

Center for Land Use Education

THE LAND USE TRACKER

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN WISCONSIN: ARE COMMUNITIES PLANNING TO PROTECT THEIR GROUNDWATER?

by Chin-Chun Tang, Bobbie Webster and Lynn Markham

This article is the first in a two-part series introducing a project by CLUE staff that examines comprehensive planning efforts to protect and manage groundwater in Wisconsin. The article includes a synopsis of the purpose and background of the project, as well as a discussion of our preliminary results. In the following issue, we will share our final results.

What is the Relationship between Groundwater and Comprehensive Plans?

Groundwater, lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands are among Wisconsin's greatest natural resources. Fish, wildlife, and plants depend on these water resources to give them life. People depend on these waters for many things, including drinking water, waste assimilation, and recreation. Over 95% of Wisconsin's communities and about 75% of Wisconsin residents rely on groundwater for their drinking water supply (WDNR, 2002b). Groundwater is equally vital to industry and agriculture. In order for communities to plan for the future, it is essential that both the quantity and quality of groundwater be protected (WDNR, 2002b). Land use decisions can have significant and unanticipated consequences for groundwater resources. Declining water levels and reductions in water quality have already occurred in many parts of the state (Meine, 2003).

Legislation adopted in 1999 (ss. 66.0295 and 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes) requires that by January 1, 2010 all communities that make land use decisions base

those decisions on a comprehensive plan. The legislation outlines nine elements that must be included in each comprehensive plan. The comprehensive planning process attempts to provide an integrated treatment of all the planning elements, of which, natural resources is just one. Though specifically required in the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element of the comprehensive plan, groundwater information and issues may appear in all nine elements (WDNR, 2002a). For example, the location of residential development determines the source of drinking water and whether waste will be treated via a private on-site wastewater treatment system or a municipal treatment plant.

A number of publications have been completed by state and university groups that provide a thorough discussion of groundwater as part of the comprehensive planning process (WDNR, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Department of Urban & Regional Planning, 2002; UW Cooperative Extension, 2002). For example, one fact sheet clearly outlines the relationship of groundwater to each of the nine elements required in a comprehensive plan. Another fact sheet discusses what groundwater-related information is needed in a comprehensive plan through a series of questions as shown in Figure 1 on page 4.

What is the Scope of the Project?

The Center for Land Use Education together with a scientist from the U.S.

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CLUE Staff**Anna Haines**

Center Director/Assistant Professor/
Land Use Specialist
Anna.Haines@uwsp.edu

Lynn Markham

Land Use Specialist
Lynn.Markham@uwsp.edu

Douglas Miskowiak

Project Planner
Doug.Miskowiak@uwsp.edu

Eric Olson

Assistant Professor/Land Use
Specialist
Eric.Olson@uwsp.edu

Rebecca Roberts

Project Planner
Rebecca.Roberts@uwsp.edu

Chin-Chun Tang

Project Planner
Chin-Chun.Tang@uwsp.edu

Robert Newby

Office Manager
Robert.Newby@uwsp.edu

Affiliated Faculty**Alicia Acken**

Land Use Specialist
UW-River Falls
Alicia.Acken@uwrf.edu

Roger Hammer

Assistant Professor
UW-Madison, Rural Sociology
rhammer@wisc.edu

Brian W. Ohm

Assoc Prof/Land Use Specialist
UW-Madison, URPL
bwohm@facstaff.wisc.edu

Kevin Struck

Growth Management Educator
Sheboygan/Washington County
Kevin.Struck@ces.uwex.edu

Susan Thering

Assistant Professor/Ext Specialist,
UW-Madison, Landscape
Architecture
sathering@facstaff.wisc.edu

CALENDAR OF EVENTS**UW-MILWAUKEE SMART GROWTH SEMINAR SERIES**

Lectures will be held on Wednesdays from 12-1:30 and will take place in Room 345 of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, 2131 E. Hartford Ave, Milwaukee. The lectures are open to the public.

March 30 – “Menomonee River Flood Management Plan: A Look at Hart Park and County Grounds” by Thomas Chapmann, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

April 6 – “Madison’s Inclusionary Zoning Policy” by Brad Murphy, AICP, City of Madison.

April 20 – “Bicycle Route Planning in Milwaukee” by Mike Loughran, Milwaukee Dept. of Public Works, and Dave Schlabowske, Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin.

WISCONSIN’S NEW LIVESTOCK FACILITY SITING LAW: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

March 29, 30, 31, & April 4, 6, 7, 2005

Learn about the new Livestock Facility Siting Law, why some dairy & livestock operations are expanding and what it means for the local community/economy, state and local permits for farm expansion, and how to hold a public hearing and maintain crowd control. For registration information, click on the article on this topic at www.wicounties.org to bring up a link to the “Act 235 Brochure.pdf.”

SPRING 2005 WIND ENERGY WORKSHOP: PLANNING SMALL COMMERCIAL WIND PROJECTS

April 4, 2005 Middleton, WI

At the end of the workshop attendees will understand the capabilities of wind turbines, be better able to decide whether to develop a wind turbine project, have tools to develop a business plan, and know what the next steps should be and who to contact for assistance.

For workshop questions call Focus on Energy toll free at (888) 476-9534. Register on line at: www.peopleware.net/2723.

GROWING COMMUNITIES, GREENING COMMUNITIES: COMPUTER TOOLS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

April 7, 2005 WisLine 10:30-11:50 a.m.

This session will review environmental implications of the nine comprehensive planning elements and present computer-based tools and resources available to enhance the local planning process. To register, contact the Local Government Center at 608-262-9961 or www.uwex.edu/lgc/.

WISCONSIN COUNTY CODE ADMINISTRATORS SPRING CONFERENCE 2005

April 7-8, 2005 Wausau, WI
www.wccadm.com/

3RD ANNUAL WISCONSIN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

April 13-14, 2005, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Join leaders from across the region in the exciting exploration of community leadership. www.wirural.org/CLSummit.htm

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE *by Becky Roberts*

U.S. SUPREME COURT TO RULE ON EMINENT DOMAIN CASE

A case currently before the Supreme Court may potentially alter the practice of eminent domain and could have serious implications for local governments, economic development practitioners and private property owners. *Kelo vs. City of New London* concerns the right of the city to use eminent domain for the purpose of promoting economic development.

Facts of the case

In February 1998, Pfizer, Inc. announced that it was developing a global research facility on a site adjacent to the Fort Trumbull neighborhood. The City of New London gave initial approval to the New London Development Corporation (NLDC), a private, non-profit corporation, to prepare a development plan for the Fort Trumbull area. The plan, tailored to accommodate the Pfizer facility, would transfer the land in the Fort Trumbull area to a private developer, which would in turn build a waterfront hotel, conference center, office spaces and expensive condos to replace the older homes and businesses. The NLDC estimates the 90-acre development plan would produce a significant economic impact, including the creation of jobs and close to \$1 million in property tax revenue.

After adopting the development plan in January 2000, the City delegated the power of eminent domain to NLDC to acquire properties within the development plan. NLDC purchased many of the neighborhood properties, yet some residents, 15 homes in total, resisted redevelopment efforts. In October 2000, the NLDC voted to use eminent domain

to acquire the remaining properties from owners who would not sell voluntarily, including petitioner Susette Kelo.

Implications

The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” Historically, eminent domain has been used to condemn private property to make way for public uses, such as bridges or highways, or to improve blighted areas. At question in this case is whether economic development, vaguely defined, constitutes a public purpose.

Advocates for individual property rights say recent interpretations of the “public use” clause are too broad. They argue that, because businesses generate more taxes than homes, local governments will likely abuse their eminent domain powers to favor private business interests. Attorneys on behalf of Kelo are arguing to hold municipalities to a higher standard of review for public use when using eminent domain. The case was heard by the Supreme Court on February 22, 2005 but has not yet been decided. All cases argued during a term of Court are decided before the summer recess begins, usually by the end of June.

Additional information related to this case and constitutional law in general is available on the FindLaw website: <http://www.findlaw.com/cascode/>. The American Planning Association is also following this case: <http://www.planning.org/amicusbriefs/kelo.htm>

CDBG PROGRAM MAY UNDERGO SEVERE CUTS

The FY 2006 federal budget, proposed by the Bush Administration, includes major budget cuts and possible restructuring of federal community development programs. The plan proposes to merge 18 existing programs, based mostly in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, into a new Strengthening

America’s Communities (SAC) grant program to be administered by the Department of Commerce. Under this plan, funding for community development would be scaled back from \$5.3 billion to \$3.7 billion. The popular Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

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Figure 1: Questions to ask about groundwater when preparing a comprehensive plan:

- Where does your community’s groundwater come from? What land area contributes recharge to your community’s well(s)?
- What geologic materials provide water for your community’s well(s)? Are sensitive/susceptible areas within the recharge area identified?
- How much groundwater do your wells currently produce? Is this amount causing drawdown?
- What are the existing and potential contaminant sources that could impact your wells?

(Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2002b)

Geological Survey decided to launch a small project to review and evaluate adopted Wisconsin comprehensive plans to understand the extent of groundwater coverage and efforts to protect and manage groundwater in comprehensive plans. In addition, we also conducted several case studies to document exemplary efforts to protect groundwater. Our plan review consists of two phases: Phase I is a preliminary review where we broadly examine how groundwater is being covered in each of the nine comprehensive planning elements. Phase II is a detailed review where we select a small pool of plans based on the preliminary results to analyze the types of data, policies, and goals included in the plans.

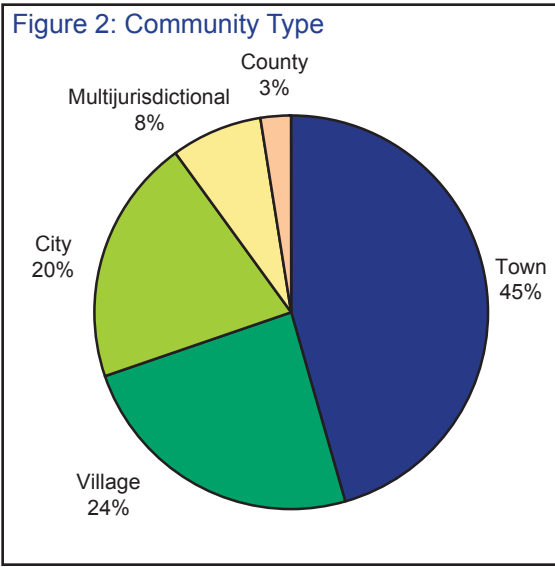
Why Are We Interested in Such a Project?

Despite widespread understanding

among groundwater scientists and planners that groundwater needs to be addressed throughout a comprehensive plan, there have been no efforts to track how groundwater is being addressed in the plans, particularly since adoption of the comprehensive planning law in 1999. Furthermore, the quality of plans and resources of the planning agency have been found to drive successful plan implementation (Laurian, Day, Backhurst, et. al., 2004). We believe this project will improve local groundwater planning efforts, and more importantly implementation efforts, by providing examples of high quality plans and real-life examples illustrating how local governments have implemented their plans. This information is largely absent from current publications. The case study examples selected for this project will highlight rural Wisconsin communities that have implemented groundwater protection measures. In particular, the case studies will highlight the key people, their rationale, and the social, financial and political challenges they overcame to achieve their groundwater goals.

What are the Preliminary Results?

We used a database of completed and in-progress comprehensive plans from the Department of Administration (DOA, 2004) to identify comprehensive plans that were completed after 2000 and submitted to the DOA. Only plans adopted by their respective communities were selected for review. We were able to obtain 79 such plans. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of plans by community type: the majority of plans were completed by



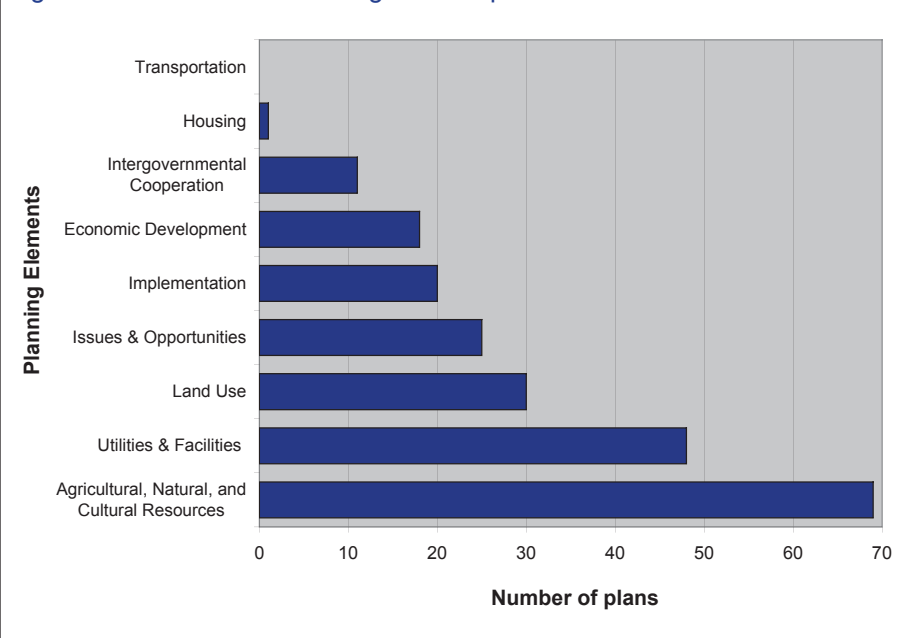
towns, followed by villages and cities. We conducted preliminary content analysis on the 79 plans to determine the extent to which groundwater is covered in each plan. First, we counted how frequently the word “groundwater” appeared in each element of the plans. Figure 3 shows the results. As expected, the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element contains the most extensive coverage of groundwater, followed by the utilities and community facilities element. The housing and transportation elements, respectively, contain little to no mention of groundwater. In total, four plans did not mention groundwater at all. It is important to note that using the word “groundwater” as the sole code word may underestimate the extent to which groundwater is covered in these plans, since alternate language could have been used. The purpose of the detailed review in Phase II is to capture these details.

Another important point to highlight is that the communities whose plans we reviewed are “pioneer communities,” meaning they committed themselves to comprehensive planning shortly after the law was enacted. Thus, many of them started preparing their comprehensive plans with limited educational materials or real-life examples to guide them in integrating groundwater into their plans. From our review process, the quality of plans is indeed wide-ranging. However, the proactive spirit and initiative of these communities should be commended.

What Are Our Next Steps?

We are in the process of conducting a detailed review of 30 plans selected from among those containing the greatest coverage of groundwater in the preliminary review. Based on the assumption that plans prepared by the same entity are likely to be similar – in terms of the types of groundwater data included, the extent of groundwater coverage, and the types of goals and policies recommended in the plans – we limited the number of plans from any single preparer to four. The detailed review examines the types of policies and goals that are included in the plans, as well as the type and format of

Figure 3: Groundwater Coverage in Comprehensive Plans



groundwater-related information and data. The latter is important for scientists attempting to identify gaps in current groundwater knowledge and to identify how best to translate scientific information into jargon-free language understandable by the public.

In addition to the detailed plan review, we are developing several case studies to illustrate proven methods of implementing groundwater protection goals, including wellhead protection, well testing programs, cropping agreements, industrial and residential water conservation, municipal well remediation, and private well casing regulation. This information will help readers visualize how these tools might work in their community.

This project is unique because it attempts to link scientists with local government staff and officials who are in positions to apply the scientific groundwater information. Groundwater management will likely improve with regular two-way communication between these groups to ensure that researchers are learning about the information needs of local decision-makers, and that decision-makers are learning about the implications of various planning decisions from the researchers.

This project is just one way to gauge

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the extent of groundwater protection strategies that exist in Wisconsin. Many communities may in fact be taking actions to protect groundwater that do not appear in their comprehensive plans. By analyzing and summarizing groundwater-related data, goals, and policies from comprehensive plans, and highlighting successful case study examples, we hope to aid communities across Wisconsin as they explore innovative approaches to address groundwater concerns in their comprehensive plans and take concrete steps to maintain safe drinking water for future generations.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the Wisconsin Groundwater Research Program in the Water Resources Institute for funding this project; Chuck Dunning, USGS, for initiating the project and providing guidance; and the advisory committee for their constructive advice and encouragement.

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program, currently funded at \$4.7 billion, would be eliminated and replaced by a grant program administered by the Department of Commerce. The new program would likely place greater restrictions on which communities are eligible to receive funding and on how the funds may be used.

Importance of CDBG

Established 30 years ago, the CDBG program funds housing rehabilitation projects, supportive services, public improvements and economic development projects in communities across the nation. It serves more than 1,100 entitlement communities, urban counties and states, and more than 3,000 rural communities.

Communities rely on these grants to leverage additional funding and to implement key projects.

Concerns and action

The proposed federal budget is currently being reviewed by Congress and is not expected to be resolved until early spring. Concerns have been expressed on all sides about significant funding reductions associated with the SAC program, lack of program details, and the possible loss of local flexibility offered by the CDBG program. The American Planning Association recently launched a CDBG campaign action center to follow new developments related to this program: www.planning.org/legislation/CDBG/.



CLUE-IN ON TECHNOLOGY

FOSTERING OUTREACH EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT WITH GIS: A CASE STUDY FROM WISCONSIN'S NORTHWOODS

by Douglas Miskowiak and Chin-Chun Tang

Introduction

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) can be an effective public participation and planning tool for natural resource and community development educators, even in rural places. Educators at the Center for Land Use Education (CLUE) employed GIS in a town hall setting to engage local plan committee members to identify and map important land resources for planning and management in Ashland County, Wisconsin. This article will describe that case study and explore the successes and lessons learned from an educator's perspective. We hope that after reading this article, extension outreach educators and other plan professionals will consider applying GIS as a tool to foster education and public involvement.

In 2003, Ashland County and participating municipalities received funding from the Wisconsin Department of Administration to develop several comprehensive plans – one county plan and 15 municipal plans. A private consulting firm was hired to facilitate the project and write the plans. CLUE, a University of Wisconsin Extension center, with a mission to provide local outreach education on natural resources and land use planning, agreed to provide assistance on the natural resources and land use elements of the comprehensive plans. CLUE provided services in addition to the consultant's contract. These services were intended to add value to the local planning process and provide a means to research innovative tools and methods for planning and participation in rural places. The remainder of this article will examine our efforts to help local citizens and committee members map environmental corridors and development constraints.

Educational Program

To map environmental corridors and development constraints, CLUE

sponsored two three-hour Strategic Mapping Workshops held on two separate weekends. A small group of dedicated citizens participated. They were selected from each municipality for their involvement as plan committee members or as interested citizens. The primary goal of the workshops was to help this group identify and map natural, cultural, and regulatory features that would guide land and resource management over the next 20 years. The purpose of the workshops was not only to build useful maps for planning, but also to:

1. Provide an objective method to help map resource areas for policy development
2. Open a dialogue to facilitate understanding and consensus building
3. Build local leadership and capacity among local planning officials

Methods

Data collection

Prior to the workshops, the CLUE team collected GIS map data from the consultant and from various state and local sources. Data included an array of ESRI shapefiles to portray natural resources such as surface water, wetlands, and slopes; existing land uses including residential, commercial, roads, etc.; regulatory data such as shoreland zoning buffers; and public ownership categories that also delineated tribal lands, not within the jurisdiction of the planning project. These data would help facilitators get to know Ashland County better as well as provide our citizen participants the information required to make place-based decisions.

Presentations

The participatory mapping workshop commenced with two educational presentations. The first presentation showcased how to identify and map important linear patterns, known as

CLUE in on Technology is a new segment in the Land Use Tracker dedicated to how cutting edge digital technologies, such as the Internet and GIS are applied to efficiently, effectively, and equitably address comprehensive planning and public involvement. The intent of these articles is to help diffuse technologies where they "best-fit" – where using technology is an improvement upon using other methods.

CLUE in on Technology wants to share studies and stories that showcase technology in local, regional, and state planning applications. If you have a 2-4 page case study to share, please contact our editor, Becky Roberts to publish in the Land Use Tracker.



environmental corridors, which connect various natural resource features. The presentation also explained how the environmental corridor concept could be used to identify areas to:

1. Support recreation and tourism
2. Protect water quality
3. Enhance aesthetic experiences
4. Provide space for wildlife
5. Provide a means to guide future development

The second presentation introduced the concept of development constraints.

Development constraints are cultural, natural, or regulatory features on the landscape that limit, restrict, or modify future development from occurring (UW-Madison LICGF terms these “growth management factors”) (LICGF, 2000). The process of mapping development constraints begins by mapping a menu of land features. Citizens, equipped with local knowledge and a GIS, select

from this menu to identify those areas where future development is constrained or restricted. For example, surface water is a natural land feature that restricts development – development cannot occur directly upon a lake.

Interactive mapping exercises

To guide facilitation, the CLUE team provided a set of example environmental corridor and development constraint maps, copies of each communities’ goals and objectives, and a set of instruction sheets. The citizen team was instructed to review the maps and their community goals and objectives, and then select map features that would guide their development and natural resource policies. The GIS mapping was run live and in real-time. Citizen group members, with the help of the facilitator, employed the functions of the GIS software, such as turning on various data layers, panning to a new location, zooming in to a location, or conducting a query to learn more about the attributes of various land features, such as size (see Image 1).

For environmental corridors, the citizen team identified a list of features that should be considered for protection or maintained for their aesthetic qualities. The facilitator used the GIS software to map the selected features and to show spatial relationships with other map data (see Map 1).

For development constraints, the citizen team also identified a list of features which they ranked based on how much they restricted new development. Three categories were identified, including: Modify, Limit, and Restrict – each progressively more limiting. The Modify category included land features where engineering or aesthetic modification were required before allowing development, such as on steep slopes. The Limit category identified features where development could occur, but would be limited to lower densities or certain types of developments, such as planned unit developments. Features in the Restrict category included those areas where new development would be most constrained. For example, new development cannot occur where existing roads are located (see Map 2).

Outcomes, Challenges, and Observations

Set of citizen crafted planning maps
A set of maps shaped by citizen participants and constructed by CLUE

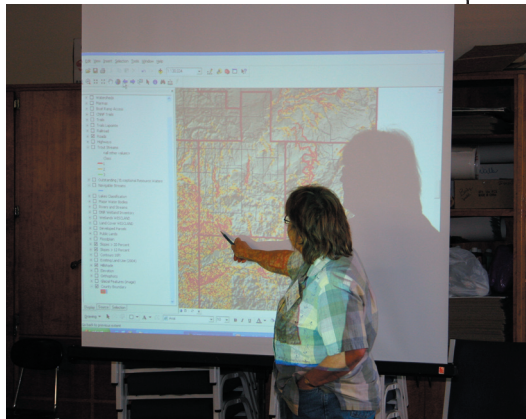
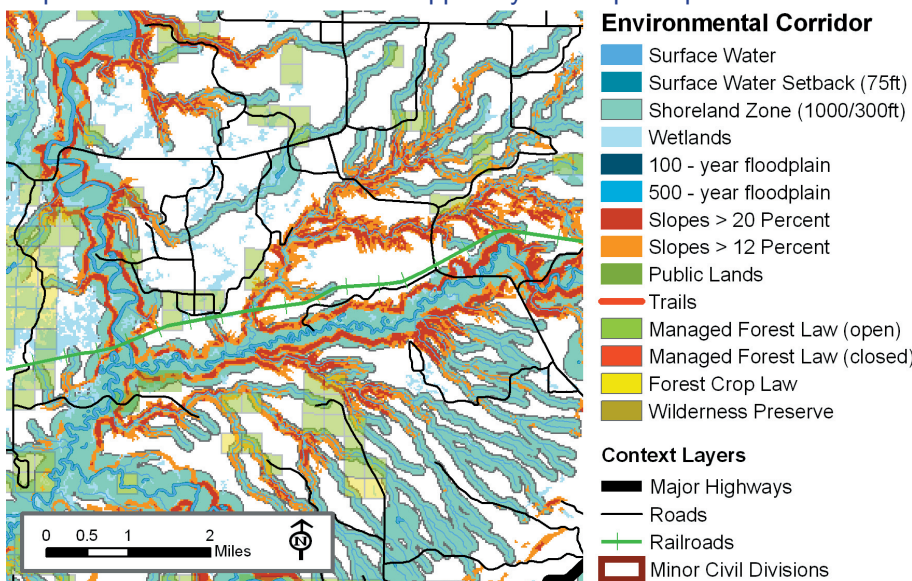


Image 1. A citizen participant uses the GIS to articulate her reasons for including a specific land feature in the environmental corridor map

Map 1. Environmental corridors mapped by citizen participants



was the final planning product derived from the workshops (see Map 1 & 2). These maps are intended to serve future policy debates about natural resources and land use. By displaying the physical locations of features of concern, they will guide local officials in developing policies regarding what happens or does not happen at these locations. The map exercises were able to effectively move the planning debate from “where are the areas of concern?” to “what should happen on or be limited in these areas?” The environmental corridor map shows areas to consider for environmental management or protection. The development constraints map identifies areas where growth is restricted, as well as those areas that have few constraints and could be developed with minimal political controversy or environmental hazard.

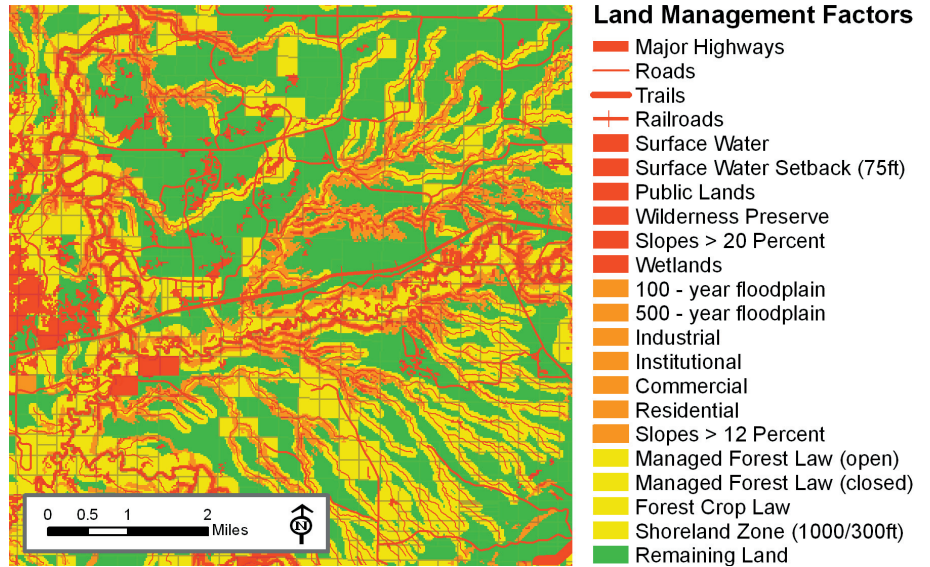
Citizen leadership skills and understanding

The mapping workshops helped develop new leadership skills and environmental understanding among participants. First, decisions were placed directly in the hands of participants. Second, a robust set of planning tools and information were provided to help them make these decisions. Equipped with the responsibility and the tools to accomplish a task, these citizens proved to be effective decision-makers.

As it turned out, the skills and human resources of our workshop participants were anything but lacking. Every participant was able to read and interpret the maps, understand complex patterns and relationships among map data, and understand the possible implications of attaching policy to map layers. The GIS tool, rather than presenting a challenge to these folks, was instead able to augment their skills. Participants had a new and increased set of information on which to base and make decisions (see Image 2).

At an upcoming planning meeting, these augmented skills would be tested. The county’s consultant presented an approach to quantifying existing land uses. One citizen who had previously participated in the CLUE workshops challenged that their approach would overestimate the

Map 2. Land management factors mapped and ranked by citizen participants



amounts of land available for future development. Given access to new map information, this citizen was empowered to speak up and insist upon applying methods more representative of her community.

Increased credibility

The GIS tools also enhanced the credibility of the facilitators and the resulting planning maps. For CLUE facilitators, the GIS tools enabled us to provide effective land use and natural resources education despite having little first-hand knowledge of Ashland County. The GIS helped to bring us up to speed about the location and extent of a variety of land-based features so we could talk about how to use these analyses to better represent the local area.

For participating citizens, the GIS tool provided an objective means to apply a set of community goals and objectives. For example, many communities state the protection of water quality as an important community goal. Science and research tells us that developed uses near water bodies can affect water quality. Community values and beliefs may also insist that protecting surface waters are important, but so is providing housing and business – these goals sometimes conflict. GIS provides a method to understand where these conflicts occur on

Land Management Factors

- Major Highways
- Roads
- Trails
- Railroads
- Surface Water
- Surface Water Setback (75ft)
- Public Lands
- Wilderness Preserve
- Slopes > 20 Percent
- Wetlands
- 100 - year floodplain
- 500 - year floodplain
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Residential
- Slopes > 12 Percent
- Managed Forest Law (open)
- Managed Forest Law (closed)
- Forest Crop Law
- Shoreland Zone (1000/300ft)
- Remaining Land

Red = Restrict
 Orange = Limit
 Yellow = Modify
 Green = No Limitations

Image 2. Workshop participant interpreting a water resource map to help design the environmental corridor map



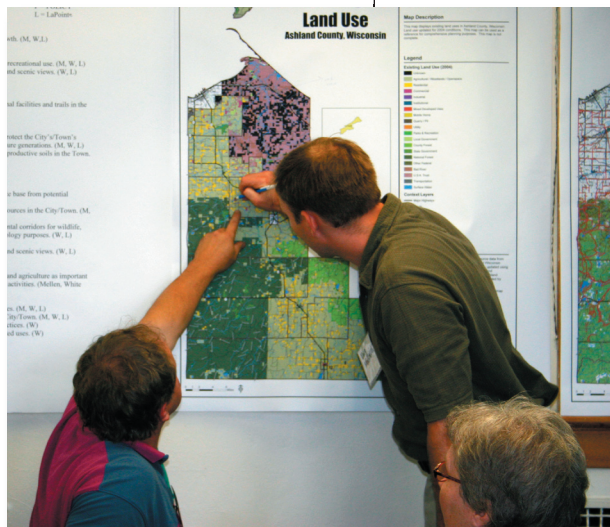


Image 3. Participant identifies an incorrectly mapped land use while the facilitator notes the error. Participants were very effective map readers – they not only were able to interpret complex map patterns, but also identify subtle errors in the data

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the landscape, as well as a means to help citizens and committee members articulate visions and policy recommendations.

Accuracy and completeness of data

The credibility of GIS for planning depends on the availability and accuracy of data. Data collected for the Ashland County

project, namely roads and existing land uses, contained major flaws. Road data contained incorrect labels and sometimes entire roads were missing. Existing land use data often displayed incorrect uses or were missing attributes. We found that participants were very sharp map readers and easily identified these mistakes – even being so bold as to correct the errors at the workshop (see Image 3). Participants asked about these mistakes and many were concerned about the credibility of the resulting analyses. The first 30 minutes of both workshops were dedicated to helping the citizen participants understand the errors and convincing them that the workshops could proceed without significantly impacting the analyses. Accurate data would have further increased our credibility as facilitators and would have saved us valuable meeting time.

Allocating time to ensure data accuracy is essential for any planning effort. Although data collection was the role of the consultant, it would have benefited us as facilitators to play an integral role in ensuring the accuracy of the data. This challenge could have been transformed into an opportunity to involve citizens as responsible partners to verify the data for accuracy. This way, the community could have come to better understand and trust the data first hand.

Jargon

Developing presentations concerning GIS and new planning concepts such as environmental corridors and development

constraints posed a challenge of understanding new language. Although we spent time during the presentation to define technology and planning-related jargon, one participant strongly rejected the use of the phrase “development constraint” and our strong focus on environmental corridors. The CLUE team had spent some time considering the phrase “development constraint” for its simplicity. It was a term that to us was easy to understand. To this gentleman, however, the term, though easily interpreted, had a negative connotation towards growth. His philosophy was, “In this county we can protect the environment as well as provide for new development.” The group spent about 10 minutes during the meeting to develop a term that everyone could agree to. “Land management factors,” defined as “land features that should be considered when guiding future growth” ultimately replaced “development constraints.”

Conclusion

Using GIS to enhance public involvement in planning can be a great tool for educators, but is not without its challenges. In Ashland County, CLUE had to wrestle with incomplete and inaccurate data, educate citizens and understand community concerns in a condensed timeframe, and help a group of citizens create planning products that will guide future decision-making. The GIS helped. The technology first provided us a means to learn about a community that we had little first hand knowledge about. Second, the GIS provided the citizen participants a tool to voice their concerns. The GIS paved the way for well-informed dialogue among participants at the workshops. Outside the workshops, these citizens were equipped with the knowledge set necessary to gauge whether planning products met their community goals, objectives, desires, or values. Learning GIS is not an insignificant task; yet, investing time to learn these skills provides natural resource and land use educators with an additional tool in their arsenal to conduct effective public involvement and planning.



SUSTAINABLE SWEDEN WORKSHOP VISITS ASHLAND

by Becky Roberts and Chin-Chun Tang

Torbjörn Lahti, the “father” of the eco-municipality movement in Sweden, and Sarah James, planning consultant, were invited to Ashland in February to share with Chequamegon Bay residents ideas for practicing sustainable development. The workshop was sponsored by the Alliance for Sustainability and 15 local co-sponsors including the Center for Land Use Education. Mary Rehwald, conference organizer and member of the Ashland City Council, and Jane Silberstein, UW-Extension CNRED educator were instrumental in bringing the workshop to Ashland.

Becoming an Eco-municipality Using the Natural Step Framework

The purpose of the workshop was to share with participants how the Chequamegon Bay region could become an eco-municipality based on the Natural Step concept.

Eco-Municipality

‘Eco’ in the word ‘eco-municipality’ stands for two words: ecological and economic. To Swedes, these two concepts are complementary. The first Swedish town to become an eco-municipality was Övertorneå, a region once struggling with economic recession. When asked in the mid-1980s to direct a “futures project,” Lahti worked with the town people and farmers to revitalize the economy. As a result, 200 new businesses flourished, 40 farmers united to provide organic food to the schools, and the town reduced its dependency on fossil fuels from 80% to 20% by converting its heating plants. Övertorneå’s success was the spark for a renaissance of 3,300 town sustainability initiatives throughout Scandinavia. The Nordic model was the foundation for solutions brought forth at the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992 on economic development and the environment.

The Natural Step

Developed by Lahti and James, the

Natural Step framework promotes four sustainability objectives:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, underground metals and minerals
2. Reduce dependence on synthetic chemicals
3. Reduce encroachment upon nature (land, water, wildlife etc.)
4. Meet human needs fairly and efficiently

The Ashland Workshop

The Ashland workshop, led by Lahti and James, explored the history of the Swedish experience, outlined the Natural Step framework, and allowed participants to meet in small groups to envision changes that would lead to an eco-municipality. Over 250 participants, representing city and tribal governments, students and teachers, small business owners, family farmers, regional planning organizations, and interested citizens were in attendance. Workshop attendees participated in a small group exercise to brainstorm sustainable action items related to tourism, food and agriculture, education, housing, business and economic development, energy, transportation and waste. At the end of the exercise participants prioritized actions that should be taken in the Chequamegon Bay region.

About 60 participants attended a post-workshop planning session to discuss strategies that could be taken by the region to become an eco-municipality. The following seven steps were identified and discussed:

1. Finding the “fire souls”
2. Initial education and awareness raising
3. Official endorsement
4. Involving the implementers
5. Applying the ‘compass’ process
6. Whole plan endorsement
7. Keeping it going

Chequamegon Bay is currently in step two. Overwhelming support

from community members to move the region towards becoming the first eco-municipality in the United States was evidenced by over 40 participants who stood up and made a personal commitment to take specific actions such as:

- Holding a day-long workshop on operating a green business
- Promoting the production and consumption of locally-produced organic foods
- Developing a sustainability curriculum and student learning projects for local schools
- Integrating sustainability concepts into local comprehensive plans and land use ordinances
- Developing “Green Pages” to advertise local green businesses

The Alliance for Sustainability has volunteered to take the lead in transitioning to the next step. A follow-up meeting was arranged on March 13, 2005 at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center to set up sub-committees and identify key listeners and audiences for educational outreach.

Additional Resources

The Alliance for Sustainability.
www.allianceforsustainability.org

The Natural Step. www.naturalstep.org

Sustainable Sweden Association.
www.sustainableSweden.org

American Planning Association. (2000). Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability. www.planning.org/policyguides/sustainability.htm

Sarah James and Torbjörn Lahti. (2004). The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.
www.newsociety.com.



Submit Articles!

Please submit an article to our newsletter.

It should be:

- 1,000 words or less,
- Informative,
- Of statewide concern,
- And address a land use issue.

The managing editor will review your submission and get back to you if any changes are necessary.

*Managing Editor
Rebecca Roberts*

905014



Center for Land Use Education
University of Wisconsin-
Stevens Point
College of Natural Resources
800 Reserve Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Phone: 715-346-3783
Fax: 715-346-4038
Email: landcenter@uwsp.edu

27TH ANNUAL WISCONSIN LAKES CONVENTION - WATER IN OUR VEINS: CELEBRATING LAKE VOLUNTEERS

April 28-30, 2005 Green Bay, WI

This conference represents an exceptional opportunity to listen, learn and discuss with others your experiences and questions on the lake and water resource management law, land use and watershed planning, shoreland restoration, economics, youth and adult education and other important topics. For more information or to register call (715) 346-2116 or online at the website www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/conventions

WAPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 18-19, 2005 Sheboygan, WI

www.wisconsinplanners.org/events/events.htm

NO ADVERSE IMPACT: PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABLE FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

June 12-17, 2005 Madison, WI

The 2005 national floodplain manager's conference will be held June 12-17 in Madison, WI. Planners, engineers, consultants, watershed managers, educators and others will gather with government officials for the largest and most comprehensive floodplain management conference in the world. Throughout the week, over 150 of the industry's experts will conduct plenary and concurrent sessions, sharing state-of-the-art in techniques, programs, resources, materials, equipment, accessories and services to accomplish flood mitigation, watershed management and other community goals. For conference details check the ASFPM website at www.floods.org.

For additional dates and information, visit the online calendar of events
www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/events.html

