

Executive Summary

The Waukesha County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan is a long-range planning document intended to guide the activities of the Land Resources Division (LRD) in its efforts to protect and improve local land and water resources for the next 10 years. This plan is mandatory for all counties under s. 92.10 Wisconsin Statutes, with more specific planning requirements contained in Chapter ATCP 50 Wisconsin Administrative Code. In general terms, this plan must describe how Waukesha County will help meet federal and state clean water goals while addressing other local natural resource issues.

Chapter I (Introduction) provides background on the LWRM planning process and how it relates to other local plans and natural resource programs. Chapter II (Resource Assessment) reviews the state of natural resources in Waukesha County, including the classification of various soil and water resources and an evaluation of the major watersheds in the county. This data is used in the rest of the document to plan the direction for future program efforts in this third generation LWRM Plan for Waukesha County. The first LWRM plan was adopted by the Waukesha County Board in 1999 as a prototype for the redesigned state program. The second generation LWRM Plan was adopted by the County Board in 2006 and is being updated through this document.

Planning Process and Goals

The plan goals from the 2006 LWRM Plan update were developed through an extensive nominal group process from two citizen advisory committees - one with an urban focus and one with a more rural perspective. To stay true to this process, those goals were only slightly modified to form the foundation for this 2012 plan update. The plan goals are listed below along with the percentage of LRD staff time allocated toward each goal:

1. Control Urban Runoff Pollution and Flooding (41%)
2. Protect the Quality and Quantity of Groundwater (6%)
3. Control Agricultural Runoff Pollution (13%)
4. Educate the Public on Conservation Issues (19%)
5. Preserve Targeted Farmland and Natural Areas (4%)
6. Support Water Monitoring and Improve Public Access to Water Resource Data (14%)
7. Reclaim Active Nonmetallic Mining Sites (3%)

Chapter III, the focal point of this plan, provides some background information on each of these goals, followed by more specific objectives and planned activities for each. It should be noted that the percentages shown above do not adequately represent the overlap that occurs between the goals. For example, the protection of groundwater (Goal #2) and natural areas (Goal #5) are both critical components of urban storm water regulations administered under Goal #1, where staff time is counted.

Assisting with the preparation of this 2012 plan update was a citizen advisory committee made up of a combination of the two groups from the 2006 plan. This committee (see previous page for a list of members) was sent a draft of Chapter III and later met to exchange comments and ideas, which have been incorporated into the final draft presented herein. A public informational meeting and hearing was also held on May 31, 2012, and the final plan approved by the Waukesha County Board on July 24, 2012 and the County Executive on July 30, 2012.

Nonpoint Pollution Control (Runoff)

Nonpoint sources of water pollution are the number one reason why water quality suffers in most lakes and streams in the state of Wisconsin and Waukesha County. This type of water pollution washes off the urban and rural landscapes during heavy rains or snowmelt periods and is carried directly to local water resources, usually with no treatment. Wisconsin has been a national leader in addressing this type of water pollution since 1979, and the redesign of the state nonpoint pollution control programs in the late 1990's

was the impetus to requiring county LWRM plans. Chapter NR 151, Wisconsin Administrative Code contains urban and agricultural nonpoint performance standards and prohibitions intended to meet water quality goals. Since counties are the primary local delivery system for state nonpoint programs, one of the key requirements for county LWRM plans is to describe local procedures that will be used to “ensure compliance” with state nonpoint pollution performance standards and prohibitions. These standards, and the procedures planned to implement them, are contained in Chapter IV and are briefly summarized below.

State nonpoint performance standards for rural areas focus on controlling agricultural runoff pollution from crop fields, animal feedlots, manure storage structures, and livestock pastures. This plan describes a systematic approach that will be used, including an information and education program, landowner contacts, land inventory/pollutant modeling, compliance notification, technical assistance, cost-sharing, and referring non-complying sites to DNR for enforcement, if necessary.

Urban nonpoint performance standards focus on controlling erosion from construction sites, managing post-construction runoff from parking lots, streets, buildings and other impervious areas, maximizing infiltration, maintaining vegetative buffers between impervious surfaces and water resources, and preventing polluted runoff through better land management. These standards are implemented through the county (and local) storm water and erosion control ordinances for new development projects, and MS4 storm water discharge permits for existing urban areas. Both of these methods rely on an effective information and education program that targets developers, engineers, contractors, municipal staff and the general public. To that end, Waukesha County has executed intergovernmental agreements with 25 local communities to implement a comprehensive storm water education program to help communities meet this part of the MS4 permit mandate. In a rapidly developing area like Waukesha County, implementing the urban nonpoint performance standards represents the single largest workload for the Land Resources Division.

Conclusion

This plan recognizes that water quality is a direct reflection of land use and management within its watershed and that groundwater and surface water are part of the same hydrologic system - and must be managed that way. Therefore, even though separate goals and objectives are listed for various target resources, the reality is that LRD program efforts are usually intimately intertwined with each other, as well as other programs, agencies and units of government. This is reflected in the large number of working agreements that the LRD has already executed with other groups.

This LWRM plan does not bring light to any “new” resource management issues or represent any shift in county policy or priorities relating to land and water conservation. Rather, it describes how limited county resources will continue to be focused on meeting water quality standards through a wide array of program methods, including education, technical assistance, cost-sharing grants, GIS technology, tax credits, low impact development, partnerships with other agencies and organizations, and regulation. Projected costs to continue existing programs, methods to track progress and impediments to plan implementation are all discussed in Chapter IV. The impediments include excessive state mandated cost-sharing requirements to control agricultural pollution and a continuous decline in state program grants to counties.

Surveys consistently show that clean water and natural resource protection are quality of life issues that are important to county residents and businesses alike. The vision of the Waukesha County Land and Water Resource Management Plan is to provide resource protection without sacrificing other county priorities, such as public safety and job growth. To that end, it is important that conservation programs adapt to changing conditions, but maintain focus on the long-term goals of natural resource protection for the benefit of all who live and work here - now and in the future.