elements when undertaking a watershed approach. Local governments working together to restore and protect watersheds is necessary. Without some level of cooperation and agreement about land use goals and techniques, only limited progress can be made towards restoring and preserving watersheds. In Wisconsin this means several towns that encompass a watershed could work together on not only a plan, but on its implementation. This town level cooperation implies county and probably state agency cooperation, especially at the implementation stage. Past watershed planning and management experience demonstrates that without a fairly high level of cooperation between and among various governmental jurisdictions (both horizontal (town to town) and vertical (town to county)), success is limited.

#### ***Implementation***

The implementation element is where a plan begins to move towards action. Ideally, the implementation element can provide various departments of local governments, state agencies, community organizations and others with direction and guidance for at least the initial steps to move from plan to action, and a way to monitor if specific actions are getting accomplished.

Figure 3: Long Lake Watershed and Town Boundaries



### Are Wisconsin communities planning for their watersheds?

Many State agencies prepare plans to guide their activities into the future. The Department of Natural Resources prepares watershed management plans for basins it has identified (see [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/gmu/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/gmu/) for DNR's approach and for status and copies of basin plans). The State of Wisconsin supports the efforts of communities to produce comprehensive plans through its planning grant program; and has encouraged communities to prepare a plan through its comprehensive planning law. However, this law does not encourage planning at a watershed level. At the local level, most communities are not planning

with the watersheds that cross their boundaries. One exception is in Washburn County where three towns (see Figure 3), Birchwood, Long Lake, and Madge, within the Long Lake watershed have been attempting to use a watershed approach as each town prepares its comprehensive plan. They are scheduled to complete their plans in 2004. To keep abreast of the situation see the Long Lake Preservation Association website ([www.longlakellpa.org/h2o\\_planning/h2o\\_planning\\_index.html](http://www.longlakellpa.org/h2o_planning/h2o_planning_index.html)).

Figures 4 and 5 (pages 10 and 11, respectively) can be used to assist a community with deciding whether or not to move forward in using a watershed approach to comprehensive planning. Figure 4 shows

groundwater susceptibility. As the colors on the map move from green to red, the groundwater becomes more susceptible to pollution. Figure 5 shows the number of lakes by county.

### Benefits of a Watershed Approach

Here are some benefits others have found who have used the watershed approach:

- It provides a **context for integration**
  - using practical, tangible management units that people understand
  - focusing and coordinating efforts
  - finding common ground and meeting multiple needs

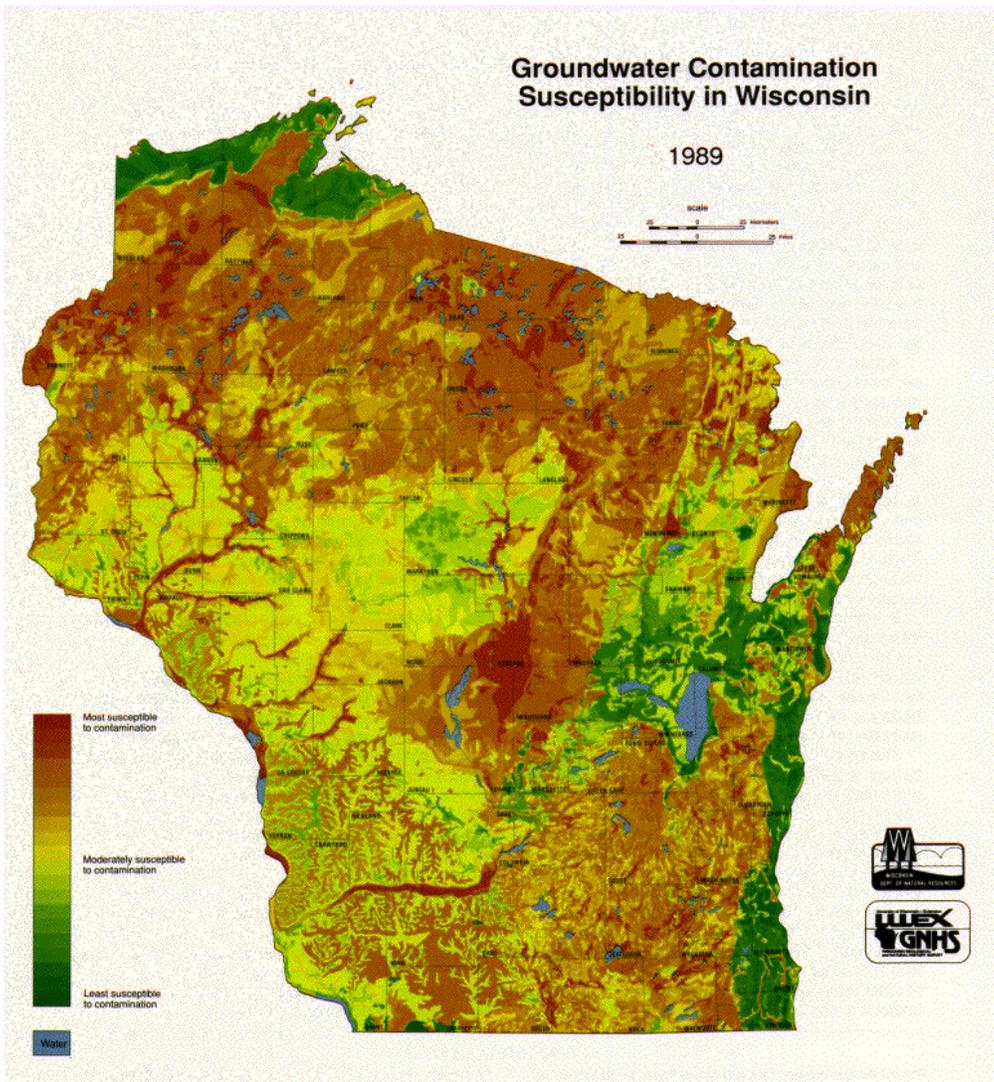


Figure 4: : Groundwater Susceptibility Map

- It provides a **better understanding and appreciation of nature**
    - understanding nature's interrelated processes
    - helping answer the question, "What are we trying to protect?"
    - linking human activities to nature's response
    - appreciating how nature's processes can benefit people
    - identifying ways we can work with watershed processes
  - It yields **better management**
    - generating ecologically-based, innovative, cost-effective solutions
    - forging stronger working relationships among governmental units, businesses, residents, etc.
    - supporting consistent, continuous management across governmental boundaries or jurisdictions.
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## SUBMIT ARTICLES!

Please submit an article to our newsletter.

- ◆ It should be 1000 words or less,
- ◆ Be informative,
- ◆ Be of state-wide concern,
- ◆ And address a land use issue.



The Managing Editor will review your submission and get back to you if any changes are necessary.

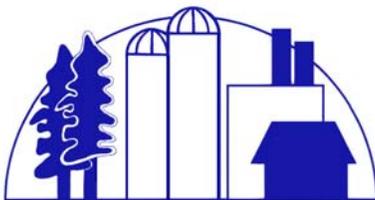
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## From the Calendar....

January 23-24

### Changing Landscapes 2: Anticipating the Effects of Local Decisions

This two-day workshop in Madison, Wisconsin, is where we ask you to help us review and evaluate decision support and impact assessment tools. This is a great opportunity for planning practitioners, agency staff, Extension agents, nonprofit leaders, resource professionals and others who assist citizen planners and local decision makers regarding land use issues. Come experience a variety of tools that can be used to strengthen the planning process and everyday land use decisions. Come learn about these important tools from the people actually creating this new technology.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the workshop, contact Matthew Murrell at 608-267-

0579 or [matthew.murrell@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:matthew.murrell@dnr.state.wi.us). Visit our calendar on the web for the brochure and registration information.

January 29

Cooperative Extension's Local Government Center--Local Land Use Planning & Zoning 2003-04 WisLine Teleconference Series "**Big Box**" **Retail Stores** - Program # 1699-3. Large retail stores can have an important effect on an area's commerce, jobs, traffic, infrastructure and service needs, and identity. This program will discuss the effects of these stores and how communities can address in their planning the issues that arise from siting these businesses.

Available at any WisLine site 10:30  
11:50 a.m. Fee: \$12 per session.  
Contact WisLine Registrations (608)  
262-0810. ■

