

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

OVERVIEW OF STUDY AREA

Racine County is located in southeastern Wisconsin, and bordered on the east by Lake Michigan, on the north by Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties, on the west by Walworth County, and on the south by Kenosha County. The impacts of urbanization in the Milwaukee, Kenosha, Northeastern Illinois County metropolitan areas, and the Waukesha County urbanizing area, are increasingly affecting the County.

The County covers about 340 square miles and contains two cities, eleven villages, and four towns. There are all or parts of five natural watersheds and a total of about 4,000 acres of inland surface waters within the County. The subcontinental divide between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes drainage basin traverses the County and has important implications for some aspects of land and water resources planning.

A majority of the population resides in the eastern portion of Racine County, within the City of Racine, the Villages of Sturtevant, Caledonia, Mt. Pleasant, North Bay, Wind Point, and Elmwood Park. However, population centers are also found in the western communities including the City of Burlington and Villages of Rochester, Union Grove, and Waterford, and in the vicinity of the major lakes, including Wind Lake, Tichigan Lake, Eagle Lake, Brown's Lake, and Bohner Lake areas. Much of the land in the County remains in agriculture, but the dairy industry has steadily declined. The primary form of agriculture involves cash-grain farming for corn and soybeans. Sod farming is predominant in the Wind Lake area. There also remains significant farm acreage devoted to cabbage and other vegetable production primarily in the eastern one-half of the County. The major industries within the County are generally located east of IH 94, with smaller industrial development being located west of IH 94 and in the other urban centers.

Racine County will face significant urban growth and development and the challenge is to balance this growth while protecting and maintaining its natural resources. This includes a large 3500-acre development currently impacting agriculture and natural resources in the Village of Mount Pleasant. The County has a diversified natural resource base, including the Lake Michigan nearshore area, several inland lakes, as well as major river systems. Additionally, the County contains significant areas of quality wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands, the most important of which are incorporated into the areas designated as environmental corridors. The environmental corridors are recognized and continually being protected and enhanced to improve the natural resource base of Racine County.

PLAN BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In 1997, the State Legislature, through Wisconsin Act 27, amended Chapter 92 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, requiring all counties to develop a land and water resource management plan (LWRMP). The intent of this charge is to support a locally led process which is intended to address each individual county's unique natural resources; identify particular problems associated with the resource base; and establish a plan to help protect and restore those resources. Additionally, the County plans are intended to focus on State minimum nonpoint source pollution reduction standards related to agriculture and urban development.

The purpose of the Racine County land and water resource management planning effort is to develop a plan to be used as a guide for Racine County in carrying out its natural resource-related programs. The plan development process is intended to encourage innovative programming and leadership and to build local support. The plan identifies the natural resources and the current condition of those resources, the limitations of those resources, and sets forth a strategy that addresses the natural resource issues and problems. This plan also provides a means to inform the public about these issues and problems and include them in the steps necessary to protect the natural resource base.

The initial Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan was approved in 2000. Originally, Chapter 92 of the *Statutes* requires that the LWRMP must be updated every five years for counties to be able to receive conservation staff funding and cost-share grant monies. In 2003, Racine County requested and received a 3-year extension of its existing LWRMP from the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board. The first revision of the original plan was developed in 2007. This was the Community Assistance Planning Report No. 259 (2nd Edition) A Land and Water Resource Management Plan for Racine County: 2008-2012. The 2nd Revision of this plan was completed in 2012. A revision to the plan requirements allows Counties to develop a 10-year plan, with a 5-year update. The Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2013-2022 was approved in 2012 and a 5-year update was given to the Land & Water Conservation Board in 2017. This plan will be the 3rd revision to be drafted and written by Racine County staff, using the previous plans as baseline information. The requirements of the Wis. Stats., 92.06, and additional guidelines have been established by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board. This plan will serve as a program guide for local conservation efforts in Racine County.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan was developed through a collective effort of a number of agencies and organizations under the overall direction of the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Committee (LWCC). The agencies involved include the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Division, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. The plan was developed under the guidance of the Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), which was created by the County specifically for plan development purposes and is comprised of elected and appointed officials and citizens knowledgeable in land and water resource matters. In addition to the formation and active participation of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, the plan development process included the following steps:

The 3rd revision to the Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan began in June of 2021 with selecting members for the Citizen's Advisory Committee. The Citizen's Advisory Committee meetings were held on August 18 and October 13, 2021, and January 19, 2022. The Committee reviewed each chapter of the plan in draft form and provided comments and recommendations, which were then addressed in the final plan. This plan was approved by the Citizen's Advisory Committee on July 22, 2022. On August 1, 2022, the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Committee met to approve the plan. On August 15, 2022 the Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee met to approve the plan; this meeting was open to the public for citizen comment and input. This meeting was announced twice in the *Racine Journal Times* prior to the meeting as a Class II public notice. The Racine County Board of Supervisors approved the plan on September 27, 2022, with application for final approval by the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board on October 4, 2022.

EXISTING LAND AND WATER RESOURCE-RELATED PLANS

The Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan complements other planning and resource management efforts, linking local level planning with regional and watershed level plans. The plan, therefore, provides an integrated framework within which Racine County will conduct activities to protect and rehabilitate the land and water resource base of the County, and contribute to the environmentally sound management of these valuable resources in a coordinated and compatible manner with watershed-wide needs and resource management programs. One of the first steps to be undertaken in land and water resource management planning is the inventory, collation, and review of the recommendations of relevant previously prepared reports and plans.

A number of plans currently exist which focus on the natural resources of Racine County. These plans include programs which address the interconnectedness of the natural resources of Racine County with those of the related watersheds and the Southeastern Wisconsin Region, as well as the immediacy and importance of natural resources at the County and community level. The plans collated and reviewed for input into this current planning

program were generally most relevant to actions undertaken by the County. In addition, selected plans prepared at the local level, including local land use plans, park and open space plans, lake and water quality management plans, and sewer service area plans prepared for individual communities or for specific waterbodies were considered.

PLAN CONTENT

The Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan is organized into four chapters. Following this initial introductory chapter, the second chapter presents a description of the natural resource base of Racine County. The third chapter describes a summary of the regulations and programs available in Racine County. Chapter III also describes the State agricultural and nonagricultural performance standards as well as other land and water resource standards. Chapters IV includes the goals, objectives, plan elements, budget and implementation steps recommended to address the Citizens Advisory Committee’s identified issues and problems for each of the areas involved and with the natural resources within Racine County. This final chapter will also contain recommendations regarding information and education, the methods of program performance review, and a summary for the plan on a countywide basis.

**RACINE COUNTY LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND SUPPORTING STAFF**

Name	Title and Affiliation
Committee Members: Monte Osterman, Chairman Jesse Bennett Dave Giordano Tom Greil Brian Gunderson Rhia Holden Greg Horeth Fred Koeller Kristin Look Taun Parkers Brandi Richter Jim Stute Melissa Warner Brian Younger	Chairman, Racine County Land & Water Conservation Committee Regional Nonpoint Source Coordinator, WDNR Executive Director, Root Pike Watershed Initiative Network Chairman, Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County Vice Chairman, Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County Soil Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Chairman, Waterford Waterway Management District Member, Southeast Wisconsin Fox River Commission County Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency Operator, A to Z Aggregates, Hillside Aggregates, Spring Valley Pit District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Scientist, Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County Director, Weed Out! Racine President, Eagle Lake Improvement Association
Staff: Julie Anderson Brian Jensen Chad Sampson, Secretary Jonathan Grove Allison Hamm	Director of Racine County Public Works and Development Services Superintendent of Racine County Development Services County Conservationist, Racine County Land & Water Conservation Division Conservation Specialist, Racine County Land & Water Conservation Division Conservation Planner, Racine County Land & Water Conservation Division