

Chapter 3– Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

As defined in Wisconsin State Statutes 66.1001, the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources element of a county comprehensive plan is designed to provide “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 non-metallic mineral resources consistent with zoning limitations under s.295.20 (2), parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources, and other natural resources”. This document adheres to these guidelines while utilizing a 30-year planning horizon.

The quantity and quality of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in a community directly affect and influence the quality of life of its residents. The Town of La Prairie is fortunate to be home to numerous areas and features that represent these resources. These special places and features warrant our promotion, protection, and conservation. It is the aim of this element to identify goals, objectives, and policies directed towards the effective management of these very important resources.

Results from La Prairie area residents from the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Survey, distributed to all Town residences, in the summer of 2006, indicates that citizens are supportive of the preservation of environmentally significant areas and cultural and historical resources and agricultural land. In fact, over 74% consider themselves “very supportive” of the preservation of environmentally significant areas. Over 64% consider themselves “very supportive” of the preservation of cultural and historic resources. And 93.5% feel that agricultural preservation is important to the future of the township and its residents.

3.1 Agricultural Resources

Goals

- Preserve, protect and responsibly manage all agricultural resources identified in this and other plans that pertain to the Town of La Prairie.
- Maintain agriculture as an important economic activity and open space resource in the Town of La Prairie.
- Other goals as listed in the Town Development Plan.

Objectives

- Develop Town of La Prairie 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.
- Continue to maintain, foster, and enhance the local specialty agriculture industry in the Town of La Prairie.
- Research and determine the usefulness and potential implementation of Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights programs in the Town.
- Other objectives as listed in the Town of La Prairie Development Plan.

3.2 Purpose of Planning for Agricultural Resources

The Town of La Prairie 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.

The preservation of agricultural land has many benefits, ranging from quality of life and aesthetic benefits to clean air and economic benefits. Orderly growth and development is imperative to reduce costs and to preserve the quality of life for The Town of La Prairie's residents. When scattered development occurs the impacts are negative for farmland owners, new rural residents, taxpayers and wildlife alike.

Urban sprawl is poorly planned development. It is rarely connected to existing public infrastructure, and it often takes agricultural land out of production. Sprawl development is often far removed from schools, parks and recreation, workplaces and shopping destinations. This creates more reliance on automobiles, thus increasing congestion, pollution and oil consumption. And 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. Farmland, on the other hand, provides considerable revenue to local government while requiring minimal public services in return.

In addition to the fiscal costs of allowing development in productive agricultural areas, it is otherwise important to maintain critical masses of prime agricultural land in the Town, to make farming a profitable career, and to supplement the nation's food supply while contributing to the Town's economic base. Once non-agricultural uses are located near farmland, the farmland may be assessed at a greater value, causing the farmers' taxes to increase. Also, when farmers foresee possible speculation of nearby land for development, they tend to invest less in their farming operation; an effect known as "impermanence syndrome".

The best practice is to preserve farmland when possible. Infill development of non-agricultural uses should be promoted, and growth should occur outwardly from urbanized areas where the location of public infrastructure is cost efficient. However, there is no reason for growth to occur at a rate greater than the rate of the population increase.

In Wisconsin, planning for agricultural resources tends to be done at the County level, in compliance with the Farmland Preservation Act of 1977, which grants tax credits to farmland owners living in counties with adopted agricultural preservation plans. Rock County's Agricultural Preservation Plan 2005 Update was certified by the State and adopted by the County Board in December of 2005. The Town of La Prairie became eligible for the Farmland Preservation Program in 1979, with the adoption of the first farmland preservation plan in the County.

3.3 Soils Suitability for Agriculture

The properties of each soil type determine which land activities the soil is suitable for. Some soils are not suitable for construction, or on-site sewage disposal due to slope, high water table, frost heave, depth to bedrock and so forth. Likewise, some soils are not suitable for agriculture due to steepness and wetness. However, the Town of La Prairie is abundant in soils that are prime for agricultural use. Unfortunately,

soil that is suited for field crops oftentimes rank highly suitable for septic tank absorption fields, leaving much prime agricultural land as the only places able to handle below-grade private septic systems.

Soils are classified into eight capability classes, and when rating suitability for agriculture, classes I, II and III are most ideal. Class I has few limitations that restrict their use. Class II has moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or requires moderate conservation practices. Class III has severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or requires very careful management practices. As shown in map 3-1, agricultural capability classes I and II dominate the Town's landscape. The Town of La Prairie is fortunate to have this resource, and given area development pressures, this resource may continue to be threatened. The American Farmland Trust has identified southern Wisconsin as one of the three most threatened farmland resources in the nation. Development should be planned and permitted in an orderly manner, so large quantities of prime agricultural land do not fall victim to degradation at a reckless rate.

3.4 Agricultural Operations in the Town of La Prairie

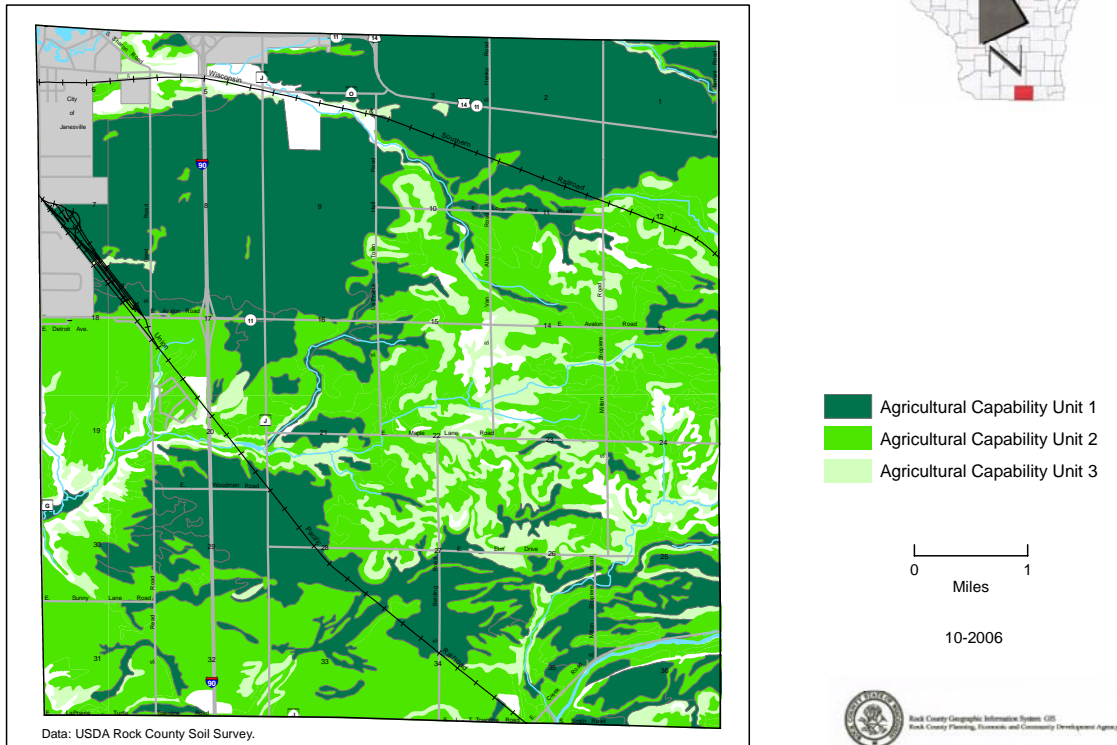
The majority of the farms in La Prairie are family operated farms. There are also a number of farms within the Township that produce such specialty crops as mint, beets, soybeans, peas and sweet corn. Seed corn production giants such as Pioneer, Syngenta and Northrup King all operate test plots in the Town. Seneca Foods Corporation utilizes several parcels of land adjacent to the City of Janesville to distribute its wastewater.

Loss of Agricultural Land

Agricultural pursuits are a thriving and dominant land use in the Town. Many farmers work other jobs, which they consider their primary occupation.

Map 3-1

**Town of La Prairie
Soil Capability Unit Classifications**



Although Town specific data is not available, we do know that countywide nearly 1,000 farms had been lost between 1964 and 2002. Also, in the 20 years between 1982 and 2002, over 18,000 acres of farmland had been lost. The loss of agricultural land is a mounting issue in the county, though the Town of La Prairie has proven successful in staving off development pressures and the subsequent loss of farmland.

Farmland in the Town of La Prairie is consistently lost due to annexations into the City of Janesville, and due to rezoning out of the A1 district. Between 1999 and 2006, a total of 47.57 acres in the town were annexed into the City of Janesville. It is difficult to determine how much of this land was zoned A1 prior to annexations, but it can safely be assumed that all the acreage annexed was done so in preparation for development.

A total of 62.14 acres has been rezoned out of the A1 district, between 1986 and 2004. Comparatively, this is a small amount of land, particularly considering the Town's proximity to the City of Janesville and the I-90 corridor. Table 3-1 shows what type of district these lands were rezoned to, whether a different agricultural district or industrial. Also, the number of approved rezoning applications is shown in parenthesis.

TABLE 3-1:
Acreage and Number of Zoning Changes Out of the Exclusive Agricultural Zoning District; Town of La Prairie, 1986-2004

Agricultural	Industrial	TOTAL
52.83 (7)	9.31 (3)	62.14 (10)

(Source: Rock County Planning and Development)

As shown, most of the land rezoned out of the A1 district recently was changed to another agricultural district; A2, A3, or A4. These first two districts permit the construction of a single-family residence, and have minimum lot sizes of 10 acres and 1 acre, respectively. It is apparent that the zoning changes to A3 were granted to allow residential development for non-farming households. However, La Prairie is unique in that the Town requires that only households engaged in agriculture can build new residences in the A2 district. The A4 district is a hybrid of the A1 district that allows residential development if a deed restriction is completed for the first residential structure and 100 acres for the second. There have been no rezonings to residential or commercial districts, which is rare in the County.

3.5 Managing Agricultural Resources

There are a number of strategies and tools governments employ to regulate land uses in agricultural areas, thus preserving agricultural land. Some are traditional, and some are more innovative. But they all have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Exclusive Agricultural Zoning

The most common method is through zoning. In Wisconsin, Exclusive Agricultural Zoning is used extensively to prohibit non-farm uses in agricultural areas, as well as to require large lot sizes in rural areas and limit density. In the Town of La Prairie, the A-1 district has a minimum lot size of 50 acres, and only structures and improvements consistent with agricultural uses are permitted. This includes two single-family residences per parcel, if it is for the owner of the parcel or for a person or family who makes their living primarily by conducting farm operations on the parcel. Additional residences may be permitted via a conditional use permit, for the above-mentioned people.

Density Limits

While the 50-acre minimum lot size does help to limit residential density in rural areas, it can also make the affordability of rural land within the means of only upper-income households, which may be viewed in either positive or negative terms. Also, 50 acres is still too small to be a viable farm unit, to some, and each housing site may consume large sums of productive agricultural land. It is possible to enforce density requirements, without requiring large lots, by establishing a maximum number of housing units allowed on a set number of acres of land. For instance, some zoning ordinances in the Midwest dictate that there can only be 1 house per 40 acres, or per 20 acres, without having a large minimum lot size requirement. Density can also be controlled, while allowing undeveloped areas, through Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).

Purchase of Development Rights

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs offer money to land owners who agree to keep their land preserved for perpetuity. These 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. 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. Land in PDR agreements may still be sold and split and farmed, of course, but they cannot be developed upon aside from agricultural buildings.

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.

Differentiated Agricultural Districts

As communities have become more aware of just how diverse separate agricultural uses can be, some have begun establishing separate zoning districts, for differentiated agricultural uses. For instance, there may be separate districts to permit livestock facilities, large commercial farms, farm tourism, and so forth. This tool can work, because a different set of performance standards and requirements may make sense for each separate farm use. Also, one farm use may not work well positioned near another.

In some cases, the use of overlay zoning districts may be another way to regulate and permit varying agricultural uses.

Land Division Controls

The Rock County Land Division Regulations controls how parcels are created, when they are less than 15 acres in size. Generally, land is rezoned or granted a conditional use permit before the land division is applied for. But conditions can be placed on land divisions to further protect agricultural land, by dictating that a new home be placed in a way to minimize the amount of cropland taken out of production, for instance.

Also, land divisions could be worded in a way to promote conservation subdivisions or rural clustering of homes. These types of subdivisions differ from conventional layouts in the way they group homes near one another and set aside the remainder of the land as common open space. Planned Unit Developments are another way to allow development that provides shared open space, when a mix of uses is involved. Some view conservation subdivisions to be a good thing, while others disagree. While they leave large tracts of land undeveloped, many people who wish to live in a rural area do not want to be near other homes, on a small lot, and conservation subdivisions tend to be more expensive.

The granting of driveway access is another tool that can minimize degradation of farmland. For instance, a governmental unit granting a driveway permit may not allow a long winding driveway that cuts through an excessive amount of farmland, if the protection of farmland is one of their goals.

3.6 Agricultural Resource Policies

- Protect and promote the specialty agricultural industries located within the Town.
- Create development policy that will establish clear, concise rules about how, when and where development (especially residential) will occur.
- Promote conservation and preservation of farmland through consistent, well thought-out development practices.
- 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.

3.7 Natural Resources

Purpose of Planning for Natural Resources

Natural resources offer many benefits, ranging from health, to recreation, to revenue. In addition to maintaining native habitat for an array of flora and fauna, humans rely on natural resources to help sustain safe and clean water and air. Parks, trails and scenic areas are considered natural resources, which should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. And natural resources can be a component of a vibrant economy, by increasing property values and increasing tourism, in a community.

While some state and federal regulations dictate use and protection standards for floodplains, shorelands and wetlands, local communities are encouraged to further regulate the use of natural resource areas that are unique and important to them. 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 La Prairie and all Rock County residents.

Goals

- Preserve and protect the Town of La Prairie's natural resources.

Objectives

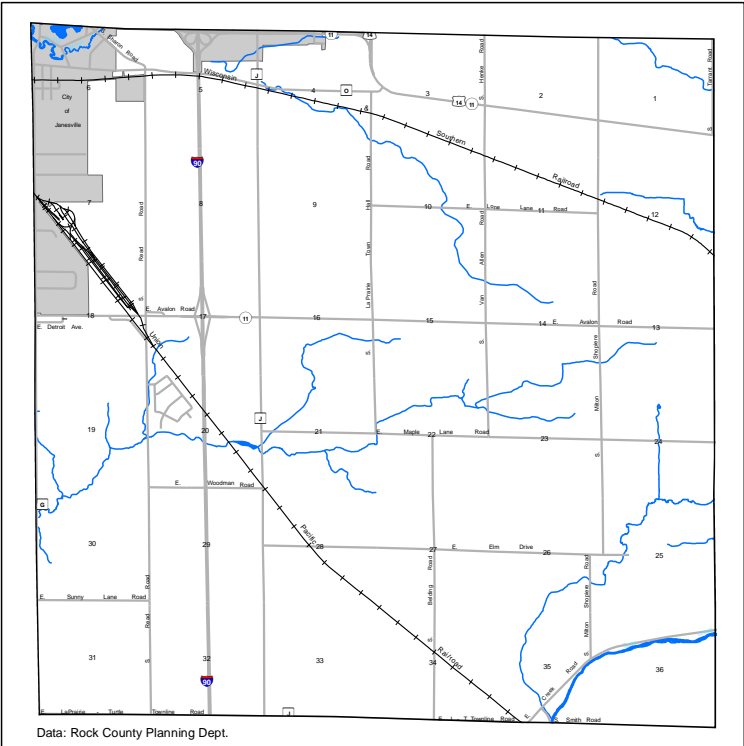
- Perform responsible analysis and encourage appropriate management and preservation of surface waters, shoreland areas, floodplains, groundwater, wetlands, hydric soils, kettles and depressions, hilltops and view sheds, steep slopes, threatened and endangered species, natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, woodlands, and valued trees within the Town of La Prairie.



3.8 Water Resources

Surface Water

Rivers, creeks, streams, brooks, lakes and ponds are all categorized as surface water. Most of the waterways in La Prairie are unnamed and intermittent, with the exception of Turtle Creek, which runs through the southeastern portion of the Town. All waterways in the Town are tributaries to the Rock River. The Town's surface water is shown in Map 3-2.

Map 3-2
Town of La Prairie
Surface Water



 Lakes and Ponds
 Rivers, Streams, and Creeks

0 1
Miles

10-2006



Turtle Creek is designated as Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) by the State of Wisconsin. This means that the water quality is excellent, and they offer high recreational and aesthetic value, however they may be impacted by point source pollution or have the potential for future discharge from a small sewer community.

Areas adjacent to these bodies of surface water are currently protected. To fulfill the requirements of Wisconsin Statutes 59.971 and 87.30, Rock County regulates land uses in the Shoreland Overlay District area, through their Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. The Shoreland Overlay encompasses all land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable lakes, ponds and flowages, and all land within 300 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable rivers and streams. The intent of Shoreland Zoning is to prevent and control water pollution, protect spawning grounds, fish and aquatic life and control the placement of structures and land uses to preserve shore cover and natural beauty, to maintain safe and healthful conditions.

Groundwater

The Town of La Prairie obtains all of its domestic drinking water from groundwater resources. There are 2 non-transient public wells (DNR categorizes wells as transient and non-transient) in the Town. These would be associated with a commercial or industrial building serving employees (Ryan Incorporated). In addition there are 25-30 high capacity wells that primarily serve agricultural uses.

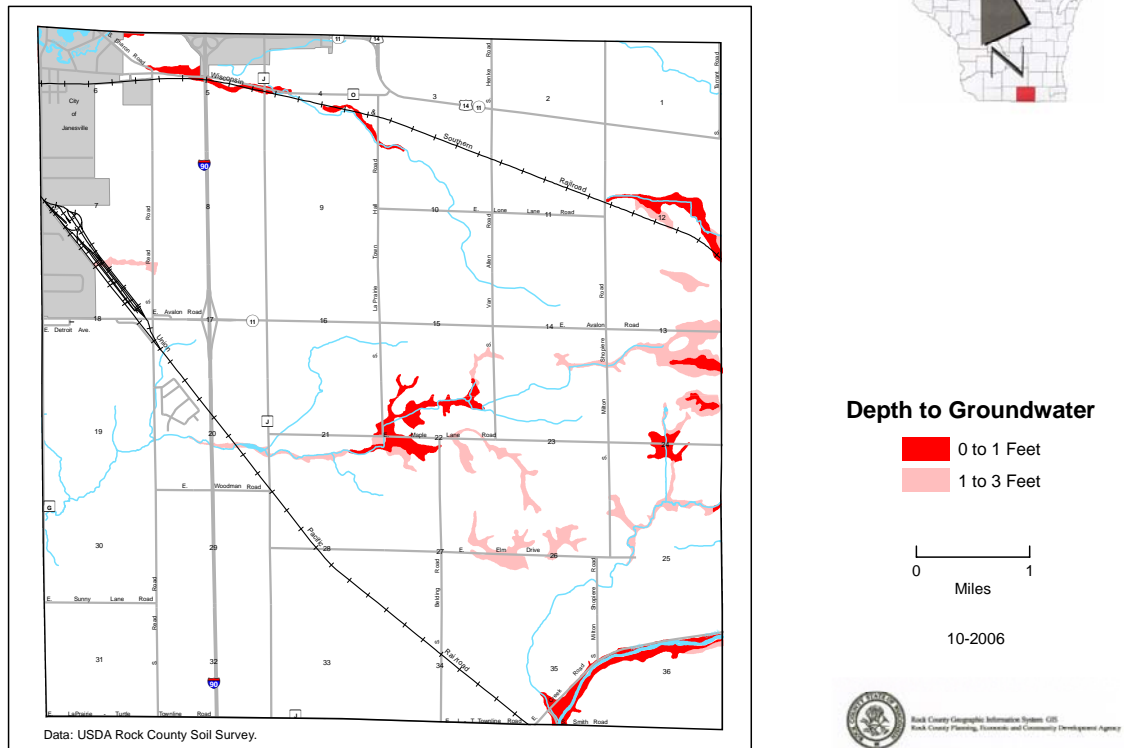
Although there are no municipal wells within the Town, there are two City of Janesville municipal wells where the "zone of contribution" extends into the northwestern portion of the Town. Rock County in its entirety is the third largest user of groundwater in the State, using 20 million gallons a day.

Local rainfall in La Prairie is enough to almost entirely recharge the Town's aquifers, and it appears there is no imminent threat that the supply of groundwater will be exhausted, though because there are currently no monitoring wells anywhere in the County, the possible extent of water depletion is unknown. But it is known that both Dane County and Walworth County have experienced considerable drawdown of the water table in some areas. The quantity of groundwater could become a concern in the future if development is not curbed, because development brings a greater demand for water, and increases the amount of impervious area.

The quality of the groundwater is also a growing concern. Map 3-3 shows the depth to groundwater in the Town. Some of the aquifers are located rather near the ground surface, and are susceptible to pollutants, such as agricultural run-off, chemical storage and septic system discharge. The concern is greater in rural areas, where there is more spreading of animal waste, more use of fertilizers and more private septic systems.

Map 3-3

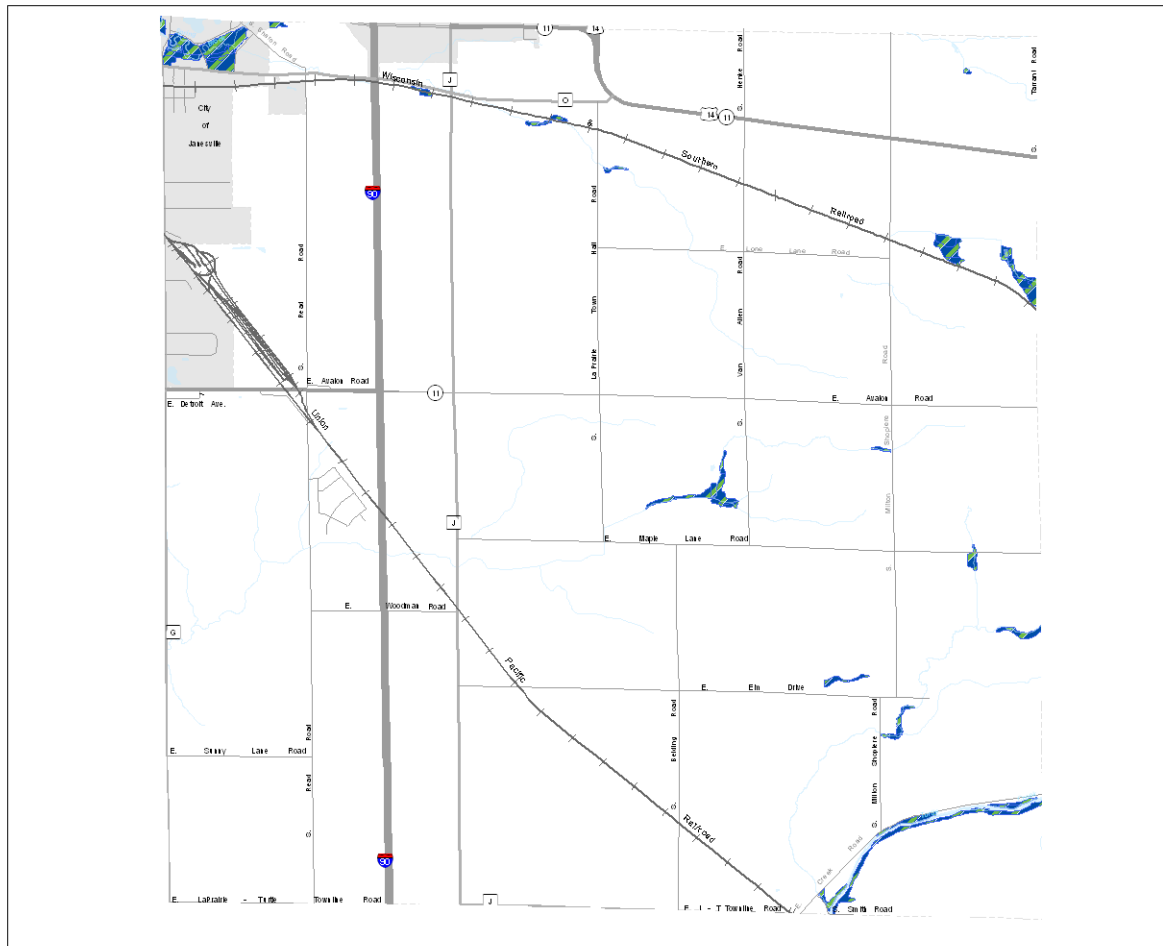
Town of La Prairie Depth to Groundwater



Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where water is at or above the land surface long enough to support aquatic or hydrophilic vegetation. There was a time when wetlands were viewed as wasteland, to be drained for agriculture. Today the benefits of wetlands are better understood. They filter pollutants and protect the quality of water in rivers, lakes and streams. They also form habitats for unique flora and fauna, as well as provide recreational opportunities. Wetland areas are minimal in La Prairie (Map 3-4), but protection of these areas is still important.

Map 3-4



06/2009

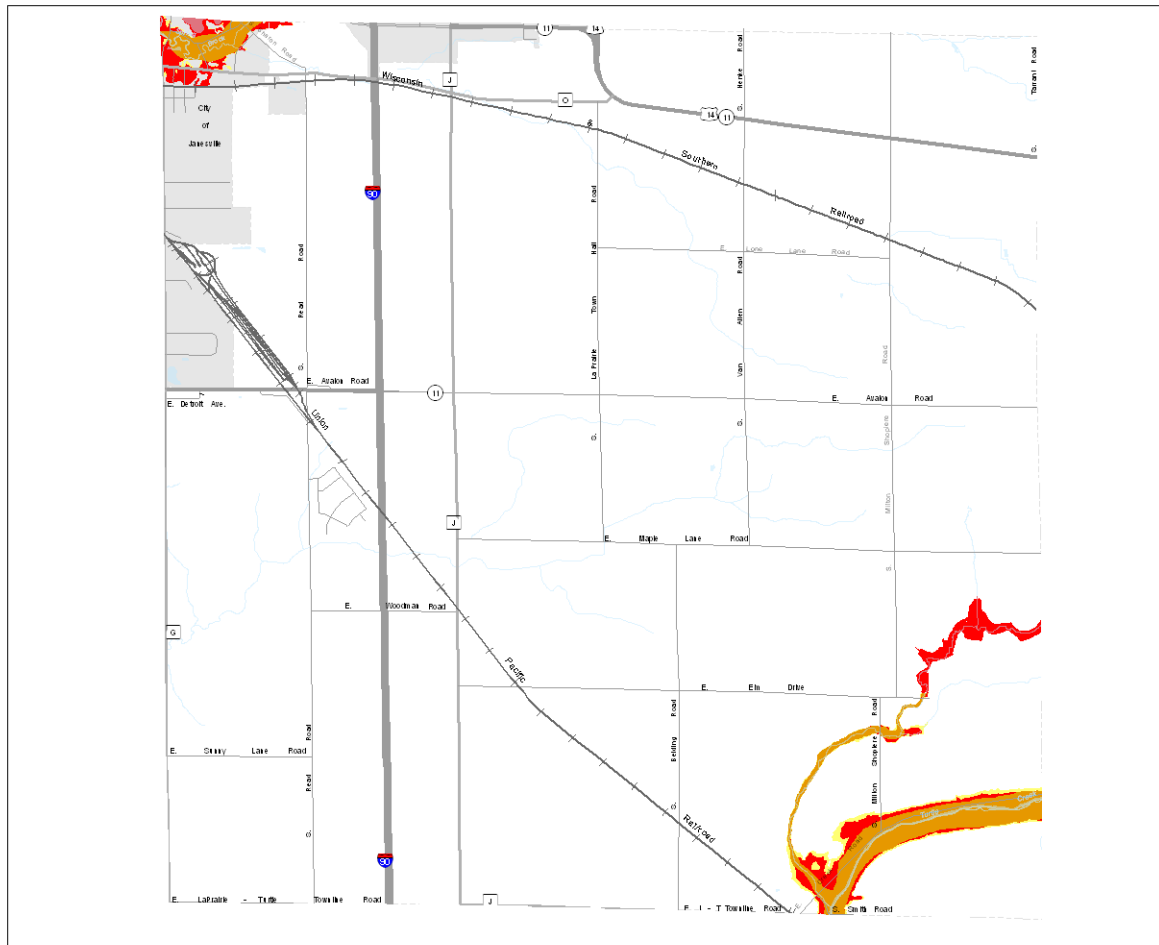
Data Sources: Rock County Planning and Development Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Section 61.351 and 62.231 of the Wisconsin Statutes and Chapter NR 117 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code dictate that at the very least, local zoning ordinances must protect wetlands that are 5 acres or larger in size, shown on the WDNR's final wetland inventory maps, and located within shorelands. Rock County's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance regulates what is termed the "Lowland/Wetland Overlay District One (C-1).

Floodplains

Lands that have been, or may be, covered by floodwater during a regional flood (commonly called a 100-year flood) are floodplains. They are areas expected to have a 1% chance of flooding in any given year, and are based on historical data. Floodplains in the Town of La Prairie are depicted on Map 3-5. Because of the proximity of floodplains to water, these areas attract homeowners and developers, though it is self-evident why development in floodplains should be avoided.

Map 3-5



06/2009

FEMA Floodplains

- Floodway
- Floodfringe
- General Floodplain

Town Boundaries

- Town Boundaries
- Cities and Villages
- Streams and Rivers
- Rivers and Lakes
- Railroads

Roads

- Local Roads
- Interstate
- Highway
- County

Data Sources: Rock County Planning and Development Agency, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

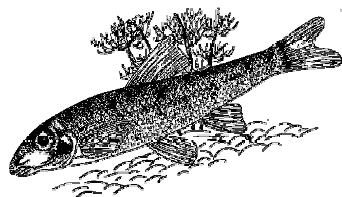
Floodplains offer natural value, by improving water quality, and providing fish and wildlife habitat. The damage floodwaters can inflict upon homes, businesses, wells, sewage treatment plants, roads and other infrastructure can be dangerous and costly. Also, as further development occurs in the floodplain, it may cause the next flood to potentially crest even higher than previous floods. Land use controls are considered the best way to manage flood risks and costs. Rock County administers a Floodplain Zoning Ordinance, which regulates development in floodplains. Recommendations for how to mitigate damage from flooding can be found in the Rock County Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning Manual and Plan.

3.9 Wildlife Resources

Threatened and Endangered Species

The State's Bureau of Endangered Resources maintains information regarding threatened and endangered species in the State. They also maintain the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), which lists data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities and natural features throughout the State. According to the NHI, there are two imperiled natural communities in La Prairie; Mesic Prairie and Dry-Mesic Prairie, the Mesic Prairie being the most critically imperiled. Mesic Prairie is a grassland community, dominated by Big Bluestem grass.

Two different imperiled fish are found in the Town of La Prairie; the Gravel Chub and the Ozark Minnow.



Gravel Chub

(Source: Wisconsin DNR)



Ozark Minnow

There are a number of different imperiled plants found in the Town of La Prairie. They are the Dragon Wormwood, Purple Milkweed, Great Indian-Plantain, Pale-Purple Coneflower, Small Skullcap, Snowy Campion and Yellow Water Lily.

Development must be controlled vigilantly in an effort to preserve these threatened and endangered species, in order to sustain the biodiversity of the area. Even if a development does not obviously maim or remove a rare species, it could affect its food supply, reproduction cycle or habitat in other ways. And though little is mandated to protect plants and animals on private property, stewardship of private property is encouraged just as with public lands. Attention should be given to conserve, manage and restore natural areas as necessary to care for these rare natural elements, in addition to all plants, animals and habitats.

There are both state and federal regulations to protect rare species. 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. It is illegal to 1) take, transport, possess, process or sell any wild animal that is included on the Wisconsin Endangered

and Threatened Species List; 2) process or sell any wild plant that is a listed species; 3) cut, root up, sever, injure, destroy, remove, transport or carry away a listed plant on public lands or lands a person does not own, lease, or have the permission of the landowner. There are exceptions to the plant protection on public lands for forestry, agriculture and utility activities. In some cases, a person can conduct the above activities if permitted under a department permit (i.e. "Scientific Take" Permit or an "Incidental Take" Permit).

The Federal Endangered Species Act also protects animals and plants that are considered endangered or threatened at a national level. The law prohibits the direct killing, taking, or other activities that may be detrimental to the species, including habitat modification or degradation, for all federally listed animals and designated critical habitat. Federally listed plants are also protected but only on federal lands. Implementation of the Endangered Species laws is usually accomplished during the state permit review process, but is ultimately the responsibility of a project proponent and property owner to ensure that they are not in violation of the laws.

Local communities are encouraged to go above and beyond state and federal regulations, and adopt their own ecosystem management principles and protection activities, to protect the natural resources that are unique and important to them.

Unique Habitats

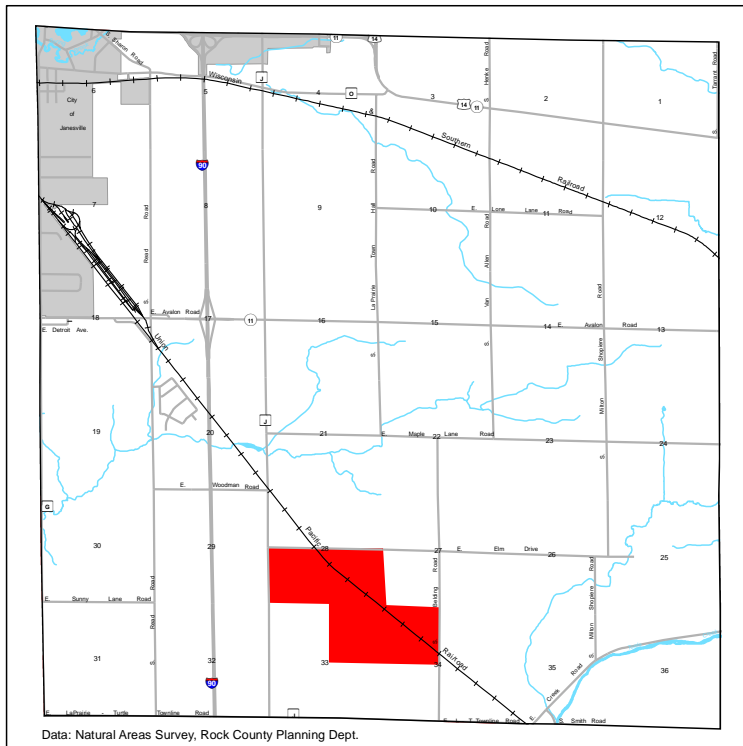
The Mesic Prairie and Dry-Mesic Prairie found in La Prairie are certainly unique habitats, which are rarely found in the state. In fact, there are fewer than 6 Mesic Prairies in the entire state. Grasslands in general, are considered unique habitats, which the state encourages protection of. Bird species dependent on grassland habitats have experienced greater declines than other bird species. The preservation of grasslands can be funded through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which is administered by the WDNR. Also, local ordinances can be constructed in a way to pay special attention to the preservation of grasslands.

Prairie remnants are just one of the examples of pre-settlement vegetation found to still be in existence in the Town of La Prairie. In 2001 ecologist Robert Baller conducted a field study for entire Rock County by visiting, inventorying and evaluating sites identified as natural areas. Habitats he visited primarily included prairie, savanna, woodland, wetland and cliff communities.

The 2001 study was an update of previous studies done by the Department of Natural Resources in 1969 and 1986. A total of 169 sites were visited countywide; 114 on private land and 55 on public land. Of these, 138 sites were determined to be ecologically significant, one of which is located in the Town of La Prairie (Map 3-6), about 1.5 miles southeast of Prairie Estates subdivision. The site contains prairie fragments that ranged from mesic to dry-mesic and were from 10 to 50 yards in length. To assess the sites, Mr. Baller considered the quality, condition, size and context of each site, in relation to pre-settlement flora, and ranked them on a scale of 1 to 10. Only areas with an overall ranking of 5 or above were denoted as being "significant".

Map 3-6

**Town of La Prairie
Natural Areas Ranked 5 and Above**



Natural Areas Ranked 5 and Above

0 1
Miles

10-2006



3.10 Forest / Woodland Resources

The Town of La Prairie is not considered a heavily forested or wooded area, and there are no County Forest Lands in the Town, or in all of Rock County. However, local programs and ordinances are encouraged to preserve the grand, old trees and woodlands in the Town, and regulate and require future tree plantings. Woodlands provide ecological, economic and social benefits, and the fragmentation of

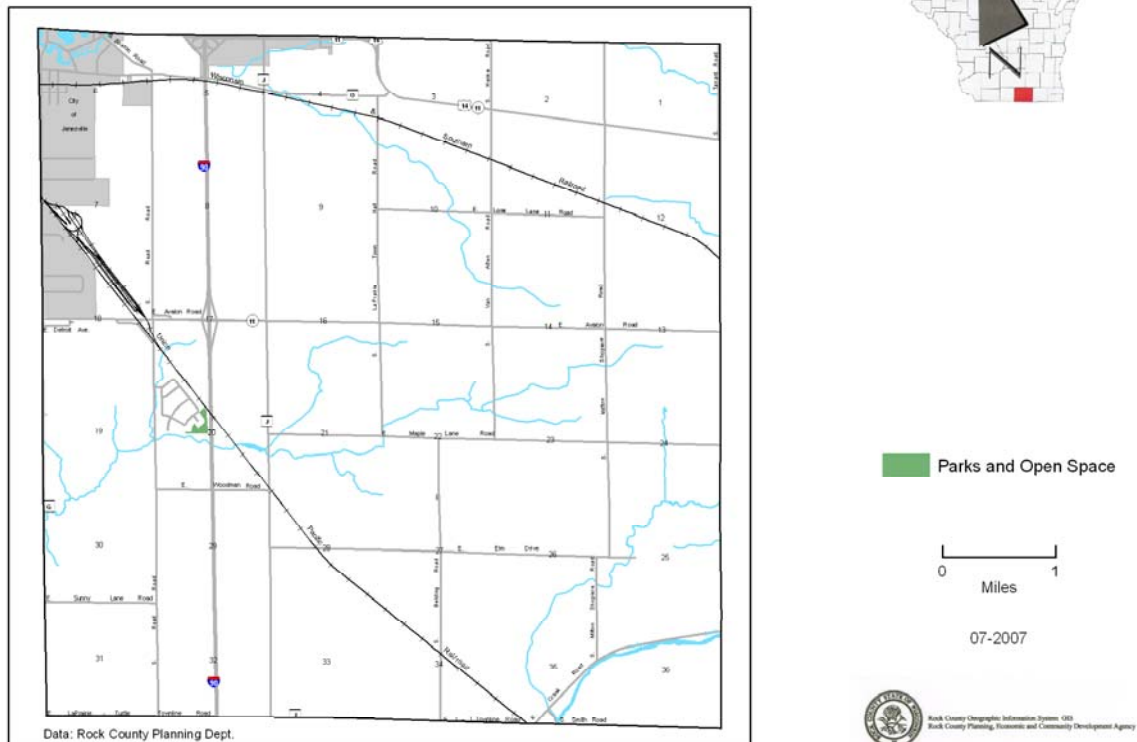
woodland resources due to development can negatively impact plant and animal habitats, air and soil quality, and the overall aesthetics of rural areas.

3.11 Parks, Open Space and Recreational Resources

With increasing pressure for development; primarily residential development, outdoor recreation and open space areas have become very important ingredients to citizens' quality of life. Parks and outdoor recreation areas in La Prairie should be accessible and adequate. There are no county parks within the Township. However, there are two Town Parks located at the Belding School site and within La Prairie Estates subdivision. The Town is also interested in pursuing the Tiffany Pit located in the southwest quarter of section 35 currently owned by Rock County.

The Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space (POROS) Plan lays out objectives, needs and priorities for park and outdoor recreation facilities countywide. There are no Rock County parks in La Prairie, but the plan does address snowmobile trails and various bike/pedestrian routes. Being immediately adjacent to the City of Janesville, the Town could be accessible to the fine City bike trail system. (See Map Below)

**Town of La Prairie
Parks and Open Space**



3.12 Mineral Resources

There are 11 non-metallic mining sites in the Town of La Prairie (Map 3-7) of which three are active. Much of the sand and gravel in the area was brought here by a series of glaciers. Over time, as the glaciers moved south from what is now Upper Michigan and Canada, rock and other material accumulated within the glaciers. As the glaciers melted, most recently around 10,000 years ago, a mixture of sand, gravel and boulders was deposited in south central and eastern Wisconsin. There are also limestone and dolomite formations throughout the area, which predate the sand and gravel.

State Administrative Code NR 135 establishes framework to regulate nonmetallic mining reclamation, to a best "post mining" land use, and Rock County enforces compliance with these regulations.

Several years ago, the Town Board of the Town of La Prairie amended the Special Purpose (SP) zoning district text as non-metallic mining; this district is the only zoning district where such activities are allowed. The amendment retained the listing of mining, processing, production and storage of mined materials on a conditional use basis only for sites that had previously received Conditional Use approval for such activities within the SP District. What this means is no new mining and related operations may be established in the Town.

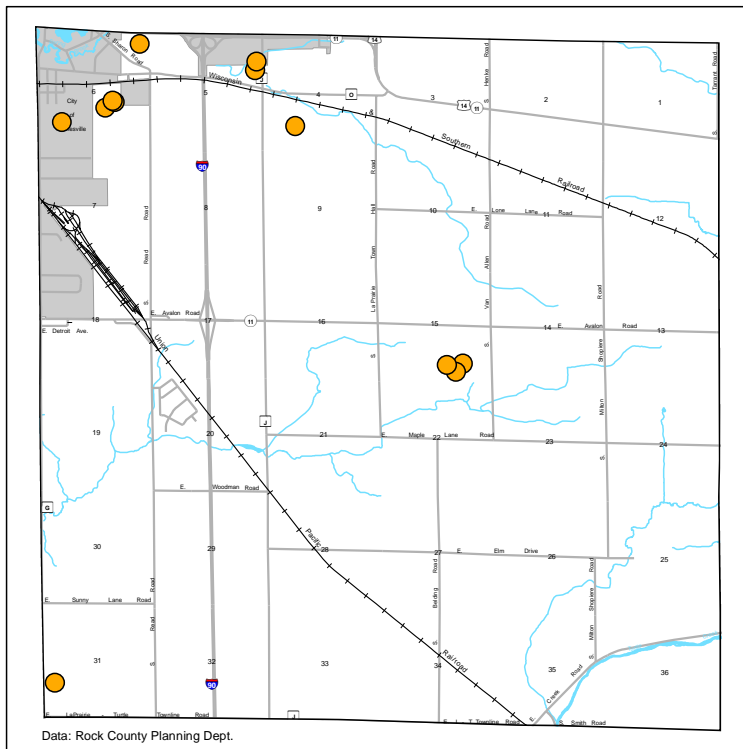
While the Town has subsurface deposits of material that would have utility and value if mined, the Town's commitment to agricultural uses of the soil surfaces in areas currently zoned in Agricultural Districts means that the only post-mining uses that the Town would approve would likely be post-mining agricultural production. The Town officials have deliberated the feasibility of this sequence of uses and have concluded that agricultural re-use is unlikely to be successful and certainly unlikely to be as productive as an agricultural business enterprise as continuation of agricultural production without interruption by mining.

The Town has also made an inventory of nonmetallic mining operations in surrounding towns and counties and has concluded that there appear to be ample mining and production of nonmetallic mineral materials to satisfy the market that would be served by mining operations in the Town of La Prairie. The record of this inventory will be on file at the Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency in the file pertaining to the La Prairie Comprehensive Plan of 2009.

For these reasons, the Comprehensive Plan of the Town of La Prairie will take the position that existing mining operations may continue to the extent of their previously granted zoning approvals and new mining operations may be allowed by these terms of the Plan only on a small scale, limited duration basis to meet the needs of road construction projects within the Town, and then only on a conditional use basis under the SP zoning district. This is further clarified on page 15 of the Town of La Prairie Zoning Ordinance.

Map 3-8

**Town of La Prairie
Non-Metallic Mining**



● Non-Metallic Mining Sites

0 1
Miles

10-2006



3.13 Community Design

Community Design can mean different things to different people. In denser, urban environments it can refer to the visual aesthetics of a community, or the community character, which comes through by the

use of Form Based Codes or similar regulations. However, at the rural town level it can refer to the layout of developments, and their consideration for the natural features present.

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 each building site.

3.14 Managing Natural Resources

Education

Educating citizens to involve them in becoming stewards of the natural environment is crucial, as private actions can be both the most beneficial and the most detrimental to the natural features surrounding us. Also, elected and appointed officials should consider natural resource goals with each land use decision that comes before them.

Environmental Assessments

Though it can be time consuming, it is recommended that environmental assessments be conducted to thoroughly study the potential impacts a certain development or land use activity may have on the natural environment. Wisconsin does not have requirements dictating when environmental assessments are mandatory, like some states do (for a development of a particular size, for instance), although they must be done for many WISDOT projects. However, some local communities have included regulations in their zoning or land divisions ordinances to set guidelines for when environmental assessments should be done.

Regulatory and Acquisition Tools

Some of the regulatory tools suggested for managing agricultural resources could also be applied to manage natural resources, such as Density Limits, and Cluster Developments.

Acquisition tools, such as TDRs and PDRs can be applied to protect natural resources. And in some cases acquisition tools utilizing non-profit conservation organizations may make sense, or even the use of eminent domain to acquire the most critical natural lands.

Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas (ESOSA)

Currently, natural components such as stream corridors, floodplains, wetlands, steep slope, shallow bedrock and wet soils are being recommended as Conservation Easements whenever a land division is reviewed by Rock County, in areas containing these physical features. These areas do not lend themselves well for development, and they encompass natural resources that should be protected from destruction, in order to maintain protect native plants and animals and to maintain green corridors for future generations to enjoy.

Authority to preserve ESOSAs was adopted by the Board of Supervisors via the POROS Plan in October of 2003. The ESOSA's are primarily made up of shoreland setback area along navigable streams, floodplains, wetlands, potential groundwater protection areas, hydric soils, kettles and depressional areas, steep slopes in excess of 12%, natural areas, and county, state or federally owned park land.

Fiscal Tools

There is a variety of state and federal grants and loan programs to help communities with their recreation, clean water, plant and wildlife needs. For instance, non-profit conservation organizations such as land trust are private organizations established to protect land and water resources for the public benefit. Impact fees are another fiscal tool, often used to fund outdoor recreation needs for a community.

3.15 Natural Resource Policies

- Continue to establish clear policies and rules that will aid 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.
- 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.
- Study the viability for a bike/walking trail to connect up with adjoining local community trails currently in existence.
- Identify and develop policy that protects woodlands, and valued trees in the Town of La Prairie.
- Preserve hilltops and vistas by not allowing residential development that detracts from their visual quality within the Town.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly alter, disturb, or degrade Environmentally Significant Open Space Areas (ESOSA's) within the Town of La Prairie by referencing and supporting the Rock County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- Pursue negotiations with Rock County for the possible purchase of Tiffany Pit for future Town park and open space.
- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly pollute or threaten the quality of wetlands in the town.

3.16 Cultural Resources

Purpose of Planning for Cultural Resources

Historic buildings and structures, ancient and historic archeological sites, and current cultural groups and activities are all considered cultural resources. These cultural resources should be planned for in order to set the framework to protect, rehabilitate, restore and/or reconstruct these community jewels. Cultural resources provide a window to the past, and preservation efforts can cultivate community pride. In addition, cultural resources can benefit tourism, real estate values, and an overall improved quality of life.

Participants at the Town Visioning Session stated that the La Prairie Grange Hall, Belding School, Smith Road Bridge and the 5-Arch Bridge are some of the local cultural resources in need of recognition and preservation.

Goals:

- Preserve and maintain architectural, historical, archeological or aesthetically interesting sites within the Town of La Prairie.
- 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 La Prairie, Rock County and the surrounding area.
- Provide a welcoming environment for people of all cultures and races.

Objectives:

- Support, encourage and educate about efforts to identify, designate, document, maintain and preserve architectural and historical sites and buildings within the Town of La Prairie.
- Provide methods and opportunities that will contribute to the knowledge and appreciation of architectural, historical, and archeological sites within the Town of La Prairie.

- Encourage, support and assist in the identification of potential Rustic Roads within the Town of La Prairie.
- Identify, attract, and support Cultural Resources for the citizens of the Town of La Prairie 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, Rock County and the surrounding area.

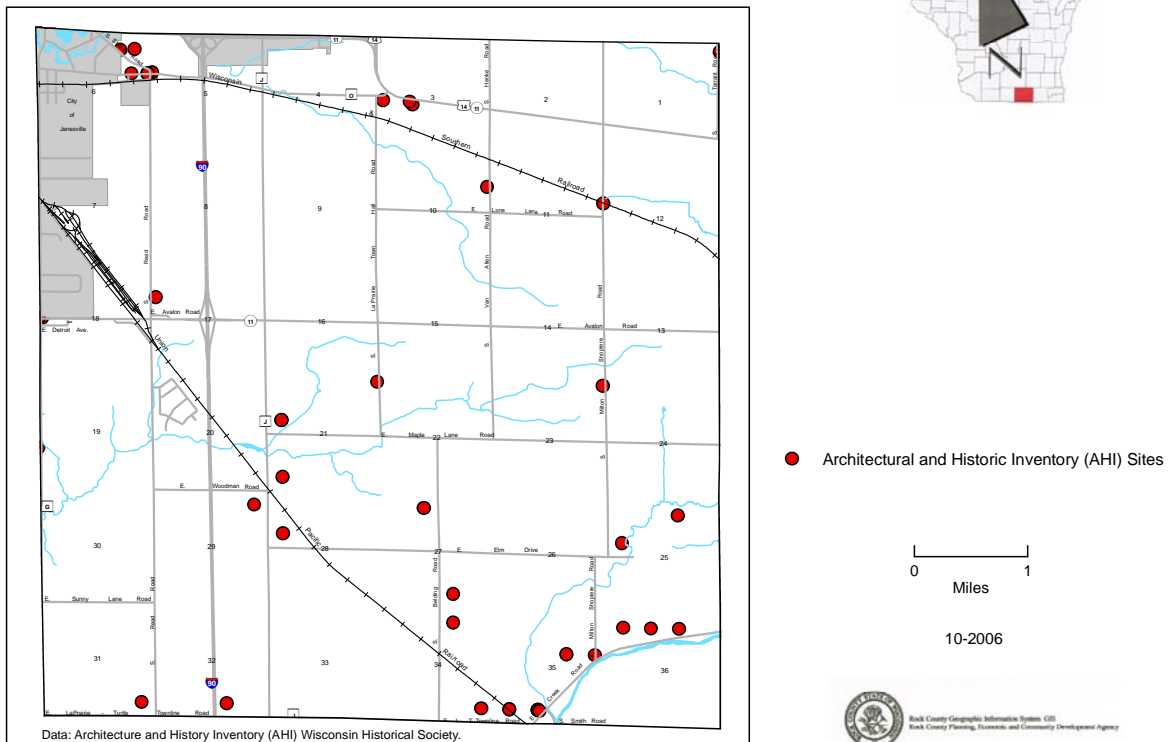
3.17 Historic Sites and Buildings

The most complete inventory of historic sites and buildings countywide is from a 1976 study, which may be viewed at the Rock County Planning, Economic and Community Development Agency office in the Courthouse, or at the Janesville Hedberg Public Library.

The Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) is a collection of information on historic buildings, structures, sites, objects and historic districts throughout the State. A number of these sites are in the Town of La Prairie (Map 3-8). This inventory is housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, and the Society's Division of Historic Preservation maintains it.

Map 3-9

Town of La Prairie Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) Sites



Cemeteries, ancient burial sites and historical markers are also considered cultural resources. However, none have been identified, by the County or by the State, to be located in the Town of La Prairie.

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 Av. Beloit, Wisconsin
Beloit Snappers Baseball	Pohlman Field, Telfer Park, Beloit Wisconsin
Janesville Art League	108 S. Jackson St., Janesville, Wisconsin
Poetry Gardens, Wright Mus. of Art	700 College St., Beloit, Wisconsin
Rock Aqua Jays Water Ski Show	Traxler Park, Janesville, Wisconsin
Rotary Gardens	1455 Palmer Dr. Janesville, Wisconsin
Welty Environmental Center	8606 County Road H Beloit, Wisconsin
Rock County Thresheree	Thresherman's Park N. Hwy. 51 Edgerton, WI.
The Merrill Community Center	1428 Wisconsin Av. Beloit, Wisconsin
El Centro Hispanic Community	1982 Cranston Rd. Beloit, Wisconsin
The Milton House	Hwy. 26 Milton, Wisconsin
Tallman House	426 N. Jackson St. Janesville, Wisconsin
Sterling North House & Museum	409 W. Rollin St. Edgerton, Wisconsin
Hanchett-Bartlett Museum	2149 St. Lawrence Avenue Beloit, Wisconsin
Logan Anthropology Museum	500 Emerson Street Beloit, Wisconsin
Beckman Mill County Park	S. County Road H, Newark Township

3.18 Educational Strategies

The promotion of cultural resources, and educating the public about them, is a primary component to garner public support (both monetarily and physically) of historic preservation efforts. Historic Preservation and Archeology Week, held in early May, is a statewide event to showcase local preservation efforts, and it is an ideal occasion to encourage pride in a community's cultural heritage.

Some specific activities that can take place any time, including during Historic Preservation and Archeology Week, include walking tours, various hands-on workshops, and local recognition programs such as a plaque program to identify local landmarks.

3.19 Legal Strategies

The State Register and National Register of Historic Places are programs to designate that a property is significant due to its architecture, archeology, culture or history, and should be preserved.

National Historic Landmark status is the highest level of national designation. Both the Registers of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmark procedures involve the nomination of a property that meets set criteria, and the eventual vote by a review board to decide if the property should be included. Public projects, whether they have federal, state or local involvement, are required to take the protection of listed properties into account.

Some communities have enacted historic preservation ordinances, which range in the amount of regulatory power they instill. The main purpose of such an ordinance is to establish a historic preservation commission that reviews any new construction, alterations or demolitions taking place within designated historic properties or areas. A model historic preservation ordinance is available from the State Division of Historic Preservation.

Many of the tools that help to preserve agricultural and natural resources can also be applied to preserve cultural resources. Zoning ordinances can address cultural character, and cluster developments, TDRs and PDRs, and subdivision controls can help, also.

3.20 Funding Strategies

Fundraising is an essential component of historic and cultural preservation. Because the preservation of cultural resources can boost tourism, create jobs, raise property values and benefit communities fiscally in other ways, it is an aspect of a community deserving of funding.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loans are increasingly being utilized across the state to establish loan programs designated for historic properties. Some private banks throughout the state are offering low interest loans in the name of historic preservation. And Revolving Loan Funds are ideal for funding rehabilitation and preservation efforts.

There are certain tax exemptions available through the State, for historic public buildings or archeological sites on private property. Investment tax credits are also available both federally and from the State, to pay for the rehabilitation of historic structures that are listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Lastly, Transportation Enhancement funds may be applied towards the rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities such as depots or locomotives.

There are a large number of other privately honored grant and foundation organizations that work to fund historic preservation efforts. But grassroots fundraising, through dinners, tours, auctions, pledge drives, etc. remains a critical component of most historic preservation efforts. Volunteerism is crucial.

3.21 Cultural, Architectural, Archeological, and Historical Resource Policies

- Prevent activities that directly or indirectly alter, disturb, or destroy significant Historical Sites and Buildings within the Town of La Prairie 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 architectural, historical structures, sites and landscapes utilizing the 1976 Rock County Study as a basis within the town.
- Identify existing and potential archeological sites within the Town.
- Provide educational materials on available cultural resources and events.
- Identify other ways to encourage cultural diversity with the Town.

3.22 Chapter Conclusion

Rock County and the Town of La Prairie 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 La Prairie. Residents of the Town have indicated a desire to preserve and protect these land resources.

The Town of La Prairie 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 stay the same or 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 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 element 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.