

Chapter 3 – Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

State Statute 66.1001(2)(e) states that the Agricultural and Natural Resources element of a Comprehensive Plan is defined as:

A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation and promotion of the effective management, of natural resources such as groundwater: forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water; floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources, parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources.

According to Statute, all laws and decisions (including zoning) made by local governments after January 1, 2010 must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in an adopted comprehensive plan. This chapter contains data, goals, objectives, policies and recommendations for consistent decision making with the intent to preserve and protect farmland, natural resources and historic and cultural resources to the fullest extent deemed appropriate by the Town of Johnstown and its residents using a 30-year planning horizon.

3.1 Introduction

Overview

The quantity and quality of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in a community directly affects and influences the quality of life of its residents. The Town of Johnstown is fortunate to be comprised of many places that have unique and valuable features that are vital to retaining the high quality of life and rural atmosphere that is valued by its' citizens. These special features require promotion, protection, and conservation to remain in tact in what may become a quickly changing and developing atmosphere.

Responses from Vision Workshop participants indicated that preservation of the rural environment, open space, agricultural land and natural resources was a priority and that residents value the aesthetic features and rural way of life available to them in the Town of Johnstown (see results in Appendix). A survey done for the township confirms these values. Although there may be widely differing opinions about how protection of these values can best be accomplished, this element will present the best information available from Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency (in the form of research and maps), and from a variety of other experiences and sources that lead to the formation of the following strategies, policies and recommendations.

Although it may be difficult or impossible to represent all viewpoints in this document, this element will aim to describe the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources currently present in the Town, explain the current level of protection (or lack of it) and provide recommendations for how these resources should be managed in order to reach the goals established by the Town of Johnstown. The goals established by the Town are intended to assure that quality agricultural, natural and cultural resources will continue to be available to future generations.

Existing Plans

It is the intention of this Comprehensive Plan to reflect the values and desired direction for action that has been determined through public participation and discussion specifically for the Town of Johnstown. However, it is important to acknowledge that both agricultural and natural resource policies have been addressed in previous plans. Policy concerning agricultural resources was addressed via the Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan 2005 Update published October 31, 2005 and adopted by the Rock County Board December 15, 2005. Policies guiding the preservation of natural resources and the development and

management of parks and other outdoor recreation facilities has been addressed in detail via the Rock County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan 2003-2008 published and adopted by the Rock County Board October 23, 2003 (commonly referred to as the POROS Plan).

Both of these Plans were established for use at the county level and apply to all of Rock County. In general, those Plans represent the best and most up to date sources of information regarding what agricultural and natural resources exist in the Town of Johnstown. Additionally, both plans contain suggested standards for preservation. Some of those standards are the minimum required by State or Federal law and some represent the County goal for a minimum level of preservation.

Although the POROS and Agricultural Preservation Plans effectively regulate some agricultural and natural resources in the Town of Johnstown, they fall short of effective preservation of others. The best way to assure adequate and permanent protection of these resources within the Town of Johnstown is through Town review and regulation through Town policies and codes. The goals, objectives, and policies of each respective plan and their future updates are expected to remain in effect during the life of this plan. However, because of the variability in the ability of the County to preserve these highly valued resources and the variability in the amount of preservation needed or wanted in the Town of Johnstown, where those resources fall within Town jurisdiction, responsibility for creating permanent, upholdable and quantifiable laws protecting them ultimately lies in the hands of the Town.

3.2 Agricultural Resources

The Town of Johnstown is largely characterized by agricultural land. This resource serves as the livelihood for many Town residents and simply as an outstanding setting in which to live for many others. Either way, it is the one most important resource existing in the Town and is one that should be carefully managed. Because of the Town's proximity to the City of Janesville, agricultural land may also become a threatened resource for the Town. Each year many acres of agricultural land in Rock County are removed from production and removed from their roll as open space in order to make room for development. Once agricultural land is developed, it is very unlikely that it will ever become agricultural land again. For this reason, this topic is probably the most important issue for the Town of Johnstown to consider for planning purposes. This section proposes a professional assessment on what should be done to preserve this valuable resource for future generations and various methods and policies to make it possible. It is, however, up to the Town of Johnstown to prioritize, choose and implement those methods and policies in order to reach the level of protection that the Town has chosen for its' agricultural land.

Goals

- Preserve, protect and responsibly manage all agricultural resources identified in this and other plans that pertain to the Town of Johnstown.
- Maintain agriculture as an important economic activity and open space resource in the Town of Johnstown.
- Other goals as listed in the Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan 2005 Update dated December 15, 2005

Objectives

- Develop Town of Johnstown policies and mechanisms for more effective preservation and management of agricultural land.
- Communicate and plan with neighboring communities to the greatest extent possible to ensure the protection of the Town's agricultural resources through cooperative efforts.
- Encourage and promote innovative farming practices.
- Research and determine the usefulness and potential implementation of Purchase of Development Rights or Transfer of Development Rights programs in the Town of Johnstown.

- Other objectives as listed in the Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan 2005 Update dated December 15, 2005

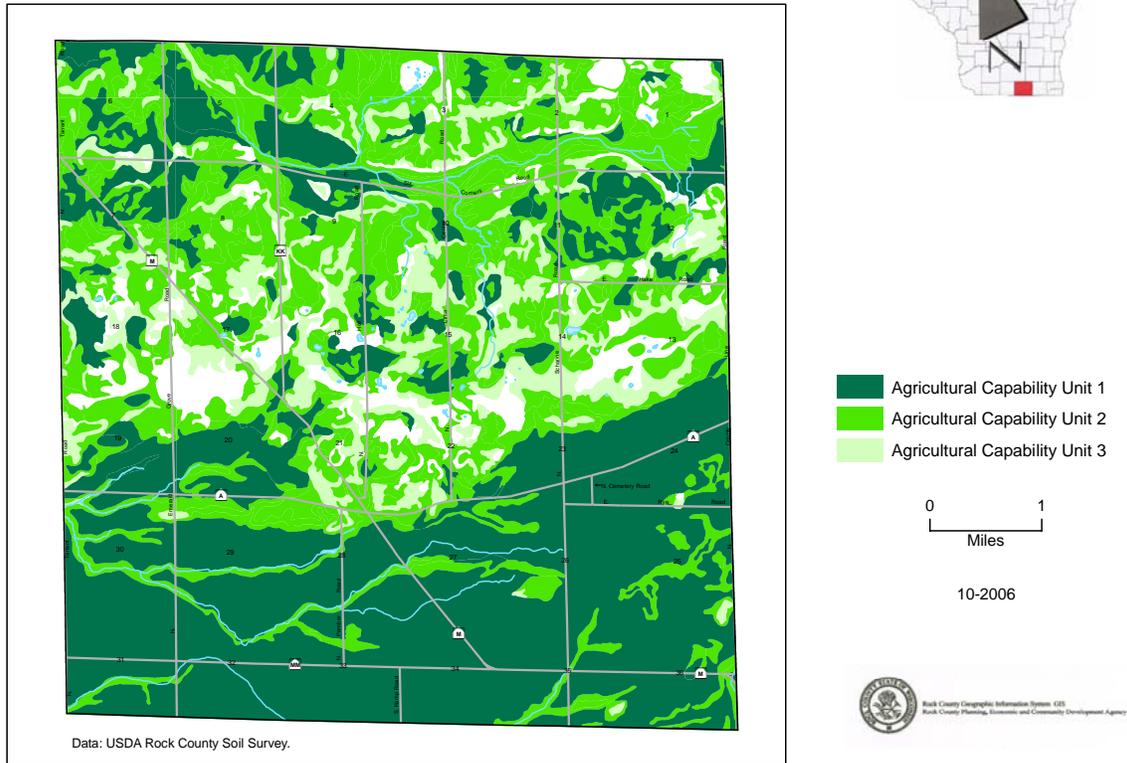
Agricultural soil capability

Soils are classified into eight capability classes. Classes 1, 2 and 3 are the most ideal for agriculture. Class 1 soils have few limitations that restrict their use. Class 2 soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or require moderate conservation practices and Class 3 soils have more severe limitations. The Town of Johnstown is characterized by large contiguous areas of Class 1 and 2 soils. A significant strip of Class 4 or higher soils runs through the midsection of the Town in the area where the last glacial drift stopped 10,000 years ago (referred to as the “terminal moraine” or “Johnstown moraine”). Class 2 and 3 soils exist in areas with steep slopes and around water features and mainly occur in the northern two-thirds of the Town. Soils in all three Classes are well suited for agriculture and are frequently also well suited for private septic systems and development. The white areas on the Soils Map are soils that are Class 4 or lower quality and are almost entirely within Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas (refer t.

The Town of Johnstown contains agricultural land with a very high incidence of soil capability classifications of Class 1, 2 or 3, (see Map 3.1, next page) meaning there is an abundance of high quality soil that is highly productive. The southern one-third of the Town is almost exclusively comprised of the finest agricultural soil there is (Class 1). Considerable acreage in Class 1 soil also exists in the northern one-third of the Town. Most of the Town is zoned A-1, is in the Agricultural Preservation Area (see Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan), and remains undeveloped except for agriculture related structures and few incidents of rural residential and commercial development. It is recommended that the Town retain as much land as possible in A-1 Exclusive Agriculture zoning throughout the planning period.

Map 3.1

Town of Johnstown Soil Capability Unit Classification



Land Conversion

Although most of the land in the Town of Johnstown is in the A-1 Exclusive Agricultural zoning district, agricultural land is still easily converted to residential (or other non-farm uses) through rezoning. Between 1986 and 2004 the Town of Johnstown was one of two Rock County towns that had no rezonings out of A-1 agriculture into residential or industrial zoning. The greatest acreage taken out of A-1 in the Town was converted to other agricultural zoning districts (174.05 acres). It is unclear if those parcels are still being used for agricultural purposes. This figure, although small by comparison to other Rock County towns, shows that A-1 zoning alone may not be enough to stop agricultural land from being converted to other uses. In order for the Town of Johnstown to prevent rezonings for the purpose of “estate housing” it must adopt policy at the Town level that addresses rezonings.

Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl is characterized by developments that are not connected to existing public infrastructure, and often take agricultural land out of production. Sprawl development is often far removed from schools, parks and recreation, workplaces and shopping destinations. Often, the rural atmosphere that attracted homeowners in the first place is the very thing that disappears as housing is allowed to occur. In addition to affecting the rural character, urban sprawl creates more reliance on automobiles, thus increasing congestion, pollution, oil consumption and costs to the Town. The costs for extending utilities, improving

roadways, constructing new schools, expanding emergency 911 operations and so forth, causes the need for more tax revenue. This is particularly true of sprawling residential development, which often costs more to service than the property taxes it generates.

The notion that it is often less expensive for a town to invest in preservation of agriculture and natural resources than it is to support residential development on the same amount of land should be explored. For instance, it may be less expensive for a town to implement a small tax increase that is meant to supplement (along with matching grant programs) purchase of development rights from farmers who are willing to sell, than to invest in extension of utilities, road improvements, eventual additional school taxation, etc. that would be generated from the same geographical area if developed.

As residential development encroaches on ongoing agricultural operations, conflicts arise between farmers and these new residents. These conflicts include the generation of noise, lights and odor from farm operations and traffic conflicts resulting from increased automobile traffic on narrow country roads. Orderly growth and development is imperative to reduce costs and to preserve the quality of life by reducing the negative impacts of development for farmland owners, new rural residents, taxpayers and wildlife alike.

Agriculture and Nature

Here in southern Wisconsin, agricultural is often interspersed with or in close proximity to other natural resources. The special interconnectedness of these resources makes it necessary to analyze and manage them as a whole, rather than as separate planning issues. It makes sense to analyze agriculture as it affects and is affected by natural resources. Agriculture has long been valued not only for its' productive and economic qualities, but also for its' ability to provide visual open space. Land that is zoned agriculturally of ten includes natural areas that are valuable for their ecology, aesthetics and ability to provide wildlife habitat. With these assets in mind, contiguous agricultural areas should be encouraged and preserved.

Agriculture should also be considered for its role as a source of non-point water pollution. Agricultural run-off is one of the biggest contributors to surface and groundwater contamination primarily in the form of nitrates and phosphorus from fertilizers. It is important to be sure that agriculture does not harm other important natural resources. This issue can be addressed through careful agricultural management and conservation practices. There are opportunities available for educational and monetary assistance to farmers who are operating near water sources and wish to reduce the negative affects of their operation on the environment.

Agriculture, Economic Development, Housing, and Transportation

Issues surrounding production, local economies, housing and transportation networks that help to sustain farming are all essential topics when planning agriculture in the Town of Johnstown. It is often an uphill battle to keep farmland in active agricultural uses in areas experiencing development pressure unless farming can remain a viable economic activity. Proactive economic development policies can help improve the economic well being of local farmers. The issue of housing will be considered from two points of view. First, as a function of the possibility (however small) that there may be increased demand for new residential housing in the Town at some point in the future. Although this scenario may be unlikely, it is important that the Town be prepared in ahead of time in the event that housing demand becomes an issue over the planning period. Residential development as well as the accompanying need for roads and road improvements and the issue of agricultural land consumption will be addressed. Second, agriculture as an industry that creates housing needs for farm families and laborers who live on or work the land either permanently or temporarily.

Transportation issues such as access for agricultural suppliers, processors, service providers, etc., transportation of farm produce to local, regional, national and international markets, and safety of agricultural transportation for the general public (ie: slow moving farm machinery on public roads) are pertinent for future planning. Discussion and policies on how to grow and sustain local agricultural business and how to meet future agriculture-related housing and transportation needs will be addressed in the Economic Development, Housing and Transportation elements of this Plan respectively.

Issues for Agriculture

In many areas, as the demand for agricultural land for development increases, the value of agricultural land becomes greater than the value of the land is it remains in agriculture. Land values, combined with the general uncertainties of the agricultural economy, create disincentives for farmers to stay in agriculture. Growth pressures have led to development in agricultural areas outside of urban areas. This Plan aims to point out strategies, policies, programs and grants that are available to Towns and farmers to help alleviate the financial incentives to convert large portions of agricultural land to other uses.

Various tools exist to promote preservation including zoning, conservation easements and Purchase or Transfer of Development Rights programs. Other strategies such as cluster and conservation developments ensure that less land will be used when new housing is developed. Zoning and density regulations, as well as policy guiding the rate of growth can have a powerful effect on how development occurs within the Town. These tools and others will be examined further at the end of this element because of their applicability not only to agricultural resources, but also to natural and cultural resources. Descriptions and discussion of various implementation tools will be presented in section 3.6 entitled "Strategies and Tools for Agricultural and Natural Resource Protection."

The best practice is to preserve farmland whenever possible. It is important for the Town to be knowledgeable about, and carefully consider all possible alternatives to development of agricultural land. As the primary caretakers and controllers of the land, it is hoped that farmers will carefully consider the alternatives to allowing farmland to be converted and the tremendous value of keeping their land in agriculture for future generations.

3.3 Agricultural Resources Policies

- Promote conservation and preservation of farmland through consistent, well thought-out development practices.
- Create development policy that will establish clear, concise rules about how, when and where development (especially residential) will occur.
- Meet with neighboring Towns to promote and decide upon the viability of a regional preservation programs.
- Research and provide information to farmers regarding assistance programs, conservation practices, niche farming, organic farming, alternatives to development, etc.
- Create land division policy with clear criteria for residential development that requires maximum protection of agricultural and natural resources, density and open space requirements.
- Conduct research and determine possible costs and propose alternatives for Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights programs at the Town or multi-Town level.
- Policies as listed in the Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan 2005 Update, December 15, 2005

3.4 Agricultural Resources Conclusion

In the process of pinpointing what the values and priorities for the Town should be, the only way to truly affect change is to write standards that uphold those values and priorities into a zoning, subdivision or land division ordinance, and follow them consistently. Changing the way that land has been managed is often controversial and emotional, however, with careful research, development and implementation of new policies, the Town of Johnstown can improve and preserve the economic viability and quality of life for all citizens.

3.5 Natural Resources

Why plan for natural resources? A simple answer is that environmental health, measured by the quality and quantity of natural resources, is a cornerstone to the quality of life.

Understanding exactly what natural resources exist in the Town of Johnstown, why they are important, and the measures needed to insure their quality helps to set the stage for future development decisions. Providing for methods of analysis and preservation of natural resources that ultimately impact the health and welfare of current and future Town of Johnstown residents that share and will inherit the use of the land is of vital importance. Having thorough, documented knowledge of what currently exists on the land suggests advantages and disadvantages for particular land uses and leads to more conscientious use of land. The following inventory of natural resources can be used as a guide to prevention of environmental destruction that if ignored, could present high cost in loss of quality of life to the Town of Johnstown and all Rock County residents.

Goals:

- Preserve and protect the Town of Johnstown's natural resources.
- Other goals as listed in the Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan, Oct.2003

Objectives:

- Perform responsible analysis and encourage appropriate management and preservation of surface waters, shoreland areas, floodplains, groundwater, wetlands, hydric soils, kettles and depressions, hilltops and viewsheds, steep slopes, threatened and endangered species, natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, forests, woodlands and valued trees within the Town of Johnstown.
- Uphold the standards for Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas (ESOSAs) set forth in the Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan (Oct. 2003).

Environmentally Significant Areas

Many "components" of the natural environment can be identified as "environmentally significant" such as stream corridors, floodplains, wetlands, high slopes or areas susceptible to erosion, areas with shallow depth to bedrock, kettles, and areas containing wet (hydric) soils. Once an environmentally sensitive area is disrupted, it can very rarely revert back to its "natural" state. Alternatively, the conservation of these environmentally significant areas preserves and can maintain and even improve surface and groundwater quality, can reduce risks from flooding, protect wildlife and maintain the scenic landscape and rural character of the Town. Landowners, citizens, and politicians are the last line of defense to protect areas of environmental sensitivity and significance.

Rock County has analyzed and defined fourteen environmentally significant natural features that are identified for protection in its' POROS (Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Open Space) Plan. These areas are termed "Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas" (ESOSAs). Included in ESOSAs are features that must be protected and monitored according to State or Federal mandate and are administered by Rock County to the minimum standards currently required by law. ESOSA features that are present in the Town of Johnstown, as well as some ESOSA features that do not exist in the Town but are of regional interest will be presented in this element. These features are indicated in bold text in the following list. Other important environmental features that are *not* elements of ESOSA but that do exist in the Town will also be discussed and are indicated in plain text below.

State or Federally protected natural features:

1. **Surface Water**
2. **Shoreland setback areas**
3. **Floodplains**
4. **Wetlands**

**Additional Rock County Environmentally Significant Open Space (ESOSA) features
(Bolded items are components of ESOSA, plain text items are addressed as Town concerns):**

5. Drainage Basin and Watersheds
6. **Potential Groundwater Protection Areas** (areas where there is less than three feet to groundwater or bedrock)
7. **Hydric soils** (wet soils that probably were wetlands at some time)
8. **Kettles and depressional areas** (low surface drainage, unique plant and animal communities, pollutants in storm water may threaten groundwater in these areas)
9. **Steep slopes** (slopes greater than 12%)
10. Hilltops and Viewsheds
11. **Natural areas** (pre-settlement vegetation and native ecology)
12. Threatened and Endangered Species
13. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
14. Forests, Woodlands and Valued Trees
15. Non-Metallic Mine Reclamation
16. **Federal Lands** (hunting land in Johnstown)
17. Ice Age Scenic Trail

Although policies affecting ESOSAs are currently in effect in the Rock County POROS Plan, if the Town of Johnstown sees fit to put more restrictive standards into effect to assure the level and longevity of protection desired for those resources, it may do so.

1. Surface Water

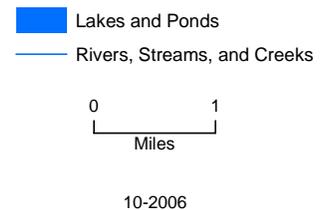
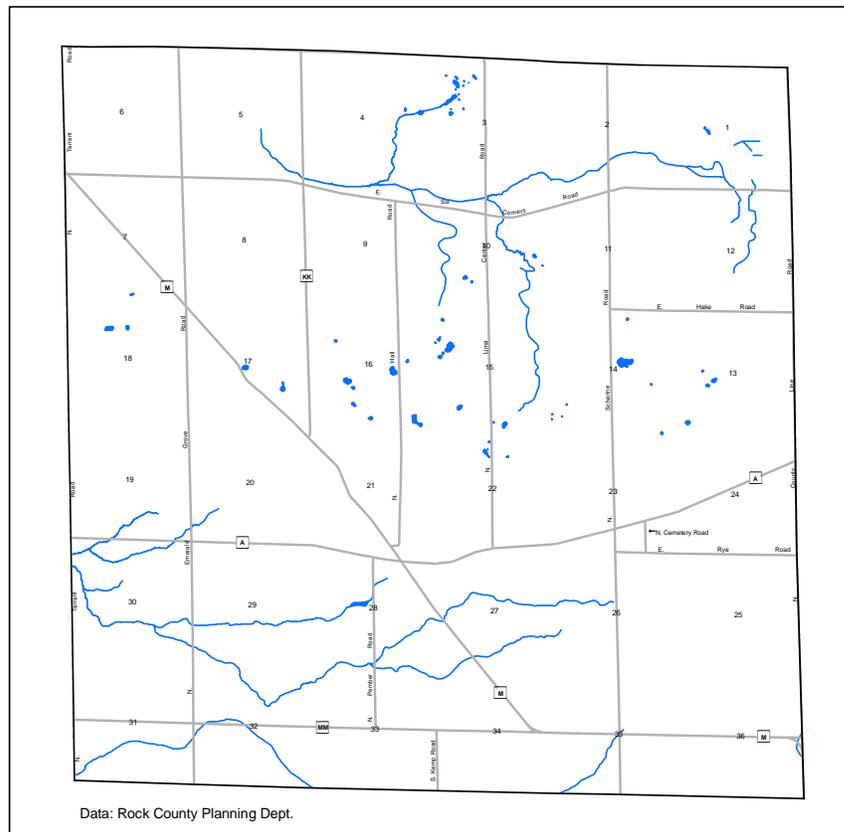
Rock County surface water mapping includes delineation of all lakes, ponds, detention, and retention basins, rivers, and streams. Because of the aesthetic and habitat qualities of surface water features in the Town, it is an important natural resource to recognize and analyze for its' quality and the need for protection.

Surface water in the Town of Johnstown is characterized by two unnamed intermittent streams that largely run east and west across the northern one-fourth and southern one-third of the Town. There is also a smaller unnamed stream in the southern most portion of the Town as well as several small ponds often associated with kettles and/or wetlands that dot the Town's midsection along the end moraine. The ponds in the Town of Johnstown are predominantly old kettle lakes that formed in the depressions left by the glaciers,

also known as seepage lakes. Seepage lakes are controlled by two factors, surface water runoff and groundwater, groundwater being the predominant control of water levels. Because seepage lakes have no visible outlet, they can easily become a pollution sink. It is recommended that this type of surface water be monitored for a potential groundwater protection area.

Map 3.2

Town of Johnstown
Surface Water



The Rock River flows into Rock County from Lake Koshkonong, which is located at the Rock, Dane and Jefferson county line. Lake Koshkonong, although not located in the Town of Johnstown, is a regional water feature that provides recreational opportunities for people from all over Rock County. Just as it is important for those up-stream to consider the effects of farming and development on surface water quality for the Town of Johnstown, it is important for the Town to consider those down-stream as well, when making farming and development decisions. Currently, Lake Koshkonong and the Rock River are on the Federal EPA list (303d) of impaired waters.

Wisconsin's Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters Program (ORW/ERW) is designed to maintain the water quality in Wisconsin's cleanest waters. A designated "outstanding resource" water feature is defined as a lake or stream that has excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, high quality fishing and is free from point source or non-point source pollution. A designated "exceptional resource" water feature is defined as a stream that exhibits the same high quality values as an "outstanding resource" water feature, but which may be impacted by point source pollution or has the potential for future discharge from a small sewer community. There are no outstanding or exceptional water resources currently existing in the Town Johnstown.

Exceptional Resource Waters in Rock County:

Allen Creek (below Evansville), Bass Creek, E. Fork Raccoon Creek, Little Turtle Creek, Raccoon Creek, Spring Brook (Town of Bradford), Turtle Creek, Unnamed Creek (Town of Bradford).

2. Shoreland Areas

Under Wisconsin State Statute 59.692, Rock County administers a Shoreland Overlay District. The uses and standards established under the district apply to land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of navigable lakes, ponds or flowages and within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of rivers or streams or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater. The Overlay District prohibits any construction within 75 feet of the ordinary high water mark and these areas are included as ESOSA features. According to Wis. Statute 281.31, this district limits certain development activities in order to "further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions and prevent and control water pollution; protect spawning grounds, fish and aquatic life; control building sites, placement of structures and land uses; and preserve shore cover and natural beauty."

3. Floodplains

Floodplains are lands that have been, or may be, covered by floodwater during a regional flood. A regional flood, commonly called a 100-year flood, is based on historical data and describes a flood that is expected to have a 1% chance of occurring in a given year. The concept that development should avoid floodplains seems almost self-evident, yet these areas continue to attract homeowners and developers because of their proximity to water amenities.

Floodwaters need not to be fast or deep to quickly damage homes, businesses, or landscapes. Public facilities such as wells, sewage treatment plants, and roads can quickly be rendered unusable and unsafe. With continuing urbanization within the river basin and increasing runoff from impervious surfaces, floods are likely to continue. Flooding along the Rock River and its tributaries has occurred frequently at significant cost to citizens and homeowners. The Town of Johnstown does not contain any streams that have floodplains associated with them.

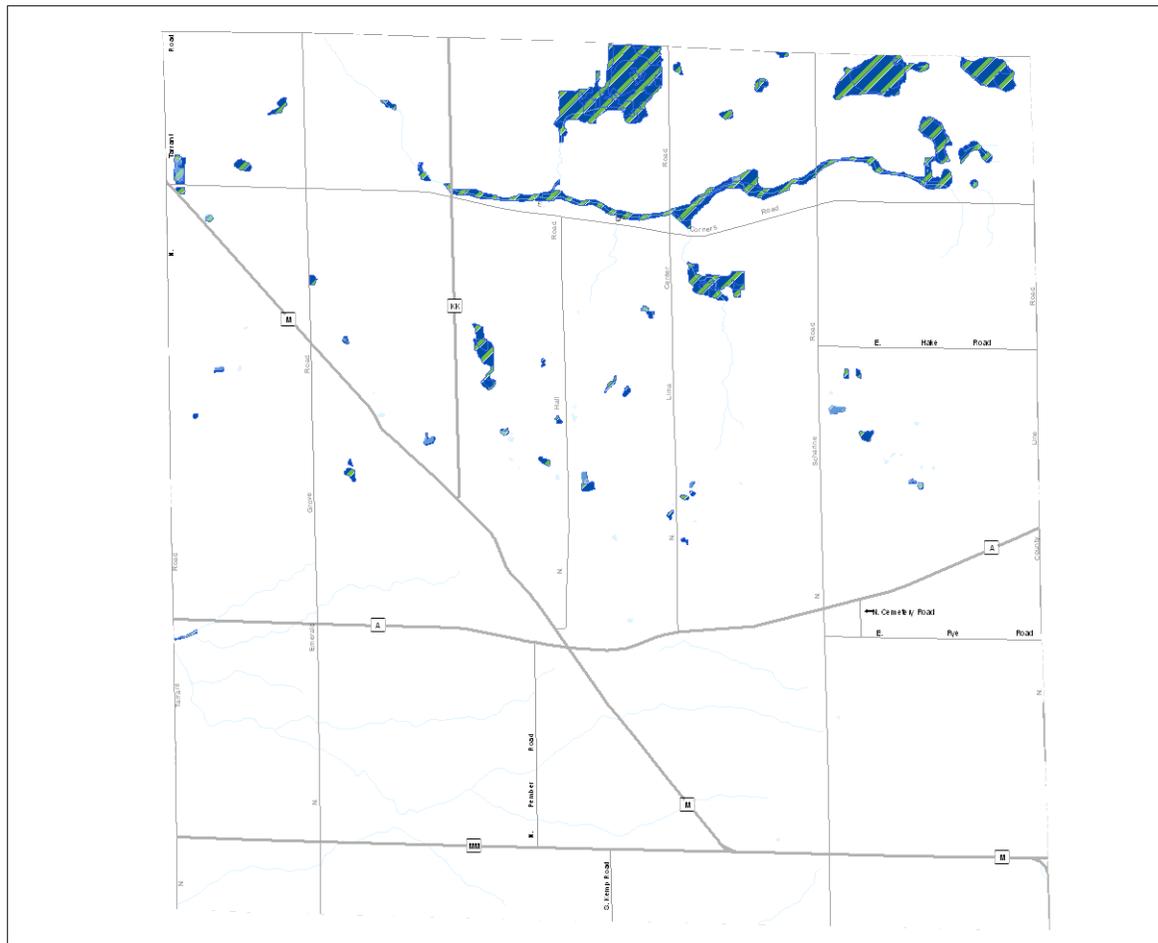
Section 16, Rock County Code of Ordinances establishes the Floodplain Overlay District. Required by 87.30 (1) Wisconsin State Statutes, this ordinance provides for the identification of floodplains within the county and establishes development limits. Floodplains also serve important natural functions, serving as buffers, wildlife corridors, and recreational areas. Additional information regarding floodplains and their management can be obtained within the Rock County Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning Manual and Plan published in September 2004 by the Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency in cooperation with the Rock County Department of Emergency Management.

4. Wetlands

Wetlands are those areas where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to support aquatic or hydrophilic vegetation or which have soils indicative of wet conditions. They are currently protected under state administrative code NR115. Wetlands support unique flora and fauna and are of limited direct human use. The Town of Johnstown has significant area designated as wetland along the northern most unnamed stream and along the northern border of the Town.

Once viewed as wasteland, useful only when drained for agriculture or filled for development, wetlands are now understood to provide substantial and irreplaceable benefits for people and the environment. By filtering pollutants, nutrients, and sediments, wetlands help protect water quality in our lakes, rivers, streams and wells. Storing runoff from heavy rains and snowmelts, wetlands reduce flood damage.

Map 3.3 WETLANDS



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- | | |
|---|---|
|  Wetlands |  Railroads |
|  Town Boundaries | Roads |
|  Cities and Villages |  Local Roads |
|  Streams and Rivers |  Interstate |
|  Rivers and Lakes |  Highway |
| |  County |

Data Sources: Rock County Planning and Development Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Wetlands provide for recreational opportunities by providing essential habitat for fish, waterfowl and a variety of other animals. Acre for acre, wetlands usually support a greater variety and number of animals than any other biotic community. Acting as a shoreline buffer, wetlands protect against erosion from waves and currents. By providing beautiful, natural open spaces, wetlands enhance quality of life, property values and tourism.

5. Drainage Basin and Watersheds (Not an element of ESOSA)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources delineates water quality management units known as basins, which are further divided into watersheds. The Town of Johnstown lies within the Lower Rock River Basin. The Town is then split into three distinctive watersheds; most of the northern half of the Town is in the Lower Koshkonong Creek Watershed and a small portion on the northeast corner of the Town is in the Whitewater Creek Watershed. The southern half of the Town lies entirely in the Blackhawk Creek Watershed. These watersheds have differing characteristics that may suggest different management practices for the protection of ground and surface water. The Blackhawk Creek Watershed has a high susceptibility for groundwater contamination and the Whitewater Creek and Lower Koshkonong Creek Watersheds both have medium susceptibility to groundwater contamination. These areas should be taken in to account when considering protection of groundwater at the Town level. Various management and conservation programs and assistance may be available to landowners within these watershed areas.

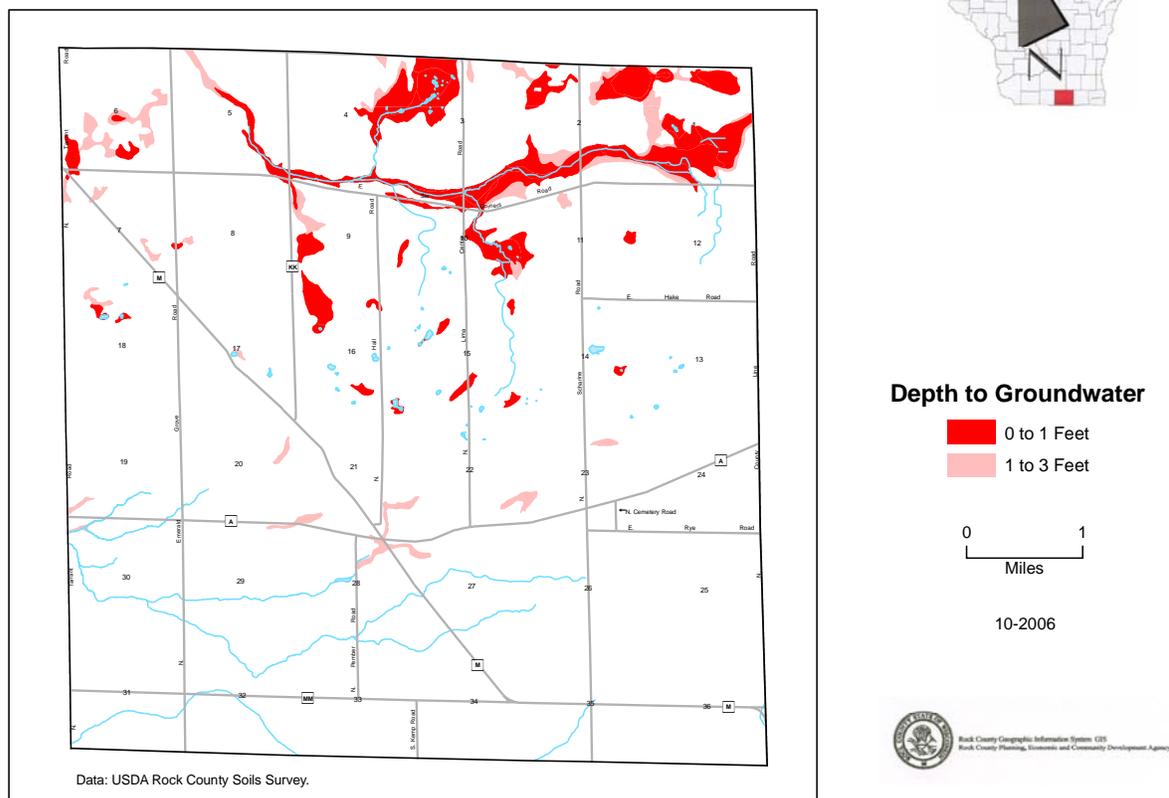
6. Groundwater Protection Areas

The watersheds discussed above have unique issues associated with surface and groundwater quality. According to the Land and Water Resource Management Plan (Rock County Land Conservation Department, 2004) activities associated with increasing the productivity of agricultural land, stream canalization, draining and/or altering of wetlands, increased runoff that carries soil particles, nutrients, and pesticides to surface water have created challenges for maintenance of groundwater quality. Groundwater quality is potentially further reduced by excessive use of nitrogen for crop production, improper lawn fertilization and improperly functioning septic systems.

Private wells provide all of the drinking water for the Town of Johnstown. The water in these wells comes entirely from sub-terrainian aquifers that are recharged almost entirely from locally occurring precipitation. This fact gives the Town of Johnstown control over, and responsibility for, their groundwater and ultimately, drinking water. Unfortunately, contamination of groundwater in any one town can possibly affect the quality of water for a great many people beyond the governmental boundaries. High levels of nitrites, primarily from agricultural sources have been measured in County public water supplies.

Map 3.4

Town of Johnstown
Depth to Groundwater



Map 3.4 shows that there are several areas in the Town of Johnstown, especially in the north that have very shallow (less than three feet) depth to groundwater. This shallow depth to groundwater is at greater than usual risk for contamination by outside pollutants, and is therefore worthy of protection. Managing these areas to pose the least threat to the water supply would require limiting development and the associated run-off as well as monitoring and directing agricultural run-off.

As noted in the report, “Groundwater Protection Principles and Alternatives for Rock County, Wisconsin” the county’s (including the Town of Johnstown’s) “...aquifers are close to the land surface, and their limited natural protection make them vulnerable to pollution. Pollution can come from a wide variety of sources, including agriculture, chemical storage on or below the land surface, and discharges of wastewater from septic systems.” Recognizing that it is much healthier and less expensive to protect water supplies than to remove pollutants, land use controls provide an opportunity to protect this valuable resource.

Water Supply:

Although Rock County is fortunate to have an abundant supply of groundwater, long-term planning is needed to assure that increasing demands do not deplete the groundwater. It is estimated Rock County consumes 20 million gallons of groundwater a day. This rate of groundwater use is the third largest in the state (Dane County

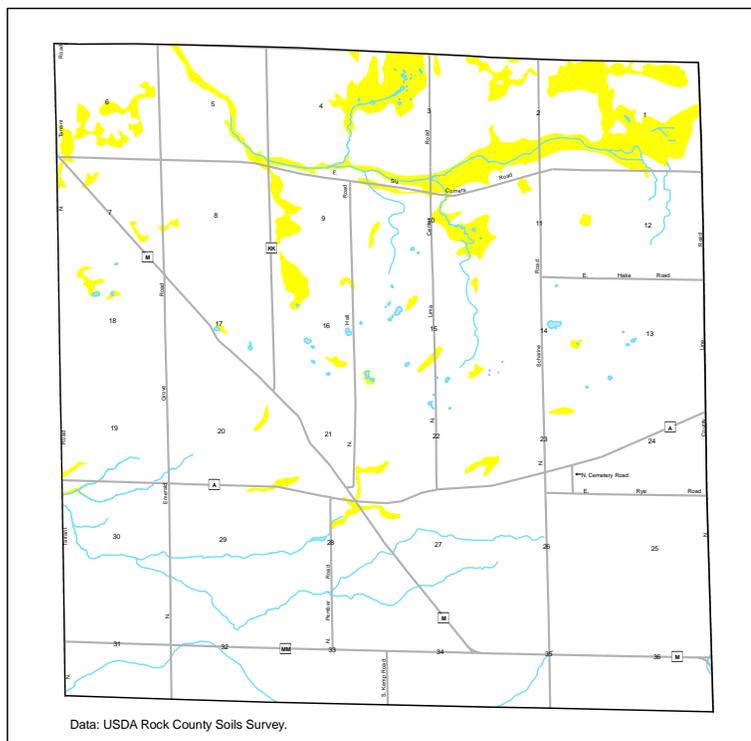
uses 48 million, and Waukesha County uses 27 million gallons a day, *USGS statistics estimates*). Evidence in neighboring counties of Dane and Walworth have identified considerable drawdown of the water table in some locations. Rock County may be susceptible to some of these same influences as water demands increase, especially in areas with large numbers of high capacity wells, and areas with increased demand on the sandstone aquifer. Monitoring of potential depletions should be conducted to evaluate possible adverse impacts. The County Health Department is considering reopening several monitoring wells that have been out of operation. Although groundwater protection is described as a feature in the Rock County POROS plan, there are no measurable policies currently in place to ensure the protection of groundwater at the County or Town level.

7. Hydric Soils

Hydric soils are formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions. The presence of hydric soils are one of the criteria, along with hydrophilic vegetation and wetland hydrology, which are required to exist before an area can be classified as a wetland. Although human activities, such as ditching, tiling, and grading, can remove enough moisture in many places to permit farming, true hydric soils are not conducive to development activities. Development on hydric soils is currently regulated as an element of ESOSA as they have been defined and identified in the "Soil Survey for Rock County, Wisconsin."

Map 3.5

Town of Johnstown
Hydric Soils



Hydric Soils

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Miles

10-2006



Rock County Geographic Information System GIS
Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency

There is significant overlap between the area identified as hydric soil and that of wetlands, however, each inventory is derived from a different source and represents the best data available at the time of writing. By using both, we are more assured of better identification of county areas that merit special consideration. In the Town of Johnstown, hydric soils mainly appear along the intermittent streams.

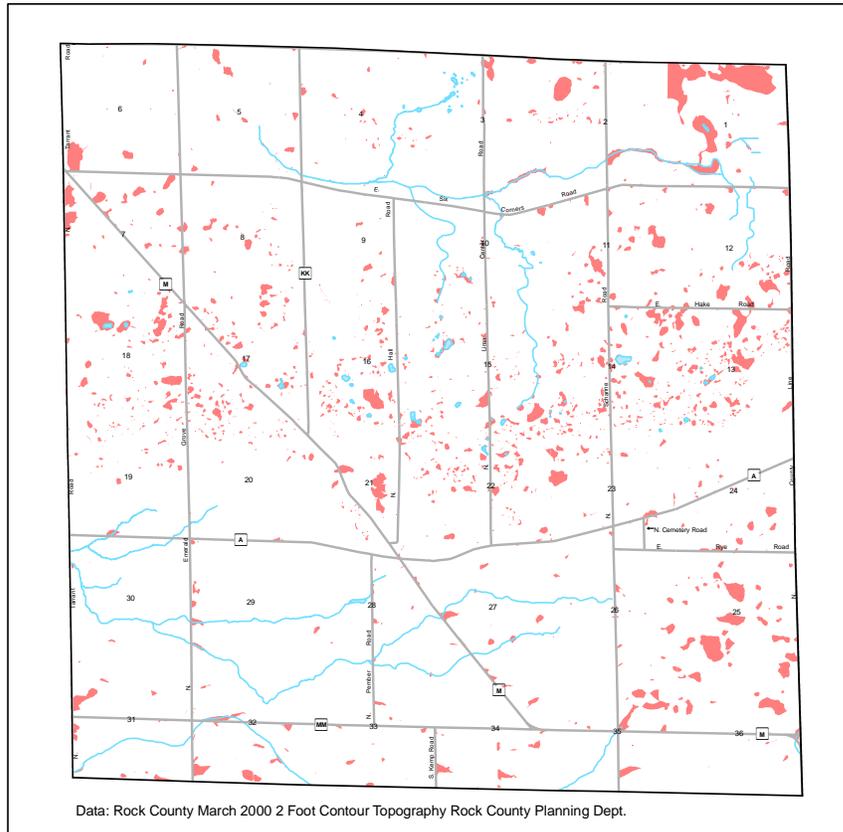
8. Kettles and Depressions

A kettle is a bowl-shaped basin or depression, often with poor surface drainage. They are formed by the melting of a large detached block of stagnant ice left behind by a retreating glacier that had been wholly or partly buried in the glacial drift. The Town of Johnstown has many small and medium sized kettles and depressions scattered throughout the Town.

Kettles may or may not fill with water. If the kettle bottom is filled with fine-grained sediment (clays, silt loams) or the groundwater table intersects the bottom, the kettle may have standing water in it. This is known as a “kettle lake” or a “kettle pond”. If the kettle bottom is composed primarily of sands and gravels they can act as groundwater recharge features. Over time, depending on the amount of runoff and/or melt water that enters a kettle, the soil composition lining the kettle bottom can change its properties. Groundwater recharge kettles lined with sand and gravel often become “filled” when runoff water carries smaller soil particles and fine sediments into them clogging their natural voids. This happens when the surrounding vegetation and soils become “disturbed” exposing the underlying sediment. Reshaping land contours that redirect existing surface runoff travel paths often create this condition.

Map 3.6

Town of Johnstown
Kettles and Depressional Topography



 Kettles and Depressional Topography

0 1
Miles

10-2006



Rock County Geographic Information System GIS
Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency

Kettles are subject to periodic flooding and often contain soils that do not offer sufficient foundation support. They also frequently contain unique plant and animal communities not found in the surrounding area. Kettles sometimes act as storm water collection basins, which in turn act as natural recharge areas (areas where water is filtered down into groundwater aquifers). This can cause threats to groundwater quality when development within or adjacent to kettles concentrates pollutants into storm water that runs into the kettle. For these reasons, development in and around kettles should be limited.

9. Steep Slopes

Steep slopes have been defined in the Rock County POROS plan as those slopes with greater than or equal to a 12% slope. Twelve percent was chosen because it is the generally accepted division between lands that are topographically suitable and those that are not suitable for most human uses. As slope increases, farming or construction projects encounter more restraints, costs, and likelihood of associated environmental degradation. Additionally, construction on steep slopes typically requires more site

11. Natural Areas Ranked 5 and Above

In 2001, ecologist Robert Baller evaluated natural areas in Rock County on behalf of the Rock County Planning, Economic, & Community Development Agency. Studied sites were derived from the WDNR *Natural Area Inventories* for Rock County from 1969 and 1986. Baller and others added additional sites. Primary habitats included prairie, savanna, woodland, wetland, and cliff communities. Site evaluations involved mostly floristic assessments. All sites were ranked on a scale of one to ten (1-10) for their quality and condition, size, and context. These constituent rankings were combined into an overall rank of 1-10 for each site. A rank of 5 or above denoted an ecologically significant site for Rock County. All sites ranked 5 and above were recommended for conservation. The 2001 *Survey* involved 114 private and 55 public sites (169 total). Individual site acreages varied from 0.1 to 142 acres. One hundred thirty-eight (138) sites were given an overall rank of 5 or greater.

Natural areas are lands that contain significant remnants of pre-settlement vegetation and are considered demonstrative of native ecology. By preserving portions of our pre-settlement environment, we help maintain bio-diversity and strengthen the natural processes underlying a healthy eco-system. Although there are no areas in the Town of Johnstown that contain examples of these species in the areas studied, there may be sites as yet unstudied that do contain some. Natural Areas are protected as part of ESOSAs by Rock County.

12. Threatened and Endangered Species (Not an element of ESOSA)

The Wisconsin Endangered Species Law was enacted to afford protection for certain wild animals and plants that the Legislature recognized as endangered or threatened and in need of protection as a matter of general state concern. The Federal Endangered Species Act also protects animals and plants that are considered endangered or threatened at a national level. These laws prohibit the direct killing, taking, or other activities that may be detrimental to the species.

Both the state and federal governments prepare their own separate lists of such plant and animal species but do so working in cooperation with one another, as well as with various other organizations and universities. The WDNR's Endangered Resources Program monitors endangered, threatened, and special concern species and maintains the state's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) database. This program maintains data on the locations and status of rare species in Wisconsin. These data are exempt from the open records law due to their sensitive nature.

While the conservation of plants, animals and their habitat should be considered prior to development for all species, this is particularly important for threatened, endangered, or special concern species. A threatened species is one that is likely, within the foreseeable future, to become endangered. An endangered species is one whose continued existence is in jeopardy and may become extinct. A "special concern species" is one about which some problem of abundance or distribution is suspected but not yet proven. The main purpose of the special concern category is to focus attention on certain species before they become endangered or threatened. Remaining examples of Wisconsin's intact native communities are also tracked but not protected by the law.

According to the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) of the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), there are 24 plant, 6 bird, 6 fish, 3 reptile/amphibian, 3 insect/invertebrate, and 2 mammal species listed on the federal or state threatened or endangered species list for Rock County. In the Town of Johnstown there are two species of imperiled (rare) plants, the Woolly Milkweed and the Purple Milkweed. These species are not endangered at this time, but have low enough populations that they could become endangered if their numbers continue to decline. Implementation of the Endangered Species laws is usually accomplished during the state permit review process, but is ultimately the responsibility of those at a project site and property owners to ensure that they are not in violation of these laws. See the State WDNR website for the Endangered Resources (ER) Program for more information.

13. Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Not an element of ESOSA)

Fish and wildlife are an important resource in the Town and Rock County. The diverse range of water resources near the Town of Johnstown provides for diversity of the fishery resource. Sport fishery in the County is comprised of catfish, smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white bass, crappies, bullheads, bluegills and perch. Carp present problems especially in Lake Koshkonong, but the population is held in check with an aggressive commercial harvest. The DNR stocks Lake Koshkonong and the Rock River with northern pike, walleye and muskellunge.

The large size of the Rock River Basin combined with high levels of natural fertility, intensive agriculture and municipal development has put a strain on the waters. High levels of phosphorus and sediment combined with algae blooms result in low dissolved oxygen. Periodic testing of fish for contamination has found low levels of PCBs.

A loss of wildlife habitat due to human encroachment and city growth has impacted several wild game species in Rock County. Quail, woodcock, and several waterfowl species, which were once common, are now less stable. It should be noted however that past County and WDNR stocking programs have dramatically improved pheasant hunting in the area. Historically, wildlife populations such as pheasants, quail, and cottontail rabbits rise and fall based on several factors, but there is a direct connection existing between populations and the number of acres of rural land actively enrolled in conservation reserve programs such as (CRP and CREP). These lands now number in the thousands of acres within Rock County.

Other wildlife such as squirrels and raccoon are abundant and deer are common. Johnstown, as well as the rest of the County and State has an increasing deer population due to the recent mild winters, selective hunting practices and improving habitat. During 2005, hunters registered approximately 2,784 (540 archery, and 2244 gun) deer in Rock County. Although factors and population do fluctuate, deer and turkey populations and harvests are now at an all time high.

14. Woodlands and Valued Trees (Not an element of ESOSA)

According to the WDNR, in 2004, Rock County forested area comprised 58,551 acres or 12.56% of the total county land area. Of this acreage 55,198 are privately owned with the remainder being public lands. Approximately two-thirds of the total acreage is in tracts of less than forty acres.

One of the problems facing forested lands nationwide is fragmentation. Although the Town of Johnstown is not a heavily wooded Town, fragmentation of this resource should be of concern. Forest fragmentation is the conversion of contiguous areas of forest into relatively small patches of forest and non-forest in ways that reduce or eliminate its' ability to provide ecological, economic, and social benefits. Farming and suburbanization are causes of forest and woodland fragmentation, creating openings and altering the landscape in ways that can have long-term ecological and aesthetic impacts.

The number of private owners of forested land for the purpose of housing development is increasing. Wooded land is now highly valued for home and recreational areas, not just for forest products. Associated with this increase is the threat of greater fragmentation through the establishment of roads, utilities, houses, etc.

There may be as yet, un-mapped forests or wooded areas or occurrences of desirable trees that would be considered worthy of preservation by the Town. Occurrences of groups of specific species such as Oak are valued by many for their positive historic, aesthetic and environmental qualities. By requiring the mapping of wooded areas and all mature trees on a site, the Town can insure the best siting for new

construction and minimize the need for replacement landscaping. The mapping/siting of important forest, woodland areas, and valued trees should be required on site plans or subdivision plats before new development is permitted. The use of conservation subdivisions (see Tools) is an effective way for the Town to ensure the preservation of forests, woodland and valued trees. Additionally, landscaping requirements for all new developments will assure the sustainability of this highly valued natural feature.

15. Non-metallic Mine Reclamation (Not an element of ESOSA)

Non-metallic mining sites provide an ample local supply of sand, gravel, limestone and dolomite used for construction and building supplies, road building and maintenance as well as for agricultural use as lime. While these sites provide a valuable resource to the community, many exhausted or abandoned nonmetallic mining sites have been left in a condition that prevents them from being of further use or, at a minimum, a safe landscape. Rock County now has regulations in place (pursuant to Wisconsin administrative code NR135) requiring a Reclamation Plan for mine sites operating after August 2001. The Plan must specify how mines are to be restored following the completion of mining including regrading, re-vegetating, and conversion to the best “post mining” land use.

As of 2007, there are no active sites in the Town of Johnstown however should there ever be a mine it would be appropriate for the Town to plan for the best use of the sites after the mine is depleted.

16. Parks and Open Space/Federal Lands

The largest example of public open space in the Town of Johnstown is the Federal hunting ground located on the northeastern boundary of the Town. This land is largely marsh and provides excellent habitat for duck and other water fowl as well as protection for various other natural resources. This regional recreational area has parking but no shelter.

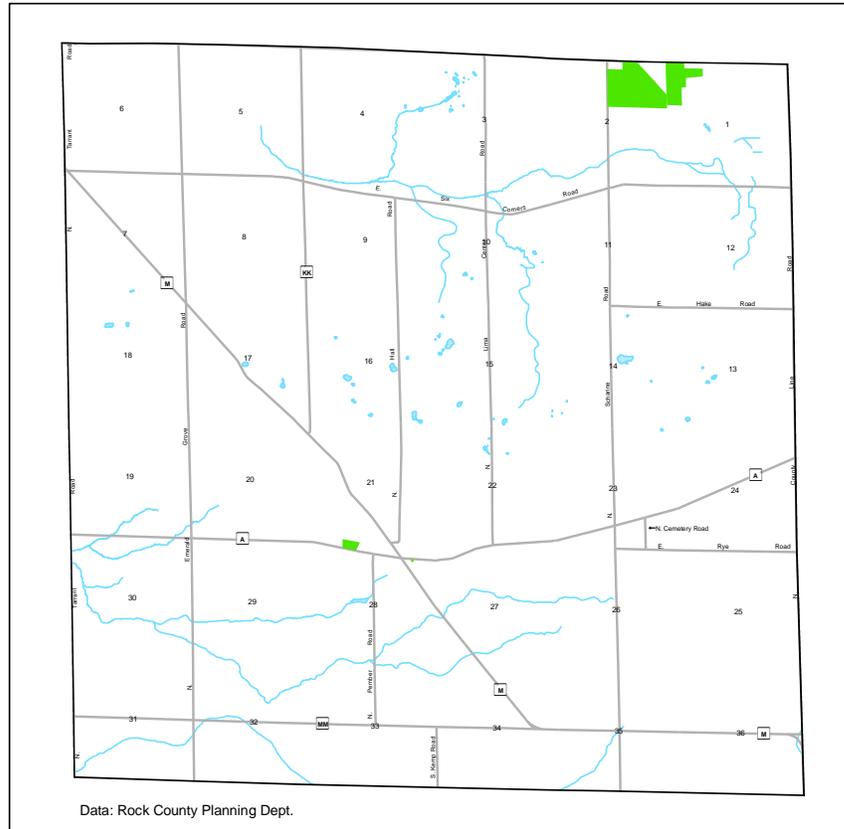
The Town of Johnstown has one other park area associated with the Town Hall. It is recommended that the Town study whether improvements to this park are needed, or whether additional parks and open space areas are viable or needed at this time. Town owned public lands can frequently serve multiple uses, including recreation, natural resource protection and community development. Managing these lands to preserve environmental values and to provide access to Town residents is both possible and desirable. Additionally, the Town of Johnstown survey indicated that 51% of respondents were supportive of the notion that parks and green space should be provided with new housing developments. This is something to keep in mind for future planning purposes.

The Rock County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space (POROS) Plan expresses the County's objectives, needs, and priorities for park and outdoor recreation facilities. It should be used to guide public policy related to the quality and location of open space opportunities, in order to meet the needs of the citizens of the Town of Johnstown as well as the surrounding region. The focus of the Plan is on assessing and providing outdoor recreational opportunities for all Rock County residents. A secondary consideration is resource preservation and open space. The Town should refer to the POROS Plan for more complete information and recommendations on parks and open space.

Map 3.8

Town of Johnstown
Parks and Open Space

Including State and Federal Lands



Data: Rock County Planning Dept.

17. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail (Not an element of ESOSA)

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a trail located entirely in Wisconsin. It is projected to be over 1000 miles long when completed. The trail system offers a varied and scenic hiking experience while attempting to follow, or stay adjacent to, the glacial geology of the Green Bay and Lake Michigan lobes of the Wisconsin glaciation that occurred approximately 10,000 years ago. This trail is expected to be an important regional recreational feature that may have segments going through the Town Lima, Johnstown and or the Town of Harmony.

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail Association, in cooperation with the National Parks Service, has begun a trail corridor scoping study in Rock County in hopes of completing the Rock County segment of the trail. At writing, committees are in the process of selection and assessment of potential future trail corridors. Future segments will connect Rock County with neighboring county’s trail systems. The lands needed to complete this system will come from a combination of existing public land, land grants or gifts, and landowner agreements. If it is determined that part of the trail will be headed into the Town of Johnstown it would be an important recreational feature that should be considered in future recreational plans for the Town.

3.6 Strategies and Tools for Agricultural and Natural Resource Protection

Many of the tools described here are effective for the protection and preservation of both agricultural land and natural resources such as those described above. There are new and innovative methods being used every day to balance the delicate need for natural agricultural and natural resource preservation with the need to preserve and protect every landowner's rights to their land.

Strategies

Community Design

As land becomes scarcer and development pressures increase, it is important that the development that does happen is planned and designed with the needs of the future residents, public, and environment in mind.

Community design issues such as housing types, lot sizes, building placement on lots, street and road configuration, trails, transportation design, and accessibility issues will take place within other elements of this plan. Because the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources element is associated with the identification, preservation, and protection of the environmental resources of the County, it is necessary to discuss the logical and efficient design of subdivisions and home sites.

For years, in general, subdivisions and home sites have been designed and planned on the drawing board first and then sited with limited analysis done of the actual physical conditions of the proposed site. Conditions such as terrain slope, soil types, drainage patterns or hydrologic systems, viewsheds, and overall compatibility with the surrounding character of the land are often times overlooked, under studied, or simply not taken into consideration. This practice adds a substantial inefficiency and cost to the development process due to the fact that both parties must make numerous requests, adjustments, and re-submittals to react to issues that would have been recognized earlier in the process had pre-design analysis been done.

With the opportunity of Comprehensive Planning to introduce new "Smart Growth" oriented ways of doing business, a fundamental change in site planning is appropriate. Currently, new technology makes computer-generated analysis of the environmental features and physical characteristics of the land possible. Site evaluations and analysis enables development sites to be assessed prior to design, taking into account both the positive amenities and the environmental limitations of the building site. This pre-design analysis can streamline the application/approval process as well as alleviate frustrations for county and local approving agencies as well as the developer when managing federal, state, and local code enforcement, environmental issues, public safety issues, etc.

It is suggested that the process of design become a collaboration, at the very beginning of the development process, between the developer or home owner and the County and local approving agencies. In addition, it is recommended that the design process take place only after the physical conditions of building and development sites have been evaluated and analyzed. This site evaluation process would maximize the potential of the building site to the developer or homeowner while minimizing the impact of the development on the environment. In practice, pre-design site evaluations would undoubtedly expedite the approval process thereby saving money for the county government, town government, and the developer or homeowner.

Implementation Tools

With creative planning, zoning and site design it is possible to permit residential development and still preserve the agricultural and scenic quality of the Town which is so valued by current residents. Many techniques have been used by governmental units across the country to preserve open space (which can be characterized by agricultural land or other natural features). The most successful open space preservation programs use a combination of these techniques and do not rely on just one. In Wisconsin, some techniques are already in use, most notably, agricultural zoning, conservancy zoning (ie: Highland and Lowland Conservancy Districts), planned unit development zoning, deed restrictions, purchase of development rights, fee-simple purchase of land, public land dedication and ownership by private land trusts.

Two approaches for preservation of agricultural and natural resources at the Town level are presented below. They are: regulatory tools and methods of land acquisition. Tools commonly used in each strategy will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Regulatory Tools

Regulatory tools are those used for controlling consumption and promoting preservation of agriculture and natural resources through policy and code. The following is a description of some of the tools that are available and may already be in use. There may be other appropriate tools in addition to those discussed here. It is important to recognize that *all* laws, codes and regulations (or the lack thereof) that affect land use, also affect the natural and/or agricultural environment in some way. For this reason, careful examination of any policies or laws affecting land use is highly recommended.

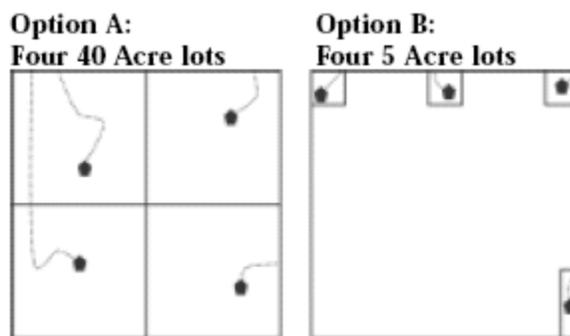
- **Exclusive agricultural zoning (A-1):**

The Town of Johnstown has an Exclusive Agricultural (A-1) zoning district that allows for minimum lot sizes of 35 acres. This zoning district restricts non-farm uses and structures and is effective at limiting development that would remove land from agricultural use. The problem with A-1 zoning, however is that it is fairly ineffective at regulating zoning changes and subsequent land divisions that do result in the consumption of agricultural land. Under the conditional uses in the A-1 district, it is allowable to separate parcels with farm family dwellings on them into parcels of 5 acres or less. Over time, these land divisions can cause fragmentation of agricultural land, especially when the separated land is re-sold as a non-farm dwelling. Lowering the size of parcels that may be separated from A-1 parcels would help to preserve agricultural land in the long run.

- **Lot size and Density**

Zoning codes can place limits on overall density in agricultural areas to encourage non-farm housing to locate on relatively small lots. The way this would work best is to replace *minimum* lot sizes with smaller *maximum* lot sizes for residential properties located in agricultural zoning districts. Lowering lot sizes might seem to allow more housing on agricultural land at first, but when used in conjunction with density limits, this is an effective way to keep “estate” homes from cropping up in the middle of 10 or 35 acres (see Figure 3.1 below). Also, because fragmentation and consumption of agricultural land often happens one land division at a time, by only allowing additional “farm family” housing units to be separated from A-1 zoning to much smaller lots, agricultural land is preserved. In order for this to work effectively, density restrictions would need to be placed on the deeds of all new parcels based on the density allowed on the original acreage. This would prevent the change in zoning from allowing any more housing than was allowed on the original parcel. (*Planning for Agriculture in Wisconsin-A Guide for Communities, Nov. 2002*)

Figure 3.1: Comparative lot sizes with similar density



Source: Planning for Agricultural Guide, Nov. 2002.

- **Land Division Ordinance Provisions**

The Town of Johnstown may enact a land division ordinance that may be more restrictive than the Rock County Land Division Ordinance in areas where the Town and the County have concurrent jurisdiction under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, and more or less restrictive in areas where the Town has jurisdiction under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, but the County does not. The Town’s land division ordinance may cover issues that are not covered in the Rock County Land Division Ordinance. One example of what the Town could do to help protect agricultural land is to create conditions, such as one stating that specific steps toward agricultural and natural resource protection must be taken, in order for a land division to gain approval. The more specific the conditions of approval are, the more consistent and effective they will be.

Additionally, current regulations require that any proposed land divisions of under 15 acres must be submitted as a certified survey and be reviewed by both the Town and County, however, land divisions of over 15 acres need no such review. For purposes of preserving contiguous areas of agricultural land, the Town of Johnstown may want to consider requiring a certified survey and review of all land divisions regardless of size.

- **Performance Zoning**

Performance zoning is a method that permits controlled development while also being sensitive to the landscape. It tries to regulate the impacts of land uses rather than the uses themselves, by outlining general goals for developers that they can meet in different ways. Land owners are permitted a wide variety of uses, so long as they meet certain numeric standards such as a certain ratio of impervious surfaces, a certain density, a certain amount of open space, or certain noise level standards. The downfall to performance zoning is that it can be complex and would likely require a professional planner on staff to effectively administer the ordinance.

- **Overlay Zoning**

Overlay zones allow special regulations within all or a portion of a zoning district or several districts. This type of zoning can be helpful if there is one particular resource that needs to be protected a consistent way regardless of what district it is in. Overlay zones are common for wellhead protection areas and groundwater recharge areas. Rock County’s Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas are in an overlay district.

- **Incentive Zoning**

Incentive zoning allows developers to provide additional amenities such as open space in exchange for higher densities, additional floor area, or other property enhancements. Zoning for conservation subdivisions often includes incentive zoning measures.

- **Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)**

A PUD is an overlay district that allows developers and towns the flexibility to vary some of the standards in local zoning codes to provide for innovative approaches that may allow for mixed uses and better design and arrangement of open space to protect agricultural and natural resources. Using PUD methodology for the siting and layout of new subdivisions gives the Town the ability to work with the developer up front to come up with a plan that is consistent with the values and needs of the Town.

Shortcomings of the PUD include that it does not allow for increased density in exchange for clustering development and it does not specify guidelines and requirements for screening and preservation and therefore may not consistently produce the desired outcome. Some of the values and goals expressed by the Town can be accomplished through a PUD overlay district, however, specific Conservation Subdivision and Cluster Housing (discussed later in this element) regulations are likely to be more effective.

- **Official Maps**

Official maps show existing and planned public facilities such as streets and parks. They can also be used to restrict the issuance of building permits within the limits of the mapped areas. The maps are an especially effective means to reserve land for future public use (such as parks and open space.)

- **Sign Ordinance**

Signs, especially billboards can drastically affect the perceived “rural character” of a town as viewed from roadways. For this reason, it is important to have an up-to-date sign ordinance that regulates such things as location and size of billboards, light emitting diodes (LEDs), changing message and pictures on signs. New legislation in Wisconsin now allows a changing message every six seconds on billboards. This is likely to cause a noticeable change to the rural landscape unless addressed in local ordinances. It is recommended that the existing sign ordinance be updated reflecting new legislation.

- **Landscaping Requirements**

One of the most critical regulatory strategies available for retaining rural character as well as for addressing issues of erosion control and replacement of disrupted natural features is a Landscaping Ordinance. Many cities and villages in southern Wisconsin have stringent requirements for natural screening and replacement of vegetation when a subdivision is developed. Used as part of or in conjunction with Planned Unit Developments and/or subdivision requirements, landscaping can have a significant effect on the shaping of the rural environment for current and future residents of the Town. Landscaping requirements are one way to sustain the rural character of the Town even as development continues to occur. It is highly recommended that the Town enact a Landscaping Ordinance to assure the quality of future developments.

- **Cluster development/Conservation Subdivisions**

The concept of cluster development (including “conservation subdivisions” to be discussed next) is one of the most important strategies (along with landscaping regulations) available to towns for the preservation of agriculture and natural resources. In a “cluster development” up to four dwellings can be allowed on the smallest allowable lots (in the Town of Johnstown the minimum lot size for

residential development is one acre and could be reduced to 40,000 square feet) with the additional requirement that they are clustered together in such a way as to avoid important agricultural and natural resources. In the agricultural districts that allow residential development on “rural” size lots (A-3 zoning allows 3 acre lots and A-2 zoning allows 10 acre lots in the Town of Johnstown) the result can be widely spaced homes that cause fragmentation of farmland, woodlands, or degradation of other natural resources. Requiring smaller lots and specifying building envelopes for dwellings that are clustered together on the portion of the land least likely to degrade or fragment existing resources, preserves larger contiguous tracts for agricultural use and natural resources.

Through a cluster housing overlay district the Town can encourage cluster developments by allowing a higher density of housing (ie: more lots) than would be allowed under the underlying zoning district if the developer agrees to cluster homes on the minimum allowable sized lots. This type of regulation can be also accomplished through a Town level Land Divisions ordinance and as part of a “Conservation Subdivision” for developments of over five land divisions (See next section).

Figure 3.2 Large Lot Rural Development

THE USE OF CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

As urban development pressures have increased in Southeastern Wisconsin, public concern has grown over the loss of open space and rural character that seems to inevitably accompany what may be otherwise perceived as desirable growth. The disappearance of the qualities that make the Southeastern Wisconsin Region an attractive place to live is caused by the very development that allows new residents to move into the Region. Rolling topography, wetlands, woodlands, hedgerows, streams and lakes, farm fields, and scenic views are distinct features that define the rural qualities which make this area so appealing. But when housing is scattered throughout the landscape in ways that do not respect its special qualities, those qualities can be lost, and, indeed, have been in many areas. Low-density, one- to three-acre suburban housing seeks a rural environment and, in the process of giving each new homeowner a “piece of the country,” destroys the very

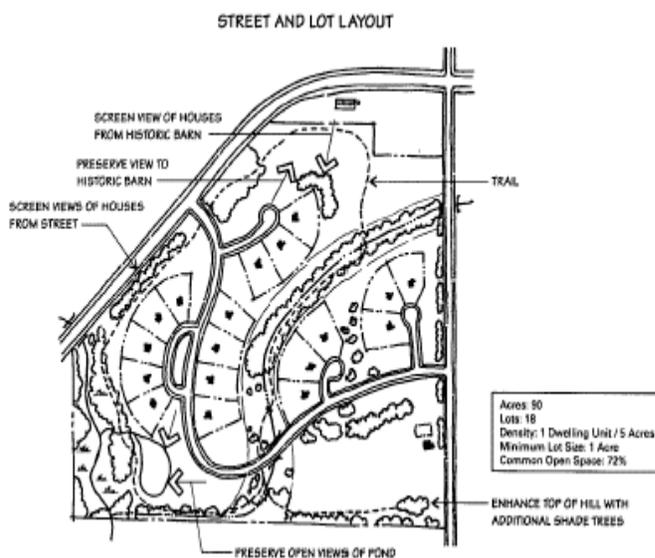


character of the land that was sought out (see Figure 1-8). Often the only reminder of the pre-construction rural character existing on a site is in the name of the subdivision, such as “Walnut Woods” or “Pleasant View.” By the time the new residents have moved in, the “woods” and the “view” have long been destroyed and cannot be enjoyed by either the residents or passers-by from the community at large.

- **Conservation Subdivisions**

Conservation subdivisions are an excellent way to preserve agriculture, open space and natural resources in zoning districts where subdivisions (five or more lots created through land division) are permitted. The most appropriate way to regulate conservation subdivisions would be through a specific “Conservation Subdivision Ordinance.” In the Town of Johnstown where most of the buildable areas are characterized by flat, open spaces, landscaping requirements would be a desired regulatory element to achieve the desired effect of a conservation subdivision.

The clustering of homes can direct development to areas more suitable for development and away from areas that are more environmentally sensitive, such as wetlands. Clustering can also provide for the preservation of archeological sites, scenic views, and natural vegetation often found near surface water. By allowing for open space that is owned publicly or by a homeowners association, these natural amenities can be preserved for the community or neighborhood as a whole, instead of for a limited number of private homeowners. Finally, conservation subdivisions can help protect water quality for everyone through the maintenance of surface water buffers and better management of run-off.



Strengths:

- Encourages smaller rural lot sizes for houses
- Protects larger blocks of open space
- Reduces the amount of land that is converted from agriculture or open space uses

Weaknesses:

- Dense clusters of rural homes may not be compatible with some kinds of commercial agriculture
- Many people moving to the country don't want to live on small lots or in clustered housing developments
- Existing conservation subdivisions have tended to cater to the high end of the housing market, which can make housing less affordable to some rural residents
- If the overall permitted density of homes is not increased, the total value of lots sold for development may be lower compared to conventional subdivisions

In order to sustain an agricultural community and ensure farming as a viable lifestyle, large blocks of contiguous farmland should be protected. Conservation subdivisions are appropriate for protecting blocks of agricultural land and promoting areas where agricultural and residential activities can co-exist especially if used along with other conservation practices intended to prevent fragmentation of agricultural land. This is significant for particular types of agricultural practices that have some economic and aesthetic benefits for residential homeowners. This might include pick-your-own operations, community supported agricultural programs, organic vegetable production, hay and straw production and other specialty products and activities that use low chemical and low intensity production.

• **Building Permits**

The Town of Johnstown Building Inspector currently has the ability to issue building permits. Establishing criteria for the issuance of building permits is another powerful tool available to the Town. The Town may specify a limit on the number of building permits that will be issued each year based on the rate of growth it deems appropriate. In this way, the consumption of land and

the strain on the environment caused by development can be more carefully monitored and controlled.

Additionally, this power gives the Town influence over the precise siting or location of new construction within a parcel of land. Issuance of building permits can be subject to conformance with language in an ordinance or plan that states specific rules about placement of structures ie: that new homes are situated in such a way as to avoid disrupting natural resources and/or to be shielded from views of neighbors. Specifying criteria for issuance of building permits is an effective way to ensure that natural resources located on private property will be considered prior to construction.

- **Other Regulatory Strategies**

The siting of driveways, septic systems and wells as well as other land use controls such as specific requirements for siting of structures relevant to agricultural and natural resources helps to regulate the effect of housing developments on the rural environment. Currently, the County level of government is administering these regulations, however, if the Town sees fit to establish additional or more restrictive regulations, those regulations will prevail.

Land Acquisition Tools

There can be little question that the best way to preserve agricultural and natural resources is for those resources to be owned by an entity that is obligated to preserve it. There are several viable economic options for this to occur.

- **Public or private purchase**

Towns and non-profit conservation organizations can acquire land for conservation purposes by purchasing it outright. This is recommended when public access to the property is required.

- **Non-Profit Conservation Organizations**

Non-profit conservation organizations such as land trusts are private organizations established to protect land and water resources for the public benefit. Land trusts often protect natural resources by owning the land or by holding a conservation easement which limits the use of the land to the terms specified in the easement. Land trusts and other non-profit conservation organizations are eligible to participate in state grant programs that fund land or conservation easement acquisitions. There are examples of successful non-profit/local government partnerships in Wisconsin

- **Purchase of Conservation Easements**

These are voluntary legal agreements between private landowners and qualified land trusts, conservation organizations or government agencies for the purpose of limiting land to specific uses and thus protecting it from development. These voluntary legal agreements are created between private landowners and qualified land trusts, conservation organizations or government agencies. Conservation easements may be purchased but are frequently donated by conservation-minded landowners. Grantors can receive federal tax benefits as a result of donating easements and may apply to parts of or entire parcels of property. Purchase of conservation easements for public use involves many land rights and widely differs from policy limiting development on private property through the use of conservation easements by a local government.

- **Public Land Dedication**

The Town may require that each time a subdivision is approved that a certain percentage of land is dedicated (donated to the Town) for public use. The Town may also elect to take fees that will be used for park and open space development or maintenance in lieu of land.

- **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)**

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs are aimed at maintaining the economic viability of keeping land in agriculture and/or preserving natural resources, even in the face of development pressure. PDR programs focus on the purchase of the right to develop a piece of property that meets criteria for preservation of agricultural and/or natural resources. This process may include analyzing the quantity and quality of the resources present and determining the extent to which the land is threatened by development. Through various fund raising efforts, including raising of taxes and partnerships with other governmental and non-profit agencies, there has been a high degree of success in the goal of purchasing the rights to develop agricultural land from farmers, thus leaving the land in agriculture into perpetuity.

PDR programs provide the farmer with the ability to sell his or her rights to develop the property in question, permanently, so that the deed to the land reflects the inability to develop no matter whom owns the land or how many times it is sold. This system lowers the value of the land for taxing purposes and also provides for other monetary incentives to the farmer. At this writing, this is one of the most successful programs for preserving agricultural land. Part of what makes it so successful is the fact that it is completely voluntary on the part of the governing municipality (taxes can only be allocated through referendum) and on the part of the farmer. The highlights of such programs are summarized below:

- The value of an easement is determined by calculating the difference between the market value of the land with development and the value of the land without development (in current dollars)
- The right to develop land is purchased from the landowner (farmer) from a local government or non-profit organization
- Some landowners may choose to donate land in order to reduce tax burden while keeping their land in agriculture
- Easements are recorded on the deed and remain with the land into perpetuity
- Landowners may “sell the development rights” to all or just a portion of their land.
- Landowners retain the right to continue to use their land and sell it to others, but the right to develop the land is no longer available once development rights have been sold.
- This system puts cash in the hands of current farmers
- It also keeps the price of farmland lower for future farmers.

- **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

In a Transfer of Development Rights program, the Town would need to designate “sending areas” (areas where development is discouraged) and “receiving areas” (areas where development is encouraged). The “sending” area would typically be farmland that the community wants to protect and the “receiving” area would be an area planned for residential development. Landowners in sending areas are allocated development rights based on density policy and criteria identified in adopted plans, which specify the number of potential building sites or non-farm development available on their property. Landowners seeking to develop in a receiving area must first buy a certain amount of development rights from landowners in a

sending area. Once a development right is purchased and transferred, the landowner in the sending area gives up the ability to develop a portion of the property.

3.7 Natural Resources Policies

- Establish clear policies and laws that will aide in the preservation of agricultural, natural and cultural resources.
- Analyze and consider the impacts of development on all agricultural and natural resources present at the development site and in other off-site areas that might be affected by that development.
- Require review of all land divisions regardless of size.
- Adopt and implement ordinances addressing outdoor lighting, noise (except that associated with farming) and wireless telecommunication towers.
- Adopt and implement an ordinance or guidelines for protecting valued Viewsheds.
- Educate on and recognize all natural features present in the Town and commit to criteria for protection.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly alter, disturb, or degrade Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas (ESOSAs) within the Town of Johnstown by referencing and supporting the Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- Require developers to incorporate and preserve ESOSAs within the designs and scope of their projects.
- Review, analyze, and identify environmental issues affecting the design and safety of new development before development occurs.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly pollute, threaten, or degrade the quality of Groundwater in the Town of Johnstown by referencing the Rock County Stormwater Management Ordinance and the Rock County Construction Site Erosion Control Ordinance.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly pollute or threaten the quality of Wetlands in the Town of Johnstown by referencing Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Shoreland and Wetland Law NR 115 and the Rock County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.
- Prevent development on hydric soils as they are mapped in the POROS Plan.
- Prevent development activities that directly or indirectly affect kettles and depressions, their ability to act as natural recharge areas and the unique habitat they provide.
- Preserve hilltops and vistas by not allowing development that detracts from their visual quality within the Town of Johnstown.
- Identify and develop policy that protects forests, woodlands and valued trees in the Town of Johnstown.
- Investigate and present options for creating and funding a Purchase of Development Rights program at the Town or Multi-Town level that is intended to make it viable for farmers to keep their land in agriculture and to preserve important or outstanding natural features.
- Work cooperatively with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation to determine possible locations for the Ice Age Trail within the Town, if applicable.
- Other policies as listed in the Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan, Oct.2003 .

Natural Resources Conclusion

There are many programs, resources and policy mechanisms that make it possible for towns, farmers and other landowners to preserve agricultural and natural resources. Funds from state and federal sources, as well as increased availability of non-profit funding makes preservation a viable alternative to development. Even though the Town of Johnstown is not expected to experience development pressure over the planning period, it is not too early to make decisions about how and when land is consumed and development is allowed to occur. This "Smart Growth" document can be the first step in providing education and policy that can have a long and far reaching affect of the future of the landscape and natural resources in the Town of Johnstown.

3.8 Architectural and Historical Resources

Identification, preservation and increased knowledge of cultural and historic resources helps to foster a feeling of pride and “identity” in a place. The Town of Johnstown has many quality places and resources for the pleasure and enrichment of Town residents.

Towns have been given authority to pass historical preservation ordinances through the following legislation (s. 60.64):

The town board, in the exercise of its zoning and police powers for the purpose of promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the community and of the state, may regulate any place, structure or object with a special character, historic interest, aesthetic interest or other significant value for the purpose of preserving the place, structure or object and its significant characteristics. The town board may create a landmarks commission to designate historic landmarks and establish historic districts. The board may regulate all historic landmarks and all property within each historic district to preserve the historic landmarks and property within the district and the character of the district.

Goals:

- Preserve and maintain cemeteries and other important architectural, historical, archeological or aesthetically interesting sites within the Town of Johnstown.
- Support the development of the Ice Age Trail where applicable.

Objectives:

- Support, encourage and educate about efforts to identify, designate, document, maintain and preserve architectural and historical sites and buildings within the Town of Johnstown.
- Support and encourage and educate about efforts to document, restore, maintain and preserve cemeteries, burial and archeological sites within the Town of Johnstown.
- Provide methods and opportunities that will contribute to the knowledge and appreciation of cemeteries and architectural, historical, archeological sites within the Town of Johnstown
- Encourage, support, and assist in the identification of potential Rustic Roads within the Town of Johnstown.

Architecture and History

Interest in historic preservation has experienced a nationwide resurgence in recent years as the population grows and the baby boom generation ages. This large demographic group has helped to fuel an interest in such issues as history, genealogy, and preservation. Consequently, an awareness of the importance of historic preservation/restoration may be at an all time high. Unfortunately, rural development, urban sprawl and population growth is also at an all time high. These factors create an increased pressure to demolish and/or develop areas that may contain historically significant landscapes, sites and/or buildings.

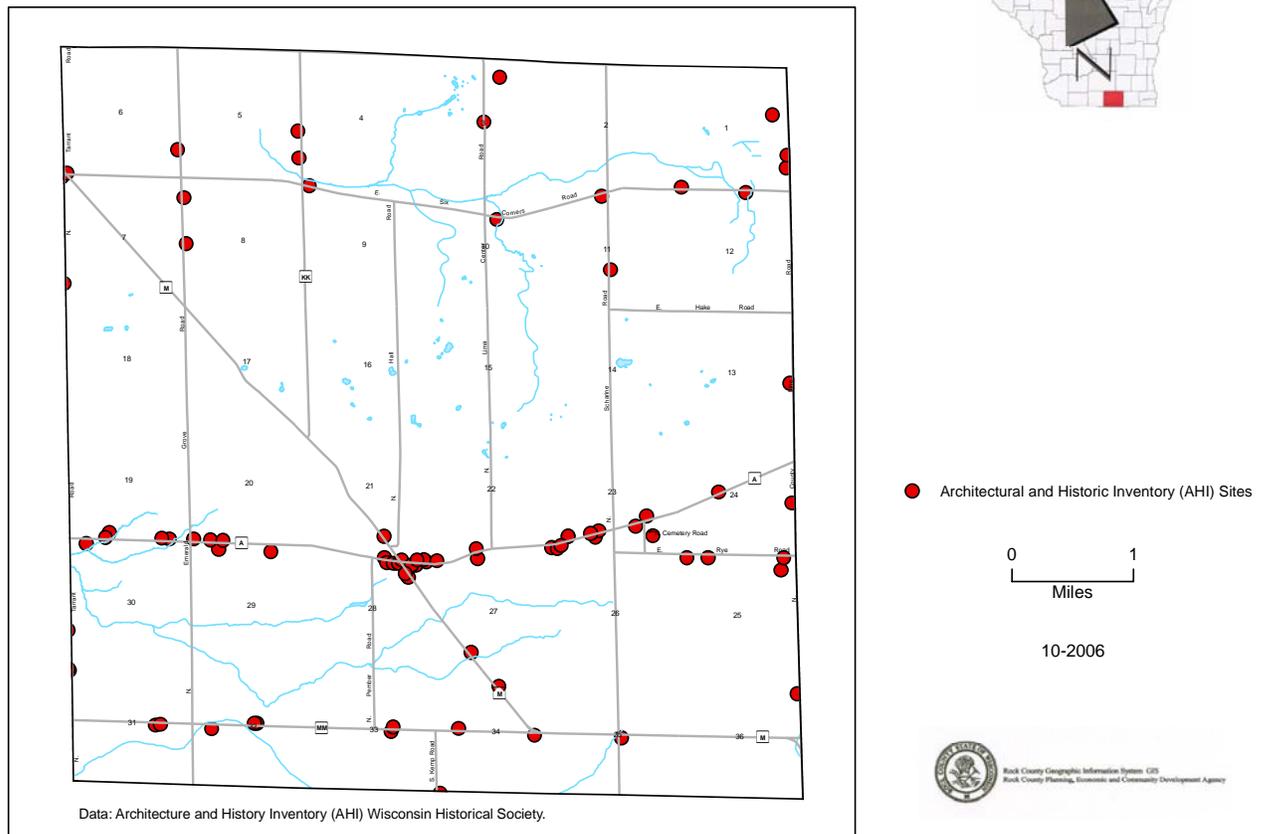
The Rock County Historical Society in conjunction with the Rock County Planning Department did a comprehensive study entitled “Rock County Historic Sites and Buildings”, which includes 38 mapped sites and substantial text detailing historical structures in the Town of Johnstown (see Appendix). This document dated May 15th, 1976, which includes many photos, renderings and historical information, is to date, the most complete study of historic sites and buildings available for Rock County and the Town of Johnstown. A copy of this historic study, researched and written by Nancy Belle S. Douglas and Richard P.

Hartung may be viewed at the Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency, or at the Janesville Hedberg Public Library. Unfortunately however, historical sites are often in poor repair or on land deemed necessary for other purposes, and are sometimes demolished, making it unclear how many of these sites are still standing in the Town of Johnstown. Additional information regarding Rock County history and historic sites, buildings and memorabilia can be obtained from the Rock County Historical Society located in Janesville, Wisconsin.

Additional documentation from the State of Wisconsin Historical Society, Division of Historic Preservation (DHP) identifies, lists and maps key historic sites and settlements in its' Architecture and History Inventory (AHI). Historic structures can help to document locations and patterns of early Town of Johnstown settlement. For more information on these sites and sites throughout Rock County visit the Historical Society website at www.wisconsinhistory.org.

Map 3.9

Town of Johnstown
Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) Sites



The DHP sponsors several programs designed to help owners of historic sites and buildings, as well as income producing historic sites and buildings receive tax credits. In most cases, the building or site must be registered on the State or Federal Register of Historic Places (refer to website for more information on this designation) or a contributor and/or member of a historic district. The tax credits associated with these programs are designed to help fund preservation and restoration efforts. Currently, there are no structures

in the Town of Johnstown in the Registry however this is a very effective mechanism for providing tax credits for preservation of historical sites that meet Registry criteria. It is recommended that the Town investigate potential sites for possible inclusion to the State or Federal Register of Historic Places. Policy that provides for the preservation of these important resources for future generations should be considered.

Historical Markers

One way that the Town of Johnstown can acknowledge and educate the public on the historic sites and structures existing there is through the use of historical markers. There are currently no State Historical Markers in the Town however there is a marker located at the intersection of Scharine Road and County Road A commemorating the birthplace of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. She was born in 1850 and was best known as an author and poet. Although these markers do not offer a comprehensive history of the area, they do provide historical insight as to significant persons, activities and events important to communities and local areas.

Private individuals as well as cities, towns, and villages may purchase historical markers. The marker program is designed to document a significant historical event, person, or place. The upkeep of the marker is the responsibility of the purchaser. Private companies are available to refurbish deteriorated or damaged markers for a fee. The use of historical markers in the Town of Johnstown can be expanded to help further the goal of maintaining the "identity" of the Town.

Rustic Roads

The 1973 State Legislature created the Rustic Roads Systems in Wisconsin in an effort to aid citizens and local units of government in designation of Wisconsin's scenic, lightly traveled country roads. These roads are used for vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian travel in unhurried, quiet and leisurely enjoyment. This Act gives authority to county government to designate Rustic Roads after the creation of a County Rustic Roads Governing Board. There are currently two designated rustic roads in Rock County. Serns road running from the City of Milton north to County Road "N" (Town of Milton) and Riley road running from U.S. 14 north to the county line (Town of Porter).

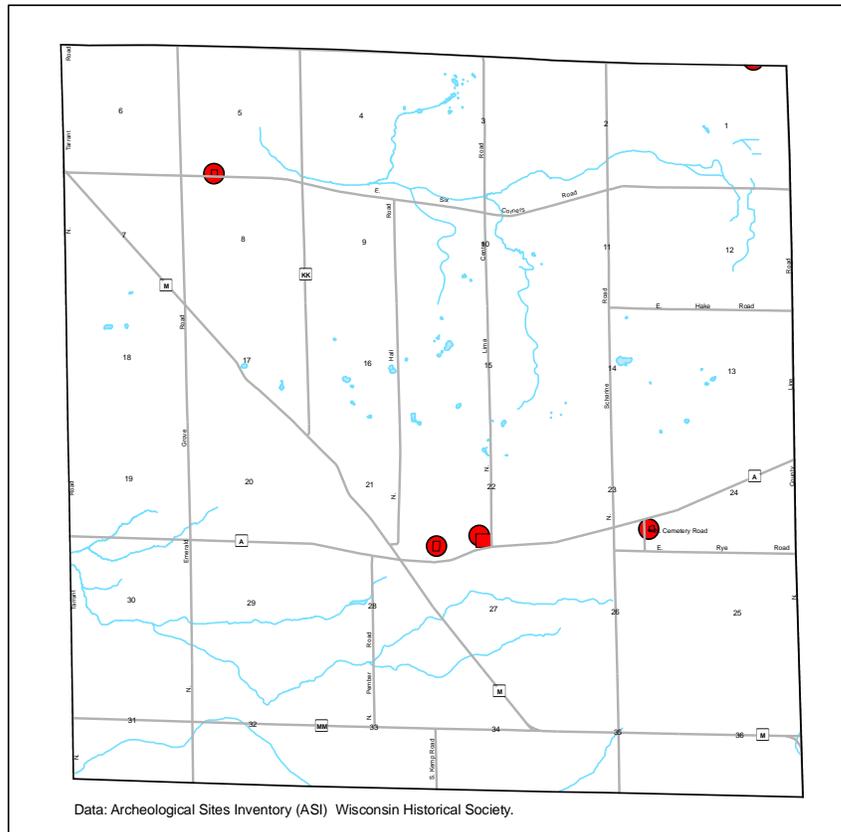
A rustic road not only serves as an aesthetic feature for a community or region, they can actually attract economic development due to increased interest from homebuyers, tourists, and recreationalists. A well maintained, properly signed, and promoted rustic road system is a feature that adds value to a City, Town, Village, or County.

Cemeteries, Burial and Archeological Sites

Recent interest in Rock County's history and cultural heritage has produced resurgence in the identification, locational mapping, and preservation of cemeteries throughout Rock County. The Alms Farm Cemetery located off County A in the Town of Johnstown is a historic site that is maintained by the Rock County Parks Division. An education and a historical connection to surnames present in local road names, historical sites, businesses, and architecture awaits anyone who has the interest to explore this site. An often-overlooked aspect of cemeteries is the cultural value of the stone artwork, design, and engraving. The historic cemeteries in the Town of Johnstown are worthy of attention and preservation (see Map 3.10).

Map 3.10

Town of Johnstown
Archeological Site Inventory (ASI) Sites and Cemeteries



3.9 Architectural, Historic and Archaeological Resources Policies

- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly alter, disturb, or destroy significant Historical Sites and Buildings within the Town of Johnstown by instituting Historic Preservation Districts at the Town level.
- Analyze and consider the effects of development on all architectural, archeological and historic resources present at the development site and in other off-site areas that might be affected by that development.
- Identify existing historical structures, sites and landscapes within the Town.
- Identify existing and potential archeological sites within the Town.
- Identify structures of architectural significance or interest.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly alter, disturb, degrade, or destroy any Cemeteries, Burial, or Archeological sites within the Town of Johnstown by referencing and enforcing the State of Wisconsin Burial Site Laws.

- Create language and/or resolutions at the Town level to utilize service groups such as church youth groups, boys and girls clubs, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, 4-H, FFA, or any other service/youth group to participate in the maintenance and/or restoration of cemeteries and burial sites within the Town.

3.10 Cultural Resources

Rock County has a wide array of cultural activities, events and performances that offer entertainment as well as an opportunity for cultural awareness to residents of the Town of Johnstown. From theatre to musicals the Rock County area is home to many facilities and groups dedicated to the performing arts and entertainment. Even though none of the following entertainment venues are in the Town of Johnstown, having them in close proximity provides a valuable dimension to the quality of life for Town residents.

Goals

- Promote existing Cultural Resources (music and theater venues, cultural and minority organizations and events, etc.) identified in this, and other plans and inventories within the Town of Johnstown, Rock County and the surrounding area.
- Provide a welcoming environment for people of all cultures and races.

Objectives

- Identify, attract, and support Cultural Resources for the citizens of the Town of Johnstown and Rock County.
- Promote and encourage the efficient use of existing and potential resources and facilities to aid in the attraction and presentation of cultural events and activities.
- Promote and educate on the potential for new cultural opportunities within the Town of Johnstown, Rock County and the surrounding area.



Janesville Performing Arts Center, City of Janesville



Laura Aldrich Neese Theatre, Beloit College

Cultural sites, organizations, activities, and events available within Rock County:

American Industrial Art Gallery	655 3 rd St. Suite 302 Beloit, Wisconsin
The Angel Museum	656 Pleasant St. Beloit, Wisconsin
Beloit Fine Arts Incubator	620 Grand Ave. Beloit, Wisconsin
Beloit Snappers Baseball	Pohlman Field, Telfer Park, Beloit Wisconsin
Janesville Art League	108 S. Jackson St. Janesville, Wisconsin
Poetry Gardens, Wright Museum of Art	700 College St. Beloit, Wisconsin
Rock Aqua Jays Water Ski Show	Traxler Park, Janesville, Wisconsin
Rotary Gardens	1455 Palmer Dr. Janesville, WI
Welty Environmental Center	8606 County Rd. H Beloit, Wisconsin
Rock County Threshereer	Thresherman's Park North Hwy 51, Edgerton WI
The Merrill Community Center	1428 Wisconsin Ave. Beloit, Wisconsin
El Centro Hispanic Community	1982 Cranston Rd. Beloit, Wisconsin
The Milton House	Hwy 26 Milton, Wisconsin
The Tallman House	426 N. Jackson St. Janesville, Wisconsin
Sterling North House & Museum	409 W. Rollin St. Edgerton, Wisconsin

Venue	Location	Contact
The Armory	Janesville, Wisconsin	
Beloit Civic Center	Beloit, Wisconsin	www.inwave.com/theater/bct
Beloit College International Performing Arts Series	Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin	www.beloit.edu
Beloit/Janesville Symphony Orchestra	Beloit/Janesville, Wisconsin	www.beloit.edu/~bjso
Edgerton Performing Arts Center	Edgerton, Wisconsin	www.edgerton.k12.wi.us/epac/homepage.htm
Janesville Presents	Janesville, Wisconsin	www.janesvillepresents.org
Janesville Little Theatre	Janesville, Wisconsin	www.inwave.com/theater/jlt/
Janesville Performing Arts Center	Janesville, Wisconsin	www.janesvillepac.org
Laura Aldrich Neese Theatre	Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin	www.beloit.edu
New Court Theatre	Beloit, Wisconsin	www.newcourtbeloit.com
Kirk Denmark Theatre	University of Wisconsin Rock County	www.rock.uwc.edu
Rock County 4H Fair	Rock County Fairgrounds	www.co.rock.wi.us
Irwin L. Young Auditorium	University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	www.uww.edu/youngauditorium

Table 3.1: Music and Theatre Venues

Source: Rock County Planning and Development Agency

The preceding listings are by no means a complete inventory of all the available sites, organizations, activities, or events that represent the cultural resources of Rock County. For more information contact the Rock County Planning, Economic, and Community Development Department at 608-757-5587 or go to www.co.rock.wi.us or contact Visit Beloit, 1003 Pleasant St. Beloit, Wisconsin 53511 or Janesville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau www.janesvillecvb.com With the populations and diversity of ethnic groups increasing in Rock County, cultural organizations, activities, and related infrastructures will certainly grow and expand. To date, as compared to just a few years ago, there has been an increasing presence of art exhibits, festivals, publications, and community activities associated with many minority ethnic groups.

In the African American community “Juneteenth” (June 19th) has been an important nationally recognized celebration. The local celebration of Juneteenth has been historically held in Beloit. For more information on this event see www.juneteenth.com/history Rock County is also home to other cultural ethnic publications, organizations, and events that contribute to the diversity of area. The Chronicle is an African-American weekly newspaper established in 1981, and based in Beloit that has a weekly publication of 6000. Gospel in the Park is a musical celebration of gospel music that is quickly becoming a mainstay event in Beloit. The Merrill Center, a Stateline Area United Way Agency, contributes to youth mentoring through programs such as “Golfing with the Boys” as well as family support services and senior programs. These all are shining examples of important cultural components of Rock County.

Two important organizations in the Hispanic community are “El Centro” Hispanic Community located in Beloit Wisconsin and the YWCA. El Centro sponsors youth activities, tutoring and mentoring, and outreach events such as youth leadership summits and keynote speakers. In addition it provides referrals for Hispanic services and opportunities. The Janesville YWCA Hispanic outreach program sponsors Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept- October) as well as various community support services and events including the Hispanic celebration of Cinco de Mayo (5th of May). The Cinco de Mayo is a celebration for the whole community that takes place annually at various locations in Janesville, Beloit, and around Rock County. All of the above mentioned events and services are designed to educate, inform and/or celebrate the Hispanic community in Rock County.

3.11 Cultural Resources Policies

- Enact housing policy that encourages cultural diversity
- Provide educational materials on available cultural resources and events
- Identify other ways to encourage cultural diversity within the Town

3.12 Chapter Conclusion

Rock County and the Town of Johnstown are fortunate to be home to an abundance of quality agricultural, natural and cultural resources. It is the responsibility of all present in the Town and County to make sure that these resources continue to be available to future generations. Agricultural and natural resources are predominant land features within the Town of Johnstown. Residents of the Town have indicated a desire to preserve and protect these land features.

The Town of Johnstown is a highly desirable place to live because of its’ rural atmosphere and its’ proximity to the urban center and jobs. Although it is projected that the Town will continue to decline in population during the planning period, it is almost equally possible that development pressure from the expanding urban area will create demand for agricultural land and open space to be developed for housing. This demand may cause a parallel increase in value of the land for development, resulting in the opportunity for farmers to sell their land at attractive prices. It is often a difficult and emotional task to balance the desire to preserve the land, historic sites and other cultural features with the need for landowners to find economic security through allowing development to occur.

This chapter has provided information on agricultural, natural and cultural resources explaining why there is a need to recognize where they exist, why they are important to preserve and some tools for doing so. Additionally, the chapter has pointed out many of the existing programs, policies and regulations regarding these resources, and the need for additional regulations if preservation is desired.