

5 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

5.1 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Chapter Purpose and Contents

This element includes a brief summary of existing agricultural, natural, and cultural resources followed by a series of goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide future preservation or enhancement activities in the Town of Hancock. The element also provides a matrix of preservation programs that could be utilized to meet Hancock's preservation objectives.

Recommendations were developed through the public participation process, and through review of the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)*. Many of the goals and objectives that were developed as part of the community management plan have also been included in this comprehensive plan. New goals, objectives, and recommendations were added where identified through the public participation process or in areas necessary for compliance with Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law.

5.2 Summary of Existing Conditions for Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

The following section identifies primary agricultural, natural, and cultural resources identified by the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) that are located in whole or in part within the Town of Hancock. A complete listing of existing resources information can be located in the *Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report*.

Agricultural Resources

- Agricultural land cover, which includes row crops, forages and grassland, comprised over 66 percent of the total area in the Town of Hancock (1999).
- In 1997, an estimated 59 farms existed within the Town of Hancock. This represents a net gain of 8 farms from 1990.
- In 1990, there were 2 dairy farms in the Town of Hancock and 232 in Waushara County; by 1997 the town had lost one dairy farm, while the county lost 101 dairy farms.
- Between 1990 and 1997, 361 acres (2.9%) of farmland were lost in the Town of Hancock.
- Only 100 acres or 0.5 percent of the land in the Town of Hancock is considered prime farmland.

Natural Resources Soils

- About 66 percent of the area in the Town of Hancock is suitable for conventional systems; while another 27 percent is suitable for at-grade, in-ground pressure and mound systems.
- About half of the area within the Town of Hancock (48.2%, 10,385 acres) has soils that are considered to have a very high suitability for building site development.
- Almost half of the soils (46.6%, 9,854 acres) pose a slight risk to no limitations for septage spreading within the Town of Hancock.

Geography and Topography

- Within the Town of Hancock, land relief is approximately 120 feet, from a low of 1,060 feet above sea level near Carter Creek to a high of 1,180 west of I-39.
- Less than five percent (4.2%, 906 acres) of the Town of Hancock is classified as having slopes in excess of 12 percent.

Water Resources

- Surface water drainage for the Town of Hancock is predominately located within the Central Wisconsin River Basin, with a small area in the Town's southeast corner falling within the Upper Fox River Basin.
- The Town of Hancock is divided into three sub-watersheds: the Big Roche-A-Cri Creek and the Little Roche-A-Cri Creek (Central Wisconsin River Basin) and the Mecan River (Upper Fox River Basin).
- There are five lakes and/or impoundments found within the Town of Hancock.
- There is only one named river/stream in the Town of Hancock; Carter Creek.
- Approximately 1.6 percent (351 acres) of land within the Town of Hancock lies in a floodplain.
- Only three percent (681 acres) of the Town of Hancock is classified as wetlands.
- A groundwater divide, located west and parallel to the topographic divide, cuts diagonally through Waushara County and the Town of Hancock from Marquette County, through the Town of Coloma, Village of Hancock, east of the Village of Plainfield to the Portage County line. East of this divide, groundwater moves southeasterly toward the Wolf and Fox Rivers. West of this divide groundwater moves westerly toward the Wisconsin River.
- Twenty wells within the Town of Hancock exceeded the 10 ppm threshold level for nitrate.
- The majority of homes within the Town of Hancock are served by private wells.
- Groundwater depths of less than two feet are found in about five percent (1,171 acres) of the land area.
- According to the Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter ATCP 30 Atrazine, Pesticides; Use Restrictions, atrazine prohibition areas have been established throughout Waushara County and within the Town of Hancock. The atrazine prohibition area includes sections 4, 5, 8, and 9, between Badger Avenue and Bighorn Avenue west of 4th Avenue.

Ecological Resources

- The majority of the Town of Hancock falls within the Central Sand Plains ecological landscape, while the eastern portion of the Town falls within the Central Sand Hills ecological landscape.
- Woodlands comprise about 60 percent of the total land area in the Town of Hancock.
- There are 4,713 acres of general woodlands and 2,217 acres of planted woodlands in the Town of Hancock.
- In 2008, a total of 1,722.8 acres were actively managed with the Town of Hancock under the MFL and 246 acres managed under the FCL.

Parks, Open Space and Recreational Resources

- The WDNR owns approximately 1,537 acres within the Town of Hancock.
- The Greenwood State Wildlife Area falls within portions of the Town of Hancock and is located east of CTH FF and west of CTH GG.
- The Town of Hancock does not have any lands classified as State Fishery Areas.
- Carter Creek Area is managed by the WDNR and provides public access to Carter Creek.

Mineral Resources

- There are two active metallic or non-metallic mining sites in the Town of Hancock.

Solid and Hazardous Waste

- There are two (2) sites in the Town of Hancock that are listed on the WDNR's registry of active, inactive and abandoned sites where solid waste or hazardous wastes were known or likely to have been disposed.

Air Quality

- There are no areas in Waushara County which exceeds the limits of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, particulates, or carbon monoxide.

Cultural Resources

- At the present, no properties within the Town of Hancock are listed on the National Register.
- A search of the Wisconsin Historical Society's on-line Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) does not reveal any properties within the Town of Hancock.
- There is one historical marker in the Town of Hancock.
- There are no museums in the Town of Hancock.
- The Hancock Lakes which include Pine (Hancock) Lake, Deer Lake, Fish Lake and two more lakes were the seat of a large Indian population. Traces of their existence in this area still exist today.
- The Town of Sylvester was created in November of 1855. In 1856 the name was changed to Hancock.
- In 2000, the most common ancestry identified by town and county residents was German. Thirty-six percent (36.0%) of Town of Hancock and 38.0 percent of Waushara County residents claimed German ancestry.
- While Waushara County has Amish Settlements, these settlements are not concentrated in the Town of Hancock area.

Community Design¹

The Town of Hancock is a rural community with a mix of lake homes, farmsteads, and working agricultural fields. Design characteristics include rural farm homes and barns in active agricultural areas, and a range of housing types, including some larger lake home properties, around Pine Lake and Fish Lake. The Village of Hancock is located in the northeastern portion of the town and provides small lots and unique Main Street-style storefronts.

5.3 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Issues Identified Through the Planning Process

Supply and preservation of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources were some of the most important issues for the Town of Hancock. The following issues were identified through the public participation process as primary concerns that should be addressed by this comprehensive plan.

Changing Farm Economy

Recently, the price of corn has risen due to increased demand for ethanol production. However, the farm economy overall has been waning due to pressures from foreign markets, and a lack of new farmers. Competition for rural lands has also increased land prices making it more difficult for farmers to compete with real estate developers for prime agricultural lands.

Groundwater Preservation

Water quality and quantity have been a concern for Waushara County communities. Low lake levels throughout Waushara County underscore a more pressing problem: groundwater quantity and quality preservation. Although groundwater is found at varying depths throughout the area, the majority of groundwater in the Town of Hancock is found in depths greater than six feet. In general, there is a strong correlation between areas of high groundwater and wetlands. Wetlands provide valuable recharge areas for groundwater supplies. About three percent of the total land area in Hancock is classified as wetlands.

¹ This item was not developed by ECWRPC but was included to satisfy state requirements for the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element.

Destruction of Rural Character

Concerns about the Town having too much residential development were voiced in the 2002 Citizen Questionnaire. New subdivisions and other residential developments have been encroaching upon active farmlands and increasing competition for available lands for housing construction that would otherwise have been available for farm expansion. New housing has also been bringing with it changing expectations of rural living.

Invasive Species

The Town of Hancock does not contain county parks and relies on recreation lands operated by the Village of Hancock. This includes two parks on Fish Lake – Village Park and Whistler Mounds Park. Village Park contains a beach that is overrun with invasive species that diminish the aesthetic and recreational value of the park facility and the water resource.

5.4 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Policy

The Town of Hancock seeks to accommodate existing and future growth in ways that do not compromise the area's agricultural, natural, and cultural resources.

5.5 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

The following section identifies goals, objectives, and recommendations for the conservation and effective management of unique and valuable resources in the Town of Hancock. The goals and objectives identify what should be accomplished, whereas the recommendations focus on identifying the action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives. In many cases, existing prerogatives were carried over from the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)*. (All actions of the Town of Hancock and Waushara County are intended to be consistent with the provisions of the Clean Air and Water Act as currently adopted by the US Congress.)

Goal 5.1: Maintain and improve the water quality of lakes and streams.Objective(s)

- a. Reduce non-point nutrient runoff into lakes and streams.
- b. Minimize nutrient contributions from private on-site septic systems.
- c. Address all air quality issues facing the Town.
- d. Maintain wetland areas in native vegetation.

Recommendations

5.1.1 Promote fencing water bodies from livestock where needed and using best farm management practices (i.e. fertilizer use/timing, no-till planting, contour plowing). This includes reestablishing windbreaks to reduce non-point pollution.

5.1.2 Coordinate with the Village of Hancock to form a lake district organization. This body should be charged with maintaining a buffer of native vegetation along shorelines, promoting storm sewer diversion to detention ponds, minimizing the amount of impervious yard area, and encouraging on-site rain gardens.

5.1.3 Work with UWEX and other agencies to encourage organic farming practices which reduce the use of chemicals that may potentially contaminate water resources.

5.1.4 Cooperate with Waushara County to monitor the effectiveness of individual septic systems and discourage development in areas poorly suited for on-site waste disposal. Encourage inspections of on-site systems at time of sale or title transfer for all properties.

5.1.5 Work with property owners and the Village of Hancock to extend sanitary sewer service provision to Pine Lake residents, as requested.

5.1.6 Enforce building setbacks adjacent to wetlands as a part of the building permit process. This includes:

- i. A 50' buffer of undisturbed native vegetation and a 75' building setback adjacent to all designated wetlands.
- ii. A 35' native vegetation buffer and a 75' building setback adjacent to all lakes and ponds.
- iii. A 100' native vegetation buffer along all rivers and streams.

Goal 5.2: Preserve the quality and quantity of our groundwater supplies.

Objective(s)

- a. Ensure that adequate amounts of safe drinking water are available throughout the area.
- b. Ensure that the right to use groundwater for a variety of purposes is not compromised.

Recommendations

5.2.1 Continue monitoring any private wells within the Town for atrazine, nitrate and bacteria levels and require a permit for all new residential wells. Set up appropriate mechanisms to require testing on a regular basis in high risk areas.

5.2.2 Consider extending the Town of Hancock and Waushara County a minimum of 30 days to comment on high capacity well permits before issuance. Maintain a fair and responsible balance between providing for the groundwater needs of agricultural high capacity wells and the need for protection of adjoining private well groundwater usage.

5.2.3 Provide educational materials and periodic monitoring of on-site septic systems. Require on-site system testing as part of ownership transfers.

5.2.4 Consider charging high capacity users a modest per gallon user fee to be put into a fund that is used to pay for drilling deeper wells if draw down or contamination problems required failed wells to be replaced. High capacity well heads would be metered to determine usage, thereby allowing fund contributions to be allocated fairly based on actual usage.

5.2.5 Restrict residential and private well development near landfills by creating a 1,200 foot setback zone adjacent to existing and closed landfills.

5.2.6 Support monitoring and enforcement of water and air requirements consistent with the standards of the U.S. Clean Water and Clean Air Act through adoption by reference.

5.2.7 Protect water quality of area lakes by expanding the sanitary sewer service extensions to include areas around developing or developed lakes when requested by a majority of lake residents.

5.2.8 Continue to monitor and enforce safeguards on the atrazine prohibition areas in the Town of Hancock to ensure that private drinking wells are safe from excessive levels of atrazine, nitrates and harmful bacteria.

5.2.9 Minimize the amount of residential development near primary irrigation areas.

Goal 5.3: Preserve the area's most productive farmland for agriculture.

Objective(s)

- a. Maximize opportunities for profitable agricultural activities.
- b. Keep raw land prices attractive for agricultural sale.
- c. Reduce conflicts with non-farm residential development.

Recommendations

5.3.1 Discourage residential development in or near productive agricultural areas.

5.3.2 Work with Waushara County and UW-Extension to address existing conflicts such as aerial crop spraying.

5.3.3 Work with Waushara County to address potential agricultural concerns such as large animal operations that may be built within the Town. Work within state requirements to identify areas where these Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) can occur.

5.3.4 Provide educational materials to educate new property owners about the rural lifestyle and its implications.

Goal 5.4: Protect important architectural, historical, and other significant cultural resources.

Objective(s)

- a. Preserve the area's heritage.
- b. Capitalize on cultural resources to attract tourists.
- c. Provide incentives for redeveloping cultural resources.

Recommendations

5.4.1 Identify and protect historic buildings which contribute to the historic character of the area, including: Whistler's Indian mounds, the drug store, the library (old firehouse), GAR building (Lion's building), the Huckin's estate, the Walker house, etc.

5.4.2 Prepare state register nominations for designating other known Indian mound sites in the town. Investigate and prepare a past history of the Village/Town of Hancock.

5.4.3 Develop and inventory of historically significant local structures. Use this listing to apply for renovation funds and seek enrollment of important sites/structures on a state or national register.

Goal 5.5: Use natural resources for appropriate levels and types of recreation.

Objective(s)

- a. Accommodate a range of recreational opportunities.
- b. Develop and maintain quality recreational facilities.
- c. Minimize conflicts between user groups.
- d. Minimize conflicts between recreationalists and landowners.
- e. Increase the economic base through additional recreational/tourism development.

Recommendations

5.5.1 Work with the Village of Hancock to develop a recreation plan to identify recreational opportunities that are presently unavailable. The plan should include programming options and facilities development alternatives to enhance and provide a level of service appropriate for the level of usage the park receives.

5.5.2 Encourage potential business opportunities. These include environmental touring and education programs, or other businesses that provide low-impact recreation activities that do not interfere with the preservation and availability of natural and cultural resources.

5.5.3 Work with elected officials to resolve any potential user conflicts that may arise through regular and increased use of local natural and cultural resources.

5.6 Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Programs

The following table identifies programs for the enhancement or preservation of agricultural, natural, or cultural resources in the Town of Hancock. A complete listing of programming information can be located in the *Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report*.

Table 5.6: Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resource Programs

Agriculture Resources			
National			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Conservation Reserve Program / Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	NRCS/FSA	Allows landowners to enroll agricultural lands into various land conservation management programs.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/crp/ http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep
Grassland Reserve Program	FSA	Protects private grasslands, shrublands, and pasturelands.	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=grp
Grazing Lands Conservation Incentive	NRCS	Provides cost sharing to improve grazing land management.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/glici/
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	NRCS	Promotes agricultural production and environmental quality and compatible goals.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/eqip/
USDA Farmland Protection Policy Act	NRCS	Maintains prime farmland in agricultural use through agricultural conservation easements.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/fppa/
State			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program	DATCP	Preserves farmland through local planning and zoning; promotes social conservation; tax relief.	http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/arm/agriculture/land-water/conservation/pdf/2007FPPSummaryMaps.pdf
Farmland Tax Relief Credit Program	WDR	Provides tax relief to all farmland owners with 35 or more acres.	http://www.dor.state.wi.us/faqs/ise/farm.html
Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems Permits	WDNR	Regulates agricultural operations which discharge into local surface waters.	http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/ww/

Natural Resources			
National			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	NRCS	Voluntary program that is used to develop or improve wildlife habitat on privately owned land.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/whip/
Wetland Reserve Program	NRCS	Provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/wrp/
Forest Land Enhancement Program	FS	Aids landowners in the application of sustainable forestry management on private lands.	http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flep.shtm
State			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL)	WDNR	Encourages the growth of future commercial crops through sound forestry practices.	http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/feeds/faqsFull.asp?s1=ForestTax&s2=MFL&inc=ftax
Wisconsin Forest Land Owner Grant Program	WDNR	Assists private landowners in protecting and enhancing their woodlands.	http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/private/financial/wflgp.htm
Partners for Fish and Wildlife	FWS	Provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wildlife.	http://www.fws.gov/midwest/WisconsinPartners/
Cultural Resources			
National			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Federal Historic Preservation Credit	WHS	Returns 20% of the cost of rehabilitating historic buildings to owners.	http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/architecture/iptax_credit.asp
State			
Program	Department	Description	Contact Information
Wisconsin Historical Society	WHS	Provides funds to conduct surveys to identify and evaluate historical resources and other key services.	http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/
Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Credit	WHS	Returns an additional 5% of the cost of rehabilitation to owners as a discount on State income taxes.	http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/architecture/iptax_credit.asp
25% State Income Tax Credits	WHS	Used for the repair and rehabilitation of historic homes in Wisconsin.	http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/architecture/tax_credit.asp