

Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon Wisconsin

Phase I Inventory and Trends Report for Vision 2030

Recommended Draft

September 2009

Prepared by the Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission

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1. Issues and Opportunities

1.1 Introduction

Vernon County is located in southwest Wisconsin and part of the Mississippi Valley and Wisconsin River regions. Vernon County is bordered by the Mississippi River to the west and dissected by the Kickapoo River, which flows to the Wisconsin River. The county is home to 21 towns, 9 villages (two partially located in an adjacent county) and 3 cities. As of the 2000 census there were 28,056 people, 10,825 households, and 7,501 families residing in the county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 817 square miles (2,115 km²). Land comprises 759 square miles (2059 km²) of that area, water covers the other 22 square miles (56 km²) and is only 2.64% of the area. The majority of Vernon County can be generally described as rural with small cities and villages that provide more urban type services. The northwestern portion of the county and areas along the Mississippi River are developing more rapidly than other areas—development pressure due to its proximity to the City of La Crosse. Vernon County is primarily rural agricultural and woodland intermixed with low density residential development.

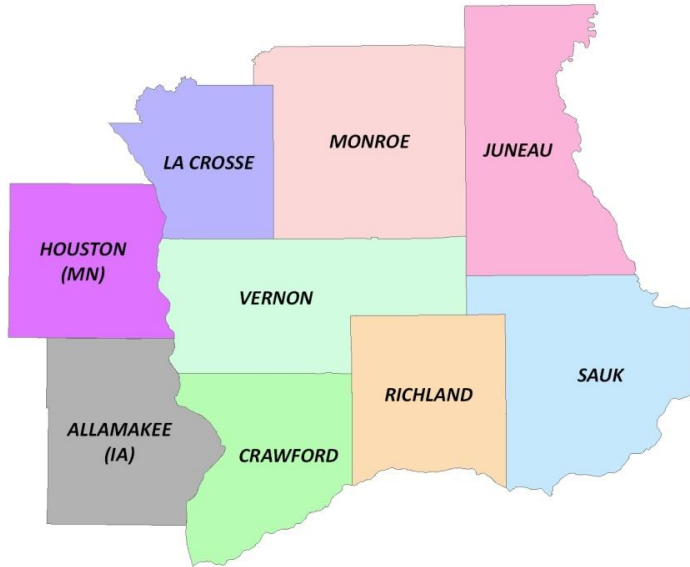
The economic base of Vernon County is historically dependent on agriculture. Recently, the diversity of the agricultural activity has expanded with the rise of organic production and marketing through Organic Valley Coop that is headquartered in the village of La Farge. The tourism industry here continues to thrive with the natural beauty of Wildcat Mountain State Park, the Kickapoo Reserve, and Mississippi River corridor providing many opportunities for recreation. Renewed trout streams and the rural atmosphere bring people to the area from major urban centers that surround this corner of Wisconsin.

This report will help to identify future trends and anticipated changes while providing background information detailing the conditions in Vernon County today.

1.2 Regional Perspective

Counties adjacent to Vernon County include La Crosse County - northwest, Monroe County – north, Juneau County – northeast, Sauk County – east, Richland County – southeast, Crawford County – south, Allamakee County, Iowa – southwest, Houston County, Minnesota – west (see Figure 1.2.1). The western part of the county is connected by transportation and jobs to the city of La Crosse, the central area of the county is dominated by the cities of Viroqua and Westby, while the eastern towns are oriented towards Hillsboro and points east. Each region offers a unique set of amenities and opportunities that attract new residents at a slow, but steady rate.

Figure 1.2.1 –Adjacent Counties



1.3 Planning Process

Development of the *Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon* was in response to the passage of Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning legislation (Statute 66.1001). This law requires all municipalities (counties, cities, towns, and villages) to adopt a comprehensive plan by the year 2010 if they wish to make any local land use decisions. As of January 1, 2010, any municipality that “affects land use” through regulation--such as zoning, land division or subdivision ordinances, or official mapping--must make its decisions in accordance with that community’s comprehensive plan. Vernon County is required to develop a countywide plan to meet the conditions of the legislation.

Incorporated community comprehensive plans are part of the county plan. However, a city or village plan is adopted separately and has autonomous authority for regulation and administration within its respective borders. While the comprehensive planning law encourages coordinated planning between jurisdictions, it does not require consistency between plans. Accordingly, it is possible that a city or village plan may conflict with that of a neighboring town and that each respective plan will portray this difference. The state comprehensive planning law does not change the basic authorities or relationships between counties and towns in adoption or administration of plans or zoning.

1.4 Planning Framework and Reporting Process.

The Vernon County planning process has resulted in two plan documents detailed as follows:

- *Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon —Phase I Inventory and Trends Report for Vision 2030.* This component contains inventory, background, and trend data for eight of the nine required comprehensive planning elements. Subjects include: population and housing,

transportation, utilities and community facilities, agriculture, natural and cultural resources, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, land use, and related programs.

- *Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon—Phase II Goals, Objectives and Action Plan for Vision 2030.* This document references the *Phase I Inventory and Trends Report* and provides goals, objectives, policies, recommendations, and future programs for the county and partnership agencies and organizations. This document, in coordination with the *Phase I Inventory and Trends Report*, meets the requirements of Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning legislation for the county.

These documents provide the planning framework upon which decisions can be based, allow for local control, and provide planning and implementation strategies that can steer the entire county in a desirable direction for the next twenty years. Each document is ordered according to the nine planning elements. One member from the full Comprehensive Plan Commission, which was appointed by the Vernon County Board Chair, led an element work group. The planning element chapters were written by the work groups. Work group membership is listed in Appendix A of this document.

The work groups varied in size and composition, but each one made efforts to reach out to the major interest groups and leaders in the specialized area. The housing element work group was a special task of a local Housing Coalition that was already meeting on a regular basis to bring interested parties together to collaborate on housing issues. An economic development group was formed after a meeting hosted by the Vernon Economic Development Association to do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the economic development situation in the county. Other element work groups had staff available and departmental resources that contributed to the work.

This decentralized approach to planning has some deficiencies, but also offers several strengths. It is difficult to plan with the larger picture in focus using a decentralized approach. The strength of the work group structure is that participants focused narrowly on felt-needs of the public and leaders. In the final phases of the document preparation there was an effort to take a wider perspective-- the connections and overlap that suggest structural changes and programs that will provide for a better functioning Vernon County.

1.5 Public Participation Efforts.

The program undertaken by the Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission required it to engage the participation of the public in the planning process. A draft copy of an initial public participation plan was distributed to the Comprehensive Plan Commission for review and input at the second meeting of the commission in October 2007. A final public participation plan was produced working with the commission and is presented below:

Goals of Public Participation:

1. To facilitate the acceptance and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan by county citizens.
2. To foster local leadership in the planning process.
3. To obtain detailed information and recommendations on specific planning issues by extending special participation opportunities to local officials, to the public and to key resource persons.

Participation Structure:

A Citizen Advisory committee will be formed to provide input to the plan and provide a resource to encourage the public to participate in public meetings. The members should be leader-representatives from the many interests in the county, including the farming, economic development, environmental and service organizations.

Citizen participation sessions on a Supervisory District basis: This is a neighborhood discussion of the state of the local situation. The structure of the discussion will conform to the nine planning areas of the comprehensive plan, and a map of the district boundary. A complete county map will also be used as issues beyond the immediate neighborhood arise. (Results of the neighborhood meetings are summarized in Appendix B.)

Timeframe to complete: before spring 2008

Sample Survey: The information generated in the Supervisory District public forums will be used to create citizen opinion surveys. This survey instrument will be disseminated to county citizens to create scientifically valid data set that reflects the interests and priorities of county respondents. This may result in sending the survey to all citizens in the county or a randomly selected subset of that sampling frame. (Results of the survey are summarized in Appendix C.)

Completion by summer 2008

Communication effort: A website will be created to track the progress of the plan as it is revised, announce meetings/agendas, make meeting minutes available on the internet and ultimately be a place to view/download a copy of the preliminary plan that will go to public hearing.

Element work group structure: For each of the nine planning areas we will appoint working groups to focus and advise in the writing of each section. This will include relevant county personnel and committees, as well as relevant public agency staff for technical input. Among these organizations are: schools, area farm organizations, U.S. Department of Agriculture offices, watershed/drainage districts, regional planning, State Department of Natural Resources, federal resource agencies, private utilities, civic organizations and others.

A public hearing on the recommended plan is required. Copies of the Preliminary Plan will be made available at the County offices, on the website and at local public libraries.

All committee, sub-committee, working group and supervisory district forums are subject to the Wisconsin open meetings law. All meetings must meet the requirements for public posting. In addition, if a majority of the members of any town, city or village board or council, or committee will be present at any such meeting, that unit of local government is also subject to the open meetings law requirements and must post notice of the meeting.

Approved Resolution by the County Board: February 5, 2008

1.6 Trends and Opportunities

The major trends are outlined at the end of each element chapter in this document. From these trends came the broad goals, objectives and actions determined in the *Phase II Goals and Action Plan*. The timeframe for implementation and the person or organization that would likely lead the effort is detailed for actions when possible. Often there are important goals that the county should support, but may not be the lead unit of government or agency or funder.

Many of the Phase II document goals are beyond the present capacity of Vernon County staff and program areas, but those agencies who have the capacity need this endorsement as they pursue grants and other aid to do work that will improve Vernon County. The goal of planning is to provide

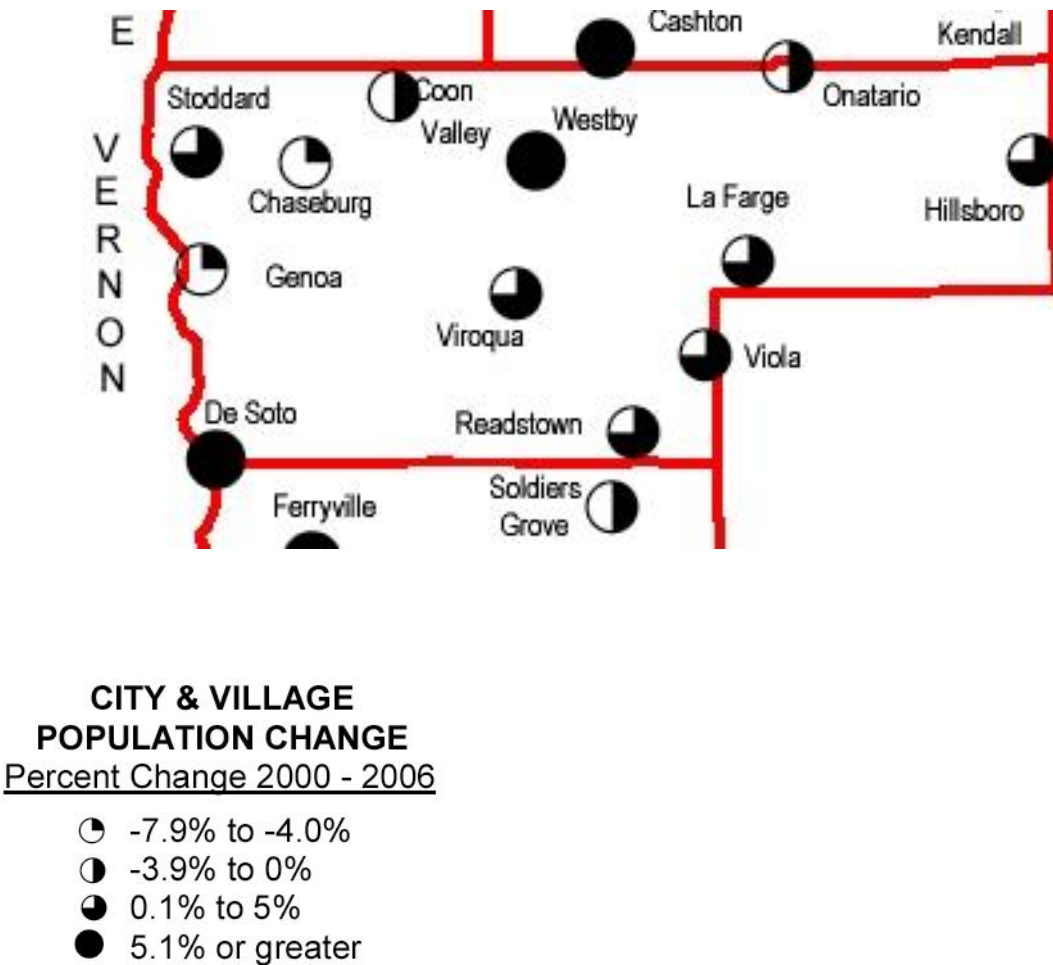
- a vision that generates outside funding for programs,
- a unity of purpose that helps all agencies and units of government work in the same direction, and
- more efficient use of resources that make a larger impact through coordinated effort.

2. Population and Housing

2.1 Population Characteristics and Trends

As of January 2007, the population in Vernon County totaled 29,530, an increase of 1,474 new residents, 5.3 percent more than in the 2000 census. Vernon County's total population is increasing from both natural causes (births minus deaths) and net-migration (more individuals moving into the county than leaving). The growth in population is unevenly distributed across the county as the following figure illustrates (from: MRRPC, 2006.)

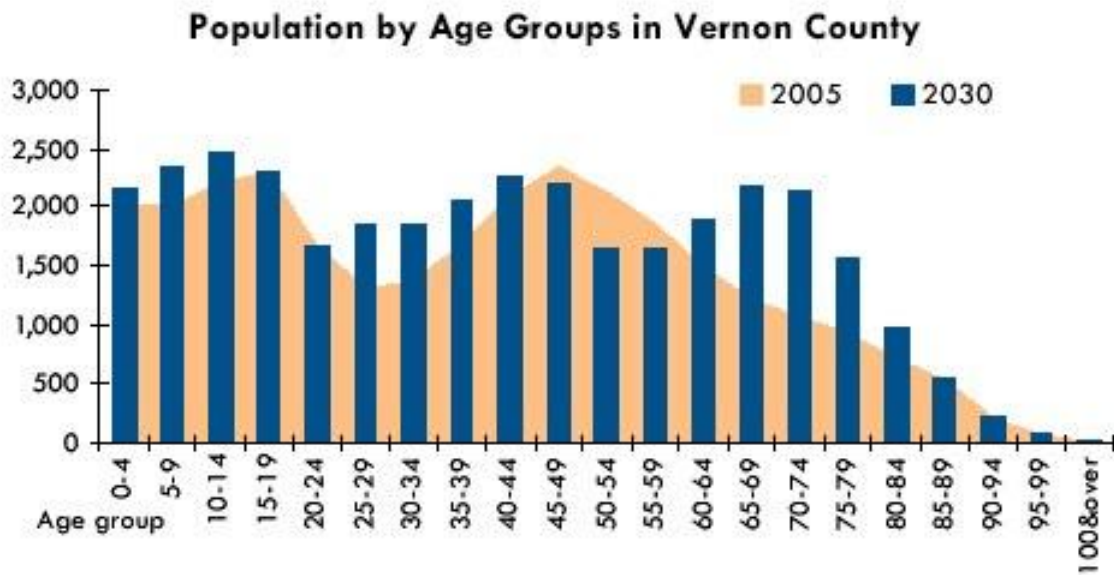
Figure 2.1.1 - Population Changes, 2000-2006



Adding new residents from natural causes is helping to keep the median age in the county in check, but at 39.7 years it is still higher than the state median age of 37.6 years. There is still a noticeable dip in the 20-40 age group that reflects the locally reported (Appendix B, 2008 Neighborhood Listening

sessions) out-migration of the county’s youth and resulting “brain drain” from the county workforce. The median age is poised to increase further, as a large share of the county’s population advances toward the older age groups. By 2030 roughly 28% of Vernon County’s population will have celebrated their 60th birthday. In 2005, slightly more than 21% of the population was aged 60 years or older.

Figure 2.1.2 - Population By Age Group



Source: WI Dept. of Administration, Demographic Services

Note: Data included in all tables and charts in this profile are subject to revision.

(from p.1 Vernon County Profile, 2007)

2.2 Housing Characteristics

This section analyzes the condition of housing and housing trends in Vernon County.

Housing Unit Trends

Table 2.2.1 below shows housing trends through the decennial censuses of 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000. From 1970 through 1990 the County’s housing stock increased by over 28%. Between 1990 and 2000 the County recorded a housing growth rate of 14.6%.

Table 2.2.1 - Vernon County Housing Trends

Total Housing Units							
	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Chg 70-90	% Chg 90-00	% Chg 70-00
Bergen T	319	374	468	535	46.7%	14.3%	67.7%
Chaseburg V	82	114	151	146	84.1%	-3.3%	78.0%
Christiana T	251	283	299	341	19.1%	14.0%	35.9%
Clinton T	213	253	295	351	38.5%	19.0%	64.8%
Coon T	258	260	270	295	4.7%	9.3%	14.3%
Coon Valley V	228	305	321	332	40.8%	3.4%	45.6%
De Soto V	81	108	115	140	42.0%	21.7%	72.8%
Forest T	203	217	228	258	12.3%	13.2%	27.1%
Franklin T	276	355	352	382	27.5%	8.5%	38.4%
Genoa V	175	264	332	120	89.7%	-63.9%	-31.4%
Genoa T	103	102	115	392	11.7%	240.9%	280.6%
Greenwood T	166	211	196	252	18.1%	28.6%	51.8%
Hamburg T	209	249	269	325	28.7%	20.8%	55.5%
Harmony T	183	207	218	279	19.1%	28.0%	52.5%
Hillsboro C	483	554	591	603	22.4%	2.0%	24.8%
Hillsboro T	205	265	266	326	29.8%	22.6%	59.0%
Jefferson T	296	327	367	407	24.0%	10.9%	37.5%
Kickapoo T	163	177	197	251	20.9%	27.4%	54.0%
La Farge V	312	350	358	366	14.7%	2.2%	17.3%
Liberty T	70	72	81	123	15.7%	51.9%	75.7%
Ontario V	167	185	197	254	18.0%	28.9%	52.1%
Readstown V	183	190	216	216	18.0%	0.0%	18.0%
Stark T	116	133	144	198	24.1%	37.5%	70.7%
Sterling T	220	241	253	278	15.0%	9.9%	26.4%
Stoddard V	256	292	324	375	26.6%	15.7%	46.5%
Union T	148	160	180	244	21.6%	35.6%	64.9%
Viola V	91	111	105	118	15.4%	12.4%	29.7%
Viroqua C	1,429	1,671	1,870	2,105	30.9%	12.6%	47.3%
Viroqua T	396	542	528	603	33.3%	14.2%	52.3%
Webster T	175	235	233	293	33.1%	25.8%	67.4%
Westby C	622	718	811	906	30.4%	11.7%	45.7%
Wheatland T	186	195	289	360	55.4%	24.6%	93.5%
Whitestown T	183	150	191	242	4.4%	26.7%	32.2%
Vernon County	8,448	9,870	10,830	12,416	28.2%	14.6%	47.0%
State of Wisconsin	1,472,332	1,863,897	2,055,676	2,321,144	39.6%	12.9%	57.7%
United States	68,704,315	88,410,627	102,236,678	115,904,641	48.8%	13.4%	68.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 2.2.2 – Vernon County Average Estimated Total Housing Units

COUNTY NAME	4/1/2000 CENSUS	1/1/2001 ESTIMATE	1/1/2002 ESTIMATE	1/1/2003 ESTIMATE	1/1/2004 ESTIMATE	1/1/2005 ESTIMATE	1/1/2006 ESTIMATE	1/1/2007 ESTIMATE	1/1/2008 ESTIMATE
VERNON	12,416	12,619	12,786	12,977	13,156	13,355	13,527	13,674	13,820

Source: 2000 Census (corrected data; Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, Annual Housing Survey for Years following 2000 Census.

Table 2.2.3 shows that according to the 2000 Census, Vernon County population was 28,056 and there were 10,825 households in the county, an average of 2.59 persons per household.

Table 2.2.3 – Vernon County Average Number of People per Household – 2000 Census

	2000 Census Population	2000 Census Households	Persons Per Household		2000 Census Population	2000 Census Households	Persons Per Household
Bergen T	1,317	491	2.68	La Farge V	775	342	2.20
Chaseburg V	306	133	2.30	Liberty T	167	73	2.29
Christiana T	871	308	2.83	Ontario V	476	225	2.12
Clinton T	1,354	313	4.33	Readstown V	395	187	2.11
Coon T	683	262	2.61	Stark T	349	138	2.53
Coon Valley V	714	307	2.28	Sterling T	713	234	3.00
De Soto V	248	104	2.38	Stoddard V	815	351	2.32
Forest T	583	199	2.93	Union T	531	165	3.22
Franklin T	923	324	2.85	Viola V	245	103	2.38
Genoa V	263	112	2.35	Viroqua C	4,335	1,990	2.10
Genoa T	705	285	2.47	Viroqua T	1,560	549	2.64
Greenwood T	770	201	3.83	Webster T	676	217	3.12
Hamburg T	848	311	2.73	Westby C	2,045	840	2.34
Harmony T	739	247	2.99	Wheatland T	533	236	2.26
Hillsboro C	1,302	565	2.18	Whitestown T	509	167	3.04
Hillsboro T	766	285	2.69	Vernon County	28,056	10,825	2.59
Jefferson T	974	367	2.65	Wisconsin	5,363,715	2,084,544	2.57
Kickapoo T	566	194	2.92	United States	281,421,906	105,480,101	2.67

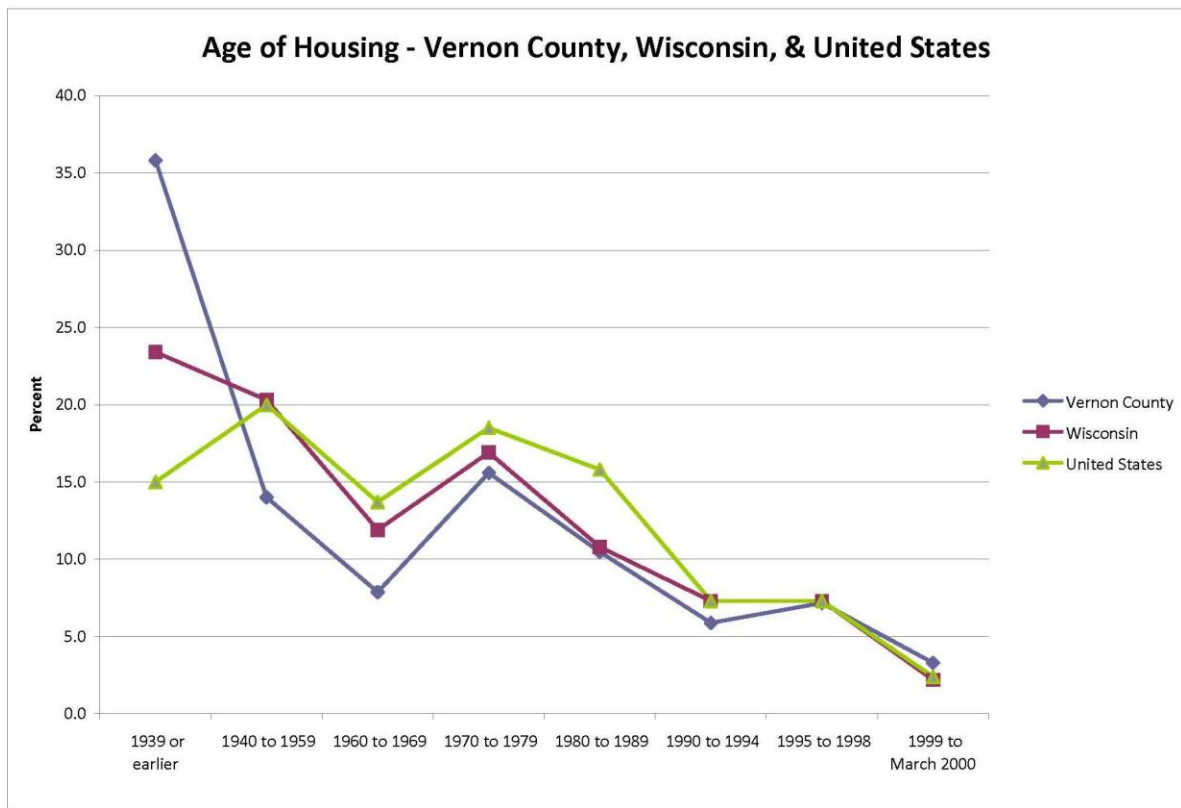
Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF1.

Age of Housing

Table 2.2.4 provides information on the age of housing for each municipality in Vernon County as well as for the State of Wisconsin and the Nation. As of the 2000 Census, 35.8% of Vernon County’s residential structures were built prior to 1939 as compared to the State (23%) and Nation (15%). From 1970 through 1979 the County saw the greatest amount of residential growth with over 15% of residential structures built during that period. From 1980 to March of 2000 the County experienced a 26.9% growth in housing, less than Wisconsin with 27.6% and the Nation with 32.8%.

Figure 2.2.1 shows residential age trends from 1939 through 2000 for the County, State and Nation.

Figure 2.2.1 – Age of Housing: Vernon County-Wisconsin-United States



Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF3.

Table 2.2.4 – Age of Residential Structures – Vernon County-Wisconsin- U.S.

	1939 Or Earlier	%	1940 To 1959	%	1960 To 1969	%	1970 To 1979	%	1980 To 1989	%	1990 To 1994	%	1995 To 1998	%	1999 To March 2000	%
Bergen T	89	16.4	78	6.1	80	14.7	123	22.7	57	10.5	57	10.5	41	7.6	18	3.3
Chaseburg V	70	47.0	13	4.0	14	9.4	19	12.8	17	11.4	12	8.1	4	2.7	0	0.0
Christiana T	162	47.1	36	7.0	13	3.8	57	16.6	18	5.2	28	8.1	26	7.6	4	1.2
Clinton T	137	38.6	29	4.8	23	6.5	39	11.0	35	9.9	51	14.4	26	7.3	15	4.2
Coon T	152	51.7	33	7.1	21	7.1	33	11.2	18	6.1	14	4.8	17	5.8	6	2.0
Coon Valley V	102	30.9	69	5.5	20	6.1	61	18.5	40	12.1	21	6.4	15	4.5	2	0.6
De Soto V	50	32.1	27	5.1	26	16.7	10	6.4	11	7.1	22	14.1	4	2.6	6	3.8
Forest T	135	48.6	26	2.9	10	3.6	42	15.1	23	8.3	14	5.0	19	6.8	9	3.2
Franklin T	160	40.6	44	5.1	24	6.1	83	21.1	33	8.4	7	1.8	35	8.9	8	2.0
Genoa V	65	52.0	24	4.8	8	6.4	13	10.4	10	8.0	0	0.0	2	1.6	3	2.4
Genoa T	76	19.6	28	2.6	57	14.7	75	19.3	49	12.6	38	9.8	44	11.3	21	5.4
Greenwood T	103	40.1	23	7.0	9	3.5	47	18.3	22	8.6	15	5.8	25	9.7	13	5.1
Hamburg T	108	33.6	15	2.5	24	7.5	56	17.4	43	13.4	35	10.9	32	10.0	8	2.5
Harmony T	113	41.2	14	2.2	21	7.7	35	12.8	30	10.9	18	6.6	31	11.3	12	4.4
Hillsboro C	272	44.3	148	9.8	38	6.2	60	9.8	37	6.0	11	1.8	39	6.4	9	1.5
Hillsboro T	127	40.7	29	6.1	11	3.5	47	15.1	45	14.4	16	5.1	25	8.0	12	3.8
Jefferson T	165	40.2	46	6.1	25	6.1	71	17.3	49	12.0	19	4.6	19	4.6	16	3.9
Kickapoo T	79	33.8	19	3.8	25	10.7	33	14.1	26	11.1	20	8.5	17	7.3	15	6.4
La Farge V	139	38.0	116	15.6	8	2.2	55	15.0	27	7.4	8	2.2	5	1.4	8	2.2
Liberty T	29	21.2	12	7.3	9	6.6	12	8.8	18	13.1	8	5.8	26	19.0	23	16.8
Ontario V	75	29.4	41	7.5	20	7.8	59	23.1	29	11.4	17	6.7	8	3.1	6	2.4
Readstown V	80	37.4	35	9.8	22	10.3	27	12.6	42	19.6	2	0.9	6	2.8	0	0.0
Stark T	69	36.1	21	1.0	14	7.3	20	10.5	29	15.2	16	8.4	16	8.4	6	3.1
Sterling T	141	49.3	25	6.6	23	8.0	53	18.5	27	9.4	9	3.1	7	2.4	1	0.3

	1939 Or Earlier	%	1940 To 1959	%	1960 To 1969	%	1970 To 1979	%	1980 To 1989	%	1990 To 1994	%	1995 To 1998	%	1999 To March 2000	%
Stoddard V	87	23.6	84	9.5	50	13.6	49	13.3	52	14.1	7	1.9	36	9.8	3	0.8
Union T	80	34.6	21	5.2	10	4.3	27	11.7	41	17.7	20	8.7	19	8.2	13	5.6
Viola V	63	47.7	12	6.1	6	4.5	9	6.8	6	4.5	6	4.5	10	7.6	20	15.2
Viroqua C	765	36.5	302	8.4	189	9.0	329	15.7	205	9.8	109	5.2	162	7.7	36	1.7
Viroqua T	206	34.9	76	6.6	28	4.7	99	16.8	64	10.8	21	3.6	43	7.3	53	9.0
Webster T	119	40.9	36	6.2	14	4.8	45	15.5	13	4.5	11	3.8	24	8.2	29	10.0
Westby C	278	31.0	173	7.8	84	9.4	146	16.3	113	12.6	37	4.1	54	6.0	13	1.4
Wheatland T	61	17.8	45	4.1	44	12.9	67	19.6	50	14.6	37	10.8	24	7.0	14	4.1
Whitestown T	83	34.6	33	7.1	7	2.9	34	14.2	21	8.8	25	10.4	29	12.1	8	3.3
Vernon County	4,440	35.8	1,733	14.0	977	7.9	1,935	15.6	1,300	10.5	731	5.9	890	7.2	410	3.3

WI	543,164	23.4	470,862	20.3	276,188	11.9	391,349	16.9	249,789	10.8	168,838	7.3	170,219	7.3	50,735	2.2
U.S.	17,380,053	15.0	23,145,917	20.0	15,911,903	13.7	21,438,863	18.5	18,326,847	15.8	8,467,008	7.3	8,478,975	7.3	2,755,075	2.4

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF3.

Type of Housing Structure

Table 2.2.5 shows that according to the 2000 census the majority of housing (73.9%) in Vernon County is on-unit—detached housing. The second most common type of housing (14.7%) is the mobile home, much more prevalent here than in Wisconsin (4.4%) or the U.S. (7.6%). One-unit-attached and multi-family unit housing make up 10.7% of the housing in Vernon County.

Table 2.2.5 – Housing Units by Type: Vernon Count- Wisconsin- United States

	1 Unit Detached	%	1 Unit Attached	%	2 Units	%	3 or 4 Units	%	5-9 Units	%	10-19 Units	%	20 or More Units	%	Mobile Home	%	Other	%	Total
Bergen T	497	91.5	2	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	42	7.7	2	0.4	543
Chaseburg V	89	59.7	2	1.3	22	14.8	3	2.0	0	0.0	15	10.1	0	0.0	18	12.1	0	0.0	149
Christiana T	292	84.9	2	0.6	5	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	45	13.1	0	0.0	344
Clinton T	297	83.7	17	4.8	0	0.0	7	2.0	5	1.4	0	0.0	2	0.6	27	7.6	0	0.0	355
Coon T	265	90.1	1	0.3	4	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	8.2	0	0.0	294
Coon Valley V	216	65.5	2	0.6	17	5.2	19	5.8	2	0.6	18	5.5	0	0.0	56	17.0	0	0.0	330
De Soto V	137	87.8	0	0.0	6	3.8	5	3.2	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	7	4.5	0	0.0	156
Forest T	220	79.1	3	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	51	18.3	2	0.7	278
Franklin T	325	82.5	3	0.8	7	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.8	56	14.2	0	0.0	394
Genoa V	110	88.0	2	1.6	5	4.0	8	6.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	125
Genoa T	201	51.8	2	0.5	8	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	175	45.1	2	0.5	388
Greenwood T	218	84.8	0	0.0	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	31	12.1	7	2.7	257
Hamburg T	276	86.0	2	0.6	4	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	11.5	2	0.6	321
Harmony T	217	79.2	0	0.0	4	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	47	17.2	6	2.2	274
Hillsboro C	458	74.6	5	0.8	67	10.9	21	3.4	30	4.9	31	5.0	0	0.0	2	0.3	0	0.0	614
Hillsboro T	237	76.0	8	2.6	2	0.6	6	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	59	18.9	0	0.0	312
Jefferson T	352	85.9	2	0.5	4	1.0	5	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	47	11.5	0	0.0	410
Kickapoo T	181	77.4	4	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	49	20.9	0	0.0	234
La Farge V	275	75.1	3	0.8	12	3.3	14	3.8	10	2.7	2	0.5	0	0.0	50	13.7	0	0.0	366
Liberty T	97	70.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	23	16.8	17	12.4	137
Ontario V	147	57.6	1	0.4	9	3.5	0	0.0	10	3.9	11	4.3	0	0.0	77	30.2	0	0.0	255
Readstown V	126	58.9	2	0.9	16	7.5	6	2.8	0	0.0	2	0.9	21	9.8	41	19.2	0	0.0	214
Stark T	151	79.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	34	17.8	6	3.1	191

	1 Unit Detached	%	1 Unit Attached	%	2 Units	%	3 or 4 Units	%	5-9 Units	%	10-19 Units	%	20 or More Units	%	Mobile Home	%	Other	%	Total
Sterling T	235	82.2	0	0.0	2	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	45	15.7	4	1.4	286
Stoddard V	257	69.8	4	1.1	21	5.7	10	2.7	10	2.7	5	1.4	24	6.5	37	10.1	0	0.0	368
Union T	178	77.1	2	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	32	13.9	19	8.2	231
Viola V	79	59.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	7.6	0	0.0	43	32.6	0	0.0	132
Viroqua C	1,247	59.5	21	1.0	183	8.7	81	3.9	63	3.0	22	1.0	187	8.9	293	14.0	0	0.0	2,097
Viroqua T	517	87.6	2	0.3	4	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	65	11.0	2	0.3	590
Webster T	239	82.1	5	1.7	2	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	32	11.0	13	4.5	291
Westby C	612	68.2	16	1.8	50	5.6	21	2.3	10	1.1	30	3.3	26	2.9	133	14.8	0	0.0	898
Wheatland T	236	69.0	2	0.6	2	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.6	100	29.2	0	0.0	342
Whitestown T	186	77.5	2	0.8	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	49	20.4	2	0.8	240
Vernon County	9,170	73.9	117	0.9	458	3.7	206	1.7	142	1.1	147	1.2	265	2.1	1,827	14.7	84	0.7	12,416

WI	1,531,612	66.0	77,795	3.4	190,889	8.2	91,047	3.9	106,680	4.6	75,456	3.3	143,497	6.2	101,465	4.4	2,703	0.1	2,321,144
U.S.	69,865,957	60.3	6,447,453	5.6	4,995,350	4.3	5,494,280	4.7	5,414,988	4.7	4,636,717	4.0	10,008,058	8.6	8,779,228	7.6	262,610	0.2	115,904,641

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF3.

Value of Housing

The median value of a home in Vernon County was \$73,400 in 2000, compared to the State of Wisconsin \$112,200 and the Nation \$119,000 (See Table 2.3.6). During the decade of 1990-2000 the median value of owner-occupied housing in the County increased by 70.3% compared to Wisconsin (80.7%) and United States (52.4%).

Table 2.2.6 – Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1980-1990	% Change 1990-2000
Bergen T	53,900	66,700	114,500	23.7%	71.7%
Chaseburg V	27,100	41,900	61,200	54.6%	46.1%
Christiana T	39,000	43,100	85,300	10.5%	97.9%
Clinton T	25,400	35,300	48,500	39.0%	37.4%
Coon T	48,800	43,800	102,400	-10.2%	133.8%
Coon Valley V	39,100	49,000	79,700	25.3%	62.7%
De Soto V	26,900	36,800	58,200	36.8%	58.2%
Forest T	21,300	23,600	57,100	10.8%	141.9%
Franklin T	46,000	45,500	67,500	-1.1%	48.4%
Genoa V	35,000	41,400	70,300	18.3%	69.8%
Genoa T	36,300	54,700	94,000	50.7%	71.8%
Greenwood T	35,000	36,000	66,300	2.9%	84.2%
Hamburg T	48,900	60,900	115,800	24.5%	90.1%
Harmony T	34,400	41,500	62,900	20.6%	51.6%
Hillsboro C	31,100	39,000	66,300	25.4%	70.0%
Hillsboro T	37,500	48,300	82,500	28.8%	70.8%
Jefferson T	35,000	45,700	75,400	30.6%	65.0%
Kickapoo T	28,300	51,900	93,800	83.4%	80.7%
La Farge V	20,400	25,800	45,000	26.5%	74.4%
Liberty T	26,300	26,700	82,500	1.5%	209.0%
Ontario V	23,000	35,500	43,600	54.3%	22.8%
Readstown V	16,400	25,100	45,600	53.0%	81.7%
Stark T	42,500	51,700	64,400	21.6%	24.6%
Sterling T	22,500	31,300	55,800	39.1%	78.3%
Stoddard V	42,100	50,100	78,600	19.0%	56.9%
Union T	25,600	52,000	56,300	103.1%	8.3%
Viola V	15,800	22,500	34,800	42.4%	54.7%
Viroqua C	36,400	43,300	70,700	19.0%	63.3%
Viroqua T	48,400	53,800	102,100	11.2%	89.8%
Webster T	32,500	30,500	83,000	-6.2%	172.1%
Westby C	36,500	47,100	70,900	29.0%	50.5%
Wheatland T	30,600	41,600	80,500	35.9%	93.5%
Whitestown T	24,400	30,400	68,800	24.6%	126.3%
Vernon County	34,700	43,100	73,400	24.2%	70.3%
State of Wisconsin	48,600	62,100	112,200	27.8%	80.7%
United States	47,300	78,500	119,600	66.0%	52.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Occupancy Characteristics and Vacancy Rates

Table 2.2.7 illustrates housing unit occupancy characteristics and vacancy rates for all municipalities in Vernon County, for the State as a whole and for the Nation. The housing vacancy rate is the

percentage of housing available for sale only or for rent. A vacancy rate of approximately 3% is the recommended standard in order to provide consumers with an adequate choice of housing.

As of the 2000 Census, 87.2% of the housing was occupied in the County while 12.8% of housing units were vacant. The County's occupancy rate was lower than that of the State (89.8%) or the Nation (91%). Vernon County had a lower number of renter occupied units (18.3%) as compared to the State (28.4%) and Nation (30.8%). Vernon County reported a homeowner vacancy rate of 2.2% as of the 2000 Census. This figure was higher than the State and National homeowner vacancy rates of 1.2% and 1.7%. Vernon County also had a higher rental vacancy rate (7%) as compared to the State and National rates of 5.6% and 6.8% respectively.

Table 2.2.7 – Housing Occupancy Characteristics

	2000 Total Housing Units	2000 Owner Occupied HUs	% Owner Occupied	2000 Renter Occupied HUs	% Renter Occupied	2000 Total Occupied HUs	% Occupied	2000 Total Vacant HUs	% Vacant	Homeowner Vacancy Rate %	Renter Vacancy Rate %
Bergen T	535	451	84.3	40	7.5	491	91.8	44	8.2	1.5	2.4
Chaseburg V	146	94	64.4	39	26.7	133	91.1	13	8.9	0.0	18.8
Christiana T	341	265	77.7	43	12.6	308	90.3	33	9.7	0.7	4.4
Clinton T	351	259	73.8	54	15.4	313	89.2	38	10.8	0.4	3.6
Coon T	295	227	76.9	35	11.9	262	88.8	33	11.2	2.6	7.9
Coon Valley V	332	251	75.6	56	16.9	307	92.5	25	7.5	2.0	15.2
De Soto V	140	88	62.9	16	11.4	104	74.3	36	25.7	4.3	0.0
Forest T	258	164	63.6	35	13.6	199	77.1	59	22.9	0.6	2.8
Franklin T	382	254	66.5	70	18.3	324	84.8	58	15.2	3.8	16.7
Genoa V	120	93	77.5	19	15.8	112	93.3	8	6.7	3.1	9.5
Genoa T	392	261	66.6	24	6.1	285	72.7	107	27.3	3.7	22.6
Greenwood T	252	178	70.6	23	9.1	201	79.8	51	20.2	1.7	4.2
Hamburg T	325	276	84.9	35	10.8	311	95.7	14	4.3	2.1	0.0
Harmony T	279	216	77.4	31	11.1	247	88.5	32	11.5	3.1	8.8
Hillsboro C	603	393	65.2	172	28.5	565	93.7	38	6.3	1.8	9.9
Hillsboro T	326	224	68.7	61	18.7	285	87.4	41	12.6	0.4	6.2
Jefferson T	407	303	74.4	64	15.7	367	90.2	40	9.8	3.5	1.5
Kickapoo T	251	174	69.3	20	8.0	194	77.3	57	22.7	0.6	4.8
La Farge V	366	269	73.5	73	19.9	342	93.4	24	6.6	1.1	5.2
Liberty T	123	66	53.7	7	5.7	73	59.3	50	40.7	2.9	0.0
Ontario V	254	164	64.6	61	24.0	225	88.6	29	11.4	5.7	3.2
Readstown V	216	128	59.3	59	27.3	187	86.6	29	13.4	4.5	7.8
Stark T	198	121	61.1	17	8.6	138	69.7	60	30.3	1.6	5.6
Sterling T	278	180	64.7	54	19.4	234	84.2	44	15.8	4.3	0.0
Stoddard V	375	259	69.1	92	24.5	351	93.6	24	6.4	0.8	7.1
Union T	244	137	56.1	28	11.5	165	67.6	79	32.4	1.4	3.4
Viola V	118	73	61.9	30	25.4	103	87.3	15	12.7	1.4	23.1
Viroqua C	2,105	1,323	62.9	667	31.7	1,990	94.5	115	5.5	2.6	5.8

	2000 Total Housing Units	2000 Owner Occupied HUs	% Owner Occupied	2000 Renter Occupied HUs	% Renter Occupied	2000 Total Occupied HUs	% Occupied	2000 Total Vacant HUs	% Vacant	Home-owner Vacancy Rate %	Renter Vacancy Rate %
Viroqua T	603	486	80.6	63	10.4	549	91.0	54	9.0	2.8	1.6
Webster T	293	179	61.1	38	13.0	217	74.1	76	25.9	1.1	0.0
Westby C	906	648	71.5	192	21.2	840	92.7	66	7.3	2.1	9.0
Wheatland T	360	213	59.2	23	6.4	236	65.6	124	34.4	1.4	4.2
Whitestown T	242	142	58.7	25	10.3	167	69.0	75	31.0	0.7	0.0
Vernon County	12,416	8,559	68.9	2,266	18.3	10,825	87.2	1,591	12.8	2.2	7.0

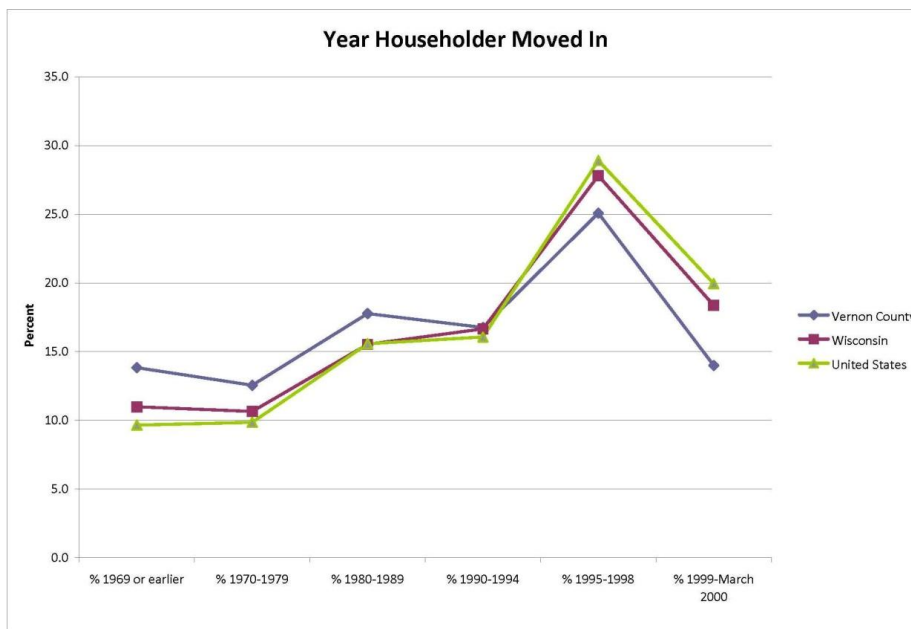
WI	2,321,144	1,426,361	61.5	658,183	28.4	2,084,544	89.8	236,600	10.2	1.2	5.6
U.S.	115,904,641	69,815,753	60.2	35,664,348	30.8	105,480,101	91.0	10,424,540	9.0	1.7	6.8

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF1; Note: Vacant housing units include seasonal, recreational and occasional use units.

Year Householder Moved In

Figure 2.2.2 below shows the year householders moved into their homes. Vernon County followed the trends of the State and Nation but at a slightly higher rate until the mid-nineties. The trend in Figure B also shows most householders moving in between 1995 and 1998, then declining again from 1999-2000.

Figure 2.2.2 – Year Householder Moved In



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

Affordability of Housing

Table 2.2.8 illustrates the affordability of housing in Vernon County, the State and Nation. As of the 2000 Census, about 16.8% of County residents spent more than 30% of their income on their housing units. This was a lower percentage than the State and Nation.

Forty-one percent of County residents spent less than 15% of their income on their housing units. Table 2.2.9 portrays renter-occupied units and percent of income spent on such units by Vernon County residents and resident of the State and Nation. About 59% of Vernon County residents who rent, spend less than 30% of their income on their renter-occupied units as compared to the State (62.5%) and Nation (55.6%).

Table 2.2.8 – Percent of Income Spent on “Owner” Occupied Housing Units, 2000

	Total Owner Occupied Units	Less than 15 Percent	15 to 30 Percent	30 percent or more	Not computed
Bergen town	281	37.7	43.8	18.5	0.0
Chaseburg village	78	42.3	46.2	11.5	0.0
Christiana town	78	46.2	37.2	16.7	0.0
Clinton town	71	54.9	23.9	21.1	0.0
Coon town	72	41.7	47.2	11.1	0.0
Coon Valley village	182	48.9	44.5	6.0	0.5
De Soto village	72	36.1	55.6	8.3	0.0
Forest town	56	51.8	26.8	21.4	0.0
Franklin town	84	41.7	39.3	14.3	4.8
Genoa village	81	37.0	53.1	9.9	0.0
Genoa town	66	31.8	48.5	19.7	0.0
Greenwood town	33	42.4	27.3	30.3	0.0
Hamburg town	102	35.3	50.0	12.7	2.0
Harmony town	38	63.2	26.3	10.5	0.0
Hillsboro city	371	45.8	38.5	14.0	1.6
Hillsboro town	81	34.6	44.4	18.5	2.5
Jefferson town	101	47.5	30.7	21.8	0.0
Kickapoo town	39	41.0	28.2	25.6	5.1
La Farge village	210	43.8	35.2	21.0	0.0
Liberty town	11	36.4	36.4	27.3	0.0
Ontario village	107	48.6	34.6	16.8	0.0
Readstown village	85	28.2	47.1	24.7	0.0
Stark town	32	53.1	34.4	12.5	0.0
Sterling town	61	29.5	36.1	34.4	0.0
Stoddard village	200	42.0	45.0	13.0	0.0
Union town	19	31.6	31.6	36.8	0.0
Viola village	51	60.8	31.4	3.9	3.9
Viroqua city	952	35.7	45.4	18.6	0.3
Viroqua town	214	40.2	43.0	15.9	0.9
Webster town	65	27.7	43.1	26.2	3.1
Westby city	490	41.6	42.4	15.9	0.0
Wheatland town	89	47.2	37.1	15.7	0.0
Whitestown town	35	60.0	22.9	17.1	0.0
Vernon County	4,507	41.0	41.6	16.8	0.6
State of Wisconsin	1,122,467	36.8	44.9	17.8	0.4
United States	55,212,108	36.5	40.9	21.8	0.8

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF3.

Table 2.2.9 – Percent of Income Spent on “Renter” Occupied Units, 2000

	Total Renter Occupied Units	Less than 15 Percent	15 to 30 Percent	30 percent or more	Not computed
Bergen town	39	23.1	43.6	7.7	25.6
Chaseburg village	33	9.1	36.4	48.5	6.1
Christiana town	27	0.0	29.6	37.0	33.3
Clinton town	29	24.1	31.0	27.6	17.2
Coon town	14	42.9	14.3	14.3	28.6
Coon Valley village	57	19.3	31.6	49.1	0.0
De Soto village	21	33.3	9.5	28.6	28.6
Forest town	15	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0
Franklin town	41	24.4	43.9	9.8	22.0
Genoa village	22	40.9	27.3	27.3	4.5
Genoa town	19	36.8	21.1	21.1	21.1
Greenwood town	14	0.0	28.6	14.3	57.1
Hamburg town	17	23.5	41.2	23.5	11.8
Harmony town	15	13.3	13.3	20.0	53.3
Hillsboro city	177	17.5	47.5	29.9	5.1
Hillsboro town	40	25.0	30.0	17.5	27.5
Jefferson town	34	38.2	29.4	8.8	23.5
Kickapoo town	12	0.0	16.7	33.3	50.0
La Farge village	77	19.5	36.4	35.1	9.1
Liberty town	2	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Ontario village	63	27.0	33.3	20.6	19.0
Readstown village	71	8.5	62.0	19.7	9.9
Stark town	6	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Sterling town	34	26.5	11.8	11.8	50.0
Stoddard village	88	11.4	55.7	26.1	6.8
Union town	12	16.7	16.7	16.7	50.0
Viola village	25	8.0	44.0	48.0	0.0
Viroqua city	656	32.0	30.6	30.3	7.0
Viroqua town	43	44.2	7.0	18.6	30.2
Webster town	17	17.6	11.8	11.8	58.8
Westby city	187	16.6	43.9	31.0	8.6
Wheatland town	17	41.2	11.8	23.5	23.5
Whitestown town	11	18.2	36.4	9.1	36.4
Vernon County	1,935	24.0	35.2	27.7	13.1
State of Wisconsin	641,672	21.1	41.4	32.3	5.2
United States	35,199,502	18.1	37.5	36.8	7.5

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, SF3.

2.3 Housing Unit Forecast

Table 2.3.1 is a projection of housing units in five-year increments from 2010 to 2030 based on using a linear projection having a five-year average rate of change of 0.012669. This rate was determined by computing the rate of change for the estimated housing units between years 2003 and 2008 as shown in Table 2.2.2 above and then averaging over a five-year period. The five-year average rate was then multiplied by 2/5ths, then multiplied by the 2008 estimate, then added to the 2008 estimate to get the 2010 projected base value. Then each five-year projected value was multiplied by the average five-year rate and added to the previous five-year projected value.

Table 2.3.1 – Vernon County Housing Unit Projections 2010-2030 Based on Linear Projection Using 5 Year Avg. (2003-2008) Rate of Change from 2000 Census Data

COUNTY NAME	2008 Est.	2010 Proj	2015 Proj	2020 Proj	2025 Proj	2030 Proj	2010-'30 # Change	2010-'30 % Change
VERNON	13,820	13,890	14,066	14,244	14,425	14,607	717	5%

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Table 2.3.2 - Sanitary Permits for New Systems Installed, Vernon County Townships, 1981-2008.

Municipality	New Sanitary Permits
Viroqua	265
Bergen	203
Jefferson	153
Hamburg	139
Wheatland	139
Franklin	126
Christiana	107
Genoa	103
Webster	97
Hillsboro	87
Kickapoo	81
Harmony	75
Greenwood	68
Whitestown	62
Sterling	61
Union	60
Stark	59
Forest	58
Liberty	55
Clinton	48
Villages and Cities	29
Total	2075

Source: Vernon County Zoning Department. Data is for new sanitary septic systems only.

The fewest new systems (35) were installed in 1988, the most (148) were installed in 2001. A total of 2075 new septic systems were installed from 1981 to 2008.

Table 2.3.3 –Housing Unit Projections 2010-2030 Based On New Septic Permits

COUNTY NAME	2008 Est.	2010 Proj	2015 Proj	2020 Proj	2025 Proj	2030 Proj	2010-'30 # Change	2010-'30 % Change
VERNON	13,820	13,968	14,339	14,709	15,080	15,450	1,482	11%

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

2.4 Household Forecast

The projected number of households in Vernon County shows a steady increase, according to the Demographic Service Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration. The number of Vernon County households is projected to increase from 10,825 in 2000 to 13,902 in 2030, a numeric change of 3,077 and percentage change of 28.4% as shown in table 2.4.1.

This increase in households is predicted to be in part due to an increase in single-person households, and an aging population. Households headed by older people tend to be smaller in size than those headed by younger householders, and as the proportion of older residents increases, the average size of the household decreases.

It is projected that the mean Vernon County household size will decrease from 2.55 in 2000 to 2.46 in 2030. In Wisconsin the mean household size will decrease from 2.50 in 2000 to 2.31 in 2030 as shown in table 2.4.2.

Table 2.4.1 –Vernon County Final Household Projections for Wisconsin Municipalities - 2005 – 2030

MCD Type & Name (* indicates split muni)	C2000	Est2005	Proj2010	Proj2015	Proj2020	Proj2025	Proj2030	NumChg30yr	PctChg30yr
T Bergen	491	517	546	578	609	638	669	178	36.3%
T Christiana	308	311	319	327	336	343	351	43	14.0%
T Clinton	313	334	364	395	426	455	487	174	55.6%
T Coon	262	272	278	284	291	296	302	40	15.3%
T Forest	199	205	213	222	230	239	246	47	23.6%
T Franklin	324	345	357	371	384	396	408	84	25.9%
T Genoa	285	292	299	306	314	321	327	42	14.7%
T Greenwood	201	221	243	267	291	314	338	137	68.2%
T Hamburg	311	337	363	391	418	444	471	160	51.4%
T Harmony	247	271	296	322	349	375	401	154	62.3%
T Hillsboro	285	293	307	321	336	349	363	78	27.4%
T Jefferson	367	392	414	438	462	485	507	140	38.1%
T Kickapoo	194	202	213	225	237	249	261	67	34.5%
T Liberty	73	93	104	114	125	136	146	73	100.0%
T Stark	138	145	156	167	179	189	201	63	45.7%
T Sterling	234	232	240	249	258	265	274	40	17.1%
T Union	165	180	196	214	231	248	265	100	60.6%
T Viroqua	549	587	606	628	647	665	684	135	24.6%
T Webster	217	234	252	273	293	312	331	114	52.5%
T Wheatland	236	264	291	318	346	373	401	165	69.9%
T Whitestown	167	175	184	194	205	215	224	57	34.1%
V Chaseburg	133	125	124	123	120	118	116	-17	-12.8%

MCD Type & Name (* indicates split muni)	C2000	Est2005	Proj2010	Proj2015	Proj2020	Proj2025	Proj2030	NumChg30yr	PctChg30yr
V Coon Valley	307	310	310	309	308	308	305	-2	-0.7%
V De Soto *	104	105	108	110	112	114	116	12	11.5%
V Genoa	112	108	107	106	104	102	100	-12	-10.7%
V La Farge	342	346	355	363	373	379	387	45	13.2%
V Ontario	225	220	226	234	240	246	252	27	12.0%
V Readstown	187	187	187	188	190	190	191	4	2.1%
V Stoddard	351	349	355	364	371	377	384	33	9.4%
V Viola *	103	121	135	148	163	176	191	88	85.4%
C Hillsboro	565	563	572	582	592	599	606	41	7.3%
C Viroqua	1,990	2,020	2,111	2,213	2,308	2,395	2,483	493	24.8%
C Westby	840	878	924	973	1,022	1,068	1,114	274	32.6%
Totals	10825						13902	3077	28.4%

Source: Demographic Services Center Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration (2008).

Table 2.4.2 –Final Household Projections Vernon County: 2005 – 2030

	2000 Census	2005 Estimate	2010 Projection	2015 Projection	2020 Projection	2025 Projection	2030 Projection
Number of Households	10,825	11,234	11,755	12,317	12,870	13,379	13,902
Household Pop.	27,583	28,796	29,800	31,009	32,218	33,298	34,150
Average Household Size	2.55	2.56	2.54	2.52	2.50	2.49	2.46

Source: Demographic Services Center Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration (2008).

2.5 Housing Agencies and Programs

The following are housing programs, agencies and activities that are currently in use or available for use in Vernon County. The following can be used to gather further information about housing and to assist in implementation of housing goals.

Local Programs

Low-Income Rental Housing

There are three agencies that coordinate some of the low-income housing available in Vernon County:

- ◆ Viroqua Housing Authority (Parkview Manor, Viroqua)
- ◆ Westby Housing Authority (Main Street, Westby)
- ◆ Village of La Farge Housing (City Hall, La Farge)

There are five multi-unit rentals that have low-income requirements with no age restrictions for residency. They are located in: Hillsboro (1), Coon Valley (1), Viroqua (2), and Westby (1). There are also private management groups and landlords offering low-cost rental units in the county. Listing available in Vernon County Housing Resource Guide, Couleecap, Westby.

Senior Independent Housing

Senior housing in multi-units is available in most Vernon County communities. Eligibility requirements such as age, disability and/or income limits may apply.

There are eighteen apartment complexes located throughout the county for seniors citizens 62 years of age or older. They are located in: Cashton (1), Chaseburg (1), Coon Valley (1), Genoa (1), Hillsboro (3), La Farge (2), Ontario (1), Readstown (1), Stoddard (1), Viola (1), Viroqua (3), Westby (2). Listing available at Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin web site <http://www.adrcww.org> To find the guide, follow the link Brochures-Community Link Resource Guide.

Assisted Living Facilities

Residential Care Apartment Complex (RCAC)

An RCAC is a place where five or more adults reside. Apartments must have a lockable entrance and exit, a kitchen including a stove (or microwave oven), an individual bathroom, and sleeping and living areas. This living option can provide up to (but cannot exceed) 28 hours per week of the following services: supportive services, personal assistance, nursing services, and emergency assistance. RCACs provide services either directly or under contract, and the services must be part of the tenant's service agreement. RCACs are either registered or certified. Certified facilities can accept public funding; registered facilities can only accept private funds from individuals.

There are two RCAC facilities in Vernon County. One is located in Viroqua and one in Stoddard. There is a listing available at the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin's web site.

Adult Family Homes (AFH)

Adult Family Homes are a place where families make a decision to open their home and provide care for one to four adults who require support to live in the community because of aging, mental health, developmental or physical disabilities.

An AFH is defined as "a place where one to four adults who are not related to the operator reside and receive care, treatment or services that are above the level of room and board and that may include up to seven hours per week of nursing care per resident." Counties certify one- and two-bed adult family homes; the State of Wisconsin licenses three- and four-bed adult family homes.

Contact Vernon County Department of Human Services, Viroqua, for more information.

Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF) – General

A CBRF is a place where five or more adults reside who do not require care above intermediate level nursing care. Adults receive care, treatment, or services that are above the level of room and board. It includes no more than three hours of nursing care per week per resident. Other supports and services are also offered. These facilities are state licensed. CBRF facilities will vary regarding the clientele they will accept. Some accept only the elderly, people with developmental disabilities or mental and emotional disabilities. Call each facility for eligibility.

There are eleven CBRF facilities in Vernon County. They are located in: La Farge (2), Coon Valley (1), Hillsboro (3), Viroqua (2), Westby (1), Readstown (1) and Viola (1). A full listing is available at the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin web site.

Skilled Nursing Facilities

There are three licensed skilled nursing facilities in Vernon County. They are: Bethel Home and Services, Viroqua; Vernon Manor, Viroqua; and Norseland Nursing Home, Westby.

Regional Programs

Couleecap (Community Action Program)

Couleecap serves people and communities in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon counties. It is a private, nonprofit agency established in 1966 as part of the War on Poverty. Couleecap offers a number of housing-related programs including home buyer's assistance, housing rehabilitation, weatherization, rental housing assistance, foreclosure prevention, homeless prevention, transitional housing and emergency assistance programs.

Most programs have eligibility requirements and are continuously changing depending on grants and others monies available. For further information, contact the Couleecap central office in Westby.

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin

This agency serves Vernon, La Crosse, Monroe and Jackson counties by providing information and assistance to help people connect with all kinds of services, benefits and community resources for the elderly, people with disabilities and their families. This includes services to help Vernon County residents stay in their homes, or help them find suitable housing to meet their needs.

State Programs

Wisconsin Rural Development, Rural Housing Service

The mission of the Rural Housing Services is to enhance the quality of life of rural people through the creation of safe, affordable housing where people can live, work, and prosper as part of a community. The Wisconsin Rural Housing Service offers housing preservation grants, loans and grants for farm labor housing, loans and grants for home improvement and repair, loans for financing housing site development, loans for home purchase or construction, loans on apartment buildings, and self-help technical assistance grants. For further information contact Wisconsin Rural Development or visit their web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority serves Wisconsin residents and communities by working with others to provide creative financing resources and information to stimulate and preserve affordable housing, small business, and agribusiness. WHEDA offers programs for both single and multi-family units. For further information contact WHEDA or visit their web site at www.wheda.com.

Habitat for Humanity

The goal of this program is to eliminate inadequate housing and poverty housing throughout the world. Local affiliates, including dozens in Wisconsin, are responsible for raising funds, recruiting volunteers, identifying project sites, and constructing owner-occupied housing for the benefit of participating low-income families.

Habitat is not a giveaway program. In addition to a down payment and monthly mortgage payments, homeowners invest hundreds of hours of their own labor (sweat equity) into building their Habitat house and the houses of others. Habitat houses are sold to partner families at no profit and financed with affordable loans. The Vernon County Chapter, Habitat for Humanity – La Crosse Area, is currently building the fourth home in 2009. For more information visit www.vernoncountyhabitat.org

2.6 Population and Housing Trends and Outlook

- Vernon County consistently lags behind the State and Nation in increases to housing stock. Much of the rise in housing stock is centered along the Mississippi River communities and localized pockets of development throughout the county.
- Our aging community and increases in single-person households will result in smaller households in the future and the need for more housing units per capita.
- While each community in the county has some low income and senior housing units, the rising needs of the aging community may outpace supply.
- The unusually old age of the housing stock in Vernon County leads to concerns about condition, rehabilitation, and redevelopment needs in the future.
- In many communities mobile home units provide a high percentage of housing. Some of these are used for recreational/seasonal activities. More and varied options for low-income non-seasonal residents should be considered.
- County residents tend to stay in their housing longer than State and National averages.
- County residents spend less on housing as a percent of income compared to State and National averages.

3. Transportation

In general, a transportation system includes all of the means used to move people, goods, and services from one location to another. A typical transportation system comprises different modes, which include: automobiles, motorcycles, trucks, buses, bicycles, trains, boats, airplanes, and pedestrians. In Vernon County it also includes horse and buggy, primarily due to the large Amish population present in several parts of the county as well as a large demographic of equestrian enthusiasts.

Roads and highways comprise the majority of Vernon County's transportation system from an overall use and cost standpoint. However, rail, waterways, airways, and trails are also elements that are present in the county's existing transportation system. All of these elements should be addressed as applicable to the county.

Vernon County's transportation infrastructure supports the varied needs of citizens, businesses, government, visitors, and through-traffic. This transportation system is relied on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. How well the transportation system is functioning can have a significant impact on every sector of the community. The functionality of the system is a major factor in the growth potential of communities within Vernon County. The transportation network is a primary component in the efficiency, safety, overall desirability, and affordability of Vernon County as a place to live, work, and visit.

It should be obvious that the relationship between transportation and economic development is important for a sustainable vitality and quality of life in Vernon County. However, supporting economic growth need not be at odds with preserving the rural character that is attractive to residents and to the tourism sector of the economy - for many people the views along the way are an important part of the journey.

Furthermore, there will always be a need to balance transportation convenience (e.g. good road surfaces, nice bike trails, higher speed limits, scenic conditions, etc.), with safety standards, and with the costs to develop and maintain the components of the transportation system. This has been true in both favorable and unfavorable economic conditions. It will always be important for decision makers to understand the overall components of the transportation system and how the decisions made will impact various aspects of the community.

In addition, it is imperative that the system be as safe as possible. For example, one common safety concern involves private driveway access to public roadways and the potential hazards of poorly coordinated access management. In order to ensure safety and operational efficiency, the transportation system needs to be efficiently managed and maintained.

While this coordination often appears seamless on an everyday level, there are certain functional characteristics, linkages, and planning components that make a transportation system productive.

Therefore, in addition to the necessary budgetary and safety considerations of the system, planning for the location and density of new development should always be evaluated for potential impacts on the various components of the transportation system.

The following sections discuss in more detail, specific information about Vernon County’s transportation system. The Transportation Element of this plan summarizes the local transportation system and, based on local input, provides a 20-year jurisdictional plan that can serve as a resource guide and general implementation tool. It suggests and sets forth policy development and implementation measures that include related plans and programs designed to maintain and improve the transportation system. Phase II of the plan concludes with specific findings, policies and implementation strategies for those policies.

3.1 Existing Road System

HIGHWAYS, LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS.

Vernon County’s road system is characterized by a rural winding pattern of local roads that typically serve property access and county roads that primarily move traffic between local roads and state highways. U.S. Highway 14/61 is the only U.S. Highway located within the county and is the major roadway that connects Vernon County’s population centers to the major cities of La Crosse and Madison. The winding ridge tops and valleys characteristic of the Driftless Area do not create conditions favorable to a high speed and efficient point to point transportation system. They do however, create excellent conditions for “Sunday” rides to enjoy the scenery and get away from it all.

Vernon County has approximately 1,715 miles of public roads and 1,733 total miles of roads. Table 3.1.1 provides the breakdown of road mileage by all road types and includes the mileage of roads that are within incorporated areas.

Table 3.1.1 - Miles of Road, Vernon County, 2009

Road Type	All Miles	% of Total Road Mileage
U.S. Highway	40.42	2.33%
State Highways	180.20	10.40%
County Trunk Highways	290.00	16.74%
Town Roads	1,103.24	63.66%
City/Village Streets	101.09	5.83%
Private Roads	18.00	1.04%
Totals	1,732.95	100.00%

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Table 3.1.2 provides the breakdown of road mileage by public road type and does not include roads that are within incorporated areas.

Table 3.1.2 - Miles of Public Road for Unincorporated Areas, Vernon County, 2009

Road Type	Public Miles	% of Total Public Road Mileage
U.S. Highway	32.11	2.02%
State Highways	164.89	10.39%
County Trunk Highways	287.00	18.08%
Town Roads	1,103.24	69.51%
Totals	1,587.24	100.00%

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

For comparison, Table 3.1.3 lists the miles of highway as stated by the WI DOT as of Dec. 31, 2006.

Table 3.1.3 - Miles of Highway, Vernon County, as of Dec. 31, 2006

Road Type	All Miles	% of Total Road Mileage
State	214	12.97%
County	285	17.27%
Local Roads	1,146	69.45%
Other Roads	5	0.31%
Totals	1,650	100.00%

Source: WI DOT Highway Map of Vernon County, 2008.

All of the county and state highways are made of hard surface blacktop with an average lifespan of 15 years. All Vernon County towns have either a single or double sealcoat pavement with an average lifespan of 5-7 years except three towns (Franklin, Liberty, Sterling) with gravel roads.

SEASONAL WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The seasonal weight restrictions apply to the spring when there is frost coming out of the road bed. At this time of the year the extra weight can increase road wear significantly.

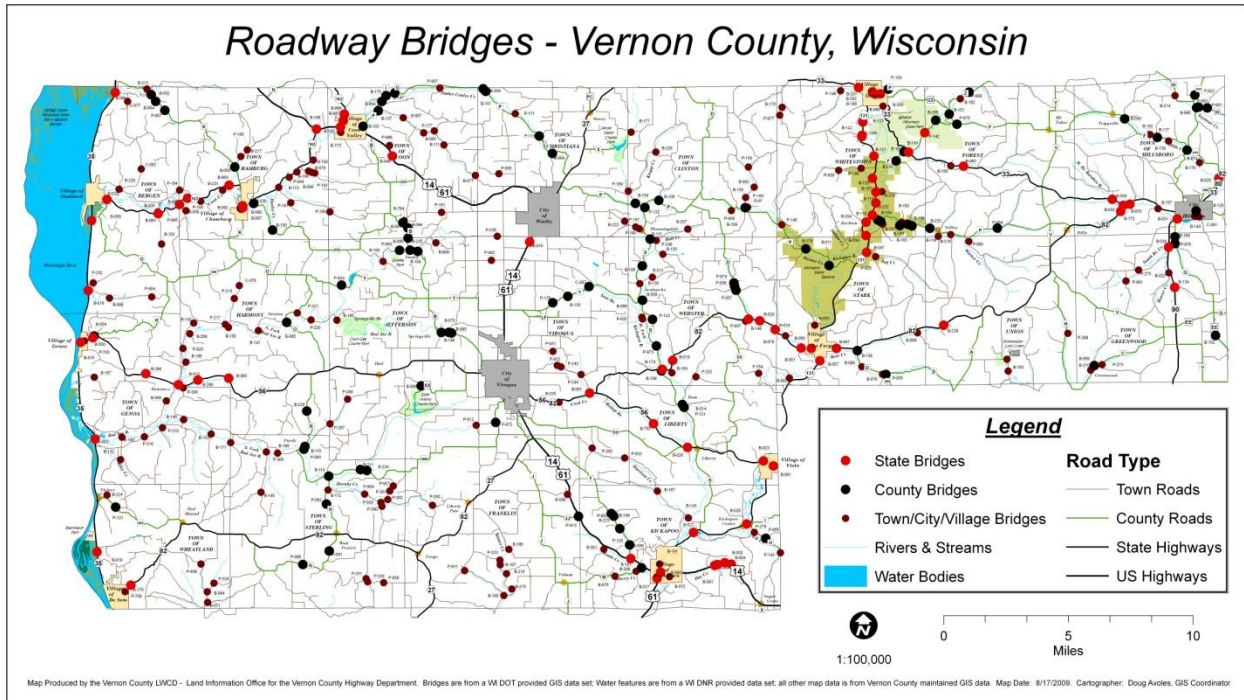
EXISTING BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Bridges play an important role in connecting the diverse terrain found in Vernon County. More than 330 bridges are listed in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Highway Structures Information System Database for Vernon County. Posted bridges are bridges that cannot carry the maximum legal weight limit, and have a posted sign indicating the maximum weight(s) allowed on the bridge. These bridges are of interest because they have weight restrictions which have potential impacts on the flow of truck traffic. The posting of bridges could have potential transportation impact on businesses located off of these roads and should be considered when planning for businesses that rely on heavy trucks to move freight. The majority of the posted bridges are located on local roads. This has implications for businesses looking to operate in the county, as posted bridges may slow down freight or prevent passage for heavy trucks. This has implications for Vernon County as it may indicate that local

infrastructure is inadequate to handle massive operations, such as large farms or sawmills. Such facilities would be better suited near well maintained roads and better funded roads.

Map 3.1.1 shows the spatial distribution of the 339 roadway bridges located in the County. Of these; 75 are on State & U.S. Highways; 95 are on County Highways; and 169 are on town, city, and village streets & roads.

Map3.1.1 –Bridges, Vernon County



3.2 Road Functional/Jurisdictional Classification

The Roadway Transportation System categorizes roads and highways according to the character of service they offer, ranging from rapid pass-through access to slower, local land access. The system is classified according to primary function representing very different purposes:

- (1) Mobility and efficient travel
- (2) Access to properties

Simply put, when there are more access points, carrying capacity is reduced and safety is compromised.

- Principle arterials accommodate interstate and interregional trips.
- Minor arterials accommodate interregional and inter-area traffic generators.
- Major collectors serve moderate-sized communities and intra-area traffic generators.
- Minor collectors link local roads to higher capacity roads and smaller communities.
- Local roads provide access to residential, commercial and industrial development.

The purpose of classification is to enhance overall travel efficiency and accommodate traffic patterns and land uses by designing streets to the standards suggested by their functional class.

Transportation planning and the associated infrastructure improvements are directly tied to land use planning. The coordination between roadway system management and land use will impact roadway functionality, safety, and land use development.

The responsibility for maintaining and improving roads should ordinarily be assigned based upon the functional classification of the roads. Arterials should fall under state jurisdiction. Collectors under county jurisdiction and local roads should be a local responsibility. Jurisdictional transfers (JT) may occur, to better reflect actual use, but only when there is an agreement between the units of government involved. When considering a possible JT, jurisdictions would want to take into account the level of traffic on the road, the projected responsibility for maintenance and the required improvements and the possible impact on general transportation aids.

Functional Road Classification

Vernon County, administered through the Highway Department, has jurisdiction and responsibility for about 290 centerline miles of county roadway. The functional classification of roads is generally the basis of transportation funding related to construction and maintenance. The functional classification of roads in Vernon County is detailed below.

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials generally accommodate interstate and interregional trips. These routes generally serve all urban areas having populations greater than 5,000.

Minor Arterials

In conjunction with principal arterials, minor arterials serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intra-regional and inter-area traffic movement.

Major Collectors

Major collectors provide service to moderate sized communities and other intra-area traffic generators, and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher function routes.

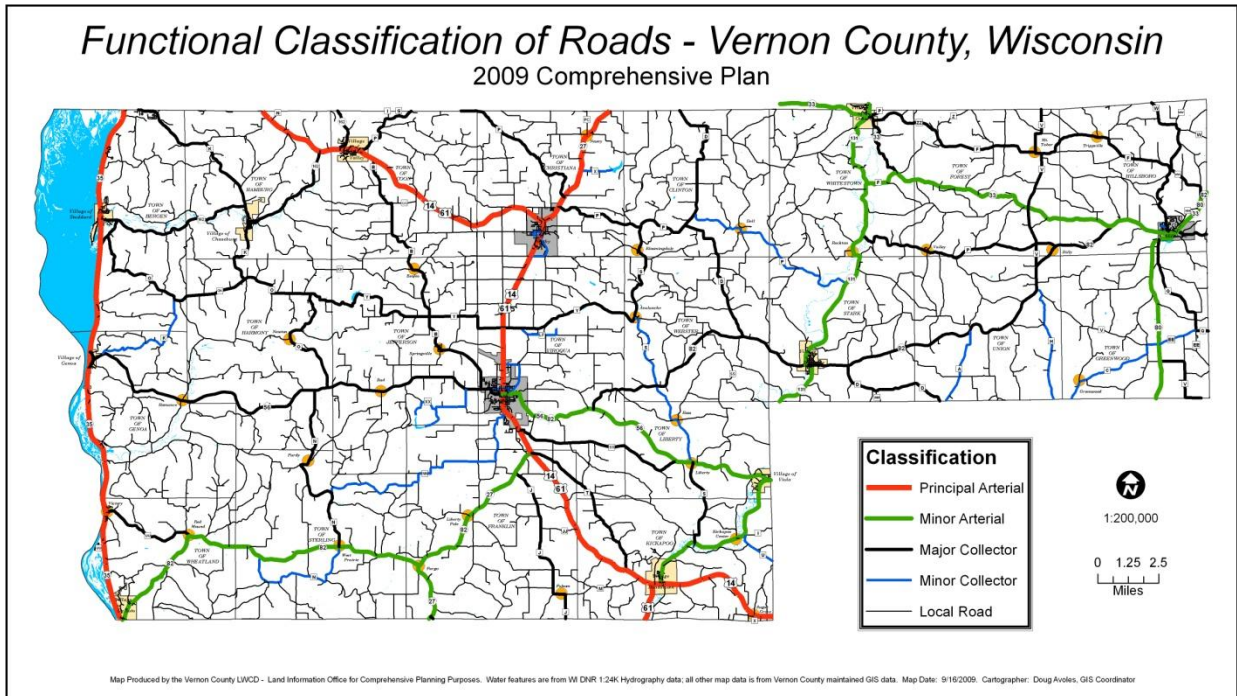
Minor Collectors

Minor collectors collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, locally important traffic generators, and higher function roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road.

Local Roads

Local roads provide access to adjacent land and provide for travel over relatively short distances. All roads not classified as arterials or collectors are local function roads.

The functional road classification system for Vernon County is depicted on Map 3.2.1.



Rustic Roads

In addition to the functional and jurisdictional hierarchy, communities may nominate local roads for the state’s rustic roads program. Created by the 1973 state legislature, the program is an effort to help citizens and local units of government preserve what remains of Wisconsin’s scenic, outstanding natural features-- such as rugged terrain, native vegetation and native wildlife—along the road’s borders. Roads in the program may also showcase open areas with unique agricultural vistas.

These roads are preferably a minimum length of 2 miles and, where feasible, should provide a completed closure or loop, or connect to major highways at both ends of the route. They are lightly traveled local access roads for the leisurely enjoyment of bikers, hikers and motorists as well as the adjacent property owners. A rustic road may be dirt, gravel or paved. It may be one-way or two-way. It may also have bicycle or hiking paths adjacent to or incorporated in the roadway area.

Unique brown and yellow signs mark the routes of all officially-designated rustic roads. A small placard beneath the rustic roads sign identifies each rustic road by its numerical designation within the total statewide system to avoid confusion with the state trunk highway numbering; a letter “R” prefix is used such as R55 or R56. The Department of Transportation pays the cost of furnishing and installing rustic roads marking signs.

Any officially designated rustic road shall continue to be under local control. The maximum speed limit on a rustic road has been established by law at 45mph. A speed limit as low as 25 mph may be established by the local governing authority. The county, city, village or town shall have the same authority over the rustic road as it possesses over other highways under its jurisdiction. A rustic road is eligible for state aid as any other public highway.

There are currently two designated rustic roads in Vernon County. Rustic road R-55, Tunnelville road, which begins at its junction with State Highway 131 and ends at the intersection with County Road SS and runs a distance of 2.8 miles. The other rustic road is R-56, portions of Dutch Hollow Road, Sandhill Road, Hoff Valley and Lower Ridge Road, which begins at the intersection of Dutch Hollow Road and State Highway 131 and extends northwest and then northeast to the intersection of Lower Ridge Road and State Highway 131 in the Village of Ontario and runs a distance of 8.6 miles.

3.3 Traffic Volume Trends

Between 1990 and 2000, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased by 30 % in Wisconsin. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts are an important measure when prioritizing improvements. The Wisconsin DOT calculates the number by multiplying raw hourly counts by seasonal, day-of-week, and axle adjustments factors. The daily hourly values are then averaged by hour of the day and the values are summed to create the AADT count. Due to cutbacks in the WDOT traffic counting program in 2005, only principal arterials and minor arterials over 5,000 ADT are counted every three years. Minor arterials under 5,000 ADT and collectors over 5,000 ADT are counted every six years. Collectors less than 5,000 ADT are counted every 10 years.

Table 3.3.1 - Growth Projections Auto Usage

Year	Avg. Miles Driven per Auto
1980	9,782
1985	10,455
1990	11,659
1995	12,435
1996	12,576
1997	12,855
1998	13,047
1999	13,151
2000	13,293
2001	13,132
2002	13,544
2003	13,681
2004	13,872

Overall traffic counts for Vernon County have changed moderately since 2001. Data from the Wisconsin DOT comparing 2001 and 2007 shows that near more populated areas there has been a 10-14% growth in traffic on US-14. Data also shows that less populated areas have varying adjustments in counts, some showing a 5-6% decline and some increasing by similar amounts during point counts. Table 3.3.2 compares Wisconsin DOT point counts from 2001 to 2007 for US-14 and Wisconsin State Roads in the Vernon County area. Data from 2004 was used in a few cases where 2007 data is unavailable. Due to inconsistent traffic volume reporting, there are limitations to analyzing the level of use of Vernon County's local roadways. For example, certain roadways may be counted in 2001, others in 2002, and then yet another set in 2003. The goal of this type of count is to complete a set of traffic counts over time, as there is insufficient staff to complete a yearly count of all roadways. Therefore, one cannot easily determine year-to-year trends on the entire set of roadways. The information that can be deducted from available data shows moderate changes in traffic volumes on county roads.

Table 3.3.2 - Vernon County Traffic Counts 2001-2007 (Blank spaces reflect unavailable data)

Roadway	2001	2004	2007	2001 traffic count as a percent of 2007 traffic	Percent Change 2001 to 2007
US14					
Coon Valley to County Highway GG	4600		5200	88.46%	11.54%
County Highway GG to Westby	5300		5000	106.00%	-6.00%
Westby to Viroqua	9600		9600	100.00%	0.00%
Viroqua to County Highway J	6200		6600	93.94%	6.06%
County Highway J to Readtown	4300		4100	104.88%	-4.88%
Readstown to Richland Center	1800		2100	85.71%	14.29%
WI-27					
Westby to County Highway P	4900		5000	98.00%	2.00%
County Highway P to Cashton			4500		
County Highway J to County WI-82	1800		2000	90.00%	10.00%
South of County Highway J	1000		1100	90.91%	9.09%
WI-56					
County Highway O West to WI-35	970	910			
Viroqua to O	1900		1700	111.76%	-11.76%
Viroqua to Viola	1000	1200	970		
WI-82					
DeSoto to Kumlin Rd	740		1200	61.67%	38.33%
Kumlin Road to WI-27	920		1100	83.64%	16.36%
WI-27 to County Highway J	1800		2000	90.00%	10.00%
County Highway J to US14	2400	2800	x		
US14 to County Highway S	2500	2200			
County Highway S to La Farge	1000	1200			
La Farge to County Highway D	1800				
County Highway D to County Highway A	1000	860			
County Highway A to County Highway H	920	960			
P					
WI-131 to WI-82	60		150	40.00%	60.00%
County Highway P NorthWest of 27					
WI-27 to County Highway S					
WI-162					
Stodden to Chaseburg	580	580			
Chaseburg to Coon Valley	1100	1200			

Roadway	2001	2004	2007	2001 traffic count as a percent of 2007 traffic	Percent Change 2001 to 2007
WI- 35					
DeSoto to County Highway UU	3600	4200	3900	92.31%	7.69%
County Highway UU to WI-56	4300		4500	95.56%	4.44%
WI-56 to Stoddard	4800	x	5600	85.71%	14.29%
Stoddard to County Highway K	6800		6800	100.00%	0.00%
WI-80					
Hillsboro to County Highway V	1800		1900	94.74%	5.26%
County Highway V to County Highway H	x		1600		
WI-33					
WI-82 to Fish Hollow Road	450		580	77.59%	22.41%
Fish Hollow Road to Ontario	460		380	121.05%	-21.05%
County Highway S					
US14 to E River Rd	1100		1000	110.00%	-10.00%
E River Road to Viola	890		890	100.00%	0.00%
LaFarge to County Highway P	910		950	95.79%	4.21%
County HighwayP to Ontario	530		620	85.48%	14.52%
County Highway K					
Chaseburg to WI-35	2000	2300	x		

Table from: University of Wisconsin-Madison, TMP Practicum Spring 2009, Vernon County Study. Data source: Wisconsin DOT Traffic Count Maps, Vernon County, 2001, 2007

3.4 Crash Trends

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Nationwide, crash fatalities are decreasing—even as traffic is increasing. Why? The reduction in fatalities can be credited to a combination of factors, including improvements in vehicle safety, better roads, increased seat belt use, and advances in on-site and emergency room medical care. The AADT data shows increased traffic on many Vernon county roads. Throughout the state, many roads were not designed to handle current traffic volumes.

In 2002, according to Wisconsin’s Transportation Development Association (TDA), nearly 64% of all vehicle crashes in Wisconsin occurred on the state’s local road system (town roads and many county roads fall into this category). According to TDA 2004 report, better lane markings and signage, wider shoulders and lanes, additional guardrails, and reduced slopes would make rural and two-lane roads safer and reduce the personal and financial loss that results from crashes. Within Vernon County there are many changes taking place with regard to transportation safety, including an increasing number of vehicle-pedestrian, vehicle-biking, and vehicle-cart crashes. Crashes are occurring on complex terrain,

including on steep slopes and sharp curves in hilly areas of the county. Moreover, a growing concern in the county is the safety issue associated with an increase in heavy-hauling industries as well as an increase in seasonal tourist coach (bus) traffic.

Figure 3.4.1 - Number of Crashes by Millions of VMT by Road Type, Vernon County, 2007

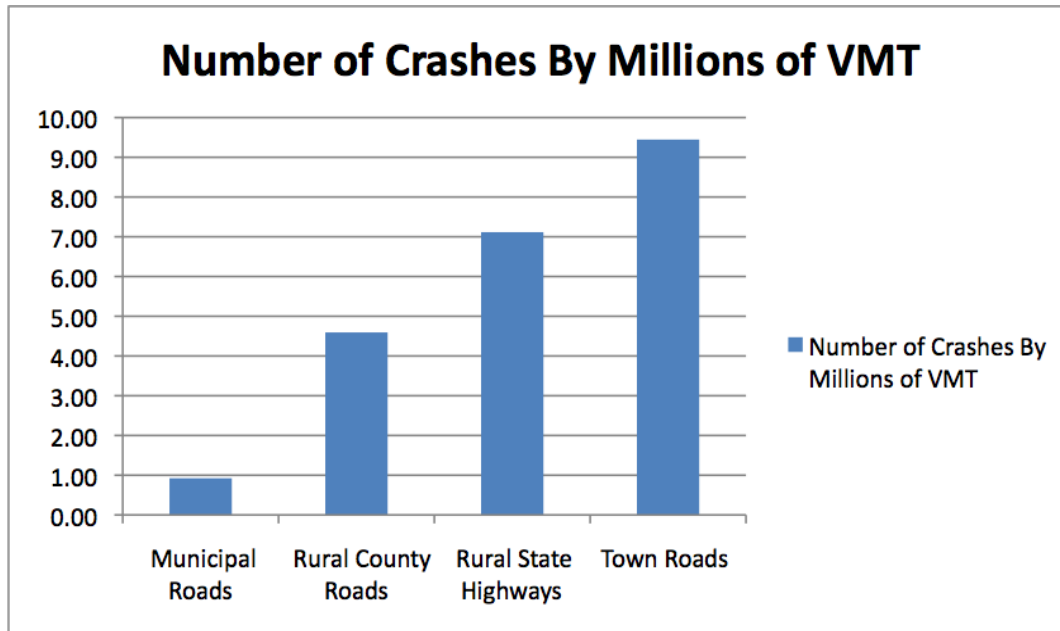


Chart From: University of Wisconsin-Madison, TMP Practicum Spring 2009, Vernon County Study.

Data source: (1) Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 2007, Vehicle Miles of Travel(VMT) by Highway System, by administrative jurisdiction; (2) Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 2007, Vehicle Miles of Travel(VMT) by County; (3) Wisconsin Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007, per crash data in Vernon County.

According to Wisconsin’s Highway Safety Performance Plan 2004, significant external factors influencing the number of vehicle crashes include demographics (particularly the proportion of the population between the ages of 15-44 and over 65), the increased number of licensed drivers, the number of miles driven, types of driving exposure, lifestyle factors (e.g. patterns of alcohol consumption), and the weather.

In order to improve safety in the area, new facilities to accommodate and better serve pedestrians and bikers are suggested. Also, improvements in road condition would also enhance safety in the county. Measures also suggested to achieve better safety include widening roads and improving the visibility of safety signals at frequent accident spots. Safety enhancement policy initiatives are in need to serve the ever changing transportation condition in Vernon County.

Fatalities are not merely statistics- they represent terrible tragedies. The Vernon County Traffic Safety Committee meets quarterly and includes the County Highway Commissioner, Law Enforcement (Sheriff), EMS, three members of the County Board, State Patrol (District 5) and the news media.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Transportation system users frequently select routes that maximize their mobility and efficiency while, at the local level, property owners frequently seek to maximize access to their property. The latter scenario reduces mobility and safety. Studies show a strong correlation between:

- 1) An increase in crashes
- 2) An increase in the number of commercial establishments
- 3) An increase in the total number of driveways per mile

Commercial or industrial development seeks highly visible and accessible properties, preferably on a road with high traffic volumes and, optimally, at an important intersection. If the new business is successful, it will change traffic patterns and may disrupt the efficiency of the larger transportation system. Access and development can be better accommodated by creating an area transportation plan for internal circulation and minimizing driveway access points.

It is estimated that a single-family home generates 9.5 trips per day on a town road. One new home may not make much difference, but ten new homes on a rural road can have quite an impact on safety and ag-vehicle mobility.

Towns were asked whether they had access management standards for new business development and if their town used access standards and road design guidelines for new residential development. The results are detailed in Table 3.4.1.

Table 3.4.1 – Access Management by Local Unit

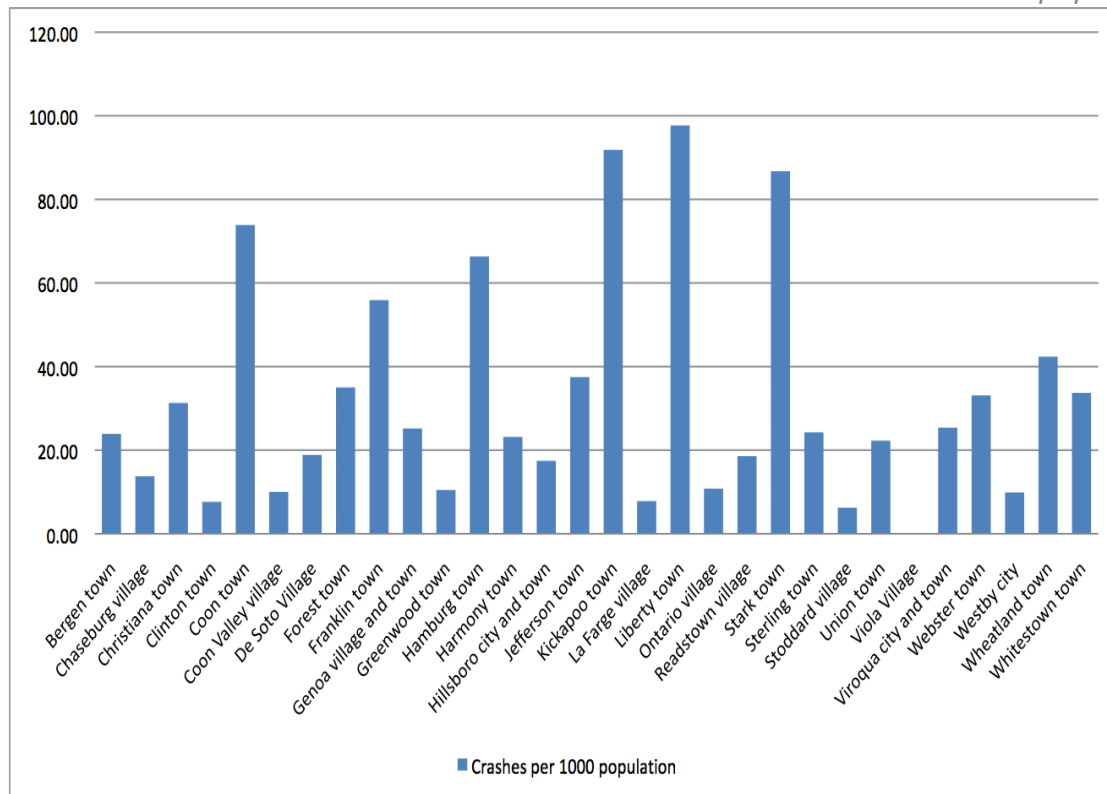
Township	Access Management Standards by Town Driveway Ordinance
Bergen	yes
Christiana	yes
Clinton	yes
Coon	yes
Forest	yes
Franklin	
Genoa	yes
Greenwood	yes
Hamburg	yes
Harmony	yes
Hillsboro	yes
Jefferson	no
Kickapoo	yes (no Town powers)
Liberty	yes
Stark	yes
Sterling	yes
Union	no
Viroqua	
Webster	yes
Wheatland	no
Whitestown	yes

SAFETY INFORMATION¹

The City of Viroqua, as the main city and major hub for transportation in Vernon County, has the most crash events. Other municipalities with high crash numbers: Bergen, Christiana, Coon, Franklin, Hamburg, Hillsboro and Kickapoo.

As shown below, Town of Liberty, followed by Town of Kickapoo, Town of Stark and Town of Coon have the highest rate of crashes by population in Vernon County.

Figure 3.4.2 - Annual Crashes in Municipalities of Vernon County (normalized by 2007 population)



¹ Safety information in this section are derived from a per crash dataset in Vernon County, from the Wisconsin Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The trends in traffic accidents in Vernon County are presented in the following table.

Table 3.4.2 – Auto Crash Trends

CRASH TYPE	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Bicycle	1	3	2	0	2	1	1
Work Zone	3	5	4	7	3	2	4
Deer	244	263	332	341	286	313	334
Hit and Run	12	30	28	23	21	23	14
Motorcycle	12	18	20	24	28	29	34
Pedestrian	2	1	5	2	1	1	0
School Bus	3	2	2	1	1	2	0
Fatalities	2	4	10	5	8	7	5

3.5 Additional Modes of Transport

SHIPPING

According to a 2004 report by TDA, trucks carry 83 percent of all manufactured freight transported in Wisconsin. More than 77 percent of all Wisconsin communities are served exclusively by trucks. Vernon County is served by a network of highways that include: STH 27; STH 33; STH 35; STH 56; STH 61; STH 80; STH 82; STH 131; STH 162; and USH 14 and 61. Access to interstate I-90 is approximately 35 miles from the county line via STH 27.

TRANSPORTATION AND AGRICULTURE

Transportation is critical for agriculture, yet ag-related transportation needs and impacts are often overlooked. Ag-related transportation operates on several scales, ranging from moving machinery on the system of local roads to moving commodities both through and to larger communities via truck or rail.

Family farming has historically been an important part of the Vernon County economy and way of life. The transportation needs and demands of this vital contributor to the local economy need to continue to be met by transportation planners. As of 2004, 92% of all farms within Vernon County were family farms with dairying as the main product. But with an aging population in the county, particularly among farmers, there is a trend toward large-scale farm operations. These large-scale operations rely on daily shipments of feed, often from areas outside of Vernon County. They also produce daily shipments of milk and frequent hauling of manure. These freight loads are often removed from the major transportation routes in the county, putting a strain on county and local roads. In addition to the wear that these trucks bring, they also have implications for the safety of other road users.

In addition to agricultural operations, numerous large-scale forestry operations exist in the county, which also have impacts on the county’s transportation network.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation truck operator maps, officially designated highways in Vernon County include:

- Designated Long Truck Routes
 - Hwy 14, 27, 61
 - 131 from Viola south
 - Hwy 80

- 75' Restricted Truck Route (53' trailer, 43' king pin to rear axle, no double bottoms)
 - Hwy 56, 82
 - Hwy 162 Stoddard to Coon Valley

- 65' Restricted Truck Route (48' trailer, no double bottoms)
 - Hwy 33, except when designated as Hwy 80 or 82
 - Hwy 162 north of Coon Valley
 - Hwy 131 north of Viola

AIRPORTS AND HELIPORTS

The Viroqua municipal airport is located in the city of Viroqua and is classified as a basic utility airport in the WDOT Wisconsin Airport System Plan 2020.

The airport does not have instrument landing capability. There is an automated fueling facility. There are two runways; the principal runway is a 3,350 X 60 foot paved runway and there is a 2,500 X 90 foot cross-wind grass runway.

The Joshua Sanford Field is located in the city of Hillsboro and is owned by the City of Hillsboro. The airport does not have instrument landing capability, but the runway has radio controlled low-intensity lighting. The runway is 3,570 X 50 foot and is paved. There are 10 planes housed there. The airport has two hangers and a small parking area. The airport has about 1,400 takeoffs and landings per year.

Both the Hillsboro hospital and Vernon Memorial hospital have heliports.

There is a private landing strip on private property off of Helegerson Road in the Town of Jefferson.

The nearest commercial airport is La Crosse Municipal Airport, located about one hour, by car, northwest of Viroqua. Some of the most important considerations related to protecting the long-term viability of the community's airport resource include: population density, height of structures, presence of distracting lights, reflective glare, smoke, dust, induced fog, electronic interference and bird attractants. Any of these potential conflicts can result in interference with safe approaches to and from the airport.

The Fort McCoy and Sparta Municipal Airport, located just east of Sparta, accommodates both civilian and military aircraft.

In October 2004, WISDOT released the Wisconsin Airport Use Guidebook (WALUG). Local jurisdictions have an array of tools that can ensure the long-term compatibility of an airport with surrounding land use. These include planning and zoning as well as more specific tools, including airport

approach protection and airport overlay zoning. The WALUG is available online. More information on land use planning around an airport is also available from WISDOT's Bureau of Aeronautics.

RAIL FREIGHT

WISDOT's commodity forecasts project that Wisconsin's freight rail tonnage will increase by more than 50 percent by 2020. Like roads and streets, rail infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance and improvements, much of the existing rail infrastructure dates back to the early 1900's when rail cars were smaller and lighter.

Existing rail in Vernon County is along the Mississippi River and is owned by Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (BNSF). This line parallels State Highway 35 for about 21 miles on the west side of the County.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

Vernon County has the Mississippi River running along its entire western boundary. There is extensive commercial and recreational navigation on the Mississippi River, but the county has no commercial docks for barge traffic. The nearest commercial port is in La Crosse.

In the center of Vernon County is the Kickapoo River, which glides through the landscape with so many twists and turns that its very name means "one who goes here, then there". There is a great deal of recreation canoeing on the Kickapoo. On the eastern side of Vernon County is the Baraboo River.

BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIANS

Bicycles, pedestrians and motor vehicles have shared the roads of Vernon County for decades. Beginning in 1890 with the "Good Roads Movement", the activism of bicyclists paved the way for the system of roads that we take for granted today.

Children under the age of 16, the elderly and those with disabilities are the greater portion of the public using pedestrian facilities. Many youth and some commuters ride bicycles as their regular means of transportation. The limited experience of children, and the limited physical ability of the elderly and disabled, should be considered when making road improvements in higher-density population areas.

Currently the only bike trail in Vernon County is located between Hillsboro and Union Center. At Union Center it connects to the 400 Trail, which then allows you to ride to many different areas of the state.

In 2001 when STH 131 from Ontario to Rockton was rebuilt, a bike lane on the paved shoulder of the road was added.

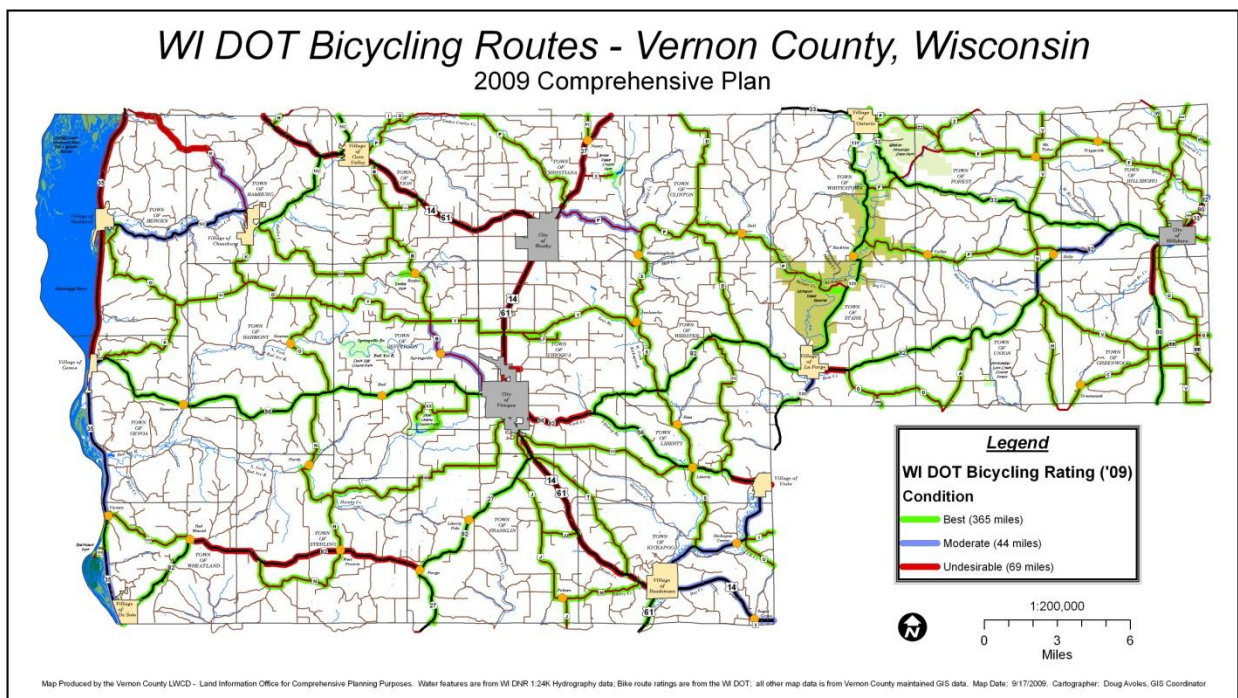
In 2011 with the widening of STH 14 and 61 between Westby and Viroqua a bike trail will be incorporated with the new road design.

For rural highways, a methodology or rating index should be used whenever traffic volumes on town and county roads increase beyond approximately 500 vehicles per day. Another resource is the Wisconsin Bike Map, which rates roadways for their bicycle compatibility using traffic volumes and the width of the roadway. On quiet county roads- including town roads and many county trunk highways - little improvement is necessary to create excellent bicycling routes. Very - low - volume rural roads (those with ADT'S below 700) seldom require special provisions like paved shoulders for bicyclists. A motorist needing to move left to pass a bicyclist can drive far enough from the pavement edge to avoid

hazards. State trunk highways and some county highways tend to have more traffic and a higher percentage of trucks, and as a result, the addition of paved shoulders may be appropriate in these areas. In special cases, shoulders may be beneficial on a town road connecting a school and a nearby development or a hilly low-volume highway serving truck traffic, for example. Paved shoulders should be seriously considered where low-volume town roads are being overtaken by new suburban development.

Map 3.5.1 displays the WI DOT recommended bicycling routes in Vernon County and the associated condition ratings. There are 365 miles of state and county highways in Vernon County that are rated **Best** for bicycling conditions.

Map 3.5.1 – WI DOT Bicycling Routes & Ratings



The Wisconsin State Trails Network Plan, completed in 2001, provides a long-term, big-picture vision for establishing a comprehensive multi-use trail network for the state. It identifies existing and proposed trails and connections that would serve as main corridors for a statewide trail system. The plan doesn't include every trail in the state, just the major arteries. It focuses mainly on abandoned rail corridors, utility corridors, critical road connections and natural feature corridors.

Pedestrian travel is an integral part of the total transportation picture. Many people rely on walking for exercise as well as for travel from their homes to work, school, or shopping. For the elderly, children, and those who are disabled, having safe and convenient pedestrian facilities is often essential to daily activities.

There are several opportunities and designated areas for walking and hiking in Vernon County. Please refer to the chapter on Utilities and Community Facilities, section 4.6 - Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, for information on walking and hiking opportunities in the county.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

This next section looks at transportation options for commuters, the elderly and disabled, and those who do not drive. In Wisconsin there are very few intercity services for smaller rural communities. With the loss of the Greyhound and the Jefferson bus services to several Wisconsin cities increased interest in exploring regional transit systems and intercity services in un-served and underserved areas.

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

The need for some form of transit services is projected to increase as the baby boom generation grows older. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average age of Vernon County's residents has been on the rise for several decades now. In 1980, the average age of a Vernon county resident was 34, in 1990 it was 36.2 and by 2000 the average age of a Vernon county resident had climbed to 39.1 years old, compared to a statewide median of 36.0 years. The proportion of people age 65 and older in Vernon County is higher than that of the state as a whole (17.0% versus 13.1%). The size of the older population has decreased 0.5% since 1990, in contrast to 7.0% growth in the state as a whole. In all, 4,769 people in Vernon County are age 65 or older, and 713 of these are age 85 or older.

The percentage of the Vernon County resident population in the 50-59, 60-69 and 70+ year old cohorts make up a substantially larger part of Vernon County's population than those same cohorts do on a state or national level. These cohorts will continue to gain population share in Vernon County in the future. The demographic shift away from a youthful population toward an older population will present future challenges for Vernon County. What follows is a snapshot-in-time of available services as of spring 2008 when this was written.

General population may travel with the following providers:

- Running Inc. shared ride taxi
- Various small volunteer driver programs
- "Amish taxi" services
- The Vernon County Unit on Aging mini-bus
- School busses in each school district

Elderly or disabled individuals may travel with one of the following providers:

- Running Inc. shared ride taxi or one of many "Amish taxis"
- The Vernon County Unit on Aging mini-bus
- Various small volunteer driver programs
- Specialized medical vehicles (SMV's)
- VARC Inc.
- Bethel Home and Services

PARK AND RIDE LOTS

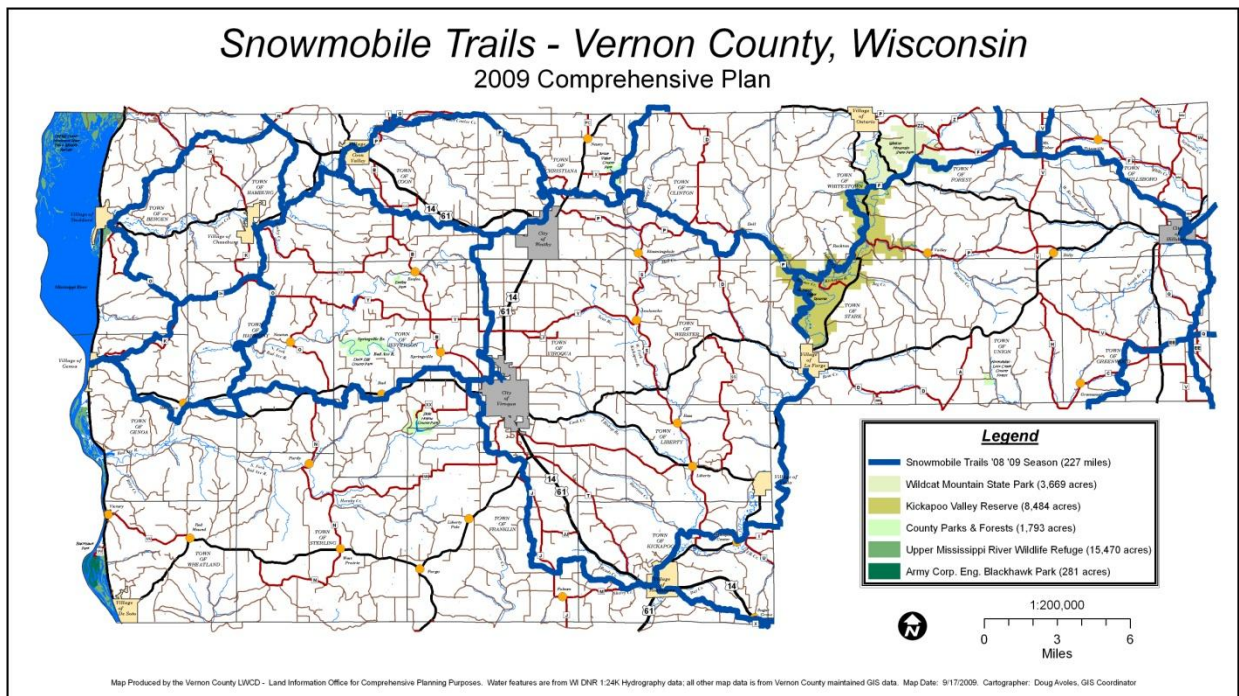
Vernon County currently has no officially designated park and ride lots. Most of the incorporated communities do have public parking areas for general use.

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS AND EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Vernon County has about 225 miles of snowmobile trails that are maintained by the seven snowmobile club alliance in the County. The clubs are: Chaseburg Snowtrailers, Coulee Track-N-Trail, Viroqua Ridge Runners, Ocooch Mountain Trail Riders, Kickapoo Valley Riders, Inc., Hillsboro Trailblazers, and Mt. Tabor Moonlight Riders.

The Vernon County Parks Administrator is the coordinator with the clubs. Each club sets up the trail routes, gets permission from the private landowners and does the marking of the trails. The State pays \$250.00 per mile of trail for the upkeep and the grooming of the trails. This money comes from snowmobile registration fees.

Map 3.5.2 – Snowmobile Trails of Vernon County



EQUESTRIAN

Horse drawn vehicles travel throughout Vernon County. The Amish community depends on the use of the equestrian mode of transportation which brings with it certain considerations for accommodating this mode of transportation. The Amish are approximately 10% of the total population of Vernon County. When planning for future transportation needs, it is important to consider varying differences in transportation needs and modes of Amish communities. Customarily, the Amish communities use non-motorized transportation such as walking or horse and buggy. Based on Amish economic and transportation traditions, their needs differ in a number of ways from other residents and these must be considered in the planning process. Transportation plans should account for various types of users on or near the roadway.

In areas that are near Amish settlements, plans must consider use of roads by horse and buggy, as well as pedestrians-such as Amish children walking to and from their local schools. One particular concern is that many roadways are winding and have numerous sharp corners. Due to this lack of visibility and multiple user's speeds and modes on the roadway, there is a danger of crashes between motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Additionally, Amish communities often participate in certain rural businesses on their settlements, including farming and other forms of income, like sawmills, woodworking shops, maple syrup production, bakeries and the like. The movement of these products to and from the settlements may increase certain types of transportation-related activities on roadways serving these settlements.

The public equestrian trails in Vernon County are primarily located within the Kickapoo Reserve and within Wildcat Mountain State Park. Recently an equestrian trail at Duck Egg County Park has been established.

3.6 Existing Transportation Plans

State Plans

Connections 2030

Connections 2030 is a statewide, multimodal transportation plan that provides a vision for highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit through the year 2030. Its policies and recommendations direct WisDOT's activities in areas such as preserving transportation infrastructure and services, promoting transportation safety and supporting economic growth.

The plan will guide transportation decisions over the next 20 years. It focuses on the transportation system's ability to support the preservation of transportation services and infrastructure, safe travel on all modes, mobility for all citizens, security and efficiency in all areas of operation, and economic growth throughout Wisconsin.

When completed, the multimodal corridors will accomplish these key goals:

- Portray key connections 2030 recommendations
- Prioritize investments
- Assist WISDOT transportation regions in identifying future segments for more detailed corridor plans

A series of corridor maps are available that show existing transportation facilities and service (highways, ferries, ports, airports, transit, intercity bus, rail, etc.) in that corridor. The following are the two corridors identified for Vernon County.

Mississippi River Corridor – Dubuque, IA to La Crosse to Twin Cities, MN

This 275-mile corridor is a major rail freight corridor containing parts of two Class I railroad mainlines linking the Twin Cities, MN, Chicago, IL and locations beyond. This corridor includes one of the main rail freight connections to Canada. It also includes the major waterborne freight corridor of the Upper Mississippi River Waterway System. The highways in this corridor are economic lifelines and tourism routes. This corridor contains Wisconsin's only National Scenic Byway, the Great River Road (primarily WIS 35), as well as

the Governor Nelson Dewey Memorial Highway (WIS 81 from Cassville to Beetown), the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway (WIS 25 from Nelson to Pepin) and the Great River Road (Mississippi River) Trail. The corridor includes the urban and urbanized areas of La Crosse and Dubuque, IA, as well as Platteville and Prairie du Chien.

Frank Lloyd Wright Corridor – La Crosse to Madison

This 140-mile corridor links La Crosse to Madison and locations south and east. The corridor serves an agricultural region of the state, and provides one of the few Wisconsin River crossings in southern Wisconsin. The corridor is named after the memorial highway honoring the architectural accomplishments of Frank Lloyd Wright. The entire Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Highway extends along US 14 from Richland Center to Madison. US 14 is also designated as the Purple Heart Memorial Highway from Richland Center to the Minnesota state line. The corridor's topography provides some of the most scenic hill and valley landscapes in the state. The corridor serves the urban and urbanized areas of La Crosse, Madison and Richland Center.

The multimodal corridors build on the idea of the corridors 2020 network, first established in 1988. Corridors 2020 identified a system of two-lane and multi-lane highways the network is made up of two subsystems:

- Backbone system: 1,550-mile network of multi-lane highways connecting all major population and economic regions of the state.
- Connector system: 2,100-mile network of high quality two-lane highways directly linking significant economic and tourism centers to the backbone system.

WISDOT conducted a study that evaluated new and expanded manufacturing plant locations in the state from 1990 to 2001. The results revealed that these new or expanding industrial firms created over 80,000 jobs in Wisconsin; 90% of these jobs are located within 4 miles of a corridor 2020 highway, which illustrates the importance of the highway system.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation maintains several other plans, statewide policies, and recommendations regarding various aspect of transportation. These plans should be taken into consideration when making future transportation decisions in Vernon County.

Other significant plans:

- Corridors 2030
- Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Airport Improvement Plan 2020
- Five Year Airport Improvement Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Pedestrian Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Rail Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Access Management System Plan
- Wisconsin DNR State Trails Network Plan
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan
- Six-Year Highway Improvement Program

Regional Plans

The La Crosse Area Regional Transportation Action Committee (LARTAC) was organized to help coordinate transportation issues for counties in the La Crosse Wisconsin area. They produced *The Regional Transportation Coordination Action Plan for the La Crosse, Wisconsin Transportation Service Area*, draft 2008 that envisions this coordination role. They emphasize the benefits of communication and coordination to save money, and that to reap these benefits will not require out-of-pocket expenses. This report was produced in collaboration with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC).

The MRRPC also produced *SAFETEA-LU Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan For the La Crosse Transportation Service Area 2008-2013*. The document lists gaps and needs in transportation services, especially for vulnerable populations, and identifies strategies and actions to close the gap.

County Plans

There are no transportation related planning documents solely for Vernon County. The county does however maintain a five year capital improvement plan.

3.7 Planned Transportation Improvements

State Transportation Projects

US 14 and US 61 are major regional highways serving southwestern Wisconsin. US 14 is a major link between Madison and La Crosse. It provides access to recreational and tourism destinations as well as numerous farming communities. US 61 is the major link (east of WIS 35 along the Mississippi River) between Dubuque, Iowa, and La Crosse.

US 14 and US 61 join at Readstown about 11 miles southeast of Viroqua. From there, routing is concurrent to La Crosse. Improvements are being proposed to US 14/61 around the communities of Westby and Viroqua in order to meet the growing traffic demand.

The improvements will be implemented in three separate segments:

- Segment 1: Four-lane divided highway between Westby and Viroqua (Tristate Road to Springville Road) estimated start is 2011 with the other segments to follow.
- Segment 2: Westby Bypass (Cut A Cross Road to Tristate Road)
- Segment 3: Viroqua Bypass (Springville Road to County T/WIS 27/WIS 82)

More information about this project and its segments can be found in the Environmental Impact Statement. The estimated total costs for real estate acquisition and roadway construction will be \$32 million. The project is funded with state and federal dollars. (From: the Wisconsin DOT website about the US 14/61 improvements (Westby to Viroqua))

3.8 Transportation Programs

Up until 1919, Wisconsin had statutory labor requirements mandating that all able-bodied men expect clergy, serve up to 20 days per year on local road building and maintenance. Every man between the ages of 21 and 50 served on a road crew or paid a substitute to represent him. If he could also bring a plow or wagon and a team of horses or oxen he got triple credit for his time of service. Citizens value good roads and maintenance of the local road system is the single largest expenditure for many local governments.

Compared to other states, Wisconsin has more local roads, the majority of them are paved and they must be maintained through four seasons. According to Federal highway Administration (FHWA) data, Wisconsin's per capital spending on local road system is second only to Minnesota's (the national average is \$123.00).

General transportation aids (GTA) represent the largest program in WISDOT's budget. The state returns roughly 30 percent of all state-collected transportation revenues (fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees) to local governments. These funds offset costs of county and municipal road construction, maintenance, bridge improvements, capital assistance for airports, rail and harbor facilities, flood damage, expressway policing and transit operating assistance. GTA funds are distributed to all Wisconsin counties, cities, villages and towns based on a six-year spending average or a statutorily set rate-per-mile.

The following are transportation programs, agencies, and activities that are currently in use or available for use in Vernon County.

State Programs

Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP)

The Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) assists local governments in improving seriously deteriorating county highways, town roads and city and village streets. The competitive reimbursement program pays up to 50 percent of total eligible costs with local governments providing the balance. The program has three basic components: Municipal Street Improvement (MSIP); County Highway Improvement (CHIP); and Town Road Improvement (TRIP). Three additional discretionary programs (CHIP-D, TRIP-D and MSIP-D) allow municipalities to apply for additional funds for high-cost road projects. For further information contact the WDOT. In the 2006-2007 LRIP project cycle, 6 Vernon county townships received \$149,985.00 in aid for reconstruction projects and in this same time frame, the county received \$124,091.25 in CHIP funds and \$332,897.00 in CHIP-D funds.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Bureau of Aeronautics

The Bureau of Aeronautics is responsible for accomplishing the WDOT mission in the air mode of transportation. The Bureau's mandate includes improving aviation safety, developing air transportation facilities, and providing aviation information and technical expertise to an array of external and internal customers. The Bureau works closely with federal, state, and local governments and with aviation industry associations. The Bureau has state permit authority for airport site approval and tall structures construction. The Bureau provides safety and technical education programs to aid pilots, flight instructors, and mechanics in meeting FAA regulatory requirements. For further information contact the WDOT.

Freight Railroad Programs

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation offers two programs to help preserve and improve Wisconsin's freight rail service: The Freight Railroad Preservation Program (FRPP) and the Freight Railroad Infrastructure Improvement Program (FRIIM). These two programs provide local units of government, industries, and railroads the assistance they need to preserve essential rail lines and encourage improvements to existing rail lines. Typical projects include track rehabilitation, spur construction, track acquisition, and storage facility construction. For further information contact the Bureau of Railroads and Harbors of the WDOT.

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Program

The Transportation Economic Assistance program provides 50% state grants to governing bodies, private businesses, and consortiums for road, rail, harbor, and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the state. Grants of up to \$1 million are available for transportation improvements that are essential for an economic development project. It must be scheduled to begin within three years, have the local government's endorsement, and benefit the public. For further information about this program contact the WDOT, Division of Transportation Investment Management.

County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance Program

The County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance program provides counties with financial assistance to provide transportation services to elderly persons and persons with disabilities. For further information contact the WDOT.

Elderly and Disabled Capital Assistance

Utilizes federal and state funds to provide capital funding for specialized transit vehicles used to serve the elderly and persons with disabilities. Eligible applicants include private, non-profit organizations and local public groups.

New Freedom

Utilizes federal funds for capital and operating expenses that support new public transportation services and alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP)

Federal pilot project, authorized by SAFETEA-LU through the 2010 federal fiscal year. Wisconsin is the only state in which it is operating. STRAP emphasizes serving rural populations, coordinating between transportation services, addressing the needs of non-ambulatory residents, and public participation in planning. Eligible applicants are local public bodies, including federally recognized Indian tribes. Projects must serve rural or non-urban areas with populations less than 50,000.

Eligible projects fall into one of two categories:

- Planning: Projects involving planning studies or operational planning.
- Operating: Projects supplementing or expanding existing service, starting up new service, or continuing service from previous STRAP grants.

Funding is provided at 80% of project costs. \$2 million has been authorized for federal fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Applications are posted early June and due on September 2nd for the

following calendar year. Detailed application information and forms with which to apply are available at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/strap.htm>.

Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP)

The Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP) represents an effort to connect low-income workers with jobs through enhanced local transportation services. This transportation program integrates state and federal funding sources into one application. The goal of this program is for local areas to work together in a collaborative process to assess the transportation needs for low-income workers and develop options for addressing those needs. For purposes of WETAP funding, low-income is defined as family income that is less than 200% Federal Poverty Level.

The WETAP program encourages long-term solutions by providing the funding for demonstration grants to cover the expenses of the early start-up and development stages of an effective transportation solution.

Recreational Trails Program

Towns, villages, cities, counties, tribal governing bodies, school districts, and incorporated organizations are eligible to receive reimbursement for development and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. Eligible sponsors may be reimbursed for up to 50% of the total project costs. Eligible projects include maintenance and restoration of existing trails, development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages, construction of new trails, and acquisition of easement or property for trails. For further information contact the WDNR.

Safe Routes to School Program

The revised federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, signed into law on August 10, 2005, provides funding to state departments of transportation to create and administer Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programs. SRTS programs encourage children ages K-8 to walk and bike to school by creating safer walking and biking routes. SRTS programs improve walking and biking travel options, promote healthier lifestyles in children at an early age, and decrease auto-related emissions near schools.

SRTS will allow parents and communities to feel better about their children walking and biking to school by creating a safer environment in the vicinity of the school. This can be achieved through a variety of ways including new sidewalks and bikeways, traffic calming initiatives, educating parents and children on pedestrian safety, and creating programs that encourage students to walk/bike to school such as a "Walking School Bus." In addition, SRTS programs ease automobile traffic and congestion near schools, and reduce fuel consumption and air pollution. For further information the WDOT can be contacted.

Local Transportation Programs

The State of Wisconsin requires local governments to collect and submit condition rating for all local roads. The most commonly used pavement condition rating system is PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating). PASER is a method of rating asphalt and concrete roads on a scale of 1 to 10, based on visual inspection. The best quality roads are US-14 and WI-State roads. These are roads that carry the bulk of local and through traffic; therefore they need to be kept in decent quality in order to sufficiently handle the thousands of cars which travel on the m daily. Most of the roads with a "poor" rating are small local roads in remote areas, furthest from major state highways.

Every year municipalities and the county are required to provide a report on the pavement condition of the roads under their jurisdiction to WISDOT. The Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) is a system that helps local government and the WISDOT manage local road data, such as width, surface type, surface year, shoulder, curb, road category. The WISLR program records the rating of a road which then allows a county commissioner to make maintenance and replacement decisions.

3.9 Transportation Trends and Outlook

Transportation Infrastructure and Issues

The transportation issues facing Vernon County are those typical of small dispersed cities and villages within a rural region. The main roads are a network of connections running between these population centers traversing through mainly undeveloped areas. Distances within this region are such that roads are usually the most practical avenues to work, shopping and all of the other places people travel to and within Vernon County. During the planning period, it is not likely that there will be significant change to this pattern and use with the exception of the planned bypasses near Westby and Viroqua.

There are places, in the county, where people have daily transportation options that include driving, taking a cab, bicycling or walking. In rural areas many of these options may not be practical and others are simply not available. It may seem that local planning input has little relation to a much larger system like transportation. However, the residents of towns, villages and cities-and the elected and appointed officials who represent them-have good reason to care about local transportation needs related to:

- Transportation safety
- Agricultural-vehicle mobility
- Connectivity with the larger transportation system
- Transportation to support economic development
- Freight mobility
- Transportation needs of the elderly and disabled
- Recreational transportation uses
- Tourism
- Maintenance Costs

When thinking about strain on the transportation infrastructure, it is important to understand the characteristics of large-scale business in the county, particularly agriculture and forestry operations, as they generate significant levels of truck and heavy equipment traffic. As this type of traffic increases, the maintenance impact on town and county roads will likely increase. To keep costs associated with maintenance as low as possible, it will continue to be important for citizens, government officials, and business to carefully consider where commercial and industrial facilities should be located as well as be able to assess the impact on the transportation infrastructure.

Tourism & Recreation

Vernon County's unique farming history and landscape, including the presence of Amish families and farms, and numerous artists and craftspeople, make it an attractive location for tourists wishing to visit, shop and view the work in shops and studios. The scenic beauty combined with a lack of traffic make the County a desired destination for motorcycle enthusiast. Also the natural amenities of the area

(forests, trout streams, Mississippi River, parks & trails) make Vernon County a desirable outdoor recreation area. It is likely that the trend in tourism and recreational use will continue to increase.

An influx of tourists and recreational visitors will likely result in increased traffic volumes and potential mode-use conflicts (i.e. bicyclists and tour buses). These potential issues should be considered when roads are being updated, maintained, or reclassified.

Commuting

According to the state of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) in 2000, Vernon County had about 3,000 more workers commuting out of the county for a job than the number who traveled into the county for work. La Crosse County is the destination of sixty percent of the outbound commuters and Monroe County received about ten percent of the commuters.

The majority of commuters drive alone and this number increased significantly over the last decade of the century. In the 1990 census, 60 percent of Vernon county workers drove alone and 13 percent carpoled. According to the 2000 census, 71 percent of residents drove to work alone and 11 percent carpoled. During this same time period, workers also saw an increase in average time spent traveling to jobs. The average time it took Vernon County residents to get to work increased from 19.3 minutes in 1990 to 23.7 minutes in 2000. With the increase in fuel costs there will likely be an increasing demand for more mass transit types of services and the establishment of park and ride lots to facilitate carpooling.

4. Utilities and Community Facilities

Addressing community service needs is becoming ever more challenging for local governments. In this age of budget deficits and shrinking revenues, municipal governments are constantly looking for ways to provide needed and expected services with fewer resources. In order to facilitate wise decisions and policies, it is valuable to estimate the future utility and community facility needs of the community.

The services and facilities not only meet a community's needs, but also the type and cost of community facilities and services affect property values and taxes and contribute to the quality of life within a community. Quality of life is improved by local features such as parks, schools, utilities, and protective services. These services require substantial investment, supported by local tax bases or user fees. The level of service is generally influenced by the ability of users to pay for services or their willingness to be taxed for services they often take for granted or do not understand well.

This chapter includes an inventory of existing facilities and services and reviews their condition and level of service. It is important to note that information regarding utilities, facilities, and services identified within this element may not be all-inclusive.

4.1 County Administrative Facilities and Services

County Public Buildings

The following public buildings are owned/leased and operated by Vernon County and are the primary sites where county government services are conducted.

- County Courthouse
- Erlandson Building
- Banta Building
- Vernon Manor nursing facility
- Vernon County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center
- Vernon County Solid Waste and Recycling Center
- Vernon County Parks Program

A variety of facilities are owned and maintained by the County at park facilities.

Facilities are detailed in the Agriculture, Natural and Historic Resources section of this plan.

- Highway Shops are located and detailed in the Transportation section of the plan
- Unit on Aging leases sites, or portions of facilities, throughout the county for use as senior meal sites or for meals on wheels programs. Leased sites are the following: Chaseburg, Coon Valley, Desoto (Bright Spot) and (Prairie View School), Hillsboro, La Farge, Ontario, Readstown, Stoddard, Viroqua #1 and #2, Westby. Meals on Wheels are located at Chaseburg/Coon Valley, Desoto, Hillsboro, La Farge, Ontario, Readstown, Viroqua (x2) and Westby.
- The county farm has several facilities and land.
- The Land and Water Conservation Department leases space in the Agricultural Service Center.

County Committees, Commission, and Boards

The following committees, commissions, and boards serve Vernon County. This list also includes committees, commissions, and boards of which Vernon County is represented for regional or specific issues.

Elective(Chairpersons elected by Committee)

- Agriculture-Extension and Land Conservation
- Highway
- Human Services
- Vernon Manor Trustees

Appointive

- Aging
- Building and Facilities / Long Range Planning
- Emergency Management
- Finance
- General Government
- Health
- Hidden Valleys Tourist Organization Representative
- Legal Affairs/Rules Revision
- Land Sales
- Mississippi River Boundary Waters Advisory
- Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission Representatives
- Personnel
- Resource
- Sheriff's Department
- Solid Waste Management
- Tourism and Promotion
- Valuation Study
- Veteran's Service
- Zoning
- Zoning Board of Appeals

Advisory Committees with Citizen Membership and County Board Representatives to Non-County Board Organizations

- Aging Advisory
- Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin Advisory
- Highway Safety
- Land Information Committee
- LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee)
- Revolving Loan Fund Committee
- Veterans Service Commission
- W-2 Steering Committee – this committee will terminate on December 31, 2009
- County Library Committee
- Coordinated Services Program Committee
- Inter-disciplinary Teams / Transition Teams

Mississippi Valley Health Services
Western WI Cares Managed Care Organization
Community Action Program
Private Industry Council
Vernon County Dairy Committee Representative
ITBEC
Transportation Coordinating Committee Rep.
Winding Rivers Library Representative
Strategic Planning Advisory Committee

4.2 Local Administration

Local towns have an elected chair and two supervisors, a clerk, treasurer and assessor. The Villages have an elected President and Trustees and clerk/treasurer and assessor. Cities have an elected Mayor and alderpersons, a clerk/treasurer and administrator. The most up-to-date information is available in the Vernon County Official Directory that is compiled by the County Clerk's office bi-annually and available through that office.

4.3 Protective Services

County Sheriff's Department

The Vernon County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center is located at 1320 Bad Axe Court, Viroqua, 54665. The department employs 46 full time staff. Twenty-four sworn deputy sheriffs are assigned to 911 dispatching, patrol, investigations, community policing, court security or detention center management. Seventeen non-sworn correctional officers are assigned to the jail. Civilian employees are assigned to clerical, transcription or maintenance duties. Department supervision includes the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Captain (Jail), Lieutenant (Investigations), and five sergeants. There are 34 part-time employees in the Sheriff's Reserve serving various relief and staffing roles. The Sheriff out-sources and contracts for detention center kitchen staff and inmate medical services.

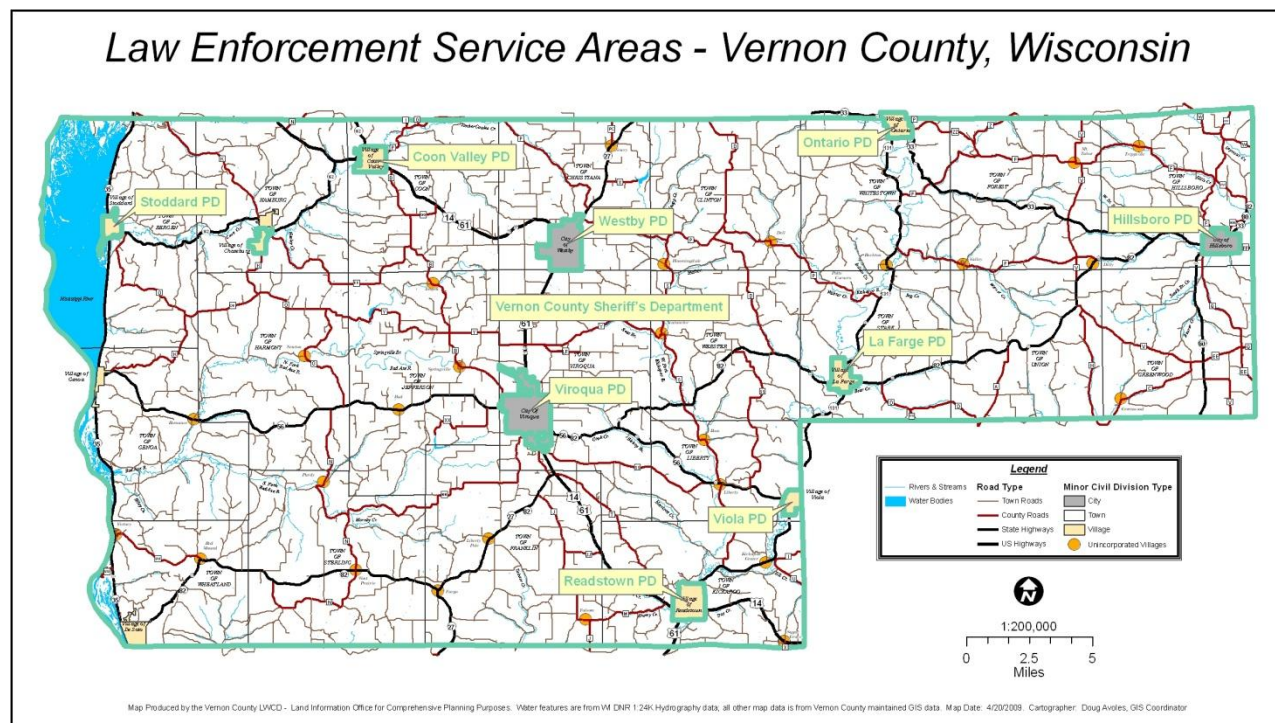
The Sheriff maintains the county jail and is responsible for the custody and care of all inmates housed with-in. A modern detention facility and office space was completed in 2006 after previous facility occupancy of 93 years. The Vernon County Sheriff's Department provides primary police patrol and investigation services to the unincorporated areas of the county, including 21 townships. In addition, Vernon County has three cities and six villages that secondary police services are provided either by contract or concurrent jurisdiction as may be needed. The elected Sheriff is designated the chief law enforcement officer of the county by the Wisconsin State Constitution.

Website: vernonsheriff.com
General email: vcso@vernoncounty.org
Emergencies: 911
General Business Telephone: 608-637-2123 - 800-637-2123

Village and City Police

Chaseburg, Coon Valley, Readstown, Viola have a police officer. La Farge, Ontario, Hillsboro, Stoddard, Viroqua and Westby have a police chief and officers.

Map 4.3.1 - Police Service Areas



Municipal Courts

Villages have cooperative agreements to share costs and revenue from Municipal Courts. These courts operate out of Ontario, Readstown, Viola, and Viroqua. The details of intergovernmental agreements are covered in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Chapter of this plan.

Vernon County Teen Court

Teen Court is a cost-effective, early-intervention program designed to hold first time youth offenders accountable for their actions and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Youth who have been issued citations for ordinance violations avoid a conviction and its consequences, if they opt for the program and successfully complete it.

To qualify for the program, youth who have been issued citations are required to appear in court with a parent or guardian and admit their guilt. They are then referred to the Teen Court Coordinator, who schedules an appearance before a peer jury, which determines an appropriate set of sanctions. Sanctions vary with the youth and the offense. They may include submission to a chemical abuse assessment, attendance of an educational program, writing an essay or a letter of apology or any other of a wide range of potential sanctions. Successful completion also requires future service as a teen court juror.

State studies show that youth who are given the opportunity to participate in a Teen Court program are 5 times less likely to re-offend than youth who go through the traditional court system. When surveyed, 100% of the Vernon County participants ascribed a benefit to completion of the program. This program also demonstrates cost savings to the county. The statistics from the program follow:

- 317 participants January 2001 – September 2008.
- 112 participants since start up of Vernon County funding in 2005:
- 97 successfully completed their sanctions (87%);
- 4 were still in the process of completing their sanctions (3%);
- 11 non-compliant and referred back to court for conviction and sentence (10%).
- Offenses (by percentage of caseload): alcohol, tobacco and drugs (41%); traffic violations (15%) violations; ATV violations (11%); disorderly conduct (10%); truancy (9%); theft (6%).

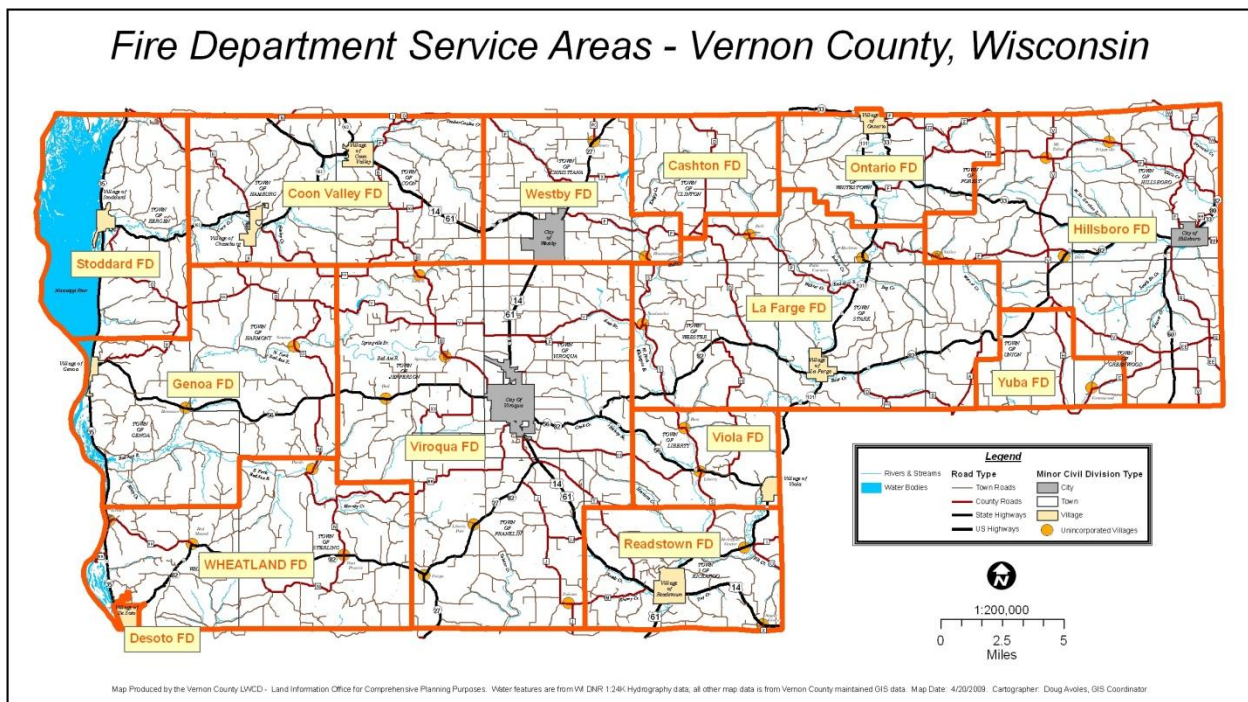
During 2008:

- Youth violations relating to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs decreased by 2%
- Youth traffic violations decreased by 14%

Fire Departments & Emergency Medical Services

Much of the fire protection and emergency response coverage is handled through cooperative agreements that are outlined in Section 7.3 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Chapter. Centers for fire administration include Coon Valley, Desoto, Genoa, Hillsboro, LaFarge, Ontario, Readstown, Stoddard, Viola, Viroqua, Westby, and Wheatland.

Map 4.3.2 – Fire Service Areas



Emergency Management Department

The Vernon County Emergency Management Office is responsible for directing, coordinating, administering and planning with all units of government and emergency service providers located in the county. Under Wisconsin law, it is the responsibility of local government to execute emergency service effectively, mobilize resources, deliver trained response personnel, mitigate hazards and ensure safety to the citizens in the county.

In Vernon County there are several warning systems which can be activated rapidly during severe weather events, which are monitored closely by Vernon County Emergency Management, the Vernon County Sheriff's Department, and your local police and fire authorities.

The most common warning devices in populated areas of Vernon County are the community sirens. These sirens are activated when conditions exist that there is "imminent danger", including, but not limited to a tornado sighting. Straight-line winds, micro-bursts, and down-bursts associated with severe thunderstorm activity may also trigger use of the warning system.

Citizens residing in flood danger areas should familiarize themselves with flood safety precautions, according to the Vernon County Emergency Management Office. Preparing for potential trouble is important following information from the Wisconsin Division of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service. These agencies work closely with County Emergency Management offices during high flood danger periods.

HAZMAT Team

The Hazmat Team provides initial response and evaluation to incidents involving hazardous materials that are geographically located within the County. It provides services to contain and hazardous material releases and provides technical advice to the County in regards to hazardous material control and mitigation. All personnel of the "Hazmat Team" are trained and certified as "Hazardous Materials Technicians" along with a trained incident commander who takes control of the incident and coordinates the activities of the local agencies and the HAZMAT team.

Local Emergency Planning Committee

The Local Emergency Planning Committee assists in the protection of the community from harmful and possibly life-threatening affects of a hazardous materials release. They develop policies, procedures, and plans for responding to hazardous materials incidents in compliance with the requirements of state and federal agencies.

4.4 School Facilities

The following tables detail the public and private schools in the county.

Table 4.4.1 - Public Schools in the County

Community	School Name	Address	Education Level	Students Enrolled
Chaseburg	Chaseburg Middle School	E3061 STATE RD 162	5-8	
Coon Valley	Coon Valley Elementary	PO BOX 309	PK-04	156
De Soto	DeSoto High School	615 MAIN ST	9-12	206
De Soto	DeSoto Middle School	615 MAIN ST	6-8	129
De Soto	Prairie View Elementary	E3245 COUNTY ROAD N	PK-05	135
Hillsboro	Hillsboro Elementary	PO BOX 526	PK-06	327
Hillsboro	Hillsboro High School	PO BOX 526	7-12	298
La Farge	La Farge Elementary	301 W ADAMS ST	PK-05	121
La Farge	La Farge High School	301 W ADAMS ST	9-12	119
La Farge	La Farge Middle School	301 W ADAMS ST	6-8	59
Stoddard	Stoddard Elementary	300 N COTTAGE ST	PK-05	138
Viola	Kickapoo High School	S6520 STATE HIGHWAY 131	7-12	226
Viola	Viola Elementary	S6520 STATE HIGHWAY 131	KG-06	223
Viroqua	Laurel High School	PO BOX 431	9-12	18
Viroqua	Liberty Pole Elementary	RR 1	PK-04	Closed
Viroqua	Better Futures	100 BLACKHAWK DR	10-12	2
Viroqua	Viroqua Elementary	701 EDUCATION AVE	PK-04	393
Viroqua	Viroqua High School	100 BLACKHAWK DR	9-12	472
Viroqua	Viroqua Middle School	101 BLACKHAWK DR	5-8	351
Westby	Westby Elementary	122 NELSON ST	PK-04	264
Westby	Westby High School	206 WEST AVE S	9-12	388
Westby	Westby Middle School	207 WEST AVE S	5-8	263

Table 4.4.2 - Private Schools in the County

Community	School Name	Address	Education Level	Students Enrolled
Cashton	South Clinton School	S1344 CTY HWY D RR 3	1-8	115
Cashton	Amish Parochial Sch	RR 3	1-8	
Cashton	Clinton Amish Schs	S609 County Hwy D	1-8	
Cashton	Sacred Heart Sch	710 Kenyon St	1-8	
Stoddard	St. Matthews School	303 N MAIN ST BOX 208	PK-8	47
Viroqua	Cornerstone Christian Academy	S 3656 US Hwy 14	K-12	
Viroqua	English Lutheran Sch	741 North East Ave	8-Jan	
Viroqua	Leadership Family and Children Center	PO BOX 149	8-12	6
Viroqua	Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School	431 E. COURT	PK-8	145
Viroqua	Youth Initiative HI	431 E. COURT	9-12	
Westby	Sugar Grove School	RR 3 S1780 CTY HWY D	1-8	28

Higher Education

Western Wisconsin Technical College has a regional center located in the City of Viroqua. Western's Center in Viroqua is a thriving learning community located in the heart of downtown. The center offers select associate's degree, technical diploma, and certificate programs. The center also offers classes that transfer to programs at Western's La Crosse Campus and to other colleges and universities. Whether you are a new high school graduate, an adult interested in career advancement or career changes, or an employer seeking training for your employees, the Viroqua Center provides a vital local resource. The programs include:

- Supervisory Management
- Accounting
- Office Support Specialist
- Administrative Assistant (first year only)
- Skilled Nursing Assistant Certificate
- LPN
- Nursing
- Farm Business and Production Management
- Business Management - Fall 2009

4.5 Quasi Public Facilities

Libraries

Vernon County joined the Winding Rivers Library System (WRLS) as a full member in 1978. At that time, county planning for library development and outreach to residents from municipalities without libraries took on a regional perspective. The County, through its membership in Winding Rivers, has provided its residents with open access to municipal libraries and outreach services.

Currently, Vernon County is represented on the Winding Rivers Board of Trustees by two appointees. These appointments follow state law by providing representation proportionate to population as nearly as practical (S 43.19) There are eight legally established Vernon County libraries in Coon Valley, DeSoto, Hillsboro, LaFarge, Ontario, Readstown, Viroqua, and Westby. There is a legal library in Viola which belongs to another library system. Presently, Readstown and DeSoto are not part of WRLSWEB, the internet based materials sharing system provided through WRLS.

These libraries are available to all regional residents and meet all the same service requirements as specified by Wisconsin Statutes. For many years, Vernon County has provided funding directly for the operation of public libraries in the County. In 2009, this appropriation equaled \$ 211,620. Beginning in 2007 Vernon County reimbursed libraries in neighboring counties for non-resident borrowing; the same process occurs in reverse. Most municipal libraries now exempt themselves from the county library tax.

Vernon County has provided annual appropriations for system operations to Winding Rivers Library System since it became a member. Vernon County has a Library Committee that updates and oversees progress on a three year plan for county libraries. Details about the libraries appear in Table 4.5.1.

Table 4.5.1 - Libraries of Vernon County

Library Community	Address	Open Hours	Building Size (sq.ft)	Staff (FTE)	Print Coll.	Internet Stations	Circulation Adult	Circulation Children's	WRLSWEB Member	2007 Budget
Viola	137 S Main St				13,972					\$46,487
Coon Valley	500 Central Ave	1,404	6,213	0.96	10,356	2	14,144	10,824	yes	\$66,204
De Soto	111 S Houghton St	1,092	1,500	0.50	13,300	3	5,619	1,534	no	\$26,819
Hillsboro	819 High Ave	1,716	3,440	1.80	33,619	2	33,366	21,269	yes	\$145,987
La Farge	118 S Bird St	1,560	2,200	1.23	10,381	3	13,992	4,922	yes	\$65,517
Ontario	313 Main St	1,300	4,320	1	14,718	3	9,796	5,729	yes	\$44,639
Readstown	129 W Wisconsin Ave	1,300	2,500	.6	21,727	5	11,142	4,906	no	\$21,862
Viroqua	118 E Jefferson St	2,808	7,424	7	38,271	10	75,287	42,263	yes	\$326,352
Westby	206 N Main St	2,607	2,525	2	17,333	3	28,636	18,670	yes	\$105,878

Cemeteries

The Cultural Resources section 5.14 of this plan contains information about cemeteries in Vernon County.

Organizations and Clubs

Giving evidence to the tremendous spirit of volunteerism in Vernon County, there are a great number of organizations and clubs located in Vernon County such as Chambers of Commerce, Lions and Lioness Clubs, 4-H Clubs, conservation groups, etc. Whenever possible these organizations should be included as partners because of their potential for guidance, funding, support, and volunteers. Civic and other organizations often provide local governments a cost-effective way to leverage tax dollars for community projects.

4.6 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

State and Federally Owned Facilities

The State of Wisconsin owns a large amount of land in the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed including 3,646 acres in Wildcat Mountain State Park and 8,569 acres in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Ownership of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, located in central Vernon County, recently transferred from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to the State of Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Reserve, originally planned to contain a large flood control structure and impoundment, is home to numerous native species of plants and animals. The Reserve is managed by an 11-member board, which includes a joint management agreement with the Ho-Chunk Nation. It is the first time a locally controlled board has managed state land. Recreational activities include on- and off- road biking, primitive camping, canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, horse riding, fishing and hunting. Future plans for the reserve include the construction of timber bridges to connect many trails and a visitor's center. More information on the Reserve can be found at <http://kvr.state.wi.us/static/>.

Wildcat Mountain State Park, located between Ontario and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, contains steep wooded hills and sandstone cliffs. Several trout streams and a portion of the Kickapoo River flow through the park. Wildcat Mountain State Park offers camping, hiking, cross country ski trails, a canoe launch on the Kickapoo River, as well as one of the few horse camping facilities and trails in the State Park system.

The State Department of Transportation owns and operates public waysides and there are public fishing easements scattered throughout the County and are held and managed by either the Wisconsin DNR or Vernon County LWCD.

Federal agencies operate the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wildlife Refuge, Army Corps of Engineers Blackhawk Park, and the USFWS Fish Hatchery in Genoa.

County Operated Parks and Facilities

Vernon County has established Park and Recreation Areas on six public properties: three County Park properties, two County Forest lands and one combination County Park and County Forest land. Vernon County also manages the boat landing and fishing pier at Runge Hollow Lake. Within these properties there are 2 campgrounds with 100 total campsites, 10 miles of hiking trails, 3 miles of

mountain bike trails, 4 boat ramps, 3 picnic shelters, and a swimming beach. The WI DNR owns Jersey Valley and Sidie Hollow is operated by the county by recreational easement.

Outdoor recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Vernon County. Vernon County is working to meet this demand for recreational opportunities by providing developed facilities such as parks, beaches, campgrounds, shower-houses, picnic areas, waysides, boat landings, canoe campsites, and multi-use trails for hiking, biking, hunter access, walking, cross country skiing, and horseback riding, etc.

The county forests also provide tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring park level developments. The management strategy for Vernon County's Forest properties is to limit development so as to maintain and foster ecosystems that are largely undisturbed for optimum benefit to wildlife. Recreational opportunities in our county forests include hunting, fishing, berry picking, mushroom hunting, bird watching, and sightseeing. The Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Outdoor Recreation Plan both address recreational activities and opportunities in Vernon County in further detail.

Sidie Hollow County Park

Sidie Hollow County Park is a 521 acre tract of land, located 3 miles southwest of Viroqua on County Road XX. Sidie Hollow Park offers camping, a boat landing, hiking trails, mountain bike trails, picnic facilities, fishing opportunities in two trout streams and a lake, and playground facilities for the children. Hunting is allowed in the park after the campground closes on October 15th each year.

The 38-acre Sidie Hollow Lake was formed as part of a Flood Control Dam project. Sidie Hollow Park has 73 campsites in three different areas within the park, including 18 sites with full hook-up (electricity, water and sewer), 19 sites with electricity and 36 rustic sites with no utilities. Campsites are open from April 15 through October 15 each year.



Sidie Hollow Park has recently installed two restroom facilities featuring hot showers and flush toilets to better serve camping clients and park visitors. Our county parks have also implemented a self-registration system to more efficiently register campers and collect camping fees at all three camping areas within Sidie Hollow Park.

Other recent park improvement projects at Sidie Hollow include the installation of information and park history kiosks, goat prairie restoration in three areas within the park, safety railings at various locations along the trail that encircles the lake, installation of a new fishing pier along the trail, native prairie restoration along Coe Hollow Creek and the planting of nearly 100 trees within park boundaries. Tree species planted include white spruce, tamarack, white cedar, maple, prairie crab tree, red osier dogwood and silky dogwood - species that are all native to this region.

A popular recreation feature at Sidie Hollow is the 2 mile hiking trail around the lake. The trail is relatively flat and would be considered an easy to moderately easy hike for people of all skill levels. The trail provides many lake access points to the shoreline for fishing and swimming.



Vernon County, through the work of the County Parks Administrator and County Forest Administrator, will continue to seek grant opportunities to implement new park and forest improvement projects, purchase additional lands when opportunities arise, and make other improvements to meet the ever increasing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities in Vernon County.

Jersey Valley County Park

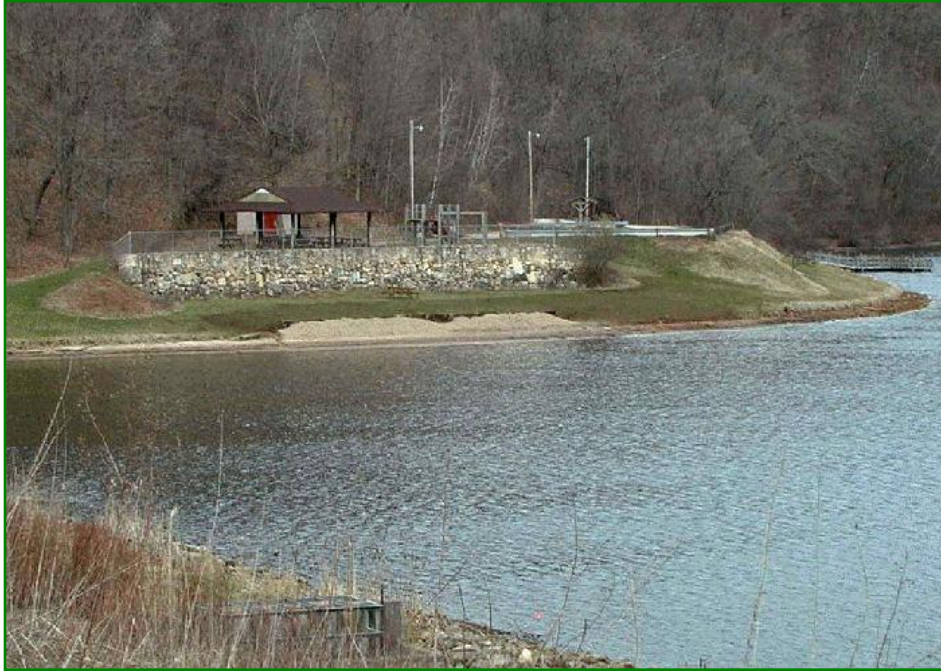
Jersey Valley County Park is a 370-acre tract of land, located 3 miles north of Westby on County Road X. Jersey Valley Park offers swimming, fishing, boating, hiking and picnicking. Jersey Valley Park offers a handicap accessible fishing pier, 3 miles of intermediate to difficult hiking on a trail that encircles the entire lake, a boat landing, a picnic shelter, restroom facilities, a drinking fountain and a swimming beach. Hunting is allowed in the park after October 15th each year.

The hiking trail around Jersey Valley Lake is a moderate to difficult hike that includes a couple of steep hills to either climb or descend, depending on which direction you are heading. The trail offers a good view of the lake below at several locations, and crosses the Peaceful Valley stream over a bridge in the far northern part of the park.



Like Sidie Hollow Lake, the 52-acre Jersey Valley Lake is part of a Flood Control project. Since 2005, after a devastating fish kill caused by manure runoff from its watershed, Jersey Valley Lake has been drained down. It was discovered that when full, lake water was leaking through the hillside and re-appearing downstream of the dam, putting it at a high risk for dam failure and potentially causing devastating flooding downstream.

Vernon County is currently under orders from the Department of Natural Resources Dam Safety Unit to repair the dam. Once the repairs have been made, it is anticipated that Jersey Valley Lake will be restored to its original size and depth. Part of the restoration design includes improvements to the beach and swimming area. Repairs to the dam are scheduled to begin in 2009. If all goes well with the repairs, Jersey Valley Lake and Park will once again become a popular destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts in Vernon County.



Esofea-Rentz Memorial County Park and County Forest

Esofea-Rentz Memorial County Park is a 56-acre tract of land and is located 9 miles northwest of Viroqua, just off of County Road B. You can fish in any of the five ponds, or along the North Fork of the Bad Axe River, which borders Esofea Park. This section of the Bad Axe River has had recent trout habitat improvement work completed.

Esofea Park has 27 campsites, including 12 with electricity and 15 rustic sites with no utilities. In addition there are 5 spring fed ponds, a picnic shelter, a ball field, a play set, a swing set and nearly 2 miles of hiking trails. The park is open for camping from April 15 through October 15 each year. Hunting is allowed in the park after the campground closes on October 15th each year.



Major flooding events occurred in Vernon County in August 2007 and June 2008, causing severe damage to Esofea-Rentz Memorial Park on both occasions. The main entry to the park includes a bridge over the North Fork Bad Axe River. The bridge was heavily damaged during the first flood, and was permanently destroyed during the second flood. A new bridge will need to be installed, but in the interim, a stream crossing has been installed allowing park users access to the facilities. The floods have also caused damage along the stream, particularly to campsites 13 through 20. Those sites have been re-graded and new trees planted thanks to donations from local businesses.

Native tree species planted in the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009 are to include white spruce, white pine, hackberry, sugar maple, river birch, quaking aspen, swamp white oak and tamarack.



Esofea-Rentz Memorial County Park is also part of the Vernon County Forest properties. The timber is managed for long-term sustainability as a productive forest. In the winter of 2007 and 2008, a timber harvest producing 18 thousand board feet of saw-timber and 250 cords of pulpwood was completed. In December of 2008, Vernon County completed the purchase of an additional 66 acres of adjacent land for enrollment into the County Forest program. This additional land purchase increases the size of Esofea-Rentz Memorial

Park from 56 acres to 122 acres, and will greatly increase recreational opportunities for residents and visitors in the future.

The new purchase includes the addition of approximately 1,940 linear feet of North Fork Bad Axe River frontage, thereby expanding public fishing access to the river substantially. Vernon County staff, including the Parks Administrator and the County Forester, will be seeking grants to improve recreational opportunities at Esofea-Rentz Memorial Park for such things as improved trout habitat, additional hiking trails, additional campsites, improved restroom facilities and perhaps long term improvements to the spring-fed fishing ponds.

Blackhawk County Park

Blackhawk County Park is a small 2-acre site, located between De Soto and Genoa in Wheatland Township just off State Highway 35 on County Road BI. The park is three miles north of De Soto, WI, and 30 miles south of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Located on the banks of the Mississippi River, Blackhawk Park has a public boat launch and a private concession stand that sells basic food and fishing items. The boat ramp presently needs an extension to help with use during periods of low water .





The county property joins the US Army Corps of Engineers Blackhawk Park directly to the north and is located immediately prior to reaching the federal Blackhawk Park entrance to the south. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' managed Blackhawk Park has a campground that offers 215 campsites, 65 of which have electricity. There are coin operated showers, two boat ramps, two playgrounds, two picnic shelters, a sanitary waste disposal station, volleyball court, horseshoe pits, pay phones and a fishing dock.

Duck Egg County Forest

The Duck Egg County Forest is a 707-acre tract of land located in a remote area of Vernon County between Springville and Romance in the heart of the Bad Axe River valley. It is 10 miles west of Viroqua on Irish Ridge Road, off of County Road Y. This land is County Forest property primarily used for timber management, but does offer recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, and equestrian trails.

Duck Egg is also the site of a Flood Control Dam capable of storing 1.4 billion gallons of water at flood stage.



Currently there are 2 timber sales pending marked and sold to local timber harvesters. Currently these sales total over 205 thousand board feet. These sales were marked and bid out by the Vernon County Forest Administrator, who will eventually administer the ongoing timber sales to ensure sustainability and adherence to the signed timber sale contract conditions. These periodic timber sales provide revenue to the county, as well as a percentage that is given to the local townships in which county forests are located.

The Duck Egg County Forest compartment is home to numerous unique wildlife species and biological communities. Numerous interior migratory songbirds call Duck Egg home, as well as reptiles and amphibians that are found in association with the stream corridor. Vernon County is committed to continuing to provide for these unique species and communities thru timber harvest modifications, tree planting, and establishment / maintenance of native prairie. In the summer of 2008, a former “borrow” site for the PL 566 dam was planted to native prairie plants. An additional 17-acre prairie planting will be undertaken during the summer and fall of 2009. The Vernon County forest is also planning a 19 acre tree planting project aimed at connecting numerous large tracts of timber through forested corridors. It is hoped that these project will enhance current populations of interior forest wildlife as well as prairie species also found at Duck Egg, while providing sustainably managed timber in the future.



Kooyumjian-Lost Creek County Forest

The Kooyumjian-Lost Creek County Forest is a 120-acre tract of land located in a more remote area. It on Pine Avenue in Union Township, located between Lafarge and Hillsboro off State Highway 82. This land is County Forest property primarily used for timber management but does offer public hunting land and hiking trails. The Kooyumjian – Lost Creek County Forest compartment was donated to Vernon County in 2002 by the Tom and Edith Kooyumjian family, who had won the Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year in 2000. . This compartment is a “must-see” for landowners who are interested in tree planting, timber stand improvement, timber harvest, tree pruning, and direct seeding. Examples of all these forestry practices can be found here with a simple “walkabout” of the property.



The diverse mix of tree species were planted here over the years including red oak, white oak, white cedar, white pine, black walnut, black cherry, butternut, and green ash. Small inclusions of native forest are also found here, that are home to numerous wildlife species including wild turkey, deer, and songbirds. Sustainable timber management will begin in 2013 with a thinning of the mixed pine and hardwood plantations, producing both small saw timber and pulpwood.

Vernon County also maintains a to mile hiking trail that is mowed annually. The property also received stream-bank improvement work, including the installation of fish habitat structures and rip-rap. This compartment is open to all public hunting and fishing seasons.

Proposed Rest Area associated with the Westby-Viroqua bike trail

A small park along the proposed bike trail between Viroqua and Westby will be maintained by the county under a cooperative maintenance and cost-sharing agreement.

Private Forest Lands

Of the 509,000 acres of land in Vernon County, approximately 225,000 of those acres are forested. The majority of forested acres are owned by private landowners. Forests are a valuable resource for forest products, wildlife, erosion control, clean air, and recreation. The Wisconsin DNR (WDNR) Private Forestry Program is available to private landowners to help them in achieving sustainable forestry management.

Vernon County, through its County Forest Administrator, works alongside the DNR assisting private landowners with developing Stewardship Forestry Plans, Tree Planting Plans, Best Management Practices for Water Quality in relation to timber harvesting, and Private Landowner Timber Stand Improvement (addressed in the Forestry Section of the Multi-Year Work Plan.) A Forest Management Plan is a basic requirement for government funded cost share assistance. These plans address the landowner's goals and objectives. The Plan further describes the forest composition and outlines practices that encourage growth, productivity, health, wildlife, and erosion control.

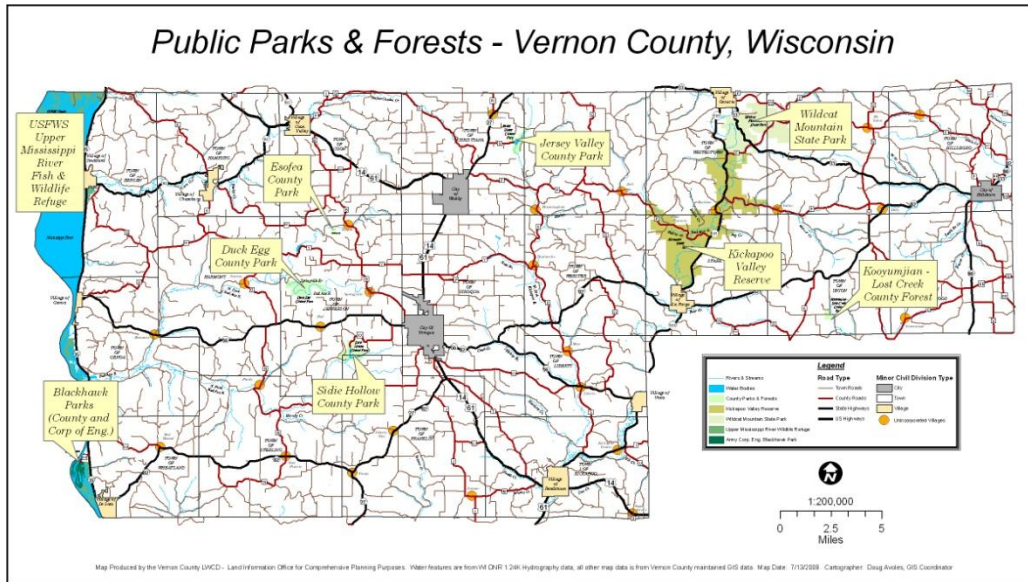
Vernon County also works closely with the DNR on a Vernon County Tree Planting Program- usually planting over 100,000 annually on private land.

Other Park, Recreation, and Open Space

Park and recreation spaces of various sizes and development are also maintained at the City, Village and Town level throughout the county.

4.7 Spatial Distribution of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Map 4.7.1 shows the spatial distribution of the major parks and public lands in Vernon County.



4.8 Trails

Vernon County snowmobile clubs maintain many miles of public snowmobile trail. The county's trail network and interconnecting privately-maintained club trails are readily accessible to all portions of the county and link up with trails of surrounding counties as part of a statewide system. Most public trails are easements across private property. Groomed cross-country ski trails are available at Wildcat Mountain State Park, Kickapoo Reserve and various golf courses, community park areas through the county. Hillsboro has the only bike trail in the county, although one is slated to be built between Viroqua and Westby when the Wisconsin DOT Highway 14 upgrade happens. More details about various trail systems in the county are in the Transportation Chapter 3 of this document.

4.9 Private Park and Recreational Facilities

Four golf courses are located in Vernon County.

- Viroqua Hills Golf Course
1110 US HY 14 , Viroqua
18 holes, driving range, 2- putting/chipping greens, bar, meeting room
- Serendipity Country Club
S4129 County Rd. S
Between HWY 82 and Avalanche, 9 holes, bar
- Snow Flake Ski and Golf
E7940 County Rd. P, Westby
CTY P north off of HWY 27,
9 holes. Bar
- Esofoea Gardens
E5415 Park Rd., Westby
9 holes, bar

4.10 Solid Waste Management and Recycling

Landfill

Vernon County owns and operates a Solid Waste Facility (located at S3705 CTH “LF” in the Town of Viroqua) that provides waste disposal and recycling services to County residents and businesses. Vernon County chose to provide these services beginning in 1993 to ensure residents would continue to have easy access to affordable and environmentally sound waste management options.

The Solid Waste Facility accepts municipal solid waste, commercial solid waste, construction/demolition waste, and a wide variety of recyclable materials as well as other, difficult to manage wastes (such as tires, waste oil, appliances, scrap metal, agricultural plastics, batteries, fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs, computer monitors and related components). Vernon County also provides occasional collection of Household Hazardous Waste (cleaning products, pesticides, oil based paints, etc) when funding is available—usually on an annual basis.

All twenty-two Townships have manned collection sites for solid waste and recycling that are secured when they are not open. All twelve Cities and Villages provide curbside collection services either by contract or with municipal employees.

The County’s intention in waste management went beyond the desire to provide services to County residents. The issue was to make sure waste services were provided in a manner that protected both the public health and the region’s beautiful environment. Operations at the Solid Waste Facility meet or exceed state and federal regulations and focus on doing so in the most economical manner practical.

The County’s Solid Waste Program is in a strong financial position, based on a recent analysis prepared by Foth (an engineering firm with specialized expertise in solid waste management). That analysis concluded that continuing to operate the existing landfill through until 2018 or 2019 is sound economically and the most practical waste management approach for Vernon County. The current plan anticipates funding needed to close and care for the existing landfill, will continue to subsidize other waste management services (waste reduction, recycling, reuse, and public information programs), and will generate a reserve fund to provide for a new landfill. If technological developments or local conditions favor a different approach to waste management, the Department’s reserve funds can be used to initiate that approach.

The Vernon County Solid Waste Facility is open from 7:30 to 4:30 daily and the first and third Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00. Spring and fall clean-up is also provided to all County municipalities.

The Vernon County Solid Waste Facility is located at:
S3705 County Road LF,
Viroqua WI 54665.

For more information call 608 634-2146 or visit www.vernoncounty.org/solidwaste.

4.11 Communication and Power Facilities

Power Facilities

The electric utility service area data in map 4.11.1 was provided by the WI Public Service Commission and can be used as a schematic for service area. The data may need to be corrected at the local level if accurate boundaries are required for future analysis.

Map 4.11.1 - Electric Utility Service Areas in Vernon County

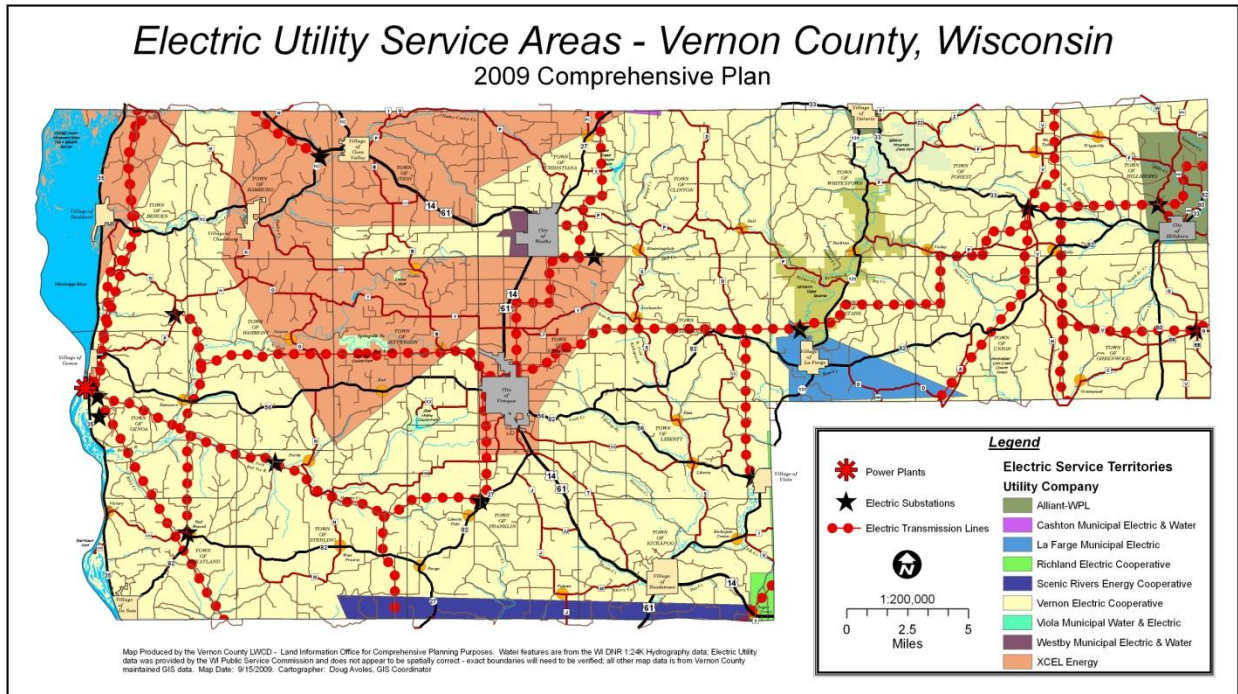


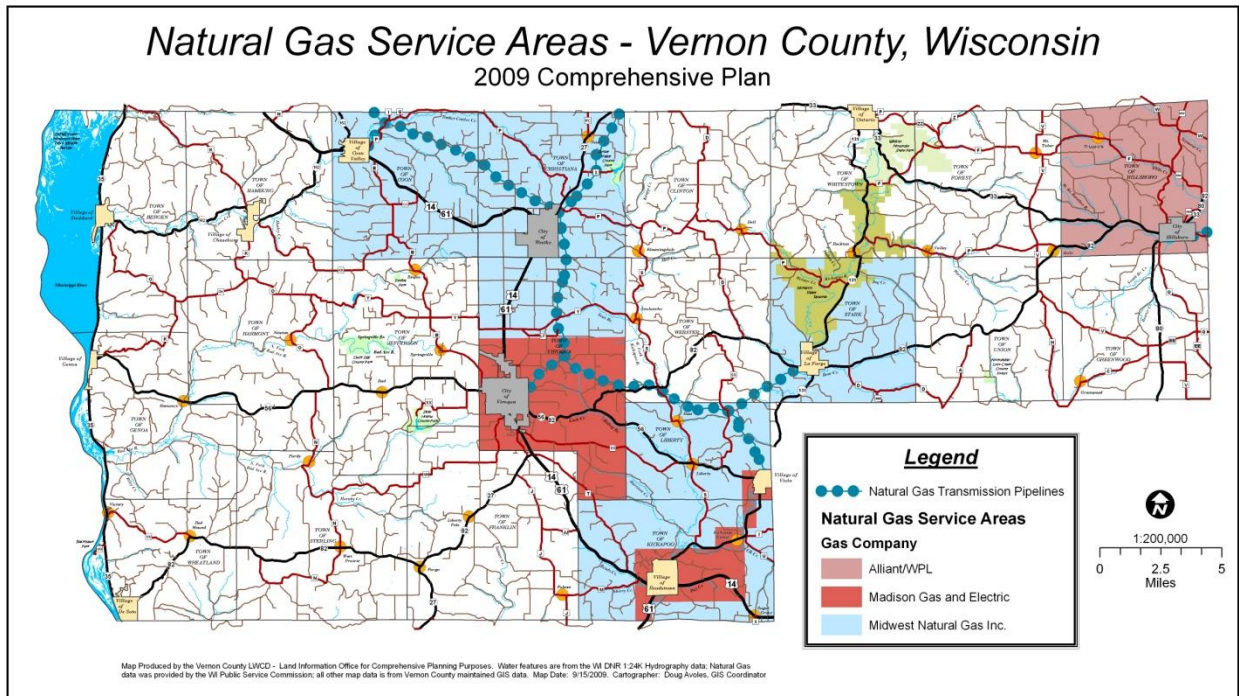
Table 4.11.1 - Electric Companies in Vernon County

NAME	CITY	STATE	
Xcel Energy	Minneapolis	MN	Subsidiary of Northern States Power
Vernon Electric Cooperative	Westby	WI	
Alliant Energy	Madison	WI	Serves Ontario and Hillsboro formerly WP&L
LaFarge Municipal Electric Utility	La Farge	WI	
Cashton Municipal Electric and Water Utility	Cashton	WI	
Viola Municipal Water and Electric Utility	Viola	WI	
Westby Utilities	Westby	WI	
Elroy Electric and Water Utility	Elroy	WI	Elroy located in Juneau County but extends into Monroe and Vernon Counties
Richland Electric Cooperative	Richland Center,	WI	
Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative	Lancaster	WI	formerly Crawford Electric Co-Op

Natural Gas

Three companies provide natural gas service in the county. The Towns that are shaded on the map do not have universal coverage. Because natural gas is less expensive than propane gas it would benefit county citizens for coverage to be more wide-spread. It would also benefit county citizens for county utilities to provide full incentives for energy efficiency and renewable improvements, irrespective of primary energy sources.

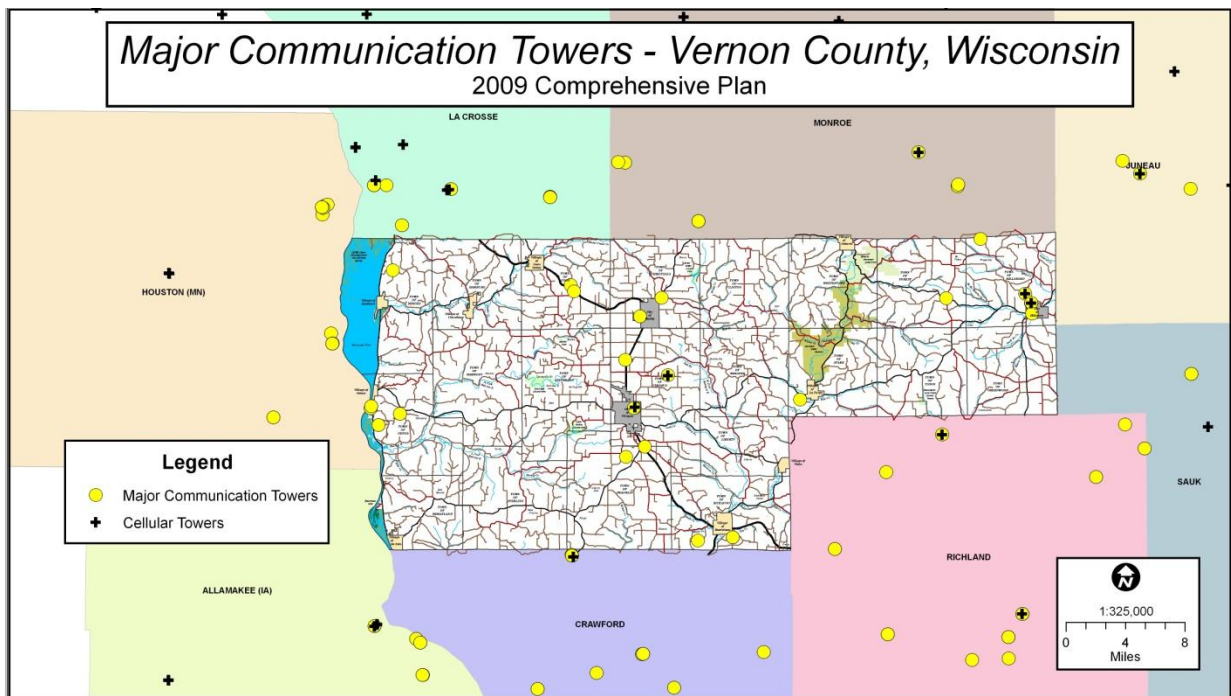
Map 4.11.2 – Natural Gas Service Areas in Vernon County



Communications Facilities

The county administers a Telecommunications Ordinance through the Zoning Department. The ordinance provides for collocation of equipment (six open spaces). The County Sheriff's Department/Emergency Management Department have the first option to locate emergency communications equipment as needed. Map 4.11.3 shows the distribution of major tower structures within the county and surrounding counties. It also depicts which towers have cellular communication equipment. The neighborhood listening session comments revealed that cellphone coverage is not complete--locations of specific areas that lack coverage is presently uncertain.

Map 4.11.3 – Communication Towers in Vernon County



4.12 Sanitary Sewer Service

Many improvements in sanitary sewer service paid off in the 2007 flooding event in Vernon County. The following is an excerpt from a DNR Natural Resource Magazine article:

The battles to provide adequate sewage treatment in flooded areas of Vernon County were even tougher. In Chaseburg the lagoons didn't flood but some lift stations did and part of their wastewater lagoon dike washed out. In Chaseburg, the slope on one of the berms started to fail and a flooded lift station bypassed some untreated sewage. Major flooding in Viola overloaded the main lift station and the treatment pond. In Westby sanitary sewers and the treatment plant's storm pond overflowed, but the plant did not flood. The Viroqua, Readstown and Stoddard systems held as well despite raging waters.

“These are significant victories,” said Roger Larson, deputy director of DNR’s Watershed Management bureau. “Most wastewater treatment plants are installed at the downstream end of communities as the sewers all flow downstream by gravity. The treatment facilities were especially prone to flooding and could be out of operation for long periods of time or destroyed. The work we started with communities in the early 1980s is really paying off now. By reviewing plans, working with the floodplain managers to provide financial assistance to communities, working with communities to reduce water inflow and infiltration, we are helping communities better protect themselves when disaster strikes. We are assuring that treatment facilities are relocated out of the floodway and are flood-proofed if they are still in the floodplain.” Larson said. (from <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/success/NRMFlooding.pdf>)

The communities with wastewater treatment plants include: Chaseburg, Coon Valley, DeSoto, Genoa, Hillsboro, LaFarge, Ontario, Readstown, Stoddard, Viola, Viroqua and Westby. Capacity at these facilities is adequate. Viroqua and Westby have issues with the sewer plant outfalls that enter “disappearing stream” receiving waters. Fissures in the streambed allow water to enter directly into the groundwater system. DNR has ordered outfall water quality to be high, which increases operation costs.

4.13 Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS)

From 1981 thru 2008 Vernon County had 3,517 septic systems installed of which 1,630 were for new construction. The type of systems is Conventional 50%, At Grade 33%, Mound 8%, Holding Tank 7%, Reconnections 2%. There is no modern tracking and location system of County septic systems which has made administering the State-mandated POWTS 3-year maintenance program difficult for the department. Ideally each septic system would be tracked via location coordinates and linked to the parcel mapping data.

4.14 Drinking Water Supply

Outside of municipal jurisdictions, water is supplied by private drilled wells. Documents related to private well construction and periodic water quality testing is filed with the Vernon County Health Department and the State Department of Natural Resources. This data is not presently digitized.

High levels of nitrate in drinking water have been documented in the county. There is an Atrazine ban imposed by DATCP in an area north of Viroqua. The LWCD is periodically able to fund well testing at reduced cost for county residents. The Health Department advises residents when a well is found to be contaminated. High coliform bacteria levels were reported after the 2007 and 2008 floods, and disinfection procedures were communicated through the Health Department.

4.15 Stormwater Management

Vernon County has been subject to historic flooding events. There are many flood control structures (the larger dams are detailed in the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter 5) designed to mitigate the effects of heavy rainfall events and snow melt in spring. The county is not regulating land use with concern for flooding beyond the floodplain ordinance enforcement mandated by the state (detailed in the Land Use Chapter of this plan.). Construction sites an acre or more in size need a stormwater permit from the DNR. Also county permitted non-metallic mining sites need to have a detailed stormwater management plan with DNR if they are not “internally drained”.

4.16 Health Care Facilities

Vernon County has a surprisingly strong medical infrastructure. In addition to traditional medical resources such as clinics and hospitals, the County, and especially the Viroqua area, has a large cadre of non-traditional healthcare providers including chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, midwives, Reiki practitioners, and others.

The County has two critical access hospitals (25 or less beds). St. Joseph’s Hospital in Hillsboro has a medical staff of eight primary care physicians and serves the northeast portion of the County, drawing patients from Monroe, Juneau, and Sauk Counties. Vernon Memorial Hospital in Viroqua has recently been growing and expanding with a staff of fifteen primary care physicians, three general surgeons, two orthopedic surgeons, and many midlevel practitioners. It draws its patient base from approximately a 75 mile radius as people come for its excellent reputation in surgical services.

Major medical facilities found in Vernon County are detailed in the following table.

Table 4.16.1 - Major Medical Facilities in Vernon County

Name	Street Address	Address
Hospitals		
Vernon Memorial Hospital	507 S. Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
St. Joseph’s Memorial Hospital	400 Water Avenue	Hillsboro, WI 54634
Medical Clinics		
Bland Clinic – VMH	100 Melby Street	Westby, WI 54667
Kickapoo Valley Medical Clinic – VMH	102 Sunset Avenue	Soldiers Grove, WI
Hirsch Clinic – VMH	407 S Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
Gunderson Lutheran – Viroqua Clinic	407 S Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
VMH – Complementary Medicine	407 S Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
La Farge Medical Clinic – VMH	111 W Snow Street	La Farge, WI 54639
Gunderson Lutheran – Hillsboro Clinic	300 Water Avenue	Hillsboro, WI 54634
St. Joseph’s Community Health Services	400 Water Avenue	Hillsboro, WI 54634
St. Joseph’s Family Clinic	301 Railroad Rd	Wonewoc, WI
Viola Health Services and Osteoporosis Center	338 N Commercial Street	Viola, WI 54664
Eye Clinics		
Gunderson Lutheran Eye Clinic – Viroqua	407 S Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
Gunderson Lutheran Eye Clinic – Hillsboro	845 Water Avenue	Hillsboro, WI 54634
Adams Eye Clinic	103 N Main	Westby, WI 54667
Mental Health Clinics		
Family and Childrens Center	1321 N. Main Street	Viroqua, WI 54665
Psychiatric Associates Counseling Center	122 W. South Street	Viroqua, WI 54665

4.17 Day Care Facilities

Wisconsin's Licensed Child Care Programs

The child care licensing program is a component of the services provided by Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The program is accountable for the statewide licensure of Wisconsin's child care facilities, including family child care, group child care and day camps. The purpose of the program is to promote the health, safety and welfare of children in licensed child care. The Department ensures that licensing requirements are met through on-going inspections of child care facilities.

Under Wisconsin law, no person may provide care and supervision for 4 or more children under the age of 7 for less than 24 hours a day unless that person obtains a license to operate a child care center from the Department. The Department provides a search option on their website for licensed providers. Up-to-date information is available on that site at:

<http://publicapps.dhfs.state.wi.us/clic/public/search.html>

Licensing is not the same as child care certification. Child care certification is another form of regulation for providers and Vernon County Human Services conducts the certification process. Part of that process is inspection of the home. To provide child care under certification the provider can provide child care for 1 to 3 children or who are not otherwise required to be licensed as a child care center according to Wisconsin State statute. To find the latest list of certified providers contact Vernon County Human Services or the Child Care Resource and Referral state database by calling 1-800-267-1018.

4.18 Utilities and Community Facilities Programs.

The following are utility and community facility programs, agencies, and activities that are currently in use or available for use in Vernon County. The following can be used to gather further information about utilities and community facilities and to assist in implementation of goals. State Programs

Community Development Block Grant for Public Facilities (CDBG-PF)

The Wisconsin CDBG Public Facilities Program is designed to assist economically distressed smaller communities with public facility improvements. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, publicly-owned utility system improvements, streets, sidewalks, community centers. Federal grant funds are available annually. The maximum grant for any single applicant is \$750,000. Grants are only available up to the amount that is adequately justified and documented with engineering or vendor estimates. For further information contact the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Division of Community Development.

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

TIF can help a municipality undertake a public project to stimulate beneficial development or redevelopment that would not otherwise occur. It is a mechanism for financing local economic development project in underdeveloped and blighted areas. Taxes generated by the increased property values pay for land acquisition or needed public works. The Wisconsin Department of Commerce or the Wisconsin Department of Revenue should be contacted for further information.

Rural Community Assistance Program

The Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) is administered by the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) to assure safe drinking water and sanitary waste disposal for low- and moderate-income rural Wisconsin communities. The Wisconsin RCAP provides comprehensive services and technical assistance to small, low- to moderate income rural communities from problem-identification through implementation of acceptable, affordable solutions. RCAP services enable community staff to develop capacity to implement water, wastewater and solid waste projects and assists the community in coordinating efforts with consultants and government agencies. For further information contact WISCAP.

Clean Water Fund Program

Funds are available to protect water quality by correcting existing wastewater treatment and urban storm water problems and preventing future problems as per s. 281.58 and 281.59, Wis. Stats. Cities, towns, villages, counties, town sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and federally-recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply. Eligible projects include construction of treatment works, sewer systems and interceptors necessary to prevent violation of discharge permits, meet new or changed discharge limits, correct water quality or human health problems in un-sewered areas, or projects for the treatment of urban storm water runoff. Low interest loans are available for planning, design and construction of wastewater treatment projects and urban storm water runoff projects approved by the department. For further information contact the WDNR, Bureau of Community Financial Assistance.

Municipal Flood Control Grant Program

Provide 70% cost-sharing grants to cities, villages, towns and metropolitan sewerage districts to acquire or flood-proof structures, purchase easements, restore riparian areas, or construct flood control structures. Applications would be ranked based on avoided flood damages, restoration or protection of natural and beneficial functions of water bodies, use of natural flood storage techniques or environmentally sensitive detention ponds and enhanced recreational opportunities.

For further information contact the WDNR.

4.19 Utilities, Community Facilities, and Services Trends and Outlook

- County and Town facilities are old and often will need updating or replacement. There will be a need for modernization of Town offices to include computer access and Internet capacity.
- The collaboration between units of government on provision of emergency services is good, and will need to be expanded in other positive ways in the future.
- Schools will continue to have budget shortfalls and challenges in keeping services to students at a high level.
- Libraries will increasingly be called upon to be gathering places and provide access to the Internet that is critical to those without home service. Keeping up with technological change and expanding hours will be necessary and challenging.
- Park use trends data are not presently available. Repair and maintenance of the existing facilities affected by the historic floods will be the short-term priorities.

- Landfill disposal costs will continue to rise and this will accelerate the need for recycling and reuse of trash. Every effort will need to be made to extend the life of the existing landfill.
- Concerns about well water quality will continue and need study.
- Securing funds to improve storm water management facilities and plans will be a priority.
- Increased demand by citizens that the electrical grid is capable of accepting alternative energy produced by Vernon County residents.

5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

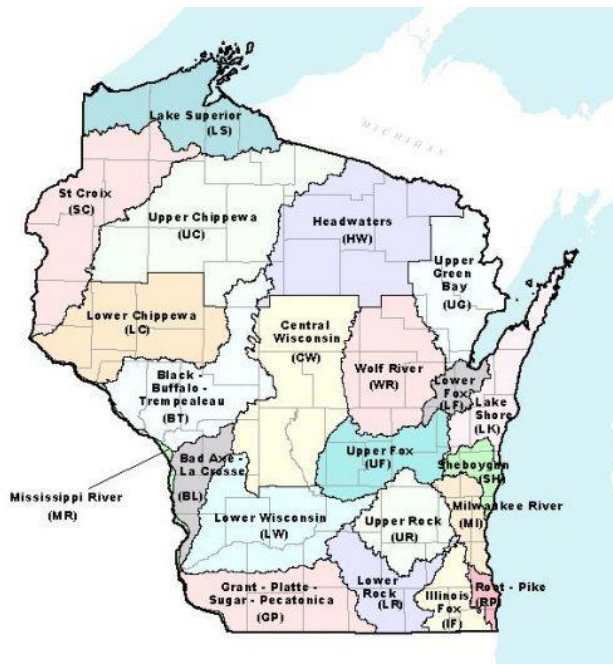
Vernon County is steeped in the traditions of agriculture and rich in recreation opportunities that make use of abundant wildlife and sporting resources. Maintaining the rural character that an agricultural landscape affords and the natural beauty that attracts visitors and enriches the life of long-time residents are high priorities. The following is an inventory of all the resources in the county and an analysis of trends that can inform our choices about the future of the county.

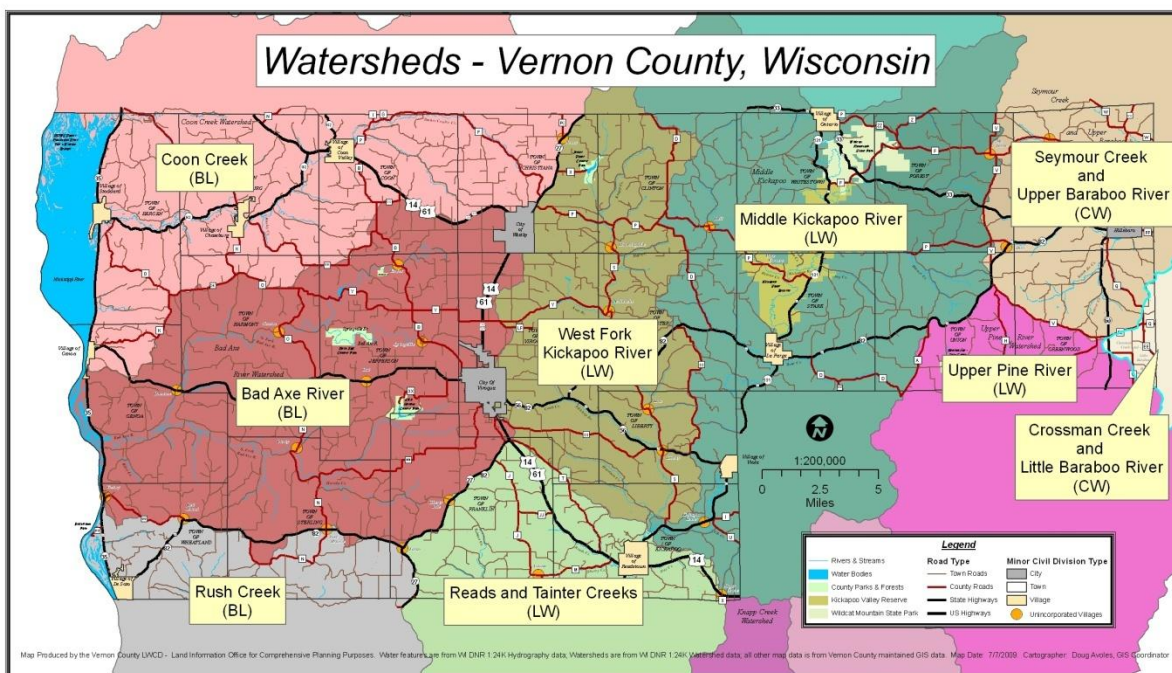
The analysis is on a watershed basis that separates the county into an eastern half (that drains to the Wisconsin River) and a western section (that drains to the Mississippi.) Since water knows no governmental boundaries, managing on watershed is a proven strategy to help managers take a holistic view and a more systematic approach to solutions.

5.1 Watersheds

Three watersheds (Geographic Management Units GMUs in Wisconsin DNR terms) cover Vernon County, the Central Wisconsin, the Lower Wisconsin and the La Crosse-Bad Axe River basins. The Central Wisconsin falls in the very eastern part of Vernon County with its western boundary primarily following County Highway V. The Lower Wisconsin (LW) lays primarily East of Highway 27, and the La Crosse – Bad Axe River basin lays West of Highway 27. Water flowing in the La Crosse – Bad Axe River basin flows to the Mississippi River and water flowing in the Central and Lower Wisconsin basins flows to the Wisconsin River before eventually entering the Mississippi River.

Figure 5.1.1 - Wisconsin DNR Geographic Management Units





5.2 Geology

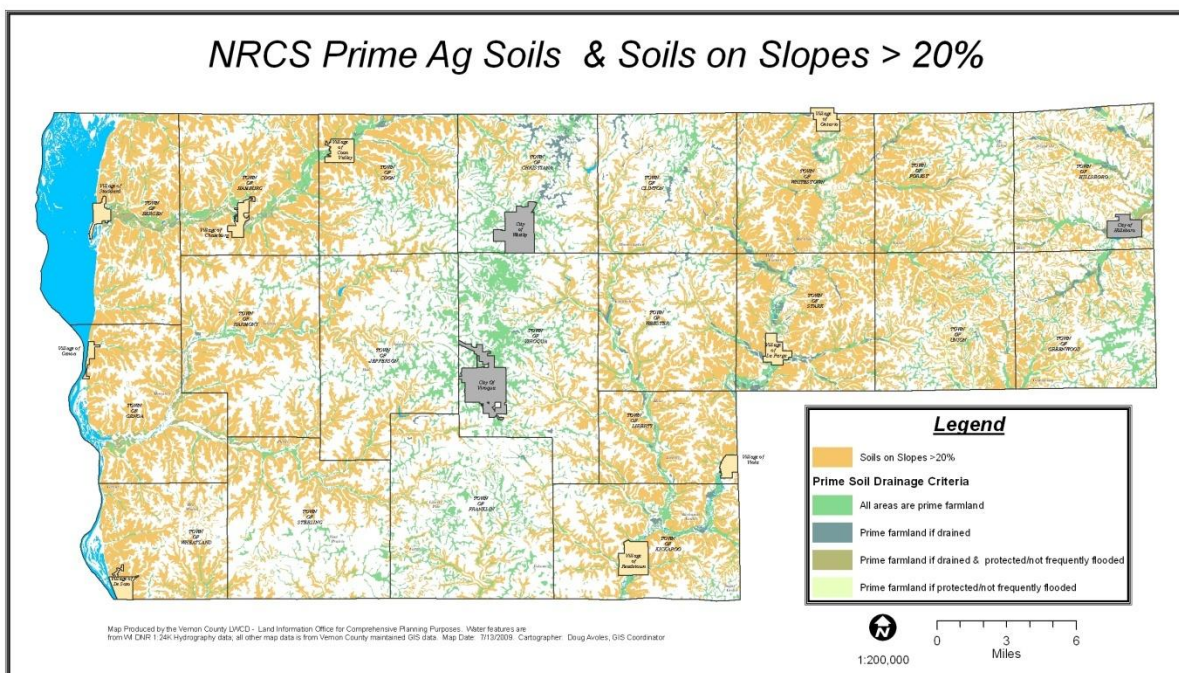
The Bad Axe-La Crosse River Basin, the Lower Wisconsin, and the Central Wisconsin basin areas in Vernon County are located within the unglaciated region of Wisconsin. The basins consist not of uprising hills, but rather of a deeply dissected bedrock plateau with as much as 700 feet of relief near the Mississippi River. Massive sandstone formations with interbedded shale layers are visible from the lowest elevations upward to about 1000 feet above sea level. Dolomite forms a resistant cap rock on ridge tops and is exposed in the bluffs along the Mississippi River. The surface of the dolomite was highly eroded and deeply incised before the next layer of sand was deposited, blanketing the surface and filling the valleys, caves and fractures in the dolomite. Although erosion has removed much of this sandstone, isolated outcrops and bedrock knobs can be found in Vernon County.

Although these basins were not glaciated, there were glacial influences, such as wind-blown silt, also known as loess, deposited on ridge tops. These deposits may be up to 40 feet thick over the bedrock. Where thin layers of loess cover the bedrock, surface activities have direct access to the rocks beneath, and consequently, to underlying groundwater aquifers. Thicker accumulations of loess may inhibit the vertical and lateral migration of some contaminants. Soils developed in loess and/or weathered residuum of the dolomite, are productive as cropland, but are less well suited to the purifying needs of septic absorption fields. Such soils are moderately to poorly drained, with low to moderate permeability, and have high available water capacity. When dried thoroughly though, for example by plowing, the soil can become rock-hard.

5.3 Soils

A soil survey for the county was completed in 1969 by the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. There are five major soil associations found in Vernon County. These soil associations are composed of multiple soil types that are grouped into associations that can be used to compare the suitability of large areas for general land uses. Soil associations are groupings of soils that share a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. In Vernon County the associations are strongly related to topography and position in the landscape (upland, valley slopes and benches, and bottom lands.)

Map 5.3.1 - Prime Ag Soils and Soils on Slopes > 20% in Vernon County



Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

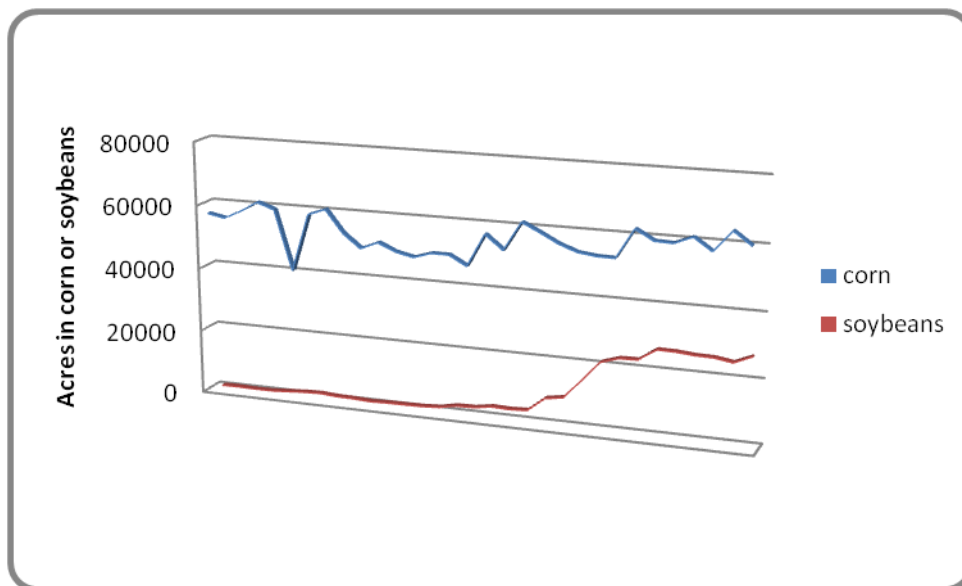
Prime Farm Soils are identified by the Natural Resource Conservation Service as those soils with the fewest limitations for agriculture operations. Limitations to agriculture include highly erodible soils, extreme wetness, low moisture holding capacity, and low productivity. Soils characterized as “prime when drained” would be well suited to agriculture if extreme wetness can be overcome with drainage.

The fragility and susceptibility to erosion of Vernon County soils is thoroughly documented in the 2009 revision of the county Land and Water Resources Management Plan. This is a result of the parent material that the geologic history provides, and also the 20-30% slopes that are common in the county. In addition the soils are used increasingly for row crops that increase the pressure on the resource. Prime Agricultural Soils as defined by the soil survey and USDA comprise less than 10% of the land base. This compares with corn and increasing soybean production on the land in the county.

5.4 Farmland and Agricultural Production

The trend toward more intense grain production and away from animal production will pose a challenge for land managers at all levels. The graphs that follow illustrate some of the trends and challenges.

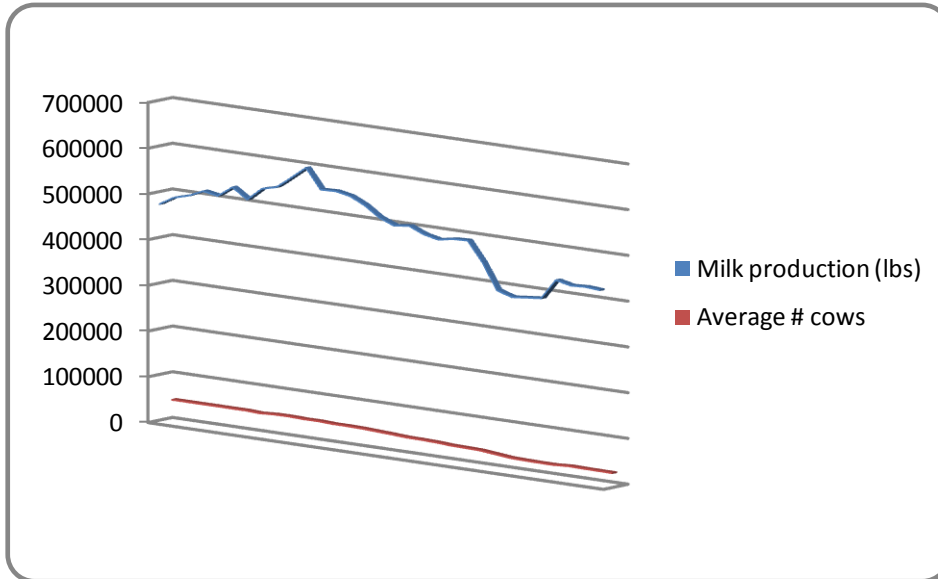
Figure 5.4.1 - Changes in Vernon County acreage in Corn and Soybeans from 1970 to 2008



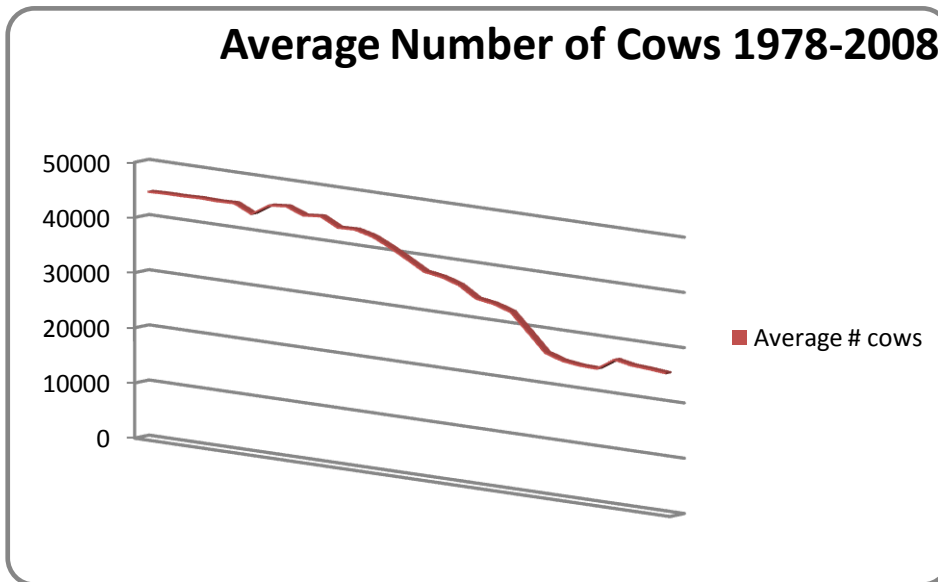
ALL DATA FROM THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE, USDA

In 1978 acres in soybeans was about 300, by 1998 to 1999 soybean acreage rose from 8600 acres to nearly doubling, 14, 600 acres and has steadily risen to 25,000 to 27,000 range for the past 5 years. In the same time frame, hay production has been cut in half, from 110,000 acres harvested in the 1980s to about 55,000 acres since 2000. The 2007 Census reports about 360,000 acres of Vernon County in farms, and half of that in crops, so there are clear shifts in crop production. Aligned with this is a shift in milk production dynamics

Figure 5.4.2 - Changes in Vernon County Milk Production and Cow Number from 1970 to 2008



ALL DATA FROM THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE, USDA



ALL DATA FROM THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE, USDA

Data is lacking about the farming systems used in these milk production figures. This information could be helpful in future to address concerns about the use of larger confinement systems in the county. These systems produce large amounts of liquid manure that needs to be spread in a short time-frame—often challenging to manage on steep slopes and soils of low production potential. Excess nutrients can leak out of the farming system into surface and ground water resources.

Mitigating some of those concerns is the trend in more diversification and value-added agriculture. Comparing 2007 agricultural census data with 2002 we see more farms in Vernon County (2,230 to 2,492), a reduction in farm size from an average of 171 acres to 143 acres and an increase in market value in that production from \$40,453 to \$67,211. This would indicate an increase in the diversity and profitability of farming (Vernon County Profile, 2007.) This was also seen as a national trend (Press Release, “Census of Agriculture Shows Growing Diversity in U.S. Farming” Feb. 2009.) The neighborhood meetings emphasized the need to respect diversity in the county and treat it as a strength and opportunity.

Farmland and Land Use

The development dynamic created between farms and rural residential development has impacts on land values, property taxes, and the overall development pattern. A farmer’s “right to farm” is often an issue when farmland areas are encroached by rural residential development. At present Vernon County does not employ a Growth Management policy to limit the number of rural land divisions with the goals of:

- managing the rate of non-agricultural growth,
- promoting more efficient growth patterns, and
- reducing public costs of non-agricultural growth in non-incorporated areas.

Agriculture Connections

Agriculture not only produces food and fiber, but is also linked to many other components of the economy. Agriculture supports equipment and implement manufacturers, dealers, and repair technicians, the vegetable and meat processing industries, the construction trade, trucking, veterinary services, genetic research, and many others. Agriculture is intimately connected to Wisconsin’s culture and heritage (see the Historical Resources section 5.17) and agriculture has many considerations relative to the natural environment, both positive and negative. Farms provide green space, wildlife habitat, enhanced groundwater recharge, and nutrient recycling. Farms can also be sources of soil erosion, polluted runoff, groundwater contamination, odors, and shoreline damage to stream bank areas.

Agriculture is connected to other land uses, and is a significant contributor to the overall development pattern. The distance from farm related services, markets for farm commodities, processing industries, and other critical land uses can determine the long term success of an agricultural area. A more complete analysis of economic impacts of agriculture is found in the Economic Development Chapter 6.

Agriculture is also linked to some significant transportation issues. Agriculture brings large vehicles to rural roads including farm equipment and heavy trucks. These rural roads are rarely constructed to handle the size and weight of such large vehicles. All associated analysis is provided in the Transportation Chapter 3.

Farmland Preservation*

The Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) provides property tax relief to farmland owners who agree to preserve Wisconsin farmland through local land use planning and soil and water conservation practices. To be eligible for participation on FPP, the landowner must be a Wisconsin resident and own a minimum of 35 acres of land. This land must have produced a gross farm profit of \$6,000 in the last year, or \$18,000 in the last three years. Owning a parcel of property where 35 or more acres are in the Conservation Reserve Program also meets the program requirements. Farming operations must be in compliance with the county soil and water conservation standards.

FPP encompasses many areas of agriculture; from beekeeping to dairying to tree farming. This program provides the potential for earning up to \$6,000 in property tax relief depending on your total income. Even if you have “off the farm” income, the program allows for a 10% minimum credit. This credit means the minimum property tax credit any qualifying landowner would receive is 10% of his or her property taxes.

There are two ways that a farmer could qualify for these tax credits under this old program:

Land located in an exclusive agricultural zone as identified in the county agricultural preservation plan may participate in the tax credit program. The ordinances may be adopted by counties, towns, cities or villages. If not in an exclusive agricultural zone, then a landowner may agree to sign an individual, long-term agreement (10-25 years). This agreement stays with the land, not the landowner, and is recorded with the county register of deeds. These agreements will no longer be available in all areas.

Table 5.4.1 illustrates the current acreage in the Farmland Preservation Program by Town. It also shows the potential decrease of land in FPP if all current contracts expire and are not renewed. Most Towns will have less than 3% of their total land preserved for farmland. Coon and Harmony are the primary exceptions to this because those two Towns have Exclusive Agricultural Zoning. Those two Towns are projected to continue to have over 40% of their total land preserved for agriculture.

Renewal rates have been far less since the advent of Agricultural Use-Value Tax Assessment. Use-Value Assessment has greatly reduced the property tax burden on Agricultural land, and has therefore reduced the incentive to enroll in the FPP. Use-Value Assessment does not provide assurance that the land will remain as productive farmland into the future.

* The Farmland Preservation Program has been significantly changed with the inclusion of the Working Lands Initiative in the 2009 budget.

Table 5.4.1 - Farmland Preservation Program by Town

Town	Tot. Town Ac	Current FP Ac	Current FP %	Post 2014 FP Ac	Post 2014 FP %
BERGEN	20918.51	1396	6.67%	265	1.27%
CHRISTIANA	21265.64	2865	13.47%	818	3.85%
CLINTON	23117.97	1491	6.45%	322	1.39%
COON (Agreements)	22469.04	1520	6.76%	64	0.28%
COON (Exclusive Ag.)	22469.04	11980	53.32%	11980	53.32%
FOREST	23044.89	1350	5.86%	389	1.69%
FRANKLIN	33247.01	2783	8.37%	844	2.54%
GENOA	22375.07	863	3.86%	135	0.60%
GREENWOOD	23005.92	2910	12.65%	390	1.70%
HAMBURG	23013.53	2759	11.99%	713	3.10%
HARMONY (Agrmnts.)	27777.32	1909	6.87%	706	2.54%
HARMONY (Excl. Ag.)	27777.32	11193	40.30%	11193	40.30%
HILLSBORO	22653.41	407	1.80%	407	1.80%
JEFFERSON	30422.47	2761	9.08%	348	1.14%
KICKAPOO	24445.93	1096	4.48%	610	1.14%
LIBERTY	15093.25	12	0.08%	0	0.00%
STARK	22324.75	950	4.26%	354	1.59%
STERLING	29390.19	2627	8.94%	240	0.82%
UNION	23010.34	735	3.19%	361	1.57%
VIROQUA	31467.44	2275	7.23%	250	0.79%
WEBSTER	22930.47	1771	7.72%	240	1.05%
WHEATLAND	17256.3	535	3.1%	0	0.00%
WHITESTOWN	22471.88	1107	4.93%	372	1.66%

Source: Vernon County LWCD.

Working Lands Initiative

The Working Lands Initiative was passed in the 2009 State Budget. The Working Lands Initiative (WLI) will bring about significant changes to the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) says the purpose of the WLI is to preserve farmland, strengthen local economies, protect the environment, minimize costly land use conflicts, and maintain the “right to farm”.

The goal of the Working Lands Initiative will be to “cluster” areas preserved for farmland. In an attempt to “cluster”, new Farmland Preservation Agreement contracts will now be restricted to “Farmland Preservation Zoning” and/or an Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA).

The income tax credit under the new program will now be based on a per-acre rate and will no longer be based on a formula related to landowner income. The tax credit benefit will now be based on zoning and agreement status as follows: \$10/acre if the land is in an area zoned for farmland preservation and in an agriculture enterprise area, with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009; \$7.50/acre if the land is in an area zoned for farmland preservation; and \$5/acre if the land is has a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 and is located in an agricultural enterprise area. Existing FPP contracts will likely get to choose between the old and new payment system for the length of the contract. Many FPP contracts are soon to expire.

The designation of AEAs is based on review of a petition voluntarily submitted by owners of at least five eligible farms and any affected local governments. The state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will request submittal of petitions. The request will include submittal deadlines and review procedures. Petitions filed with DATCP must meet basic requirements identified by DATCP to be considered for designation. Additional evaluation criteria may be used to review competing petitions.

The area proposed for designation as an AEA must be:

- Located in a farmland preservation area, as certified under a county farmland preservation plan
- A contiguous land area
- Primarily in agricultural use

Once successful petitions are selected, the state will officially designate the areas as AEAs through a modified administrative rule process. The rule process requires a public hearing and notice to the legislature. AEAs may only be designated, modified or terminated through this process.

The state is authorized to designate:

- EAs (up to 200,000 acres) during a two year pilot period ending December 31, 2011
- Up to 1,000,000 acres total statewide after 2011

Farmers will need to work with the Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) to develop, maintain, and follow their Conservation and Nutrient Management Plans. Participants also must meet the NR 151 Performance Standards (runoff rules). A gross farm income requirement of \$6,000/year or \$18,000 over three years also applies.

The requirement of a 35 acre minimum to be in the program has been abolished. Almost any agriculturally related business is allowed to participate in the program. Another change is that landowners with horses may now be able to participate.

Vernon County and local towns will need to be very active in order to help farmers to participate in this program. The Land and Water Conservation Department will need to stay up-to-date on the newest information related to this program. This information will need to be disseminated out to the towns and the County Board, farmers, real-estate agents, and all citizens through local meetings, press releases, and possibly direct mailings.

In the towns where land owners are interested in participating in the WLI through implementation of farmland preservation zoning, the towns will need to update their existing zoning ordinance, or adopt "Farmland Preservation Zoning" either at the local level or under county level zoning administration.

The County will also have to work with the towns to perform extensive mapping and identification of areas to be preserved for farmland and areas to be developed. The County will need to ensure consistency with its Comprehensive Plan, farmland preservation zoning, and the updated County Farmland Preservation Plan. The Land and Water Conservation Department will also need to work with farmers to develop/update their Conservation Plans and Nutrient Management Plans. Along with the

planning process, it will be necessary for the LWCD to monitor compliance with these plans and the State NR 151 Performance Standards (i.e. “runoff rules”).

The WLI will also create matching funds for Purchase of Agricultural Easements (PACE). DATCP will work with cooperating entities (local governments or nonprofit conservation organizations) to purchase agricultural conservation easements under the new PACE program. DATCP may pay up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement (not 50% of the total land value, since the farmer still owns and operates the land within the easement). DATCP may also reimburse allowed transaction costs.

The intent of the Working Lands Initiative is to strongly encourage farmland preservation through zoning and/or Agricultural Enterprise Areas. Land that does not fit into these categories will have no direct tax credit incentive to be preserved for future agriculture.

Exclusive Agricultural Zoning is similar but not exactly synonymous with Farmland Preservation Zoning”. We are waiting for DATCP to define what “Farmland Preservation Zoning” is and what the differences are from “Exclusive Agricultural Zoning”.

Farmland Use Value Assessment

Wisconsin farms are facing other social, economic, and political issues as well. Some of the most significant include soaring property values and the related property taxes, the cost of health insurance coverage, and a growing set of federal, state, and local regulatory programs. In 1974, the State Legislature amended the Rule of Uniform Taxation (Article VIII, Section 1.) in the Wisconsin Constitution to permit the preferential treatment of agricultural land. The 1995-1997 Budget Act changed the standard for assessing agricultural land in Wisconsin from market value to use value.

The goal of this legislation, known as use value assessment, is to protect Wisconsin’s farm economy and curb urban sprawl by assessing farmland based upon its agricultural productivity, rather than its potential for development. Specifically, the value of agricultural land for assessment purposes was changed from market value to use value. In a use value assessment system, the use of the land is the most important factor in determining its assessed value. Use value in Wisconsin is specific to land only. The use value legislation passed in 1995 requires that the assessed value of farmland be based on the income that could be generated from its rental for agricultural use. Income and rental from farming are a function of agricultural capability. Because any land could theoretically be used for agricultural purposes, statutes and administrative rules limit the benefit of use value assessment to only those lands that qualify as “land devoted primarily to agricultural use.”

Organic Farming and Fresh Markets

Organic food is the fastest growing part of the consumer food market, with especially rapid growth in produce and dairy products. Wisconsin farmers are leaders in organic food production, especially in dairy. Wisconsin boasts the third-most organic farms in the country, behind California and Washington. Wisconsin dairy producers raise 22% of the nation’s organic milk cows, and they enjoy a price premium ranging from 80-115% over conventionally produced milk. Vernon County has the most certified organic farms in the state. There are a number of organic farms that are not certified in the county.

5.5 Forests and Woodlands

Of the 509,000 acres of land in Vernon County, approximately 225,000 of those acres are forested. The majority of forested acres are owned by private landowners. Table 5.5.1 provides a more detailed picture of public versus private forest acreage.

Table 5.5.1 Public vs. Private Forest Acreage with Breakdown of Private Forest Acreage

	2000 Ac	2000 %	2008 Ac	2008 %
Public Forest	17016.24	10.65%	18687.80	11.21%
Private Forest	142763.69	89.35%	148083.07	88.79%
Productive Forest	115148.54	80.66%	31793.58	21.47%
FCL/MFL	27615.14	19.34%	56564.28	38.20%
Ag Forest	0.00	0.00%	59725.21	40.33%

Source: Derived from 2000 and 2008 Vernon County tax assessment data, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Vernon County Forest Lands

Vernon County has recently been enrolled (year 2000) in Wisconsin's County Forest Law Program. Vernon County, along with 29 other counties, has entered into an agreement with the State of Wisconsin DNR to manage their timberland in a sound and sustainable manner. Presently the State's County Forests totals more than 2,350,000 acres. The intent of this program is to maintain healthy productive forests that will provide public access for recreation, and also provide marketable forest commodities. (Addressed in the Forestry Section of the Multi-Year Work Plan, LWCD).

Including the new land purchase at Esofea-Rentz Memorial County Park/Forest, Vernon County owns 949 acres of County Forest land, and helps maintain another 891 acres for the State of Wisconsin (Jersey Valley and Sidie Hollow). These acres are open to the public for recreational purposes. These properties are being managed by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department as recreational sites to include lakes, picnic areas, campgrounds and hiking trails. Vernon County has established Park and Recreation Areas within these forests at six separate locations. These county parks and forest properties are described in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter 4 section 6.

Urban Forests

Urban forests consist of all the trees and other vegetation in and around a community. This includes not only tree-lined streets, but also trees in home landscapes, school yards, parks, river banks, cemeteries, vacant lots, utility rights-of-way, and anywhere else trees can grow. Shrubs, flowers, vines, ground cover including grasses, and a variety of other wild plants and animals are also components of the urban forest system. Urban forest resources are found in Vernon County's cities and villages as well as its unincorporated rural hamlets. Urban trees provide functions and benefits with respect to storm water management and temperature regulation. Urban trees provide energy savings through shading and by reducing the effects of "heat islands" that come from paved surfaces.

Private Forests

Table 5.5.2 lists the private forests in the Managed Forest Law Program. The program requires that an owner have a forest management plan and follow that plan to ensure sustainable harvesting and planting. The benefit to the landowner is lower property tax obligation. If the landowner offers public access to the forest for hunting, then larger tax savings can be realized. The public and non public access alternatives are tabulated Table 5.5.2. When the program began the tax savings were substantial and reduced the income for local units of government. Presently, the tax savings are less with the new agreements.

Table 5.5.2 - Managed Forest Law Acres in Vernon County by Town

Town	Open to public (acres)	Closed (acres)	Total (acres)
Bergen	295.93	2304.31	2600.24
Christiana	26	1306.26	1332.26
Clinton	73	1293.733	1366.733
Coon	147.906	3497.01	3644.916
Coon Valley	0	10	10
Forest	409	1742.817	2151.817
Franklin	90	1130.68	1220.68
Genoa	403.335	2281.724	2685.059
Greenwood	145.69	3139.08	3284.77
Hamburg	318.84	3953.82	4272.66
Harmony	832.7	5243.422	6076.122
Hillsboro	242	1449.02	1691.02
Jefferson	79	2142.418	2221.418
Kickapoo	312.9	3569.733	3882.633
Liberty	242	1441.87	1683.87
Readstown	0	80	80
Stark	33.13	3586.61	3619.74
Sterling	0	1839.454	1839.454
Union	223.5	2696.571	2920.071
Viroqua ©	12	0	12
Viroqua (T)	193	2033.28	2226.28
Webster	95	1859.353	1954.353
Wheatland	857	2423.91	3280.91
Whitestown	266	1956.53	2222.53
Total	5297.931	50981.605	56279.536

Source: Vernon County LWCD

5.6 Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance

Vernon County adopted a nonmetallic mining reclamation ordinance in response to Wis. Administrative Code NR135, and is being administered by the Land and Water Conservation Department. This ordinance requires operators of nonmetallic mining sites to plan for a specific post-mining land use once mining at their site has ceased.

With approximately 50 nonmetallic mines in the county, the Land and Water Conservation Department is well-occupied inspecting, making determinations in order to collect annual fees, measuring the acreage covered by mining activity, receiving and reviewing reclamation plans, and investigating complaints. The department also works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to assure that sediment -laden water does not negatively affect surrounding properties or surface waters.

Experience indicates that applications for new (nonmetallic mining reclamation) permits, associated fees and reclamation plans can be expected every year.

5.7 Wetlands and Floodplains

Wetlands

The steep topography of this basin is not conducive to many acres of wetlands; however, large expanses still exist near the mouths of the Bad Axe River, Coon Creek, and the La Crosse River. Due to the significant environmental functions served by wetlands, there is a complex set of local, state, and federal regulations which places limitations on the development and use of wetlands (and shoreland). Laws have slowed the pace of the destruction of wetlands, but they continue to be destroyed and degraded. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has authority over the placement of fill in wetlands connected to federally navigable waterways, while the USDA incorporates wetland preservation criteria into its crop price support programs. Therefore, prior to placing fill or altering a wetland resource, the appropriate agencies must be contacted to receive authorization.

Floodplain

For planning and regulatory purposes, a floodplain is normally defined as those areas, excluding the stream channel, that are subject to inundation by the 100-year recurrence interval flood event. This event has a one-percent chance of occurring in any given year. Because of this chance of flooding, development in the floodplain should be discouraged and the development of park and open space in these areas encouraged. The floodplain includes the floodway and flood fringe. The floodway is the portion of the floodplain that carries flood water or flood flows, while the flood fringe is the portion of the floodplain outside the floodway, which is covered by waters during a flood event. The flood fringe is generally associated with standing water rather than rapidly flowing water.

Wisconsin Statute 87.30 requires counties, cities, and village to implement floodplain zoning. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has developed flood hazard data. Under the authority of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, FEMA conducted studies to determine the location and extent of flood lands and the monetary damage risks related to the insurance of urban development in flood land areas.

P.L. 566 Flood Control Dams

The Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) has the legal responsibility to actively operate and maintain (O&M) twenty-two (22) large, earthen embankment flood control dams built in partnership with USDA/NRCS (then SCS), the LWCD (then Soil and Water Conservation District), and local community Watershed Associations (now defunct) between 1954 and 1988. The dams were built with federal funds and engineering, with some local funds going for right-of-way/easement acquisitions and administrative support. Reduction of serious flash flooding in the Driftless Area was the

primary purpose of these dams (see photo below). During that same time period, 66 similar dams were built throughout 13 counties in western Wisconsin.

JULY 3, 1954

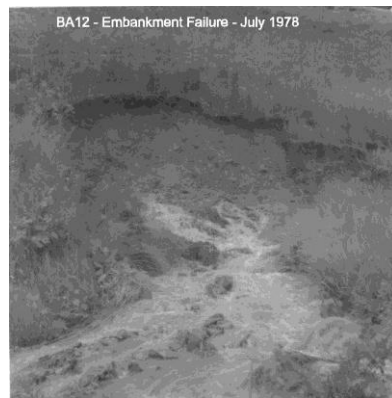


Flooding in Avalanche during the 1954 Flood. Two people were killed.

The most significant trade-off between the federal government and county government over these structures was that once they were built with federal assistance, the county would assume 100 percent of the ongoing operation and maintenance responsibility for either 50- or 100-year periods. For the first 40 years of operation, these tasks were physically carried out by the Highway Department when they had the time or equipment; or by as-needed, seasonal workers for specific jobs. Problems were addressed only as they developed (see photos).



Failure of Coon Creek 41 (Dahlen) 1978



BA12 - Embankment Failure - July 1978

Near-Failure of Bad Axe 12 (Runge Hollow) 1978

Beginning in 1995, The LWCD has had one full-time and one permanent, seasonal staff assigned to all maintenance and operations functions for the dams. These duties range from mowing 150 acres of embankment to construction project management to flood plain mapping to making minor repairs (see photos). The County has a statutory responsibility for O&M under NR333, as well as the legal obligations placed on all dam owners/operators.



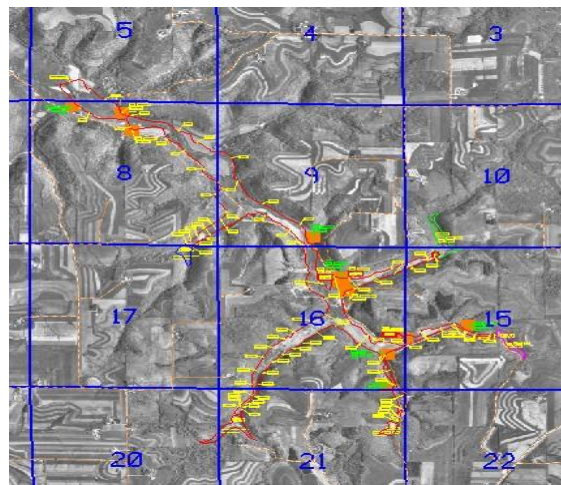
Slide Gate Repair Bad Axe 33



Flood Debris Cleanup Bad Axe 11



2:1 Embankment Mowing Bad Axe 12



5-Dam Breach Route Map – Coon Creek

In August of 2007 and again in June of 2008, Vernon County was severely impacted by tremendous rainfall events that generated flooding which exceeded 500-year return elevations. Each of the 22 dams was damaged to some extent, some much worse than others. It is estimated that repairs and rehabilitations will exceed \$10 million. To meet this financial burden, the County has petitioned the State legislature to allow Vernon County to assess an additional ½ cent in sales tax. An advisory referendum in the November 2008 general election showed public support for the increased sales tax at nearly 2:1. It is anticipated that this will produce over \$1 million in revenue annually, allowing the County to budget and plan the needed repairs over a 10 year period.

In response to orders from the Department of Natural Resources, Vernon County will undertake the repair of the Jersey Valley Dam. Leakage through the abutment will be addressed with the injection of grout and extension of an existing clay blanket. Funds from the DNR ADLP program will help offset part of anticipated \$1.7 million in cost. A significant part of the repair and rehabilitation project is bringing the beach swimming area into compliance with modern design and safety standards.

The County also received 2007 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds from FEMA to implement a high water warning system on 13 of the 22 dams which are listed as high hazard. A combination of rain gauges in watersheds above the dams, and water level sensors at the dams will give County employees a much better picture of which dams are being or will be impacted by major flooding. The system will also

allow rational distribution of emergency response personnel and inspection teams should the need ever arise again. This project will be completed by Summer of 2009.



Bad Axe 12 Aux. Spillway Damage-Aug. 2007



Bad Axe 12 Aux. Spwy Repair – Sept. 2007



West Fork 12 Overtopping – June 2008



West Fork 12 Aux. Spwy Repair – July 2008



West Fork 17 Stilling Basin Damage – June 2008



West Fork 17 Stilling Basin Repair – Oct. 2008

(Addressed in the P.L. 566 Flood Control Structures Section of the Multi-Year Work Plan)

Rivers and Creeks

The Reads and Tainter Creeks Watershed

The Reads and Tainter Creeks Watershed is located in northeast Crawford and southeast Vernon Counties. This watershed includes all streams that flow to the Kickapoo River between Readstown and Gays Mills. The entire length of the Kickapoo River in this watershed is flanked by floodplain wetlands. No named lakes exist in this watershed, however several shallow oxbow lakes can be found adjacent to the Kickapoo River. Due to the steep topography of the area, much of the acreage in the watershed is woodland. The remainder is either in agriculture or private property that is not farmed.

Land Cover in the Watershed

Land Cover Percent of Watershed

Agriculture 44.6%
Forest (Total) 40.4%
Broad-Leaf Deciduous 39.6%
Coniferous 0.75%
Grassland 11.2%
Wetland (Total) 2.15%
Emergent/Wet Meadow 1.70%
Forested 0.40%
Lowland Shrub 0.05%
Development 0.28%
Other 1.32%

Drainage Area (m2): 136
Total Stream Miles: 83.4
Trout Stream Miles: 59.9
Sport Fishery Miles: 0
Lakes: None
Exceptional/Outstanding
Resource Waters: Reads Creek, Tainter Creek, Creek 6-11
Municipalities: Readstown,
Major Public Lands: None
Concerns and Issues: Nonpoint source pollution
Initiatives and Projects:

- Wild trout reintroduction
- In-stream habitat restoration
- Continuous water temperature monitoring

The West Fork Kickapoo River

The West Fork Kickapoo River Watershed is located in central Vernon County. This watershed includes all streams that flow to the West Fork of the Kickapoo River. Two flood control structures owned and operated by Vernon County create Seas Branch Pond and Jersey Valley Lake. Due to the steep topography in the area, much of the acreage in the watershed is woodland. The remaining acreage is either in agriculture or private property that is not farmed.

Land Cover Percent of Watershed

Agriculture 52.7%

Forest (Total) 34.5%

Broad-Leaf Deciduous 33.9%

Coniferous 0.60%

Grassland 10.7%

Wetland (Total) 0.89%

Emergent/Wet Meadow 0.77%

Forested 0.11%

Lowland Shrub 0.01%

Development 0.29%

Other 0.94%

Overall, Nonpoint source pollution is considered the primary cause of water quality problems in streams of the watershed and consequently the stream ranking of high has been assigned for Nonpoint source pollution abatement efforts. There is an Atrazine prohibition area in the Town of Viroqua in sections 7, 18, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Drainage Area (m2): 118

Total Stream Miles: 80.1

Trout Stream Miles: 47.6

Sport Fishery Miles: 0

Lakes: Jersey Valley Lake, Seas Branch Pond

Exceptional/Outstanding Resource Waters: Bishop Branch, Seas Branch

Municipalities: Viroqua, Westby

Major Public Lands: Jersey Valley County Park

Concerns and Issues: Nonpoint source pollution. Atrazine

Initiatives and Projects:

- Wild trout reintroduction
- In-stream habitat restoration
- Continuous water temperature monitoring

West Fork Kickapoo River Watershed (LW04) 138

The West Fork Kickapoo River Watershed has a variety of good quality habitats and rare plant communities that are listed on the state's Natural Heritage Inventory, (NHI), kept by the Bureau of Endangered Resources. These communities include pine and hemlock relicts. In addition to these special communities, the watershed is also home for a variety of rare plant and animal species including; one species each of fish, frog, mammal, snake and salamander and 3 different plant species. These plants and animals are listed on the state's NHI. No extensive amount of public lands are found in the West Fork of the Kickapoo River Watershed. The largest single piece of public land is the 370-acre Jersey Valley Park that surrounds Jersey Valley Lake. Vernon County manages this park, which offers fishing, hiking, swimming and picnicking. A barrier free fishing pier is also located in this park. The WDNR owns

small tracts of land adjacent to the West Fork of the Kickapoo River, Cook Creek, Maple Dale Creek and Bishop Branch. In addition, WDNR easements are located on Seas Branch, Bishop Branch and West Fork of the Kickapoo River.

The Middle Kickapoo River Watershed

The Middle Kickapoo River Watershed is located in central Vernon County, but also includes portions of south central Monroe County and northwest Richland County as well. This watershed includes all streams that flow to the Kickapoo River between Ontario and Readstown. The topography of the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed is quite severe with steep wooded hillsides and narrow valleys, which limits the majority of farmland in this watershed to the ridge tops. Only a small portion of the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed contains wetlands and they are concentrated along the Kickapoo River, Weister Creek and Warner Creek. An abundance of trout streams drain this watershed. Recently the section of the Kickapoo River in this watershed was classified as Class II trout.

Overall, nonpoint source pollution is considered the primary cause of water quality problems in streams of this watershed specifically the overgrazing of livestock on streambanks, cropland erosion, and streambank erosion. Consequently the Middle Kickapoo River Priority Watershed Project was initiated in 1989 to improve land management practices in order to reduce Nonpoint source pollution by working with landowners. This project will continue until 2004.

Drainage Area (m2): 247

Total Stream Miles: 205.5

Trout Stream Miles: 128.6

Sport Fishery Miles: 0

Lakes: None

Exceptional/Outstanding

Resource Waters: Cheyenne Valley Creek, Elk Creek, Camp Creek, and South Bear Creek

Municipalities: La Farge, Ontario, and Viola

Major Public Lands: Kickapoo Valley Reserve Wildcat Mountain State Park

Concerns and Issues:

Nonpoint source pollution

Proliferation of spring ponds

Initiatives and Projects:

- Middle Kickapoo River Priority Watershed Project
- Installation of in-stream habitat for trout
- Continuous water temperature monitoring
- Fish and habitat surveys
- USGS Gauging Stations on the Kickapoo River at La Farge

Land Cover in the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed

Land Cover Percent of Watershed

Agriculture 37.7%

Forest (Total) 45.9%

Broad-Leaf Deciduous 44.5%

Coniferous 1.4%

Grassland 13.6%

Wetland (Total) 2.1%

Emergent/Wet Meadow 1.4%
Forested 0.6%
Lowland Shrub 0.1%
Other 0.6%
Development 0.09%

The Middle Kickapoo River Watershed has a variety of good quality habitats and rare plant communities that are listed on the state's Natural Heritage Inventory, (NHI), kept by the Bureau of Endangered Resources. These communities include:

Dry cliff . Southern mesic forest
Hemlock relict . Floodplain forest
Moist cliff . Forested seep
Northern dry-mesic forest . Hardwood swamp
Northern mesic forest . Southern hardwood swamp
Pine relict . Southern sedge meadow
Southern dry-mesic forest

In addition to these special communities, the watershed is also home for a variety of rare plant and animal species including; 6 bird species, 1 species of dragonfly, 2 species of fish, 1 species of frog, 1 species of mammal, 16 plant species, 1 species of salamander and 1 species of snail. These plants and animals are listed on the state's natural heritage inventory.

The State of Wisconsin owns a large amount of land in the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed including 3,646 acres in Wildcat Mountain State Park and 8,569 acres in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Ownership of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, located in central Vernon County, recently transferred from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to the State of Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Reserve, originally planned to contain a large flood control structure and impoundment, is home to numerous native species of plants and animals. The Reserve is managed by an 11-member board, which includes a joint management agreement with the Ho-Chunk Nation. It is the first time a locally controlled board has managed state land. The board decided to ban all motorized vehicles in the Reserve except snowmobiles. Recreational activities include on- and off- road biking, primitive camping, canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, horse riding, fishing and hunting. Future plans for the reserve include the construction of timber bridges to connect many trails and a visitor's center. More information on the Reserve can be found at <http://kvr.state.wi.us/static/>.

Wildcat Mountain State Park, located between Ontario and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, contains steep wooded hills and sandstone cliffs. Several trout streams and a portion of the Kickapoo River flows through the park also. Wildcat Mountain State Park offers camping, hiking, cross country ski trails, a canoe launch on the Kickapoo River, as well as one of the few horse camping facilities and trails in the State Park system.

Upper Pine River watershed

The 188.5 square mile Upper Pine River watershed lies mostly in north central Richland County with a small portion in Vernon County. Streams in the watershed have a high gradient and water quality is generally good. Nearly all of the streams in the watershed are cold-water streams and can support trout and other cold-water species. Like other watersheds in the Lower Wisconsin Basin, agriculture is the

dominant land use in the watershed. Currently, the overall trend in Richland County is from intensive agriculture to hobby farming. The exception to this transition in land use is near the upper end of the Pine River.

There are few wetland complexes in the watershed. Many of them are wet meadows adjacent streams that have been degraded by grazing or cultivation. One exception to this is a northern bog wetland complex near Hub City. This type of wetland is very rare in this part of the state. Overall, the watershed is estimated to have a population of around 4,975 people. The Village of Yuba is the largest municipality in the watershed and experienced 19.5% growth in the last decade from 77 people to 92.

Land Cover Percent of Watershed

Agriculture 42.8%
Forest (Total) 36.8%
Broad-Leaf Deciduous 36.7%
Coniferous 0.1%
Grassland 16.8%
Wetland (Total) 2.9%
Emergent/Wet Meadow 2.4%
Lowland Shrub 0.3%
Forested 0.2%
Development 0.3%
Other 0.4%

Despite the generally good water quality in the watershed and the transition from intensive agriculture to less intensive hobby farming, there are still some water quality, habitat and recreational use problems in the streams as a result of Nonpoint sources of pollution. As a result of this Nonpoint source pollution, some of the cold water and trout streams are in poor condition.

Drainage Area (m2): 188.5
Total Stream Miles: 214.2
Trout Stream Miles: 85.4
Sport Fishery Miles: 4.9
Lakes: None
Major Public Lands: None

Concerns and Issues:

Nonpoint source pollution

Stream channelization

Initiatives and Projects:

- Wild trout reintroduction
- Pine River Study and Information Network

The Upper Pine River Watershed has a variety of good quality habitats and rare plant communities that are listed on the state's Natural Heritage Inventory, (NHI), which is kept by the Bureau of Endangered Resources. These communities include:

Dry cliff . Southern mesic forest
Hemlock relict . Alder thicket

Moist cliff . Northern wet forest
Pine relict . Shrub-carr
Southern dry-mesic forest . Southern sedge meadow

In addition to these special communities, the watershed is also home for a variety of rare plant and animal species including; 2 species of fish, 12 plant species, 1 species of snake, and 1 mammal species. These plants and animals are also listed on the state’s Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI).

Crossman Creek and Little Baraboo River Watershed

Nonpoint sources of pollution are problematic in the watershed. In response, the watershed was the focus of a Nonpoint source priority watershed project. The project was jointly sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and the Sauk, Richland, Juneau County Land Conservation Departments. The project was selected in 1983 and was completed in the mid 1990’s. Goals of the project were to protect and improve water quality and fisheries habitat by controlling erosion from farm fields, reducing streambank erosion, reducing or controlling barnyard runoff, and better management of manure spreading in the watershed.

When the priority watershed project was completed, 60% of eligible landowners had signed up, but only 65% of the signed projects were actually completed. The project did achieve its goal of 70% phosphorus reduction and 50% sediment reduction.

Drainage Area (m2): 218.0
Total Stream Miles: 217.4
Trout Stream Miles: 23.3
Sport Fishery Miles: 27.4
Exceptional/Outstanding
Resource Waters: none
Municipalities: none
Major Public Lands: none

Concerns and Issues:

- Nonpoint source pollution
- Atrazine
- Hydrologic modification
- High phosphorus levels in lakes leading to eutrophication and algae blooms

Initiatives and Projects:

Crossman Creek and Little Baraboo River Watershed Former Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed Project

The Seymour Creek and Upper Baraboo River Watershed

The Seymour Creek and Upper Baraboo River Watershed, located in Juneau, Monroe, Sauk and Vernon Counties, contains all of the streams that drain to the uppermost 30 miles of the Baraboo River, which eventually reaches the Wisconsin River 120 miles downstream near Portage. The land in this watershed is characteristic of the Driftless area with steep hills, however many stream valleys are fairly

wide. Agricultural activities are found both on the wider ridge tops and in most valleys. The population in the watershed for the year 2000 was estimated at 6,790. Municipalities in the watershed include Elroy, Hillsboro, Kendall and Union Center. Approximately 65% of the primary land use throughout the watershed is agriculture. The remainder of the watershed is largely forested. Wetlands occupy just over 4% of the watershed and are located adjacent to the Baraboo River, Seymour Creek and the West Branch of the Baraboo River.

Land Cover Percent of Watershed

- Agriculture 52.7%
- Forest (Total) 29.2%
- Broad-Leaf Deciduous* 29.0%
- Coniferous* 0.2%
- Grassland 12.5%
- Wetland (Total) 4.3%
- Emergent/Wet Meadow* 3.2%
- Lowland Shrub* 0.9%
- Forested* 0.2%
- Development 0.8%
- Other 0.8%

Nonpoint sources of pollution primarily from agricultural activities have created water quality problems in the watershed. Siltation of streams and the nutrient enrichment of Hillsboro.

- Drainage Area (m2): 171.7
- Total Stream Miles: 172.2
- Trout Stream Miles: 43.6
- Sport Fishery Miles: 31.3
- Lakes: Hillsboro Lake (aka Field Veterans Memorial Lake)
- Exceptional/Outstanding
- Resource Waters: Baraboo River
- Municipalities: Hillsboro
- Concerns and Issues: Nonpoint source pollution

Initiatives and Projects: Hillsboro Lake Priority Watershed Project. USGS Gauging Station at Hillsboro Lake, an impoundment of the West Branch of the Baraboo River, were severe enough that the area became a Priority Watershed Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement Project in 1993. The portion of the Seymour Creek and Upper Baraboo River Watershed addressed by this project includes all lands draining to Hillsboro Lake. Goals of the project are to significantly reduce sedimentation rates in Hillsboro Lake, significantly reduce peak stream flow, increase base flow in watershed streams, and improve fish habitat. The Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department has been working with landowners in the watershed for the past six years to achieve these goals by improving land management practices. This project is due to end in 2005.

The Seymour Creek and Upper Baraboo River Watershed has a variety of quality habitats and rare plant communities that are listed on the state’s Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), kept by the Bureau of Endangered Resources. These communities include:

- Dry-mesic prairie . Pine relict

Hemlock relict . Southern dry-mesic forest
Moist cliff . Southern mesic forest

In addition to these special communities, the watershed is also home to a variety of rare plant and animal species including; 2 species of fish and 1 species of bird. These plants and animals are also listed on the state's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI). Two Wisconsin State Trails bisect this watershed: The Elroy-Sparta and the "400." Both trails are former railroad beds that parallel the Baraboo River and were converted to limestone screened bike trails. Snowmobilers also use these trails in the winter. The Elroy-Sparta State Trail is 32 miles in length and travels through three tunnels. The "400" State Trail is a 22 mile trail between Elroy and Reedsburg. Even though both trails travel through the hilly Driftless area of Wisconsin, the trail grade doesn't change more than 3%. Rest areas and campgrounds are found along the trails.

Rush Creek Watershed (BL01)

The Rush Creek Watershed contains many small to medium sized streams which all flow toward the Mississippi River from Battle Hollow Creek, on the northern border, south to Prairie du Chien. The ridge on which Highway 27 runs is the eastern border of the watershed. The topography of the Rush Creek watershed consists of steeply wooded hillsides with narrow ridge tops and valleys. Rock outcrops along the bluffs facing the Mississippi River are a common sight in the watershed. The severe elevation changes, common in this watershed, minimizes the usable acreage for agricultural purposes. The scenic beauty found in the Rush Creek Watershed has attracted many new landowners. Stream valleys and ridge tops with scenic vistas now contain many seasonal and permanent homes. Most streams located in the Rush Creek watershed are classified trout streams. Prairie du Chien, DeSoto, Ferryville, and the Valley Ridge Clean Water Commission each have wastewater treatment plants that discharge to the Mississippi River.

Drainage Area (square miles) 241

Total Stream Miles 105

Total Trout Stream Miles 40

Class I = 2.6

Class II = 25.3

Class III = 12.1

Total ORW Miles 0

Total ERW Miles 17.3

Total Impaired Stream Miles/Lakes None

Total Wetland Acres 9,795 (includes Mississippi River wetlands)

Best Water Quality Cooley Creek

Lakes None

Municipalities De Soto, Ferryville, Lynxville, Prairie du Chien

Total Permitted Wastewater

Discharges 4

Major Public Lands

Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Rush Creek State Natural Area

Concerns and Issues

- Agricultural non-point source pollution
- Stormwater runoff volume from rural housing developments

Initiatives and Projects _

- Comprehensive stream surveys
- Installation of in-stream habitat
- Continuous water temperature monitoring

Bad Axe River Watershed (BL02)

The Bad Axe River Watershed, which lies entirely within Vernon County, encompasses approximately 200 square miles of steep forested hillsides, ridge top and valley farms. The only farms with sizable tillable acreage in the basin are located on the upper plateau of the Bad Axe River watershed, west of Westby and Viroqua. The communities of Viroqua, Westby and Genoa are all found within this watershed.

Excessive flooding in the Bad Axe River watershed in the 1950s and 1960s prompted the construction of many flood control structures on numerous streams. Some of these structures are designed to permanently detain water (wet dam) while many others impound water only during rain events (dry dam) then slowly release it over time. Vernon County is responsible for maintaining many of these flood control structures. Recreational parks surround two wet flood control structures: Sidie Hollow County Park on Sidie Hollow Creek and Coe Hollow Creek and Duck Egg County Park on the Springville Branch. Generally, the North Fork of the Bad Axe River contains warmer water than the South Fork, consequently more of the South Fork is classified as trout water. However, the North Fork contains a very diverse fishery below Runge Hollow Lake. The Bad Axe River only totals five miles in length and contains a fishery more similar to the Mississippi River rather than the North and South Forks that feed it. The shift of agricultural land to recreational land is taking place in the Bad Axe River Watershed as in other parts of rural Wisconsin.

North Fork Bad Axe River

The Vernon County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently administering an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) project in this watershed. The main focus of this effort is to reduce gully and streambank erosion in the Bad Axe River Watershed. This project requires landowners to sign up in order to be considered for streambank or gully erosion projects on their property. The Bad Axe River Watershed EQIP project has signed up 92 landowners for projects over the last four years. Only one more year (2002) of sign up remains. After three construction seasons, this project has improved 30,837 feet of streambank with shaping, riprap and LUNKER structures, which has saved an estimated 9,839 tons of soil from washing into streams. A total of 120 gullies have been stabilized with dams, grassed waterways, critical area shaping and seeding, saving approximately 8,375 tons of soil from reaching streams.

Drainage Area (square miles) 195

Total Stream Miles 105

Total Trout Stream Miles 64.5

Class I = 12.4

Class II = 17.1

Class III = 35.0

Total ORW Miles 0

Total ERW Miles 11.2

Total Impaired Stream Miles/Lakes None

Total Wetland Acres 2,553 (includes Mississippi River wetlands)

Best Water Quality Hornby Creek

Lakes Runge Hollow Lake, Sidie Hollow Lake

Municipalities Viroqua, Westby

Total Permitted Wastewater Discharges 4

Major Public Lands

Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Sidie Hollow County Park

Duck Egg County Park

Esofea County Park

Concerns and Issues

- Urban and agricultural non-point source pollution
- Stormwater volume, quality and temperature

Initiatives and Projects

- Comprehensive stream surveys
- Installation of in-stream habitat
- Continuous water temperature monitoring

Coon Creek Watershed (BL03)

The Coon Creek Watershed, located in west central Vernon, southwest Monroe, and southern La Crosse counties, covers 238 square miles and includes all streams that drain to Coon Creek as well as the following Mississippi River tributaries: Chipmunk Coulee Creek, Mormon Coulee Creek, Creek 16-6 and Creek 29-1. This watershed contains 88 miles of trout streams, many of which contain self-sustaining trout populations (Class I). The Coon Creek Watershed contains steep, wooded hills with farming activities in both the valleys and ridge tops. Streams in the Coon Creek watershed characteristically contain clear, cold spring-fed water with gravel and rubble bottoms in their upper reaches changing to predominantly sand bottoms further downstream. Numerous streams in the watershed contain both natural and restored overhead cover for trout and are accessible for fishing through public easements.

Nation's First Watershed Project. Farming practices utilized since European settlement in the mid-1800's created massive soil erosion and frequent flash floods triggered by the cultivation and pasturing of steep slopes. In 1933, the Coon Creek watershed was designated as the first soil conservation project in the nation within the Soil Conservation Service(SCS), now known as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of the project was to determine which flood control and watershed conservation measures were effective in reducing erosion. The successful flood control and conservation practices were then promoted in other areas where similar erosion problems had occurred. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was mobilized to install contour strips, grass waterways, fences to exclude cattle from steep hillsides, as well as plant trees and shrubs. They also installed stream bank protection such as willow plantings, brush mats, as well as rock and timber pilings on eroding banks. The success of this soil conservation project is evidenced by farmers still maintaining original contour strips, re-vegetated hillsides, and recovery of the Class I trout streams.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the Coon Creek Watershed since the 1933 project. It is important to note that the Wisconsin DNR defined Coon Creek Watershed encompasses 238 square miles, whereas the NRCS defined Coon Creek Watershed encompasses 141 square miles including only Coon Creek and its tributaries. Recognizing the high quality trout streams in the Coon Creek watershed, the WDNR created the Coon Creek Fishery Area. WDNR ownership of land and easements on private

property provides access to Coon Creek upstream of Chaseburg, Timber Coulee, Rullands Coulee, Bohemian Valley, Spring Coulee Creeks, and many unnamed tributaries for fishing and hiking. Parking areas are found throughout the fishery area and posted signs ask users to respect private landowners while enjoying the streams on public easements. Colder stream temperatures than in the past are suspected in Coon Creek watershed streams. Proof of this comes from a decrease in fish species diversity found in area streams. Fewer fish species can tolerate constant cold water temperatures. The loss of some forage fish species over the years may be linked to decreasing average water temperatures. The observation that more natural springs are flowing than in past years also points to colder stream temperatures. To document current water temperature trends, continuous data loggers were installed in 1999 in Coon, Spring Coulee, Timber Coulee, Rullands Coulee, Bohemian Valley, Poplar, and Mormon Coulee Creeks. These data loggers will collect water temperature hourly for approximately eight years.

The communities of Coon Valley and Chaseburg each discharge treated wastewater to Coon Creek. Both the La Crosse and Pineview Mobile Home Parks discharge treated wastewater to Mormon Coulee Creek and St. Joseph discharges to a dry creek bed tributary to Mormon Coulee Creek. Both Genoa and Stoddard send their treated wastewater to the Mississippi River.

Drainage Area (square miles) 238

Total Stream Miles 134.2

Total Trout Stream Miles 89.2

Class I = 42.7

Class II = 30.3

Class III = 16.2

Total ORW Miles 16.0

Total ERW Miles 22.9

Total Impaired Stream Miles/Lakes None

Total Wetland Acres 6,050 (includes Mississippi River wetlands)

Best Water Quality Bohemian Valley Creek

Lakes None

Municipalities Chaseburg, Coon Valley, Genoa, St. Joseph, Stoddard, Westby

Total Permitted Wastewater Discharges 7

Major Public Lands

Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Coon Creek State Fishery Area

Concerns and Issues

- Urban and agricultural non-point source pollution
- Storm water volume, quality and temperature

Initiatives and Projects - Comprehensive stream surveys

- Base flow water chemistry sampling
- Installation of in-stream habitat
- Continuous water temperature monitoring

5.8 Groundwater

Groundwater is a limited resource, and both its quality and quantity are important characteristics that are influenced by local geology and local land use. Precipitation percolates through the soil and bedrock where it eventually reaches a saturated zone known as an aquifer. It is from these aquifers that wells draw their water.

Most of the groundwater in Vernon County is stored in fractured bedrock. Wells tap these fractures to access the water. Pollutants in groundwater are an issue of high concern in Vernon County. One common groundwater pollutant is nitrates. Nitrates are odorless, colorless, and tasteless and are the result of decaying organic matter. Nitrates are found in animal and human waste and are also found in fertilizers. Nitrate levels of less than two parts per million are considered naturally occurring and levels of two to 10 parts per million are considered elevated levels due to human activities. A nitrate level over 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for infants and is the enforcement standard. According to testing completed in Vernon County, 26% of results were greater than 10 parts per million.

Another common groundwater pollutant is bacteria. Tests are completed for the presence of coliform bacteria which is an indicator for the presence of more harmful bacteria. Sites that are positive for coliform are then tested for E. coli bacteria. Any level of E. coli bacteria is considered harmful because it is found in animal and human waste. Vernon County is particularly susceptible to groundwater contamination because fractured dolomite underlies most of the county. These fractures allow water and pollutants to move more efficiently and rapidly.

Unused wells can serve as direct pipelines to the groundwater. Contaminants at or near the surface, such as animal and human wastes or lawn and agricultural fertilizers, can enter the groundwater easily through unused wells and sinkholes. Vernon County draws all of its water from the same aquifer thus, all areas and all wells are susceptible to some extent.

5.9 Water Quality

Surface water and groundwater quality in Vernon County are influenced both by natural and human influenced processes. Development factors that influence water quality include point and nonpoint sources of water pollution, the amount of impervious surface in a watershed, the potential pollution sources related to a particular land use, and the degree to which mitigation measures have been used. Natural factors that influence water quality include soils, geology, topography, climate, vegetation types, and the water cycle.

Clean Water Act and Impaired Waters, Section 303(d)

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires each state to periodically submit a list of impaired waters to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval. Impaired waters are those that are not meeting the state's water quality standards. The WDNR last submitted an updated list to EPA in April 2004. EPA approved the list of impaired waters in September 2004. The next updated list is due to be submitted to EPA on April 1, 2006.

Non-Point Sources of Pollution

As precipitation and snow melt run across the surface of the land, they can pick up sediment and other pollutants from the ground. This polluted runoff is known as non-point source pollution. Construction site erosion, municipal storm water runoff, and uncontrolled agricultural runoff are the three primary sources of non-point source pollution.

Animal Waste Facilities

One of the most significant potential groundwater contamination sources is animal waste. Both storage and spreading of animal waste can contaminate groundwater if not done properly. Animal waste storage facilities currently in use range from manure pits dug 50 years ago to newly engineered and installed storage structures. The State of Wisconsin regulates livestock operations with 1,000 animal units or more and those livestock operations with less than 1,000 animal units that have discharges that significantly affect water quality. Animal waste contains chlorides, nitrogen, and phosphorus, among other pollutants. Through NR 243 Wis. Adm. Code, some of the worst sites in the state have been addressed, but significant animal waste problems remain. The WDNR has codified statewide performance standards that apply to agricultural operations of various types and sizes. These performance standards include:

- Manure management prohibitions.
- Nutrient management.
- Manure storage.
- Soil loss from riparian fields.

Implementation of the standards and prohibitions will likely occur primarily through the counties, although the WDNR will be the main implementation authority for state permitted facilities. All livestock and poultry operations in Wisconsin, regardless of size, must abide by the four common-sense manure management prohibitions. These prohibitions are required by NR151. The purpose of these prohibitions is to protect water quality from adverse impacts related to manure discharges by encouraging practices that should become common-sense for every producer.

- No overflow of manure storage facilities.
- No unconfined manure piles in water quality management areas (within 300 ft. of a stream, 1000 ft. of a lake, or areas where the groundwater is susceptible to contamination).
- No direct runoff from a feedlot or stored manure into waters of the state.
- No unlimited livestock access to waters of the state where high concentrations of animals
- prevent the maintenance of adequate sod cover or self-sustaining vegetation.

Wellhead Protection

The goal of wellhead protection is to prevent potential contaminants from reaching the wells that supply municipal water systems. This is accomplished by monitoring and controlling potential pollution sources within the land area that recharge those wells. Wellhead protection planning is administered by the WDNR as required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the 1986 amendments to the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Wellhead planning is encouraged for all communities, but is required when any new municipal well is proposed.

The general process of community-level wellhead protection planning includes:

- Forming a planning committee.
- Delineating the wellhead protection area.
- Inventorying potential groundwater contamination sources.
- Managing the wellhead protection area.

The units of government with wellhead protection planning:

- Six of eleven municipal water systems in Vernon County have a wellhead protection plan: Coon Valley, Hillsboro, La Farge, Readstown, Viroqua, and Westby.
- Four of eleven municipal water systems in Vernon County have a wellhead protection ordinance: Coon Valley, La Farge, Viroqua, and Westby.

5.10 Air Quality

In order to evaluate the quality of the air and to protect the public health, a series of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) have been developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as established in section 109 of the Clean Air Act. According to the Wisconsin Air Quality Report, as prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), the air pollutants affecting Wisconsin include sulfur dioxide, suspended particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, oxides of nitrogen, lead, sulfates, and nitrates. Vernon County is considered an attainment area, which is an area that meets the NAAQS defined in the Federal Clean Air Act. The WI DNR is beginning to monitor air quality and plan to develop state air quality standards beyond existing permitting of mostly point sources.

There are commonly air advisories during the summer months in Vernon County. There are more often localized air quality issues that challenge rural areas. Concerns with airborne particulates, or dust, may also be a concern where residential land use is in close proximity to extraction operations or agricultural operations. Outdoor burning can lead to air quality problems in a particular neighborhood if garbage or other materials that release toxic substances are burned, or if burning occurs in a densely populated area. Issues might arise from improper open burning, improper use of burning barrels, or the improper use of outdoor wood burners (furnaces).

5.11 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Designated State Natural Areas

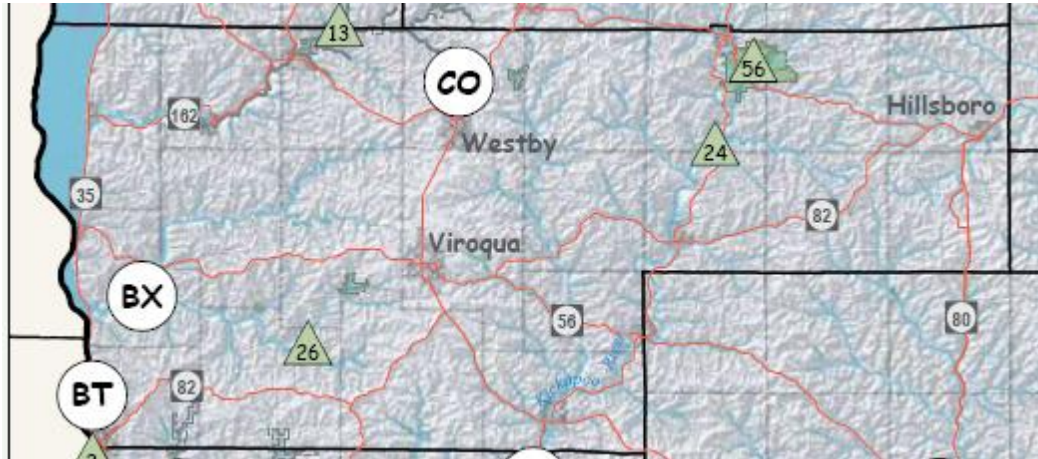
State Natural Areas (SNAs) protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape -often the last refuge for rare plants and animals. Natural Areas are valuable for research and educational use, the preservation of genetic and biological diversity, and for providing benchmarks for determining the impact of use on managed lands. As such, they are not intended for intensive recreation. State Natural Areas are designated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Land Legacy Places

At the request of the Natural Resources Board, the Department of Natural Resources undertook a study to identify places that would be critical in meeting Wisconsin's conservation and recreation needs over the next 50 years. The study did not address how or when these "Legacy Places" should be protected or who should be responsible for implementing protection measures. The outcome of the three-year effort was a *Land Legacy Report* that catalogues the results of the study. Land Legacy Places i

identified by the report as being located in Vernon County include the following.
CO - Coulee Coldwater Riparian Resources
BT - Battle Bluff Prairie
BX - Bad Axe River

Figure 5.11.1 - Land Legacy Places in Vernon County



5.12 Wildlife Habitat

Many of the details of wildlife habitat in Vernon County are discussed in section 5.7 under the heading Rivers and Streams. Each watershed section reports out the prominent habitats on those landscapes. This section will outline some of the historical explanations for present day habitat distribution and their uniqueness and importance.

Historical vegetation consisted of southern hardwood forests, oak savanna, scattered prairies, and floodplain forests and marshes along the major rivers. Relict conifer forests including white pine, hemlock and yellow birch are rarer natural communities in the cooler, steep, north slope microclimates. Some remaining relict forests are tamarack swamps, sugar maple/beech forests, oak forests and ancient pine stands. Other relict habitats are oak savanna, and mesic and wet-mesic prairies. Wetlands were and are currently rare. Floodplain forests were only found along the Kickapoo and Mississippi Rivers.

Algific talus slopes are a rare community left behind by the glacial push over 10,000 years ago and are only known in the southwestern corner of Wisconsin's Driftless Area. Algific talus slopes support northern plant species and glacial era relicts such as northern monkshood and globally rare terrestrial snails.

European Settlement

With Euro-American settlement, most of the land on ridgetops and valley bottoms was cleared of oak savanna, prairie, and level forest for agriculture. The steep slopes between valley bottom and ridgetop, unsuitable for raising crops, grew into oak-dominated forests after the ubiquitous presettlement wildfires were suppressed. Current vegetation is a mix of forest (40%), agriculture, and grassland with some wetlands in the river valleys. The primary forest cover is oak-hickory (51%) dominated by oak species and shagbark hickory. Maple-basswood forests (28%), dominated by sugar maple, basswood and red maple, are common in areas that were not subjected to repeated

presettlement wildfires. Bottomland hardwoods (10%) are common in the valley bottoms of major rivers and are dominated by silver maple, ashes, elms, cottonwood, and red maple. Relict conifer forests including white pine, hemlock and yellow birch are a rarer natural community in the cooler, steep, north slope microclimates.

Natural Community Management Opportunities

The Western Coulee and Ridges Ecological Landscape provides opportunities to manage for the following natural communities, based on the findings in the Wildlife Action Plan. (Please see the Wildlife Action Plan, Chapter 2.4 and the Ecosystem Management Team's Opportunities for Sustaining Natural Communities for background information.)²

Table 5.12.1 Management Opportunities for Natural Community Types

Natural Community Type	Opportunity
Algific Talus Slope	Major
Bedrock Glade	Major
Cedar Glade	Major
Coldwater streams	Major
Coolwater streams	Major
Dry Cliff	Major
Dry Prairie	Major
Dry-mesic Prairie	Major
Emergent Marsh	Major
Floodplain Forest	Major
Hemlock Relict	Major
Moist Cliff	Major
Oak Barrens	Major
Oak Opening	Major
Oak Woodland	Major
Pine Relict	Major

² Description of Terms Used to Define Opportunities for Protection, Restoration and/or Management of Natural Communities by Ecological Landscapes

Major A major opportunity for sustaining the natural community in the Ecological Landscape exists, either because many significant occurrences of the natural community have been recorded in the landscape or major restoration activities are likely to be successful maintaining the community's composition, structure, and ecological function over a longer period of time.

Important Although the natural community does not occur extensively or commonly in the Ecological Landscape, one to several occurrences do occur and are important in sustaining the community in the state. In some cases, important opportunities may exist because the natural community may be restricted to just one or a few Ecological Landscapes within the state and there may be a lack of opportunities elsewhere.

Present The natural community occurs in the Ecological Landscape, but better management opportunities appear to exist in other parts of the state.

Content for this page was derived from the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan and/or the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan Database. Last Revised: Thursday February 08 2006

Natural Community Type	Opportunity
Sand Prairie	Major
Shrub Carr	Major
Southern Dry Forest	Major
Southern Dry-mesic Forest	Major
Southern Mesic Forest	Major
Submergent Marsh	Major
Surrogate Grasslands	Major
Warmwater rivers	Major
Alder Thicket	Important
Emergent Marsh - Wild Rice	Important
Ephemeral Pond	Important
Mesic Prairie	Important
Northern Dry-mesic Forest	Important
Northern Sedge Meadow	Important
Northern Wet Forest	Important
Pine Barrens	Important
Southern Sedge Meadow	Important
Southern Tamarack Swamp (rich)	Important
Wet Prairie	Important
Wet-mesic Prairie	Important
White Pine - Red Maple Swamp	Important
Bog Relict	Present
Calcareous Fen	Present
Impoundments/Reservoirs	Present
Northern Hardwood Swamp	Present
Northern Mesic Forest	Present
Northern Wet-mesic Forest	Present
Southern Hardwood Swamp	Present
Warmwater streams	Present

Ensuring preservation of native habitats is key to continued wildlife diversity. Invasive exotic species including, but not limited to, Emerald Ash Borer and Garlic Mustard threaten the native population succession in Vernon County. Programs to control these invasive species work to reduce exotic monocultures and encourage natural succession and regrowth of native plant species.

5.13 Threatened and Endangered Species

Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), established in 1985 by the Wisconsin Legislature, is maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (WDNR) Bureau of Endangered Resources. The NHI program is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin NHI program is part of

an international network of inventory programs that collect, process, and manage data on the occurrences of natural biological diversity using standard methodology.

Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory program's three objectives are to: collect information on occurrences of rare plants and animals, high-quality natural communities, and significant natural features in Wisconsin; standardize this information, enter it into an electronic database, and mark locations on base maps for the state; and use this information to further the protection and management of rare species, natural communities, and natural features. According to NHI mapping for Vernon County, the following rare species and natural communities are found in the county. The dates following the occurrence name notes the most recent year the occurrence was recorded in the county.

AQUATIC OCCURRENCES

Animal

Goldeye, *Hiodon alosoides*, 1994
Wartyback, *Quadrula nodulata*, 1979
Washboard, *Megaloniaias nervosa*, 1979
Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, 2002
Monkeyface, *Quadrula metanevra*, 1979
Mud Darter, *Etheostoma asprigene*, 1995
Paddlefish, *Polyodon spathula*, 1992
Shoal Chub, *Macrhybopsis aestivalis*, 1979
Blue Sucker, *Cycleptus elongatus*, 1994
Silver Chub, *Macrhybopsis storeriana*, 1988
Weed Shiner, *Notropis texanus*, 1994
Wood Turtle, *Glyptemys insculpta*, 2008
American Eel, *Anguilla rostrata*, 1980
Higgins' Eye, *Lampsilis higginsii*, 1977
Pirate Perch, *Aphredoderus sayanus*, 1994
Redside Dace, *Clinostomus elongatus*, 1979
Round Pigtoe, *Pleurobema sintoxia*, 1979
Black Buffalo, *Ictiobus niger*, 1994
Lake Sturgeon, *Acipenser fulvescens*, 1979
Pallid Shiner, *Notropis amnis*, 1994
Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*, 1977
Pugnose Minnow, *Opsopoeodus emiliae*, 1995
Longear Sunfish, *Lepomis megalotis*, 1944
Rock Pocketbook, *Arcidens confragosus*, 1979
Bluntnose Darter, *Etheostoma chlorosoma*, 1949
Greater Redhorse, *Moxostoma valenciennesi*, 1949
Skipjack Herring, *Alosa chrysochloris*, 1986
Blanding's Turtle, *Emydoidea blandingii*, 1993
Little Glassy Wing, *Pompeius verna*, 1997
Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*, 1996
Western Sand Darter, *Etheostoma clarum*, 1995
Worm-eating Warbler, *Helmitheros vermivorus*, 1978
Four-toed Salamander, *Hemidactylium scutatum*, 2004
Louisiana Waterthrush, *Seiurus motacilla*, 1996

Northern Cricket Frog, *Acris crepitans*, 1998
Russet-tipped Clubtail, *Stylurus plagiatus*, 1992

Plants

Drooping Sedge, *Carex prasina*, 1996
Sweet-scented Indian-plantain, *Cacalia suaveolens*, 1974
Natural Communities
Forested Seep, Forested seep, 1994
Emergent Marsh, Emergent marsh, 1977
Hardwood Swamp, Hardwood swamp, 1993
Floodplain Forest, Floodplain forest, 1994
Southern Sedge Meadow, Southern sedge meadow, 1994
Southern Hardwood Swamp, Southern hardwood swamp, 1993

Terrestrial Occurance

Animal

Dull Gloss, *Zonitoides limatulus*, 1991
Gophersnake, *Pituophis catenifer*, 2008
Smooth Coil, *Helicodiscus singleyanus*, 1987
Bird Rookery, Bird Rookery, 1994
Prairie Vole, *Microtus ochrogaster*, 1998
Gray Ratsnake, *Pantherophis spiloides*, 2008
Ottoe Skipper, *Hesperia ottoe*, 2008
Bat Hibernaculum, Bat Hibernaculum, 1990
Cerulean Warbler, *Dendroica cerulea*, 1994
Cherrystone Drop, *Hendersonia occulta*, 1972
Kentucky Warbler, *Oporornis formosus*, 1994
Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, 2005
Upland Sandpiper, *Bartramia longicauda*, 2004
Henslow's Sparrow, *Ammodramus henslowii*, 2002
Wing Snaggletooth, *Gastrocopta procera*, 1987
Acadian Flycatcher, *Empidonax virescens*, 1994
Timber Rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, 2008
Columbine Dusky Wing, *Erynnis lucilius*, 1997
Gorgone Checker Spot, *Chlosyne gorgone*, 1994
Western Harvest Mouse, *Reithrodontomys megalotis*, 1996
Wild Indigo Dusky Wing, *Erynnis baptisiae*, 1987
Abbreviated Underwing Moth, *Catocala abbreviatella*, 1996

Plants

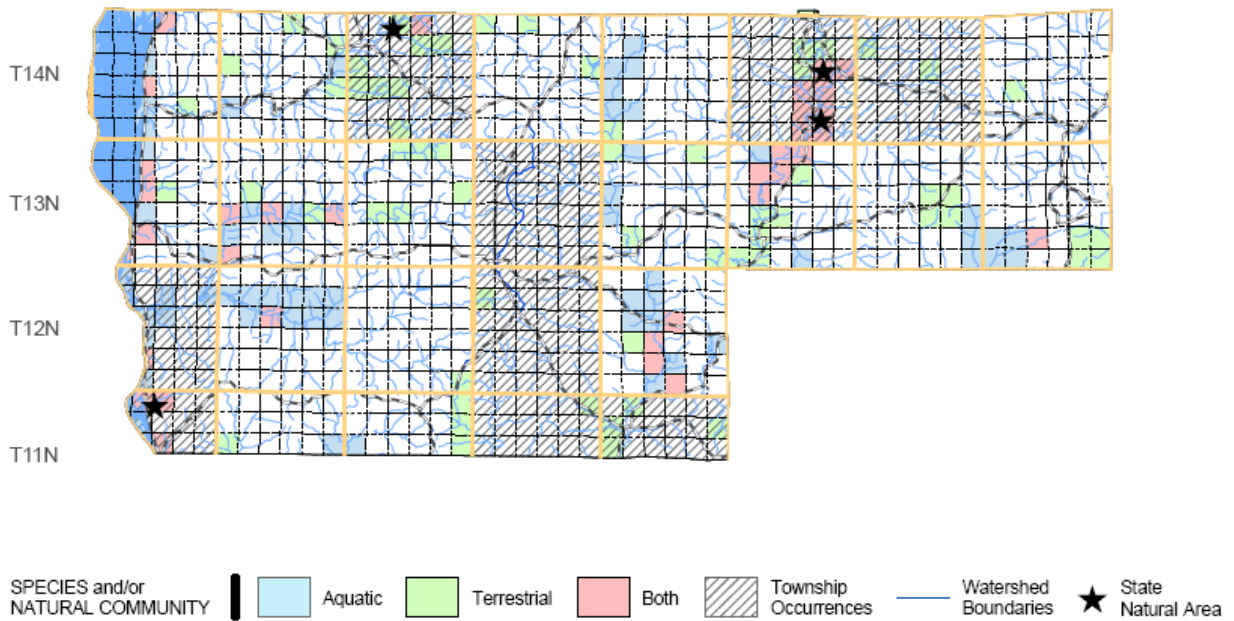
Catfoot, *Gnaphalium helleri* var. *micradenium*, 1958
Musk-root, *Adoxa moschatellina*, 2002
Beak Grass, *Diarrhena obovata*, 2003
Glade Fern, *Diplazium pycnocarpon*, 1978
Marbleseed, *Onosmodium molle*, 1956

Putty Root, *Aplectrum hyemale*, 2003
Low Calamint, *Calamintha arkansana*, 1911
Cliff Cudweed, *Gnaphalium obtusifolium* var. *saxicola*, 2001
Hooker Orchis, *Platanthera hookeri*, 1970
Rock Clubmoss, *Huperzia porophila*, 1996
Hill's Thistle, *Cirsium hillii*, 2002
Lapland Azalea, *Rhododendron lapponicum*, 1996
Upland Boneset, *Eupatorium sessilifolium* var. *brittonianum*, 1971
Yellow Gentian, *Gentiana alba*, 2000
Nodding Pogonia, *Triphora trianthophora*, 1999
Rock Stitchwort, *Minuartia dawsonensis*, 1958
Broad Beech Fern, *Phegopteris hexagonoptera*, 1985
American Gromwell, *Lithospermum latifolium*, 1930
Reflexed Trillium, *Trillium recurvatum*, 1955
Shadowy Goldenrod, *Solidago sciaphila*, 1993
Limestone Oak Fern, *Gymnocarpium robertianum*, 1985
Roundstem Foxglove, *Agalinis gattingeri*, 1975
Bird's-eye Primrose, *Primula mistassinica*, 1996
One-flowered Broomrape, *Orobanche uniflora*, 1931
Laurentian Bladder Fern, *Cystopteris laurentiana*, 1977
Northern Wild Monkshood, *Aconitum noveboracense*, 2008
Purple-stem Cliff-brake, *Pellaea atropurpurea*, 1976
Oregon Woodsia (Tetraploid), *Woodsia oregana* ssp. *cathcartiana*, 1956

Natural Communities

Dry Cliff, Dry cliff, 1977
Dry Prairie, Dry prairie, 1995
Moist Cliff, Moist cliff, 1998
Pine Relict, Pine relict, 1993
Hemlock Relict, Hemlock relict, 1995
Southern Dry Forest, Southern dry forest, 1983
Northern Mesic Forest, Northern mesic forest, 1993
Southern Mesic Forest, Southern mesic forest, 1994
Northern Dry-mesic Forest, Northern dry-mesic forest, 1977
Southern Dry-mesic Forest, Southern dry-mesic forest, 2003

Figure 5.13.1 - Natural Communities in Vernon County



5.14 Historic and Cultural Resources

Preserving important aspects of our past gives us a sense of continuity and meaning and historic preservation efforts foster community pride. Because cultural resources provide an important window to the past, Vernon County residents need to retain those resources that make their individual communities distinctive. The presence of these resources creates a level of respect for our earlier pioneers who formed the character of our community that new residents now enjoy.

In addition to maintaining a community's distinctive character, cultural resource preservation can lead to tangible economic benefits. By retaining and emphasizing historic heritage, tourism can increase. Preservation offers a positive alternative to continued decay. Neighborhood improvement and investment in rehabilitation leads to increase real estate values and municipal tax revenues.

Historical Preservation Organizations in Vernon County

Vernon County Historical Society

The Vernon County Historical Society is the officially recognized county organization for the preservation of Vernon County's historical heritage. Its purposes and objectives are to

- promote and guide in the preservation of Vernon County's Historical Heritage,
- encourage historical research, education and publication of gathered data,
- operate the Vernon County Museum and its historical sites,
- assist and promote other historical organizations within the county,

- cooperate with the Wisconsin State Historical Society and incorporate state objectives wherever possible,
- receive, hold, preserve, or dispose of any property (real estate or personal) acquired by the society by gift, devise, bequest, purchase, or otherwise, and
- to the extent to which human and financial resources shall permit, the practices and procedures in the collection, accessioning, cataloging, use, and display of museum and library materials shall be consistent with the standard site, museum and library practices and procedures such as those recommended by the Office of Local History and other divisions of the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

The Vernon County Historical Society operates four historical sites: The Vernon County Museum, Old St. Mary's Church Museum, the Foreaker One Room Schoolhouse, and the historic Sherry-Butt House. There is an ongoing fundraising effort to accomplish the following:

- Museum Accessibility \$502,000+
- Museum Facility Space Renovations \$125,000
- Endowment \$120,000
- Heating and Cooling System upgrade \$103,000
- Travelling exhibits \$75,000
- Technology \$50,000
- Ongoing Programs and Operations \$25,000
- Total of \$1,000,000 campaign

Driftless Area Heritage Group

A group composed of the Vernon County Museum and Historical Site leaders that meet twice a year to share information and ideas.

Westby Historical Society

The Society was formed in 1989 for the preservation of the City of Westby's historic features. Their first project was to videotape people telling their stories of old Westby. This was followed by the purchase of the Thoreson House in 1993. Many fund-raising projects followed to help pay for it.

- The Westby Area Historical Society is a leader in educating the people of the community about its history.

Coon Prairie Lutheran Church Preservation Committee

The Coon Prairie Lutheran Church Preservation Committee is a group organized to maintain the church listed on National Register of Historic Places.

Hillsboro Historical Society

The Hillsboro Historical Society supervises the use of their local Museum, Log Cabin, a replica of a one-room School House, and Antique Machinery Shed that are located in the Albert Field Memorial Park, in Hillsboro.

Cheyenne Settlers Heritage Society

Contact Hillsboro City Hall or rmw@direcway.com for further information.

Readstown Area Historical Society

Readstown museum houses artifacts of Readstown area and is home to the Readstown Area Historical Society.

Viroqua Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission mission is to protect, enhance and perpetuate sites of special architectural or historic character in the community. Meetings are held monthly.

Associates of the Restored Temple Theater (ARTT)

ARTT, a non-profit (501c3) volunteer group, raised nearly 1.6 million dollars for the restoration of Viroqua, Wisconsin's historic Temple Theatre. With a membership of nearly 250 community members, businesses, foundations, and Viroqua High School alumni from all over the country, ARTT's goal to bring the Temple Theatre back to its original classical revival beauty was reached in 2002. The group now manages the facility and is expanding to include an adjacent restaurant space in their care.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve and Visitor Center

Kickapoo Valley Reserve and Visitor Center, S3661 State Hwy. 131, La Farge: Located 1 ½ mile north of La Farge this is a nature reserve and visitor center with exhibit gallery featuring area history, nature and geology.

Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center

Norskedalen (which means the Norwegian Valley), is a nature and heritage center dedicated to preserving, interpreting and sharing the natural environment and cultural heritage of the area surrounding Coon Valley in southwest Wisconsin. The Skumrud Heritage Farm is located in the Town of Hamburg in Vernon County.

Vernon County History

Pre-Columbian Occupants of Vernon County

Vernon County has had continuous human occupation for about 12,000 years, since the retreat of the last glaciers. There are many sites in Vernon County with evidence of these long ago people. Archeological finds range from petroglyphs or rock art, to spear points and pottery and remnants of raised row farming. The first farmers in the County were the Mississippian people who arose about 1,000 years ago and they not only hunted, fished and gathered food, but grew large plots of corn, beans and squash. These people are the ancestors of the Ho-Chunk, who were removed from their lands along the Mississippi River during the 1800's. However, the Ho-Chunk returned to their homes, family by family, are in the process of buying land in their traditional home grounds. The Ho-Chunk and the State of Wisconsin jointly manage the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy currently owns and protects most of the archeological sites. Due to the fragility of the archeological evidence, many sites are not available to public viewing. New sites are still being discovered in the County. These ancient remnants of the first people to settle here need to be preserved, maintained and available for continued scientific study.

Early History and Settlement

The Indians were the first inhabitants of the region which is now Vernon County. The Sioux are known to have occupied land here about 1634 and they were displaced by the Fox Indians who in turn were supplanted by the later groups. Several fur traders had posts in the County, which was called Bad Ax as early as 1817. There were two major battles between the Indians and the Whites. The first was during the Winnebago War in 1827 and the other was the final battle of the Black Hawk War in 1832. The Winnebago Indians ceded this territory to the United States in 1837. The land survey began in 1839 and was completed in 1845. It is not certain of the first permanent white settlement as one report states the Rice brothers in 1839 and another report states they arrived along with John McCulloch in 1843/1844 at Bad Ax (now Liberty Pole).

County Organization

Wisconsin Territory was formed in 1836, and the territory now known as Vernon County was first created in 1849 as a town of Bad Ax of Crawford County. In 1851, Crawford County was reduced when Bad Ax and La Crosse County were separated from it. The original name of the county of Bad Ax was named after the river of that name which flows through the county. The most common explanation for the name Bad Ax is that it is said that in the latter part of the eighteenth century the Indians made poor ax heads. By 1862 the name of Bad Ax was considered a detriment to the county because it suggested a backwoods settlement. Jeremiah Rusk, then representing Bad Ax County in the State Legislature, wrote to W. F. Terhune asking him to suggest a new name. Terhune suggested the name of “Vernon” because it was euphonious; it suggested the green fields of the county and it had a pleasing association with Mount Vernon, the home of President Washington. The State Legislature approved the name Vernon County on March 22, 1862.

The first election was held in April, 1851, at which county officers were elected. It is to be presumed that the first meeting of the board of supervisors was held shortly after the April election; but the records do not throw any light upon it. The first recorded meeting of the board of supervisors was held on the 11th of November, 1851 at Viroqua. The county seat was voted on by its citizens on Tuesday, the 25th of May, 1852 to be in the new village of Viroqua. The first courthouse was a log cabin built in 1850 by Moses Decker and other pioneers who helped with a “raising bee.” This building was torn down in 1856 when the second Courthouse was built. The present courthouse was built in 1880 with additions attached in 1904, 1924, 1955, 1988 and 1998. This courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

The county’s economy has always been based on agriculture within an unglaciated “Driftless Area.” The ethnic heritage of Vernon County has been unique in that it has been a “melting pot” of many nationalities:

- English/Yankees, had advantages over other European immigrants as they knew the language and better understood the political process and how to use it to their advantage. Many went into professional occupations or took the better claims of land.
- The Norwegians were plentiful but mainly settled where there were other Norwegians, such as the Coon Valley/Coon Prairie and West Prairie areas. Most Norwegians were farmers and many descendants still live in the County.

- German concentration was in the Towns of Bergen and Hamburg and they were also farmers. They were appalled at the wasteful practices they saw around them and were some of the first to rotate crops and use manure to maintain fertility.
- The Irish settled in two separate communities in Vernon County. One settlement developed along the southern border of Sterling and Franklin Towns. The other settled in the Town of Forest on Irish Ridge and were farmers.
- The Italians gathered in the Genoa area. The Genoa bluffs reminded them of Italy, but since there was no suitable farmland, the residents pursued many occupations associated with the Mississippi River, such as fishing, harvesting clams and operating stores, bars and hotels serving the steamboat passengers.
- The Czech/Bohemian population settled in the eastern part of the County in Champion Valley (Dilly to Yuba area). They also were farmers.
- The area of Cheyenne and Revels Valley, east of Wildcat Mountain was the largest rural tri-racial (free Afro-American, Native American and white) settlement in Wisconsin. Farming was their major occupation, but lumberjacking was also common.
- The Amish are relatively a new group of immigrants to Vernon County. They have mainly arrived from the Pennsylvania and Ohio areas starting in the late 1960's in the area south of Cashton. They are now seen in many other areas of the County, including Chaseburg, and Bloomingdale. In the Town of Franklin there are two sects; one group came from New York and the other came from Minnesota.

Historic Places

State and National Register

The National Register of Historic Places recognizes properties of local, state, and national significance. Properties are listed in the National Register because of their association with significant persons or events, because they contain important information about our history or prehistory, or because of their architectural or engineering significance. The National Register also lists important groupings of properties as historic districts. In addition, the National Park Service highlights properties that have significance to the nation as a whole by conferring them the status of National Historic Landmark.

The Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places parallels the National Register. However, it is designed to enable state-level historic preservation protection and benefits. Most of the properties in Wisconsin listed in the National Register are also listed in the State Register.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society there are 21 sites located in Vernon County that are on the National and State Register, which are detailed below. The period of significance indicates the length of time when a property was associated with important events, activities or persons, or attained the characteristics that qualify it for register listing.

- Town of Clinton: Round Barn owned by George Apfel, a/k/a Dell Round Barn. Listed on the State and National Register in 2006. Architectural style is described as octagon mode. Period of significance is 1900-1924. Private owner.
- Town of Sterling: Baumgartner Mound Archeological Site #47 VE-881. Added in 1993. Prehistoric late Woodland Effigy Mound. Period of Significance is 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD. Ceremonial burial site. Private owner.
- Rockton area: B. Lawrence Site I a/k/a Boy Scout Rockshelter; VE-154. Added in 1975. Prehistoric early, middle, and late Archaic, early, middle, and late Woodland. Period of significance is 5000-6999 BC, 3000-4999 BC, 1000-2999 BC, 1000 AD-999 BC, 1499-1000 AD. Conservation area and village site. Federal owned.
- City of Viroqua: Bekkedal Leaf Tobacco Warehouse a/k/a Northern Wisconsin Co-op Tobacco Pool Warehouse. Added in 2003. Historic significance is event, architecture/engineering. Built by Parkinson and Dockendorf in late Victorian style. Period of significance is 1900-1924, 1925-1949, 1950-1974. Privately owned.
- Newton area: Cade Archeological District added in 1988. Area and cultural significance is Prehistoric, Archaic, Mississippian, Woodland. Period of significance 9000-10999 BC, 7000-8999 BC, 3000-4999 BC, 3000-4999 BC, 1000-2999 BC, 500-999 BC, 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD. Camp ceremonial burial site. Privately owned.
- Stoddard area: Goose Island Archeological Site VE-502. Added in 1980. Prehistoric significance of cultural affiliation of Oneota, Middle and Upper Mississippian. Village site, now a park. Period of significance 1000-1499 BC, 500-999 BC, 499-0 AD, 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD, 1749-1500 AD. Federal owned.
- Viola area: Hanson Petroglyphs a/k/a VE-48. Added in 1974. Religion, prehistoric, Native American, art significance. Period of significance 1499-1000 AD. Federal owned. Currently conservation area, unoccupied land.
- Ontario area: Hay Valley Archeological District a/k/a VE-51. Added in 1974. Prehistoric, Paleo-Indian, Woodland, early, middle and late Archaic significance. Period of significance 1499-1000 AD. Also was village site. Federal owned agricultural fields, unoccupied land.
- Westby area: Larson Cave a/k/a Jersey Valley Rockshelter: 47 VE 637. Added in 1988. Prehistoric, art, Oneota, late prehistoric-Woodland significance. Period of 499-0 BC, 499-0 AD, 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD. Historic camp, ceremonial site, work of art sculpture, carving, rock art. Privately owned. Conservation area.
- 113 South St. Ontario: Charles Lord House a/k/a Inn at Wildcat Mountain. Added in 1998. Architecture/Engineering historic significance. Sullivan Brothers built in Classical Revival style. Period of significance is 1900-1924. Privately owned single dwelling and hotel.
- Rockton area: Markee Site a/k/a VE-195. Added in 1975. Prehistoric late Archaic, Woodland significance. Period of 6000-6499 BC, 5500-5999 BC, 5000-5499 BC. Federally owned. Historic sub-function: Animal Facility, camp, agriculture/subsistence, domestic. Current function: Landscape, Vacant/not in use, underwater.

- 116 S. Main St., Viroqua: Masonic Temple Building. Added 2000. Historic significance: Event, Architecture/Engineering. Architect, builder, or engineer: A.E. Parkinson and Bernard Dockendorf et al. Classical Revival entertainment/recreation, architecture, social history significance. Meeting Hall and theater. Period of significance 1900-1924, 1925-1949. Privately owned.
- Coon Prairie and E. Coon Prairie Rds., Westby: Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery a/k/a Country Coon Prairie Church and Coon Prairie Cemetery. Added in 1986. Architecture/Engineering historic significance. Architect, builder, or engineer: Parkinson and Dockendorff, Theodore Thorson. Late Gothic Revival style. Historic Function: Cemetery, religious structure. Period of significance is 1900-1924. Privately owned.
- Ontario: Rockton Archeological District. Added in 1974. Prehistoric early, middle and late woodland, middle and late archaic. Period of significance is 1499-1000 AD. Historic village site. Currently agriculture/subsistence, landscape, agricultural fields, unoccupied land. Privately owned.
- E4465 US Hwy. 14/61, Coon Valley: Nils Skumrsrud House a/k/a Lloyd and Ruth Thrune Cabin. Added in 1990. Historic significance is event, architecture/engineering. Builder was Nils Skumrsrud. Oldest building in Vernon County still in its original location. Period of significance: 1850-1874, 1875-1899. Museum owned by Norskedalen.
- Harmony (2 sites): Tollackson Mound Group a/k/a 47 VE 927. Added 1997 and 1998. Site #97001552 and #98001464. Prehistoric, religion, Effigy Mound Tradition, late Woodland. Period significance of 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD. Historic function of funerary, religion, ceremonial site, graves/burials. Privately owned.
- La Farge: Upper Kickapoo Valley Prehistoric Archeological District a/k/a La Farge Lake Project. Added 1999. Prehistoric significance with woodland, Paleo-Indian, Archaic cultural affiliation. Period of significance: 499-0 BC, 499-0 AD, 1000-500 AD, 1499-1000 AD, 1749-1500 AD. Historic function: Domestic, funerary, industry/processing/extraction, recreation and culture, religion, camp ceremonial site, graves/burials, manufacturing facility, village site, work of art (sculpture, carving, rock art). Current function: landscape, recreation and culture, forest, outdoor recreation.
- 401 Courthouse Square, Viroqua: Vernon County Courthouse building. Added in 1980. Historic significance: Event, architecture/engineering. Architect, builder, or engineer: Carl F. Struck. Architectural style is Gothic, late 19th and 20th Century Revivals. Also significant in Art, politics/government, architecture. Period of significance: 1875-1899, 1900-1924, 1925-1949. Owned by State (?).
- Kickapoo Center: Viola Rockshelter a/k/a 47 VE 640. Added 1987. Prehistoric significance. Late, middle and early Woodland. Privately owned. Historic camp, conservation area. Vacant.
- Main Street, Viroqua: Viroqua Downtown Historic District. (Roughly bounded by W. Court, E. Jefferson and the odd numbered 200 block of S. Main St.) Added 2003. Historic significance: Event, architecture/engineering. Architectural style of Italianate and Queen Anne. Commerce and architecture significance. Period significance 1875-1899, 1900-1924, 1925-1949, 1950-1974. Other historic function: Commerce/trade, domestic, financial institution, hotel, specialty stores.

Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory

The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI), provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society, lists historical and architectural information on properties in Wisconsin. The AHI contains data on buildings, structures, and objects that illustrate Wisconsin's unique history. The majority of properties listed are privately owned. Listed properties convey no special status, rights, or benefits. This inventory could be used by the county and its communities as another source for information on historical or architecturally important sites.

Identified below are the communities located within or partially within Vernon County and the number of AHI sites found within the respective community. A full list of AHI sites, with their descriptions, may be found by looking on the internet at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi/summary.asp> or visit the Vernon County Museum for a printed copy. There are 669 records listed as of March 26, 2009. Some on this list include the 21 National Register of Historic Places listed previously. Some of the AHI sites listed may be no longer in existence. This list should be checked for places no longer in existence. Others need to be updated and corrected.

City of Hillsboro 29
City of Viroqua 238
City of Westby 40
Village of Chaseburg 11
Village of Coon Valley 6
Village of De Soto 4
Village of Genoa 6
Village of La Farge 8
Village of Ontario 56
Village of Readstown 10
Village of Stoddard 4
Village of Viola 6
Town of Bergen 7
Town of Christiana 8
Town of Clinton 11
Town of Coon 9
Town of Forest 15
Town of Franklin 15
Town of Genoa 6
Town of Greenwood 19
Town of Hamburg 16
Town of Harmony 8
Town of Hillsboro 12
Town of Jefferson 9
Town of Kickapoo 1
Town of Liberty 1
Town of Stark 13
Town of Sterling 12
Town of Union 9
Town of Viroqua 20
Town of Webster 7
Town of Wheatland 6
Town of Whitestown 47

Museums, Monuments, and Other Attractions

Skumrsrud Heritage Farm, Town of Hamburg: Located ½ mile west of Coon Valley, WI. off US Hwy. 14/61. Outdoor Museum with more than 11 historic buildings, including the 1853 Skumrsrud Cabin. Owned and operated by Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center. It is open June 1-August 31st, Monday-Friday, 11-4 PM, Sat. 10-4 PM, Sunday 12-4 P.M. For further information call 608-452-3424.

Hillsboro Museum, Field Park on Maple Ave, Hillsboro: Museum of Hillsboro area artifacts, pioneer log cabin, rural schoolhouse, and machine shed in Hillsboro City Park. Museum open Sundays 1-4 PM, summer only, and by appointment. Home of the Hillsboro Historical Society. For further information call 608-489-3192.

Thoreson House, 101 Black River Avenue, City of Westby: Historic house and headquarters of the Westby Historical Society. Meeting house of Westby Historical Society and area artifacts. Open by appointment only. For further information call 608-634-4101.

Sherry-Butt House Museum, 795 N. Main St., Viroqua: House built in 1870 by Civil War veteran Col. Cyrus M. Butt. Victorian furnishings and Civil War artifacts throughout. Also once owned by cattle breeder Obec Sherry, owner of Jane of Vernon, and his wife Hilda. Museum owned and operated by the Vernon County Historical Society. Open Memorial Day through mid-September on Saturdays and Sundays 1-5 PM. For further information call 608-637-2998 or 608-637-7396.

Vernon County Museum, 410 S. Center Ave., Viroqua: Museum housed in historic three-story building once used for Vernon County Teacher's College a/k/a Vernon County Normal School. Built in 1918-1919. Extensive genealogy and research department for all of Vernon County information. The Museum is home of the Vernon County Historical Society and owned and operated by the Society. Summer hours – mid May to mid-September, Monday – Saturday 12-4 P.M. Winter hours: Tuesday, Wed. and Thursdays 12-4 P.M. For further information call 608-637-7396.

Foreaker School a/k/a Country School Museum, 600 block of West Broadway, Viroqua: A one-room school building built in 1889 in the Town of Liberty and moved to Viroqua in 1963. Property owned by Vernon County, managed and maintained by the Vernon County Historical Society. Elementary student classes held in May and other activities as scheduled. Open by appointment only. For further information call 608-637-7396.

Old St. Mary's Church Museum, 600 block of West Broadway, Viroqua: First Catholic Church building in Viroqua. Built in 1907. Was once used as the main Vernon County Museum. Now a church museum with artifacts of all denominations. Property owned by Vernon County, managed and maintained by the Vernon County Historical Society. Open for viewing by appointment or may be rented for meetings, weddings, baptisms and other activities. For further information call 608-637-7396.

Coon Prairie Lutheran Church and Cemetery, S2706 Coon Prairie Rd., Westby: Listed on National Register of Historic Places. It is open by appointment only. Services are held June through August on Saturdays at 7:30 P.M. For further information call 608-634-4104.

Readstown Area Historical Society Museum, 116 N. 4th St., Readstown: Located in the Municipal building of Readstown. Houses artifacts of Readstown area and is home to the Readstown Area Historical Society. Open Tuesdays, Thursdays and the second Saturday of the month 1-3:30 P.M.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve and Visitor Center, S3661 State Hwy. 131, La Farge: Located 1 ½ mile north of La Farge this is a nature reserve and visitor center with exhibit gallery featuring area history, nature and geology. Trails for hiking, mountain bikes and horseback riding. Center open Memorial Day thru October seven days a week, Monday – Saturday 8 – 4:30; Sundays and holidays 10 – 4 p.m. November thru May open Monday – Saturday 8 – 4:30 p.m.

Cheyenne Settlers Heritage Society, c/o City of Hillsboro: No buildings at this time. Contact Hillsboro City Hall or rmw@direcway.com for further information.

Black Hawk Trail Markers, along Hwy. 82, UU and Hwy. 35 in Vernon County and intersection of Hwy. 27 and Hwy. B in Crawford Co.: Seven road-side markers telling the history of the Black Hawk War of 1832 as it evolved in Vernon County. The original stones were made by C.V. Porter in the 1930's and repositioned and preserved by the Vernon County Historical Society in 1993.

Lucy Stone Marker, across from Pioneer Cemetery on Rock St. in Viroqua: On July 4, 1856, Lucy Stone delivered the first speech ever given by a woman in the great northwest on Woman's Rights and Anti-Slavery.

Liberty Pole Marker, at wayside on the outskirts of Liberty Pole on Hwy. 27: Near here in 1844, John McCulloch erected the first permanent cabin in Vernon County. In 1848, the Democratic Nomination Convention for Crawford County was also held here.

Site of Red Bird Village Marker, along Hwy. 35 North of Victory: June 28, 1827 "First Battle of The Bad Axe" was fought. The same day Red Bird killed Lip Cap and Gagnier at Prairie du Chien.

Winneshiek Landing 1820 Marker, along Hwy. 35 just North of De Soto: Winneshiek's Landing-1820-1854 is now named De Soto. Marker tells of life of Winnebago Chief Winneshiek and additional history of Village of De Soto.

Chief Win-no-shik, the Elder Marker, 2 miles North of De Soto along Hwy. 35: Biography of Chief Winneshiek, notable Chief of the Winnebago.

Battle of Bad Axe Marker, Hwy. 35, 2 miles North of De Soto: Story of the end of the Bad Axe War of 1832.

Civilian Conservation Camp Marker, Veteran's Memorial Park in Coon Valley: The first soil erosion project in the Nation started in Coon Valley in 1933. Camp #1697 was stationed on the west side of the Village in 1934. A stone marker tells the history of the camp and the work the men performed in the area. The rock-gate entrance to the CCC camp has been preserved and rebuilt in the park as a thank you to all whose efforts made the Coon Creek project successful.

Nation's First Watershed Project Wayside and Marker, along Hwy. 14 only ½ mile west of Coon Valley: Soil Erosion Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior set up Project #1 at Coon Valley in 1933.

Jeremiah Rusk Wayside Marker, along Hwy. 14/61 on North side of Viroqua: Marker is on west border of what now is the Viroqua Industrial Park, but was previously farm home of Wisconsin Governor, Jeremiah Rusk. Jeremiah Rusk was also Secretary of Agriculture and a Civil War veteran.

Admiral Marc A. Mitscher Marker, along Hwy. 33/82, 0.1 mi. West of Hillsboro: Marc Mitscher was born in Hillsboro and became Chief of Naval Operations. Marc was in service from 1910 to 1947, seeing service in WWI and WWII.

First Settlement of Viroqua Marker, along North Main St. in Viroqua: Moses Decker was the founding father of Deckerville in 1846, which is now the City of Viroqua. Marker stands across from his first house at 207 Main St.

Dams on the Mississippi Marker, along Hwy. 35 south of Genoa: Lock and Dam site #8 built in 1937. A lucky visitor may also see barges being moved through the locks and many fishermen in boats or trying their luck from the shore.

Wisconsin's First Nuclear-Fueled Generating Station, south of Lock and Dam site #8 along Hwy. 35, south of Genoa: In 1967, operated by Dairyland Power Cooperative, this reactor achieved its first self-sustaining chain reaction, which ushered Wisconsin into the nuclear age.

Cheyenne Valley and Tri-Racial Settlement Marker, Southwest corner of Hillsboro along Baraboo River: Story of large tri-racial pioneers that settled west of Hillsboro and round barn builder, Alga Shivers.

Veteran's Memorial, Veteran's Memorial Park in Coon Valley: Listing of all Coon Valley and Chaseburg area soldiers for all wars. Flags for all branches of the military services and statue of soldier are also at the memorial.

Veteran's Memorial, along Black River Ave. on North edge of Westby: Listing of all area soldiers for all wars and flags for all branches of the military service.

Veteran's Memorial, corner of Main and Terhune St. in Viroqua: Listings of all area soldiers for all wars and flags for all branches of military service.

Veteran's Memorial, along Hwy. 80 in Southwest corner of Hillsboro: Listings of all area soldiers for all wars.

Veteran's Memorial, Ontario: Listing of all area soldiers for all wars.

Veteran's Memorial, Walnut Mound Cemetery, Retreat: One large stone listing all soldiers for all wars, including War of 1812 thru World War II.

Veteran's Memorial, near City Hall in La Farge: Listing of all area soldiers for all wars.

Veteran's Memorial, City Park in Readstown: Listing of all area soldiers for all wars.

Veteran's Memorial, Viola: Listing of all area soldiers for all wars.

Star Valley Monument, Kickapoo Valley Reserve: Monument in remembrance of those buried at Star Valley Cemetery and the Star Valley School.

Veteran's Memorial, Courthouse Square, Viroqua: This is in remembrance of those who died in the military service during World War I 1918-1919, on East side of Courthouse yard.

Lest We Forget—Veteran’s Memorial, Courthouse Square, Viroqua: Memorial stone in the shape of Vernon County (standing on end).

Sheriff’s Department Monument, in front of the Vernon County Sheriff’s Office and Detention Center, 1320 Bad Axe Court, Viroqua. In remembrance of those who have lost their lives during law enforcement service of Vernon County (Bobbie Dickson 8/8/1986; Curtis Starry 3/13/1953; and Michael Cook 11/25/1976). Originally the monument was placed in front of the 1910 Vernon County Jail. It was moved when new Jail was built.

Moses Decker, First Settler of Viroqua Marker, Courthouse Square, Viroqua: Small marker commemorating the founder of the present City of Viroqua.

Grandstaff Marker, East side of Courthouse yard, Viroqua: Very small marker under a tree with only date “June 1, 1888.” This is the date of the only lynching known in Vernon County. Andrew Grandstaff was lynched by a mob for the murder of Reuben and Sarah Drake and their grandchildren, Denver and Laura Dupee.

Rustic Road R-55: 2.8 miles on Tunnelville Road connecting Hwy. 131 and Hwy. SS in Webster and Stark Townships.

Rustic Road R-56: 8.6 miles in the Town of Whitestown. Consisting of portions of Dutch Hollow Road, Sand Hill Road, Hoff Valley Road and Lower Ridge Road, south of Ontario.

Three Chimneys Rock Formation, 3 ½ miles north of Viroqua on Three Chimneys Road. Three shafts of stones rise precariously from a single base in the middle of a field/pasture.

Courthouse Rock, Eckhart Park in City of Viroqua: One of several interesting rock formations in the City Park.

Table Rock, on former Hans Peterson farm near Readstown: Table Rock is on the peak of a bluff off Hwy. M in the Town of Kickapoo. As name suggests, the rock formation looks like a five-legged table. Growth of trees and other vegetation makes the formation hard to see.

Monument Rock, southwest of Liberty Pole along Hwy. 82/27: One lone rock stands 35 or 40 feet high right next to the highway. The top of the rock is twice as wide as the bottom.

Fort Wales Rock, Northeast corner of Sec. 31 Town of Stark: This is a large flat rock, like the Buttes you would see out West. It used to be a great picnic area for people from La Farge. It is on all maps from 1896 to the present, but is no longer seen because of the trees and other vegetation grown on and around it.

Viroqua Centennial Time Capsule, near water tower in Eckhart Park, Viroqua: A receptacle containing centennial articles was closed November 19, 1946 and buried under a marker in the City Park.

WPA Projects: Established by the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Administration in 1939 to 1943 to provide jobs and income to the unemployed.

Viroqua: Pool house on Rock Street; Eckhart Park bleachers in the “Park Bowl”; and Sac and Fox Indians stealing horses during Black Hawk War painting in Post Office.

Hillsboro: City Hall at 836 Prairie Ave.

Snowflake Ski Hill on Hwy. P in Timber Coulee, Town of Christiana: A 90 meter ski hill erected in 1961 is considered to be the biggest and best ski jump in the United States. National Championship tournaments have been hosted here. A 50 meter ski hill is also on the site.

Great River Road a/k/a State Hwy. 35: Historic National and State scenic byway follows the Mississippi River the full length of the west side of Vernon County. Created in 1938, the Great River Road is 3,000 miles long and continues through ten states. A green pilot’s wheel road sign directs traffic along this beautiful stretch of highway showing nature at its best.

Vernon County Round Barns: At one time there were at least 21 centric a/k/a round barns in Vernon County. In 1996, there were only 15 left. Many built or inspired by Alga Shivers, an African-American who lived his entire life in Vernon County. As of 2009, there are now only 10 left. This is still one more than Fulton County, Indiana, the self-proclaimed “Round Barn Capital of the World.” Locations and history of the barns are in the “Round Barns of Vernon County, Wisconsin A Circle Tour” by Gail Curry Fish, Wava G. Haney, and June Zalewski Pedretti. Towns of Viroqua and Whitestown each have one, Towns of Clinton and Hillsboro each have two and Town of Forest has four.

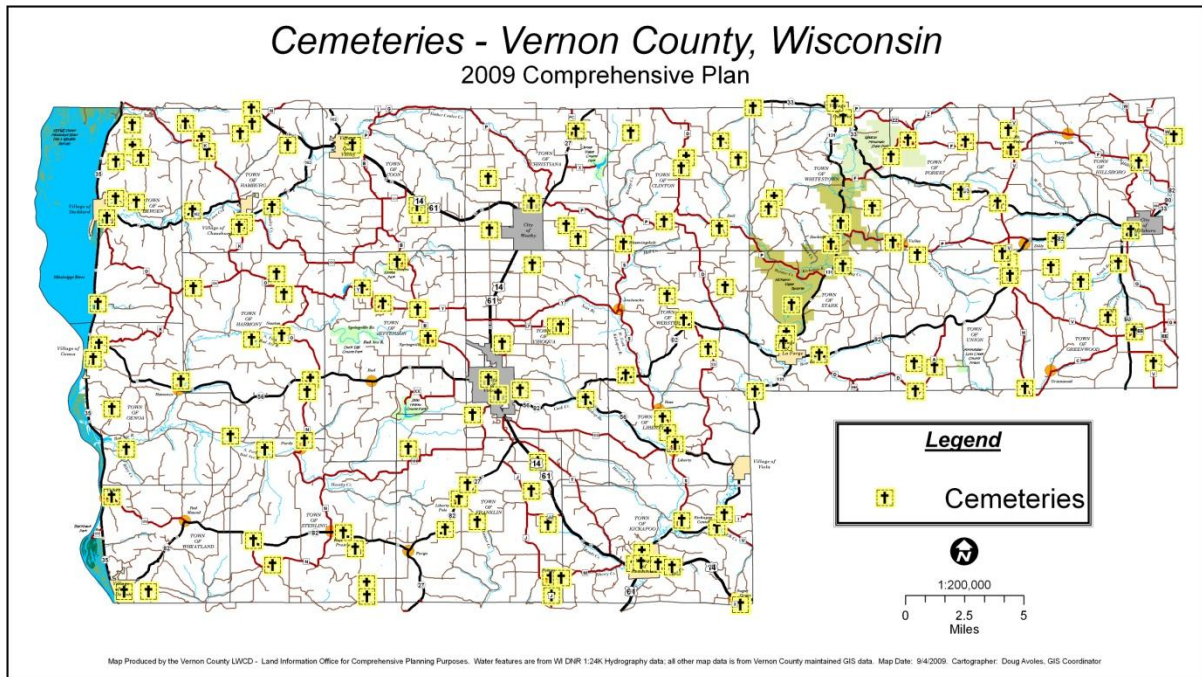
Mississippi River a/k/a Father of Waters, flows the full length of the west side of Vernon County: The Mississippi River has played an extremely important part of our county’s history from the very first inhabitants to the recreational and commercial uses of the present.

Vernon County Cemeteries and Burial Plots

Many cemeteries are known by more than one name. Only the most common name or names will be listed here. A complete list of tombstone inscription, cemetery/burial plot locations - with various names indexed and the history of the cemetery may be found at the Vernon County Museum, 410 S. Center Ave. in Viroqua. In the early years of our history, many burials were on the family farm and are no longer marked. Plots that are only a memory are not listed here, but all known burial sites may be found in the book “Vernon County Cemetery Locations and History” by Judy Mathison. Corrections and additional information is encouraged.

This is a listing of cemeteries with stones or certified by State Cemetery Association. Map 5.14.1 shows the extent of cemeteries throughout the county.

Map 5.14.1 – Cemeteries and Burial Plots within Vernon County



Town of Bergen (North)

- Mohawk Valley Road Cemetery: Along Mohawk Valley Road in Sec. 3
- Stellner Plot: In the woods on the top of the hill in Sec. 10. One stone only.
- Leisso Cemetery/ St. Johannes Cemetery: Along Chipmunk Ridge in Sec. 11.
- Brailey Plot: Private property in Sec. 15.
- German Lutheran Cemetery/ St. Mathew Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery: Along Cedar Valley Road and Sec. 22.
- Bay Cemetery: Along Proksch Coulee Road in Sec. 23. Two stones in the woods.
- Stoddard Cemetery: S.E. corner of the village of Stoddard.

Town of Bergen (South)

- Riverside Cemetery/Potter's Field: East side of Hwy. 35.

Town of Christiana

- North Coon Prairie Lutheran/Melby/Newry Cemetery: S470 Sunrise Road at Newry in Sec. 2.
- Rasmussen/Rude Plot: Along Meyer Road in Sec. 19.
- Pleasant View /Westby Methodist Church Cemetery: Along East Ridge Road in Sec. 26.
- Saugstad Cemetery/Our Savior's Lutheran Cemetery: Along Saugstad Road in Sec. 28.

- Unseth Plot/Country Cemetery: Along Hegge Road in Sec. 32.
- Bethesda Lutheran Cemetery: Along Bethesda Road in Sec. 35.

Town of Clinton

- North Clinton Cemetery/Clinton Ridge Cemetery: Along Clinton Ridge Road in Sec. 7.
- St. Patrick’s Catholic Cemetery/Bad Axe Mission Church Cemetery: Along Irish Ridge Road in Sec. 13.
- Clinton Amish Cemetery: Can be seen from Hwy. “D” in Sec. 15.
- Brody Plot: In private yard in Sec. 15, along Short Cut Road.
- Sugar Grove Methodist/ Hughes Chapel Cemetery: Along Hwy. “P” in Sec. 28.
- Bloomingdale Cemetery: On hill in the village of Bloomingdale in Sec. 31.
- Dell/Prestonville Cemetery: Along Bloomingdale Road in the village of Dell in Sec. 35.
- Clinton Cemetery: Sec. 11 along Irish Ridge Rd.

Town of Coon

- Upper Coon Valley Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along Hwy. “P” across and in back of Lutheran Church in Village of Coon Valley, Sec. 8.
- Sisbach Plot: One stone in the pasture in Sec. 26.
- Vang Lutheran Church Cemetery: Surrounding Vang Lutheran Church, Sec. 27.

Village of Coon Valley

- Upper Coon Valley Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along Hwy. “P” across and in back of Lutheran Church in Village of Coon Valley, Sec. 8.

Village of DeSoto

- De Soto Cemetery: North side of Hwy. 82, across from De Soto High School in Sec. 15.

Town of Forest

- Mt. Tabor Cemetery/ Sherman Cemetery: North of the Village of Mt. Tabor along Mount Tabor Road in Sec. 1.
- Billings Creek Cemetery/ Johnny Cake Cemetery: Along Cemetery Road in Sec. 7.
- Fairview Cemetery: Hwy. “F” in Sec. 10.
- St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery: Along Hwy. “F” in Sec. 12.
- Williams-Jones Pioneer Cemetery: No stones yet, but it is now a legal parcel #010-00405-001. Monument/stone and fence are anticipated to be installed. On hill in Sec. 18.
- Revels/ Cheyenne Valley Cemetery: On hillside along Hwy. 33 in Sec. 21.
- Burr Cemetery/Barton’s Corner Cemetery/United Brethren Church Cemetery/Forest Cemetery and Pleasant Ridge Cemetery: Along Hwy. 33 in Sec. 26.
- Valley Cemetery: On a hill west of the village of Valley in Sec. 31.

Town of Franklin (North)

- Osgood Plot: Two stones in a farmer's field in Sec. 15.
- Liberty Pole Cemetery: Large cemetery for Village of Liberty Pole area in Sec. 19 and 30.
- Brookville Cemetery: On a hillside near Hwy. 14/61 in northeast corner of Sec. 21.
- Clawwater Plot: Two small markers in Sec. 25, near Hwy. 82/27.
- Chambers Plot: Family burial plot in woods near residence along Green Acres Road in Sec. 28.

Town of Franklin (South)

- Franklin Lutheran Church Cemetery: Junction of Hwy. "M" and Hwy. "J" in Sec. 10.
- Ole Torger Cemetery/ Fortney Cemetery: Along Hwy. "M" in Sec. 15 (10?)
- North Kickapoo Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along Hwy. "J" in Sec. 15.
- Hinkst Plot: Fenced family burial ground in woods behind residence in Sec. 31.
- Amundson Plot: One stone on Vesbach farm in Sec. 34.
- Henderson Plot: On top of the hill across from Monument Rock on Hwy. 27/82 in Sec. 36.

Village of Genoa

- Hickory Hill Road Cemetery: Northeast corner of the Village of Genoa in Sec. 21.

Town of Genoa (North)

- St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Cemetery (old and new sections): South of church in Sec. 28.
- Romance Cemetery: Behind residence on Newton Road in Sec. 36, just north of the unincorporated Village of Romance.

Town of Genoa (South)

- Powell Cemetery: Near Mound Ridge Road in Sec. 4.
- St. John's German Lutheran Cemetery/Bad Axe German Cemetery Association: Along Willenberg Road, across from church in Sec. 15.

Town of Greenwood

- Shoughnessy Plot: One stone in the pasture once owned by Shoughnessy brothers in Sec. 3.
- Amish Cemetery: North side of St. John's Ave. in Sec. 6.
- St. Patrick's Cemetery: Along Kouba Valley Road on the Section 8 and 9 line.
- Shreve/Beaver/Oakwood Cemetery: On the hill between Shreve Road and Beaver Creek Dr. in Sec. 22.
- Debello Cemetery: Along Hwy. "EE" in Sec. 23.
- Greenwood Lutheran Cemetery/Wood Cemetery: Sec. 25 corner of Havlik Road and Hwy. "V"

Town of Hamburg

- Koethe/Brinkman Ridge/Methodist Cemetery: At the end of Cemetery Road at the border of La Crosse and Vernon County in Sec. 3.
- Hellwig Cemetery: Along Old Orchard Lane in Sec. 3.
- Stark Plot: Two stones in the woods at the end of Zetlow Lane in Sec. 6.
- Schnick Plot: On the hillside along Brinkman Ridge Road in Sec. 7.
- Striegel Cemetery/ Hamburg German Lutheran Cemetery: Corner of Hamburg Ridge Road and Hwy. "K" on Streigel Ridge in Sec. 8.
- Krause/Jung Cemetery: Corner of Brinkman Ridge Road and Wrobel Road in Sec. 9.
- Middle Coon Valley Lutheran Church Cemetery: West of Middle Coon Valley Church, along Hwy. 162 in Sec. 27.
- St. Peter's Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along side of church in Village of Chaseburg in Sec. 28 on Hwy. "K".
- Old Chaseburg Pioneer Cemetery: On plateau along Hwy. 162 in Village of Chaseburg in Sec. 28.
- Lower Coon Valley Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along North Stoddard Road, near Hwy. 162 in Sec. 30.
- St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery: Sec. 11 along Schlicht Rd.

Town of Harmony (North)

- Leitritz Plot: East side of Stellner Lane, 8/10 mile from Hwy. "O" in Sec. 2.
- Krause Cemetery: Along Hwy. "K" and "O" in sec. 7.
- Keim/ Amish Harmony Twsp. Cemetery: Fenced area near Hass Lane in Sec. 11.
- Baker and Huxley Cemetery: Two cemeteries together along Newton Road in Sec. 21.
- Newton Cemetery/ Old Hillside Cemetery: At the end of McKittrick Lane, off Hwy. "O" at what used to be the village of Newton in Sec. 23.
- Zion East Lutheran Church Cemetery: Along church on Hwy. 56 in Sec. 36.
- Zion West Lutheran Church Cemetery #2/Thoreson Cemetery: Along Hwy. "N" not far from the Zion Church in Sec. 36.
- Pinetree Cemetery: Sec. 9 south of Bad Axe Rd.
- Burcham/Mitchell Plot: Sec 4 northeast of Olson Rd.
- Bemis Plot: Sec. 35 east of Hwy 56

Town of Hillsboro

- Millard's Prairie Cemetery: At the border of Vernon County and Juneau County in Sec. 12.
- Hill's Prairie Methodist Cemetery: At intersection of Hwy. "F" and "WW" in Sec. 14.
- Knadle Cemetery/ Bohemian Brotherhood Cemetery: Corner of Knadle Road and Hwy. "82" in Sec. 31.
- Mount Vernon Cemetery/Hillsboro Cemetery: Southwest corner of the City of Hillsboro, along Hwy. 80 in Sec. 35.

Town of Jefferson (North)

- Bethany Lutheran Cemetery/ Esofea Cemetery: On the hillside, next to Bethany Lutheran Church along Park Road in Sec. 3.
- Frazier Plot: Several stones in the woods, near Hwy “Y” in Sec. 8.
- West Coon Prairie Cemetery: Southeast corner of junction with Hwy. “Y” and Hwy. “B” in Sec. 14.
- Bethel Cemetery: Southwest corner of junction with Hwy. “Y” and Hwy. “B” in Sec. 15.
- Asbury Methodist East Church Cemetery: Surrounding rock church along Hwy. “Y” in Sec. 16.
- Springville Cemetery: Along Randle Lane, just off Hwy. “B” in the unincorporated village of Springville in Sec. 23.

Town of Kickapoo

- Fox Cemetery/Old Readstown Cemetery: Along an abandoned railroad line, on north side of Readstown in Sec. 5.
- Carter Plot: On top of a large hill and in the woods, directly North of junction of Hwy. 14 and Hwy. 61/131 in Sec. 7.
- Readstown Cemetery: Just north of Readstown Tourist Park in village of Readstown in Sec. 8.
- Maiben Cemetery/ Day Cemetery: 3/10 mile east of Readstown, on the wooded hillside in Sec. 9.
- Day Family Burial Plot/ State Site #VE-1316, Burial #BE-0234: East of Readstown, along driveway to private residence in Sec. 9.
- Kickapoo Amish Cemetery: Along Cemetery Road, south of Hwy. 14 at Sugar Grove in Sec. 13.
- Manning Cemetery: S7098 Hwy. S, just north of Hwy. 131 in Sec. 34.
- Kickapoo Center Cemetery/ Wilder Cemetery: Along Hwy. 131, 2/10 mile north of junction with Hwy. “I” and “U” in Sec. 35.
- Barrie Plot: South of Hwy. 131, in a field at Kickapoo Center in Sec. 35.

Town of Liberty

- Mc Collough Cemetery/ Dustin Farm Cemetery: Next to field-road near bank of West Fork of Kickapoo River in Sec. 9.
- Martin Cemetery/ Oliver Farm Cemetery: In wooded area on the west bank of West Fork of Kickapoo River in Sec. 9.
- Reed Plot: One home-made stone on hillside at junction of Hwy. “S” and Hwy. 56 in Sec. 16.

Village of Ontario

- Ontario Cemetery/ Old Ontario Cemetery: On hill-top on Cemetery Street, east of Hwy. 131 in Sec. 2
- Hilltop Rest Cemetery: North side of Village of Ontario on Park St. in Sec. 3.

Town of Stark

- Jug Creek Cemetery: On hill-top on north side of Jug Creek Road in Sec. 2.
- Star Valley Cemetery: Controversial just where this cemetery was. Memorial placed at junction of Star Valley Road and Old Hwy. 131 in Sec. 17.
- Star Cemetery/Advent Church Cemetery: On hill-top at end of Corps Road, ½ mile north of Hwy. 131 in Sec. 20
- Chapel Hill Cemetery/Seeleyburg Cemetery: On northwest side of village of La Farge along Seeleyburg Road in Sec. 20.
- Bear Creek Cemetery: Along Hwy. 82, 1 mile east of La Farge in Sec. 27-28.

Town of Sterling (North)

- Bad Axe Lutheran Church Cemetery/ Purdy Cemetery: S5755B Hwy. "N", south of Hwy. 56 in Sec. 13.
- Collins Cemetery: Along Bad Axe Road, just north of the junction with Anderson Ridge Road in Sec. 15.

Town of Sterling (South)

- Call/ Fargo/West Prairie/Bunde Hill Cemetery: Located on Bundy Hill near farm residence on the corner of Call and Prairie Road in Sec. 5.
- North West Prairie Lutheran Cemetery: At junction of N.W. Prairie Ave. and Hwy. 82 in Sec. 6.
- Walnut Mound Cemetery/ Retreat Cemetery: Along Hwy. N, east of Retreat in Sec. 10.
- West Prairie Hauge Cemetery: Along Hauge Cemetery Road, 2/10 mile north of Prairie Road in Sec. 17.
- South West Prairie Cemetery: S9466 S.W. Prairie Road, near Crawford Co. line in Sec. 17.

Town of Union

- Wopat Cemetery/ Bohemian Brotherhood Cemetery: West side of Hwy. 82, across from St. John's Catholic Church and Cemetery in Sec. 11.
- St. John's Catholic Cemetery: Southeast corner of Hwy. 82 and St. John's Ave. in Sec. 12.
- Newburn Cemetery: North side of Newburn Road, 9/10 mile west of Hwy. "A" in Sec. 30.
- Vernon Cemetery: Junction of Hwy. "A" and Newburn Road in Sec. 32.
- Czech National Cemetery/ Champion Valley Cemetery: West side of Hwy. "H" at Richland County line in Sec. 36.

Town of Viroqua (North)

- Coon Prairie Lutheran Church Cemetery: South east corner of Coon Prairie Road and East Coon Prairie Road, one mile south of Westby in Sec. 4.
- Asbury Ridge (East) Cemetery/ Zion Lutheran Church (East) Cemetery: E8414 N. Asbury Road in Sec. 22.

- Old American Cemetery/ Union Methodist Cemetery: E8530 N. Asbury Road in Sec. 23.
- Vernon County Farm Cemetery/ Potter’s Field/ Poor Farm: East of Hwy. 14/61 on BB, then north on Erlandson Lane in Sec. 29.
- Pioneer Cemetery/ North Rock Street Cemetery: Corner of Rock Street and Parkinson St. in City of Viroqua in Sec. 31.
- “Putt” White Cemetery/ Telton Farm Cemetery: North side of Mahoney Road, ½ mile east of Hwy. 56 in Sec. 33.

Town of Viroqua (South)

- Bishop Ridge Cemetery/ White Cemetery: 2/10 mile east of Hwy. 82 on north side of Hwy. 56 in Sec. 1.
- Viroqua Cemetery: Southeast side of City of Viroqua at East and Hickory Street in Sec. 5.
- Belgium Ridge Cemetery: E6999 Belgium Ridge Road, near Hwy. “NN” in Sec. 7.

Town of Webster

- Salem Ridge Cemetery: East side of Salem Ridge Road, across from Faith United Methodist Church in Sec. 9 and 16.
- Brown Homestead Cemetery: End of Parr Road, off Buckeye Ridge Road in Sec. 11.
- Melvin Cemetery: West side of Salem Ridge Road in Sec. 15. No stones, but area is fenced off.
- Mt. Zion Cemetery: Hwy. “SS”, 1 ½ mile south of Hwy. 82 in Sec. 26.
- Brush Hollow Cemetery: Along Hwy. 82 at Brush Hollow Road in Sec. 31.

Town of Wheatland

- De Soto Lutheran Cemetery/ Lawrence Ridge Cemetery: S8301 Lawrence Ridge Road in Sec. 14.
- Victory Cemetery: Junction of Hwy. “UU” and Cemetery Road, 4/10 mile east of Victory in Sec. 27.

Town of Whitestown

- Brush Creek Lutheran Church Cemetery: E11765 Omlet Ave. in Sec. 6.
- Sand Hill Bethany Lutheran Cemetery: Sandhill Road, north of Hay Valley Road in Sec. 20.
- Winchell Cemetery: 1 4/10 mile east of Hwy. 131 on Winchel Valley Ave. in Sec. 25.
- Frye IV Burial Site/ STH 131 Burial Site: Southeast corner along Hwy. 131 at Kickapoo Reserve in Sec. 27. No stones or markers. Documented in Vol. 639 P. 679 of Vernon County Register of Deeds.
- Rockton Cemetery: North edge of Rockton along east side of Hwy. 131 in Sec. 34. Mill stones at the cemetery are from the old Rockton Grist Mill.

5.15 Community Design

Community design as a cultural resource helps explain the origins and history of how a given community looks, feels, and functions in the present day. Components of the origin of community design include historic settlement patterns, resource use (like mining, farming, and forestry) in rural areas, the industries and businesses that influenced urban areas, transportation features and traffic flow patterns, natural features like rivers, lakes, and wetlands, and the heritage and values of the people that lived in a community in the past and that live there today. These factors might be expressed through

street layout, building architecture, landscaping, preservation of natural features, development density, and other components of development design.

The design of a community as seen today might also be influenced by community decisions including the use of zoning and subdivision controls, the establishment of parks and other community facilities, the use of historic preservation, and in some cases, the use of land use planning. Many residents expressed support for maintaining the rural character of the county through the survey and neighborhood meeting process. Use of community design principles could assist in preservation of this intangible feature of the landscape.

Estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration show a population in the year 2000 of 28,056 people. By 2020, the population is projected to reach 32,425 residents. Research by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International's Global Footprint Network shows that, based on current lifestyles, Americans require an average of 23.7 acres per person to sustain that lifestyle with food, fiber, and fuel resource needs.³ Given those numbers, in the year 2000 Vernon County would have required 664,927 acres (Vernon County has a total land base of 507,000 acres) to be self-sustaining. Based on population projections for 2020, Vernon County would require 768,473 acres in order to sustain the needs of its residents at current consumption rates. These numbers suggest an increased dependence on imported resources within the County and individual resource needs that are unsustainable in the long term.

Sustainable local resource development should be encouraged to limit dependence on outside resources and encourage a more regional economy. Fluctuating oil prices threatening global market delivery systems may lead to a more regionally focused support network to maintain resource needs cost-effectively. In addition to lifestyle changes that may be necessary in the future as well as continued natural resource management, planning for efficient and sustainable development and delivery systems in the County may require adoption of standard policies and guidelines to encourage and ensure local resource availability within reasonable proximity to this population base.

5.16 Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Programs

The following are agricultural, natural, and cultural resource programs, agencies, and activities that are currently in use or available for use in Vernon County. The following can be used to gather further information about agricultural, natural, and cultural resources and to assist in implementation of related goals.

State Programs

Wisconsin Historical Preservation Tax Credits

One of the benefits of owning a historic property in Wisconsin is the ability to participate in federal and state income tax incentives programs for rehabilitation of historic properties. There are currently three programs available to owners of properties that are either listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the state or national registers of historic places. The three programs are:

³ WWF International, Zoological Society of London, Global Footprint Network. 2006. Living Planet Report 2006. Gland, Switzerland: WWF. Available at http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/living_planet_report/index.cfm

- Federal 20% Historic Rehabilitation Credit.
- Wisconsin 5% Supplement to Federal Historic Rehabilitation Credit.
- Wisconsin 25% Historic Rehabilitation Credit.

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Historic Preservation should be contacted for further information.

County Programs

Watershed Project Practices funded by the WDNR and WI DATCP

- Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Program
- Wisconsin Statutes (Chapter 92.10) requires each county to prepare a LWRM plan as a condition of state grants through the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). This planning process was adopted in October of 1997. It is intended to be more comprehensive by including local citizen input into the county's local natural resource management issues. This program is managed by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department.
- The Middle Kickapoo River Priority Watershed and the Hillsboro Lake Priority Watershed programs have now expired, but still requires continued conservation practice operation and maintenance by landowners.

Additional Programs

Farmland Preservation Program Conservation Compliance: This is a state mandated cross-compliance rule that requires all landowners receiving a tax credit through this program maintain cropland soil erosion rates at "tolerable" levels (as defined by NRCS technical standards). The LWCD is responsible for writing and updating conservation plans for landowners yearly. The LWCD is also required to spot check 20% to 25% of the program participants each year. This program is administered by DATCP with local administration through the county.

Animal Waste Rule NR-243: This is a DNR regulatory program that operates on a complaint-driven basis. The DNR must investigate complaints and determine if an operation is causing a significant water quality problem. If so, the DNR issues a Notice of Discharge to the landowner, which requires adoption of animal waste runoff control practices. The owner is directed to the LWCD to obtain technical assistance. The LWCD recommends the practices needed to solve the problem and will design and supervise the installation of those practices. Cost sharing is offered through DATCP.

Animal Waste Storage Ordinance: This county ordinance became effective in 1989. It is designed to prevent water pollution by requiring all new manure storage facilities or modifications to existing storage facilities be designed and built according to NRCS technical standards. A landowner is required to obtain a permit from the LWCD on all plans, and the work done must be inspected by LWCD staff prior to utilization.

Wildlife Damage and Abatement: The LWCD maintains a contract with USDA-APHISADC to provide landowner services through this program. The program deals with crop damage caused primarily by deer and geese but will offer consulting services on other nuisance species. Abatement measures are emphasized and always required as a first step. Crop damage is also reimbursed, with a deductible amount that applies.

There are numerous federal programs administered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service including the Conservation Reserve Program, EQIP, WHIP, FRPP, CSP, EWP. The Farm Service Agency provides crop subsidy payments, administers the milk program, disaster assistance, etc.

5.17 Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Trends and Outlook

Agricultural Trends

- Increased pressure to convert farmland to other uses resulting in a continued loss of farmland, particularly near cities and villages.
- Decreased interest in farmland preservation programs.
- Increased interest in specialty farming.
- Increased interest in “value-added” businesses to complement small dairy and general farming operations.
- Farmers will be retiring in greater numbers resulting in potential greater losses of farms.
- Continued economic pressure for moderately-sized farms to expand.

Natural Resources Trends

- Continuing need to site new municipal and private wells.
- Increasing pressure on groundwater quality by various land uses.
- Continuing need for improved groundwater quality and quantity data.
- Continuing pressure to develop shoreland areas.
- Increasing threat of invasion of exotic species.
- Continued pressure to alter or eliminate wetlands for commercial development, highway construction, etc.
- Continued state-level priority to protect and acquire unique natural habitats.
- Growing interest in land trusts and conservation easements for the preservation of unique natural areas.
- The price of forest land sold for recreational purposes will continue to increase.
- Continuing demand for non-metallic minerals for state, county, and local road improvement projects.
- The price of non-metallic minerals will increase with the increasing difficulty of obtaining permit approvals.

Cultural Resource Trends

- The recognized value of historic and cultural resources will grow, demanding more attention to their preservation.
- The community design features that express rural character and small town atmosphere will be increasingly challenged in areas that experience growth.
- Funding the preservation of historic sites will be a challenge.

6. Economic Development

6.1 Role of Planning and Economic Development

Economic development planning is the process by which a community organizes, analyzes, plans, and then applies its energies to the tasks of improving the economic well-being and quality of life for those in the community. This can be done by addressing issues ranging from enhancing community competitiveness, nurturing business growth and investment, establishing industrial policy, encouraging sustainable development, providing infrastructure, enhancing worker training, and improving overall quality of life.

All of these issues affect residents within a community and are addressed directly or indirectly in this comprehensive planning process. In the world of private business, planning is an essential part of a company's ability to sustain profitability, stability, and growth. This principle also applies to the administration and work of Vernon County.

The reason to plan for economic development is straight-forward: economic development helps pay the bills. It requires working together to maintain a strong economy by creating and retaining desirable jobs which provide a good standard of living for individuals. Increased personal income and wealth increase the tax base, so a community, county, or state can provide the level of services residents expect. A balanced, healthy economy is essential for community well-being.

Economic development expenditures are a community investment. They leverage new growth and redevelopment to improve the area. Influencing and investing in the process of economic development allows community members to determine future direction and guide appropriate types of development according to their values.

Successful plans for economic development acknowledge the significance of:

1. Considering community values, quality of life, and the environment in defining prosperity
2. Considering community-wide interests emphasizing self-reliance when approaching decision making, not just the interest of a small elite group
3. Thinking in terms of getting better instead of getting bigger
4. Pursuing the idea of long-term stewardship of the community resources, to ensure that the present actions don't erode the basis of future prosperity
5. Knowing the region's economic function in the global economy
6. Creating a skilled and educated workforce
7. Investing in an infrastructure for innovation
8. Creating a quality of life that is attractive for business investment and retention
9. Fostering an innovative business climate
10. Reinventing and modernizing government to increase transparency, accessibility and efficiency
11. Taking action toward regional governance and collaboration

For these reasons, it is important in the planning process to identify the county’s economic characteristics and resource base. Characteristics include: the labor force, employment/unemployment, income characteristics and employment by sector. Assessment of these characteristics provides insight into the historical and current economic situation in the county, thereby providing direction for planning the future of the economic base.

The resource base includes the economic development infrastructure that can assist in new business development, or support existing businesses to achieve their goals. The resource base also includes the existing job base and growth trends, tax environment and credit climate that can encourage innovation or squelch it.

Through the listing of these characteristics and dynamic resources a picture of the economy emerges that will provide insight into what goals and objectives will be desirable and realistic. The work of detailing these goals and an action plan will be presented in the phase II document of the comprehensive plan for Vernon County.

6.2 Labor Force and Employment Analysis

Characteristics of the Labor Force in Vernon County

Population

Details of population trends were presented in section 2.1 of this document. The trends indicate that the population in the 20-40 age group will continue to be depressed relative to older age groups. This trend of out-migration of younger working adults was reported by participants in neighborhood listening sessions (Appendix B) and will affect the labor pool available for local development. Retaining young people was a goal of many participants and economic development opportunities were seen as the key to making this shift possible. Another perspective grants that the wealth of older residents offers economic development opportunities as they age and require services.

Labor force

In April 2008, the total Vernon County civilian labor force was 15,384, of which 14,687 were employed. The unemployment rate in June 2008 was 4.6%. In June 2007 it was 5% unemployment. (from p. 2 Vernon County Profile, 2007)

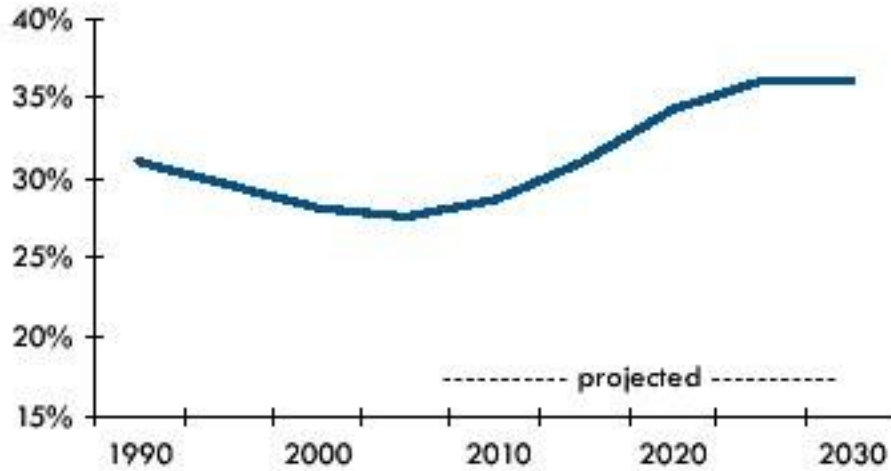
Table 6.2.1 – Historic Labor Force Data

Vernon County Civilian Labor Force Data					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Labor Force	14,843	15,248	14,708	14,293	14,560
Employed	14,058	14,449	14,008	13,637	13,865
Unemployed	785	799	700	656	695
Unemployment Rate	5.3%	5.2%	4.8%	4.6%	4.8%
Source: WI DWD, Bur. of Workforce Training, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2007					

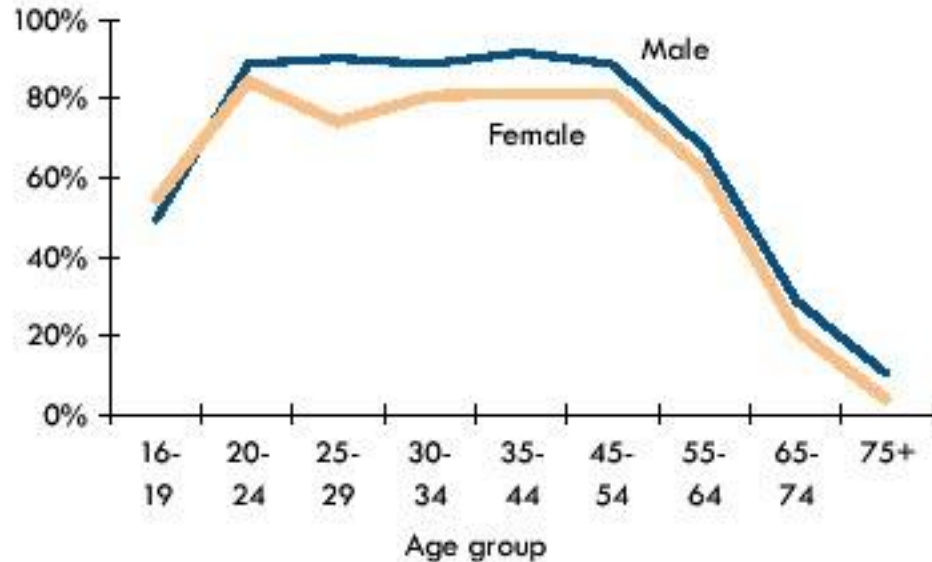
By 2020, roughly 6,460 baby boomers currently in the labor force will reduce the number of hours they work, leave their current job for self-employment or change of scenery, and eventually retire. Not only will boomers leave the workforce, but the population to replace them is diminishing. (from p. 2 Vernon County Profile, 2007)

Figures 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 - Population Dynamics

Vernon County population aged 60 years and older as a share of population aged 16 years and older



Labor force participation rates of men and women by age in 2000



Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, Demographic Services
Population estimates & projections, and Census 2000, SF3

Table 6.2.2 - Commuting Patterns of Workers

Workers aged 16 and over in Vernon Co	12,930
Resided and worked in County	8,174
% who reside and work in Vernon Co.	63.22
Number resided in Vernon and worked elsewhere	4,756
Aged 16 and over working in Vernon Co.	9,881
Resided and worked in County	8,174
Workers residing elsewhere, but working in Vernon Co.	1,707
Net Flow	-3,049 (4,756 minus 1,707)

From County-to-County Worker Flow in Wisconsin, Census 2000

Source: County to County Workflow files, U.S. Census Bureau of the Census (Prepared by Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration)

Travel time to work

Travel time to work refers to the total number of minutes that it usually took the person to get from home to work each day during the reference week. The elapsed time includes time spent waiting for public transportation, picking up passengers in carpools, and time spent in other activities related to getting to work.

Data were tabulated for workers 16 years old and over--that is, members of the Armed Forces and civilians who were at work during the reference week--who reported that they worked outside their home.

Mean travel time to work is obtained by dividing the total number of minutes by the number of workers 16 years old and over who did not work at home. Mean travel time to work is rounded to the nearest tenth of a minute.

Vernon County is 23.7 minutes and the State average is 20.8 minutes.

Unemployment rates

The table below (*from the Vernon County Profile, 2007, page 3*) shows a smaller labor force in 2006 than in 2002. The number of employed in the county in 2006, while a bit greater than in 2005, is down over 580 since 2003. Since 2002, the number of unemployed also dropped from 785 to 695; and, the county's unemployment rate declined to 4.8 percent from 5.3 percent in 2003.

The average annual unemployment rate in 2006 included a high rate of 6.7 percent in February and a low of 3.8 percent in October. The range in unemployment rates reflects seasonal changes where workers completely lose their job, especially during the winter months, but workers whose hours are reduced are still included among the employed residents. Even though these workers are still counted as employed, their annual earnings have been diminished because they work fewer hours.

Table 6.2.3 - Unemployment Rates

Vernon County Civilian Labor Force Data					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Labor Force	14,701	14,910	15,328	14,787	14,406
Employed	14,037	14,131	14,534	14,092	13,762
Unemployed	664	779	794	695	644
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	5.2%	5.2%	4.7%	4.5%

Source: WI DWD, Bur. of Workforce Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2006

Poverty rates and dynamics

In 1989 the number of people in Vernon County living in poverty was 3,970 (15.8%.) In 1999 the number was 3,918 (14.2%.) State rank is 69th out of 72 counties. Per capita income in 2004 was \$22,479 which is about 10,000 below the state per capita. Poverty rates as of 2005 are reported in the figure below (4 counties and the State of WI from the US Census Bureau, 2005 Estimates.) Children, in all units of government, stand out as those disproportionately affected by poverty and the conditions of working poor families. In Vernon County, 1 in 4 of its children live in poverty.

Table 6.2.4 - Poverty Rates in Vernon County and Surrounding Counties

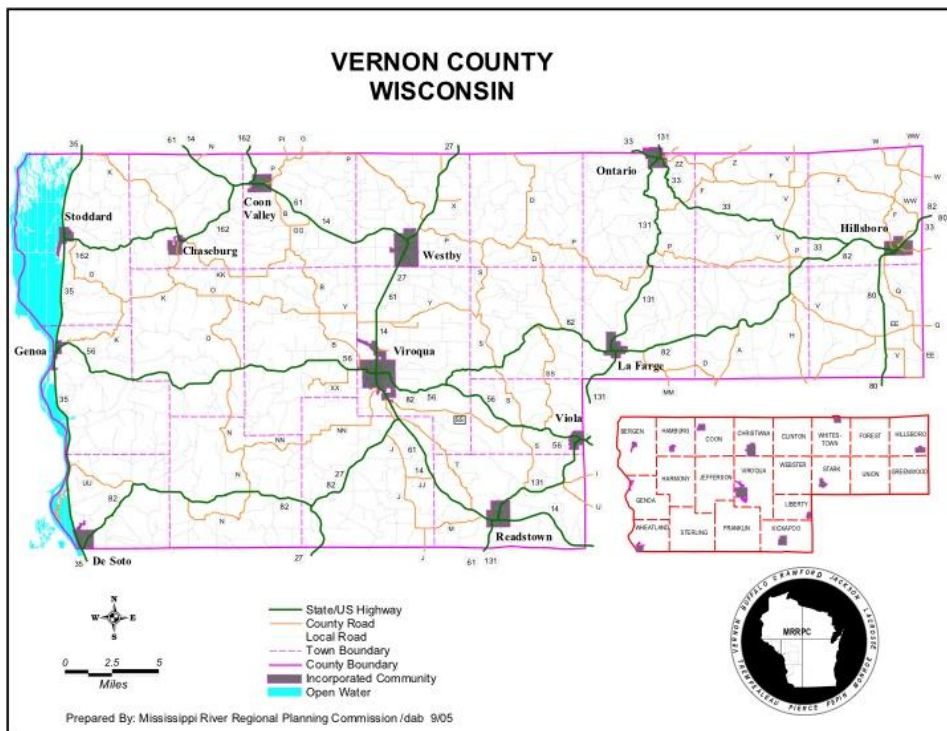
Poverty ages	Crawford	La Crosse Co	Monroe	Vernon	State of WI
All Ages (%)	1,866 (11.4)	13,026 (12.6)	4,582 (11.0)	4,494 (15.8)	547,648 (10.2)
Children under 18 (%)	614 (16.2)	2,897 (12.8)	1,838 (17.3)	1,818 (25.5)	177,768 (14.0)

6.3 Economic Development Infrastructure in Vernon County

Economic Development requires adequate support systems in transportation (highway, rail, airport) communication (telecommunications, data transfer systems) utilities (water and sewer, power), business and community programs (industrial parks, incubator programs, community revitalization and redevelopment), and education opportunities.

Transportation

Map 6.3.1 - Major Truck Routes

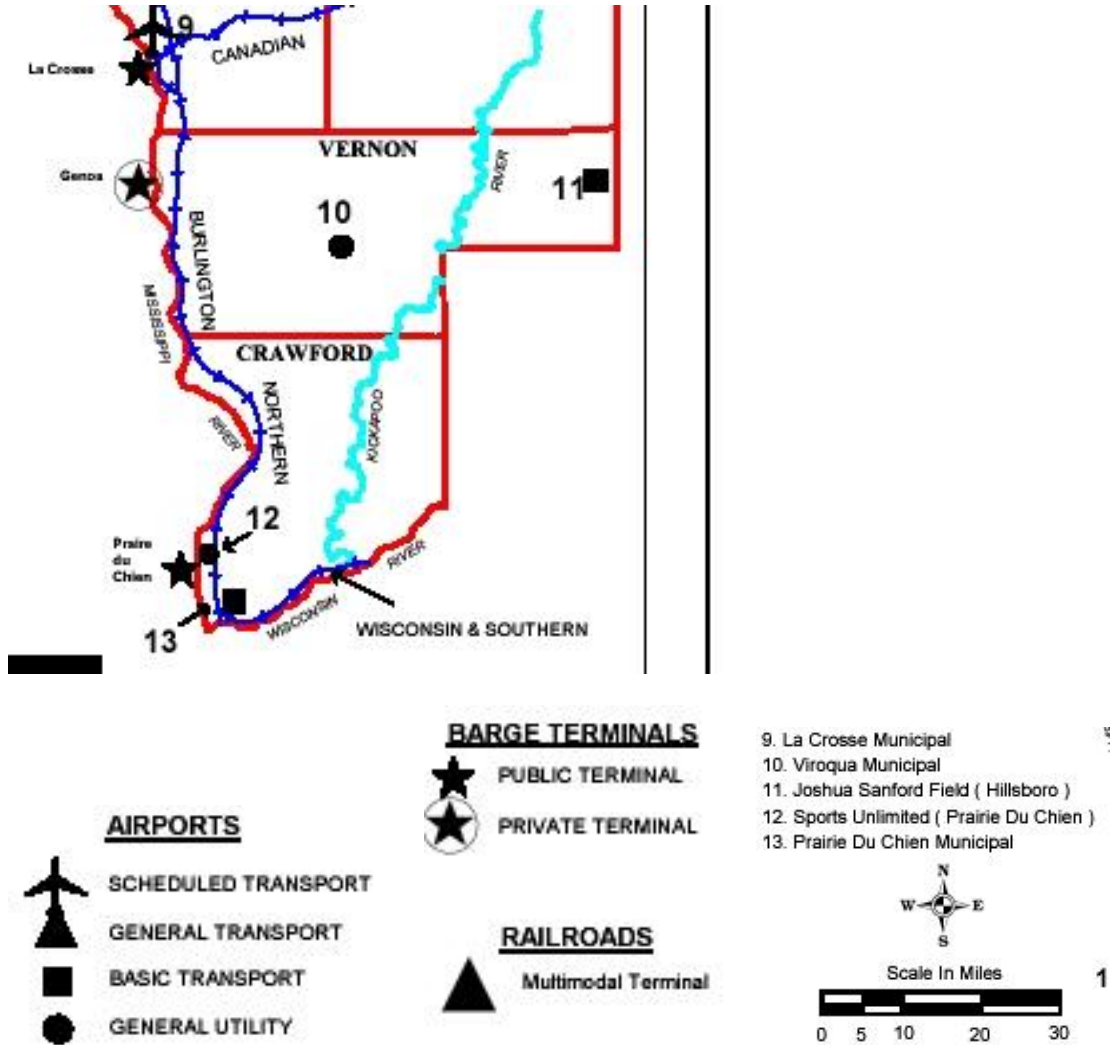


Airports, rail, shipping

AIRPORTS

Viroqua and Hillsboro have their own airports. Viroqua has a 3,500 ft. runway capable of handling twin-engine aircraft and smaller planes. Regularly scheduled air passenger service is available only 45 minutes away in La Crosse.

Figure 6.3.1 - Airports



COMMUNICATIONS AND UTILITIES

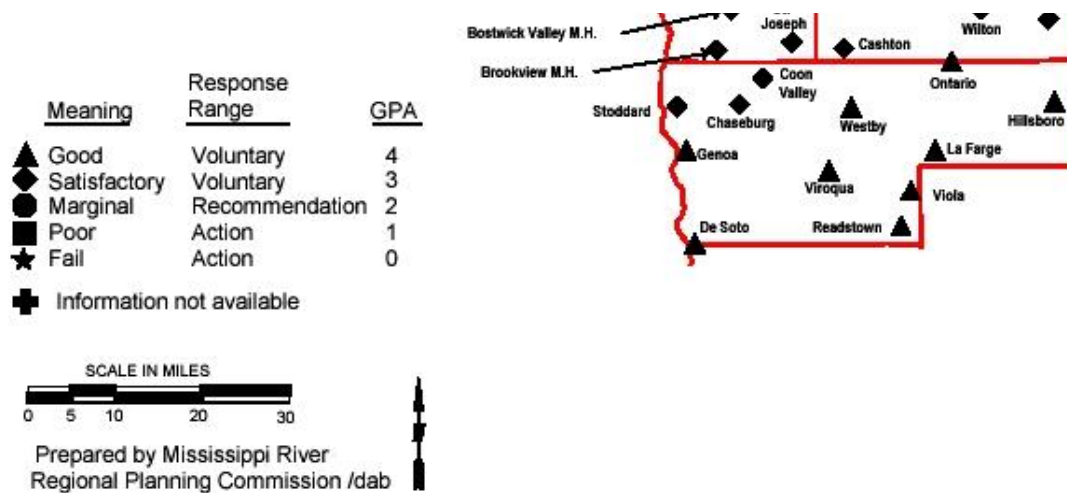
Vernon County has a tower siting ordinance. Cell phone coverage issues include the continuing “dead zones” and no plan for cellular coverage. The technology for cell phone service is not keeping pace with urban area technology that often makes visitor cell phones unusable in Vernon County.

DSL does not fully cover the county and in some areas there is only one carrier. This might pose risks for businesses dependent on Internet connectivity, but certainly makes the county less able to attract businesses that rely on robust access to the Internet.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

Municipal sewage treatment generally has excess capacity, except for Hillsboro, which is upgrading their system to be in compliance in 2009.

Figure 6.3.2 – Wastewater Treatment Facilities



Community Facilities and Support

Communities can provide services to support economic development. These business and community programs include industrial parks, incubator programs, community revitalization and redevelopment programs, professional staff to promote and assist businesses, and promotional activities for tourism.

Industrial and business park development

Coon Valley Industrial Park

Coon Valley 's Industrial Park currently has about 20 acres available to be developed out of the original 57 acres. Water and sewer are available and remaining land parcel sizes are negotiable. Current businesses include: Chaseburg Manufacturing, Industrial Heat Transfer, Krause Konstruction, Mt. Borah Designs, Star Storage and Valley Machining,

Hillsboro North Industrial Park

Hillsboro's North Industrial Park currently has about 13 acres remaining to be developed out of the original 60 acres. Convenient access is available to Hwy 80, 33 and 82. This Industrial Park is home to Whitehall Specialties, METCO, Posture Correction Tools, Champion House and Verbsky Properties.

Hillsboro South Industrial Park

Hillsboro's South Industrial Park is currently full, but additional adjacent land may become available in the future. This Industrial Park is home to Kouba Well Drilling, Kouba Financial Services, Hillsboro Cement Products, Syntec, Prairie Ready Mix, and Slama Farms.

Viola Industrial Park

Viola's Industrial Park has complete infrastructure with paved streets, water, sewer and immediate access to Hwy 131 South. Currently there are 3 acres available to be developed from the original 9, with potential of more parcels from a private land owner. Existing businesses include a wood pellet factory, a furniture carpentry business, storage units and Kickapoo Biofuels.

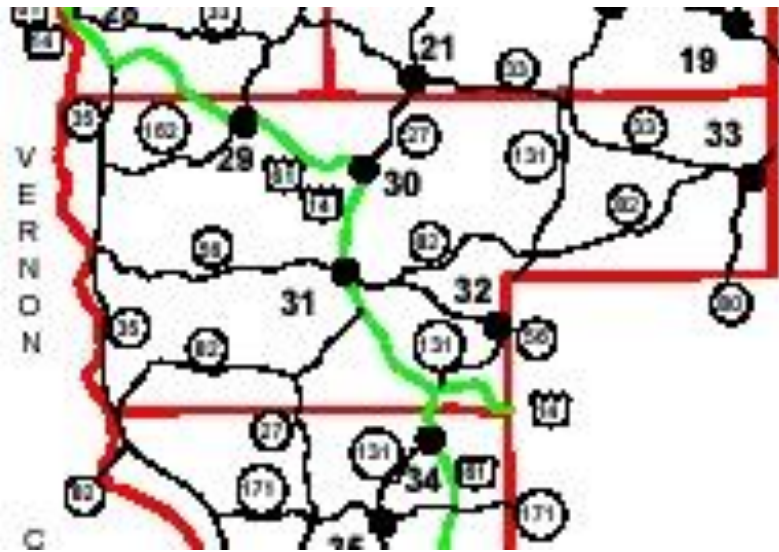
Viroqua Industrial Park

The city-owned industrial park has 24 acres available out of the original 107 for development. Water, sewer, and electric service are installed to the property line and the streets are paved. Businesses in the park include: Animal Tracks, Elegant Stone Products, GandF Distributors, Key Ingredients, Cummins Emission Solutions, Olsen Mill, Toman Tool, Sleepy Hollow Auto, Vernon County Humane Society, VARC, Wal-Mart, and the grounds for Wild West Days.

Westby Industrial Park

Westby's Industrial Park of 80 acres has all utilities available to all lots and convenient access to Hwy 14 and 27. It is currently full with the following businesses: Badger Environmental, Christiana/Westby Townships Fire Station, DHIA Milk Testing, Dollar General, George's Auto Shop, GM Rentals, Hanson's IGA, Heartland Co-op Grain Drying, Iverson Woodworking Shop, Leer Wood Industries Sawmill, Mark Tainter Woodworking and Taxidermy, Midwest Fuels, ORC Industries, River City Ready Mix, Taylor Made Rentals, Von-Ruden Flooring, Westby Car Wash and Westby Co-op Credit Union.

Map 6.3.2 - Industrial Parks



KEY

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 - Prescott (2 sites) | 20 - Wilton (2 sites) |
| 2 - River Falls (2 sites) | 21 - Cashton (3 sites) |
| 3 - Ellsworth (2 sites) | 22 - Sparta (2 sites) |
| 4 - Elmwood | 23 - Bangor |
| 5 - Spring Valley | 24 - Holland |
| 6 - T. River Falls | 25 - West Salem (2 sites) |
| 7 - Pepin | 26 - Holmen (4 sites) |
| 8 - Alma | 27 - Onalaska (2 sites) |
| 9 - Mondovi | 28 - La Crosse (5 sites) |
| 10 - Osseo (3 sites) | 29 - Coon Valley |
| 11 - Whitehall (2 sites) | 30 - Westby |
| 12 - Independence | 31 - Viroqua (2 sites) |
| 13 - Arcadia | 32 - Viola |
| 14 - Blair | 33 - Hillsboro |
| 15 - Galesville | 34 - Soldiers Grove |
| 16 - Black River Falls | 35 - Gays Mills |
| 17 - Taylor | 36 - Wauszeka |
| 18 - Tomah (3 sites) | 37 - Prairie Du Chien (3 sites) |
| 19 - Kendall | |



SCALE IN MILES



Prepared by Mississippi River
Regional Planning Commission /dab

6.4 Economic Development Programs

Organizations that assist with Economic/Business Development

Hillsboro Community Development Authority

The Hillsboro Community Development Authority (CDA) is funded to help new business thrive in the City of Hillsboro. The CDA currently owns several properties in the City, including two low-income housing developments, a main street business location that is used as a business incubator, and vacant land where spec building may be erected for promising new businesses that wish to locate in Hillsboro. The CDA is also actively involved with local lending institutions and City Hall to encourage business development in Hillsboro.

Viroqua Partners

The Viroqua Revitalization Association was formed in 1989 to improve the business district and community life. In August of 1989, Viroqua was honorably chosen as a Wisconsin Main Street City. On January 1, 1995, the Viroqua Revitalization Association and the Viroqua Chamber of Commerce joined forces and merged into one organization, The Viroqua Chamber ~ A Main Street City, also known as the Viroqua Partners.

The Viroqua Partners is an organization whose goal is to enhance the quality of life of all citizens. The key to the success of Viroqua's Main Street Program is its integration of four areas into a practical city management strategy known as the "Four-Point Approach." Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring combine to work with both the public and private sectors to upgrade the quality of services and variety of goods offered in the Viroqua area. It also works to encourage further growth and economic development of the entire community by promoting industrial development, tourism, and cooperation with agriculture.

Vernon Economic Development Association

Vernon Economic Development Association is an organization that strives to support businesses and help cultivate the conditions for new businesses to locate here. The director provides technical assistance and educational opportunities to county units of government and businesses. The director networks across organizations toward the common goal of increased economic activity and success.

Programs to Support Business Development

STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESS:

- Tax Increment Financing
- Western Wisconsin Technology Zone (Tax Credits)
- Vernon County Revolving Loan Fund
- USDA 2% Loan Pool (Façade Program)
- Beginning Farmer Program
- USDA Farm Loan Program
- Hillsboro City Revolving Loan Fund
- Viroqua Main Street Loan Pool (Facade Program)
- Industrial Revenue Bonds

PROGRAMS TO RETAIN AND GROW EXISTING BUSINESSES

- The Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club – Monthly meetings provide opportunities to help creative people explore their ideas and turn them into a product or business through peer networking, access to resources and topical speakers. Within the past decade, economists and development practitioners have recognized the increasing importance of fostering a ‘creative culture’ to foster job and economic growth. Entrepreneurs thrive in areas that encourage creativity, adaptability, and where they have access to the resources they need to get started or grow their business.
- Entrepreneur educational services (what it takes to start a business) – There are many services to help start or grow a business, but it can be confusing to walk through the maze. Vernon Economic Development Association provides one-to-one counseling and connects entrepreneurs to resources such as: Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Rural Development, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development, Couleecap Job and Business Program, Small Business Administration, Wisconsin Entrepreneurs Network, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, Inventors and Entrepreneurs Clubs across Wisconsin.
- Financial and loan assistance programs available –Badgerland Financial, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission and Couleecap, Tax Increment Financing districts (more details in Tax and Credit section), financial institutions, angel investors and venture capitalists. Vernon Economic Development Association can connect entrepreneurs to these resources.
- Vernon County currently has five Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs available to assist businesses with start-ups or expansions. Two RLF programs are administered through the county RLF committee, two are available through Couleecap Community Action and one is through the CMV fund of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. Two of the RLFs are loans specific to flood recovery assistance. The other three are low-interest loans and eligibility is based on the number of jobs created. More information about these programs can be obtained from the Vernon Economic Development Association office.
- The Western Wisconsin Technology Zone was designated by the State of Wisconsin on June 25, 2002 to support the development of high technology businesses. The seven counties that make up the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone are Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon. The State has granted \$5 million in state tax credits to this seven-county zone for use by expanding high technology businesses.
- General business assistance and informational support post start up - Vernon Economic Development Association provides one-to-one counseling in Vernon County. SCORE and UW-La Crosse Small Business Development Center are located in La Crosse. It would be helpful to have a business mentoring service like SCORE available in Vernon County.
- Viroqua Development Association (VDA) is a private, non-profit corporation that works closely with the city and financing institutions to recruit industry to Viroqua. They offer assistance to local businesses in need of expansion and attractive incentives, flexible development plans, and competitive land prices to those looking to relocate to Viroqua’s Industrial Park. The VDA, Inc., and the City of Viroqua actively seek new industry and are willing to offer their assistance.

Promotion of Tourism

- Vernon County Tourism Council
- Hidden Valleys Regional Tourism
- Kickapoo Valley Association, Inc.
- Mississippi River Parkway Commission
- Vernon County Board’s Tourism Committee
- Vernon Trails, Inc.
- La Farge Tourist Information
- Kickapoo Reserve
- Viroqua Chamber of Commerce/Main Street/Viroqua Partners
- Westby Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Information Center
- Hill Country Chamber of Commerce
- Hillsboro Economic Revitalization Organization (HERO)

Quality of Life

We have an abundance of attributes that contribute to the quality of life in this region. The goal is to strengthen and support the existing systems and to develop other methods to provide for unmet needs, currently and into the future.

Community Services

In the category of community services we have a variety of health care providers (alternative and traditional), law enforcement services, emergency services (fire/ambulance), education (public/private; pre-k thru college grad degrees), public libraries (including free internet services), county meal sites, temporary emergency shelters.

Education

Vernon County is unique in its diversity of schooling opportunities at the K-12 and technical school level. It is near to 4-year university opportunities offered in La Crosse and a two-year UW campus in Richland Center. A full tabulation of schools in the county is presented in the Utilities and Community Facilities section of this plan. Private schooling options are many for a rural setting and within this designation is homeschooling that is an increasingly popular option for families.

The diversity of school options is good, but our K-12 schools are challenged with daunting budget shortfalls and face continued decrease in variety of courses of study offered. Western Technical College is also experiencing tight budgets. Their ability to expand areas of study is adversely affected by budget constraints. These shortfalls are problematic in two ways—one is the decrease in workforce preparedness for the county, and also a reduction of a Quality of Life feature that helps to encourage businesses and talented people to relocate here, or to be retained. As we go forward partnerships will play an important role in expanding educational opportunities.

Housing

Housing that meets the basic human need for shelter is an important ingredient for high quality of life. In general, communities need a variety of housing options to meet the housing needs of all of its citizens. Housing options include emergency shelters, transitional housing units, rental units, and home ownership. Every community should include the following:

- Housing that is economically affordable for all economic levels.
- Housing that serves the diverse needs of our population including persons with disabilities and older citizens.
- Maintained in good physical condition (decent, sanitary and safe.)
- A commitment to inclusiveness, appreciation of diversity, and a sense of community.

In general, housing is affordable if the total cost, including rent or mortgage, property taxes, insurance and utilities does not exceed 30% of a family's gross income. Affordability is affected by family size. In addition, housing that is affordable for moderate and low income families is simple, in decent physical condition and affordable, meaning it has modest features, and minimal luxuries.

Part of our Quality of Life depends on our working families being able to afford housing. Also, families will be better able to retain their housing if maintenance costs are reasonable, the house is energy efficient, and the family has good financial literacy skills. It is difficult for a business to move to this county or expand their business significantly if their potential employees cannot find adequate, affordable housing options. Housing prices, both rental and home ownership, are out-pacing the wages of working people in our community. It is increasingly difficult for lower wage earners to afford housing. Service workers, nurses, teachers, police officers also find it increasingly difficult to afford housing in the communities they serve.

Natural Resources

Vernon County is unique in its location in the unglaciated (Driftless) region of Wisconsin that is characterized by steep topography and spring-fed trout streams in the valleys. We have the Mississippi River to the west that offers a fish and wildlife refuge as well as water sport opportunities. Our area is rich in parks (including city, village, county, state and the Kickapoo Reserve), green spaces, forested areas, productive agricultural lands. Maps of these facilities are in the Utilities and Community Facilities, and Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resource sections of this plan.

Vernon County maintains a large list of supporting systems: roadways (state, county, city, town) for adequate transportation; taxi services, bus routes, hiking trails, bike trails, snowmobile trails, cross-country ski trails (several on area golf courses), historic trails (ex: Bad Axe) county and state historic sites and historic markers. There is also a network of services that include telecommunication services, local newspapers, local radio stations, delivery routes for goods/services in un-incorporated areas and incorporated areas in the county. Maps of these facilities can be found in the Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resource section and Utilities and Community Facilities section of this plan.

Cultural Activities

We have a great number of artisans/artists per capita which creates a critical mass to support studios and shops for producers to work and display their creations for sale. We have Amish crafts available locally. There are abundant community events and organizations that focus on cultural activities such as art shows, concerts, theatre productions, and educational presentations that inform the public on issues of concern.

Other Unique Resources

Other community resources are unique to the rural setting in the county. This includes numerous cooperatives where members vote on issues affecting the membership and own shares in the cooperative (a list follows), county fairs, community festivals, farmers' markets, sportsmen's clubs, civic and religious organizations that provide community services and assist in times of natural disasters are many. Local organic production provides the critical amount needed for economic success and this provides county citizens access to locally produced food.

Table 6.4.1 – Cooperatives in Vernon County

Cooperative Name	Address
Accelerated Genetics	828 South Main Street, Westby, WI 54667
Organic Valley (C.R.O.P.P. Coop Inc)	1 Organic Way, La Farge, WI 54639
Chaseburg Farmers Union Coop	113 Cactus Dr, P.O. Box 46, Chaseburg, WI
Farm Credit Services (FCS)	P.O. Box 111, Viroqua, WI 54665
Hamburg-Stark Mutual Insurance Company	P.O. Box 369, Coon Valley, WI 54623
Heartland Country Coop	405 South Main Street, Westby, WI 54667
Hillsboro Farmers Cooperative	Warehouse, P.O. Box 429, Hillsboro, WI
Vernon Coop Oil	P.O. Box 26, Viroqua, WI 54665
Vernon County Farmers Union	E4756 CTY KK, Chaseburg, WI 54667
Vernon Electric Cooperative	110 North Main Street, Westby, WI 54665
Vernon Telephone Cooperative	103 North Main Street, Westby, WI 54667
Vernon-Crawford Coop DHIA	P.O. Box 130, Westby, WI 54667
Viroqua Food CO-OP	609 North Main Street, Viroqua, WI 54667
Westby Coop Credit Union	P.O. Box 70, Westby, WI 54667
Westby Coop-Creamery	401 South Main Street, Westby, WI 54667
Wisconsin Farmers Union	117 W. Spring Street, Chippewa Falls, WI

6.5 Economic Base Analysis

Jobs

The inability of the county to retain young workers and attract young families is in part due to the lack of family-supporting jobs. Wages in the county are lower than other parts of the state for comparable work, and the number of jobs that include benefits lag behind more economically active parts of the state and country. The highest wages are in the areas of management, engineering, health care, education, social services and most of these sectors should see an increase in numbers as the present generation ages and retirees continue to relocate in the county. The need for services will expand and job opportunities should emerge in these sectors.

These jobs typically need some level of higher education post-secondary, and making these opportunities available in a cost-effective way will be key to having a ready workforce to meet the needs of this development and growth. Coordination between high school programs, the Western Technical College and local universities will help in providing citizens with training for a living wage job of the future.

Jobs in farming and tourism are an important part of the economy but provide more seasonal, low-wage work than living wage employment. A UW Extension publication “Vernon County Agriculture: Value and Economic Impact” identifies that the Agriculture sector as a whole (with multiplier effects) provides 27% of the jobs for the workforce, but only accounts for 16% of the income for the county. Since the publication of that pamphlet, the Department of Commerce figures (2006) estimate that about 19% of Vernon County’s workforce is in the farming sector. Technical services to the agriculture and tourism sectors and manufacture of value-added products will continue to help make these sectors of the economy more stable, attain higher wages and provide a positive impact on the economy of the county.

The county has abundant wood resources that could be developed into businesses with high paying jobs if there were investment in processing and transportation infrastructure. In 2000 State-wide and regional planning efforts were targeting southwestern Wisconsin for development of a pulp mill industry to fill the need for paper production and use of small diameter forest resources. (pg. 15 “Building The Region’s Knowledge Based Industry Clusters” MMRPC, 2001) A UW-Madison study identified the lack of pulp wood processors in Crawford County as the reason small-diameter wood was not used by forest harvesters. (Small-Diameter Timber Utilization in Wisconsin: A Case Study of Four Counties (2006) by Scott A. Bowe, Department of Forest Ecology and Management, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706-1598; and Matthew S. Baumgartner, Northeastern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, Princeton, WV) Making use of this underutilized resource with state of the art non-polluting processing and wise forest management could be a boost to the job market and economy.

Economic Impact

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) began investigating the industry clusters in its nine-county region in 2001. Its research concluded that the top five economic sectors among the nine counties were: (1) Services—\$1.02 billion, (2) Government— \$882 million, (3) Manufacturing—\$881 million, (4) Retail—\$458 million and (5) Transportation- \$330 million. The sectors of the economy that were reporting the most jobs were: (1) Services—44,586 jobs, (2) Retail—32,771 jobs, (3) Government— 26,270 jobs, (4) Manufacturing—26,164 jobs, and (5) Farm Employment—14,877 jobs. They determined that annual wages of the top sectors for the whole region in 2000 were: (1)

Transportation with an average annual wage per job of \$37,011, (2) Government with an average annual wage per job of \$31,745, (3) Wholesale with an average annual wage per job of \$31,073, (4) Construction with an average annual wage per job of \$31,042 and (5) Manufacturing with an average annual wage per employee of \$30,405.

Of these sectors, Manufacturing (17% of Vernon County jobs in 2000) has been determined to be more likely to attract capital from outside the region, hire knowledge based workers, pay health and retirement benefits, have a stronger ripple (multiplier) effect on the other sectors of the economy and is more likely to make investments in research and development. This makes it a key sector and one they further subdivided for analysis. Specific types of manufacturers in the region were then analyzed using the North American Standard Industry Classification System (NAICS).

The leading Manufacturing industry clusters in the region are:

- Wood Product Manufacturing—65 establishments
- Food Manufacturing—62 establishments
- Fabricated Metal Manufacturing— 51 establishments
- Machinery Manufacturing— 45 establishments

Of interest is the presence of Group 33 industries:

- 331- Primary Metal Manufacturing;
- 332-Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing;
- 333-Machinery Manufacturing;
- 334-Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing;
- 335-Electronic Equipment, Appliance and Component Manufacturing; and
- 336-Transportation Equipment Manufacturing.

These industries all have a strong attraction and interdependence on one another from which industry cluster/regional economic development initiatives can be based. This cluster of manufacturers also is commonly associated with using high technology in their manufacturing processes through automation and creating high wage-knowledge based jobs that stay in the region and are less likely to move to low-wage labor market areas.

According to the UW Extension pamphlet, Vernon County agriculture generates \$224.2 million in economic activity, accounting for 25.2 percent of Vernon County's total economic activity. Newer (2006) Department of Commerce figures estimate that there are about 19% of Vernon County jobs in the farming sector.

Environmental Impact

Growth in the local economy in all sectors that increases the availability of living wage jobs and protection of the environment often seem to be in conflict. The good news in this picture is that the better paying jobs and demographic trends indicate that the growing opportunities will be in economic sectors that do not impact the environment. Medical, Education and Government sectors pay well, usually provide benefits and will be a growing area of our economy. Making use of the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone designation could enhance the county's high tech infrastructure and provide clean industry that will provide high paying jobs.

Many of the jobs in the agricultural sector provide lower wages and less stable work, but the value-added manufacturing of food products and better use of underutilized byproducts could be a driver for higher wages and better working conditions.

Tourism also provides lower wage and seasonal work, but brings in dollars from outside the community that are re-circulated locally in a multiplier effect. Tourism does highlight and support local value added agricultural infrastructure. It also provides the rationale for protecting our natural resources for this use and future generations. The rise of eco-tourism and agro-tourism as a strategy for bringing in greater numbers of people from urban areas also motivates county residents to have a proactive approach to natural resource protection.

Protection of the resource base also provides the quality of life that will attract highly skilled workers from other places, and will motivate the youth of the area to return after completing their higher education.

6.6 Economic Development Trends and Outlook

Trends in Growth of Important Economic Sectors

Health, Education, Government, and Utilities are the foundation of higher paying jobs and have a bright future for growth. Manufacturing could be very successful if paired with high tech and knowledge-based workforce. Tourism will continue to bring in dollars from other regions and better promotion, and “destination identity” could make this an increasing part of the activity in the economy of the county. Agriculture is the major land use and culturally a foundation of the county’s image. Organic agricultural production is increasing, and Vernon County has the most organic farms in the State of Wisconsin. This niche as well as the movement to value-added products, and the need for technical assistance on-farm, will keep this a positive in terms of job quality and wages.

All of these developments and trends require a more educated workforce to meet the needs of those with businesses who wish to locate in the county or expand their product base or services.

Tax and Credit Environment at State and Local Levels

Bonds

Municipalities generally offer bonds to creditors as security for loans. Three typical types of bonds are:

1. General Obligation (GO) Bonds
2. Special Assessment Bonds
3. Revenue Bonds

General Obligation Bonds: Wisconsin municipalities can pledge up to 5% of the assessed value of the real estate within their geographic boundaries and secure the loan with GO bonds. The maximum term for GO debt is 20 years. Credit sources can range from individuals to State and/or Federal Agencies to local credit sources to Wall Street bond markets. GO bonds are the most secure bonds a municipality can offer. Loans can be made for any purpose, from vehicles to furniture to buildings.

Special Assessment Bonds: These bonds are secured by the real estate of the owner for improvements made to the property by the municipality. Wisconsin statutes have very specific hearing and notice requirements in order for the assessment to be placed on the owner’s property. Loan terms are typically 20 years, but can vary. Owners can pay assessments at any time, but must be paid per the levied assessment. Collateral for the bond is the owner’s real estate.

Revenue Bonds: Here the municipality pledges the revenues generated by an entity/utility to pay back the obligation created by the revenue bond. The revenue bonds are tied to a municipality’s revenue producing entity. Typically revenue bonds are utilized to finance water and wastewater utilities. The revenues generated via utility bills pay for all operating expenses, fund reserve account requirements, and pay the principle and interest required by the bond.

TIF DISTRICT IMPACTS/BENEFITS

It is a common assumption and operating procedure that the use of Tax Increment Financing is an upfront expense to the tax base, but will yield long-term benefits from the improvements that are put into place that would not be possible without the incentive. The following table provides a summary of the impact of TIDs within Vernon County.

Table 6.6.1 – Summary of the Impact of TIDs in Vernon County

Municipality	Base Year (BY)	BY EQ Value	Current EQ Val.	Added Val.
1 Coon Valley	1987	607,300	2,462,600	1,855,300
2 Coon Valley	1996	57,700	2,214,900	2,157,200
DeSoto 1	2001	161,700	273,900	112,200
DeSoto	2001	340,200	502,600	162,400
Hillsboro 2	1993	483,600	10,937,600	10,454,000
Hillsboro 3	1993	269,500	778,500	509,000
Hillsboro 4	1998	2,715,800	7,480,000	4,764,200
Ontario 1	1998	486,500	2,201,800	1,715,300
Viola 1	1983	42,600	188,600	146,000
Viola 2	2006	660,900	1,001,500	340,600
Viroqua 2	1994	355,500	1,188,800	833,300
Viroqua 3	1995	1,668,300	10,015,100	8,346,800
Viroqua 4	1999	293,000	3,388,600	3,095,600
Viroqua 5	2007	279,600	256,600	279,600
Westby 1	1990	86,200	6,559,100	6,472,900
Westby 2	2007	6,109,100	7,375,300	1,266,200

Hillsboro City #1 Equalized Value at Termination was 3,986,700 and Base Year Equalized Value was 838,500. Viroqua #1 Equalized Value at Termination was 9,298,200 and Base Year Equalized Value was 2,886,200.

NEWEST VALUATION OF TAX BASE

There have been wide shifts in the valuation of the tax base in Vernon County. Below is a table highlighting some of the largest positive gains and negative losses. The gains generally happened along the Mississippi River or close to La Crosse, and the losses are often in areas struck by the past years' flooding.

Table 6.6.2 – Valuation of Vernon County Tax Base

UNIT OF GOVERNMENT	EQ VAL 2009	EQ VAL 2008	% CHANGE
TWN KICKAPOO	868,748	587,122	47.97%
VILLAGE COON VALLEY	37.3 MIL	32.3 MIL	15.5%
VILLAGE STODDARD	43.7 MIL	38.4 MIL	13.4%
VILLAGE DESOTO	16.5 MIL	14.6 MIL	12.9%
TWN STARK	28.9 MIL	26.3 MIL	9.6%
TWN COON	58.1 MIL	52.2 MIL	9.4%

UNIT OF GOVERNMENT	EQ VAL 2009	EQ VAL 2008	% CHANGE
TWN GREENWOOD	35.5 MIL	36.3 MIL	-2.4%
VILLAGE CHASEBURG	12.3 MIL	12.6 MIL	-2.6%
CITY WESTBY	94.3 MIL	99.1 MIL	-4.9%
CITY HILLSBORO	43.9 MIL	47.8 MIL	-8.15%
VILLAGE LAFARGE	21.2 MIL	23.1 MIL	-8.3%

Credit Environment for Businesses

Given the credit contraction and fiscal uncertainties in the economy at the end of 2008, it is difficult to predict the near-term effects of this disruption. Anecdotal discussions with lenders indicate that our local credit system is robust, and loans are available for those with a worthy business plan. In general and historically, lender attitudes have been supportive of new and expanding businesses. This plan assumes on a 20 year time-scale this will continue to be the operating procedures of local lending institutions.

6.7 Conclusion

Vernon County has many assets to drive regional economic development. As we pursue better and more plentiful jobs, we also realize there are assets to preserve in the process. In our rural circumstance, economic development will often be driven by knowledge resources. These intangibles provide the basis behind sustainability--our ability to provide a higher value that will produce more with less. This also provides the pool of entrepreneurs who take on risk to bring innovations to the marketplace. We need the best trained workforce and best schools to support this kind of development in the community.

The county also must establish leadership that stimulates regional cooperation and collaboration. The county needs to position itself to effectively act when resources are available at the state or federal level. The county also can play a role in creating a strong business climate that supports entrepreneurship and increases access to capital. The county needs to continue work to provide appropriate infrastructure and services, increase the number of educated and professional workers, and maintain a quality of life that enhances the economic well-being of our region.

Phase II of the plan will detail an action plan toward goals for economic development in the county. It will focus on strength in diversity, a need for sustainability and a critical examination of where the logical locus of control needs to be for implementation.

7. Intergovernmental Cooperation

In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communicating and sharing information, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. It can even involve consolidating services, jurisdictions, or transferring territory. Many issues cross jurisdictional boundaries, affecting more than one community. For example, air, water, and wildlife pass over the landscape regardless of boundaries so that one jurisdiction's activities with regard to air, water, and wildlife impact other jurisdictions downwind or downstream.

Today, increased communication technologies and personal mobility mean that people, money, and resources also move across jurisdictions, as quickly and freely as air and water. Persons travelling along roadways use a network of transportation routes, moving between jurisdictions without even realizing it. Frequently, the action of one governmental unit impacts others. Increasingly, we have come to the realization that many vital issues are regional in nature. Watersheds, economic conditions, commuter patterns, housing, media markets, and effects from growth and change are all issues that spill over municipal boundaries and impact the region as a whole. Communities are not islands.

Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts defined as follows:

- 72 counties
- 190 cities
- 395 villages
- 1,265 towns
- 426 school districts
- 16 technical college districts
- Sanitary districts, drainage districts, lake protection districts, metropolitan sewage districts, etc.

Wisconsin ranks 13th nationwide in total number of governmental units and third nationwide in governmental units per capita. Vernon County is home to 33 different units of government or special purpose districts.

Two of Vernon County's units (Viola and DeSoto) each have portions in other counties. Having so many governmental units allows for very local representation and means that Wisconsin and county residents have numerous opportunities to participate in local decision-making. However, the sheer number of governmental units with overlapping decision-making authority presents challenges. More governmental units can make communication, coordination, and effective action more difficult, creating a greater potential for conflict. Instead of communicating ideas within one jurisdiction, communication needs to move across multiple jurisdictions and involve multiple boards, commissions, committees, executives, administrators, and citizens. Goals between communities may differ and present challenges. More governmental units may also mean unwanted and wasteful duplication in the delivery of community services. Cooperation can help avoid this.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Benefits

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. The following are some examples:

- Cost savings – Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.
- Address regional issues – By communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues which are regional in nature.
- Early identification of issues – Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before the political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.
- Reduced litigation – Communities that cooperate are able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save a community money, as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.
- Consistency – Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- Predictability – Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.
- Understanding – As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another’s needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.
- Trust – Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions.
- History of success – When jurisdictions cooperate successfully in one area, the success creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.
- Service to citizens – The biggest beneficiaries of intergovernmental cooperation are citizens for whom government was created in the first place. They may not understand, or even care about, the intricacies of a particular intergovernmental issue, but all Wisconsin residents can appreciate their benefits, such as costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

This element will contain information regarding existing plans or agreements between Vernon County, its municipalities, and other jurisdictions. In addition, the element identifies existing or potential conflicts, as well as processes to resolve such conflicts relative to cooperative planning and decision making between the county, municipalities, and other governmental units. The following sections also demonstrate instances of existing cooperative situations and delineate new opportunities for communities to explore.

7.1 Multi-Jurisdictional Plan Building Process

In order to facilitate meaningful opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation, the Vernon County Comprehensive Plan and seven township plans were partially built utilizing a coordinated approach to plan development and facilitated by Nuzum Foundation support. The county was responsible for all mapping and GIS data development for all communities in the county, not just those communities participating in the Nuzum grant. The level of effort in data coordination to enable the mapping products was a large and significant effort that involved cooperation among the communities in Vernon County.

7.2 Status of Planning in Neighboring Counties and Communities

To the North

Vernon County shares a portion of its northern border with Monroe County. Monroe County has no comprehensive plan as of January 2009. Monroe County has no zoning. Towns that share a border with Vernon County are (west to east): the Town of Portland, which borders the Town of Christiana in Vernon County; Jefferson, which borders the Town of Clinton; Sheldon, which borders the Town of Whitestown; Wellington, which borders the Town of Forest in Vernon County; and Glendale, which borders the Town of Hillsboro in Vernon County. All of the bordering townships in Monroe County have made unknown progress on comprehensive plans. (Wis-DOA web site map – 4/15/09)

The northern border to the west is La Crosse County. La Crosse County adopted a comprehensive plan “LA CROSSE COUNTY, WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2007-2027” on March 20, 2008. The towns adjacent to Vernon County include (west to east); the Town of Shelby, which borders the Town of Bergen in Vernon County; Greenfield, which borders the Town of Hamburg in Vernon County, and Washington, which borders the Town of Coon. All of the bordering townships in La Crosse County are underway with comprehensive planning at a town level. (Wis-DOA web site map – 4/15/09) All of these bordering townships in La Crosse County have comprehensive zoning under the county plan.

To the East

Juneau, Sauk and Richland Counties share borders with Vernon County to the east. Juneau County is currently developing a comprehensive plan. The township adjacent to Vernon County is the Town of Wonewoc, which borders the Town of Hillsboro in Vernon County. The Town of Wonewoc is underway in developing a comprehensive plan. (Wis-DOA web site map – 4/15/09)

Sauk County has created a comprehensive plan. Their mission is “to create a plan to position Sauk County for the Future.” The township adjacent to Vernon County is the Town of Woodland, which borders Greenwood in Vernon County. Woodland is underway with developing a town comprehensive plan (Wis-DOA web site map-4/15/09) and has comprehensive zoning under the county plan. Richland County adopted a comprehensive plan July 17, 2007. The governmental units adjacent to Vernon County include (west to east): the Town of Forest (Richland), which borders the Town of Stark in Vernon County, Bloom, which borders the Town of Union, and Henrietta, which borders Greenwood. Half of the Village of Viola is in Vernon and half in Richland County. Bloom and Henrietta townships have local comprehensive planning underway, while Forest is in the preliminary stage of planning. (Wis-DOA web site map – 4/15/09) All of the bordering townships in Richland County have comprehensive zoning under the county’s plan.

To the South

Crawford County is located south of Vernon County. Crawford County has no comprehensive plan. The towns adjacent to Vernon County include (west to east): Freeman, which borders the Town of Wheatland in Vernon County; Greenfield, which borders the Town of Franklin, and Clayton, which borders the Town of Kickapoo in Vernon County. Green field and Clayton townships have comprehensive plans listed as “underway” on the Wis-DOA web site map (4/15/09), while Freeman’s planning is listed as unknown. The village of Desoto is partly in Crawford and Vernon Counties.

7.3 Existing Intergovernmental Relationships

The following is an inventory and description of intergovernmental agreements and service relationships that affect communities in Vernon County beyond the standard agreements for mutual aid. Most of the background information and information related to service provisions are discussed in Chapter 4, Utilities and Community Facilities.

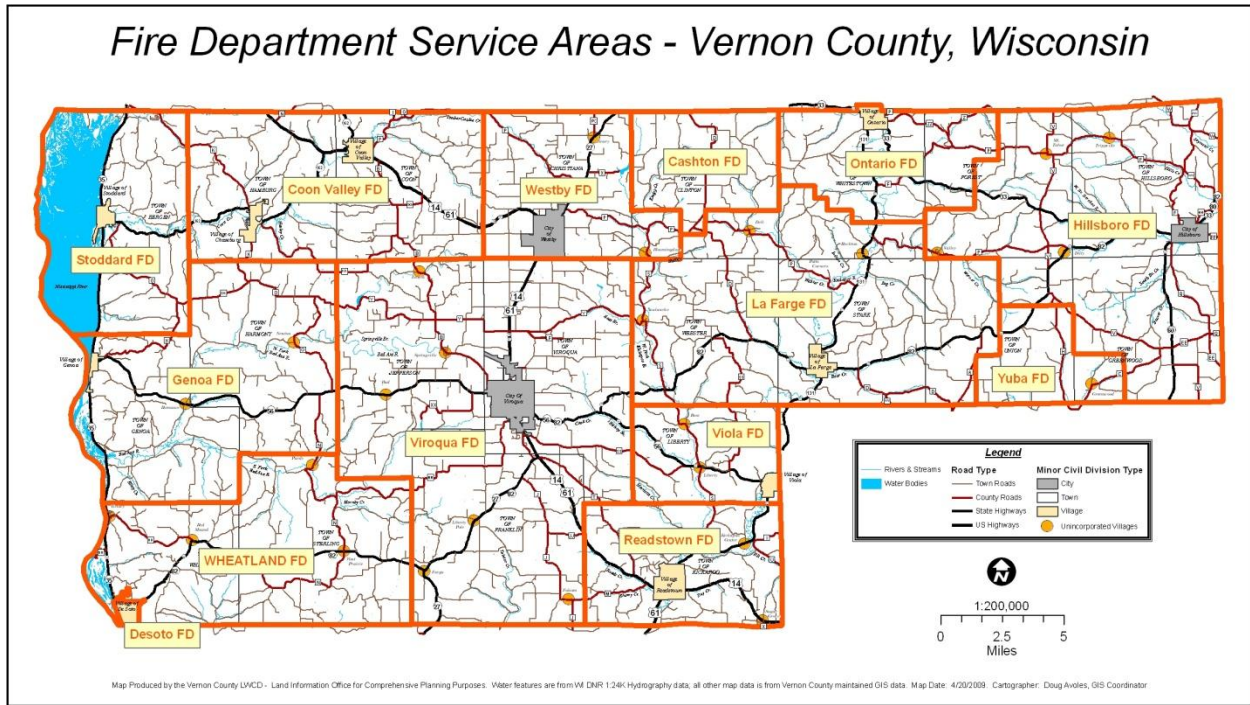
Police Protection

The Vernon County Sheriff’s Department provides law enforcement services to all towns and villages in Vernon County. The villages of Viola, La Farge, Ontario, Readstown, Coon Valley and Stoddard as well as the cities of Hillsboro, Viroqua, and Westby have police departments and officers of their own, who work with the county Sheriff’s Department.

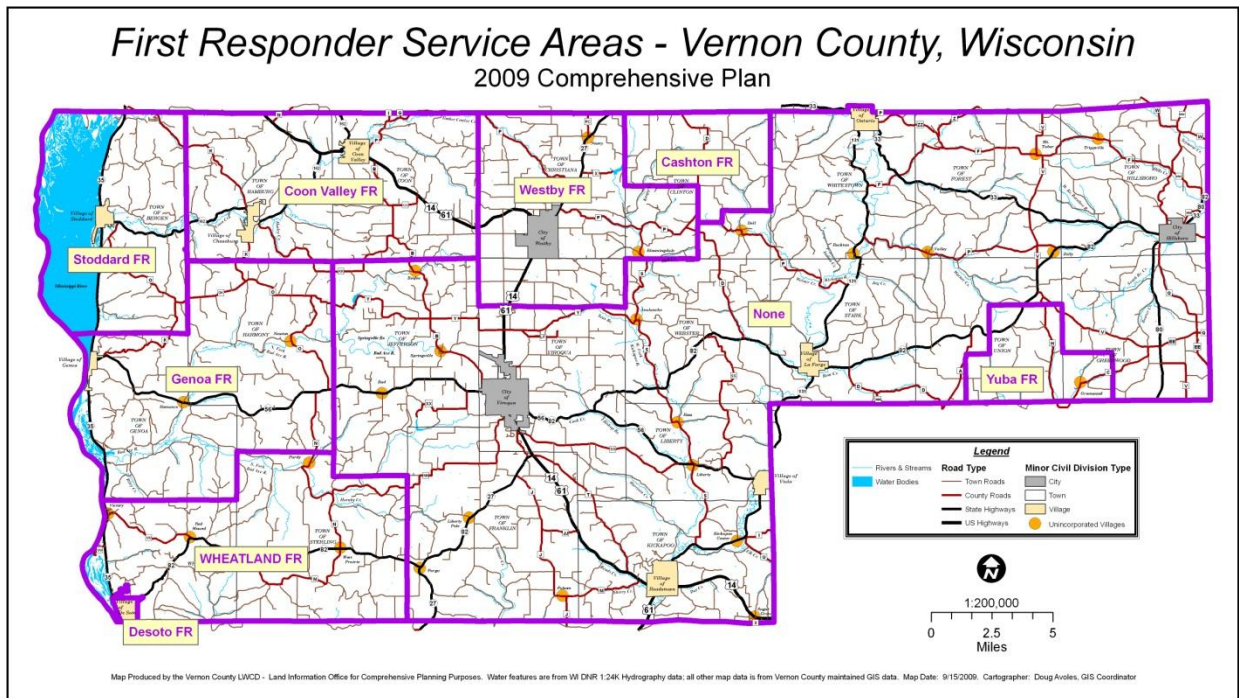
Fire Protection and Emergency Services

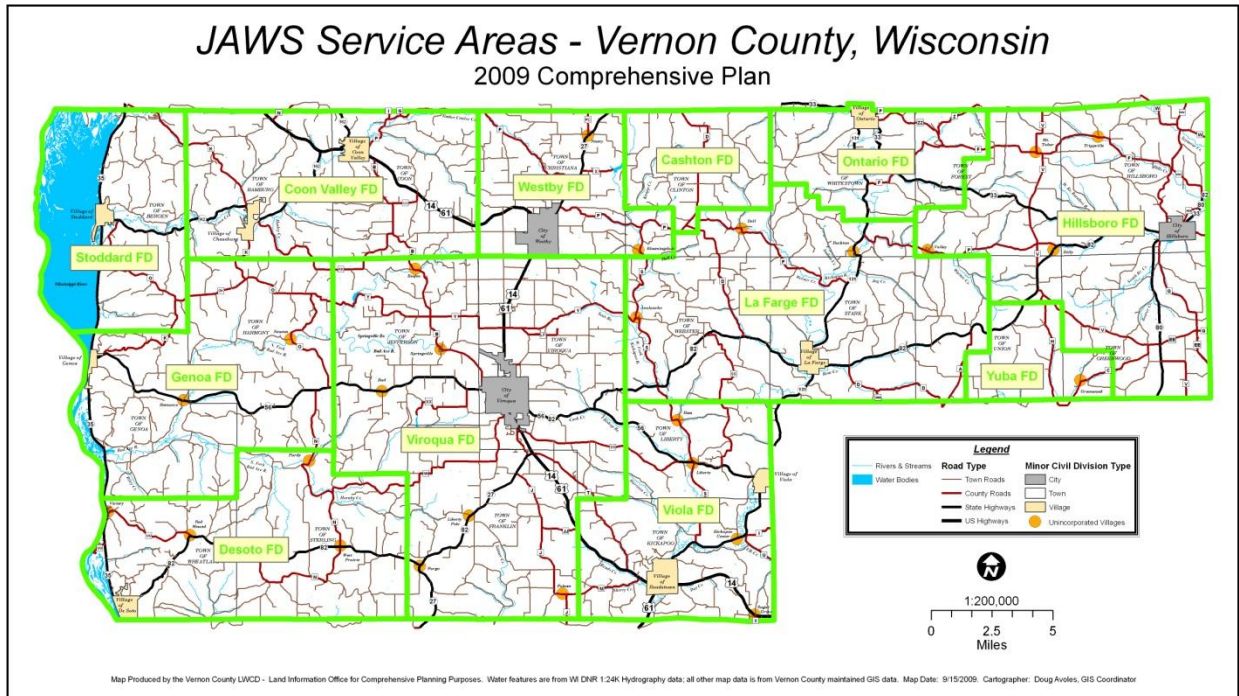
There are a total of thirteen fire departments (Cashton, Coon Valley, Desoto, Genoa-Harmony, Hillsboro, La Farge, Ontario, Readstown, Stoddard, Viola, Viroqua, Westby, Wheatland), eight first responder departments, and six ambulance providers serving Vernon County. The majority of these departments serve more than one community and has service areas which cross municipal borders, and some cross county borders. The service area boundaries of most of these services are based more on need and development patterns rather than on municipal boundaries. The coordination and provision of these services are based on a variety of different intergovernmental agreements. The fire departments of Desoto, Wheatland, Stoddard, Coon Valley, Westby, Cashton, and Yuba (based in Richland County) provide first responder services in Vernon County. Map 7.3.1 provides a depiction of the distribution of fire departments, Map 7.3.2 depicts the first responder service areas, and Map 7.3.3 depicts the JAWS of Life service areas within the County.

Map 7.3.1 – Fire Department Service Areas



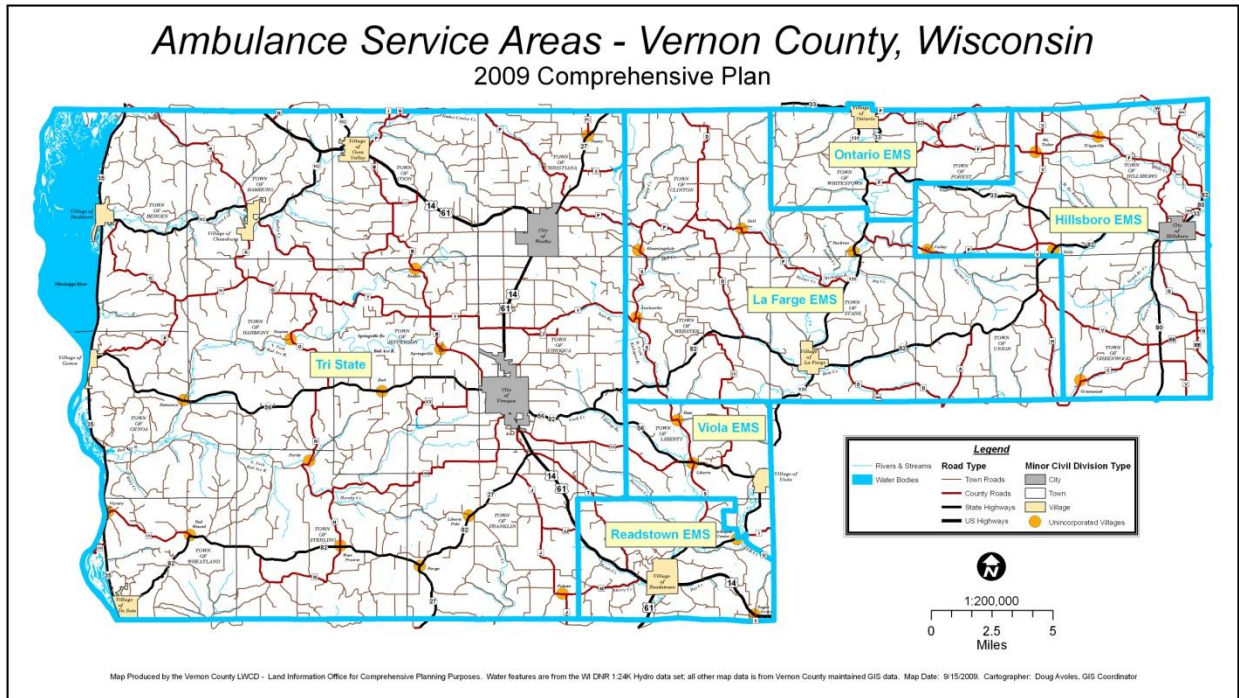
Map 7.3.2 – First Responder Service Areas





There are six ambulance services serving Vernon County. Tri State Ambulance serves the western part of the county including the towns of Christiana, Viroqua, Franklin, Sterling, Wheatland, Genoa, Harmony, Jefferson, Coon, Hamburg, and Bergen. Tri State also provides service for the cities of Westby and Viroqua and the villages of Coon Valley, Chaseburg, Stoddard, Genoa, and Desoto. The Readstown EMS serves the village of Readstown and the town of Kickapoo. Viola EMS services the Village of Viola and the Town of Liberty. La Farge EMS provides service to the Village of La Farge and the Towns of Stark, Union, Webster, Clinton, and the southern third of the Town of Whitestown. Ontario EMS services the Village of Ontario, the northern two-thirds of the Town of Whitestown and the northwest quarter of the Town of Forest. Hillsboro EMS provides service for the City of Hillsboro, and the towns of Hillsboro, Greenwood, and the other three-quarters of Forest. Map 7.3.4 displays the ambulance service areas.

Fire protection services as well as ambulance and first responder services in Vernon County extensively utilize intergovernmental provision of service. Provider service areas are generally not based on municipal boundaries, but on where services are needed. Many providers have service contracts with multiple municipalities. Numerous mutual aid agreements have also been made between the various community departments and are on file with the Vernon County Sheriff’s Department and the Vernon County Office of Emergency Management.



In June 2008, Vernon County was inundated with record rainfall amounts, which caused floods of historic proportions, massive amounts of landslides, numerous dam failure situations, and power outages. In response, the Vernon County Emergency Management office opened an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Erlandson Building in Viroqua. Working with 21 townships, nine villages and three city governments, the EOC assessed damages and focused resources on preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. 144 people were called on by the EOC to participate in the countywide response, which included additional coordination with nine different state agencies, FEMA, the Wisconsin National Guard, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and seven local fire departments. Vernon County’s Office of Emergency Management administers a Hazardous Materials Response Team (HAZMAT) with six team leaders and 26 team members from the various fire departments in the county, who are trained to respond in emergency situations. Refer to Map 4-2 in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter for fire protection and emergency service provider service area boundaries.

Stormwater Management

There are no countywide agreements in place for stormwater management, which is administered at the local municipal or town level.

Public Water

The County has a Shoreland and Wetland Zoning Ordinance that depends upon the cooperation of all local units of government to ensure possible violations of the ordinance are brought to the Zoning Administrator's attention.

School Districts

Currently there are no agreements with the local school districts.

University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension

University of Wisconsin-Extension is a partnership of counties, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Wisconsin. This partnership brings educational programs to people where they live through Extension offices in each of Wisconsin's counties.

The programs are developed to meet identified local needs and concerns. UW-Extension uses education to help people understand and confront problems in their communities. Faculty uses research-based knowledge from UW-Wisconsin, other universities, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture to meet identified local needs.

By statute, the UW-Extension system is supported by federal, state and county funds. Vernon County UW-Extension programming combines faculty and staff expertise in these program areas: Agriculture and Agri-business; Family Living Education; and 4-H Youth Development. Local county programs partner with people, local governments, and public and private organizations to affect positive community change.

A sampling of Vernon County programs in Agriculture include: dairy, livestock and crop management; grape production; and state-required pesticide certification. In Family Living examples are: basic financial counseling; food safety and preservation; and family caregiver education. In 4-H Youth Development examples are: 4-H community clubs; volunteer development; and Teen Court.

Boundary Agreements

There are currently no boundary agreements in place within Vernon County.

County Transportation Services

The Vernon County Highway Department administers state funded LRIP and TRIP grants for local roads, maintains state highways in cooperation with neighboring counties, administers the state funded bridge replacement program, cooperates with towns in the purchase of road salt, and partially funds culvert replacements on town roads. The Unit on Aging oversees a van service in the county and potentially in cooperation with adjacent counties to serve the elderly and disabled in the community.

County Health Related Services

Providing public health, hospice, and home health care services and assistance are services typically provided by counties. The Vernon County Health Department provides these services to county residents, but the department also performs some intergovernmental functions. For example, the Vernon County Health Department participates in a multi-county consortium with Grant, Iowa, Crawford, Richland, and La Fayette counties called the Southwest Wisconsin Public Health Preparedness

and Response Consortium. This consortium responds to public health emergencies. In addition, Vernon County participates in providing regional health services and planning for future health care needs.

Vernon County Child Support Agency administers child support and paternity programs by statute between county and state, partially funded with federal funds. The County Human Services Department coordinates programs with Mississippi Valley Health Services, Western Wisconsin Cares MCO, Southern and Western Wisconsin Crisis Programs, Aging and Disability Resource Center, S.85.21 transportation, FEMA food program, Wisconsin Home and Energy Assistance, W-2, Emergency Mental Health Services, Children First, Coordinated Services Team, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, and Tele-health Commission. Vernon County also participates in providing regional health services and for planning for future health care needs and services.

The county nursing home, Vernon Manor works with Medicare and Veterans Administration on a federal level and with Medicaid and Supplemental Payment Program on a state level.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western WI (ADRC-WW) is a cooperative four-county initiative to serve residents in each county (Vernon, Jackson, Monroe, and La Crosse). The Vernon site of the ADRC-WW is located in the Banta Building in downtown Viroqua. Services range from a referral to a service provider or local resource to a comprehensive assessment of physical, mental health/emotional, financial, and developmental capacity/need. There are contracts among the four counties and the State of Wisconsin; along with numerous memorandums of understanding among agencies within the county (for example: MOU with adult protective services; MOU with the Unit on Aging; MOU with the Family and Children's Center for mental health; etc.). There is an advisory board that provides insight and guidance to the administrators in each of the four county human services departments.

Mississippi Valley Health Services (MVHS) is another cooperative to serve residents of Lakeview Nursing Home in West Salem, WI. Eleven counties, including Vernon, have created a commission to allow for consumers to continue to live and receive services in the nursing home and allows for financial support to do so. There is a board of directors that reviews and approves all major business transactions within MVHS.

Western Wisconsin Cares (WWC) is a managed care organization created to serve the physically and developmentally disabled in the Family Care / Long Term Care program. Vernon County is part of an eight county consortium that created WWC and transitioned into family care in November 2008. Currently there is not a physical site for WWC in Vernon County, however with the eventual entitlement nature of the program, this is a potential area of growth for either new development or use of existing vacant buildings in Vernon County; along with the potential for employment that goes along with opening a new facility.

Elections

The Vernon County Clerk's office works with the State of Wisconsin and the townships and municipalities in the county to properly conduct elections.

Property Taxes

The Vernon County Treasurer's office works with the state of Wisconsin and the townships and municipalities in the county on the assessment of property and collection of property taxes.

Solid Waste

The Solid Waste and Recycling Department in Vernon County maintains a Sub Title D sanitary landfill site, accepts municipal and township solid waste, demolition waste, and asbestos waste; runs a collection site for agricultural and household waste collection, paints, old drugs, deer bones, and various other special collections, and coordinates a county-wide recycling program.

Conservation

The Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department administers many programs countywide. Most of these programs are mandated by state statute and administered at the county level. These programs include the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which aids farmers in constructing conservation structures; Farmland Preservation Program, a program which is currently being revised at the state level; Land Information Program, which aids in proper identification of land parcels; Land Use Planning; Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation, which includes a county site map and the Wildlife Damage Program, which is run in cooperation with the USDA Wildlife Services. Other countywide programs administered by this Vernon County department are *County Land Records Modernization Plan*, the *County Forest Land Use Plan*, *Soil Erosion Control Plan* and the *Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan*. In the *Vernon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan*, there are listed eighteen different government agencies and forty-two organizations that the county department actively works with on various projects. (<http://vernoncounty.org/LWCD/documents/lwrmpplan.pdf>)

7.4 Wisconsin Intergovernmental Agreement Statutes

66.0301 - Intergovernmental Cooperation

Wisconsin Statute, 66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with s. 66.0301, formerly s. 66.30, are the most common form of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

66.0307 - Boundary Changes Pursuant to Approved Cooperative Plan

Under Section 66.0307, Wisconsin Statutes, combinations of municipalities may prepare cooperative boundary plans or agreements. Each city, village, or town that intends to participate in the preparation of a cooperative plan must adopt a resolution authorizing its participation in the planning process. Cooperative boundary plans or agreements involve decisions regarding the maintenance or change of municipal boundaries for a period of 10 years or more. The cooperative plan must include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan; a schedule for changes to the boundary; plans for the delivery of services; an evaluation of environmental features and a description of any adverse environmental consequences that may result from the implementation of the plan; and address the need for safe and affordable housing. The participating communities to the plan must hold a public hearing prior to its adoption. Once adopted, the plan must be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Commerce for state approval. Upon approval, the cooperative plan has the force and effect of a contract.

66.0309 Creation, Organization, Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions.

Wisconsin Statute 66.0309 permits local governments to petition the governor to create a regional planning commission (RPC). If local support for a commission is unanimous, the governor may create it by executive order. The governor may also create a commission if local governments representing over 50% of the population or assessed valuation of the proposed region consent to the creation.

Commission members are appointed by either local governments or the governor. State Statutes require the RPC to perform three major functions:

- Make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the region.
- If requested by a local unit, report recommendations to that local unit on the location of or acquisition of land for any of the items or facilities which are included in the adopted regional master plan.
- Make an annual report of its activities to the legislative bodies of the local governmental units within the region. RPC's are also authorized to perform several other functions, however, by law; they serve a strictly advisory role. The Mississippi Regional Plan Commission serves all of Vernon County as well as the counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, LaCrosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, and Trempealeau.

Extraterritorial Plat Review and Zoning

Cities and villages that have adopted a subdivision ordinance or official map can exercise extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction for three miles beyond the corporate limits of a first, second, or third class city and one and one-half miles beyond the limits of a fourth class city or village. Specifics relative to Extraterritorial Plat Review can be found under Wis. Stats.S.236.02(5). Classes of municipalities are based on population, but a municipality does not move up a class until it takes action to do so. Based on 2005 population estimates, all municipalities in Vernon County are fourth class cities. Any city or village that has a plan commission may exercise extraterritorial zoning power in the unincorporated areas surrounding the city or village. The extraterritorial zoning power may be exercised in the unincorporated areas located within one-half miles of a fourth class city or village. Extraterritorial zoning may be initiated by a city or village adopting a resolution and providing notice of the extraterritorial area to be zoned. The city or village may unilaterally adopt an interim zoning ordinance to preserve existing zones or uses for up to two years while a comprehensive zoning plan is being

prepared. A joint committee, consisting of three city or village plan commission members and three town members must approve of the plan and regulations by majority vote. Extraterritorial zoning is not commonly used in the State of Wisconsin.

Annexation

Wisconsin Statute, 66.021, Annexation of Territory, provides three petition methods by which annexation may occur. Annexation involves the transfer of one or more tax parcels from a town to a city or village. Cities and villages cannot annex property without the consent of landowners as required by the following petition procedures:

1. Unanimous Approval - A petition is signed by all of the electors residing in the territory and the owners of all of the real property included within the petition.
2. Notice of intent to circulate petition (direct petition for annexation) - The petition must be signed by a majority of electors in the territory and the owners of one-half of the real property either in value or in land area. If no electors reside in the territory, then only the landowners need sign the petition.
3. Annexation by referendum - A petition requesting a referendum election on the question of annexation may be filed with the city or village when signed by at least 20 percent of the electors in the territory.

7.5 Intergovernmental Plans and Programs Currently in Use

The following programs and agencies, which involve intergovernmental relations, are utilized in Vernon County.

State-wide Programs

Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA)

Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan, statewide organization created under s. 60.23(14) of the Wisconsin Statutes to protect the interests of the state's 1,264 towns and to improve town government. In 2004 WTA celebrated its 57th year of service to town governments and the state's 1.6 million town residents. The association is organized into six districts and is headquartered in Shawano. WTA relies on regular district meetings, an annual statewide convention, publications, participation in cooperative training programs, and other means to support the goal of keeping grassroots government strong and efficient in Wisconsin. Vernon County towns are active participants in the WTA and hold meetings at the county level four times each year. For further information contact the WTA.

League of Wisconsin Municipalities

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities is a non-profit association of municipalities. First established in 1898, the League acts as an information clearinghouse, lobbying organization and legal resource for Wisconsin municipalities. Its membership consists of 378 villages and all of the 190 cities in the state. For further information contact the League.

Wisconsin Counties Association

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is an association of county governments assembled for the purpose of serving and representing counties. The direction of the organization is one that is

determined by the membership and the WCA Board of Directors consistent with the parameters set forth by the WCA Constitution. For further information contact the WCA.

Wisconsin Partnership

The State of Wisconsin offers local government contract purchasing, technical advice, data and financial assistance to more efficiently provide government services and increase cooperation. At the Wisconsin Partnership web-site a variety of information is provided to help local governments become more cost-effective. For further information visit the web-site or contact the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Intergovernmental Relations.

Regional Programs

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

The Commission is the official comprehensive planning agency for the counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon. Services provided by the Commission include comprehensive and land use planning; transportation improvement and corridor planning; open space, recreational and environmental planning; economic development; demographic information and projections; technical assistance to local governments; geographic information services and aerial photography distribution. For further information contact the Commission.

International Trade and Economic Development Council (ITBEC)

ITBEC is organized through the Wisconsin Counties Association and encourage counties to work cooperatively on economic development and tourism projects. Vernon County is a member of the Southwest ITBEC. Other counties in this ITBEC are Juneau, La Crosse and Monroe. For further information contact the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Driftless Area Initiative (DAI)

DAI is a collaborative effort working across state and agency jurisdiction, and is led by six non-profit Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. DAI uses a targeted approach for developing and implementing economically sound farming and resource management practices that improve water quality in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

RC&D is a non-biased, rural development program focusing on the conservation, development and utilization of area resources to improve the standard of living. It joins forces with individuals, agencies and groups to improve the social, economic and environmental opportunities of the local area. The RC&D program was established by federal legislation in 1962. This act directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help units of government conserve and properly utilize all resources in solving local issues. Citizens who are aware of the opportunities first hand provide leadership and work together to set program priorities. A variety of individuals, government agencies, organizations, environmental groups and business institutions provide assistance to these people in accomplishing their program goals. For further information contact the RC&D program.

Vernon County is a member of the Southwest Badger RC&D, which also includes Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland and Sauk counties. This RC&D is currently conducting Switchgrass Production Trials (currently no test plots in Vernon County, although future plots are planned) as part of a Biomass Energy Project.

Ho-Chunk Nation

In 1999, in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) the Ho-Chunk Nation agreed to make a \$100,000 donation to Vernon County to be used by the Sheriff's Department to install and implement a 911 emergency services system. The Sheriff's Department agreed to provide police services on Ho-Chunk tribal lands held in trust on the Kickapoo Valley Reserve property in the townships of Stark and Whitestown.

Also, in 2010, according to the gaming contract signed between the Ho-Chunk Nation and State of Wisconsin in October 2009, the nation will be making to Vernon County a payment of \$1,200,000 per year for the BIA trust land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. The county, the two townships of Stark and Whitestown where the land is located, and the school districts of La Farge, Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton, and Hillsboro will need to work out a formula for proper distribution of those funds.

7.6 Intergovernmental Cooperation Trends and Outlook

The following intergovernmental trends are anticipated during the planning period within Vernon County.

- Intergovernmental cooperation will continue to increase as state, county, and local operating budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued.
- As more jurisdictions create comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will become apparent.
- Growing communities may need to address administrative applications, joint management, or shared services and staff with other communities for building inspection or land use permitting procedures.
- The sharing of employees, equipment, and facilities will increase locally to meet demand at reduced costs.
- The level of success with intergovernmental agreements will have a direct relationship with the level of trust between communities.
- School districts within Vernon County will face challenges to maintain expected educational standards in the face of enrollments fluctuation and anticipated budget declines.
- Economic development efforts will require leveraging the strengths of the county as a region rather than an uncoordinated, individual focus on a community level.
- Successful intergovernmental cooperation will require sustained commitment and investment by all affected parties to produce value over time

8. Land Use

The land use pattern in Vernon County consists of rural towns containing mostly agricultural land mixed with hardwood forests and scattered residential development, along with several small incorporated communities that serve as centers for commerce, services, and cultural resources. There are some significant differences between regions of the county. The Mississippi River corridor and bluffs provide land with high value. Some of the county is within commuting distance to La Crosse and results in greater development pressure for housing. The central area of the county is largely agricultural with much of the prime farmland as well as the two largest population centers. The Kickapoo Valley lies further east, and provides tourism and recreational opportunities. At the eastern-most part of the county, the Hillsboro region is economically linked to Mauston (Juneau County), Reedsburg (Sauk County) and Tomah (Monroe County). Each region has its needs and assets that provide a unique challenge to land use planning at a county level.

Land use assessment begins by classifying how land is used. It then examines the effects of land ownership, regulations and economic forces on community development. Land use types are often not compatible. Each type of land and location has characteristics that can determine its best use and compatibility to other land uses. The maps and data developed in the planning process detail the current land use pattern, and provide a framework for formulating how land might best be used in the future.

The land use portion of the comprehensive planning process is often the most contentious to local residents and landowners. This is largely due to the fact that land use and private property rights are often directly intertwined with land use management and regulation. For the planning process to be successful, it must consider a range of ideas and opinions relative to land use, property rights, and community values. This is a people-oriented process where personal opinions, desires, and attitudes, and legal and political considerations all have a place in the conversation about land use impacts and solutions.

8.1 Existing Land Use

Existing land use can be examined in several ways. The best method is to develop a detailed map through a parcel level determination of the differing land uses throughout the county using current aerial photography and some on-site verification. This was not possible for the development of this plan due to time constraints, available existing data, and the timing of a new aerial photography project. This type of information is in the process of being developed, but will need to be updated and refined after new digital aerial photography is acquired in the spring of 2010 and as parcel mapping is completed across the county.

Therefore, other information has been used to create a general picture of current land use within the County. The two main sources of information that were available are the Vernon County tax assessment data and the 2001 National Land Cover Dataset (The Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics (MRLC) Consortium - <http://www.mrlc.gov/index.php>). Some information was also obtained from county GIS data currently being maintained or in development.

Based on the most accurate and current GIS data available, Vernon County’s total acreage is approximately 522,648 acres. Approximately 508,499 acres are land and approximate 14,149 acres are part of the Mississippi River and its backwaters. There are approximately 10,296 acres (about 2%) that are within incorporated cities and villages, with the remaining approximately 498,203 acres (about 98%) of the land in un-incorporated areas. (Source: Vernon County LWCD - Land Information Office)

Table 8.1.1 shows a compilation of overall public and private land ownership based on the 2000 and 2008 tax assessment data for un-incorporated areas only. Over this 8 year period this data indicates that there has not been much change in public versus private ownership.

Table 8.1.1 - Private vs. Public Land Ownership in Vernon County

Private vs. Public Ownership	2000 Acreage	2000 %	2008 Acreage	2008 %
Private Lands	479403.90	95.70%	477974.37	95.27%
Federal Lands	9927.07	1.96%	3425.70	0.68%
State Lands	6408.02	1.27%	14325.31	2.86%
County Lands (Exempt & Co Forest)	2258.30	0.45%	2500.86	0.50%
Other Public	2607.18	0.62%	3475.09	0.69%
Totals	500604.47	100.00%	501701.33	100.00%

Source: Derived from 2000 and 2008 Vernon County tax assessment data – for un-incorporated areas only, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

A compilation of the assessment code acreage from the 2000 and 2008 Vernon County Tax Assessment Rolls, Table 8.1.2, provides a general picture of existing land use for the un-incorporated areas of the county.

Table 8.1.2 - Generalized Land Use derived using Tax Assessment Codes⁴

Assessment Codes	2000 Acreage	2000 %	2008 Acreage	2008 %
Total Ag	285707.15	57.07%	279528.06	55.72%
Total Forest	159055.75	31.77%	166138.53	33.12%
Total Undeveloped	29069.51	5.81%	30426.75	6.06%
Total Residential	16056.54	3.21%	13775.62	2.75%
Total Ag Other	5449.47	1.09%	5340.70	1.06%
Total Town & Co Public	4216.96	0.84%	5096.27	1.02%
Total Commercial	722.73	0.14%	916.82	0.18%
Total Manufacturing	326.36	0.07%	478.58	0.10%
Totals	500605.48	100.00%	501702.32	100.00%

Source: Derived from 2000 and 2008 Vernon County tax assessment data – for un-incorporated areas only, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Incorporated areas were not included in this analysis because acreage values for parcels less than 1 acre are not required to be listed in the assessment roll. For most of the cities and villages within the county their total assessment acreages are significantly less than their actual total acreage. Because of this there was no easy way of determining a total county acreage that could be used to derive accurately reflective percentages for both 2000 and 2008. It is not clear why there has been a decline of residential acreage from 2000 to 2008. Some of this decline may be due to annexations which are not accounted for in this data because incorporated areas were not included in the tabulation.

Because of assessment practices, a significant portion of forest land is classified as agricultural for tax purposes. Therefore, the actual forest actual acreage is greater than reported and actual agricultural acreage is less.

Of the 508,499 acres of land in Vernon County, approximately 212,000 of those acres are forested. The majority of forested acres are owned by private landowners. Table 8.1.3 provides a picture of public verses private forest acreage based on the Vernon County tax assessment data base.

⁴ Acreage values in this table for forest make the assumption that most of the state and federal exempt acreage on the assessment roll is for forest lands; this however is probably not the case and a portion of the state exempt acreage in the assessment data base is likely for highway/transportation lands.

Table 8.1.3 - Public vs. Private Forest Acreage with Breakdown of Private Forest Acreage

	2000 Ac	2000 %	2008 Ac	2008 %
Public Forest	17016.24	10.65%	18687.80	11.21%
Private Forest	142763.69	89.35%	148083.07	88.79%
Productive Forest	115148.54	80.66%	31793.58	21.47%
FCL/MFL	27615.14	19.34%	56564.28	38.20%
Ag Forest	0.00	0.00%	59725.21	40.33%

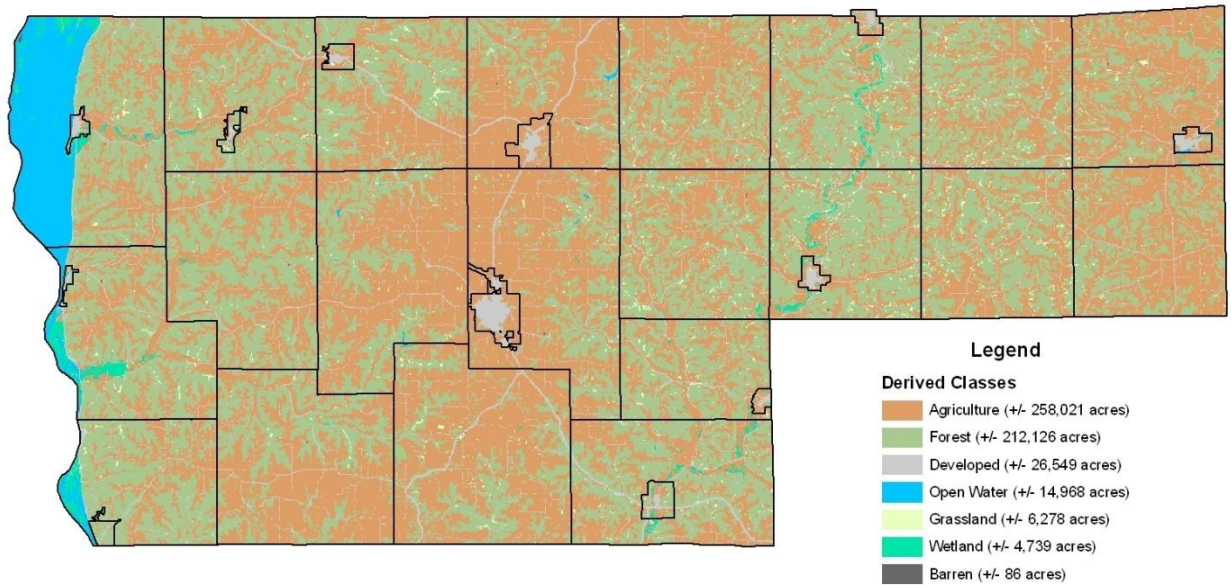
Source: Derived from 2000 and 2008 Vernon County tax assessment data, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

From this table it is interesting to note the shift from lands classified for assessment from Productive Forest in 2000 to Ag Forest in 2008 because of Use Value assessment, as well as the significant increase in lands enrolled in the MFL Program.

The 2001 National Land Cover Dataset is a digital data product developed by the MRLC, a consortium of several federal agencies, using Landsat 7 satellite imagery. This satellite imagery acquires sensor information on a 30 meter resolution and therefore has limitations on the detail that can be captured. The intended use of this data is to provide a general assessment of land cover and land use across the nation.

Map 8.1.1 shows a generalized compilation of land cover from the 2001 National Land Cover Dataset. The general land cover and use pattern follows what is generally observed throughout the county. The forested areas are primarily on areas of steeper slope and the agricultural lands are primarily on the ridge tops and in the valleys. The ridge tops and the valleys are also where the prime agricultural soils are also found. See Map 5.3.1 to compare.

Map 8.1.1 - Generalized Land Cover Derived From 2001 National Land Cover



Source: Derived from the 2001 National Land Cover Dataset, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Using a compilation of acreages derived from the 2001 National Land Cover Dataset, Table 8.1.4, reflects a similar breakdown of general land use within the county when compared to the tax assessment acreage data presented above. The difference between the agriculture and forest acreages from the two sources is probably due to the common assessment practice of lumping some of the forested land into the agriculture assessment classification for given parcels as mentioned before.

Table 8.1.4 - General Land Cover Summary

General Land Cover	2001 Acreage	2001 %
Agriculture	258021	49%
Forest	212126	41%
Developed	26548	5%
Open Water	14968	3%
Grassland	6279	1%
Wetlands	4739	1%
Barren	86	0%
Totals	522765	100%

Source: Derived from the 2001 National Land Cover Dataset, Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

While some of this information is dated and not very precise, in general it can be concluded that approximately 50% of the land within Vernon County is in agricultural use, approximately 35-45% of the land is in forest use, about 5-8% is developed which includes transportation right-of-way lands, and the remaining 5-15% are areas of open water (i.e. primarily the Mississippi River), undeveloped open space (e.g. grassland), wetlands, and barren lands (e.g. quarries). About 95% of the land is held in private ownership and the remaining 5% is held in some form of public ownership or public use such as transportation right-of-ways.

8.2 Land and Resource Management

Land and resource management is comprised of several components that significantly affect land use. The type of land ownership has a direct correlation to how that property is managed, and how lands may be used in the future. As resource management takes place under both private and public land ownership, the type of public and private resource management programs utilized are primary to evaluating the impact on land use. Understanding the correlations between land use and land management are necessary to evaluate why or how lands are regulated the way they are (or how they should be). Generally speaking, evaluating land use with land management, regulation, and environmental features will allow correlation between the existing conditions that create our landscape and the features we find valuable in Vernon County. The bridge to the future will be when those conditions we value, such as the county's rural and small community character and natural resources, are managed in concert with land management and regulation to achieve economic development and natural resources preservation.

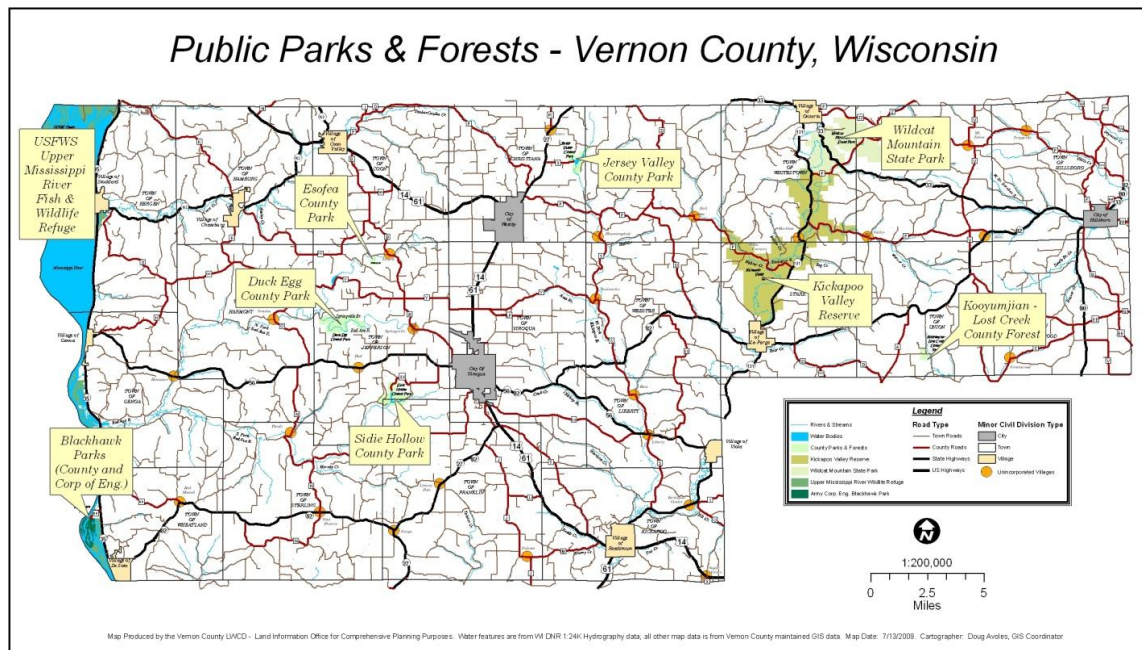
Forest, Park, Recreation and Wildlife Management

Vernon County owns 949 acres of County Forest land, and helps maintain another 891 acres for the State of Wisconsin (Jersey Valley and Sidie Hollow). These acres are open to the public for recreational purposes. These properties are being managed by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department as recreational sites to include lakes, picnic areas, campgrounds hiking trails, and fishing and hunting opportunities. Vernon County has established Park and Recreation Areas within these forests at six separate locations. The county parks are discussed in detail in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter 5.

Wildcat Mountain State Park and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve are large areas managed at the state or Kickapoo Reserve Board level. Significant land and water areas of the Mississippi River adjacent to Vernon County are within the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge which is under the management of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Army Corp of Engineers manages and operates Blackhawk Park located adjacent to and just to the south of the County's Blackhawk Park, and northwest of De Soto. There are also several sections of Wisconsin DNR managed lands throughout the county that are open to the public.

Map 8.2.1 provides a county wide view of the location of these major public lands.

Map 8.2.1 - Public Parks and Forests



Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Land Management Programs

The following are the most common land and resource management programs used in Vernon County. Some of the following information on Farmland Preservation, the Working Lands Initiative, and Managed Forest Law programs were discussed in the Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter of this document. This information is also included here to allow ease of use by the reader.

Farmland Preservation⁵

The Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) provides property tax relief to farmland owners who agree to preserve Wisconsin farmland through local land use planning and soil and water conservation practices. To be eligible for participation on FPP, the landowner must be a Wisconsin resident and own a minimum of 35 acres of land. This land must have produced a gross farm profit of \$6,000 in the last year, or \$18,000 in the last three years. Owning a parcel of property where 35 or more acres are in the Conservation Reserve Program also meets the program requirements. Farming operations must be in compliance with the county soil and water conservation standards.

⁵ The Farmland Preservation Program has been made less relevant (being phased out) with the inclusion of the Working Lands Initiative in the 2009 budget.

The Farmland Preservation Program encompasses many areas of agriculture; from beekeeping to dairying to tree farming. This program provides the potential for earning up to \$6,000 in property tax relief depending on a farmer’s total income. The program allows for a 10% minimum credit, even if there is “off the farm” income. This credit means the minimum property tax credit any qualifying landowner would receive is 10% of his or her property taxes.

Land located in an exclusive agricultural zone as identified in the county agricultural preservation plan may participate in the tax credit program. The ordinances may be adopted by counties, towns, cities or villages. If not in an exclusive agricultural zone, then a landowner may agree to sign an individual, long-term agreement. This agreement stays with the land, not the landowner, and is recorded with the county register of deeds. These agreements will no longer be available in all areas.

Table 8.2.1 illustrates the current acreage in the Farmland Preservation Program by Town. It also shows the potential decrease of land in FPP if all current contracts expire and are not renewed. Most Towns will have less than 3% of their total land preserved for farmland. Coon and Harmony are the primary exceptions to this because those two Towns have Exclusive Agricultural Zoning. Those two towns are projected to continue to have over 40% of their total land preserved for agriculture. Renewal rates have been far less since the advent of Agricultural Use-Value Tax Assessment. Use-Value Assessment has greatly reduced the property tax burden on agricultural land, and has therefore reduced the incentive to enroll in the FPP even though Use-Value Assessment does not provide assurance that the land will remain as productive farmland into the future.

Table 8.2.1 - Farmland Preservation Program by Town

Town	Tot. Town Ac	Current FP Ac	Current FP %	Post 2014 FP Ac	Post 2014 FP %
BERGEN	20918.51	1396	6.67%	265	1.27%
CHRISTIANA	21265.64	2865	13.47%	818	3.85%
CLINTON	23117.97	1491	6.45%	322	1.39%
COON (Agreements)	22469.04	1520	6.76%	64	0.28%
COON (Exclusive Ag.)	22469.04	11980	53.32%	11980	53.32%
FOREST	23044.89	1350	5.86%	389	1.69%
FRANKLIN	33247.01	2783	8.37%	844	2.54%
GENOA	22375.07	863	3.86%	135	0.60%
GREENWOOD	23005.92	2910	12.65%	390	1.70%
HAMBURG	23013.53	2759	11.99%	713	3.10%
HARMONY (Agrmnts.)	27777.32	1909	6.87%	706	2.54%
HARMONY (Excl. Ag.)	27777.32	11193	40.30%	11193	40.30%
HILLSBORO	22653.41	407	1.80%	407	1.80%
JEFFERSON	30422.47	2761	9.08%	348	1.14%
KICKAPOO	24445.93	1096	4.48%	610	1.14%
LIBERTY	15093.25	12	0.08%	0	0.00%
STARK	22324.75	950	4.26%	354	1.59%
STERLING	29390.19	2627	8.94%	240	0.82%
UNION	23010.34	735	3.19%	361	1.57%
VIROQUA	31467.44	2275	7.23%	250	0.79%
WEBSTER	22930.47	1771	7.72%	240	1.05%
WHEATLAND	17256.3	535	3.1%	0	0.00%
WHITESTOWN	22471.88	1107	4.93%	372	1.66%

Source: Vernon County LWCD

Working Lands Initiative

Details of the Working Lands Initiative were presented in section 5.6 of this document. This initiative passed in the 2009 State Budget and the details are still being determined at the time of this writing. Although the rules are still being developed by DATCP it seems clear that this program will strongly encourage zoning for farmland preservation and designation of agricultural enterprise areas. Land that does not fit into these categories will have no opportunity to access these tax credit incentives.

Managed Forest Law Program

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) program can ease the property tax burden for Wisconsin forestland owners who wish to manage their woodlands. The MFL program is intended to foster timber production on private forests, while recognizing other values. MFL participants pay property taxes at a reduced rate. A portion of the foregone taxes is recouped by the state at the time the timber is harvested. The MFL program is open to all private landowners with at least 10 acres of woods or forestland that meet three requirements:

- ◆ 80% of the land must be productive forestland capable of producing wood products (can grow at least 20 cubic feet of wood per acre per year).
- ◆ Forests must cover 80% of the land. A forest is an area currently forested or will soon be regenerated to forests.
- ◆ The minimum average width of the enrolled land is no less than 120 feet.

The MFL program requires a contract period of either 25 or 50 years. Participation in the MFL program requires an approved, written forest management plan and an application fee. To get the lowest annual property tax rate, landowners must allow the public to access the land. Access on these “open” lands is only for hunting, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, and cross-country skiing.

Landowners may choose to “close” land to public access. However, there are limits to the number of acres per municipality (city, town, or village) that may be designated as closed. The tax rates on “closed” land are higher as well.

There are a total of approximately 56,280 acres of forestland enrolled in the MFL program in Vernon County. The majority of MFL land is closed to the public with only about 9.5% open for public use. The Town of Harmony has the greatest amount of land enrolled in the MFL program in the county, followed by the Towns of Hamburg and Kickapoo.

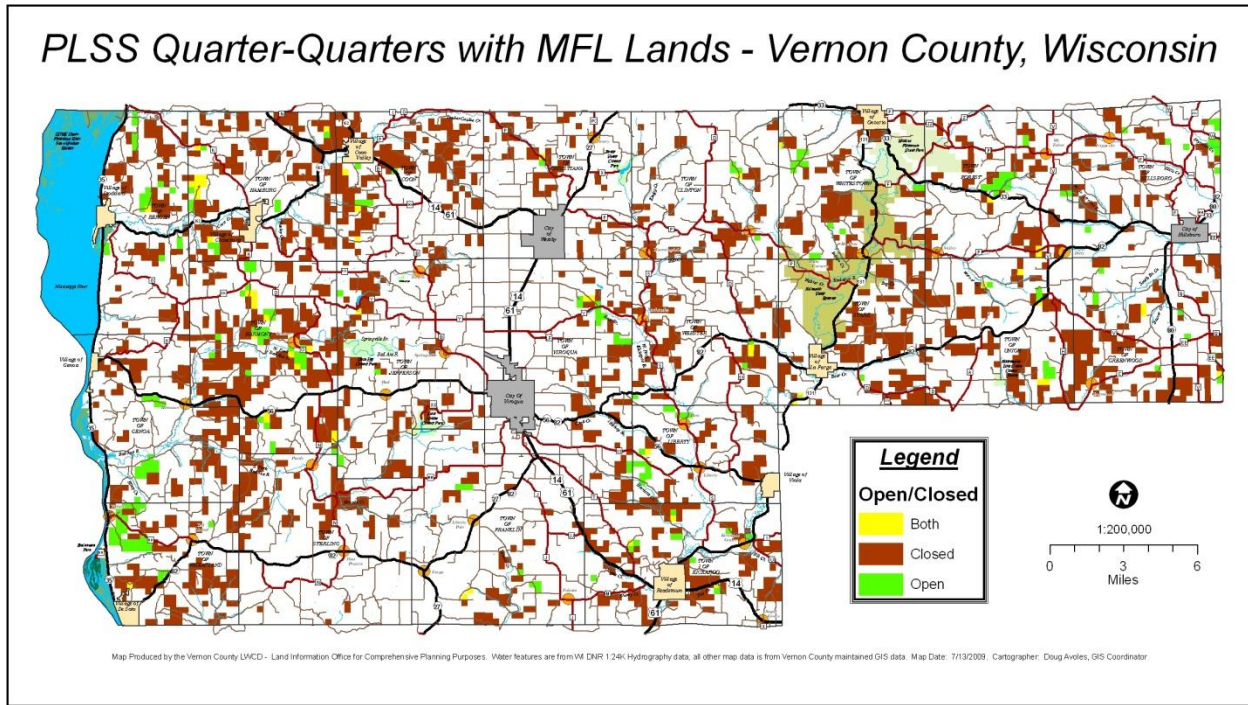
Table 8.2.2 details the acreage of open, closed, and totals by Town of MFL land within Vernon County.

Table 8.2.2 - Managed Forest Law Program Acres in Vernon County by Town

Town	Open to public (acres)	Closed (acres)	Total (acres)
Bergen	295.93	2304.31	2600.24
Christiana	26.00	1306.26	1332.26
Clinton	73.00	1293.73	1366.73
Coon	147.91	3497.01	3644.92
Coon Valley	0.00	10.00	10.00
Forest	409.00	1742.82	2151.82
Franklin	90.00	1130.68	1220.68
Genoa	403.34	2281.72	2685.06
Greenwood	145.69	3139.08	3284.77
Hamburg	318.84	3953.82	4272.66
Harmony	832.70	5243.42	6076.12
Hillsboro	242.00	1449.02	1691.02
Jefferson	79.00	2142.42	2221.42
Kickapoo	312.90	3569.73	3882.63
Liberty	242.00	1441.87	1683.87
Readstown	0.00	80.00	80.00
Stark	33.13	3586.61	3619.74
Sterling	0.00	1839.45	1839.45
Union	223.50	2696.57	2920.07
Viroqua ©	12.00	0.00	12.00
Viroqua (T)	193.00	2033.28	2226.28
Webster	95.00	1859.35	1954.35
Wheatland	857.00	2423.91	3280.91
Whitestown	266.00	1956.53	2222.53
Total	5297.93	50981.61	56279.54

Source: Vernon County LWCD

Map 8.2.2 shows the distribution of Public Land Survey System (PLSS) quarter-quarters that contain lands enrolled in the MFL Program as of May 2008. As the map depicts, and as stated previously, most of these lands are closed to public use. What is important to see is the distribution of lands being managed for forest related benefits (e.g. wood production, wildlife habitat) across the county.



Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Land Trusts

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting in land or conservation easement acquisition, or by its stewardship of such land or easements. There are many regional (e.g. Mississippi Valley Conservancy) and national (e.g. The Nature Conservancy) land trust organizations available for use in Vernon County.

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) is a regional, non-profit land trust in La Crosse that has permanently conserved almost 9,000 acres of blufflands, prairies, wetlands and streams in the Coulee Region since its founding in 1997. The Conservancy works with private landowners and local communities on voluntary conservation projects in seven counties along the Mississippi River. The counties include Buffalo, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, Crawford and Grant County.

The Conservancy uses voluntary tools such as conservation agreements, land purchases, land donations, cooperative acquisitions, and a landowner registry program to conserve lands for ecological, scenic, and open space values.

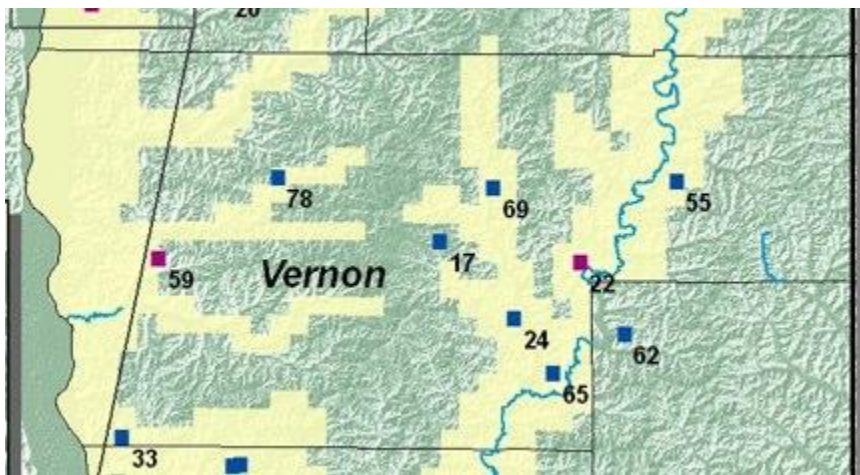
MVC works cooperatively with individuals, businesses, conservation groups, local units of government and other state and federal agencies.

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy has 7 easements in Vernon County:

- 52 acres - forest, grassland/streambank/wetland complex
- 80 acres - prairie, forest, Kickapoo River
- 250 acres - farm and forest, CRP grasslands
- 200 acres - sedge meadow/wetland/river, forest
- 140 acres - farm (organic hayfields), forest, prairie, cliffs
- 114 acres - CRP grasslands, forest
- 200 acres - farm, forest, creek/grassland, cliffs

Each easement has specific acreages for ag land/forest land. There are three Vernon County projects in process in 2009: a 67 acre, 269 acre, and a 370 acre property all located in portions of the Bad Axe River Watershed.

Figure 8.2.1 - Mississippi Valley Conservancy Protected Properties



Blue squares= Private Easement Properties; Pink squares=MVC owned public properties

Source: Abbie Meyer of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (2009).

The Fish and Wildlife Service holds one easement from a federal program from about 30 years ago. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources holds multiple public fishery easements throughout the county.

Overall, lands that are enrolled in a resource management program or that are managed in a way that would allow logical assessment for future land use can then be compared to the existing development pattern for analysis. The process of land use planning will use this information to help build classifications of preferred land use that will ultimately build the county plan. As an example, the lands currently enrolled in the farmland preservation program can be viewed as possible lands that will be agriculturally orientated in the future. This information helps the town and town landowners to discern not only the land use situation now, but also view the potential future land use, assuming the conditions and program enrollment stay the same.

8.3 Supply, Demand, and Price Trends of Land

Equalized Valuation

The equalized value of the land base of the county determines the potential tax revenue. Increases in equalized valuation of property in the county allows for additional tax revenue necessary to fund public facilities and service programs in the county.

Equalized values are based on the full market value of all taxable property in the state, except for agricultural land. In order to provide property tax relief for farmers, the value of agricultural land is determined by its value for agricultural uses rather than for its possible development value, which is termed a “use value” system, rather than one based on full market value.

Table 8.3.1 lists the equalized values by the primary aggregated tax assessment “land use” classes for Vernon County over a 10 year period.

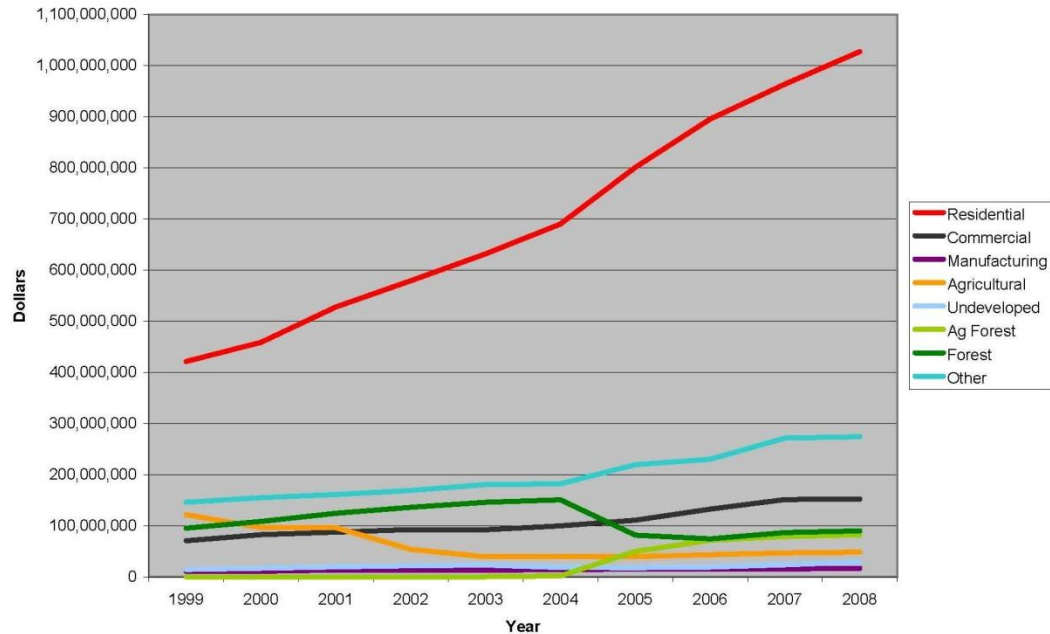
Table 8.3.1 - Equalized Values, Vernon County, 1999 - 2008

Year	Residential	Commercial	Manufac.	Agricultural	Undeveloped	Ag Forest	Forest	Other*	Total Real Estate
99	421,195,500	70,454,900	10,144,400	121,417,200	14,262,500	0	95,131,900	145,760,400	878,366,800
00	458,649,400	82,222,400	10,536,400	96,142,700	16,722,600	0	108,327,600	154,822,900	927,424,000
01	527,897,000	87,364,000	13,128,300	96,051,200	19,207,000	0	124,208,100	160,914,000	1,028,769,600
02	579,139,000	92,327,400	13,214,600	53,587,300	21,584,700	0	135,925,700	168,769,200	1,064,547,900
03	631,849,500	91,903,700	13,042,100	39,185,100	22,829,700	0	145,632,500	180,401,700	1,124,844,300
04	690,148,400	99,572,100	13,719,800	39,402,300	18,075,000	1,616,600	150,539,200	181,733,400	1,194,806,800
05	801,091,300	110,575,800	14,947,800	39,365,700	17,622,800	49,396,700	81,397,200	219,314,900	1,333,712,200
06	895,586,400	132,326,100	15,066,700	43,100,900	18,892,600	71,296,400	74,124,900	229,787,400	1,480,181,400
07	964,001,000	151,112,900	15,265,800	46,509,800	23,261,700	78,785,800	86,372,900	271,271,400	1,636,581,300
08	1,027,538,900	152,254,800	16,267,700	48,184,200	28,882,000	82,031,200	89,687,700	273,880,700	1,718,727,200

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item, 1999-2008. *Includes swamp, waste, and other land.

Figure 8.3.1 provides a graphical view of this equalized value data. Residential, Commercial, Manufacturing, Undeveloped, and Other (which includes farm buildings) all show a steady increase in equalized value over the 10 year period. Residential valuation shows the most significant and highest rate of increase, which is more than double any of the others. The decrease of Agricultural and Forest equalized values in this figure reflect the effects of “use value” mentioned above and the shift of assessing many forest lands from Productive Forest to Ag Forest in 2004 and after.

Figure 8.3.1 - Chart of Equalized Values, Vernon County, 1999 - 2008



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item, 1999-2008; Chart created by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Agricultural and Forest Land Sales

Another indicator of land demand and pricing are agricultural and forest land sales. Table 8.3.2 shows that the number of agricultural land sales remained fairly steady, while the number of land sales, where the land was converted out of agricultural to another use, declined significantly during the years between 2003 and 2007. Over the same period, the average dollars per acre for both agricultural land and land converted out of agriculture increased significantly. In 2007 the average dollar per acre for agricultural land was about 39% more than what it had been in 2003, and the average dollar per acre for land converted out of agriculture was about 81% greater in 2007 than it was in 2003.

Table 8.3.2 - Agricultural Land Sales, Vernon County, 2003-2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	5 Yr # Change	% 5 Yr Change
Ag Land Continuing in Ag Use							
Number of transactions	47	51	44	57	47	0	0.0 %
Acres sold	3,283	3,645	2,567	3,588	2,706	- 577	-17.6 %
Dollars per acre	\$2,246	\$1,985	\$2,622	\$3,037	\$3,121	\$875	39.0 %
Ag Land being Diverted to Other Uses							
Number of transactions	38	47	16	8	8	-30	-78.9 %
Acres sold	1,088	1,895	682	313	384	-704	-64.7 %
Dollars per acre	\$2,247	\$2,019	\$3,157	\$4,552	\$4,073	\$1,826	81.3 %
Total of All Ag Land							
Number of transactions	85	98	60	65	55	-30	-35.3 %
Acres sold	4,371	5,540	3,249	3,901	3,090	-1,281	-29.3 %
Dollars per acre	\$1,988	\$1,997	\$2,734	\$3,158	\$3,239	\$1,251	62.9 %

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service, 2003-2007.

(http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Wisconsin/Publications/Land_Sales/index.asp); Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Table 8.3.3 indicates that both forest land and lands converted out of forest declined significantly and at a comparable rate, while the price per acre increased by about 115% and 147% respectively between 2000 and 2007.

Table 8.3.3 - Forest Land Sales, Vernon County, 2000-2007*

	2000	2001	2005	2006	2007	8 Yr # Change	% 8 YR Change
Forest Land Continuing in Forest Use							
Number of transactions	62	67	22	28	17	-45	-72.6%
Acres sold	2,740	2,330	816	940	452	-2,288	-83.5%
Dollars per acre	\$1,306	\$1,332	\$2,324	\$2,529	\$2,812	\$1,506	115.3%
Forest Land Diverted to Other Uses							
Number of transactions	45	20	14	7	6	-39	-86.7%
Acres sold	1,703	731	616	225	185	-1,518	-89.1%
Dollars per acre	\$1,192	\$1,689	\$2,614	\$4,215	\$2,943	\$1,751	146.9%
Total of All Forest Land							
Number of transactions	107	87	36	35	23	-84	-78.5%
Acres sold	4,443	3,061	1,432	1,165	637	-3,806	-85.7%
Dollars per acre	\$1,262	\$1,417	\$2,448	\$2,855	\$2,850	\$1,588	125.8%

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service, 2000-2007.

(http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Wisconsin/Publications/Land_Sales/index.asp); Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office. * Note: Reporting for years 2002-2004 was not available.

Both of the agricultural and forest land sales appear to indicate that the demand for land, especially land to be converted to residential use, has declined significantly in Vernon County over the last 5 years. This may be due to the increase in land prices as well as from the effects of “use value” assessment

which has made it significantly more affordable for farmers to keep land in agriculture and hold onto their forested acreages instead of converting it to another use. Current land prices appear to be between about \$3,000 and \$4,000 per acre for agricultural land, and between about \$2,500 and \$3,000 per acre for forested land in the county. No analysis has been made on the effect that the slumping economy in 2008 and 2009 has had on land prices, but it is assumed that it will cause a slight decrease in the short term.

Tax Parcel Property Splits and Ownership Changes

Another indication of the trend in demand for land within Vernon County is the amount of parcel splits and ownership changes. Tables 8.3.4, 8.3.5, and 8.3.6 depict the number of new real estate parcels created, the approximated number of land splits resulting from the new parcels, and the real estate parcel ownership changes in Vernon County from 2002 to 2008. The Towns with the highest number of new parcels are highlighted in yellow.

Table 8.3.4 - Real Estate New Parcels, Vernon County, 2002-2008

Municipality	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	New Parcels	
	New Parcels	New Parcels	New Parcels	New Parcels	New Parcels	New Parcels	New Parcels	Total '02 to '08	Annual Avg. '02 to '08
T Bergen	33	24	9	17	21	7	10	121	17
T Christiana	17	34	13	19	21	26	38	168	24
T Clinton	20	21	20	32	8	22	21	144	21
T Coon	19	38	11	13	14	10	12	117	17
T Forest	17	11	29	40	6	23	31	157	22
T Franklin	36	56	24	22	8	28	14	188	27
T Genoa	5	35	34	48	20	24	15	181	26
T Greenwood	11	32	44	10	29	7	19	152	22
T Hamburg	24	28	23	73	38	5	10	201	29
T Harmony	19	23	38	46	18	7	15	166	24
T Hillsboro	17	28	35	36	31	21	16	184	26
T Jefferson	39	51	35	41	12	24	22	224	32
T Kickapoo	10	41	25	32	61	45	23	237	34
T Liberty	2	15	6	17	14	21	14	89	13
T Stark	10	12	7	24	16	10	12	91	13
T Sterling	6	28	26	25	19	18	8	130	19
T Union	33	14	45	45	23	51	12	223	32
T Viroqua	52	69	52	46	56	17	44	336	48
T Webster	25	43	24	27	19	26	25	189	27
T Wheatland	12	52	22	35	10	2	5	138	20
T Whitestown	20	36	14	44	6	6	13	139	20
V Chaseburg	2	2	1	18	0	7	4	34	5
V Coon Valley	6	18	0	29	0	17	0	70	10
V De Soto*	2	5	3	5	6	0	0	21	3
V Genoa	2	1	5	2	2	4	0	16	2
V La Farge	4	8	2	4	36	5	4	63	9
V Ontario	2	15	2	4	0	2	0	25	4
V Readstown	0	2	2	0	18	6	0	28	4
V Stoddard	3	7	14	74	41	8	21	168	24
V Viola*	1	1	3	4	0	2	2	13	2
C Hillsboro	0	9	4	23	7	0	0	43	6
C Viroqua	4	4	24	31	80	15	17	175	25
C Westby	4	16	10	38	14	4	12	98	14
Totals	457	779	606	924	654	470	439	4329	621

* Village split between two counties; data is for Vernon County only

Source: Vernon County Real Estate Property Change Reports, 2002-2008, Treasurer's Office; table compiled by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

An estimate of parcel splits can be made by dividing the number of new parcels by 2 and rounding up. Most parcel splits entail splitting one existing tax parcel into 2 new parcels. However, occasionally a single existing parcel is split into more than two pieces (i.e. subdivision plats, certified survey maps, multiple land sales in the same year). Without examining every single split transaction, it is only feasible to make an estimate of the number of actual parcel splits. Therefore, the data presented in Table 8.3.4 makes the assumption that odd numbered counts (i.e. 17) consist of one split into 3 parcels with the remaining splits being into 2 parcels, which may not be exactly what has happened. However, Tables 8.3.5 and 8.3.6 do present an accurate depiction of where the most land division is occurring within the county.

Table 8.3.5 - Real Estate Parcel Splits, Vernon County, 2002-2008

Municipality	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Parcel Splits	
	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Parcel Splits	Total '02 to '08	Annual Avg. '02 to '08
T Bergen	17	12	5	9	11	4	5	61	9
T Christiana	9	17	7	10	11	13	19	84	12
T Clinton	10	11	10	16	4	11	11	72	10
T Coon	10	19	6	7	7	5	6	59	8
T Forest	9	6	15	20	3	12	16	79	11
T Franklin	18	28	12	11	4	14	7	94	13
T Genoa	3	18	17	24	10	12	8	91	13
T Greenwood	6	16	22	5	15	4	10	76	11
T Hamburg	12	14	12	37	19	3	5	101	14
T Harmony	10	12	19	23	9	4	8	83	12
T Hillsboro	9	14	18	18	16	11	8	92	13
T Jefferson	20	26	18	21	6	12	11	112	16
T Kickapoo	5	21	13	16	31	23	12	119	17
T Liberty	1	8	3	9	7	11	7	45	6
T Stark	5	6	4	12	8	5	6	46	7
T Sterling	3	14	13	13	10	9	4	65	9
T Union	17	7	23	23	12	26	6	112	16
T Viroqua	26	35	26	23	28	9	22	168	24
T Webster	13	22	12	14	10	13	13	95	14
T Wheatland	6	26	11	18	5	1	3	69	10
T Whitestown	10	18	7	22	3	3	7	70	10
V Chaseburg	1	1	1	9	0	4	2	17	2
V Coon Valley	3	9	0	15	0	9	0	35	5
V De Soto*	1	3	2	3	3	0	0	11	2
V Genoa	1	1	3	1	1	2	0	8	1
V La Farge	2	4	1	2	18	3	2	32	5
V Ontario	1	8	1	2	0	1	0	13	2
V Readstown	0	1	1	0	9	3	0	14	2
V Stoddard	2	4	7	37	21	4	11	84	12
V Viola*	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	7	1
C Hillsboro	0	5	2	12	4	0	0	22	3
C Viroqua	2	2	12	16	40	8	9	88	13
C Westby	2	8	5	19	7	2	6	49	7
Totals	229	390	303	462	327	235	220	2165	309

* Village split between two counties; data is for Vernon County only

Source: Estimated From New Real Estate Parcels, 2002-2008, by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Table 8.3.6 - Real Estate Ownership Changes, Vernon County, 2002-2008

Municipality	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	New Owner	
	New Owner	New Owner	New Owner	New Owner	New Owner	New Owner	New Owner	Total '02 to '08	Annual Avg. '02 to '08
T Bergen	144	81	79	83	68	54	55	564	81
T Christiana	99	69	42	74	76	75	76	511	73
T Clinton	84	40	77	68	78	62	57	466	67
T Coon	122	67	88	48	78	64	58	525	75
T Forest	142	53	84	65	59	57	64	524	75
T Franklin	197	122	128	106	63	93	76	785	112
T Genoa	89	84	76	97	95	54	61	556	79
T Greenwood	88	79	108	52	92	52	46	517	74
T Hamburg	126	82	62	71	55	62	48	506	72
T Harmony	111	73	112	99	50	75	84	604	86
T Hillsboro	113	80	105	57	70	75	55	555	79
T Jefferson	166	90	163	98	73	90	66	746	107
T Kickapoo	150	124	127	115	121	131	74	842	120
T Liberty	176	40	46	48	42	77	56	485	69
T Stark	199	54	63	60	65	62	50	553	79
T Sterling	64	42	89	95	79	63	85	517	74
T Union	143	52	93	90	64	68	40	550	79
T Viroqua	175	169	162	117	152	117	89	981	140
T Webster	129	82	106	104	97	70	76	664	95
T Wheatland	171	108	131	118	81	87	59	755	108
T Whitestown	208	49	82	77	27	39	30	512	73
V Chaseburg	12	19	12	10	28	18	21	120	17
V Coon Valley	154	33	50	41	32	33	48	391	56
V De Soto*	35	21	29	35	20	23	14	177	25
V Genoa	17	8	20	14	10	15	12	96	14
V La Farge	69	47	55	42	60	80	22	375	54
V Ontario	25	28	36	28	25	28	31	201	29
V Readstown	59	34	35	28	26	44	19	245	35
V Stoddard	43	38	51	32	38	28	40	270	39
V Viola*	26	13	19	15	20	15	4	112	16
C Hillsboro	103	74	57	81	53	61	41	470	67
C Viroqua	224	181	216	204	208	167	152	1352	193
C Westby	89	83	91	93	86	64	67	573	82
Totals	3752	2219	2694	2365	2191	2103	1776	17100	2443

* Village split between two counties; data is for Vernon County only

Source: Vernon County Real Estate Property Change Reports, 2002-2008, Treasurer's Office; table compiled by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

8.4 Projected Land Use Demand

The following projections of land use demand show that if population and household growth occur as projected, there will likely not be a tremendous amount of increased residential, commercial, and manufacturing acreage development over the next 20 years. The following projections do not take into account market factors such as interest rates, land prices, or availability of land and do not take into account land use regulations and policies that are used to control development. These estimates are a general representation of projected future land use and should only be used for planning purposes in combination with other indicators of land use demand.

Projected Land Demand Based on Population Change Projections

Using population change trends as a basis, Table 8.4.2 estimates the acreage that may be demanded for agricultural, forest, undeveloped, residential, ag other (i.e. farm related lands with improvements), public (i.e. institutional), commercial, and manufacturing (i.e. industrial) land uses for five year increments from 2010 through the year 2030 in unincorporated areas. These projected estimates are

based on applying the percentage of the projected population change for unincorporated areas of the county, Table 8.4.1, at each five year interval as a multiplier to project the future acreages needed for the increasing land uses. Then the land use categories that are assumed to be decreasing (i.e. agricultural, forest, undeveloped) are being reduced equally by the difference between the total increased acreage per time interval. The base acreage is from the 2008 tax assessment data for unincorporated areas described in Section 8.1 above. The first assumption is that the projected 2008 acreages will increase by 2/5ths (i.e. 2 of 5 years) of the population percent change between 2005 and 2010 to get the estimated 2010 acreages. Further the projection is based on the assumption that agricultural, forest, and undeveloped lands will have a slight decrease for the next 20 years, and that about an equal amount of land will come out of each of these 3 land use categories for development.

Table 8.4.1 - Final Population Projections for Wisconsin Municipalities: 2005 – 2030 for Unincorporated Areas

MCD Type & Name (* indicates split muni)	C2000	Est2005	Proj2010	Proj2015	Proj2020	Proj2025	Proj2030	NumChg30yr	PctChg30yr
T Bergen	1317	1390	1453	1523	1593	1658	1714	397	30.1%
T Christiana	871	882	894	910	926	939	947	76	8.7%
T Clinton	1354	1451	1560	1677	1796	1908	2010	656	48.4%
T Coon	683	710	718	729	740	747	752	69	10.1%
T Forest	583	602	619	639	659	677	690	107	18.4%
T Franklin	923	985	1009	1038	1067	1092	1112	189	20.5%
T Genoa	705	723	733	745	758	768	774	69	9.8%
T Greenwood	770	846	923	1004	1086	1164	1237	467	60.6%
T Hamburg	848	923	982	1047	1111	1173	1228	380	44.8%
T Harmony	739	812	878	948	1019	1087	1149	410	55.5%
T Hillsboro	766	790	817	848	880	908	931	165	21.5%
T Jefferson	974	1044	1091	1144	1196	1245	1287	313	32.1%
T Kickapoo	566	590	617	645	675	702	726	160	28.3%
T Liberty	167	214	235	257	279	301	320	153	91.6%
T Stark	349	369	391	416	440	464	484	135	38.7%
T Sterling	713	708	725	745	765	783	796	83	11.6%
T Union	531	579	625	674	724	771	813	282	53.1%
T Viroqua	1560	1659	1694	1737	1778	1815	1842	282	18.1%
T Webster	676	730	780	835	889	941	987	311	46.0%
T Wheatland	533	598	651	707	763	816	866	333	62.5%
T Whitestown	509	533	557	582	608	632	653	144	28.3%
Unincorporated Totals	16137	17138	17952	18850	19752	20591	21318	5181	32.1%
5 Yr # Chg			814	898	902	839	727		
5 Yr % Chg (multiplier for incr. LU's)			0.047497	0.050022	0.047851	0.042477	0.035307		

Source: Demographic Services Center Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration (2008); modified for unincorporated areas by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Table 8.4.2 - Estimated Land Use Acreage 2010-2030 Based on % Change of Projected Population for Unincorporated Areas

Land Use Category	Assumptions	Rounded Base Values 2008 Ac	2010 Ac	2015 Ac	2020 Ac	2025 Ac	2030 Ac	2030 % Land Area
Agricultural	Steady/Slight Decrease	279528	279366	278931	278494	278087	277735	55.36%
Forest	Steady/Slight Decrease	166139	165977	165542	165105	164698	164346	32.76%
Undeveloped	Decrease	30427	30265	29830	29393	28986	28634	5.71%
Residential	Increase	13776	14038	14740	15445	16101	16670	3.32%
Ag Other	Increase	5341	5442	5715	5988	6243	6463	1.29%
Public/Institutional	Increase	5096	5193	5453	5713	5956	6166	1.23%
Commercial	Increase	917	934	981	1028	1072	1110	0.22%
Manufacturing	Increase	479	488	513	537	560	580	0.12%
Totals		501703	501703	501703	501703	501703	501703	100.00%
	Sum Increasing LU's	25608	26095	27400	28711	29930	30987	
		Increase Difference	487	1305	1311	1220	1057	
		Decrease Applied	162	435	437	407	352	

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Projected Residential Land Demand Based on Projected Households

Table 8.4.3 provides household projections for unincorporated areas of Vernon County. This is a subset of the projection data developed by the Demographic Services Center Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration (See Table 2.5.1).

Table 8.4.3 - Final Household Projections for Unincorporated Areas: 2010 – 2030.

MCD Type & Name (* indicates split muni)	C2000	Est2005	Proj2010	Proj2015	Proj2020	Proj2025	Proj2030	NumChg30yr	PctChg30yr
T Bergen	491	517	546	578	609	638	669	178	36.3%
T Christiana	308	311	319	327	336	343	351	43	14.0%
T Clinton	313	334	364	395	426	455	487	174	55.6%
T Coon	262	272	278	284	291	296	302	40	15.3%
T Forest	199	205	213	222	230	239	246	47	23.6%
T Franklin	324	345	357	371	384	396	408	84	25.9%
T Genoa	285	292	299	306	314	321	327	42	14.7%
T Greenwood	201	221	243	267	291	314	338	137	68.2%
T Hamburg	311	337	363	391	418	444	471	160	51.4%
T Harmony	247	271	296	322	349	375	401	154	62.3%
T Hillsboro	285	293	307	321	336	349	363	78	27.4%
T Jefferson	367	392	414	438	462	485	507	140	38.1%
T Kickapoo	194	202	213	225	237	249	261	67	34.5%
T Liberty	73	93	104	114	125	136	146	73	100.0%

MCD Type & Name (* indicates split muni)	C2000	Est2005	Proj2010	Proj2015	Proj2020	Proj2025	Proj2030	NumChg30yr	PctChg30yr
T Stark	138	145	156	167	179	189	201	63	45.7%
T Sterling	234	232	240	249	258	265	274	40	17.1%
T Union	165	180	196	214	231	248	265	100	60.6%
T Viroqua	549	587	606	628	647	665	684	135	24.6%
T Webster	217	234	252	273	293	312	331	114	52.5%
T Wheatland	236	264	291	318	346	373	401	165	69.9%
T Whitestown	167	175	184	194	205	215	224	57	34.1%
Unincorporated Totals	5566	5902	6241	6604	6967	7307	7657	2091	28.4%

Source: Demographic Services Center Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration (2008); modified for unincorporated areas by Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

Using household change trends as a basis, Table 8.4.4 estimates the acreage that may be expected for agricultural, forest, undeveloped, residential, ag other (i.e. farm related lands with improvements), public (i.e. Institutional), commercial, and manufacturing (i.e. industrial) land uses for five year increments from 2010 through 2030 in unincorporated areas of the county. These projected estimates were determined by first interpolating the number of estimated 2008 households (about 6105 households). Then the 2008 “acres per household” for each of the assumed increasing land use categories was computed by dividing the 2008 tax assessment base acreage by the 2008 estimate of households (i.e. 2008 base ac/6105). The resulting 2008 “acres per household” for the land use categories that are expected to increase are as follows:

- Residential 2.256363219 acres per household
- Ag Other 0.874799358 acres per household
- Public/Institutional 0.834670947 acres per household
- Commercial 0.150194909 acres per household
- Manufacturing 0.078455138 acres per household

A linear projection was then made by multiplying the projected number of total households for each 5 year increment from 2010-2030 in Table 8.4.3 by the computed acres per household listed above for each of the corresponding land use categories assumed to increase.

To complete the projection the assumed decreasing land use categories (i.e. agricultural, forest, undeveloped) were then reduced equally by the difference between the total increasing land use category acreage per time interval. This is based on the assumption that agricultural, forest, and undeveloped lands will have a slight decrease for the next 20 years, and that about an equal amount of land will come out of each of these 3 land use categories for development.

Table 8.4.4 - Estimated Land Use Acreage 2010-2030 Based on Projected Households

Land Use Category	Assumptions	Rounded Base Values 2008 Ac	2010 Ac	2015 Ac	2020 Ac	2025 Ac	2030 Ac	2030 % Land Area
Agricultural	Steady/Slight Decrease	279528	279338	278831	278323	277848	277359	55.28%
Forest	Steady/Slight Decrease	166139	165949	165442	164934	164459	163970	32.68%
Undeveloped	Decrease	30427	30237	29730	29222	28747	28258	5.63%
Residential	Increase	13776	14082	14901	15720	16487	17277	3.44%
Ag Other	Increase	5341	5460	5777	6095	6392	6698	1.34%
Public/Institutional	Increase	5096	5209	5512	5815	6099	6391	1.27%
Commercial	Increase	917	937	992	1046	1097	1150	0.23%
Manufacturing	Increase	479	490	518	547	573	601	0.12%
Totals		501703	501703	501703	501703	501703	501703	100.00%
	Sum Increasing LU's	25609	26178	27700	29223	30649	32117	
	Increase Difference		569	1523	1523	1426	1468	
	Decrease Applied		190	508	508	475	489	

Source: Vernon County LWCD – Land Information Office.

The two projections present very similar results for all land use categories. This should be expected since both are based on a measure of population. The second projection based on the number of projected households in 2030 results in a slightly higher need for developable residential acres (i.e. 607 ac more) which would likely result in a little more land being converted from agriculture and forest lands.

As stated at the beginning of this section, these projections do not take into account many factors which can affect land sales, development, and changes in use. The main point they show is that if population and household growth occur as projected, there will likely not be a tremendous amount of increased residential, commercial, and manufacturing acreage development over the next 20 years.

8.5 Land Use Programs

The land use programs, agencies, and activities that are currently in use or available for use in Vernon County are addressed in other chapters of this plan.

8.6 Land Use Trends and Outlook

Changes in land use are not isolated. They are related to changes in population, housing, transportation, community services, agriculture, natural resources, and economic development.

The following land use trends are anticipated within Vernon County over the next 20 years.

Housing, Population, and Land Use

- All population projections indicate that there will be a pretty significant increase in the County's population over the next 20 years. According to the 2008 projections developed by the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center this will be approximately 6,800 more people than reported by the 2000 Census.
- While this is a significant increase in population, the impact on land demand will be small.
- Most of this increase (i.e. about 5,200) is projected to occur in the un-incorporated areas of the county; the Towns of Clinton, Greenwood, Harmony, Bergen, Hamburg, Wheatland, Jefferson, and Webster are all projected to increase by over 300 people by 2030.
- The number of persons per household is projected to remain fairly constant with 2.5 persons per household over the next 20 years.
- The number of housing units in the county is projected to increase by about 700 to 1,400 units between 2010 and 2030.
- The County's scenic shoreland areas, woodlands, highland, and bluff areas will continue to be desired as residential and seasonal use building sites and subdivisions.

Transportation and Land Use

- Major highway intersections will continue to be targeted for commercial and industrial development.
- US route access management will significantly impact land use development.
- The regional highway system will offer efficient access to regional employment and recreation opportunities which will support growth and development trends.
- Traffic volumes will likely continue to increase with population growth, development, and tourism.
- Lower density development in rural areas will likely lead to increased costs of maintaining and developing transportation facilities.

Community Services and Land Use

- County and local government administration of land use regulations may need to increase in response to a growing population and the need to provide services at a lower cost and higher level of efficiency.

Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Land Use

- The sale of forested, open, and agricultural lands for conversion to more intensive development will continue but does not appear to be at rates where significant acreages will be converted or lost.
- Agriculture will maintain a strong presence in the County.
- The Working Lands Initiative (i.e. tax credits for preserving agricultural land) will likely drive implementation of local and county land use policy and adoption of zoning.

- Programs like the Managed Forest Law (MFL) will continue to be used by land owners for property tax relief on forest lands.
- Cash cropping and specialty farming will likely increase along with economic pressures for production farming to expand animal numbers and or acreage.
- Nonmetallic mine sites will continue to be developed to meet demands for sand, gravel, and other resources.
- Water quality management and coordination of development will likely become more prevalent and important, potentially impacting the allowable location and density of development.

Economic Development and Land Use

- The types of businesses and industry attracted to the county will continue to be a mix of manufacturing, professional, tourism and agriculturally based uses.
- Residential and highway corridor development will continue in order to accommodate those who commute to employment centers both within and out of the County.

While development is not projected to be intensive across the county, land use policies should play a significant role in the location and density of new development. Phase II of Vernon County's Comprehensive plan will identify and describe goals, objectives, and actions for the 20 year planning horizon.

Appendix A - Membership of the Comprehensive Plan Commission and Element Work Groups

Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission

Lynn Chakoian - Commission Chair, Economic Development Work Group
Jim Servais - Commission Vice-Chair, Land Use and Ag, Natural and Historic Resource Work Groups
Ole Yttri - Ag, Natural and Historic Resource Work Group
Armand Bringe - Housing Work Group
Cliff Peterson – Transportation Work Group
Dennis Brault – Utilities Work Group
Brad Steinmetz – Intergovernmental Cooperation Work Group
Phil Hooker – Land Use
Maynard Cox and Tom Spenner –Implementation

Staff Support

Doug Avoles - Planner/GIS Coordinator
Lori Polhamus – Clerks Office, Deputy II
Greg Lunde – County Corporation Counsel

Work Group Membership

Housing - Armand Bringe, chair

Karen Ehle-Traastad, Family Living Agent Vernon County UW-Extension in cooperation with the Vernon County Housing Coalition

Transportation - Cliff Peterson, chair

Virgil Hanold – Highway Department
Doug Avoles - Planner/GIS Coordinator
Pat Peterson – Unit on Aging
Lynda Wilke
Dennis Brault – County Board Member

Utilities and Community Facilities – Dennis Brault, chair

Tom Wilson
Jim Olson
Margaret Thielke
Utilities staff attended on an as needed basis

Land Use and Agricultural, Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources – Jim Servais, chair

Kelly Jacobs
Will Beitlich

Jessica Luhning
Sam Skemp
Ben Wojahn
Trent Strang
T Solverson
Art Thielin
Sharon Zellmer
Susan Burkhamer
Dave McClurg
Tim Servias

Economic Development – Lynn Chakoian chair

Rosanne Boyett Vernon County Tourism Council member and business owner
Mary Christenson, Development Director at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School
Marie Cimino, President, Vernon County Tourism Council and business owner
Rebecca Eby Executive Director, Viroqua Partners
Peter Fletcher Transportation Planner, Mississippi River Regional Planning
Dan Gilbertson, Farm Business Production Management Instructor, Western Technical College
Mary Ann Herlitzke, Dean of Teaching and Learning, Western Regional Learning Centers
Tim Hundt, Supported Employment Specialist, Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center
Karen Innis, Event Implementation Manager, Organic Valley
Kelly Jacobs, County Conservationist Vernon County LWCD
Grace Jones, Executive Director, Couleecap
Jim Kirchoff, Director, Vernon Economic Development Association Board and business owner
Penny Lindstrom, Community member and business owner
Kathy Neidert, Employment Coordinator, Workforce Connections
Susan Noble, Executive Director, Vernon Economic Development Association
Dawn Simonson, Vice-President, Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center
Marcy West, Executive Director, Kickapoo Valley Reserve and business owner
Ben Wojahn, Project Manager and GIS Specialist, Vernon County LWCD

Intergovernmental Cooperation – Brad Steinmetz, chair

A collaboration with the Towns Association and Vernon County Department Directors

Implementation – Maynard Cox, chair

Tom Spenner, County Board Chair
Greg Lunde, Vernon County Corporation Counsel
Lynn Chakoian, Comprehensive Plan Commission Chair

Citizens Advisory – Lynn Chakoian, facilitator

Aaron Corbin
Becky Comeau
Carol Gohlke
Daniel Arnold
Darin Von Ruden
Donna Leum

Elizabeth Parish
Gary Krause
Harvey Kirking
Jack K. Lee
Jessica Luhnig
Jim Holmberg
Jim Servais
Judy Williams
Margaret Thielke
Mike and Merna Fremstad
Philip Hooker
Rosanne Boyett
Steve Wagemester
Steven Laurdan
Sue Noble
Sustainable Woods Coop
Terry Kucera
Vernon Trails
Viroqua Natural Step Study Circle
Viroqua Partners
Wendy Crews

Appendix B - Summary of themes from the Summer 2008

Listening Sessions

Purpose of this Summary

This summary is an analysis of patterns, or themes, that emerged during the county-wide listening sessions conducted as part of the citizen participation plan for the county comprehensive planning effort. This summary is an addition to the many summary documents that were generated from each listening session. These other documents are readily available in the comprehensive plan section of the Vernon County website. This document is offered to assist the Phase II development of Goals, Objectives and Action Plans that need to reflect a broad understanding of citizen concerns as well as the specifics. In particular this report makes an effort to describe a county-wide context and identify where the diverse regions of the county find unity. Building on this unity will lead to a coherent plan and successful implementation of the final plan.

Regions within Vernon County

The listening sessions took place in groupings of County Supervisory Districts. The Supervisors convened the listening sessions and decided: where to meet, when would be a convenient day and time, and how to get the word out for maximum participation. The districts were grouped according to the Comprehensive Plan Commission's sense of what constituted a logical "neighborhood." As it turns out these groupings were sensible—there were real differences between groups, and also mostly agreement within groups. This section tries to make sense of the differences and the following section will analyze the points of unity between regions.

Regionalism in Vernon County is built into the landscape: steep topography, rivers, soil resources, cities and villages. These barriers and attractions are often reinforced by transportation infrastructure that keeps areas isolated, or pulls citizens to other cities and counties. As a result we have a very diverse base of world-views and social/cultural groups that need to be understood as we plan for the whole county.

Mississippi River

Vernon County's western edge is the Mississippi River Valley that offers a rich mixture of natural beauty, wildlife and plants from the bluffs down to the wildlife refuge and fish hatchery. Highway 35 facilitates travel north (La Crosse) and south (Prairie du Chien) that provide the major centers for jobs and commerce. There was a sense that the absence of Bergen Township and Stoddard in the meeting was in part due to their orientation towards the major center, La Crosse. There was also a sense of isolation from the county and hope that in future they could be more integrated into the county and particularly the tourism efforts of the county.

Prime Agricultural Lands

Inland from the Mississippi River is a region of prime agricultural soil (50% is Class I or II by NRCS definitions.) This area stretches east from the bluffs to the US Highway 14 corridor. The prime agriculture designation forms a patchwork because of our steep slopes, and this land is productive beyond the mapped boundaries if there is good stewardship and use of conservation practices. These areas are rural culturally and residents gravitate to city centers along the US Highway 14 corridor. Viroqua provides a hub of commercial activity, but often mailing address location, or school district identity forms the basis for cultural affiliations that subdivide this large region. There is also the tendency of these rural areas to be locally very tightly-knit—neighbors help each other, people regularly gather at a local bar or restaurant, and there is a pride in being self-sufficient at the very local level. Protection of land for agricultural use was a strong message from this group.

Cities

The Cities of Viroqua and Westby form another distinct region in the county. Natural resource protection was a major issue. These more centrally located cities were unified in wanting land use controls and zoning county-wide. There was no disagreement on this in the listening sessions⁶ and this unity on the subject was remarkable. This attitude provides a contrast with the rural areas of the county that were more divided on this issue. Non-city citizens often wanted the effects of land use regulation/zoning⁷ without being comfortable with the implementation of regulation that would make it possible.

Kickapoo Valley

Further east is the Kickapoo Valley region of the county. This unique culture and landscape results from the physical characteristics of the river valley (trout fishing, scenic beauty, historic flooding) and the history that resulted in the development of the Kickapoo Reserve. The valley was represented in a single listening session and found a focus on protection of area natural resources rather than a concern about preservation of agriculture. There was talk about eco-tourism opportunities and within this is a specialized agri-tourism that brings people onto small farms to experience farm work and rural scenery. This is an area of the county with plentiful Amish farms that could be regarded as agri-tourism in place.

⁶ One participant in the Viroqua Listening Session wanted future planning to stress the use of incentives and not regulation of land use, but he was a resident of Liberty Township, not the City. His comment also drew a counter argument from a resident of the City.

⁷ Examples include not allowing houses to randomly develop on the landscape, protection of farm land base, or protection of scenic and natural resources for the enjoyment of residents and tourists.

Hillsboro Region

The eastern part of the county is the rural Hillsboro and City of Hillsboro region that, being on the edge of the county, orients to the Interstate Highway to the north and US Highway 80 south to Richland Center. This directs the focus of commerce/jobs away from Vernon County and to adjoining counties. Redirecting that out-migration and attracting new residents to the Hillsboro area was a stated goal. Cultivating a diverse economy (manufacturing, tourism and agriculture) that would provide family-supporting jobs so the youth can stay and new people would relocate locally was a prime concern.

All participants around the county wanted to work closer to home and wanted opportunities for the young people to stay in the area for home and job. How to reverse this pull of workers away from the county for jobs and commerce and bring the economic activity into Vernon County will depend on building on what we can agree on as Vernon County citizens and uniting these areas of agreement to the stated goals, objectives and action plan for the county.

Points of Unity

Strength in Diversity

Diversity was seen as a strength in several areas: the agriculture sector, the many education alternatives, tourism opportunities, new people attracted to the area (from Amish to urban flight) and small business orientation towards many small businesses (not dependent on a single big employer.) In all of these areas people had a sense that the diversity could be put to better use if there was more collaboration and cooperation. Some examples follow.

We have a diverse agriculture sector, everything from high input, vertically-integrated distribution system to low-input, local (even horse drawn) distribution and all the territory in between. There is a “live and let live” attitude unless a person is being harmed or there is the perception that one model might dominate to the point that the other will not be able to function on the landscape or will not be profitable. As long as there is a balance and all producers and processors accomplish good stewardship of the land and water, people generally were open to making a place for all types of agriculture.

Education was not listed as a major concern, and there was pride in the local school systems. There are many options for schooling K-12 and the comments that came up centered on concerns about the budget crisis public schools face and the resulting loss of programs. The value placed on education as a way to help families and communities prosper includes some challenges. Making higher education an achievable, affordable, realistic part of a busy life and something that leads to local employment formed the basis of the conversations. Some thought that collaborating from K-12 up to technical college and university was needed to be more effective. Making all levels work together better, as well as forging collaborations in our K-12 schools that are so diverse will be a future challenge, but is seen as a way to build our local capacity.

Tourism options in the county are diverse and were perceived as not well-coordinated. Collaborating to create and promote the Mississippi River, Kickapoo River and Cities as a destination identity was seen as a path that would deliver growth in this area that has so much promise given our diverse natural resource base.

With our aging population we need new people and workers to be ready to provide labor for potential businesses. Often new residents use the telecommunication system that is essentially a “bring their job with them” model. The diverse business base also is seen as a strength and it was often mentioned that we want to encourage this and cultivate new small businesses to avoid the dependence

on a single source of jobs that could relocate or close and be a shock on our economy and tear apart our communities.

Sustainability

Participants also agreed that the future will depend on planning that keeps sustainability in mind, and taps into opportunities for “green” energy and technologies. This should not be a surprising theme because at-the-pump gas prices topped \$4.00 in the summer of 2008. Even given that reality, there was a sense people understood that the long-term future will be more expensive for commuters, government and businesses that depend on fuel, petroleum-based inputs, and electricity. From county road maintenance to school bus routes people were aware of the problems and ready for innovative ways to approach this future challenge.

We are united in support of locally produced fuels and electricity that will help our local economy with new jobs and opportunities for commerce. There was a collective hope that this alternative energy would provide savings for users by providing various energy options. We also saw a need to have a more sustainable approach to travel options and habits—car pooling, public transport systems, park-and-ride, car sharing. We also desire more local options for jobs, commerce, and recreation in an effort to minimize our need to travel for these necessities of life.

Control issues

Many areas of the county voiced concern about State-level government intruding into what most consider local-level issues. Put in a positive form, we are united in favoring local control. This can be carried to the extreme of the landowner level: “I want to be able to do whatever I want with my land.” But in general there was a sense that the Township level of government should and could handle regulation—if there will be any. While this local wisdom prevails, citizens had many concerns that the towns are ill-equipped to counter state regulation, or unwilling to establish local regulations.

Another aspect of the dilemma we face is that while many want the county to counteract pushy state agencies,⁸ there is a hesitancy to give the county the power to actually do it. This is similar to the situation of people calling for land use regulations, but those same people being unclear and uncomfortable talking about a particular institutional mechanism. Understanding the desires and discomforts is the first step to deciding what to do.

One participant in Sterling Township Listening Session stated clearly, “We want to keep the status quo.” Given the State’s habit of creating uniform rules that we will need to conform to, and the continuing flow of people into the county that provides needed new energy, but also new complexity on the landscape and in communities, it becomes difficult to identify a status quo. Economic stagnation might result in things staying the same, but no one attending the listening sessions provided a cheering voice for stagnation. People wanted a more vibrant economy that provided jobs. They also wanted thoughtful change that preserves agricultural land and tourism options and reduces the patchwork of random development that results from market pressures and chance. There is a sense something needs fixing, but the mechanism and needed locus of control for effectively making things better is not clear.

⁸ There were complaints about DNR requirements that make road maintenance more expensive, DOT plans that squash local vision of how transportation fits our landscape and DATCP rules that do not allow locals to consider local conditions before approval of major development projects.

As We Move Ahead in the Planning Process

This Comprehensive Plan is a first step to create goals that we agree will improve our lives in the county. As each element workgroup makes decisions about an action plan, they need to consider the themes covered in this paper. In all our recommendations do we maintain respect for diversity and ways to bring collaboration to diverse groups? Do we have innovative thinking that results in a more sustainable Vernon County at the center of our action plans? Are we critically examining the power position of the county and what mechanisms would be most effective and justifiable to make the county or other unit of local government/organization a potent voice for local concerns?

In the end we need to thank those who participated in the Listening Session events in all the neighborhoods. These active and engaged citizens are also our strength and we, as commission members and workgroup participants, need to integrate this local knowledge into our assessment of current conditions and our goals for the future.

Appendix C - Report on the Comprehensive Planning Survey for Vernon County, Spring of 2009

The Comprehensive Plan Commission implemented a sample survey to inform decisions written into the Vernon County comprehensive plan. The methods and results are summarized below.

Survey Methods

The Vernon County parcel database was used as the base of information to create a sample for the Comprehensive Plan survey that was specified in the approved participation plan. Lynn Chakoian, Doug Avoles (LIS/LWCD) and consultant Kathy Crittenden (emeritus professor of Sociology, University of Illinois) devised the sampling method.

The first 3 characters of the parcel number is a code for the unit of government, and a separate data field also identifies the municipality. In the county we have 21 Towns, 9 Villages and 3 Cities. There are 32,714 records in the parcel database. The 911 fire number list (a different database) has about 14,500 properties with addresses that include businesses and non-residence buildings (camp sites, well houses, etc.) We expected the final sampling frame to include less than 14,000 mailing addresses.

We determined that the sample should be stratified by unit of government and proportionally sampled. We anticipated a 5% sampling rate would yield enough responses from small units of government, and also be small enough to be within budget constraints. At this sampling rate we estimated that 700 surveys (5% of 14,000) would be mailed out. The actual number of surveys to be mailed was 657.

The following process was used to build a sample that includes the potential representation of resident landowners, absentee landowners, and non-landowning renters:

1. The parcel database was imported into an Access database
2. The parcel records were extracted by municipality into separate lists.
3. Parcels that have property addresses different from tax mailing addresses and have a land use code of residential or ag-residential were assumed to be a potential renter. A duplicate record was created and if selected as part of the sample, the survey was sent to the property address as "to the resident at..." Not all of these properties will be rented and in that case the survey will be either returned as undeliverable or forwarded to the owner of the property.
4. Duplicate mailing addresses were eliminated, including those across municipalities, to develop the final sample frame for each municipality.
5. Each municipal list was then sorted on parcel number in preparation for the random selection process and survey response tracking & follow-up.
6. For each municipal list a random number between 1 and 19 from a random numbers table was selected and used to determine the 1st included record. Then every 20th record after the 1st was selected and added to the final survey mailing list.

This process created a stratified, systematic random sample that represents resident landowners, absentee landowners, and renters who do not own parcels within the county. This process was designed to represent respondents that are geographically distributed across the county and widely distributed within units of government. This sampling represents those who own business property in the county even if they do not reside in the county.

Survey development

Each element work group was given the task of preparing questions for the survey. Drafts of the compiled questions were brought to the full commission and the draft survey was assembled through the meeting process. The questions were assembled into a booklet form and before being sent out, the Citizen advisory group met to discuss the format and clarity of the questions. Changes were made that reflected their input and a final booklet was published. It was sent out via US postal service with a stamped return envelope enclosed.

Results of the survey

We achieved about a 40% return rate with 306 of the surveys sent in. Those returned were collected by the LWCD and Doug Avoles who checked them in using the parcel number that was on the return envelope. The survey then was separated from the envelope and later numbered for tabulation in a spreadsheet. Michael Bankes (citizen volunteer from Viroqua) and Lynn Chakoian worked on the tabulation. Michael developed summary spreadsheets that were then used by Lynn to distribute the survey results to the full commission and all the workgroups (completed in early June 2009.)

Demographics of Respondents

Males 61%

Females 39%

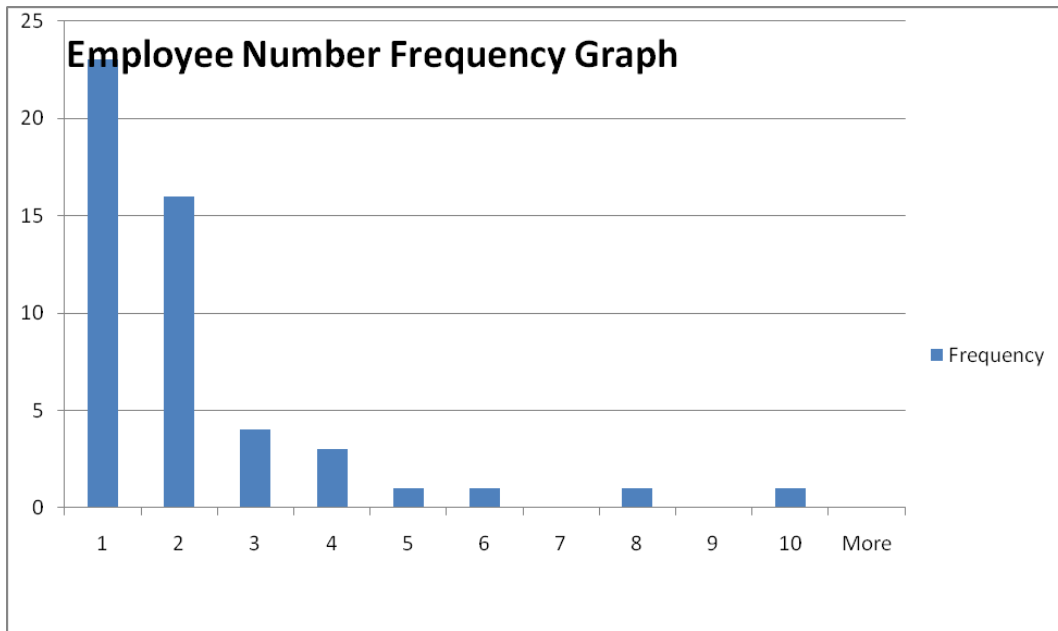
Employed =142 residents answering following questions about type of work

- full time 77%
- part time 16%
- irregularly 7%

250 residents answered about their work situation

- Not employed 6%
- Fixed income/retired/disabled 33%
- Employee 42%
- Self-employed 22%
 - Ave years in business 22
 - Total businesses 57
 - 67% of those responding feel have ability to expand

Frequency (vertical axis) of employee numbers (horizontal axis)

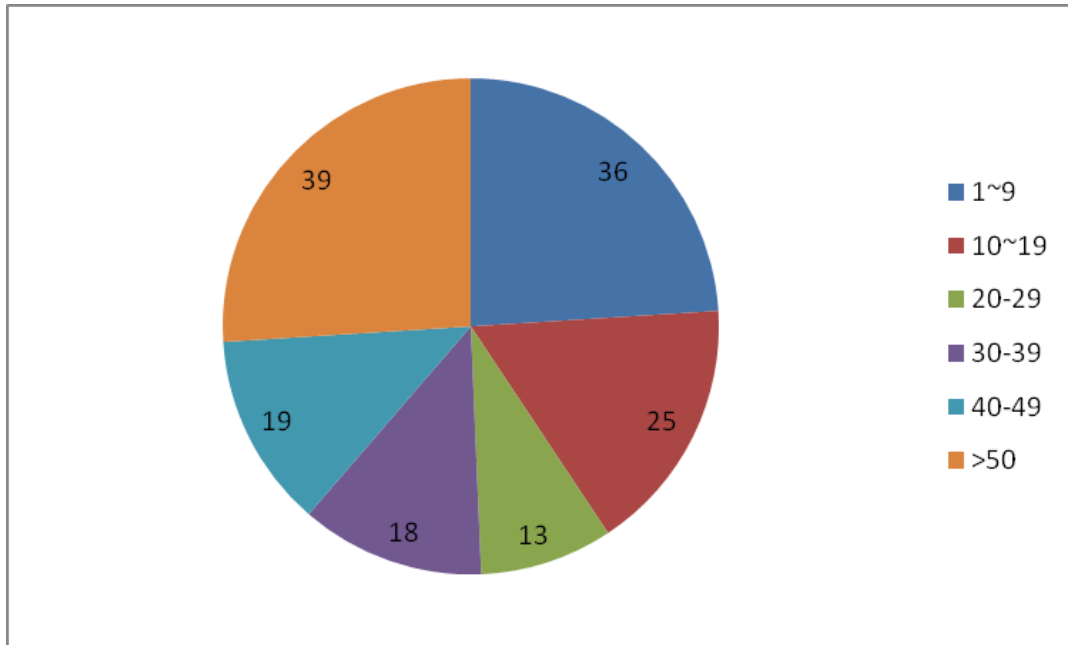


Of 179 residents responding to quality of job questions:

- My job uses all my talents and provides potential for growth 63%
- I am underemployed or in a dead-end job. 13%
- I am unemployed 24%

In total 233 of the respondents reside in the county and there were 60 non-residents, 13 left this blank . Only 8 respondents were residents of the county less than a year.

Number of years resident (only 150 people responded) distribution appears in the pie chart below. Nearly a quarter of those responding were residents 1-9 years, and another quarter were resident over 50 years. The other ranges vary, with the 20-29 year residency the least reported.



Age ranges of 290 reporting

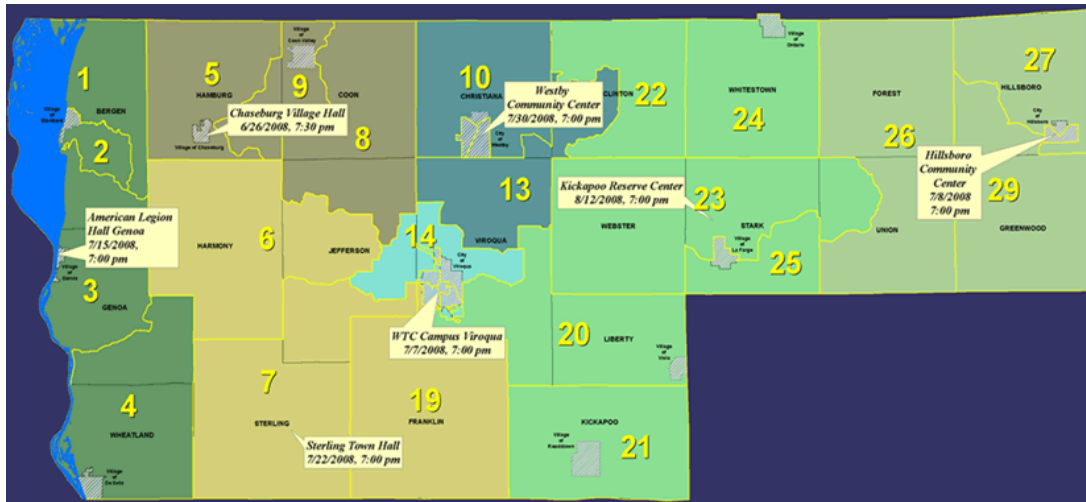
- 5% 18-30
- 21% 31-45
- 47% 46-65
- 27% over 65

Economic Security/Insecurity of Residents:

	Number	Percent
In financial distress	16	7%
Foreclosed on mortgage	0	0%
Job insecure	14	5%

Neighborhood response rates

In the comprehensive planning process we grouped areas of the county for “neighborhood meetings” and for consistency we grouped the town results into these same “neighborhoods.” The neighborhood map follows, with the response rate from each group.



- Mississippi River area =41 responses
- Towns of Harmony, Jefferson, Sterling, Franklin = 34
- Hamburg, Chaseburg, Coon Valley = 40
- Westby, Christiana = 21
- Kickapoo Valley communities =73
- Viroqua City and Town =24
- Hillsboro area/NE = 39

*total n=275, some surveys did not include location (23)

Results Related to the Planning Elements

Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources

The following table shows the relative financial security/insecurity of resident farmers in the county.

	Number	Percent
In financial distress	1	3%
Foreclosed on mortgage	0	0%
Job insecure	3	5%
Worried about your financial future	15	26%
Comfortable but wary	40	69%
No worries/secure	6	10%

The next table details the source of health benefits that farmers have in the county.

Health benefits from my/spouse's current or former employer or self-employment	Only health benefits that are expensive or high deductible	Government health benefits	No health insurance now
# = 28	12	15	6
8 48%	21%	26%	10%

Farmers and the future:

Of 58 residents responding that they are engaged in farming

43 (74%) indicated they wanted to pass on the farm to the next generation

11 (19%) said they did not want to pass the farm on to the next generation

*several not farming wished the next generation to use the land for farming.

Program ideas:

Favor government and non-government programs to help starting farmers (n=227)

Yes =53%, No=22%, Don't know = 22%

Programs Favored (could choose >1, total #=266)

29% Purchase Development Rights

17% Land Trusts

45% Partnering with other programs

24% said Startups are no concern of the county

There was genuine support for local farmers and local products as shown by the responses to the question, "Would you be willing to pay more for farm products (milk, meat, vegetables, pizza, cheese etc.) to support local County farmers?"

Yes; I already do this on a regular basis.	Yes, if there was only a slight difference in cost	Yes, but only if it were convenient	No, I would not pay more.	No, I do not buy these kinds of products.
#= 138	98	30	34	4
45%	32%	10%	11%	1%

There was enormous support for protection of natural resources, and land in agriculture, as well as maintaining the rural character of the county. The table below shows the percent of responses with 4 being strong support, 3 support, 2 do not support, 1 not at all. Overall 60=90% of respondents supported these protections.

	Natural Resources				Rural Character				Protect Ag Land			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Mississippi	74%	17%	5%	5%	50%	39%	3%	8%	56%	18%	15%	10%
Chaseburg	83%	15%	0	3%	74%	21%	3%	3%	71%	18%	5%	5%
Westby	85%	5%	5%	5%	67%	29%	5%	0	55%	35%	5%	5%
Viroqua	83%	8%	8%	0	70%	17%	13%	0	67%	21%	13%	0
Harmony Jefferson Sterling/Fran klin	73%	12%	9%	6%	66%	25%	3%	6%	70%	15%	6%	9%
Kickapoo	70%	17%	9%	4%	70%	19%	9%	3%	66%	20%	11%	3%
Hillsboro	73%	22%	0	5%	78%	8%	5%	10%	62%	23%	3%	13%

The next two tables show the responses about the effectiveness of tools for wildlife management in Vernon County, and the effectiveness of forest management.

HUNTING REGULATION EFFECTIVENESS

	State hunting regs	State trapping regs	Ag damage progs	Habitat management progs	State hunting and trapping regulations, but only if changes	Other landowner activities	Ed	Weather/ Mother nature/ none
Strongly oppose	4%	1%	13%	5%	13%	10%	5%	7%
Not support	14%	17%	21%	21%	21%	18%	12%	11%
Support	44%	44%	41%	41%	37%	48%	45%	50%
Strong Support	38%	38%	25%	33%	29%	24%	38%	32%

FORESTRY PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

	Managed Forest Law	Forest stewardship Plans	Landowner management outside of	Government cost-share programs	Education	Timber Indust./ logging	Natural management
Strongly oppose	10%	7%	9%	15%	5%	11%	9%
Not support	19%	17%	20%	21%	14%	26%	17%
Support	40%	47%	44%	41%	46%	42%	48%
Strong Support	31%	29%	27%	24%	36%	21%	26%

Transportation Questions

	Does Vernon County need officially designated Park and Ride locations?	Do the elderly and disabled routes (minibus) meet our needs?	Are designated safe routes to schools needed?	Does the County need more designated bike/pedestrian routes?
Yes	33%	21%	35%	41%
No	35%	17%	25%	35%
Don't know	32%	62%	40%	24%

	Would you support employer sponsored transport service for commuting to work?	Is there a need for carpooling in the county?	Would you be interested in a daily commuter bus?	Are the roads maintained to provide safe transportation?	Will the roads meet our needs for the next 20 years if they are maintained as they are now?
Yes	44%	56%	24%	74%	47%
No	30%	16%	56%	17%	30%
Don't know	26%	28%	20%	9%	22%

The following tables reflect answers about the adequacy of the roads of different jurisdictions. In general State roads were judged better able to handle traffic and heavy loads than more local roads, but overall there was good support/satisfaction for the way the roads are maintained/managed.

Responses to the question, “How adequate are the following kinds of roads to safely transport high-volume heavy truck traffic? “

	State Roads	County Roads	Town Roads	City Roads	Village Roads
Not at all	2%	8%	23%	12%	20%
	7%	28%	44%	33%	39%
	58%	50%	24%	41%	32%
Very	33%	15%	9%	14%	10%

Responses to the question, “How well do the roads meet the needs of county residents?” are in the following table.

	State Roads	County Roads	Town Roads	City Roads	Village Roads
Not at all	2%	3%	7%	4%	5%
	5%	12%	16%	8%	14%
	47%	50%	48%	56%	52%
Very	46%	35%	29%	32%	29%

On all groups (age, m/f, farmer/non-farmer, resident/non) the opinions about roads were similar to the results in the previous two tables.

Housing Questions

More of the following types of housing are needed...

	Single-family housing	Duplexes	Rental Apartments/ houses	Handicap accessible Low income
Yes	43%	24%	32%	51%
No	18%	35%	32%	12%
Don't know	38%	41%	36%	37%

	Low Income	Elderly housing	Affordable housing	Condominiums
Yes	44%	61%	71%	13%
No	24%	10%	9%	50%
Don't know	32%	28%	20%	37%

Across neighborhoods (small variations) the data indicate that affordable and elderly housing are most needed and condominiums are not seen as a pressing need in the county

Utilities Questions

The questions related to utilities asked opinions about the adequacy of existing facilities as well as planning for future placement of facilities.

Utilization of existing sewer facilities vs. developing new facilities was asked in the following question.

(Check the one that best describes your opinion)

New homes should be encouraged...

27% Primarily in communities where sewer and water are available.

20% In or next to communities where sewer and water can be extended.

25% In the country within existing local guidelines

29% Anywhere in the County.

How adequate are the following kinds of services?

	The County recycling and hazardous waste services	Your electric utility's promotion of renewable energy options	Hospitals and clinical health care services in the County	Availability of long-term/nursing care facilities
Not at all	6%	13%	3%	11%
	17%	27%	16%	18%
	41%	37%	44%	42%
Very adequate	37%	23%	38%	29%

How available are library services?

	Not very available			Very available
Mississippi	18%	10%	33%	38%
Chaseburg	0%	9%	36%	55%
Westby	6%	0%	35%	59%
Viroqua	0%	14%	41%	45%
Harmony/Jeff Sterling/Franklin	7%	13%	37%	43%
Kickapoo	6%	2%	39%	54%
Hillsboro	5%	8%	38%	49%
No Town reported	6%	24%	24%	47%

Placement of Towers question

(Please check the choice that best fits your opinion.)

Towers (i.e. cell, TV, wind, etc) on the landscape are ...

- 17% Acceptable anywhere in the County
- 43% Acceptable only if County has tower design and land use regulations
- 11% Acceptable only if there are certain restrictions placed on the tower design
- 31% Acceptable only if they do not impede on nearby neighbors
- 1% Not acceptable

Should Vernon County Government take an active role in planning for and regulating the type and location of energy facilities? (e.g., wind generators, manure digester power plants) n=294

- Yes = 77%
- No= 13%
- Don't know = 9%

More detailed responses on a neighborhood basis:

	Acceptable only if County has tower design and land use regulations	Acceptable only if there are certain restrictions placed on the tower design	Acceptable only if they do not impede on nearby neighbors
Mississippi	47%	5%	30%
Chaseburg	38%	10%	35%
Westby	57%	10%	29%
Viroqua	42%	17%	25%
Harmony/Jeff Sterling/Franklin	35%	21%	38%
Kickapoo	32%	9%	46%
Hillsboro	26%	14%	36%

Inter Governmental Cooperation Questions

The following two tables detail the responses about government units cooperating. Overall the public supports cooperation (differences between neighborhoods are small) and generally the public does not support the hiring of a county administrator. How the county can manage coordination between units of government without a coordinator will be a challenge for this planning element.

	Vernon County should increase its participation in western Wisconsin regional planning.	The County should work closely and cooperatively with cities, towns, and villages for planning and maintenance of roads and recreation	Vernon County should cooperate with local governments in supervision of mining sites
Yes	54%	88%	58%
No	13%	6%	10%
Don't Know	33%	6%	31%

	Vernon County should coordinate law enforcement and emergency service efforts with cities, towns, and villages.	Vernon County should coordinate its sanitation and zoning services with local zoning administrators.	Vernon County should acquire an Administrator or elected Executive.
Yes	88%	72%	24%
No	6%	13%	34%
Don't Know	6%	15%	42%

Economic Development Questions

The table below shows the percent of responses with 4 being strong support, 3 support, 2 do not support, 1 not at all.

	More Recreational Land				Promote Tourism				Promote Historic Preservation			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Mississippi	19%	43%	24%	14%	39%	46%	5%	10%	50%	38%	8%	5%
Chaseburg	18%	29%	35%	18%	41%	32%	16%	11%	63%	24%	11%	3%
Westby	45%	25%	20%	10%	50%	35%	15%	0	80%	10%	10%	0
Viroqua	26%	32%	16%	26%	39%	30%	30%	0	52%	30%	17%	0
Harmony Jefferson Sterling/Fran klin	30%	37%	7%	27%	35%	29%	13%	23%	50%	31%	13%	6%
Kickapoo	30%	16%	28%	27%	35%	26%	21%	18%	57%	27%	11%	4%
Hillsboro	31%	11%	26%	31%	36%	38%	23%	3%	46%	41%	13%	0

There was support for county financial help to have leadership in economic development,

“To provide leadership and coordination in helping local businesses start up and expand, Vernon County should...”

	Have an economic dev department funded by the County.	Hire/contract an economic development director/professional	Contribute to hiring a Community Development agent with University Extension	Support existing orgs that provide these services	Do nothing at the county level.
#	68	32	100	126	32
%	19%	9%	28%	35%	9%

Land Use Questions

Much of the commission’s curiosity to know public opinion relates to the often contentious issue of land use regulation and to what extent Vernon County residents support land use controls like ordinances and zoning (county-wide or town based.) The previous sections show a strong desire for controlling land uses and protecting natural, agricultural and rural character resources we now enjoy. The strong sentiment to control the placement of towers in the county illustrates that even when citizens maintain a “no regulation” stance, there can be exceptions. To the extent this is expressed as a tower being ok “unless it impedes my neighbor”, the policymakers of the county will have difficulty maintaining order. It would be much more orderly to have rules that govern these issues that all agree to, and that can be implemented evenly. Unfortunately, the results of the survey show less unity on *how* we might control and contain unappreciated uses, even though the desire is strong to control effects on the landscape. For instance the following question drew little support for “development anywhere in the county,”

Which of the following do you prefer? (*Check one*)

- 39% Preserve the existing rural landscape, with little new residential development
- 52% Preserve the existing rural landscape, with moderate amounts of new residential development
- 7% Unrestricted development in rural areas

The “zoning question” drew the following response,

To create more orderly development and to preserve farmland and recreation areas, do you support more regulation of land use?

Yes 54% or no 40%

(*If yes, choose all that apply*)

At what level of government?

- 42% County-wide
- 27% Town/village/city
- 19% State

What form of regulation of land use would you prefer? (*Check as many as apply*)

- 50% Zoning
- 39% Various restrictive ordinances (e.g., driveway ordinance)
- 5% Other (*Specify* _____)

(When percentages do not add up to 100% there were people who left the question blank, or if they add up to over 100%, people chose more than one response, ie support zoning and ordinances. In this case the support for zoning was 57% of those responding, but 54% of the 306 surveys returned.)

There was some confusion for people filling out the surveys with this question. Some, as shown in the neighborhood breakdown below, checked “no” to more regulation for orderly development, but also checked zoning. In total 35 respondents (every neighborhood represented) support zoning, but checked “no” for more regulation for orderly development. There is not a clear explanation of why there would be this inconsistency, but it suggests the signal is stronger for implementing regulations than

there is clarity for what kind of regulations would be acceptable. The numbers also indicate support for county-wide regulation instead of towns having total control. Clearly there is much definition of terms and education needed to reflect the desires of the citizens of the county.

	For more regulated, orderly development		County-wide	Town	State	Zoning	Ord
	Yes	No					
Mississippi	56%	37%	37%	28%	30%	53%	30%
Chaseburg	48%	48%	28%	25%	13%	50%	40%
Westby	67%	33%	52%	24%	24%	52%	43%
Viroqua	58%	33%	54%	33%	8%	75%	38%
Harm/Jeff Sterl/Frank	56%	44%	44%	29%	21%	59%	53%
Kickapoo	51%	43%	39%	28%	22%	39%	42%
Hillsboro	52%	40%	45%	24%	14%	52%	33%
No Town	61%	25%	57%	21%	11%	39%	39%

Conclusion

All the workgroups have been given this data to include in their work. More analysis of the data is possible between demographic groups, but overall the variation between groups is not great. These results will help the element work groups to identify issues of concern to county citizens and craft appropriate goals and actions to guide policy-makers and county staff into the future.

Appendix D - Acronyms and Glossary

Acronyms

ACE	Army Corps of Engineers
ADC	Animal Damage Control
ADLP	Acquisition and Development of Local Parks
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
AWAC	Animal Waste Advisory Committee
AWRA	American Water Resources Association
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CAFO	Confined Animal Feeding Operation
CES	Cooperative Extension Service
CREP	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
CROPP	Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
DARE	Driftless Area Restoration Effort
DATCP	Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
DC	District Conservationist
DNR	Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin)
DOA	Department of Administration
DOR	Department of Revenue
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Programs
ERW	Exceptional Resource Water
ES	Enforceable Standard
FEST	Forest Education Steering Team
FLEP	Forest Landowner Enhancement Program
FPP	Farmland Preservation Program
FS	Forest Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
FSA	Food Security Act
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Geographic Positioning Systems
HEL	Highly Erodible Land
ICWG	Interagency Conservation Working Group
IPM	Integrated Pesticide Management
LCO	Local Contracting Officer
LWCB	Land and Water Conservation Board
LWCC	Land and Water Conservation Committee
LWCD	Land and Water Conservation Department
LWRM	Land and Water Resource Management (Plan)
MALWEG	Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grant
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

MRRPC	Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission
MUT	Multi-Use Trail (between Westby and Viroqua)
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NALMS	North American Lake Management Society
NFHAP	National Fish Habitat Action Plan
NOD	Notice of Discharge
NHI	National Heritage Inventory
NMP	Nutrient Management Planning
NPM	Nutrient & Pest Management
NPS	Non-Point Source Pollution
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
ORW	Outstanding Resource Water
QST	Wisconsin Interagency Quality Steering Team
PAL	Preventive Action Limit
PL566	Public Law 566 (Flood Control Structures)
RC&D	Resource Conservation and Development Council
SOC	Standards Oversight Council
SWA	State Working Agreement
SWCS	Soil and Water Conservation Society
SWRM	Soil and Water Resource Management Program
TU	Trout Unlimited
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDI	United States Department of Interior
USGS	United States Geological Survey
UWEX	University of Wisconsin-Extension
VSN	Valley Stewardship Network
WAL	Wisconsin Association of Lakes
WALCE	Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees
WCA	Wisconsin Counties Association
WCCA	Wisconsin County Code Administrators
WDCAP	Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program
WFLGP	Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program
WGNHS	Wisconsin Geologic and Natural History Survey
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
WLWCA	Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
WPRA	Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association
WRP	Wetlands Reserve Program
WTFC	Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee
Y&E	Youth and Education

Glossary

303(d) Waters This list identifies waters which are not meeting water quality standards, including both water quality criteria for specific substances or the designated uses. It is used as the basis for development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) under the provisions of section 303(d)(1)(C) of the Clean Water Act, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA requires that the DNR update its list every 2 years. Also called List of Impaired Waters.

Animal Waste Management Program This regulatory program, administered by the DNR via NR243, seeks to identify and correct animal waste-related water quality problems.

ATCP 50 The chapter of Wisconsin's Administrative Code that implements the Land and Water Resource Management Program as described in Chapter 92 of the State Statutes. It identifies those conservation practices that may be used to meet performance standards.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) The most effective conservation practice or combination of conservation practices for reducing Nonpoint source pollution to acceptable levels.

Chapter 92 Portion of Wisconsin Statutes outlining the soil and water conservation, agricultural shoreland management, and animal waste management laws and policies of the State.

Conservation Plan A record of decisions and intentions made by land users regarding the conservation of the soil, water and related natural resources of a particular unit of land.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program An add-on to the CRP program, which expands and builds on CRP's success in certain areas of the state.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) A provision of the federal Farm Bill that takes eligible cropland out of production and puts it into grass or tree cover for 10-15 years.

Cooperator A landowner or operator who is working with, or has signed a cooperative agreement with, a county LCC.

County Conservationist County Land Conservation Department head, responsible for implementing programs assigned to the LCD and for supervising LCD staff.

Critical Sites Those sites that are significant sources of Nonpoint source pollution upon which best management practices shall be implemented as described in s. 281.65(4)(g) 8.am., stats.

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) The state agency responsible for establishing statewide soil and water conservation policies and administering the state's soil and water conservation programs. The DATCP administers state cost-sharing funds for a variety of LCC operations, including support for staff, materials and conservation practices.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) The state agency responsible for managing state owned lands and protecting public waters. DNR also administers programs to regulate, guide and assist LCCs, LCDs and individual land users in managing land, water, fish and wildlife. The DNR administers state

cost-sharing funds for priority watershed project, Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) grants, and Urban Nonpoint Source Construction and Planning grants.

District Conservationist (DC) NRCS employee responsible for administering federal conservation programs at the local level.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) The agency of the federal government responsible for carrying out the nation’s pollution control laws. It provides technical and financial assistance to reduce and control air, water and land pollution.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Federal program to provide technical and cost-sharing assistance to landowners for conservation practices that provide water quality protection.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) USDA agency that administers agricultural assistance programs including price supports, production controls and conservation cost-sharing.

Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) A DATCP land-use program under Chapter 91, Wisconsin Statutes, that helps preserve farmland through local planning and zoning, promotes soil and water conservation and provides tax relief to participating landowners.

Geographic Information System (GIS) A computerized system of maps and layers of data about land including soils, land cover, topography, field boundaries, roads and streams. Such geographically based data layers improve the ability to analyze complex data for decision-making.

Impaired Waters List Same as the 303(d) list.

Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) Composed of 3 local elected officials, 4 appointed by the Governor (1 shall be a resident of a city with a population of 50,000 or more, 1 shall represent a governmental unit involved in river management, 1 shall be a farmer and 1 shall be a member of a charitable corporation, charitable association or charitable trust) and leaders from DNR, DATCP, DOA, the LWCB oversees the approval of county land and water management plans (s.92.04, stats.).

Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRM) A locally developed and implemented multi-year strategic plan with an emphasis on partnerships and program integration. The plan includes a resource assessment, identifies the applicable performance standards and related control of pollution from Nonpoint sources, identifies a multi-year description of planned activities, establishes a progress tracking system, and describes an approach for coordinating information and implementation programs with other local, state and federal agencies, communities and organization (s. ATCP 50.12).

Land and Water Conservation Committee (LWCC) The unit of county government empowered, by Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin Statutes, to conserve and protect the county’s soil, water and related natural resources. Referred to in the LWRM guidelines as the “committee”.

Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) The department of county government responsible for administering the conservation programs and policies of the Land Conservation Committee.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Part of USDA, NRCS provides soil survey, conservation planning and technical assistance to local land users.

Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS) Pollution from many small or diffuse urban and rural sources. Livestock waste finding its way into a stream and causing water pollution is an example of non-point source pollution.

Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement Program A DNR water quality program under Chapters 120 and s. 281, Wisconsin Statutes, that provides technical assistance and cost-sharing to landowners to develop and maintain management practices to prevent or reduce Nonpoint source water pollution in designated watersheds.

NR 151 DNR's administrative code that establishes runoff pollution performance standards for non-agricultural facilities and transportation facilities and performance standards and prohibitions for agricultural facilities and practices designed to meet water quality standards.

Nutrient Management Plan The Nutrient Management Plan means any of the following: (a) A plan required under s. ATCP 50.04 (3) or 50.62 (5) (f). (b) A farm nutrient plan prepared or approved, for a landowner, by a qualified nutrient management planner.

ORW/ERW DNR classifies streams as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) as listed in NR 102.10 and NR102.11. ORW waters have excellent water quality and high-quality fisheries and do not receive wastewater discharges. ERW waters have excellent water quality and valued fisheries but may already receive wastewater discharges.

Priority Farms Farms identified by the county for having excessive runoff from soil erosion and/or manure resulting in existing or potential water quality problems.

Soil and Water Resource Management Program (SWRM) DATCP program that provides counties with funds to hire and support Land Conservation Department staff and to assist land users in implementing DATCP conservation programs (ATCP 50).

Soil Loss Tolerance ("T") Erosion rate in tons per acre per year of soil field could lose and still maintain productivity.

Soil Survey NRCS conducts the National Cooperative Soil Survey and publishes soil survey reports. Soils data is designed to evaluate the potential of the soil and management needed for maximum food and fiber production.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Branch of federal government with responsibilities in the areas of food production, inspection, and storage. Agencies with resource conservation programs and responsibilities, such as FSA, NRCS and Forest Service and others are agencies of the USDA.

University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX) The outreach of the University of Wisconsin system responsible for formal and informal educational programs throughout the state.

Watershed The geographic area that drains to a particular river, stream or water body providing its water supply.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) A provision of the federal Farm Bill that compensates landowners for voluntarily restoring and protecting wetlands on their property.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Federal program to help improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) The state association that represents the county interests and the furtherance of better county government. It is a membership organization representing Wisconsin's 72 county boards of supervisors and nine county executives.

Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA) Membership organization that represents the state's 72 County Land Conservation Committees and Departments.

Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon Wisconsin

Phase II Goals, Objectives and Actions for Vision 2030

Recommended Draft

September 2009

Prepared by the Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission

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1. *Background--Issues and Opportunities*

Planning Process

Development of the *Vernon County Year 2030 Comprehensive Plan* was in response to the passage of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation (Statute 66.1001). This law requires all municipalities (counties, cities, towns, and villages) to adopt a comprehensive plan by the year 2010 if they wish to make any local land use decisions. As of January 1, 2010, any municipality that "affects land use" through regulation, such as zoning, land division or subdivision ordinances, or official mapping must make its decisions in accordance with that community's comprehensive plan. Vernon County falls under this requirement because it is required to develop a countywide plan to meet the conditions of the legislation.

Incorporated community comprehensive plans are part of the county plan. However, a city or village plan is adopted separately and has autonomous authority for regulation and administration within its respective border. While the comprehensive planning law encourages coordinated planning between jurisdictions, it does not require consistency between plans. Accordingly, it is possible that a city or village plan may conflict with the plan of a neighboring town and that each respective plan will portray this difference. The state comprehensive planning law does not change the basic authorities or relationships between counties and towns in adoption or administration of plans or zoning.

Planning Framework and Reporting Process

The Vernon County planning process has resulted in two plan documents detailed as follows:

- *Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon —Phase I Inventory and Trends Report for Vision 2030.* This component contains inventory, background, and trend data for eight of the nine required comprehensive planning elements. Subjects include: population and housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, agriculture, natural and cultural resources, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, land use, and related programs.
- *Comprehensive Plan of the County of Vernon—Phase II Goals, Objectives and Action Plan for Vision 2030.* This document references the *Phase I Inventory and Trends Report* and provides goals, objectives, policies, recommendations, and future programs for the county and partnership agencies and organizations. This document, in coordination with the *Phase I Inventory and Trends Report*, meets the requirements of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation for the county.

These documents provide the planning framework upon which decisions can be based, allow for local control, and provide planning and implementation strategies that can direct the entire county in a desirable direction for the next 20 years. Each document is ordered according to the 9 planning elements. One member from the full Comprehensive Plan Commission, which was appointed by the Vernon County Board Chair, led an element work group. The planning element chapters were written by the work groups. Work group membership is listed in Appendix A of this document.

The work groups varied in size and composition, but each one made efforts to reach out to the major interest groups and leaders in the specialized area. The housing element work group was a

special taskforce of a local Housing Coalition that was already meeting on a regular basis to bring interested parties together to collaborate on housing issues. An economic development group was formed after a meeting hosted by the Vernon Economic Development Association to do a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis) of the economic development situation in the county. Other element work groups had staff available and departmental resources that contributed to the work.

A decentralized approach to planning has some deficiencies, but also offers several strengths. It is difficult to plan with the larger picture in focus using a decentralized approach. On the other hand, the work group structure is close to those working in the particular area, and thus focused on felt-needs of the public and leaders. In the implementation and action planning (phase II) there was an effort to see the connections and overlap that suggest wider changes and programs that will provide for a better functioning Vernon County.

Public Participation Efforts

The comprehensive planning program that the Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission undertook required that the commission engage the participation of the public in the planning process. A draft copy of an initial public participation plan was distributed to the Comprehensive Plan Commission for review and input at the second general meeting in October 2007. A final public participation plan was produced working with the commission. This public participation plan is detailed in the Phase I document.

After two years of study, this comprehensive plan document brings together ideas for making Vernon County more successful, prosperous and effective. The leaders who gathered to write these ideas were motivated by the desire to see the county move forward, and not for personal gain. While some objectives in the plan are beyond the capacity of the current county government staff, much was included to ensure that the stamp of County support is there for organizations taking up the work and pursuing grant monies to make positive change happen. There are also many ideas to help the County become more efficient and capable of generating increased resources to do innovative work. Leaders hope that this initial plan will help all departments be better prepared to react to changing conditions, and anticipate needs in a proactive way to save money and provide needed services.

Issues and Opportunities

Each element group identified important issues and opportunities that were detailed within chapters of the phase I document. At a broader level, the citizen participation component of the plan yielded several themes that all planning element work groups considered as they prepared the phase I and II drafts.

First, Vernon County is diverse with rich regional, urban/rural, and economic sector differences. The neighborhood meeting results (appendix B of the Phase I document) stressed that the public considered this diversity a strength of the County. Participants also related that future goals need to use these strengths to their fullest and accommodate difference if conflicts arise.

Second, the need to attend to sustainability was a priority. Government needs to be more efficient, plan for energy savings, invest in reductions in energy use. Government units need to work together and pool talents and resources to avoid duplication and waste. Those who use our land resources need

to use best practices and government has a role in ensuring this happens. Businesses need help to find the partnerships and models that will make them a sustaining presence and employer.

Third was the recognized need to identify leadership that will provide follow-through. Vernon County and the local units of government are extremely decentralized in structure, which can lead to inefficiencies. Often there is an advantage to have an umbrella group when pursuing grants, and planning for larger scale improvements. In almost every element there was the need to identify potent leadership and gather various organizations to cooperate to achieve the stated goals.

Conclusion

This *Phase II Goals and Action Plan* details broad goals, objectives and actions, often with a timeframe for implementation and who would likely lead the effort. Many of the goals are beyond the present capacity of Vernon County staff and program areas, but those agencies who may have the capacity need this endorsement as they pursue grants and other aid to do work that will improve Vernon County. It also may be that success in gathering resources for larger projects or increased staff will depend on this vision being in place to lay the groundwork for success. The goal of planning is to provide:

- a vision that generates outside funding for programs,
- a unity of purpose that helps all agencies and units of government work in the same direction, and
- more efficient use of resources that make a larger impact through coordinated effort.

The comprehensive plan commission took these themes as a basis to provide the best ideas for Vernon County's future development and success. Given we are on shifting ground economically, technologically, and our population is becoming older on average, there is much urgency in planning. Vernon County is also blessed with many natural and human resources that in combination make us optimistic about the future, even in changing, challenging times.

2. Population and Housing Goals and Actions

The Vernon County Housing coalition, professionals working with housing issues in the county, worked on the following strategies for the housing issues identified through the Phase I work on the Comprehensive Plan:

- Lack of safe, decent, affordable housing for low to moderate income households.
- Lack of affordable land for the development of housing to meet the county needs.
- Need for adequate senior housing options in the county.
- Need for emergency and transitional housing for the homeless.
- Lack of affordable housing and transportation located near employment.
- Lack of varied and mixed income housing units.

The above areas of focus form objectives that fall under the general goals of providing adequate housing for those in most need in Vernon County and housing that will assist economic development efforts. This is consistent with the results of the sample survey (Appendix C of the *Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report, phase I*) that indicated citizen support for housing programs to assist those most vulnerable.

Goal 2.1 Provide adequate housing for the most vulnerable populations in Vernon County.

Objective 2.1.a Housing that is safe, decent, affordable housing for low to moderate income households.

Actions

- i. Development of income based rental housing – multi-family
- ii. Encourage Habitat for Humanity and other self-build programs
- iii. Land Trust Housing
- iv. Housing Rehabilitation
- v. Weatherization of Homes
- vi. Development of energy efficient housing and rehab
- vii. Encourage First Time Homebuyers in purchasing safe and affordable homes
- viii. Lease to Purchase Programs
- ix. Encourage programs that support homeowners in maintaining homeownership.
- x. Encourage programs that support renters in maintaining housing
- xi. Tax Credit Housing

Objective 2.1.b Affordable land for the development of housing to meet the county needs

Actions

- i. Develop an overlay for the county that indicates areas of critical need for affordable housing.
- ii. Encourage programs that support the development of infrastructure to promote the development of affordable housing.
- iii. Maintain awareness of affordable housing needs as it relates to other types of developments, such as economic development.
- iv. Encourage programs that support Land Trust Housing.
- v. Encourage the development of new construction of mixed income housing developments.

Objective 2.1.c Promoting Adequate Senior housing options in the county.

Actions

- i. Encourage programs that support Seniors in maintaining homeownership.
- ii. Encourage programs that support Seniors in maintaining rental housing options.
- iii. Encourage programs that support the development of Senior housing, both rental and homeownership.
- iv. Identify community needs for elderly housing countywide.
- v. Encourage programs that support Tax Credit Housing.

Objective 2.1.d Need for emergency and transitional housing for the homeless.

Actions

- i. Encourage programs that support funding to provide emergency and transitional housing assistance.
- ii. Encourage programs that support outreach efforts to identify and support individuals and families in need.
- iii. Identify need for an emergency shelter.

Objective 2.1.e Affordable housing & transportation near employment

Actions

- i. Encourage programs that support the development of market-rate housing.
- ii. Encourage programs that support mixed income housing developments.
- iii. Encourage programs that support workforce housing initiatives and walk-to-work housing.
- iv. Partner with area employers to identify housing needs.

Goal 2.2 Provide adequate varied and mixed income housing.

Objective 2.2.a Encourage programs that support the development of varied and mixed income housing to meet economic development needs of the county.

Actions

- i. Partner with area employer and economic development groups to identify housing needs.
- ii. Encourage programs that support the development of more and varied housing options for owner occupied housing.
- iii. Encourage developers to consider Vernon County communities when building housing units.

3. Transportation Goals and Actions

3.1 Trends

The following are the anticipated key trends for the Vernon County transportation system during the planning period:

- Financial constraints will be a major factor for road maintenance and improvements as well as development of other transportation features such as trails.
- Coordination or consolidation of services for transportation improvements, maintenance, and development will continue to increase.
- There will continue to be a high level of commuting in the county and therefore continued traffic volume increases. The demand for para-transit services will increase as the general population ages.
- Additional long range highway corridor planning will occur as traffic volumes continue to increase and alternatives are evaluated.
- There will be an increasing demand for economic development along highway corridors and major highway intersections.
- The demand for regional trail (e.g. bikes, equestrian) and pedestrian facilities will likely increase.
- The demands for corporate aviation services will likely increase as growth occurs.

3.2 Transportation Planning and Programs

Vernon County must ensure that its interests are well served when major transportation facilities or programs are proposed. The county should continue to work with the WISDOT, the FAA, local governments and railroad companies to develop and implement improvements to existing federal, state, and county infrastructure and facilities. Any improvements will have implications on many of the land use recommendations provided in this plan.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation maintains several plans and programs statewide with policies and recommendations regarding various aspect of transportation. These should be taken into consideration when making future transportation decisions in Vernon County.

These plans are:

- Connections 2030
- Corridors 2030
- Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Airport Improvement Plan 2020
- Five Year Airport Improvement Plan 2020

- Wisconsin State Pedestrian Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Rail Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Access Management System Plan
- Wisconsin DNR State Trails Network Plan
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan
- Six-Year Highway Improvement Program

WISDOT also administers a variety of state and federal programs, including:

- Airport Improvement Program (AIP)
- Connecting highways aids
- County elderly and disabled transportation assistance
- Elderly and disabled capital assistance
- Freight Rail Infrastructure Improvement Program (FRIIP)
- Freight Rail Preservation Program (FRPP)
- General Transportation Aids (GTA)
- Highway and bridges assistance
- Local bridge improvement assistance
- Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP)
- Local Transportation Enhancement (TE)
- New Freedom
- Railroad crossing improvements
- Recreational Trails Program
- Rural and small urban public transportation assistance
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP)
- Rustic roads program
- Safe Routes to School Program
- Surface Transportation Discretionary Program (STP-D)
- Surface Transportation Program - Rural (STP-R)
- Surface Transportation Program - Urban (STP-U)
- Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP)
- Traffic signing and marking enhancement grants program
- Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)
- Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP)

Planning For Capital Improvements

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) can assist in planning for major projects by creating a multi-year scheduling plan for physical public improvements including transportation. The schedule is based on the projection of fiscal resources and prioritization of improvements five to six years into the future. Capital improvements include new or expanded physical facilities that are relatively large in size, expensive and permanent.

Environmental Planning

Thoughtful planning for continued growth can also protect water quality, wildlife habitats and working farms. Sound management of transportation infrastructure maintenance or expansion may include: de-icing procedures and salt reduction; erosion control; wetland mitigation (preservation, creation or restoration); prairie restoration; or use of nesting boxes.

3.3 Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Goal 3.3.1: Provide and maintain a safe, convenient, efficient and economically sustainable transportation system.

Objective 3.3.1.a: Provide a road system that permits safe transportation of goods and people

Actions

- i. Where feasible, promote the separation of truck and through-traffic from local traffic and re-route truck traffic around communities
- ii. Continue to design new and re-constructed roads to increase safety and the general functionality of the roadway
- iii. Maintain county roads and bridges in as good or better condition than at present
- iv. Establish a policy regarding the transportation of hazardous or noxious material via the county road network
- v. Continue to utilize the PASER (Pavement Surface and Evaluation Rating) system and WISLR (Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads) to annually update the 5-year road improvement program
- vi. Continue to track funding sources and priorities for identified improvement projects
- vii. Work with WIDOT to improve the geo spatial location of PASER and WISLR
- viii. Incorporate PASER and WISLR info into county GIS for planning and analysis
- ix. Establish a uniform access control policy for county highways and town roads (e.g. driveway ordinance) for adoption by towns
- x. Coordinate and cooperate with WIDOT on access controls along all arterial and major collector highways, and consider the need for additional access control for other county trunk highways
- xi. Consider bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian, and horse & buggy safety needs when new roads are proposed or when roadway improvements are made
- xii. Develop a county bike and pedestrian plan and coordinate planned road improvements with it
- xiii. Limit new rail crossings and eliminate existing crossings whenever possible to improve safety
- xiv. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources, for needed transportation improvements
- xv. Monitor and track all transportation accident locations in the county GIS mapping system

Objective 3.3.1.b Provide a road system that is convenient, efficient, and scaled appropriately for existing and future development (i.e. economically sustainable)

Actions

- i. Work cooperatively with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the County Highway Department, neighboring counties, the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, and local municipalities on future transportation planning
- ii. Work cooperatively with communities to prepare transportation system plans and studies for corridors for major facilities as needed throughout the planning period
- iii. Guide future residential, commercial, and industrial development to roadways capable of accommodating resulting traffic
- iv. Continue to utilize the PASER (Pavement Surface and Evaluation Rating) system and WISLR (Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads) to annually update the 5-year road improvement program
- v. Continue to track funding sources and priorities for identified improvement projects
- vi. Incorporate PASER and WISLR info into county GIS for planning and analysis
- vii. Improve the roads that connect the various communities and resources
- viii. Support the jurisdictional transfer of highways in accordance with periodic updating of the functional classification of highways
- ix. Maintain and/or expand current service agreements and consider alternative possibilities for providing road maintenance, construction, and supplies
- x. Require area development plans as part of the submittal of residential development plans allowing the county to assess the future connection and traffic flow impacts on surrounding properties (e.g. Adopt County Subdivision Ordinance)
- xi. Adopt uniform town road standards and require developers to build any new roads to those standards
- xii. Require developers to bear the costs for improvements and extensions to the transportation network and require improvements to meet applicable highway design standards
- xiii. Utilize the existing road network and public transportation facilities/services to the maximum extent possible to accommodate new development
- xiv. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources, for needed transportation facilities.

Objective 3.3.1.c Provide citizens of the county and surrounding areas safe and efficient airport facilities for general aviation use

Actions

- i. Pursue funding and other programs that can assist in improving or promoting the airports in the county
- ii. Work cooperatively with the Cities of Hillsboro and Viroqua and the Bureau of Aeronautics to ensure the existing airports can meet present and future air traffic needs

Objective 3.3.1.d Increase and maintain the potential for business, recreation, and commerce on the Mississippi corridor

Actions

- i. Encourage programs that support enhancements to the railway network to improve business access to rail transportation
- ii. Encourage more business to use rail transportation to assure the railroad is viable and continues to serve Vernon County
- iii. Pursue the potential for a commercial dock/port/depot/yard for water and rail transportation on the Mississippi river.

Objective 3.3.1.e Assist in the facilitation of transportation services to developing transportation infrastructure outside of the county

Actions

- i. Monitor and actively participate in discussions and provide input on the development of the proposed high-speed rail line between Madison and St. Paul/Minneapolis as it pertains to use by Vernon County residents.
- ii. Encourage the pursuit of all available funding, especially state and federal sources.

Goal 3.3.2 Maintain and preserve the historic, cultural, natural, and scenic resources that characterize travel routes throughout the county

Objective 3.3.2.a Minimize the disturbance on critical wildlife habitat, prime agricultural land, and sensitive natural areas when planning and constructing transportation routes

Actions

- i. Design and locate roads in such a manner as to maintain and preserve natural topography, land cover, significant landmarks, trees, views and vistas
- ii. Limit road development within areas protected for agriculture and other important natural resources as much as possible
- iii. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources
- iv. Study the needs of transportation for recreational use of county rivers

Goal 3.3.3 Meet the transportation needs of the elderly, disabled, and the economically disadvantaged

Objective 3.3.3.a Continually monitor the need for transit services or programs within the county and seek opportunities to fill this need

Actions

- i. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources
- ii. Encourage programs that support growth of accessible public transportation options
- iii. Encourage programs that support transportation opportunities that would allow low and moderate-income residents access to jobs

Goal 3.3.4 Increase the potential for non-motorized modes of travel.

Objective 3.3.4.a Provide opportunities for walking and bicycling to be viable, convenient and safe transportation choices within the county.

Actions

- i. Consider bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian, and horse and buggy safety needs when new roads are proposed or when roadway improvements are made.
- ii. Consider developing a county bike and pedestrian plan and coordinate planned road improvements with it.
- iii. Work with local and regional governments to create bicycle and pedestrian linkages between neighborhoods, subdivisions and communities.
- iv. Where the opportunity exists, plan to preserve and acquire abandoned rail corridors as recreational trails so they are available for future transportation uses.
- v. Where desirable and feasible pave and/or add wider shoulders when roads are constructed/improved.
- vi. Promote and encourage the use of preferred routes.
- vii. Increase opportunities for multi-use trails.
- viii. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources.

4. Utilities and Community Facilities Goals and Actions

4.1 County Administrative Facilities and Services

The county maintains many buildings that were listed in the Phase I Inventory and Trends report of the comprehensive plan. Some are older and will require maintenance or replacement; others are leased and might be replaced with a building owned by the county. All these factors should be inventoried and projections made to anticipate cost of operation and proper budgeting.

Parks and recreational facilities also need periodic maintenance and renovation. Plans need to be devised to anticipate costs and evaluations of benefits for these facilities.

Stormwater management is a tremendous cost to the county and needs a comprehensive study to ensure the structures fixed provide protection for health and safety.

Goal 4.1.1: Anticipate future capital and maintenance costs of buildings, facilities.

Objective 4.1.1.a: Be comprehensive in building maintenance assessment and future facility needs.

Actions

- i. Create a building inventory that tabulates all building features that will need replacement.
- ii. Use the inventory to maintain a forecasting program to assist with budgeting for repairs and renovations and make use of programs to increase energy sustainability.
- iii. Develop a strategic energy management plan.
- iv. Increase our focus on preventative maintenance and include life-cycle cost/benefit analysis.
- v. Evaluate need for a new Vernon County administrative building and plan for construction at appropriate time.

Objective 4.1.1.b: Evaluate the cost/benefit of County Park system.

Actions

- i. Determine how many annual visitors to County park system.
- ii. Create a plan for the facilities that caters to the popular uses.
- iii. Determine whether a fee-for-use is justified or would be a positive change.

Objective 4.1.1.c Ensure efficient use of funds for stormwater control.

Actions

- i. Pursue funding for comprehensive hydrologic study to guide decisions about storm water management and flood control. (same as Action 5.1.1.a.i)

4.2 Protective Services

Goal 4.2.1 Ensure effective county protective services

Objective 4.2.1.a Maintain the effectiveness of the County Sheriff's Department

Actions

- i. Information regarding law enforcement needs by the Office of Sheriff for Vernon County will be maintained by the Sheriff, who will determine needs, efficiencies, and effectiveness in accordance with the Wisconsin Constitution and Statutes.
- ii. Programs or activities that increase local community access or relations as may be determined by the Sheriff.
- iii. Maintain the 911 emergency services, including dispatch and response responsibilities to emergencies county-wide.
- iv. As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer across all jurisdictions in the county, the Sheriff will determine the level of cooperation, working relationship, and expectations of local law enforcement providers and mutual aid necessary with neighboring agencies. (In 46 Op. Atty. Gen. 280)

Objective 4.2.1.b Maintain the effectiveness of county Fire Departments

Action

- i. Encourage local communities to provide a full range of adequately staffed emergency services.

Objective 4.2.1.c Maintain the effectiveness of Emergency Management Department

Actions

- i. The Emergency Management Department shall continue to upgrade and improve on the emergency preparedness for the county.
- ii. The county shall encourage joint training opportunities for all, through mutual aid.
- iii. The county shall assist in the coordination of training for new Fire Department, Emergency Medical Service, and HAZMAT members.

4.3 Quasi Public Facilities

The Vernon County Library Committee maintains a plan for the county library system. This plan is designed to increase efficiencies and service to the public. This plan is updated every 5 years. The latest update was approved in 2009.

4.4 Solid Waste Management and Recycling

At present use of the county landfill, the year 2019 is forecast as the timeframe for closure. The next step is to build a new landfill on existing site, between existing landfill and a closed demolition site. Since this is a relatively small landfill, there is an issue of scale and feasibility of by-product use for alternative energy or heat. Technology is progressing and these processes may be more feasible as the processing equipment is scaled and priced in the range of smaller operations.

Goal 4.4.1: Decrease load to landfill to extend life

Objective 4.4.1.a: Management of waste streams

Actions

- i. Create a management plan that inventories all waste streams in the county and plans for cost beneficial fates of each component.
- ii. Continue policy of the county landfill being a positive resource for waste management that keeps county waste in the county and does not encourage import of waste.
- iii. Educate citizens about the cost-effectiveness of using the county landfill.

Objective 4.4.1.b: Increase recycling

Actions

- i. Work with Towns to extend hours at Town collection sites.
- ii. Educate about recycling regulations. Focus on school-aged outreach.
- iii. Distribute the video of the landfill and its programs.

Objective 4.4.1.c: Increase composting

Actions

- i. Educate/give out bins/or other program
- ii. Institute county compost to sell for local use
- iii. Partner with institutions to compost food waste
- iv. Find alternatives for mixed paper recycling—i.e. shred for mulch
- v. Discourage open burning and provide alternative programs.

Objective 4.4.1.d: Explore alternatives for by-product processing to generate revenue

Actions

- i. Study what energy production is feasible given our natural resources and waste stream.
- ii. Study anaerobic digester technology/Gasification/Combustion power generation and cultivate needed partnerships --sewage treatment plants/confined animal manure facilities, producers of wood waste.
- iii. Composting for local use and revenue. Possible partnership with sewage treatment plants, local food waste streams (institutions, restaurants, public drop-off sites.)
- iv. Encourage all county utilities to provide full incentives for energy efficiency and renewable improvements, irrespective of primary energy sources.

Goal 4.4.2: Keep hazardous waste out of the landfill

Objective 4.4.2.a: Education

Actions

- i. Distribute newsletter from the Landfill.
- ii. Radio spots that take on a topic--compact fluorescents, clean sweep, etc.
- iii. Promotion of proper disposal of batteries, medication roundups, clean sweeps.

Objective 4.4.2.b: Structural solutions

Action

- i. Find a process for the county to collect toxics and find safe storage until clean sweep.

4.5 Power and Communication Facilities

Power

The area of energy use and alternatives is expanding to accomplish State mandates and community desires to move to more sustainable sources of electricity. Preparing for these changes through improved infrastructure and more proactive pursuit of grants to prepare for the changes will be a new challenge for Vernon County.

Goal 4.5.1: Be ready for new technology and alternative/renewable energy

Objective 4.5.1.a: Electrical energy future

Actions

- i. County-wide wind and infrastructure study to determine viable places for alternative energy production.
- ii. Encourage programs that support development of infrastructure for the creation of distributive alternative energy production, solar/wind/co-generation etc.
- iii. Inventory county building energy usage and pursue grants through Focus on Energy, Block Grant or other grants to improve efficiency.
- iv. Study possible production of energy at the landfill site. Ensure County has adequate staff for grant writing, or partner with VEDA for needed expertise.
- v. Prepare for changes that will happen due to future greenhouse gas regulations.

Communications

Goal 4.5.2: Encourage programs that support increase of Internet and cellular phone coverage and service.

Objective 4.5.2.a: Support pursuit of grant opportunities

Actions

- i. Encourage grants to eliminate dead zones for cellular phones and Internet.
- ii. Encourage efforts to reduce costs of internet service.
- iii. Encourage super-fast Internet infrastructure in the county.
- iv. Encourage expansion of cellular phone service options to include 3G, and future generations.
- v. Ensure County can provide facility to tap into webcasts offered through State agencies and Extension. Possible partnership with Western Technical College.
- vi. Do not create unnecessary barriers to competition between service providers.

4.6 Sanitary Sewer Service, Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS)

Goal 4.6.1: Increase the effectiveness of all sewer treatment in the County.

Objective 4.6.1.a: Support the pursuit of grant opportunities

Actions

- i. Investigate separation of storm and septic sewer to reduce excessive inflow and plant disruptions by interference and pass through of chemicals in the inflow.
- ii. Encourage programs that pursue funds to find a solution to overflows of treatment facilities.
- iii. Develop monitoring program of receiving streams to identify presence of human-source of coliform.
- iv. Administer an active program to identify and replace failing septic systems.
- v. Keep current on innovative ways to treat waste (composting, etc.)
- vi. Study feasibility of transitioning land application of septic waste to disposal at municipal sewage treatment plants.
- vii. Develop a program to stencil sewer grates with watershed and receiving water information to discourage dumping of polluting materials in sewers.

4.7 Public Water Supply

Goal 4.7.1: Protect the integrity of quality and quantity of the county water supply.

Objective 4.7.1.a: Collect data needed to ensure quality decisions are made related to water supply protection.

Actions

- i. Geologic study to understand our resource
- ii. Monitor private wells systematically.
- iii. Look at options to protect quantity and limit high capacity well development.
- iv. Create partnerships to share information from wellhead protection programs.

Objective 4.7.1.b: Educate about water quantity and quality issues.

Actions

- i. Promote and encourage water testing of wells.
- ii. Develop a database linked to GIS to track trends in groundwater issues.
- iii. Promote school-aged education efforts.

Objective 4.7.1.c: Take action to protect county groundwater resources.

Actions

- i. Enact as needed regulations to ensure the protection of the county groundwater resources.
- ii. Enforce existing regulations to ensure the protection of the County groundwater resources.

4.8 Health, Senior and Day Care Facilities

Goal 4.8.1: Expand services to cater to aging population

Objective 4.8.1.a: Prepare plan for services at Vernon Manor

Actions

- i. Prepare an assessment that includes: market analysis, financial review, physical plant assessment, and reviews of clinical and regulatory environment.
- ii. Prepare a strategic plan for facilities and operations with mechanism for evaluation and implementation follow-up.

Objective 4.8.1.b: Expand Senior services to limit isolation

Actions

- i. Explore need of senior centers, expanded meal site services and intergenerational opportunities (e.g. hobby clubs, field trip opportunities) to enhance quality of life for seniors.
- ii. Encourage actions that help seniors with accessibility – parking, street corners, shopping, appointment locations, door openers, long enough lights to get across the streets.
- iii. Anticipate increased participation of seniors in programs as their incomes do not keep up with costs-- energy assistance, meals on wheels, Medicaid, etc.
- iv. Continue to provide health promotion – fitness activities, falls prevention.
- v. Evaluate the need for adult day care to relieve pressure on caregivers county-wide.

5. Agricultural, Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources Goals and Actions

The protection of Vernon County's natural resource base was a high priority for citizens who responded to the county-wide survey (Appendix C.) The goal of balancing our economic and agricultural development activity with preservation and protection of natural resources has been a major theme throughout the planning process. Vernon County is blessed with much to protect including a long and varied heritage grounded in working the soil. The goals that follow endeavor to strike this balance and also highlight where lack of data and tools might get in the way of informed decision-making.

The reality is that often decision-makers need to come to a choice without perfect knowledge about resource issues. The actions below will close this gap over time as monetary resources become available for studies, and best practice research continues to improve.

5.1 Data Needs

Goal 5.1.1 Ensure the County has accurate and reliable data to support decision making.

Objective 5.1.1.a: Accomplish comprehensive studies.

Actions

- i. Pursue funding for a comprehensive hydrologic study to characterize land use impacts and guide decisions about storm water management, flood control and mitigation methods.
- ii. Pursue funding for a comprehensive geologic study to characterize the relative risks to groundwater and surface water from land use activities.
- iii. Map and plan for logical placement of agricultural infrastructure (co-ops, mills, grain driers) and determine cost/benefit criteria for when to encourage on-farm support infrastructure for developing processing operations, energy production, etc.
- iv. Map regional overlays for important agricultural production areas, natural resource protection areas (preserve water quality, wildlife, view-shed, trout, etc.) and associate best practices within those sectors.
- v. Increase private well testing and improve well and groundwater database management.
- vi. Improve floodplain mapping efficiency through the use of LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology to meet FEMA specifications.
- vii. Survey and map forests, parcels in Managed Forest Land or Forest Stewardship Plans. Track production of forest products, including but not exclusive to timber sales. Develop a database tracking forest habitat restoration.
- viii. Complete GIS based parcel mapping to support transect survey and performance standards tracking agricultural practice information for conservation.
- ix. Survey and/or acquire maps of invasive species and damage. Develop a tracking program to identify trends in invasive species movement, damage and success of control programs.

5.2 Balance of Agricultural Production and Natural Resource Protection

Goal 5.2.1: Promote agricultural and forestry business growth that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

Objective 5.2.1.a: Environmental Sustainability

Actions

- i. Develop a water sustainability model for county. Develop a water balance budget. Map water resources, recharge capacity, stream base flow.
- ii. Encourage the development and use of Nutrient Management Plans for conventional and organic producers (Increase LWCD funding of consultant developed plans, increase UW Ext, LWCD, technical college training of farmers to develop their own plans – possible funding through NRCS.)
- iii. Educate the public how Nutrient Management Plans benefit farmers and their neighbors.
- iv. Encourage/facilitate manure bartering to prevent over-application of manure/acre.
- v. Continue oversight of the Nutrient Management Plan program.

Objective 5.2.1.b: Economic Sustainability

Actions

- i. Encourage agriculture energy management plans. Alternative energy production on-farm from byproducts or other renewable sources. The Utilities Chapter provides more details.
- ii. Evaluate the purchase of development rights to preserve farmland through regional organizations, e.g. Mississippi Valley Conservancy, SW Badger RCD, etc.
- iii. Continue exploring the use of county land for demonstrations of various practices (county forest land for demonstrations of Forest Management Plans and agri-forestry projects, long-term leases of small tracts on the county farm at Fair Market Value for demonstrations of permaculture/perennial/horticultural/alternative crops, etc.)
- iv. Encourage efforts to bring alternative agriculture education facility to the county, including land stewardship, organic method innovation, large scale manure composting, design of Integrated Pesticide Management (IPM) plans, alternative crops and forestry.

Objective 5.2.1.c: Social Sustainability

Actions

- i. Develop an agricultural land use plan recognizing that having a local plan is essential to having local control of land use (large scale agricultural expansion/residential development conflicts.)

5.3 Best Practices and Natural Resource Protection

Goal 5.3.1: Promote good practices to protect air, water, wildlife and plant resources.

Objective 5.3.1.a: Air Quality best practices.

Actions

- i. Enforce prohibitions on open burning.
- ii. Explore composting as an alternative to burning.
- iii. Educate and encourage the use of liquid manure best practices.

Objective 5.3.1.b: Water Quality best practices.

Actions

- i. Promote the soil conservation programs available through the NRCS office (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Nutrient Management Plans, and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.)
- ii. Encourage the use of the Vernon County Agriculture. Resource list in assistance in planning changes to farming operations. (Details of resource list in Goal 6.2.4.2)
- iii. Develop a website announcing the application availability of all USDA cost share and grant programs, including short-term funding programs.
- iv. Develop a county wide guidance for land stewardship, including Integrated Pesticide Management, rotational grazing, BMPs, on-farm wildlife and habitat surveys.
- v. Develop a riparian maintenance and bank erosion control program with the beef and dairy producers.
- vi. Continue working with non-USDA Federal Agencies for grants and cost-sharing programs for Watershed Management.
 - EPA Nonpoint Source program and Impaired Waters program
 - USFWS habitat, forestry and other programs
 - USGS

Objective 5.3.1.c: Wildlife (flora and fauna) best practices.

Actions

- i. Promote Forest Stewardship Plans through the LWCD or the State Managed Forest Law to encourage woodland owners to manage forests for forest health, control of invasive species, habitat restoration and timber and forest-related production.
- ii. Develop and implement a plan for education on invasive species, forest products and optimal forest management for forest health with the County and the State Forestry Plan.
- iii. Develop a program to encourage absentee landowners to participate in land management for wildlife habitat, forestry stewardship and other beneficial land uses.
- iv. Develop Land Use priorities to reduce subdivision of forests.

5.4 Historic and Cultural Resources

The Vernon County Sample Survey (Appendix I, March 2009) indicates widespread support for the preservation of historic sites. The table below details support of 80-90% (The table shows the percent of responses with 4 being strong support, 3 support, 2 do not support, 1 not at all.)

Neighborhood	Promote Historic Preservation			
	4	3	2	1
Mississippi	50%	38%	8%	5%
Chaseburg	63%	24%	11%	3%
Westby	80%	10%	10%	0
Viroqua	52%	30%	17%	0
Harmony/Jeffers Sterling/Franklin	50%	31%	13%	6%
Kickapoo	57%	27%	11%	4%
Hillsboro	46%	41%	13%	0

Given this enthusiasm of the public, the leaders of the many county historical societies gathered to imagine a rejuvenation of their offerings, and a recommitment to the identification and preservation of our county history.

The phase I Historic and Cultural Resources section identified nearly a dozen active groups working to protect and promote historic preservation in Vernon County. Each organization is well supported locally by donations and memberships, but some coordination of these efforts might yield better funding through grants and better visibility for all groups.

Goal 5.4.1: Achieve coordination between historic preservation groups in the county.

Objective 5.4.1.a: Encourage coordination between groups that will reduce duplication of effort, waste of resources in promotion, and be a hub of information for historic preservation and information in the county/region.

Actions

- i. County Historical Society work as an active member of the Driftless Area Historical Group (DAHG)
 - Leadership: County Historical Society
 - Projected time frame: Ongoing
- ii. Stimulate interest and participation of the Mississippi River region preservation groups to join the network.
 - Leadership: County Historical Society and DAHG
 - Projected time frame: 2010

Objective 5.4.1.b: Create useable resources based on the coordinated vision that groups can use to pull in the same direction.

Actions

- i. Develop a website structure that will deliver important information to the public that is accurate (regularly updated) and efficient (easily updated by all organizations involved.)
Leadership: County Historical Society in consultation with the County Tourism Committee
Projected time frame: complete by 2012
- ii. Catalogue partnerships that all historical groups may choose to tap for help with creating videos, writing grants, developing educational materials.
Leadership: County Historical Society in consultation with DAHG
Projected time frame: 2011
- iii. Identify and inventory properties in the county with high historic value and create a priority list for preservation.
Leadership: County Historical Society in consultation with DAHG
Projected time frame: 2013

Another concern was the lack of communication that happens in the county regarding the importance of historic preservation, and the work of all these organizations. The Vernon County Historical Society and museum archive should be a recognized point of information for all things historical. The lack of local attendance at events county-wide, the uneven distribution of historic preservation groups across the county, and the need to increase the profile of preservation groups are concerns the following goal hopes to address.

Goal 5.4.2: Enhance education and communication with the community, county board, and partners.

Objective 5.4.2.a: Improve outreach/education to the Vernon County community.

Actions

- i. Convey the value of historic preservation and pursue grant funding to help restore/improve sites or buildings that are privately held. Improve this effort as the results of actions 3 and 4 are developed.
Leadership: All organizations working within their own area and coordinated by the Vernon County Historical Society
Projected time frame: ongoing
- ii. Create a publicity plan to interest the public in visiting county museum facilities and other special events that happen at historical groups across the county.
Leadership: County Historical Society in collaboration with the Vernon County Tourism committee and Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA.)
Projected time frame: 2011

Objective 5.4.2.b: Improve communication with the county board.

Action

- i. Report in a meaningful way progress made in the area of historic preservation to the Tourism Committee and full County Board as able.

Leadership: County Historical Society

Projected time frame: Ongoing

Objective 5.4.2.c: Improve sustainability of partners and volunteers.

Action

- i. Develop and maintain an evaluation process to ensure all partnerships and volunteers find the work mutually beneficial and sustainable.

Leadership: Vernon County Historical Society and DAHG

Projected time frame: Implemented after Action 5.4.1.b.ii is completed.

6. Economic Development

6.1 Introduction and Recommendations Summary

Economic development in Vernon County can be viewed from many points of view—placement in the county, various sectors with a variety of interests, citizens with different skill sets and education. This leads to a complicated economic development landscape that can seem to be characterized by factions in competition for development opportunities. In fact, the county is in need of all types of development in all sectors and making use of everyone’s talents. Managing this in a positive way is one of the challenges of the economic development scene. Lifting out the positive opportunities within sectors is the task of this chapter. The committee took up the following major sectors and topics: Service, Manufacturing, Tourism, Agricultural and Structural goals to make improvements happen. Each sector will be discussed in a section below.

6.2 Economic Development Goals

6.2.1 Service Sector

The service sector in Vernon County is growing and has good potential for family-supporting employment for residents. The results of the sample survey (Appendix C of the *Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report*, July 2009) indicated broad support for the quality of services provided in education and health. The phase I document showed that the demand for these services is predicted to grow and provide some of the highest paying jobs in the county. Financial services were also an area of growth. Our largest employers are in education, health and government. Maximizing the positive impact of the service sector will help our citizens to have living-wage jobs and the county to prosper.

Goal 6.2.1.1: Help our service sector businesses to grow

Objective 6.2.1.1.a: Expand opportunities and success for education.

Actions

- i. Expand educational opportunities through the identification of educational needs of county residents and business; development of models for meeting such needs; and implementation of educational opportunities offered in a variety of delivery formats.
Leadership: Partnership with Western Technical College, VEDA, county school systems, county businesses.
Projected time frame: Ongoing
- ii. Expand local professional development opportunities for businesses in the county.
Leadership: VEDA and Western
Projected time frame: Ongoing

Objective 6.2.1.1.b: Expand opportunities and success for health-related businesses.

Actions

- i. Specialization has worked in the past (Bariatric services at Vernon Manor, Ortho-surgery at VMH) and should be used as a model going forward by identifying emerging needs and provide services proactively.
Leadership: County ADRC and county health providers.
Projected time frame: Ongoing
- ii. Serve the needs of local businesses and citizens to have affordable health care through a local preferred health insurance system that is open to all.
Leadership: Local health care providers in partnership with business community, VEDA.
Projected time frame: Complete by 2012
- iii. Promote what we have to offer in health care.
Leadership: VEDA and local health care groups
Projected time frame: Ongoing

Objective 6.2.1.1.c: Expand opportunities and success of financial service providers.

Actions

- i. Establish a micro finance program, business-to-business credit system and Angel (philanthropic) Investor group
Leadership: Financial Institutions, Small Business Development Center and VEDA
Projected time frame: Completed 2012
- ii. Conduct Credit Seminars to educate the public about managing credit wisely and how to get credit that is not too costly.
Leadership: Financial Institutions, Small Business Development Center and VEDA
Projected time frame: Ongoing

6.2.2 Manufacturing Sector

Goal 6.2.2.1: Identify and address the needs of start-up and existing manufacturing companies (Leadership by VEDA)

Objective 6.2.2.1.a: Increase access to information, resources and technical assistance

Actions

- i. Provide office space for an organization to coordinate activities and serve as a central place of contact.
- ii. Support as able staff that will provide information and technical assistance.
- iii. Compile a listing of available resources.
- iv. Promote available programs through business visits, one-to-one counseling, press releases and website listings.
- v. Provide incubator space for start up businesses.

Objective 6.2.2.1.b: Increase opportunities for funding assistance

Actions

- i. Provide access or referral to short-term funding, low-interest loan programs or lines of credit that are available through local financial institutions, micro loans, revolving loan programs and SBA programs.
- ii. Coordinate a group of local investors that will provide angel funding.
- iii. Increase programs for improved business process and management.
- iv. Provide cost sharing for training within businesses.

Objective 6.2.2.1.c: Create peer support networking groups centered around best practices and idea sharing, and connect to the Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club and the Equipment and Metal Manufacturing Association.

Actions

- i. Partner with resources such as Western Technical College Business & Industry Services, Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing & Outreach Center, Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership.
- ii. Provide cost sharing for energy audits of business facilities and equipment, and connect to programs such as Focus on Energy and Energy Star.
- iii. Coordinate group marketing strategies.
- iv. Research options for group health insurance or health insurance cooperatives.
- v. Provide information regarding succession planning options.

6.2.3 Tourism Sector

Goal 6.2.3.1: Achieve unity of purpose in the tourism sector.

Objective 6.2.3.1.a: Establish a shared vision for tourism across groups.

Actions

- i. The Tourism Committee of the County in collaboration with VEDA will gather all groups with a tourism program together to find shared values and a trajectory for the regional tourism efforts.
- ii. Establish a structure that will reduce duplication of effort, waste of resources in promotion, and be the umbrella all can identify as the place, person (salaried through some source), and hub of information for tourism in the region.

Objective 6.2.3.1.b: Create useable resources based on the shared vision that groups can use to pull in the same direction.

Actions

- i. Seek professional help to translate that shared vision into a Vernon County/Driftless region “brand” that groups can use in their promotional efforts.
Leadership: The structure developed by Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii, in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2011
- ii. Tourism groups are educated about and use the branding materials, meet with the umbrella person or group on a regular basis in an open collegial atmosphere.
Leadership: All organizations in the tourism sector in the region.
Projected time frame: 2012
- iii. Groups will benefit from these arrangements and know they are through quantitative reflection/reporting.
Leadership: Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii structure in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2012

Goal 6.2.3.2: Vernon County government departments work with Tourism Leadership to achieve regulation/improvements that will assist the tourism section to achieve the vision.

Objective 6.2.3.2.a: Produce a tourism overlay map that reflect our shared values and will protect areas for that use,

Actions

- i. Identify and propose areas important for tourism to the appropriate Vernon County committee/s and the county board.
Leadership: Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii structure in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2015
- ii. Propose design standards that will protect the integrity of the tourism resources and get them implemented in the overlay areas detailed in Action 6.2.3.2.a.i.
Leadership: Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii structure in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2015

Objective 6.2.3.2.b: Improve infrastructure to ensure our success (roads, trails, parks, cultural facilities/gathering places.)

Actions

- i. Identify cost-beneficial improvements and propose them to the appropriate Vernon County committee/s and the county board.
Leadership: Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii structure in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2020
- ii. Identify larger projects that require major investments, but will reap larger gains for tourism in the region.
Leadership: Action 6.2.3.1.a.ii structure in consultation with regional organizations
Projected time frame: 2030

6.2.4 Agricultural Sector

Goal 6.2.4.1: Vernon County government departments work with Agriculture Leadership to achieve security in agricultural investment in the county.

Objective 6.2.3.1.a: Produce a agricultural overlay map that reflect our best science and will protect areas for productive agricultural use,

Actions

- i. Identify and propose areas important for agriculture (productive as well as “prime” farmland) to the appropriate Vernon County committee/s and the county board.
Leadership: LWCD and in partnership with Towns and others
Projected time frame: 2015
- ii. Identify design standards that will protect the integrity of the agricultural resources and get them implemented in the overlay areas detailed in Action 6.2.4.1.a.i.
Leadership: Various Departments depending on issue.
Projected time frame: 2015

Goal 6.2.4.2: Provide encouragement and support for new farmers and continuing farmers.

Objective 6.2.4.2.a: Create a hub of information about assistance that is available to new farmers¹ (leadership – VEDA, UW Ext.)

Actions

- i. Create a catalog for use by emerging farmers.
- ii. Update resource catalogue annually and promote information sharing among providers of services to new farmers.
- iii. Plan an annual articulation meeting to update providers about the resources available for new farmers.
- iv. Make the information available in printed and web format.
- v. Encourage increased joint educational programs between education providers.²

Objective 6.2.4.2.b: Seek funding for a position of Agricultural Development Resource person to work as coordinator of this effort.

Actions

- i. Create and maintain the Agricultural Resource Catalog.
- ii. Maintain the list of young farmers interested in beginning farming.
- iii. Link farmers up with resources.
- iv. Facilitate communications between resource personnel.

¹ * Information/Educational/Planning Resources

- a. Farm Short Course – UW Madison
- b. School for Beginning Dairy Farmers - UW Madison
- c. FFA & 4H programs
- d. Vernon County UW Extension
- e. Farm Business and Production Mgt Program – Western Technical College
- f. On Campus Technical College Programs in agriculture, Western Technical College, SWTC, etc
- g. CROPP, MOSA, Michael Fields Institute, SARE

* Financial & Funding Resources

- a. FSA – Beginning Farmer Loan Program
- b. WHEDA – Crop & Feed – Loans
- c. List of local banks that provide FSA guaranteed & WHEDA loans to farmers

* Transfer/Succession Resources

- a. WDATCP – Farm Link – Linking young farmers with exiting farmers
- b. Develop a local list of young farmers seeking internship/partnership/farm ownership opportunities
- c. FSA – Beginning Farmer Loan personnel
- d. Local attorneys with farm succession experience
- e. Western Technical College & UW Ext. personnel with transfer experience

² Extension/technical college/CROPP/Michael Fields seminars using resources and facilities available (Western Viroqua campus, County Farm.)

Objective 6.2.4.2.c: Make the entry into farming more affordable through encouragement of programs to contain land costs.

Actions

- i. Investigate the feasibility of programs to purchase development rights via Farm land trusts, use of exclusive agricultural use zoning in connection with Farmland Preservation Credit/Working Lands Initiative or other similar programs.

Goal 6.2.4.3: Cultivate More Value-Added, Processed Food Products to Create Jobs and Agriculture Growth.

Objective 6.2.4.3.a: Establish channels for food processing.

Action

- i. Encourage creation of infrastructure to support value-added processing, marketing and the following specific project ideas.³

Objective 6.2.4.3.b: Encourage and Incent Local Food Purchasing.

Actions

- i. Encourage departments that have food purchasing power to study the cost benefits of purchasing local food for these program areas.
- ii. Support grants that develop the capacity of local food purchasing and existing efforts like the Farm to School and Farm to Institution program.

Objective 6.2.4.3.c: Assist producers in Market Development and Business Planning

Actions

- i. Establish Technical Assistance office to help local farmers/processors.
- ii. Identify and establish specialized product niches.
- iii. Refer producers to Business Development and Market Resources.

³ Establish a food processing incubator
Survey existing & potential processors to determine their needs
Create Certified Community Kitchens
Create private label and bulk foods products to sell
Develop Community Gardens and transport produce to larger markets
Establish food processing facility for mid to large size processes as they out grow the incubator/community kitchens

Objective 6.2.4.3.d: Provide encouragement to other agricultural efforts to ensure success.

Actions

- i. Encourage programs that support creation of the capacity that will support value-added processing.
- ii. Write and secure county-wide grants for support of these efforts.

6.2.5 Economic Development Structure

The Economic Development structure in Vernon County is historically quite decentralized and diverse. There has never been a department in the county tasked with coordinating and promoting economic development. The results of the sample survey (Appendix C of the *Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report*, July 2009) indicated broad support for the county participating in economic development coordination. Only 9% of responses favored the county take no role in this area. Contracting out the work was also not supported, with only 9% indicating hiring an outside firm was desirable. Nineteen percent favored a full department funded by the county, 28% favored contributing toward a University Extension Community Natural Resource Development (CNRD) agent, and 35% were in favor of supporting existing organizations that provide these services. Clearly, the public sees a role for the county to support coordination of an economic development position.

At one time there were matching funds for University Extension positions, but presently those grants are not available, making a CNRD agent cost-prohibitive. A full department would be a tremendous leap and was not as well supported as the option of supporting those doing the work at present.

When we look over the economic development groups at work, we have many working in many sectors, but there is one that is a recent addition working to coordinate the many threads that drive economic development—Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA.) VEDA offers an umbrella that has a successful track record and is in need of support to be sustainable and expand into coordination of tourism county-wide and grant writing for various sectors of the economy. The following goals and actions will accelerate these possibilities.

Goal 6.2.5.1: Achieve coordination between economic development groups in the county.

Objective 6.2.5.1.a: Establish an umbrella all can identify as the organization/person/ hub of information for economic development and information in the county/region.

Actions

- i. Contribute to the sustainability and growth of VEDA.
Leadership: County Tourism Committee and County Board
Projected time frame: 2010-11
- ii. Be accountable for resources used through a proactive evaluation process and communication of the results.
Leadership: VEDA board and the County board.
Projected time frame: Ongoing

Objective 6.2.5.1.b: Create useable resources based on the coordinated vision of development groups.

Actions

- i. Identify a shared vision and inventory opportunities that will have the largest impact on our economic goals and make concentrated effort on those priorities.
Leadership: All organizations working in their own area--coordinated by VEDA.
Projected time frame: 2013
- ii. Serve as a resource. Communicate information in publications, seminars, personally, but also determine the type of website structure that will deliver important information to investors and the public to drive development.
Leadership: VEDA
Projected time frame: Complete by 2012
- iii. Facilitate partnerships
Leadership: VEDA and local development groups
Projected time frame: Ongoing
- iv. Provide technical assistance
Leadership: VEDA
Projected time frame: Ongoing

Goal 6.2.5.2: Enhance our public relations image

Objective 6.2.5.2.a: Broadcast our successes and the unique features of Vernon County.

Action

- i. Connect with local and state-wide media about the successful programs and business development happening in the county.
Leadership: VEDA as a distributor of news from all economic development groups around the county.
Projected time frame: Ongoing

7. Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals and Actions

Intergovernmental cooperation is a necessity for all levels of government to operate in a cost effective and efficient manner while providing citizens with required services. The importance of intergovernmental cooperation has increased drastically in the last several years in Wisconsin, as well as the rest of the country, due to funding constraints and mandates to provide services and/or programs. The county's towns, villages, and cities not only share common boundaries, but also schools, fire protection and emergency services, lakes, rivers, roads, and its citizens share a common identity as residents or landowners. Citizens demand a high level of service for their tax dollars and expect that the services will be provided in the most cost effective and efficient way possible.

Intergovernmental cooperation can offer solutions to many issues and at a minimum should be pursued to allow for good governmental relations and a noncompetitive environment. The remainder of this section provides a summary of intergovernmental cooperation in Vernon County, existing or potential intergovernmental conflicts, as well as processes to resolve such conflicts relative to planning and decision making between the county and other governmental units. For further detail on the status of intergovernmental cooperation in the county refer to the *Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report*.

Following is a summary of the recommendations found within this planning element.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Recommendations Summary

- Encourage local community efforts on ongoing discussions to cooperate and resolve conflicts, including potential land use and boundary agreements.
- Continue to coordinate and share plans with adjacent communities and overlapping jurisdictions to match land use plans and coordinate policies along municipal boundaries to promote consistency and minimize potential conflicts.
- Invite affected communities in, or adjacent to, Vernon County to any future meetings in which amendments or updates to the comprehensive plan are made or discussed.

Many of the current intergovernmental activities in the county are informal and involve communities working together or sharing facilities or services to meet specific needs. There are also a number of more formal agreements in the county which are detailed in the Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report and in local plans.

New opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation in Vernon County will likely include a focus on saving money, eliminating duplication of services, maximizing purchasing through economies of scale, and generally improving communication and planning.

7.1 Opportunities, Conflicts and Resolutions with Other Units

Potential Opportunities

Numerous opportunities exist for further cooperation within Vernon County. Four primary Intergovernmental opportunities include the following:

- Cooperation with services
- Cooperation with regulations
- Cooperation by sharing revenue
- Cooperation with boundaries

Several of these potential opportunities available in Vernon County are described in Table 7.1.1.

Table 7.1.1: Opportunities for cooperative services in Vernon County

Intergovernmental Opportunities	Governmental Units Involved
1. Further reducing costs for providing services through working with Towns and municipalities on such items as road maintenance and improvement, parks, and recreational services.	County and all local units of government.
2. Updating and amending local Town/municipal comprehensive plans and/or ordinances when applicable.	County and all local units of government.
3. Assistance in developing plan implementation ordinances and other tools simultaneously.	County and all local units of government.
4. Assistance in rating and posting local roads for road maintenance and road improvement planning.	County and all local units of government.
5. Pursuing intergovernmental cost savings opportunities through bulk purchasing, shared services, consolidations, etc.	State, County and all local units of government.
6. Reduce conflict over boundary issues through cooperative planning.	Adjacent county governments and all local units of government.
7. Cooperatively manage land use and development to ensure continuing groundwater quantity and supply.	County and all local units of government.
8. Develop and implement the programs and tools for farmland preservation to occur.	County and all local units of government.

Potential Conflicts and Resolutions

Several potential conflicts may develop through the course of the planning period. Potential conflicts can be most effectively addressed in a pro-active fashion. In other words, pursuing opportunities will often avoid future conflicts. Potential conflicts and the process to resolve the conflicts are summarized in Table 7.1.2.

Table 7.1.2 Intergovernmental Conflicts and Potential Resolutions, Vernon County

Potential Conflict	Potential Resolutions
1. Siting of large livestock farms near Incorporated areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns to establish a buffer area around cities and villages. • Vernon County to administer ACTP51 performance standards for livestock operations over 500 animal units. • Towns may use their Zoning Ordinances (those with zoning) to achieve buffer areas or performance standards.
2. Annexation conflicts between Cities/villages and adjacent towns.	Use of boundary or intergovernmental agreements.
3. Development or land use that threatens groundwater quality in Municipal well recharge areas.	<p>Cooperative planning and implementation of wellhead protection areas.</p> <p>Education and issue training with UW Extension and Land and Water Conservation Department</p>
4. Construction of buildings or other improvements in areas planned for future parks, street extensions, or other public infrastructure.	<p>Distribution of plans and plan amendments to adjacent and overlapping units of government.</p> <p>Official Transportation Mapping</p>
5. Concern over too much intervention by Vernon County and state relative to local control of land use issues.	<p>Adoption and implementation of local comprehensive plans.</p> <p>Provide ample opportunities for public involvement during land use planning and ordinance development efforts.</p>
6. Increasing competition between communities for economic development and job growth.	Education and advice from Vernon Economic Development Association that serves all of Vernon County.

7.2 Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals and Objectives

The following are the goals and objectives developed by Vernon County with regard to the Intergovernmental Cooperation element.

Goal 7.2.1: Cooperate with units of government adjacent to and within Vernon County in planning and regulation.

Objective 7.2.1.a: Cooperate in planning efforts

Actions

- i. Issues regarding planning, land use regulation, implementation, or resource management will be discussed with local communities as warranted.
- ii. The county shall encourage neighboring communities to match land use plans and policies along municipal boundaries to promote consistency and minimize potential conflicts.
- iii. Affected communities in or adjacent to Vernon County will be invited to any future meetings in which amendments or updates to the comprehensive plan are made or discussed.
- iv. The County should work with local governments to create bicycle and pedestrian linkages to create a network to existing trail systems.
- v. Work cooperatively with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, County Highway Department, and/or the East Central Regional Planning Commission on future transportation planning.
- vi. Maintain the good working relationships with neighboring counties and local municipalities for utilization of emergency preparedness and additional law enforcement when needed.
- vii. Vernon County should discuss the opportunity for a multi-jurisdictional planning effort when the county comprehensive plan is updated.

Objective 7.2.1.b: Cooperate in regulatory efforts

Actions

- i. The county will encourage the development of mutually beneficial intergovernmental tools, such as boundary agreements, between municipalities in the county.
- ii. Work with state agencies that have projects or regulations impacting the county to ensure coordination between their activities and the comprehensive plan goals, objectives, and policies.
- iii. Create opportunities to jointly hold public forums and workshops to exchange information and increase public understanding of innovative planning tools, programs, and regulatory procedures.

Goal 7.2.2: Realize economies of scale in procurement and infrastructure.

Objective 7.2.2.a: Maintain and continue to pursue cooperation between municipalities and other counties to avoid duplication of facilities and services and to increase the cost effectiveness of facilities and services provided.

Actions

- i. Before the purchase of new county facilities or equipment or the re-instatement of service agreements, the county will pursue options for trading, renting, sharing, or contracting such items from neighboring or local jurisdictions as warranted.
- ii. The County shall cooperatively prepare transportation system plans and studies for corridors for major facilities (arterials, collectors, transit corridors, etc.) as needed throughout the planning period.
- iii. The county shall encourage the shared development of all public capital facilities including community facilities such as parks, libraries, schools, and community meeting facilities.

Goal 7.2.3: Effective Data Management

Objective 7.2.3.a: County provide central repository for data and resources

Actions

- i. Planning materials, reports, and studies obtained from local jurisdiction shall be kept in a central location and utilized when decisions that affect land use are made.
- ii. Digitized Geographic Information System data will be housed, updated and be made available as able through the county office.
- iii. The county will pursue funding to retain/hire staff that can accomplish these actions. This includes Geographic Information System and county surveyor expertise.

Goal 7.2.4: Cooperate to retain local control

Objective 7.2.4.a: Provide coordinated lobbying on state and federal issues.

Actions

- i. The County should establish a Legislative Action Committee to maintain regular contact with federal and state legislators to both promote county policy and to stay abreast of potential impacts to county residents and operations.

8. Land Use Goals and Actions

Vernon County has historically been averse to implementing land use regulation. At the same time land use conflicts are becoming a more common problem. Additionally, the results of the neighborhood meetings and the results of the survey (Appendices B and C of the *Vernon County Inventory and Trends Report*) indicate overwhelming support on the part of the public for there to be limits on land changing activity. These goals, objectives and actions are designed to support the movement of Vernon County to transition to a balanced approach to land use regulation that takes into consideration the private landowner rights as well as the common good that was expressed by the public.

Goal 8.1: Balancing property rights and community goals

Property rights are an important issue in Vernon County. Sentiments expressed at the neighborhood listening sessions indicated that generally people want to use their land as they wish as long as it doesn't conflict with the rights of others. It is not necessary for the preservation of property rights and protection of the environment and resources to conflict with one another. People are looking for ways to achieve all of these things. They understand that it is important to protect the community's general interest.

Objective 8.1.a: Preserve private property rights while recognizing the importance of the rights of the community, including protecting the natural environment and conserving resources.

Actions

- i. Review and retain regulations that serve to protect the public welfare, health, and safety.
- ii. Where appropriate establish programs such as cluster density bonuses in urban and concentrated rural growth areas, purchase of development rights and transfers of development rights (e.g. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements) to compensate property owners when rights are unduly infringed upon.
- iii. Provide information to the public as to government's role and responsibility in relation to property rights.

Goal 8.2: Accommodating Growth

The survey results indicate citizens encourage concentrating growth into existing incorporated areas. This allows for efficient provision of services and greater preservation of rural areas as quiet, open spaces where development pressures are not of a scale that extraordinary regulations must be imposed. A distinct boundary is also encouraged between rural and urban areas, discouraging sprawl, maintaining desired rural lifestyles, and conserving agricultural land.

While the level of growth in the county is anticipated to be steady and slow, the 20 year land use vision map (Map 8.2.1) shows where residential and commercial growth could be encouraged, where natural resource and tourism attracting features should be preserved, and important areas for

agriculture production. This schematic is a starting point in the effort to create overlay maps for interests named in this plan: affordable housing, tourism, agriculture and natural resource preservation. Overlay boundaries need to be created at a local level with standards, if needed, for those areas agreed to by local communities in an independent process.

General Overlay of 20 Year Land Use Vision

The 20 year land use vision depicted in Map 8.2.1 is not intended to establish exact boundaries for specific land use. The map is based on the information acquired by the “Neighborhood” Listening Sessions (appendix B of the Phase I document); results of the Comprehensive Plan Survey (appendix C of the Phase I document); population growth projections; and the various economic, infrastructure, and environmental factors present and/or anticipated in Vernon County.

This map is intended to present a general distribution of the ***primary land use focus*** expected over the next 20 years. Areas of the map overlap considerably and just as there currently is a mix of land use spread over the county, one must recognize that due to a variety of factors some areas will naturally have diffuse and others more uniform land use distribution. This conceptual, county-wide vision of continued and future land use trends was not derived from the kind of rigorous analysis of factors that would lead to similar delineations at a much greater level of detail. Detailed analysis will need to be done in future years on a more local level to support land use decision- making and further planning.

Map 8.2.1 does not show specific areas delineated and defined by Vernon County’s Shoreland-Wetlands (Chapter 50) and Floods (Chapter 26). Consult the Zoning Department for information about lands subject to these regulations.

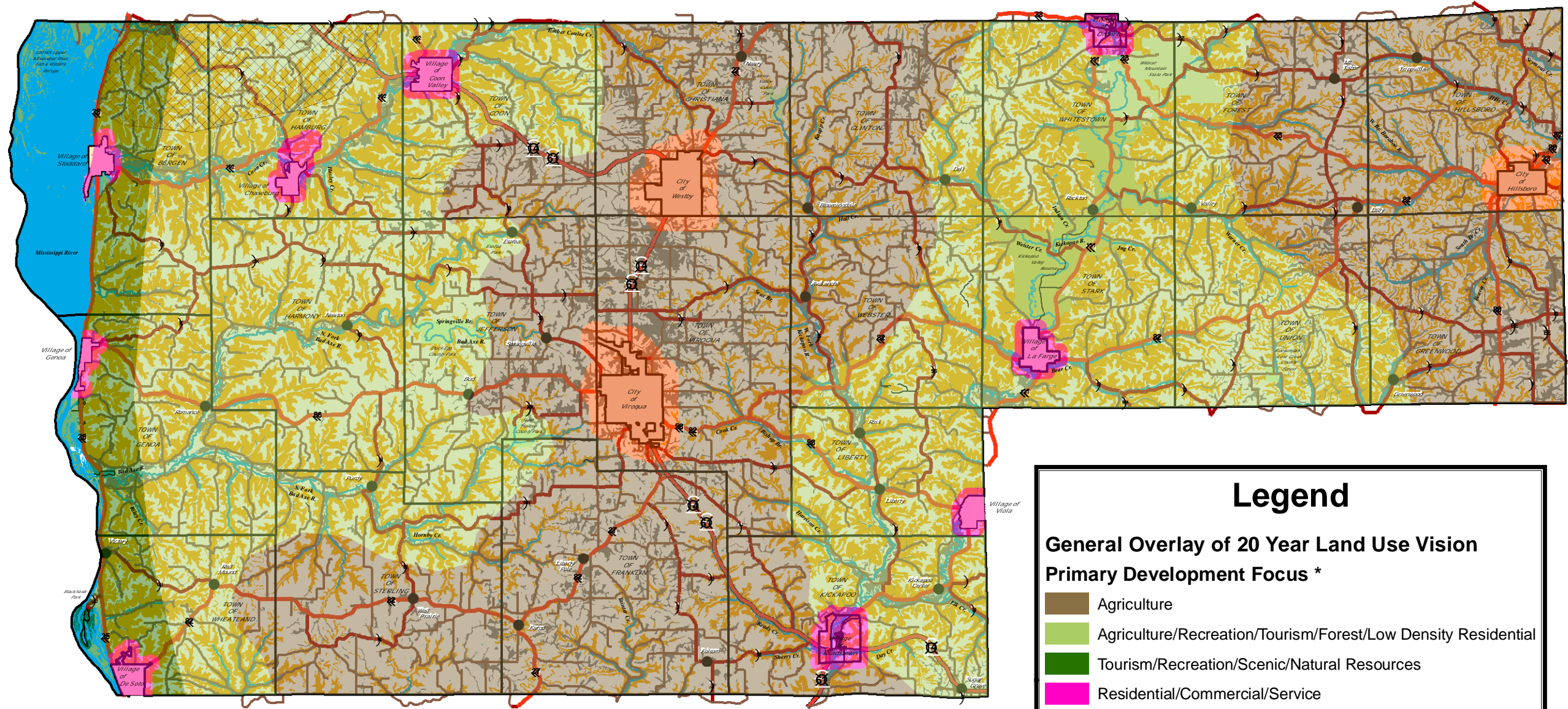
Primary “Development Focus” Area Descriptions

Agriculture

These areas will continue to be the more intensive agricultural areas of the county. They are relatively flat topographically and feature more prime soils than other areas of the county. They also are better connected to the major highways within the county that link directly to other major transportation routes and urban centers outside of the county. These areas of the county probably will not have as much pressure for rural residential development because they are not as scenic (e.g. big valley vistas) and do not have the trout streams and larger blocks of forested areas that are features in other parts of the county. However, when scattered development occurs, it can be disruptive to agricultural production and often leads to conflicts at the very local level.

Complications abound in the area between Westby and Viroqua that has the most concentrated block of prime farmland soils in the county. This area will experience increasing development pressure when the state highway 14/61 is converted to a 4-lane road. This area is also subject to conflicts between larger farms (e.g. CAFO) versus smaller scale farm operations, and proximity issues to city centers. The landscape position of this region provides the highest potential within the county for commercial wind energy, and is subject to issues related to ground water protection due to the Karst geologic setting.

Map 8.2.1 General 20 Year Land Use Vision - 2009 Comprehensive Plan



Legend

General Overlay of 20 Year Land Use Vision

Primary Development Focus *

- Agriculture
- Agriculture/Recreation/Tourism/Forest/Low Density Residential
- Tourism/Recreation/Scenic/Natural Resources
- Residential/Commercial/Service
- Residential/Commercial/Industrial
- La Crosse Residential Development Pressure
- Slopes > 20%
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Open Water
- Rivers & Streams

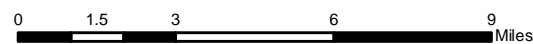
This map was created by the Vernon County LWCD - Land Information Office for comprehensive planning. Prime Farmland & Slopes >20% were derived from the official USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) SSURGO soils data, which has been processed to facilitate use with GIS software. Road centerlines and minor civil divisions are from Vernon County maintained GIS data for support of E911 and base mapping needs.

Map Created: September 1, 2009

Cartographer: Doug Avoles



a



* Note: For detailed descriptions and explanations of the Primary Development Focus items listed in the map legend, please refer to "Goal 8.2: Accommodating Growth" of the Phase II document.

All these factors make preservation of this area for agriculture challenging and important as an area of focus for the county.

Agriculture/Recreation/Tourism/Forest/Natural Resources/Low Density Residential

These areas are characterized by very steep sloped terrain and narrow valleys, several tremendous trout fisheries, smaller and less intensive farm distribution/concentration, primarily winding narrow roadways, several parks & natural areas, significant areas of forest, and have primarily scattered rural residential development. While agriculture is still probably the primary land use, these areas are pretty evenly divided between these various uses with no one single use significantly dominating or conflicting with the others. Many of the valleys within these areas are prone to flooding.

Because of the scenic and recreational attributes found within these areas it is anticipated that there will be pressure for vacation and recreational residential development. Balancing the many land uses and protecting natural resource base will be a future challenge.

Tourism/Recreation/Scenic/Natural Resources

This area encompasses a swath along the entire western part of the county, where there is a tremendous scenic resource in the bluffs and Mississippi River valley. Also due to the bluffs and river, there is very little potential for significant commercial and industrial development or expansion around and outside of the three villages located along the river. The area is very desirable for rural residential development (e.g. everybody wants to have a “million dollar view”) and it is probably most suited to tourism and recreational types of business development as a best use.

The biggest land use challenge may be how to keep a balance between a demand for residential development and the protection of the scenic beauty that draws people to the area both to visit and to live. The acceptable density threshold of residential development probably will not be reached within the next 20 years, but what happens within the next 20 years will certainly set the stage for the following 20 years. This area will very likely be an area where the purchase of development rights, conservation easements, and conservation subdivisions are seriously considered.

Residential/Commercial/Service (Villages)

According to projections developed by the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center which are based on U.S. Census Bureau Population Statistics, almost all of the villages in Vernon County are not expecting a shift in population. Several are projected to actually see a slight decrease in population over the next 20 years. Due to several factors such as limited workforce, limited transportation capacity, and other infrastructure to support large facilities, these villages are not likely to become centers of commerce or manufacturing.

These centers are more likely to attract smaller businesses and commercial services that serve local needs or are related to niche agriculture (e.g. organic), tourism, and recreation. They will likely remain primarily as residential centers for those working on farms, in agriculture related businesses, or

commuting to the larger population centers in the county. Redevelopment and rehabilitation of aging housing stock will be an important emphasis of development efforts in these areas.

Residential/Commercial/Industrial (Cities)

The three cities are anticipated to be centers of more intensive development. They are connected to the major highways within the county that link more directly to other major transportation routes and urban centers outside of the county. They are also located in proximity to the more intensive agricultural areas of the county. With the anticipation of an increase in “value added” business and industry for the county’s agricultural products these cities are logical places to locate such development.

With an increase in business and industry, there will also be an increase in population needing housing. This residential development should be encouraged to be located in and adjacent to the cities and their supporting utility infrastructure and discouraged from being scattered out in the surrounding countryside where it is likely to negatively impact the amount of productive farmland. This will be especially challenging in the area between the Cities of Westby and Viroqua where there is a large amount of the county’s prime farmland soils.

La Crosse Residential Development Pressure

It is anticipated that increased pressure for residential development due to the proximity of these areas to the City of La Crosse will continue to be a challenge. These areas feature very scenic views, natural amenities, and rural character charm that serve to accelerate development. At the same time there has been an expressed interest in preserving significant blocks of agricultural lands within this area.

Implementation of conservation subdivisions, purchase of development rights, agricultural preservation, and more detailed land use analysis will be important to managing these pressures.

Objective 8.2.a: Provide more predictability to property owners and ensure provision of sufficient land and densities to accommodate the growth needs of Vernon County and protect the qualities that make the county a desirable place to live.

Actions

- i. Promote the concentration of urban levels of development within or adjacent to existing cities and villages.
- ii. Designate land uses using regional overlays that reflect the best use of the land.
- iii. Encourage the use of boundary agreements, extraterritorial agreements, buffer areas between land uses and Working Lands Initiative provisions to preserve agricultural land.

Goal 8.3: Flooding and Shoreland/Wetland Issues

Objective 8.3.a: Promote and enhance solutions for areas prone to flooding.

Actions

- i. Continue to limit lands in one-hundred year floodplains to low-intensity land uses and/or permanent vegetation.
- ii. Continue to administer and enforce shoreland ordinances.
- iii. Work towards funding a *Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan* as a basis to balance land use and flooding. Consider the ultimate goal of a water sustainability plan that takes into account the water budget for the county and region. The Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources goals compliment this action.
- iv. Promote land use practices known to increase infiltration and reduce runoff.
- v. Pursue funding to obtain data to better determine floodplain boundaries.
- vi. Pursue funding for flood hazard mitigation.

Goal 8.4: Recognizing regions of Vernon County

Vernon County is a large and diverse county. People living in different parts of the county have different priorities and understanding of what constitutes rural and urban lifestyles. It is important to citizens to honor these regional differences.

Objective 8.4.a: Recognize the important regional differences within Vernon County.

Actions

- i. Use the regional overlay concept to reflect the priorities of the citizens in different regions of the county.
- ii. Work with local units to implement regulation as needed to work towards the integrity of those land uses and separation of urban and rural land uses.

Goal 8.5: Protection of Natural Habitat Communities

Vernon County has historically enjoyed abundant and diverse fish and wildlife populations. Maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations is a vital goal in maintaining the quality of life and tourism industry in Vernon County.

Objective 8.5.a: Protect and encourage restoration of habitat for fish and wildlife populations.

Actions

- i. Ensure that new land uses do not degrade habitat.
- ii. Ensure that existing land uses do not cause further degradation of habitat.
- iii. Develop educational tools and incentives to encourage existing land uses to restore degraded habitat to properly functioning conditions.
- iv. Develop a program that will alert those who obtain permits issued by the County for clearing or development activity within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the documented habitat of threatened or endangered species, to the presence of these species.

- v. Require developers of subdivisions to protect fish habitat and water quality when a fish bearing stream or river passes through the site.
- vi. Pursue funding for restoration of habitat in the county.

Goal 8.6: Continuously improve the governmental regulatory structure

It is very important to Vernon County citizens to maintain local control over land use decisions. At the same time some people want to see regulations streamlined and reduced. Regulations should be clear, concise, and predictable with enough flexibility to allow for reasonable and efficient decision-making. Regulations should be enforced. People would like to see an incentive program to encourage land to be used in ways that meet community goals.

Objective 8.6.a: Refine the regulatory system to ensure accomplishment of desired land use goals in a fair and equitable manner.

Actions

- i. Eliminate unnecessary regulations.
- ii. Eliminate regulations that could be more effectively achieved through incentive or education programs.
- iii. Streamline development regulations to allow for efficient implementation and enforcement.
- iv. Coordinate permitting requirements among jurisdictions to minimize duplication and delays.
- v. Provide enforcement of the remaining beneficial regulations.

Objective 8.6.b: Give a high priority to the use of a comprehensive incentive program to encourage achievement of land use goals.

Actions

- i. Develop a set of incentives, including economic, which encourages property owners to achieve land use goals.
- ii. Base incentive programs on suggestions from citizens, government officials, and experts in the field.
- iii. Revise regulations to include incentive programs.
- iv. Review and adopt, where appropriate, incentive programs such as cluster density bonuses in urban growth areas, density management in agricultural areas, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights and tax deferrals.
- v. Encourage use of easements to protect or enhance areas with forest and natural resource significance.
- vi. Monetary compensation as an economic incentive shall be based only on market value at the time of compensation, not on "possible" future value of the land.
- vii. Monitor incentive programs on a five-year basis to ensure the comprehensive plan goals are being achieved. Develop an alternate approach if necessary.

Objective 8.6.c: Increase the level of understanding of county administration, local units of government, and citizenry about land use regulation options and cost/benefits within the next three years.

Actions

- i. Utilize press releases and community meetings to inform all officials and citizenry of the changes occurring with the Farmland Preservation Program and what this community must do to qualify for tax incentives under the Working Lands Initiative. Involve guest speakers when appropriate for the most current information.
- ii. Be proactive on the issue of the Working Lands Initiative and what costs farmers will incur by the County not having comprehensive zoning including Farmland Preservation Zoning.
- iii. Continue county support to maintain the Land Information and Land & Water Conservation Department staff necessary to allow Vernon County to have the information, technical assistance, and meet the requirements of land use programs in order to qualify for available grants, cost-share, and tax benefits.
- iv. Investigate the most appropriate zoning designations based on our unique needs and work with existing Town zoning to adopt those designations in order to encourage uniformity across units of government.
- v. Work towards coordination and agreement of land use designations along boundaries of units of government.
- vi. Actively investigate the costs and benefits of zoning administration to ensure that changes in land use regulations are not wasteful and optimizes taxpayer money.

9. Implementation

This chapter will outline the existing implementation programs, describe changes needed to implement goals of this plan, describe how progress toward achieving all aspects of the plan will be measured and describe the process for updating the plan.

9.1 Present Implementation Programs

The County Zoning Department administers state mandated shoreland requirements, floodplain regulations, wetland regulations and sanitary code regulations. The only official mapping is related to 911 coverage, floodplain, shoreland and wetland delineations.

9.2 Possible Future Implementation Tools

Partnerships

This plan has many action plan elements that are beyond the capacity of the county to fund or implement, but that are considered important to the future of the county's success. It is through partnerships much of this work will happen. By naming projects and new initiatives in the plan, the County officials put on record their support for these types of activities. Granting agencies often look for this endorsement, and having it in the Comprehensive Plan lends weight to funding requests.

Education Efforts

Good land use decisions depend on informed leaders and citizens. Having quick and convenient access to the types of information assembled in the Phase I document is critical to ensuring that the best decisions are made. Traditionally the county has not made full use of a variety of tools for the planning and management of land use. While advances and improvements are slowly being made, in comparison to the rest of the counties in Wisconsin, Vernon County has much work to do to continue implementing a modernized land information system.

An accurate and well maintained land information system will assist leaders and citizens when making informed land use decisions and policy. In addition to better land information, education will also be a key to successful work in this area. The options for education will range from those that encourage voluntary cooperation toward planning goals, to researching options for regulations that ensure the accomplishment of community land use goals. Establishing community consensus on regulatory issues, positive structural arrangements and acceptable efficiencies will require extensive education and communication. The issues at stake are complex and the solutions equally complicated. This makes community engagement and open-sharing of information essential to the future of wise land use.

Zoning as a tool

Zoning is the most effective tool for implementing a community's land use goals. Vernon County administers shoreland, flood plain and wetland zoning regulations and mapping according to state standards. It is likely that a more local zoning regulation will be required for the benefit of agricultural producers interested in participation in the Working Lands Initiative. Many other sectors in the county have potential to realize benefits of more orderly development through land use regulation. A comprehensive study is needed to determine how this kind of programming change in the County might be implemented to best effect, at most reduced cost, and in a form most acceptable to County residents.

Subdivision and Platting Review

A subdivision ordinance, sometimes called a land division ordinance, is another effective tool for implementing a land use plan. This tool enables a unit of government to review and decide whether or not a proposed subdivision of land is consistent with land use plans, density standards, street locations, conservation and drainage standards and other standards of good platting procedure.

This plan calls for encouragement of the use of extraterritorial plat review and the use of boundary agreements to help assure that the community's subdivision review decisions result in preservation of the rural character in the county and encourage development near city and village utility infrastructure.

Boundary Agreements

Formal boundary agreements are encouraged in this plan as an effective tool in providing benefits to both city and town in the matter of growth issues related to jurisdictional boundaries. Boundary agreements between municipalities and towns are permitted in state statute 66.037 and 66.0301 which provide authority for local governments to develop "cooperative plans" for their boundaries. The statement of purpose in s. 66.0307(3) indicates that boundary agreements can play an important role in community planning and development; this statement of purpose is as follows:

The cooperative plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory covered by the plan which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

A boundary agreement can set out in advance mutually agreed terms for boundary adjustments that would be advisable to serve future urban growth; such agreements can encourage growth which is truly "urban" in nature to be planned and developed according to accepted urban standards, thereby assuring benefits to the businesses, customers, residents, and the local governments affected by such urban growth. Examples of such benefits include the categories of: good fire protection and safety as related to water supply and building construction methods, good traffic facilities and management, public safety and policing, application of a single source of public codes and development standards, and other categories of urban services normally required for urban growth.

In general, city and town agreements on managing growth can lead to a greater sense of community. Such agreements can enable the tapping of opportunities not otherwise possible. Such

agreements can avoid the imposition of new responsibilities on town government, over time, with all the related expenses and liabilities that come with it.

Boundary agreements and town planning, in general, can avoid imposing new, urban-type responsibilities on town government which they likely would not be seeking but could be forced into when dealing with the public needs associated with significant non-rural development patterns. Such new responsibilities would bring all the related expenses and liabilities that come with them and the loss of much of the town's rural character.

Local Governmental Revenue Sharing Agreements

The effectiveness of boundary agreements can potentially be improved if they include a "municipal revenue sharing agreement" provided by state statute 66.0305. Sharing of revenue between local units of government may be an effective method of encouraging voluntary agreements on boundary adjustments. Among the requirements of such agreements is that they be for a term of at least ten years and that they are subject to a public hearing, and are subject to the possibility of an advisory referendum.

To be successful, boundary agreements and revenue sharing agreements must be well planned and based on good communication. Such planning would require public information and education programs, and must be backed up by good comprehensive planning for the units of government involved in such measures. A regular means of communication between adjacent units of government is advisable.

Official road mapping

An additional planning implementation tool for a community that expects growth is an official street map which is adopted by ordinance. This tool gives a community the authority to map the location and width of future streets and the location of future parks and parkways within the jurisdiction. After 2010, official street mapping must be consistent with a community's Comprehensive Plan. This ordinance restricts the issuance of any building permit in the path of an official street, subject to property owner protections in this process. The provisions of official street mapping are contained in section 62.23 (6) of state statutes. This Comprehensive Plan recommends that the development of an official street map be considered as a Comprehensive Plan implementation tool.

In addition to the standard implementation measures identified above, there are other techniques which can have an effective role in implementing the plan.

Development Impact Analysis

An additional technique which can be employed as an aid in implementing development ordinances is the development impact analysis process. The principal components of such an analysis would include fiscal, environmental, socio-economic, traffic and land use impacts. Such analysis is typically employed for major rezoning and subdivision plats. Local zoning or plating ordinances can include requirements for some level of development impact analysis geared to the scope of a project. Such analysis can include special studies and limited moratoriums on development proposals until special studies or plans are done. There are a variety of program models that are available to use for such an analysis. Such a model was recently developed by the Wisconsin Land Use Research Program. The County lacks zoning

ordinance and structural arrangements to implement this presently, but this should be considered a possible tool in future.

9.3 Future Implementation Structure

Custodian of the Comprehensive Plan

One of the most important requirements for implementation of a Comprehensive Plan is that the plan has a “custodian”. It is important that there be an individual or committee whose job it is to keep the plan in front of governmental decision making bodies as development discussions and decisions come up. This custodian would be responsible for detecting when amendments to the plan are necessary or desirable as circumstances change, and then arranging for the plan to be updated. This custodian element is particularly important under the state’s comprehensive planning law which requires that after January 1, 2010, that local governmental decisions regarding land (zoning, platting, official mapping) be “consistent” with their Comprehensive Plan. A designated custodian could be that entity that helps maintain local governmental compliance with these consistency requirements.

Mechanism to Measure Progress and Updates

The Vernon County Zoning Committee will be the lead group to gather information on an annual basis about implementation of the plan, and also 5 year updates of the plan. Oversight of each section of the plan will be carried out by the appropriate County committee that will report to the Zoning Committee yearly and assist with updates at 5 year intervals. The Zoning Committee will prepare a yearly report to the County Board each fall.

9.4 Goals, Objectives and Actions for Implementation

Goal 9.4.1: Incorporate Institutional Arrangements to Ensure the Plan is Followed and Updated As Effectively and Efficiently as Possible

Objective 9.4.1.a: Develop, maintain, and utilize the County Geographic Information System (GIS) (a.k.a. County Land Information System (LIS))

Actions

- i. Continue to fund and support the Public Land Survey (PLS) Remonumentation program and consider hiring a full or part time County Surveyor.
- ii. Ensure land information is made and kept current, complete, and accurate.
- iii. Establish the training of GIS/LIS data custodians and users in all departments relevant to the Comprehensive Plan; hire and retain staff with GIS skills.
- iv. Accelerate the development of cadastral parcel mapping.
- v. Add the Director of the Computer Department as a voting or staff member of the Land Information Committee and continue to update and improve the County’s computer infrastructure to support increasing GIS/LIS use.
- vi. Continue to participate in and support the Wisconsin Land Information Program.
- vii. Make GIS/LIS data more available to County Departments and local units of government for land use related and other regular government operations.
- viii. Actively pursue all available funding, especially federal and state sources.

Objective 9.4.1.b: Ensure the Zoning Committee and Department fulfill the role of custodian of the plan.

Actions

- i. Provide training/hire expertise to lead the zoning department in the study of land use regulation that will be suitable and cost-effective.
- ii. Communicate with relevant Departments and Committees about progress.
- iii. Communicate with and educate the county board about successes of the plan.
- iv. Provide a formal annual report to the board.
- v. Coordinate the 5 year updates.

Objective 9.4.1.c: Ensure the committees related to the Comprehensive Plan Elements are effective overseers of the plan.

Actions

- i. Monitor consistency of regulations and departmental plans-of-work with the goals of the comprehensive plan.
- ii. Report progress yearly to the Zoning Committee.
- iii. Assist with the plan update at 5 year intervals.

Objective 9.4.1.d: Ensure the Zoning Department is situated optimally within the county government structure to accomplish these goals.

Action

- i. Study the costs/benefits of combining departments to streamline communication and access to land use data.

Appendix A Participants in Planning Process

Vernon County Comprehensive Plan Commission

Lynn Chakoian - Commission Chair, Economic Development Work Group
Jim Servais - Commission Vice-Chair, Land Use and Ag, Natural and Historic Resource Work Groups
Ole Yttri – Ag, Natural and Historic Resource Work Group
Armand Bringe - Housing Work Group
Cliff Peterson – Transportation Work Group
Dennis Brault – Utilities Work Group
Brad Steinmetz – Intergovernmental Cooperation Work Group
Phil Hooker – Land Use
Maynard Cox and Tom Spenner –Implementation

Staff Support

Doug Avoles - Planner/GIS Coordinator
Lori Polhamus – Clerks Office, Deputy II
Greg Lunde – County Corporation Counsel

Work Group Membership

Housing - Armand Bringe, chair

Karen Ehle-Traastad, Family Living Agent Vernon County UW-Extension in cooperation with the Vernon County Housing Coalition

Transportation - Cliff Peterson, chair

Virgil Hanold – Highway Department
Doug Avoles - Planner/GIS Coordinator
Pat Peterson – Unit on Aging
Lynda Wilke – Unit on Aging
Dennis Brault – County Board Member

Utilities and Community Facilities – Dennis Brault, chair

Tom Wilson
Jim Olson
Margaret Thielke
Utilities staff attended on an as-needed basis

Land Use and Agricultural, Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources – Jim Servais, chair

Kelly Jacobs – Land and Water Conservation District
Will Beitlich - County Board Member

Jessica Luhning – Valley Stewardship Network
Tim Rehbein – UW Extension Ag Agent
Sam Skemp – Natural Resource Conservation Service
Ben Wojahn - Land and Water Conservation District
Trent Strang - Zoning Department
T Solverson
Art Thielin
Sharon Zellmer
Susan Burkhamer – Zoning Department
Dave McClurg
Tim Servais

Economic Development – Lynn Chakoian chair

Rosanne Boyett Vernon County Tourism Council member and business owner
Mary Christenson, Development Director at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School
Marie Cimino, President, Vernon County Tourism Council and business owner
Rebecca Eby Executive Director, Viroqua Partners
Peter Fletcher Transportation Planner, Mississippi River Regional Planning
Dan Gilbertson, Farm Business Production Management Instructor, Western Technical College
Mary Ann Herlitzke, Dean of Teaching and Learning, Western Regional Learning Centers
Tim Hundt, Supported Employment Specialist, Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center
Karen Innis, Event Implementation Manager, Organic Valley
Kelly Jacobs, County Conservationist Vernon County LWCD
Grace Jones, Executive Director, Couleecap
Jim Kirchoff, Director, Vernon Economic Development Association Board and business owner
Penny Lindstrom, Community member and business owner
Kathy Neidert, Employment Coordinator, Workforce Connections
Susan Noble, Executive Director, Vernon Economic Development Association
Dawn Simonson, Vice-President, Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center
Marcy West, Executive Director, Kickapoo Valley Reserve and business owner
Ben Wojahn, Project Manager and GIS Specialist, Vernon County LWCD

Intergovernmental Cooperation – Brad Steinmetz, chair

A collaboration with the Towns Association and Vernon County Department Directors

Implementation – Maynard Cox, chair

Tom Spenner, County Board Chair
Greg Lunde, Vernon County Corporation Counsel
Lynn Chakoian, Comprehensive Plan Commission Chair

Citizens Advisory – Lynn Chakoian, facilitator

Aaron Corbin
Becky Comeau
Carol Gohlke
Daniel Arnold

Darin Von Ruden
Donna Leum
Elizabeth Parish
Gary Krause
Harvey Kirking
Jack K. Lee
Jessica Luhning
Jim Holmberg
Jim Servais
Judy Williams
Margaret Thielke
Mike & Merna Fremstad
Philip Hooker
Rosanne Boyett
Steve Wagemester
Steven Laurdan
Sue Noble
Sustainable Woods Coop
Terry Kucera
Vernon Trails
Viroqua Nat. Step Study Circle
Viroqua Partners
Wendy Crews