

CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Basin Water Quality Management Plans

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) prepares “State of the Basin Reports” for the 24 water management units in the State of Wisconsin. The basin plans provide a history and vision for each basin’s land and water resources and lists priority goals and actions for the basins. The basin plans also make recommendations and sets performance measures for what the WDNR can do to improve the health of ecosystems in the basins. The basin plans that impact Wood County include The State of the Black- Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin (2002) and The State of the Central Wisconsin River Basin (2002).

The basin plans were used as guidelines in the development of the Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Some of the goals from the basin plans have been incorporated into this document. The following is a list of the priority goals for each of the Wood County basins as established by the WDNR.

Black- Buffalo-Trempealeau River Basin

Goals:

- Preserving our unique resources
- Protecting the public’s health and promoting safety
- Improving recreational opportunities
- Managing watersheds to reduce water quality impacts
- Discovering integrated management and partnership opportunities

Central Wisconsin River Basin

Goals:

- Monitor and comprehensively study the Wisconsin River and its tributaries for water quality. The information generated would be used to make management decisions, which would ultimately solve many water quality issues.
- Department staff should oppose construction of dams and encourage removal of existing dams on basin streams.
- Continue to monitor groundwater and surface water consumptive uses and their impacts on surface aquatic life and groundwater level sustainability. Where possible, regulate the withdrawals of both surface and groundwater to protect water dependent natural resources. Where regulations are not adequate, work with local communities to reduce impacts. Encourage conservation measures to minimize these impacts.

- Evaluate impacts to water quality from nonmetallic mining through permit compliance monitoring in Central Wisconsin.
- Watershed staff should continue monitoring surface waters to support the 303(b) report and identify impaired waterbodies for the 303(d) list.
- Continue trout habitat improvements and maintenance on state owned and easement properties.
- Continue to protect sensitive or critical shoreland habitats through easements of acquisition.
- Continue to monitor and address contaminants of concern basin-wide in surface water, sediment groundwater, fish, and other water dependent resources.
- The Drinking and Groundwater staff along with Watershed staff and our partners should continue to collect information, water samples, etc. to document the nonpoint contamination of Central Sands and other aquifers in the basin. This information should be used to develop educational and regulatory strategies to address the source of the contamination.
- Watershed staff should continue efforts to reduce agricultural NPS inputs into waters of the state.
- Basin staff should continue to work with stakeholders to identify and designate sensitive habitat areas.
- Encourage municipal water systems to adopt comprehensive Well Head Protection Plans.
- Encourage Best Management Practices in all agricultural areas designated as vulnerable to groundwater contamination.
- Encourage NRCS to extend their funding program that offers financial assistance to farmers for abandonment of unused wells on agricultural properties.
- Encourage municipal water systems to reduce water losses in their distribution systems and expand water conservation measures by their customers.
- Basin staff shall continue to monitor aquatic and terrestrial exotics, document the distribution, and work with partners to prioritize control efforts to minimize the spread of exotic species on state land and waters within Central Wisconsin River Basin.
- Basin staff shall continue to monitor aquatic and terrestrial communities, and document the distribution and status of endangered, threatened, special concern species and natural communities within the Central Wisconsin River Basin.
- Basin staff should continue to identify and pursue the abandonment of non-complying water supply wells, that serve as conduits for contamination of groundwater.
- Continue to work with local government departments such as health departments and zoning departments; private sector business; and professional associations e.g. Well Drillers, WI Water Well Assoc. (WWWA), WI Rural Water Assoc. (WRWA), Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Assoc. (WWOA), Wisconsin Association of Zoning Administrators, etc., on educational programs and materials addressed to the general public/farmers concerning the protection of all waters of our basin.

Local Work Group

To initiate the Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan revision process, the Land Conservation Department convened a meeting of community leaders to assess the quality of the county's natural resources. Eighteen people, representing local government, landowners, concerned citizens, educators, and local and federal government agencies compiled a list of environmental issues and concerns that they believe required the attention of natural resource managers. The following is a list of the natural resource issues and concerns raised by the Local Work Group:

- Landspreading issues, animal, human, fertilizer, municipal
- Monitoring of surface water quality, municipal discharge, cooperation between agencies affecting quality
- Declining grassland habitat
- Pesticides in groundwater
- Municipal wells-impact on surrounding area
- Woodland management
- Loss of wetlands
- Nonmetallic mining reclamation
- Loss of agricultural land
- Yellow River water quality, runoff
- Soil erosion, agricultural, highways and construction
- Abandoned wells leading to groundwater pollution
- Excessive wildlife
- Air quality
- Improved rural economics through prescribed grazing
- Invasive species
- Decreasing enrollment in land conservation programs (CRP, CREP, etc.)
- Comprehensive land use plan (residential, industry) to protect groundwater
- Water conservation

The Local Work Group was then asked to vote on which issues they thought were most important. The following is the list of priority resource concerns voted upon by the Local Work Group.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Resource Concern</u>
1	Landspreading issues, animal, human, fertilizer, municipal
2	Monitoring of surface water quality, municipal discharge, cooperation between agencies affecting quality.
3	Declining grassland habitat (prairie chicken) fragmentation
4	Loss of wetlands
5	Loss of agricultural land
6	Soil erosion, agricultural, highway, and construction

Focus Group

The prioritized resource concerns ranked by the Local Work Group were presented to the Focus Group to be incorporated into the Land and Water Resource Management Plan revision under their appropriate goals and objectives. The Focus Group was made up of 12 participants.

The Focus Group was to:

- discuss the resource
- identify resources needed
 - time
 - money
 - people
 - agency responsible
- discuss possible new programs/projects to address resource concerns not covered by existing programs
- develop objectives, goals, and actions

Other Issues and Concerns

In addition to the prioritized resource concerns, several other resource issues are significant to the quality of Wood County's natural resources. The following are additional issues and concerns facing natural resources management in Wood County:

- There is a growing concern over invasive plant species.
- The management of increasing numbers of bear, wolf, and deer continues to be a concern.
- The loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses.
- The loss of farms due to economics.