Land & Water Conservation Division - Conservation News

Home Grown Food - Support your local Farmers

When you purchase food grown locally, you’re guaranteed fresh produce. Did you know that the average distance that fresh food travels from production to final destination is 1,500 miles? Visit the website: www.farmfreshatlas.org, for a list of farms from around the Southeast area of Wisconsin - providing you with a variety of fresh food (i.e., vegetables, fruits & meats). Included in the listing are certified organic producers.

Comprehensive Planning News

Housing Element

The housing element is one of nine elements of a comprehensive plan required by the Wisconsin comprehensive planning law. Chapter 10 of Washington County’s Comprehensive Plan documents the Housing Element for the County. The chapter provides an inventory of existing housing stock in Washington County and each local government participating in the multi-jurisdictional planning process, a description of government housing programs, and information on community policies and ordinances affecting housing. Housing goals and objectives through the plan design year of 2035 will be developed this summer, and will be included in part 4 of the chapter.

(continued on page 4)

Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

• The median value for owner-occupied housing units in the County in the year 2000 was $159,100.

Structure Type and Year Built

• Just over 27 percent of the County’s housing stock was constructed between 1990 and 2000.

Existing Housing Stock

• Approximately 34 percent of the housing units in the County were rated as “good” or “very good/excellent” by local assessors.
• Approximately 63 percent of the housing units were rated as “average” condition by local assessors.
• In 2000, there were 45,853 total housing units in Washington County. Approximately 73 percent were owner-occupied, 23 percent were renter-occupied, and approximately 4 percent were vacant.
The Land Use Division of the Washington County Planning and Parks Department administers and enforces the Shoreland, Wetland, and Floodplain Zoning Ordinance for all unincorporated townships. Permits may require approval by the Land Use Division, the Washington County Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee, the Washington County Board of Adjustment, or the full Washington County Board prior to your starting work on the following projects within the shoreland/wetland or floodplain zoning district. Before beginning work on any of these projects, please contact the Land Use Division and request information on what permits and/or inspections may be necessary:

- Filling, grading, excavating, ponding, lagooning, dredging or any soil disturbance work
- Shoreline stabilization including rip-rap and other approved methods
- Additions/alterations to existing structures or reconstruction of structures
- New or replacement construction of any type
- New or replacement retaining walls, sidewalks, driveways, patios, decks or other landscaping

The owner of the property or their representative can apply for a permit by filling out an application, along with supplying plot plans and diagrams of the project and submitting the appropriate fee. Some projects will require only basic drawings, while others may require detailed building and grading plans. In floodplains, structures must meet stringent FEMA requirements. Projects sometimes require the application to be reviewed at a hearing before the County Planning, Conservation, and Parks Committee or the County Board of Adjustment. These applications need to be signed by all property owners or designated corporation officers. If the project meets all of the related code requirements, a permit will be issued.

Following the submittal of an application for a shoreland/floodplain zoning permit, but before the project is started, a Land Use Inspector will visit the site to confirm the adequacy of erosion control and other site considerations. The Inspector will then issue and post the permit if all the ordinance requirements have been met. Periodic inspections will occur throughout the phases of the project to ensure compliance with the permit. To obtain permit applications, or if you have questions regarding your proposed projects, contact the Land Use Division of the Washington County Planning and Parks Department.

When working near lakes, streams, or wetlands, you are advised to contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Milwaukee at (414) 263-8500, because in some cases, you may need permits from them as well. Land disturbance activities of any type, in any wetland or along a shoreline may also require approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; their local phone number is (414) 547-4171.

To help minimize complications, please do not hesitate to contact the Land Use Division for information regarding the procedure for obtaining any of the permits described. This should be done at least several weeks prior to the proposed start of your project. When work takes place without permits, County and State laws usually hold the property owner responsible even if the work was done by a contractor. In some cases, the contractor may also be responsible. You should also contact the local township regarding their permit requirements. If you are planning to construct a structure or conduct other land disturbing activities, follow this check list to help you through the permit approval process.
# Permit Application Check List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning</th>
<th>Check for Shoreland, Wetland and Floodplain zoning related to the property with the Land Use Division to verify that the proposed structure can be built on the lot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waterbody Classification</td>
<td>Check the classification of the lake, river, creek or waterbody with the Land Use Division to determine which development standards apply to the property. Different waterbody classifications have different requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Title</td>
<td>A deed or land contract must be recorded with the Washington County Register of Deeds in order to legally transfer ownership. Permits can only be issued to the legal owner of the property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Assessment and Soil Evaluation</td>
<td>Contact a certified soil tester to perform a site assessment and a soil evaluation report (i.e. “perc test”). This assessment and evaluation indicates what type of POWTS* can be installed and where it can be located on the property. Washington County does not permit holding tanks for new residential projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitary Permit</td>
<td>Contact a properly licensed plumber and provide them with a copy of the site assessment and soil evaluation. The plumber may act as the property owner’s agent and can apply for the sanitary permit and any state approvals that are required. The plumber or owner can submit the required documentation for the sanitary permit to the Land Use Division with the required fee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling and Grading Permit</td>
<td>A permit is required for any filling, grading, or excavating greater than 450 square feet within the shoreland zoning district including landscaping or construction-related activity. Application materials are available at the Land Use Division. Detailed plans showing the location and scope of the proposed project along with the fee is required. Site inspection by County staff prior to issuance of a permit may also be required. Depending on the scope of the proposed project, you may need to apply for an Administrative Permit or a Conditional Use Permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreland Restoration Plan</td>
<td>A shoreland restoration plan may be required for any new construction or additions to structures on waterfront property. Application materials are available at the Land Use Division. A site inspection by Land Use Division staff is required. A fee may also be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreland Zoning Permit</td>
<td>The property owner (or builder/agent) can obtain a shoreland zoning permit application from the Land Use Division and return the completed form and required plans to the Division with the fee. A site inspection by County staff is also necessary before the permit will be issued and construction can commence. In some instances, you may need to request a variance from the County Board of Adjustment. If approved, permits can then be issued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Private OnSite Waste Treatment Systems*
Income should be considered when developing policies intended to help provide housing units within a cost range affordable to all income groups.

- In 2006, the median price for a housing unit was $202,000; this is an increase of nearly 37 percent from the median price in 2000.
- The median monthly housing cost for homeowners with a mortgage in the County was $1,225 in 2000. The median monthly cost for rental housing in the County was $615 in 2000.
- The minimum annual household income needed to afford a median priced home ($202,000) in Washington County was $74,662 in 2006.
- A household earning the estimated 2006 median household income of $64,000 per year could afford a home of $170,000, based on the household paying 30 percent of its income on housing.

The map on page 5 shows housing units in the County affordable for households earning the median household income, which are those with a fair market value (home plus lot) of $170,000 or less in 2006.

Community Regulations Affecting Housing

Housing structure type, housing unit size, and lot size are controlled by community zoning regulations. The chapter examines those regulations to identify the extent to which they permit or exclude relatively lower-cost minimum-size housing structures and lots.

**Housing Unit Types** - The type of housing unit allowed is generally determined by the type of structures allowed in residential zoning districts. This is important because apartment units tend to be more affordable to lower-income households than single-family housing units.

**Minimum Lot Size Requirements** - Residential zoning districts include minimum lot size requirements, which specify the smallest land area a residential structure can be constructed upon. Lot size requirements are important because larger minimum lot size requirements can add to the total price of developing a residence by increasing land and land improvement costs; however, larger minimum lot sizes may be appropriate in areas without urban services (such as public water and sewer services), or in environmentally sensitive areas such as woodlands and areas with steep slopes.

**Minimum Floor Area Requirements** - All of the local zoning ordinances enacted by Washington County communities include minimum floor area requirements for homes and multi-family units. These requirements are important because the cost of housing units typically increases for larger homes. Minimum floor area requirements generally correlate to minimum lot size requirements; the larger the minimum lot size requirement, the larger the minimum floor area requirement.
As Washington County and its local government partners complete their comprehensive plans, housing issues will be addressed and possible solutions formulated. A document called “Providing a Range of Housing Options” was prepared by County staff to aid the Housing, Utilities and Community Facilities and Economic Development (HUED) Workgroup by providing examples and ordinances enforced throughout the County. For a full copy of the document, visit the Washington County website at www.co.washington.wi.us/smartgrowth.

The following is a summary of the document:

**Conservation Subdivisions**

Conservation subdivisions concentrate or cluster homes in those areas most suitable for building while preserving natural or cultural features as open space.

**Conservation-Based Affordable Housing**

Conservation-based affordable housing provides high-quality affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents and conserves high-quality open space and working landscapes in line with community conservation priorities. Typically, affordable housing is proposed in one place, usually a downtown or urban center, and land conservation efforts in another area, usually a rural or exurban area facing development pressures. But such trends discount the need for conservation in urban areas as well as the need for low- and moderate-income housing in rural areas.

**Density Bonuses**

To encourage development of residential lands in urban areas and rural hamlets, density bonuses can be offered to developers as an incentive in exchange for public benefit to help achieve comprehensive plan goals. The density incentive is expressed as an additional bonus housing unit, or fractions of housing units, earned per amount of public benefit provided.

**Inclusionary Housing**

Inclusionary housing requires a percentage of housing units in developments of a given size to be affordable. Density bonuses can be awarded to developers to compensate for any financial loss that would otherwise occur.

**Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU’s)**

Often referred to as “mother-in-law apartments” or “granny flats”, ADU’s are accessory to the primary home on a lot and may be added to, created within, or detached from the primary home. ADU’s are popular housing options for young adults and elderly relatives of the owners of the primary housing unit.

**Backyard Homes**

Such regulations enable property owners to build an additional dwelling unit on their property if they have a suitable amount of land that is available for development, possibly behind their existing house.
The Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Workgroup formed a sub-committee to specifically develop a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) process to determine parcels that are most suitable for long-term agricultural use. The results of the analysis are intended to be used by the County and local governments to help identify areas that should be designated for farmland protection in County and local comprehensive plans. The LESA process was developed in 1981 by the USDA - Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is an analytical tool designed to provide a systematic and objective procedure for rating and ranking the agricultural importance of a parcel.

The first step in the analysis was to identify the parcels to be analyzed. Parcels within an adopted sewer service area and parcels with less than 2 percent of the parcel in agricultural use were excluded from the analysis.

Land Evaluation Component (LE)

The land evaluation component of the LESA process was determined by the NRCS, which rated each soil in Washington County based on soil type, slope, agricultural capability class, and soil productivity for producing corn and soybeans. The resulting ratings were then placed into groups ranging from the best to the worst suited for cropland production.

Site Assessment Component (SA)

The Site Assessment (SA) component rates non-soil factors affecting a parcel’s relative importance for agricultural use and is separated into 3 classifications. The LESA subcommittee selected the following nine SA factors to be used in the Washington County LESA analysis:

Factors for SA-1 (agricultural productivity)
- size of farm in contiguous management by 1 farm operator
- compatibility of surrounding land uses within ½ mile
- percent of farm in agricultural use

Factors for SA-2 (development pressures impacting a site’s continued agricultural use)
- distance from adopted sewer service area
- distance from selected hamlets
- distance from interchanges along US Highways 41 & 45

SA-3 Factors (other public values of a site supporting retention in agriculture)
- primary or secondary environmental corridors or isolated natural resource or natural areas/critical species habitat outside environmental corridors areas present on farm
- floodplains present on farm-using current 100 year floodplain
- proximity to permanently protected land 20 acres or more in size

(Continued on Page 9)
Farmland Protection Areas in Washington County
Identified Through the LESA Analysis: 2007

- Tier I Farmlands (LESA score of 6.8 or higher)
- Tier II Farmlands (LESA score of less than 6.8)
- Permanently protected lands of 20 acres or more
- Sewer service area boundary (Agricultural lands within sewer service areas were not included in the LESA analysis)
- Surface water

Source: Washington County and SEWRPC.
**Parcel Scoring**

The LESA system recognizes that some of the factors used to rank agricultural parcels are more important than others. To account for this, the LESA subcommittee assigned the LE component a weight of 0.34, or about one-third of the total weight. The remaining 0.66 weighting “points” were divided among the 9 SA factors. Each parcel analyzed was scored on a scale of 1 to 10. The LESA sub-committee defined lands scoring 6.8 or higher as Tier 1 farmlands, which are areas best suited for long-term protection by County and local officials. Lands scoring below 6.8 were defined as Tier 2 farmlands, which are areas that should be considered for long-term protection. The sub-committee agreed that setting the benchmark at 6.8 left adequate amounts of acreage for development in the next thirty years, yet also allowed for a suitable amount of land for future agricultural production.

- 117,481 acres, or 73 percent of land in the County, were designated as Tier 1 Farmlands, scoring 6.8 or higher. Of this, 94,589 acres are in agricultural use.
- 43,874 acres, or 18 percent of land in the County, were designated as Tier 2 Farmlands, scoring less than 6.8. Of this, 23,985 acres are in agricultural use.

The ANCR Workgroup recommends that each municipality reference the final LESA map on page 8 as a guide to help identify farmland protection areas that best suit their local agricultural resource element goals and recommendations outlined in their comprehensive plans.

**Upcoming Planning Meetings**

**Meeting Locations:**

- Public Agency Center (PAC)
  - 333 E. Washington Street
  - West Bend, WI. 53095

### Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee
- June 27, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 6:15 p.m.
- July 25, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 6:15 p.m.
- NO MEETING IN AUGUST, 2007

### Land Use and Transportation Elements Work Group
- NO MEETING IN JUNE 2007
- NO MEETING IN JULY, 2007
- August 27, 2007, West Bend Airport, 310 Aerial Dr. at 6:30 p.m.

### Utilities and Community Facilities, Economic Development, and Housing Elements Work Group
- June 13, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 6:00 p.m.
- NO MEETING IN JULY, 2007
- August 8, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 6:00 p.m.

### Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Elements Work Group
- NO MEETING IN JUNE, 2007
- July 11, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 7:00 p.m.
- August 1, 2007, PAC - Room 1113A/B at 7:00 p.m. (if necessary)

*Meetings are subject to change. Please contact the Washington County Planning and Parks Department for current meeting information at 262-335-4445 or www.co.washington.wi.us/smartgrowth*
Water, many agree, is our most precious natural resource; without it, life ceases. Landscapes that save water, prevent pollution and protect the environment are in fact, easily achieved by employing water-efficient landscaping. Water-efficient landscaping produces attractive landscapes because it utilizes designs and plants suited to local conditions. One of the first conceptual approaches developed to formalize principles related to natural landscaping is known as Xeriscape landscaping pronounced zeer'-ih-scape. Xeriscape landscaping is defined as quality landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment. The word is a combination of the Greek word “xeros,” which means “dry,” and “landscape.” Many urban areas and metropolitan cities are now turning towards this concept. Some states such as Arizona, Florida and Nevada have enacted local ordinances and laws for Xeriscape landscaping – phasing in Xeriscape on properties constructed before a certain year and requiring it on new construction, offering incentives, cash rebates and credits on their water bills to install Xeriscaping landscaping design. In some states, local governments also consider requiring the use of Xeriscape, and offer incentives to install Xeriscape to capture rainwater and runoff onsite.

The Seven principles of Xeriscape landscaping are based on:
1. Proper planning and design – (Analyze the regional and micro-climatic conditions, existing vegetation, topography, sun/shade tolerance and grouping of plants by water needs)
2. Soil analysis and improvement – (Analyze the pH, nutrient, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium levels through a soil test, and sand, silt, clay and organic matter content)
3. Appropriate plant selection – (Choose native plants/trees to your region)
4. Practical turf areas – (Reduce or eliminate turf areas, select a type of grass that is drought tolerant/resistant)
5. Efficient irrigation – (A large portion of watering lawns and gardens is not absorbed by the plants, it is lost by evaporation, runoff, or is pushed too quickly beyond the root zone because it is applied too quickly or in excess of the plants needs. Promote strong root growth that supports a plant during drought, water deeply and only when the plant needs water-for clay soils, watering less deeply and more often is recommended.)
6. Use of mulches – (Aid in greater retention of water by minimizing evaporation, reducing weed growth, moderating soil temperatures and preventing erosion. Careful not to use too much mulch which can restrict water flow to plant roots.)
7. Appropriate maintenance – (Water and fertilize only when needed, too much water promotes weak growth and increases pruning and mowing requirements.)

Proper landscaping techniques not only create beautiful landscapes, but also benefit the environment and save water, offering many economic and environmental benefits including:
- Lower water bills from reduced water use.
- Conservation of natural resources and preservation of habitat for plants and wildlife such as fish and waterfowl.
- Decreased energy use (and air pollution associated with its generation) because less pumping and treatment of water is required.
- Reduced home or office heating and cooling costs through the careful placement of trees and plants.
- Reduced runoff of stormwater and irrigation water that carries topsoil, fertilizers/pesticides into waterbodies.
- Fewer yard trimmings to be managed and extended life for water resources infrastructure (e.g., reservoirs, treatment plants, groundwater aquifers), thus reduced taxpayer costs.
Shop locally to support our local & state economy. It’s a fact, that milk prices are up, and local farmers are pleased to see the increase. March milk production in Wisconsin totaled 2.04 billion pounds, a 33 million pound increase from March 2006!

The state’s averaged milk cow numbers were 1.25 million head, 5,000 head more than a year ago, but the same as last month. March ended with 48 fewer milk cow herds in the state, compared to a month earlier. As of April 1, 14,265 milk cow herds were licensed in the state, 514 fewer than last year. For Wisconsin, milk production was up 2%, and in Washington County there were a reported total number of 143 herds; out of that number 134 or 94% are producing Grade A milk and 6% are producing Grade B milk.

Local farmers are seeing the milk prices rise and are taking advantage of the opportunity through expanding their operations. Paul Sebo, Senior Technician of the Land & Water Conservation Division, states that “within the last month, he has had four landowners requesting technical advise and expertise with manure storage and handling as part of their dairy expansion projects.”

Most agriculture experts agree that milk prices will jump in coming months as producers pass along increased costs for livestock feed and a spike in overseas demand.

(Source: Wisconsin Farm Reporter Vol. 07, No 8)
Grazing Land Management
How a Grazing Specialist Can Help You Improve Your Production!

What is it? Grazing land is land which supports vegetation that can be harvested by grazing animals. In Wisconsin, grazing land includes permanent pasture with introduced forage species, rotated cropland planted to grass and legume (alfalfa and clovers) species for hay and grazing, native prairies, and grazed oak savannas. As an owner or manager of grazing land, a Grazing Specialist can help you maintain or improve your grazing land resources through the development and implementation of a Managed Grazing Plan. Through the Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), a Grazing Specialist can provide on-farm visits, consultations, and grazing plan development.

How? The First Step...together the landowner and grazing specialist meet onsite to discuss and observe the factors that affect grazing land management, these include:

1. Identifying/discussing major grasses and legumes that grow on your land, how these plants grow and respond to grazing, and how grazing can be managed to enhance the most productive plants.
2. Observing various plants to understand why some plants are grazed and why others remain un-grazed. Analyzing soil and landscape characteristics on the farm. Some sites have a higher potential to produce forage than other sites. The types of sites located on the farm and their condition will influence the stocking rate. Calculating an annual stocking rate based on the present condition of the pasture and the management intensity to be used.
3. Evaluating the condition of each pasture. This will give you an idea of how much forage is being produced in relation to how much forage the site is capable of producing. Discussing the possible grazing management alternatives for improving the production potential of each site on the farm.
4. Delineating pasture units and facilities such as lanes, watering tanks, water pipelines, etc., based on management and site characteristics.
5. Developing managed grazing schedules and other grazing land management recommendations for implementation.

And Then? The Grazing Specialist develops a Managed Grazing Plan with you for your farmland taking into account your goals and needs. Through the Natural Resources Conservation Service cost sharing can also be provided to develop and implement a Managed Grazing Plan.

Who to Contact? In Washington County, contact Haly Schultz, Grazing Specialist for the Town and Country Resource Conservation and Development Council at 262.335.4808.
March 21st (National Agriculture Day) marked the first day of spring. It fell during National Agriculture Week, March 18-24, 2007, a time when producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and many others across America gathered to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture. Local educators spent time in the classroom, before heading to the farm, teaching the role of agriculture in Wisconsin today.

Since 1997, 4th grade students from around the area have been leaving their urban lives behind to spend a day at the farm. On March 29th more than 100 Washington County children visited the Floyd Berggren Beef Farm, run by Ross & Marcie Bishop, as well as, the Gerald Groth Dairy Farm, run by Shawn Maney. Stations were set up at the Berggren Farm educating students about beef cattle, feed & nutrition, conservation & no-till and nutrient management. Dairy cattle, milking, feed & nutrition and calves were the station topics at the Groth Farm.

Cheese, crackers and milk were provided by the Washington County Dairy Promotions Committee. If you’d like to find out how to get involved, contact the Land & Water Conservation Division for more information.

*Ag Day Celebrations were started many years before 1997, by Herb & Sharon Lofy. Students visited their farm to learn about the dairy industry. Over time, the Berggren and Groth Farms were asked to join and then take over the event.
Many folks remember the days of past, sitting down with USDA-NRCS District Conservationist (DC) for Washington County, Patrick Murphy to develop their conservation plans, revise their plans, request alternative options or methods for farming, how to no-till farm, designing and installing waterways, implementing buffers, installing manure storages, and sometimes... just to stop in and run the mill, etc. Pat Murphy was employed as the DC in Washington County for a little over 10 years (1987-1997) and throughout that timeline he developed hundreds of plans covering thousands of acres in Washington County. Since those days of past in Washington County, he has found a new home in Madison and is employed as the USDA NRCS State Resource Conservationist - some say, “that he has moved up in the world and is surely shuffling more papers now than ever”. Pat, always knew that his love of the land would not lead him far from his fellow farmers. Pat always had a good working relationship with the folks in Washington County and he always stressed to the landowners, “follow your conservation plan.” Their plans were developed and recommended specifically for each field providing rotation methods to follow, always advising “follow your plan, so that you’re not found to be out of compliance.”

The former NRCS District Conservationist is continuing to send his message to Washington County, giving his advice to those growing corn on corn. He notes the importance of following a conservation plan is key, to remain in compliance and eligible for future USDA programs, now and into the future. Commenting that the emerging markets and higher prices for field corn is a boon for Wisconsin corn growers, stating “however, it could lead to compliance issues for some growers, and serious soil erosion on farms, unless more conservation measures are used. Discussing conservation compliance is especially timely this year with increased interest in growing corn after corn. When growing corn after corn, the benefits of crop rotations are lost. Nitrogen credits from legumes, reduced need for pesticides, soil-conserving crops in rotation – are lost with continuous corn. Even with best management practices for erosion control, and nutrient and pest management, we face a serious risk of increased sediment and chemical residues in water with continuous corn production.”

Murphy states, “that the most common ways farmers get out of compliance with USDA is by dropping a soil-conserving crop, such as hay, and adding a tilled crop, such as corn, that may increase soil erosion. Conservation compliance, which began with the 1985 Farm Bill, is still in effect.” That means farmers need to control erosion on highly erodible land in order to stay eligible for USDA program benefits. And those benefits are substantial, because they include the Farm Loan programs and Disaster Assistance, in addition to, Commodity Price Support programs. Benefits that could be provided would be lost if found in noncompliance. “The best advice for growers is to check with NRCS before straying too far from the crop rotation shown in their conservation plans. USDA program participants are responsible for ensuring
that their conservation plan or system is applied and maintained in order to remain eligible for USDA program benefits. The local NRCS District Conservationist can review the current plan and discuss possible options for you.”

Currently, the new DC at the helm is Betsy Gillen, USDA NRCS District Conservationist for Washington County & Ozaukee County, and Gillen couldn’t agree more with her former predecessor. “It’s always beneficial to the landowner to come into the office and verify that they are meeting and maintaining the requirements of their conservation plan, keeping good records is always a plus for any future programs that may develop such as the Conservation Security Program, going over their plans is always a good idea.” “Spring is most definitely the busiest time of the year, with landowners wanting to get into the fields as soon as possible, and update plans on new tracts of land,” states Gillen. “I rarely forget any requests and get back to them as soon as I possibly can, it’s always good to give me a couple of weeks notice to complete the request.” “It’s a challenge working in two different counties, but very rewarding.”

Murphy states, that farmers also need to be alert to ephemeral erosion in order to maintain program eligibility. Ephemeral erosion refers to the channels and gullies, from a few inches up to several feet wide, that form in tilled fields after rains. Control of ephemeral erosion is also a farm bill requirement.

Murphy notes, “that USDA offers cost-sharing to help farmers with the conservation practices necessary to remain eligible for USDA benefits. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers cost sharing for waterways, buffers, and other cropland conservation practices. USDA strongly supports corn-grain ethanol as an alternative fuel, and developing conservation systems for the sustainable production of energy crops is an NRCS agency priority. Intensive cropping requires intensive conservation systems that are consistently followed to avoid significant soil and water degradation. NRCS is committed to work with Wisconsin farmers to develop the conservation systems needed to face the challenges of crop production for biofuels.”

**NRCS Recommendations**

**Protect Soil Quality**

**Soil Erosion** – Without increased use of conservation practices, increased tillage for continuous corn will result in increased erosion. Controlling surface water runoff becomes increasingly important, through grassed waterways, diversions, terraces, contour buffer strips and by seeding down headlands where erosion is known to occur.

- On slopes less than 6%, normal conservation practices (reduced tillage and grassed waterways) may control soil erosion.
- Fields with slopes between 6 and 12% require a system of conservation practices, such as no-till, contour buffers, terraces and grassed waterways.
- Fields with slopes greater than 12% are not suited to continuous corn production.

(Cont. on Page 16)
(...Corn on Corn) Organic Matter/Soil Carbon — no-till planting will produce net gain in organic matter with corn for grain. Losses may occur if stalk/stover is harvested. Soil Tilth — reduce tillage and manage heavy equipment traffic to minimize compaction.

Protect Water Quality

Surface Water

💧 Sediment delivered to streams will increase with more intense cropping and tillage if not supported with adequate conservation measures to keep soil in place.
💧 Phosphorous — erosion control and proper nutrient management is critical to avoid significant increases in phosphorous in surface water.
💧 Pesticide runoff — Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can be effective in reducing pesticide losses but can be difficult on a large scale. Continuous corn forfeits the rotation effect on pests and leads to increased use of pesticides. Even with IPM, there is increased risk of pesticide residues in soil and water with continuous corn.

Groundwater

∇ Nitrogen — elevated levels in groundwater are linked to areas of corn production.
∇ Pesticides — without crop rotations, more pesticides are needed and pose an increased risk of pesticide residues reaching groundwater.

Following additional conservation measures will help reduce soil loss and minimize threats to water quality. Farmers should check with your NRCS District Conservationist before changing a crop rotation or planting new acreage to corn to find ways to avoid the erosion problems as well as to avoid risking their USDA program eligibility. USDA program participants should contact their local NRCS field office if they have questions regarding the status of their conservation compliance plan, conservation practices, or any of the USDA conservation programs.

Additional Conservation Solutions

Growing corn after corn can cause significant environmental issues unless the corn is produced in a sustainable manner. The conservation practices and technology exist to limit erosion and help protect water quality. However, the following steps must be taken to assure sustainable production and avoid soil and water degradation:

- Reduce soil erosion to “T” or tolerable levels
- Maintain a positive Soil Conditioning Index (above zero)
- Control surface water runoff with grassed waterways and surface residue
- Protect headlands from gullying
- Establish grass buffers to protect uplands, streams and sensitive areas
- Rotate crops to reduce pesticide and fertilizer needs
- Follow a nutrient management plan to avoid excess fertilizer use, runoff, and to identify risks to surface and groundwater
Perhaps by now, many of you will have received in the mail an assessment notice from your assessor. After receiving the notice, you are faced with a choice, to appeal or not to appeal. If you choose not to appeal, you need not do anything. However, if you choose to appeal the assessment, what follows is a very brief outline of the appeal process.

Normally before going to a Board of Review, most people find satisfaction by informally bringing their concerns to the assessor before the Open Book date specified on the notice. If you choose, you may speak with the assessor during the Open Book. Individuals not satisfied with the results of informal discussions may choose to proceed to the Board of Review.

Prior to appearing at the Board of Review, you must provide either written or oral notice of your intent to file an objection with the municipal clerk, who will provide you with the proper form. It is important that you appear before the Board of Review; however, you may appoint a representative to appear on your behalf. During the Board of Review process, it is the responsibility of the person appealing to present convincing evidence that the assessor’s value is incorrect. The single most compelling evidence that can be presented is a recent, arm’s-length sale of the property in question. Recent sales of reasonably comparable properties are the next best evidence. During the Board of Review, you should present all information you believe affects the value of the property. After your presentation, the assessor will present information they believe supports the valuation. Board members may ask questions at anytime in the process and you may address questions to the assessor. All proceedings of the Board are recorded by either a stenographer or a recording device. After hearing all the evidence, the Board will hold a public deliberation. The municipal clerk will provide you with a written notice of the Board’s decision.

Should you be dissatisfied with the Board’s decision, state statutes provide for three methods of challenging the assessment.

- Under Chapter 70.47(13) you may appeal directly to Circuit Court.
- Chapter 70.75(85) allows individuals to appeal to the Department of Revenue.
- An individual may claim excessive assessment with the municipality under Chapter 74.37.

Each of these options have advantages and disadvantages. An individual appealing their assessment should consider all options carefully. For additional and more detailed information on this process, please see: [http://www.revenue.wi.gov/pubs/slf/pb055.pdf](http://www.revenue.wi.gov/pubs/slf/pb055.pdf) for a copy of “Property Assessment Appeal Guide for Real Property Owners 2007.”

Submitted by:
Brian Braithwaite, Real Property Lister
Trial Period At Cedar Lake Wayside Park
Dogs allowed Off-Leash

Are dogs allowed off leashes in the Washington County Park System? The answer is “No”, but there is one exception. As of April 1st dogs are allowed off leashes at Cedar Lake Wayside County Park, a five acre park located on County Highway NN at County Highway Z, 3 miles south of State Highway 33. The Washington County Planning and Parks Committee has authorized a one-year trial basis allowing dogs off leashes at this site only. Cedar Lake Wayside is a 35 year-old park that has a picnic area, tables, water, and a portable restroom. Signs are currently posted notifying dog owners that dogs must be under control at all times and owners are responsible for picking up and disposing of all dog waste. There is no perimeter fencing at this park. For more information, contact the Washington County Planning and Parks Department at 262.335.4445.

Golf Course Barn Fire

On Tuesday, April 17th, the cold storage barns at the Washington County Golf Course were destroyed by fire. By early afternoon the fire was out, but the buildings and all the machinery inside were a total loss. Some dry fertilizer and a small amount of dry fungicide were also stored in these buildings, but the greatest loss came from the turf maintenance equipment including fairway mowers, green mowers, sprayers, and rough mowers that were stored in the barns. The best news was that no one was injured and there was no environmental damage and business was only interrupted for a few hours. The cause of the fire is still under investigation, but as soon as the site is released the demolition and cleanup will begin. This process should take several days to complete. A new cold storage building will be built next to the existing maintenance building, located near the entrance to the Golf Course, and should be ready by early winter.

Earth Day

In celebration of Earth Day (April 22nd) Washington County Park crews are planting thousands of trees at various sites in the park system and around county buildings. Seventy–five hardwoods were planted around the new Highway Shop in West Bend, and hundreds of potted trees will be planted at Leonard J. Yahr County Park located at 7999 Orchard Valley Road. The Disc Golf Course located in Heritage Trails County Park located on County Highway E will also receive trees. Bare root evergreens will be planted using a tree planter at several other county parks to serve as screening. Fifty-five oaks and maples will also be planted this spring along the Eisenbahn Trail corridor.

Submitted by: Mike Kactro, Assistant Administrator for Golf & Parks
WHAT'S BLOOMING?

Walk the wooded trails in Washington County’s Parks and look for these spring blooming beauties!

Some spring blooming plants called *spring ephemerals* grow rapidly in spring with leaves and flowers usually appearing together. These plants generally bloom, set seed and die back before the tree canopy develops. One of the reasons why invasive plants are so detrimental to our native woodlands is because some invasive plants leaf out very early, earlier than the native trees and they prevent the light from reaching the ground layer, including the spring ephemerals, so these early blooming native plants eventually die off.

Other spring blooming plants grow in shady woods but retain their leaves for part or all of the summer, pictured below are some of the *spring ephemerals*. Enjoy the walk and the scenery!

- Pictured above: Purple Trillium
- Bloodroot
- Wild Ginger
- Mayapple
- Trout Lilly
- White Trillium
- Dutchman’s Breeches
Planning & Parks Department Newsletter is published quarterly for Washington County residents. Viewpoints of authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee or the Washington County Board of Supervisors. The Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee and the Planning and Parks Department staff encourage responses from the public.

Planning & Parks Department Mission Statement
Our Mission:
The public is provided with recreational benefits, environmental protection and increased awareness, compliance with regulations, vibrant local economy, sensible growth and an improved quality of life in Washington County.

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