

CHAPTER 3: MILWAUKEE COUNTY LAND USE TRENDS AND RESOURCES

Most citizens in Milwaukee County and surrounding communities believe that substantial social, economic and environmental change will occur over the next fifty years. Whether they foresee positive or negative changes ahead, all seemed to want acquisition and protection of green and open space to bring them closer to their vision of a sustainable, desirable Wisconsin for their children. Some of the changes that appear likely over the next fifty years are:

- An increasing urban population, with a continuing trend in land being divided into smaller and smaller parcels;
- Land continuing to increase in value at a rate far greater than inflation;
- Far fewer small farming operations;
- More private land closed to public access, and more pressure on the recreational use of public lands as the population increases and more private land is closed to public access;
- An increase in the number and distribution of invasive species;
- More ecological fragmentation;
- More problems managing rapidly growing populations of urban game animals ;
- Climate change altering species composition and distribution;
- More demand for a variety of non-motorized recreational activities on public lands, and more conflicts between user groups of public lands.

3.1 LAND AND WATER RESOURCES: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The Milwaukee County Department of Public Works - Environmental Services\Land Conservation Department initiated development of the initial Land and Water Management Plan by gathering input from:

- The Parks, Energy, Environment and Extension Education Committee;
- Results of public meetings initiated by the DNR in January and February 2000, with representation from local and state conservation and recreation organizations;
- Information compiled from DNR questionnaire and citizen survey responses on the needs related to important natural resource issues; and
- A review of the top issues identified and prioritized by Milwaukee River Basin conservation professionals.

Issues Identification

Based on a review of issues characterized and prioritized by the groups referenced above, the top issues were identified for consideration (reference Table 10 below). They were incorporated into the Milwaukee County Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Goals and objectives were developed based on the issues, and they form the basis for the Milwaukee County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

Table 10. Top Natural Resource Issues Identified for Milwaukee County (2000)

Loss of wetlands, woodlands, quality farmland, environmental corridors and other green space due to development pressure: need for preservation of unique natural areas; endangered, threatened and rare species preservation; habitat restoration and enhancement; loss of wetlands due to filling/development encroachment; loss and fragmentation of Environmental Corridors and wildlife habitat; protection and restoration of riparian areas; financial support for purchase of conservation easements, particularly for riparian areas; need for farmland preservation planning

Nonpoint Source Pollution Control: Need for buffers along waterways (perennial and intermittent streams); concern about surface water pollution (streams, rivers) caused by urban and suburban runoff pollution; urban storm water management; soil erosion from construction sites; flooding; contamination of sediment caused by excessive runoff; adoption of comprehensive stormwater management plans by all cities, villages, and towns; overall, need for improvement of water quality by controlling nonpoint sources of pollution; need for training and enforcement to assure more uniform erosion control ordinances

Lake Michigan Shoreline: lakeshore bluff erosion; beach erosion; shoreline recession; public access; shoreline erosion control measures

Need for local, publicly-available natural resource education and information support programs, including GIS and a county web page: lack of readily available information and mapping since no GIS is in place; need for informative web page to disseminate current news, standards and educational materials related to local water quality issues in Milwaukee County; invasive and exotic plant identification and controls; and nuisance wildlife management control measures

On-going dialogue with the public and stakeholders, such as Land & Water Basin Team Leaders in the Milwaukee River Basin, citizen advisory groups, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), has indicated that the top natural resource issues in Milwaukee County have not changed significantly since 2000. As such, the goals in this updated plan are similar to that of the initial plan. The objectives have changed, since they build upon progress made over the past five years. They also reflect the issues that are currently at the forefront of resource management.