

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Washburn County's relationship with neighboring municipalities, school districts, and state agencies can significantly impact residents in terms of planning for the provision of services offered and the siting of public facilities. An examination of these relationships and the identification of potential conflicts will help the county address these situations in a productive manner.

Within the county planning process, maps, goals, objectives, and plan recommendations were developed in conjunction with one another. Development of individual local comprehensive plans was conducted in concert with the county and other towns developing plans, as to achieve a logical and consistent framework among the local units of government.

Inventory and examination of the existing jurisdictional relationships within the county provides the cornerstone for intergovernmental cooperation. Understanding the nature and complexity of these relational issues is key to understanding how these relationships can be enhanced to provide maximum coordination and cooperation. Presently, many jurisdictions within the county have informal agreements with other units of government. It is the aim of this intergovernmental component to achieve a superior level of multi-jurisdictional cooperation through formalization of relationships, opening the lines of communication between jurisdictions, and promoting intergovernmental agreements.

### **7.2 66.1001 REQUIREMENTS**

This element will analyze the relationship of Washburn County to school districts, adjacent local governmental units, the region, the state, and other governmental units. The element will incorporate plans or agreements to which the county is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, or §66.0309. The element will also identify existing or potential conflicts between Washburn County and other governmental units that are specified herein and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

### **7.3 GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO WASHBURN COUNTY**

Washburn County shares borders with four counties in Wisconsin. In addition, the county must also coordinate with local school districts, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and local jurisdictions.

#### **Adjacent Governmental Units**

Washburn County's relationship with the bordering Counties of Barron, Burnett, Douglas, and Sawyer can be characterized as one of mutual respect and compatibility from a land use and political standpoint. The borders between Washburn County and the adjacent counties are fixed

resulting in no boundary disputes. Three of the four adjoining counties have completed land use plans. Based on these plans and that of Washburn County, consistency between the plans is apparent. Sawyer County has not developed any kind of land use plan to date. As municipalities adjoining Washburn County begin to develop comprehensive plans, intergovernmental cooperation will become a key component in helping to formulate agreements and relationships for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services.

### **Area School Districts**

Washburn County is served by six school districts: Northwood, Hayward, Spooner, Shell Lake, Rice Lake, and Birchwood. The school district boundaries are illustrated on Map 4.3 in the *Utilities and Community Facilities Element*. The county's relationship with the school districts can be characterized as cooperative. These relationships must continue to be strengthened to coordinate school facility planning and district development as it may impact the county transportation network. For more information on school districts within Washburn County, refer to the *Utilities and Community Facilities Element*.

### **Federal Agencies**

The National Park Service owns and manages land adjacent to the Namekagon River. The Namekagon River has been federally designated as part of the Upper St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and is managed by the National Park Service. No known conflicts exist between the county and National Park Service.

### **State Agencies**

WDNR and WisDOT are the primary state agencies that Washburn County must coordinate with to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan. WDNR is a major agency involved in the acquisition and development of recreational trails and nature areas. Furthermore, the WDNR takes a lead role in wildlife protection and the protection and sustained management of woodlands, wetlands, and other natural wildlife habitat areas. Washburn County and the WDNR have cooperated on several joint planning and acquisition projects over the past several years. It is anticipated this relationship will continue.

The WisDOT is a key player in the planning and development of the regional transportation corridors. Through a cooperative agreement, Washburn County is responsible for maintenance of all state-owned highways. It will be important for Washburn County to continue to coordinate with WisDOT with respect to these roadways. The continued discussion and review of roadway design and safety will occur into the future as an increased amount of vehicles travel in the county. Of particular importance is the continued discussion of STH 53 and present and future at-grade crossings. Future maintenance funding for state highways is of concern as the county is called upon to keep roads up to specific standards and to maintain safe roads for the traveling public.

Washburn County also coordinates with other state agencies such as the Department of Revenue and Department of Administration. Cooperation and assistance in matters impacting the county and state are often discussed, particularly pertaining to tax collection, either property or sales tax.

### **Regional Planning Commissions**

Washburn County is located within Northwest Regional Planning Commission's (NWRPC) ten-county planning area. The commission is a cooperative venture of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn Counties and the tribal units of Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac du Flambeau, Lac Courte Oreilles, and St. Croix. The purpose of the commission is to improve the quality of life of the residents of the region by increasing the number of jobs and wages paid while recognizing the importance of planning for balanced use of natural resources. Recommendations within this comprehensive plan have not been the authority of or influenced by NWRPC but have come from the Washburn County Planning Committee, Washburn County Departments, and from the general public. NWRPC has cooperated on many planning and development projects with Washburn County and many of its local governments in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.

### **Local Units of Government**

Washburn County must also coordinate with local jurisdictions within the county boundary. Although the 21-member county board represents the people, county board decisions can sometimes impact individual units of government. In particular, of the 21 towns, 20 have adopted county zoning, thus delegating the responsibility of zoning to the county board. This function has from time-to-time created conflict between units of government and the county.

Washburn County by Wisconsin Statute has been given authority to provide shoreland zoning responsibilities on all lakes, streams, and rivers. Cooperation between the county, local units of government, and private property owners is essential in providing the best protection of local resources while allowing the best use of a persons property.

During the comprehensive planning process, significant conflict was identified pertaining to zoning related matters among the towns under county zoning and the county zoning department, county zoning committee, and county board. This conflict is difficult to generalize; however, it could be characterized as conflict associated with the county board decision contrary to a towns recommendation on certain zoning related matters, such as rezones, variances, and conditional uses.

### **Future Cooperation Efforts**

It is critical that Washburn County and other units of government identify their cooperation effort on strengths and weaknesses. Cooperation and shared services has been given high priority not only at the state level but by all local units of government working on the development of comprehensive plans in Washburn County. As a result, it is critically important that Washburn County and all local units of government work towards an understanding of how each can better serve its electors and collaborate on important issues affecting the community.

## **7.4 FORMAL AGREEMENTS UNDER CHAPTER 66 AND OTHER AGREEMENTS OR PARTNERSHIPS**

Washburn County is engaged in several cooperative agreements or plans under §66.0301, §66.0307, or §66.0309 and in other memorandums of understanding or agreement.

**Washburn County Transit Commission:** Created in 1999, the commission supports the potential freight use on a rail line between the City of Spooner and Hayward Junction. The commission is represented by appointed citizens from throughout the county.

**Northwest Regional Planning Commission:** Created in 1959, the commission provides professional services to local units of government throughout a ten-county area focusing on economic development and community services. The Washburn County Board Chairman and Vice Chair are voting members on the 32-member commission.

**Forest Fire Protection Services:** Washburn County Forestry Department, all local fire departments, and the DNR have in place a MOU to provide the shared wildfire protection services during times when wildfire protection services are needed.

**Recycling Control Commission:** Created as a partnership between the Counties of Washburn and Burnett, the commission oversees and administers recycling and solid waste management services as a result of legislation banning various recyclable items in landfills. The Commission operates recycling drop-off and curbside recycling programs for homeowners as well as disposal options for appliances, tires, computers, batteries and fluorescent bulbs.

**International Trade, Business and Economic Development Council (ITBEC):** Created in the mid 1990s by participating counties, ITBEC links economic development and tourism organizations together to develop a regional coalition.

**Wild Rivers Trail Commission (WRT):** Created in 1996, by Barron, Douglas, and Washburn Counties, the commission brings together periodically parties representing those units of government responsible for the development of the Wild Rivers Trail.

**Indianhead Community Action Agency (ICAA):** ICAA is a locally governed not-for-profit agency that assists low- to moderate-income people in attaining self-sufficiency; provides services and coordinates community resources; and provides resources for community planning, coalition building, resource mobilization, and community development.

**Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program (NWCEP):** NWCEPs mission is to strengthen the economy by providing effective and efficient workforce development services to businesses and workers.

## **7.5 EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS AND PROCESSES TO RESOLVE THEM**

The comprehensive planning legislation requires the *Washburn County Comprehensive Plan* identify existing and potential conflicts between the county and other governmental units and describe processes to resolve such conflicts. This planning process has been designed to avoid and minimize potential conflicts. However, numerous government entities affect planning and land use in Washburn County. As a result, not all conflicts could be resolved as part of the *Washburn County Comprehensive Plan*. The following section addresses remaining or potential conflict areas and potential resolution processes.

### **Between Other County Plans and Town Plans**

Several town comprehensive plans (and indeed several components of the *Washburn County Comprehensive Plan*) are in conflict with the recommendations of some previously prepared plans. For example, there are conflicts with the *1982 Farmland Preservation Plan*. The conflicts mainly occur between the Future Land Use maps included in the towns' comprehensive plans and the areas identified for farmland preservation in the *1982 Farmland Preservation Plan*. Washburn County should update its Farmland Preservation Plan given these inconsistencies. Changes in state law and market realities have changed significantly over the past 20 years.

Several town comprehensive plans also advise new initiatives that Washburn County should consider as it completes its plan and updates other plans, including the *Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan*, *Washburn County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, and the *Washburn County Zoning Ordinance*.

### **Among Town Comprehensive Plans in Washburn County**

The fact that numerous town comprehensive plans were prepared simultaneously with the assistance of a single consultant aided in reducing conflicts between adjoining towns' comprehensive plans. In cases where future conflicts stem from a town not having a comprehensive plan, that town should be encouraged to prepare one. In cases where there are not even basic zoning regulations in the town, that town should be encouraged to adopt them.

As part of the overall comprehensive planning process, each town developed its own goals, objectives, actions, and future vision (land use). As the plan recommendations in each community are initiated, the potential exists for conflict between the town(s) and county plan. However, as was established early in the planning process, a town plan officially adopted by ordinance would be used by the county to base future land use recommendations upon. This should reduce conflicts. As part a future comprehensive revision to the county zoning ordinances, largely based on town recommendations from their comprehensive plans, the potential conflicts regarding current zoning and future rezoning requests will be minimized significantly.

### **Between the Washburn County Comprehensive Plan/Town Comprehensive Plans and Plans of Adjoining Counties and Towns**

As part of the planning process, a coordinated effort was made to contact representatives from all adjacent and overlapping local, county, and regional governments. The purpose of these contacts was to learn about their land use/comprehensive plans and to identify any conflicts between them

and the *Washburn County Comprehensive Plan*. As mentioned previously, three of the four adjoining counties have completed land use plans. Many adjoining towns have also completed or are in the process of completing either land use or comprehensive plans. These pre-existing plans are listed later in this element. There are many municipalities that have not completed any type of future land use/comprehensive planning. Washburn County encourages these towns to embark on a comprehensive planning effort.

In areas where the county has jurisdiction in a town, the county attempts to get input from the town before making decisions affecting town land use. For example, the county accepts town input when revising the ten-year Washburn County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Likewise, the town has attempted to maintain open lines of communication with Washburn County. These lines of communication have not always proven to work effectively or efficiently, resulting in conflict. Washburn County has committed to incorporating town recommendations into a formal comprehensive zoning revision following county plan adoption. Following the comprehensive revision, the county zoning ordinances should be consistent with town level land use requirements and desires.

Potential conflicts related to land use decision-making have been greatly diminished due to the concerted development of local jurisdictional plans through this planning process. Although it is important to recognize that future variables may result in conflict. To assist in addressing the potential future conflict between jurisdictions, a conflict resolution process has been drafted. This conflict resolution process outlines the appropriate steps to be taken by the local governing bodies in order to resolve these disputes in a logical, systematic, and equitable manner (Appendix C).

## 7.6 PRE-EXISTING PLANS

During the Washburn County comprehensive planning process, pre-existing plans developed by local, regional, state, and federal agencies relating to various resources and activities within the county were reviewed. Many of these documents contain significant background information and specific goals, objectives, and policies/actions/recommendations. The framework for examination of pre-existing plans can be subdivided into five categories: local/adjoining, county, regional, state, and federal plans.

### **Plans of Local/Adjoining Jurisdictions**

- Comprehensive Plan for the City of Shell Lake (1985)
- Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for the City of Shell Lake (1974)
- Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Village of Birchwood (1974)
- Community Outdoor Recreation Plan - Village of Minong (1985)
- Local Roadway Management Plans
- Barron County Land Use Plan
- Bayfield County Land Use Plan
- Burnett County Land Use Plan
- Douglas County Land Use Plan
- Town of Hayward Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Bass Lake (Sawyer County) Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Scott Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Sand Lake Comprehensive Plan (in progress)

- Town of Edgewater Comprehensive Plan (in progress)
- Town of Wascott Comprehensive Plan (in progress)
- City of Shell Lake All Hazards Mitigation Plan (2004)
- Town of Blaine Comprehensive Plan (in progress)

### **Pre-existing County Plans**

- Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Farmland Preservation Plan (1982)
- Solid Waste Management Plan (1983)
- County 10-Year Highway Improvement Plan
- County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 1996-2005
- Washburn County Forest Recreation Plan 1993-2003
- Washburn County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (1999)
- Long Range Program-Washburn County Soil & Water Conservation District (1980)

### **Pre-existing Regional Plans**

- Northwest Sands Landscape Level Management Plan (2000)
- Northern Rivers Initiative (2001)
- 2003 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

### **Pre-existing State Plans**

- Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020
- Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020
- Wisconsin State Rail Plan 2020
- Corridors 2020
- TRANSLINKS 21
- Connections 2030
- State of Wisconsin Hazard Mitigation Plan

### **Pre-existing Federal Plans**

- General Management Plan – Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers (1998)

## **7.7 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been recommended for the county to engage and work with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. Implementation of the action is a start to providing discussion and cooperation of a broad range of issues impacting the towns, villages, cities, and other jurisdictions in Washburn County.

Goal: Increase communication, cost sharing, and service provisions between local governments with the goal of elimination of unnecessary duplication of efforts, resulting in less costs to local units of government.	
Objectives	Action-Plan
1. Encourage a more efficient use of common resources between Washburn County and local jurisdictions.	Develop and catalog an inventory of equipment having the potential for sharing between units of government.
	Develop a countywide purchasing system in an effort to reduce costs by purchasing in larger bulk quantities.
2. Encourage cost sharing between the county and local jurisdictions when beneficial.	Investigate possible law enforcement sharing/coverage between local governments.
	Investigate the possibility and cost savings in having multiple jurisdictions contract for desired services including planning, legal work, and assessment.
	Continue and build upon the relationship between local units of government and the WCEDC in building business retention and expansion efforts.
	Develop a report on the countywide tourism efforts and investigate the potential for multiple jurisdiction promotional efforts.
3. Encourage an open dialog between all local units of government and other organizations providing services.	Utilize existing meeting formats, such as the Washburn County Towns Unit, or develop another format for all jurisdictions (town, cities, villages and county) to meet at least yearly to discuss mutual issues and concerns.
	Develop a direct relationship by meeting regularly with local print media editors in an effort to identify and report on local government issues.
4. Advocate change in Wisconsin State Statutes that discourage cooperation.	Level shared revenue disbursements between types of local governments.
	Encourage a less costly method for towns to have more authority in local land use decisions.