
NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine and inventory the various natural, agricultural, and cultural resources in the Town of Blaine. It is important for citizens and elected officials to know what and where these resources are, as well as to how they are impacted by certain development activities. This knowledge helps find a balance between the natural and developed worlds to allow planned development while keeping the desired rural character of the area.

The natural resource base of the Town of Blaine is directly interconnected to land use. The community's natural resource base impacts activities such as farming and forestry, as quality and quantity of natural resources directly influences the productivity and sustainability of land use activities. Residential development is greatly influenced by the presence of natural attributes such as woodlands, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, which attract both residents and visitors to the community. Furthermore, community economy is linked to revenues generated through tourist expenditures and agricultural productivity, both of which rely on the continued viability of the community natural resource base.

Due to the interconnectedness of land use and community natural resources and the role natural resources play in defining community character, it is important that community planning emphasize resource sustainability and protection of sensitive environmental features.

The maintenance of resource quality in the future is directly related to land use. Impacts to air, land, wildlife, and water are generated by every land use activity; and it is the cumulative effect of these activities that can create environmental problems.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

The Town of Blaine lies in the northern portion of Burnett County encompassing the convergence of the "Wild and Scenic" St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers.

The total land area of the town is approximately 70.3 square miles and is bordered by the Town of Dairyland (Douglas County) to the north; the Town of Minong (Washburn County) to the east; and the Towns of Swiss and Webb Lake (Burnett County) to the south and the State of Minnesota to the west. State Highway 35 runs north/south through the town.

5.3 TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the town is rolling to flat, with steeper banks along many water features; the exception being large portions of the St. Croix River, where banks are generally flat before the St. Croix joins with the Namekagon. Other steep slopes exist in the southeast corner of the town. Several areas have slopes in excess of 20 percent. The majority of land exhibits fairly low slope levels, ranging from 0 to 12 percent. The town ranges in elevation from high to low

approximately 1,257 feet. The highest point is approximately 4,111 feet above sea level and the lowest is 2,854 feet (Map 5.1).

5.4 GEOLOGY

Bedrock within the town and surrounding area consists of a mixture of three main types. Sandstones with some dolomite and shale exemplify Cambrian bedrock in the western region of the town. The Oronto bedrock group is most prevalent in the eastern section of the town and consists of feldspathic sandstones, siltstones, shale and conglomerates thereof. The third bedrock group is part of the Keweenawan system that runs along the axis of Lake Superior and continues south along the Minnesota/Wisconsin border. These rocks occur along what is known as the mid-continent rift and consist primarily of upper volcanic sequence basalt flows and interbedded sedimentary rocks.

5.5 SOILS

The general soils in the town are either sandy or a mix of sand and gravel. Three general soil associations are located in the town: Sayner-Rubicon-Omega which is found in the eastern two-thirds of town, Omega-Nemadji-Mahtomedi found in the western third of town, and Ahmeek-Ronneby-Prebish which occupies a very small pocket in the southwest part of town adjoining the Town of Swiss. General characteristics of the major soil series in the town include the following.

- **Nemadji Series**

These soils are somewhat poorly drained formed in sand glacial outwash or lacustrine sediments in glacial lake and outwash plains. Slopes range from 0-3 percent, have rapid permeability, and are poorly drained. Most of the soils in this series are in forest. A small percentage is in pasture or crop land (small grains and hay). Native vegetation is mixed deciduous-coniferous with aspen, birch, and red and white pine.

- **Mahtomedi Series**

Soils in this series are very deep, excessively drained, rapid permeable soils formed in sandy outwash on glacial moraines and outwash plains. Slopes in these upland soils can range from 0-45 percent. Most of the land in these soils is forested (mixed deciduous/coniferous) with some pasture.

- **Sayner Series**

Sayner series soils are characterized as being very deep, excessively drained soils formed in stratified sand and gravel on outwash terraces, outwash plains, old beaches, kames, eskers, and other glaciofluvial areas within moraines. Soils can range from 0 to 60 percent and permeability can range from moderately rapid to very rapid. Most of this area is in forestland with a small portion being in crops. Forests are a mix of deciduous/coniferous trees such as red pine, eastern white pines, jack pine, northern red oak, red maple, paper birch, balsam fir, and aspen being the dominant species.

- **Rubicon Series**

This series consist of very deep, excessively drained soils formed in sandy deposits on ground, end and kame moraines, lake plains, outwash plains, stream terraces, beach ridges, and sand dunes. Slopes can range from 0 to 70 percent and have rapid permeability. The soils in this series are primarily forested with red pine, aspen, white pine, and jack pine dominating. Ground cover consists of blueberries, wintergreen, sweet fern, and bracken fern. Small areas are used for crop and pasture of small grains and hay.

- **Omega Series**

Omega soils are very deep, somewhat excessively drained, and are formed in sandy glacial outwash on outwash plains or valley trains. Permeability is rapid with slopes ranging from 0 to 25 percent. The soils are primarily used for coniferous forest with jack pine and red pine predominating. A few areas are cleared for forage crops.

Soil Association Limitations

Soil association limitations are used to determine suitability for different types of development. The most common analyzed limitations are that of dwellings with basements and septic tank absorption fields. Table 5.1 outlines limitations for each soil association found in Blaine. Please note that these are general assumptions and site evaluations should be prepared to ensure proper soil properties. Within these broad categories, soil limitations change with varying slopes, permeability, depth to bedrock, etc. Map 5.2 provides a detailed description of soils in the Town of Blaine.

Soil Association	Dwellings With Basements	Septic Tank
Sayner-Rubicon-Omega	Slight	Severe
Omega-Nemadji-Mahtomedi	Severe	Severe
Ahmeek-Ronneby-Prebish	Slight	Severe

Source: NRCS

Northwest Sands

This area is defined as an ecological landscape by the Wisconsin DNR and covers portions of Polk, Burnett, Washburn, Douglas, and Bayfield Counties. Sandy soils, pine and oak barrens, large, open wetlands, seepage lakes, and fire proneness characterize the area. There are many ecological management opportunities in this area including large-scale restoration of oak-pine barrens and wetlands (bogs, sedge meadows, and marshes), as well as white and red pine restoration. Restoring the pine barrens would benefit many different types of species including rare lepidoptera (butterflies, moths), herptiles, plants, and birds.

This landscape type is ecologically important for a number of reasons. Many rare communities occur in this region including pine barrens (which support many prairie type flora and fauna), large sedge meadows, and kettle lakes. Currently many of these areas are being managed with the exclusion of fire, even though in pre-settlement times, this community was extremely fire dependent. Within these unique ecological communities, many species of plants and animals are

of concern, including the Karner blue butterfly, smooth green snake, Franklin's ground squirrel, prairie skinks, grouse, trumpeter swan, Blanding's turtle, sedge wren, and Kirtland's warbler.

For more information on the Northwest Sands or other ecological landscapes, please refer to the WDNR's publication *Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin* or the *Northwest Sands Landscape Level Management Plan*.

5.6 LAND COVER

Land cover represents the physical or biophysical layout of the earth's surface. This description enables various biophysical categories to be distinguished such as areas of vegetation (trees, bushes, fields, lawns), bare soil, hard surfaces (rocks, buildings), wetlands, and bodies of water. The following information was derived from the state's WISCLAND coverage. This coverage was completed in 1993 using the source data from the nationwide MRLC (Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium) acquisition of dual-date Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM) data primarily from 1992. The data used for this was from a statewide coverage and only has a resolution of 30 meters; therefore, it should only be used for general informational purposes and not site-specific analysis. Map 5.3 provides a visual depiction of land cover for the town.

Forest Land

Forest is the dominant land cover within the Town of Blaine, covering 95 percent of the town. Forest resources are important for many reasons including economics, aesthetics, and recreation. Table 5.2 shows the breakdown of the different forest types present in the town. This data shows that most of the forested land is in aspen and mixed broadleaf deciduous (21,874 acres). The next most dominant forest type is mixed deciduous/coniferous (8,788 acres).

Table 5.2: Land Cover: Town of Blaine

CLASS	Acres	Percentage
BARREN	219.8	0.49%
FOREST: aspen	7616.6	16.97%
FOREST: jack pine	1370.3	3.05%
FOREST: maple	626.5	1.40%
FOREST: mixed deciduous/coniferous	4403.4	9.81%
FOREST: mixed/other broad-leaved deciduous	9028.3	20.12%
FOREST: mixed/other coniferous	1377.6	3.07%
FOREST: northern pin oak	326.8	0.73%
FOREST: oak	25.5	0.06%
FOREST: red oak	200.8	0.45%
FOREST: red pine	749.2	1.67%
FORESTED WETLAND: broad-leaved deciduous	3423.2	7.63%
FORESTED WETLAND: coniferous	800.2	1.78%
FORESTED WETLAND: mixed deciduous/coniferous	150.0	0.33%
GRASSLAND	5733.0	12.78%
OPEN WATER	614.7	1.37%
SHRUBLAND	3130.0	6.98%
WETLAND: emergent/wet meadow	660.9	1.47%
WETLAND: lowland shrub	3801.4	8.47%
WETLAND: lowland shrub: broad-leaved deciduous	537.9	1.20%
WETLAND: lowland shrub: broad-leaved evergreen	78.0	0.17%
TOTAL	44874.1	100.00%

Other Land Cover Types

Agriculture land is not a dominant feature on the town's landscape, however there are pockets of land that are considered to be "prime farmland", as defined by the National Resource Conservation Service. Many of these areas would be considered "prime farmland" if they were drained and used for agricultural purposes. The bulk of these lands can be found in the northwest corner of the town. It is very unlikely that these lands will ever be farmed since they are part of Burnett County forestlands. Wetlands account for approximately 12,399 acres of land in the town (27.5%), and open water, 2,789 acres (6.2%). There is no high-density development, other than that occurring around select lakes. Map 5.4 shows lands in the Town of Blaine that are considered to be prime farmland.

5.7 WATER RESOURCES

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to support aquatic or hydrophilic vegetation and has soils indicative of wet conditions. Wetlands serve as important areas for groundwater recharge areas, as well as habitat for many unique plant and animal communities. They also provide natural open space and maintain ground and surface water quality. Burnett County has 122,194 acres of wetlands or 23 percent of the county's total land area. Within the town, there are approximately 12,399 acres of wetlands covering 27.5

percent of the town. Wetlands in Blaine are generally located adjacent to the water features in the town. Map 5.5 shows wetlands greater than five acres in the town.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and local zoning codes regulate wetlands. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act established a program to regulate the discharge of dredged and fill material into waters of the state, including wetlands, and is the primary federal regulatory program for wetlands.

The Shoreland/Wetland Zoning Ordinance adopted by Burnett County regulates the use/alterations of wetlands in the county and in the Town of Blaine. The regulations contained within this document apply to all lands within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of any navigable lake, pond, or flowage and those lands within 300 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of any navigable river or stream.

Floodplains

Floodplains are important and valuable natural resources. They provide wildlife habitat, storm water retention, and serve as groundwater recharge areas. Development in these areas may lead to higher construction costs, storm damage repairs, and environmental degradation. Additional costs and maintenance can include flood proofing, increased flood insurance premiums, and water related repairs to roads, water mains, sewers, and other public facilities.

Due to these limitations, the state requires that cities, villages, and towns develop a floodplain/shoreland zoning ordinance. Development in floodplains may be allowed, but certain design standards and increased setbacks may also be required. The floodplain is normally defined as those areas that are subject to inundation by the 100-year recurrence interval flood event. This means that in any year there is a one percent chance that the area will flood. High-density development in floodplain areas should be discouraged with park and open space encouraged.

Floodplains generally overlap wetland areas and are located along the various water features. Within the town the major floodplain areas are located along the low-lying portions of the St. Croix River, and along the Totagatic River previous to its joining the Namekagon River. For more detailed information regarding floodplain locations please refer to the FIRM (flood insurance rate maps) developed by FEMA. As no digital floodplain maps are available, no maps are included in this plan. For all future land use decisions, it is recommended the town board and planning commission have available copies of the FIRM maps to review when making land use decisions.

Watersheds

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources defines watersheds as areas of an interconnected area of land draining from surrounding ridge tops to a common point such as a lake or stream confluence with a neighboring watershed. Wisconsin has restructured its natural resource management approach around the concepts of eco-regions and watersheds, as opposed to strictly political or social boundaries, which may provide more successful results.

There are three main watersheds in the town, the Lower Namekagon, Upper Tamarack, and the St. Croix & Eau Claire Rivers watersheds (Map 5.6). The St. Croix and Eau Claire Rivers is the predominant watershed, covering the northeastern and north-central area of the town, encompassing the St. Croix riverway and McGraw and Little McGraw Lakes. The Upper Tamarack River watershed is located in the western third of town. The Lower Namekagon watershed occupies the southeastern edge of town, with the Namekagon River being the primary water feature of the watershed.

Surface Waters

Surface waters are important for aesthetics, environmental, and economic reasons. They provide habitat, food, and corridors for many plant, animal, bird, and fish species and helps create the distinct and valuable habitats that exist in the town and county. Many people are also drawn to water for various recreational opportunities. Surface waters in the town are shown on Map 5.7.

Streams

There are two types of streams, perennial and intermittent. Perennial streams are those that flow throughout most of the year (>50%). Intermittent streams only flow part of the year, usually during the spring snow melt and after heavy rainfalls. These intermittent streams are important to protect because they channel runoff into perennial streams and lakes and may become part of the aquatic ecosystem when water flows in them.

According to the Burnett County Land Atlas/Plat Book, there are eleven named rivers and streams. The St. Croix River cuts through the northeastern and southern sections of the town. Six streams drain into the St. Croix River – Chases Creek, Glendenning Creek (via Chases Creek), Hay Creek, Perkins Creek, Clemens Creek, and Moores Farm Creek. Dogtown Creek flows into the Namekagon River in the south-central section of the town. Two other rivers flow through the town. The Upper Tamarack River can be found in the extreme northwest corner of the town while the Totagatic River meanders through the extreme southeast portion of the town. There also exist intermittent and other small, unnamed creeks. Six of these streams and creeks are classified as trout streams.

Lakes

Lakes are few in the town – five are listed in the WDNR lakes directory and account for 243 acres. The Burnett County Land Atlas/Plat Book also lists No Mans Lake, but no information is included on this lake in the WDNR directory. There are also other unnamed ponds/pothole lakes scattered throughout the town. Table 5.3 lists some major characteristics of lakes in the Town of Blaine.

Table 5.3: Major Lake Characteristics

Lake Name	Acres	Max. Depth ft	Township	Range	Section
Bass Lake	30	35	T41N	R14W	34
Bradley Lake	6	15	T42N	R14W	24
Little McGraw Lake	55	12	T42N	R15W	13
McGraw Lake	135	25	T42N	R14W	6
Richart Lake	17	3	T42N	R14W	24

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Lakes Directory

ORW

The Department of Natural Resources classifies water bodies as outstanding resource waters (ORW) under Chapter NR 102 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. These waters have outstanding recreational, cultural, aesthetic, or scientific resource value and shall have special protection from degradation. Within the town, the St. Croix River is designated as an outstanding resource water.

Impaired Water Bodies

The State of Wisconsin classifies impaired water bodies as regulated by the Federal Clean Water Act (Section 303.d). This list includes all surface waters in the state in which beneficial uses (such as drinking water and recreation and aquatic habitat) are impaired by pollutants. These water bodies do not meet surface water quality standards and are not expected to do so within the next two years. Burnett County has six water bodies on this list, none in Blaine, and the closest being Johnson Lake in the Town of Oakland and North Sand Lake in the Town of Jackson. All the lakes are on the 303.d list because of mercury fish consumption advisories.

Burnett County Classification System

In 1998, Burnett County assumed the responsibility of formulating a classification system for all water bodies in the county. The county felt this was important because surface waters constitute important environmental and economical (recreational) resources to the area. Also, they wanted a system in place that is more sensitive to local resources compared to the minimum statewide standard and one that is easy to understand.

Burnett County has seen a steady increase in permanent, seasonal and recreational homes over the last two decades. In 1980, there were 683 total housing units compared to 833 in 2000, representing an increase of 22 percent. In the last two decades, seasonal housing units also increased over 23 percent. Many of these homes are being built along lakes and streams. This classification plan was developed to identify which lakes are most prone to developmental pressures and to set building standards based on lake sensitivity.

The lake classification system uses a variety of physical and developmental factors in determining the lake's vulnerability. These factors include lake surface area, maximum depth, lake type, watershed size, shoreline development factor, and existing density (feet per structure). Each factor is divided into categories and given a score of 0-3. The scores of each factor are then added up and put into a lake class with a corresponding protection level, (Table 5.4).

Overall Vulnerability Ranking	Lake Classification	Protection Level
Total score 14 or over	Class 1	Minimum
Total score 10 – 13	Class 2	Moderate
Total score 9 or less	Class 3	Maximum

Source: Burnett County Land Use Plan

Based on the lake's classification, each category has specific building and lot standards. Class 1 lakes (minimum protection) have the smallest lot sizes and side yard setbacks, where as Class 3 lakes (and all rivers and streams) have the largest setbacks and lot sizes (Table 5.5). For more specific information regarding this classification system, refer to the *Burnett County Land Use Plan* or *A Guide for Developing & Managing Shoreland in Burnett County*.

Lake Classification	Lot Size	Lot Width - Single Family	Shoreline Setback	Lot Depth	Vegetation Removal	Side Yard Setback
Class 1	30,000 s.f.	150 ft.	75 ft.	200 ft.	30' corridor within 35' of shore	10' min 40 ft. min total
Class 2	40,000 s.f.	200 ft.	75 ft.	200 ft.	30' corridor within 35' of shore	20' min 50 ft. min total
Class 3	75,000 s.f.	300 ft.	100 ft.	250 ft.	30' corridor within 50' of shore	30' min 60 ft. min total
Rivers & Streams	75,000 s.f.	300 ft.	100 ft.	250 ft.	30' corridor within 50' of shore	30' min 60 ft. min total

Source: A Guide for Developing & Managing Shoreland in Burnett County.

Groundwater

Groundwater is important as it provides the household water source to all residents in the town and provides water recharge to many lakes, streams, and wetlands. Primary sources of groundwater pollution in Wisconsin are agricultural activities, municipal landfills, leaky underground storage tanks, and spills. Other possible contamination sources may be septic tanks and land application of wastewater. Rarely do natural pollutants affect groundwater quality. If groundwater is contaminated, it can take years and large monetary expense to clean up.

Groundwater contamination susceptibility results from a number of factors. Geologic and soil conditions combine to determine how sensitive groundwater is to contamination. The area in and around the town has a sand and gravel aquifer from the Precambrian Era, which leads to a higher susceptibility to groundwater contamination. The depth to the water table in the town ranges from 0 to 50 feet (Map 5.8).

5.8 WILDLIFE HABITAT/THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES

The abundance of large tracts of contiguous lands in the town and county creates prime habitat for various plant and animal species. In the Namekagon Barrens area, the primary focus of wildlife management is the sharp-tailed grouse population. Other avian wildlife found in the town include the upland plover, colored sparrows, bluebirds, mallards, ring-necked ducks, and red-tailed and marsh hawks. Mammals common to the area are the badger, fox, coyote, black bear, whitetail deer, pocket gopher, and occasionally the endangered grey wolf

Some of these species are rare, threatened or endangered. The bureau of endangered resources is the department of the WDNR that monitors and identifies these species of concern. The Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) is used to track these species because it is part of an international network of Heritage programs. This network is preferable because it uses a standard methodology for collecting, processing, and managing data occurrences of biological diversity. This network of data centers was established by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and is now coordinated by Nature Serve, an international non-profit organization. Because of the mobility of many of these species, they can be found in different parts of the county at different times, and absence of species on the list does not infer absence of presence in the area. Not all areas are inventoried because of private lands or lack of resources. The general location for threatened and endangered species is not specifically revealed due to the potential impact to resources.

5.9 NATURAL AREAS/OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

There is an abundance of opportunities to view and experience natural areas within the town. The federal government, state, and county own five large public land holdings that encompass the town. Collectively, these areas provide environmental corridors for wildlife to travel throughout the county as well as permanent habitat to create the diverse ecosystems present in the town and surrounding area.

St. Croix National Scenic River

This federally owned river way is managed jointly with the Namekagon River and was one of the initial designations under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. The Lower St. Croix was designated in 1972. The General Management Plan: Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, July 1998, provides the National Park Service with a management guide for maintaining the scenic riverway. The river abuts many unique habitats and provides excellent viewing of wildlife. The primary recreational activities are water related. The Upper St. Croix is perfect for canoeing and kayaking whereas boats can use the wider lower portion.

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is responsible for management of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area in the south-central and north-central portions of the Town of

Blaine as part of a twenty-year lease agreement with local land owners and Burnett County. This resource area provides significant natural resources to both plant and animal species. The area contains approximately 5000 acres and is one of the last remnants of what was once a vast expanse of semi-open brush prairie on sandy soils.

Burnett County Forest Land

The Burnett County Forest system, developed in 1932, covers more than 106,000 acres and is the ninth largest county forest system in the state. Primary habitat includes mixed forest with aspen, pine, oak, birch, and other sandy soil species. The forest gives public access to many of the county's pristine water features, including the St. Croix, Namekagon, Totagatic, Yellow, Clam, and Tamarack Rivers. Many miles of trails offer opportunities for snowmobiling, hiking, biking, ATV's, skiing, and horseback riding. Permits are required for hunting, fishing, and trapping and for the collection of plants, firewood, Christmas trees, and other forest products. Berries, mushrooms, edible fruits, and seeds may be gathered for personal use without a permit.

5.10 METALLIC & NON-METALLIC MINING

Mining in Wisconsin has occurred since settlement. Metals mined in the state include copper, lead, iron, and zinc. Mining has economic value to multi-regional areas but also has the ability to potentially harm natural resources. There are no metallic mining operations in the town.

Non-metallic mining substances may include stone, sand, gravel, beryl, clay, coal, feldspar, peat, talc, and topsoil. There is one non-metallic mining site (gravel) presently operating in the town at this time (T & T Ranch). A new gravel mining site has been applied for and is scheduled to begin operations in the spring of 2005 (Chrysten Dig property). Any new mines need to have a permit granted by the WDNR and are subject to the rules and regulations of NR 135.

5.11 AGRICULTURAL USES AND TRENDS

Productive Agriculture Lands

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed a list of Official Prime Farmlands. The NRCS has defined prime agricultural lands as *“land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The land must also be available for these uses (cropland, pastureland, forestland, or other land but not water or urban built-up land).”* These lands have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture content that can maintain high yields of crops when treated and or managed. The following lists some general characteristics of prime farmland in Wisconsin:

- Has an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation
- Has a favorable temperature and growing season
- Has acceptable acidity or alkalinity
- Has few or no rocks
- Is permeable to air and water
- Is not excessively erodible

- Is not saturated with water for long periods of time
- Does not flood frequently, or is protected from flooding

These soils do not include unique farmland, which is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific food crops. These soils have unique conditions, growing season, and moisture content that are specific to one type of crop. In Wisconsin, this could include soils used for cranberry production that are too wet for other crops or soils used for orchards that may be too steep or erodible to qualify as prime farmland (see Map 5.4)

Another way to examine productive agriculture lands is to consider the land capability class. This classification scheme breaks up land into eight general classes, labeled I-VIII. Lands classified as I or II are “most productive”, classes III and IV are “productive” and classes V-VIII are non-productive lands. The first four classes are suitable for cultivation where the last four are limited to grazing, pasture or woodlands. The north- and southwestern portion of the town is the primary area for continued agricultural activity.

Agricultural Trends

Agriculture use has seen a decline throughout the state as these lands are being converted to residential use. In contrast, according to the tax assessment data, the town has had a 29.2 percent increase in the amount of land assessed as agricultural since 1991. This rate is much higher than the county’s, which had a 27 percent loss over the last 13 years. The number of total parcels also increased significantly (38.3%), meaning that the average farm size has remained relatively steady. It should be noted that the residential acreage during this time period increased dramatically (432 percent) in the town from 313 acres in 1991 to 1,668 in 2003.

Table 5.6: Agricultural Tax Assessment Statistics

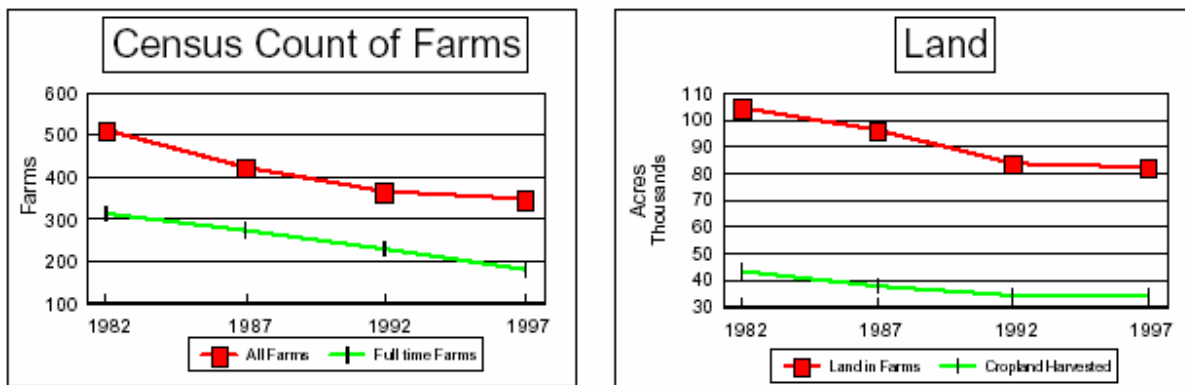
	1991		1997		2003		%Acre change 1991-2003
	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	
Blaine	73	1,700	48	831	101	2,197	29.2%
Burnett Co.	3,517	88,827	3,357	80,452	2,993	64,680	-27.2%

Source: WDOR

The Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service (WASS) is a part of the Department of Agriculture whose primary responsibility is to prepare official estimates of agriculture for the state and counties. WASS develops profiles on a five-year cycle. Some countywide statistics from the 1997 survey include (2002 County data not yet available):

- Land in farms decreased 2 percent from 84,091 acres in 1992 to 82,742 acres in 1997
- Average farm size increased 4 percent from 228 acres in 1992 to 236 acres in 1997
- Full time farms decreased 22 percent from 231 farms in 1992 to 180 in 1997
- Market value of agricultural products sold decreased two percent to \$14,187,000 in 1997
 - Crop sales accounted for 39 percent of market value
 - Livestock sales accounted for 61 percent of market value
- Market value of agricultural products sold, average per farm increased three percent from \$39,081 in 1992 to \$40,418 in 1997

Figure 5.1: Farm Related Activity



Source: WASS

The graphs in Figure 5.1 show the steady decrease of the number of farms and land over a 15-year period covering the 1980's and 1990's.

5.12 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

It is important to identify and discuss historic and cultural resources as they give a valuable link to the past. This section will touch on three cultural categories: architecture, archeology, and burial sites. The Wisconsin State Historical Society has taken the lead on being the source for most of the historic and cultural resources in the state. There are no buildings in the town on the state or national registry; however, Table 5.7 lists possible historic buildings within the town as defined by the Wisconsin State Historic Society. These buildings are part of the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) which lists structures that have a unique, cultural, or historic importance to Wisconsin. This is not a comprehensive list as it was developed from a variety of sources. Not all buildings may be eligible for listing on the state or national registry as some properties may have been altered or no longer exist. Two of the entries do not identify the type of structure.

Table 5.7: Historic Buildings		
Town, Range, Section	Location	Name

Table 5.7: Historic Buildings

Town, Range, Section	Location	Name
4214W - 24	1 mile E of Co. Hwy T, 1 mile NW of St. Croix River	Westman House
4214W – 16	On St. Croix River	Wood Tick Bridge
4214W – 33	Namekegon Trail Rd	Namekegon Trail Bridge
4215W – 04	State Highway 35 and Town Rd	Woodland School
4215W – 19	State Line Rd	John Pierson Barn
4215W – 22	State Highway 35	Sander Johnson Barn
4215W – 27	Big Island Rd	Not Available
4215W – 28	CNR of Two Sand Rds, Old Aspen Community	Aspen School
4215W – 31	S Side of Rd, 2 M W of State Highway 35, .5 M E of Wis/MN State Line	Not Available
4215W – 33	Off Big Island Rd on Big Island	Charles Lindstrom House

Archeology

It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of the archaeological sites that once existed in the state have been destroyed or severely damaged, primarily by modern land practices such as development and farming. Looting has also damaged many sites (Wisconsin State Historical Society). Archeological sites may include cemeteries, Native American burial mounds and campsites, pictographs, and shipwrecks. The Wisconsin State Historical Society keeps a list of all known archeological sites in the state. Due to the sensitive nature of these sites, the exact location may not be available.

In Burnett County the rich Native American heritage and history allows for the possibility for many archeological sites in the area. There are two known cemeteries in the Town of Blaine: Hillcrest and Evergreen Cemeteries. All burial sites are protected under state statutes and apply to both public and private lands. Before any major developments, it is suggested that a site analysis be done to ensure a site is not damaged. If a site is found on private land, state tax exemptions may be available to the landowner. For more information on archeological sites contact the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

5.13 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

The Town of Blaine, in the implementation of this comprehensive plan may use the following list of programs. This list is not comprehensive; and many other local, state, and federal programs may also exist.

Natural Resource Programs

Runoff Management Programs

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administers two grant programs to support both the implementation of source-area controls to prevent runoff contamination and the installation of treatment systems to remove pollutants from runoff. The Targeted Runoff Management Program (TRM) provides a 70 percent cost share, up to \$150,000 to target high-priority resource problems.

- Construction of urban and rural BMPs
- Two-year grant period
- Site-specific

The Urban Nonpoint Source & Storm Water Management (UNPS&SW) Grant Programs are used to control runoff in urban areas with a population density of 1,000 people per square mile.

Lake Planning Grants

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administers a number of lake management financial assistance programs designed to assist local units of government.

Small Scale Lake Planning Grant

Available to local units of government, including public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, town sanitary districts, and other local governmental units as defined in Wis. Stats. Ch. 66.0301.

- Funds may be used to collect and analyze information needed to protect and restore lakes and their watersheds.
- 75 percent cost share
- Total project cost not to exceed \$3,000

Self-help Trend Monitoring Grant

- Total project cost not to exceed \$3,000
- Grantees provide voluntary labor (130 hours) for lake monitoring activities
- WDNR provides materials and laboratory analysis

Large Scale Lake Planning Grants

Available to local units of government, including public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, town sanitary districts, and other local governmental units as defined in Wis. Stats. Ch. 66.0301.

- 75 percent cost share project
- Total cost not to exceed \$10,000
- Funds can be used for collecting lake data, analysis of land uses, analysis of ordinances, resource assessments, or developing components of a lake management plan.

Lake Protection Grants

Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Lake Protection Grants Program is designed to fund large-scale lake protection projects.

- Available to local units of government, including public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, town sanitary districts, and other local governmental units as defined in Wis. Stats. Ch. 66.0301.
- 75 percent cost share
- Maximum award of up to \$200,000

Eligible projects include:

- Purchase of land or easements
- Restoration of wetlands or shoreland
- Development of ordinances or regulations
- Implementation of lake management plan projects

Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP)

This is a state program administered by the WDNR. Cost shares up to 65 percent are available for:

- Development of management plan
- Tree planting (site prep, planting stock, planting, etc.)
- Timber stand improvement
- Fencing

Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP)

This federal program, administered by WDNR and Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides up to 65 percent cost share for:

- Development of management plan
- Tree planting (site prep, planting stock, planting, etc.)
- Timber stand improvement
- Fencing

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

This federal program, administered by FSA and Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) with WDNR input, provides annual payments and up to 50 percent cost share for:

- Development of management plan
- Tree planting (site prep, planting stock, planting, etc.)
- CRP is currently focused on wildlife enhancement and does not allow solid plantations SRIC Poplars. The State of Wisconsin currently does not allow hybrid poplar to be planted under any CRP contract because it is not native to the area. However, pure cottonwoods are acceptable. Allowable species varies with each state. Please consult your local NRCS and/or FSA office for details.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

This federal program, administered by NRCS with WDNR inputs, provides up to 65 percent cost share for:

- Development of management plan
- Tree planting (site prep, planting stock, planting, etc.)

Managed Forest Law (MFL)

This Wisconsin state program is entirely administered by the WDNR and provides the landowner a significant property tax reduction. The actual property tax paid will depend upon if the land is open or closed to the public. Upon harvest, a stumpage tax must be paid to the state, based on the average stumpage price. The program is targeted towards:

- Development of management plan
- Tree planting (site prep, planting stock, planting, etc.)
- Timber stand improvement

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

This federal program, administered by NRCS with WDNR inputs, provides up to 75 percent cost share with emphasis towards:

- Wildlife practices and plantings
- Wetland restoration
- Farmstead shelterbelts
- Grazing systems

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

This federal program, administered by NRCS with WDNR, inputs and provides up to 75 percent cost share for:

- Priority areas
- Tree planting for erosion control, ag waste management, stream buffers, ecosystem management, etc.

Cultural and Historic Resource Protection Programs

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Fund Subgrants (Tax Credits)

The Wisconsin Historical Society's Division of Historic Preservation (DHP) administers Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) subgrants. These grants are in the form of income tax credits for income-producing historic buildings, historic homes, and archaeological sites. These credits are available to all local units of government in the State of Wisconsin and to non-profit organizations.

Wisconsin Humanities Council Historic Preservation Grants

The Wisconsin Humanities Council offers grants of up to \$10,000 for projects that enhance appreciation of the need for historic preservation and/or increase public awareness of the importance of particular historic buildings or decorative art works in Wisconsin. Preference is given to small towns and rural communities with populations under 30,000.

National Trust for Historic Preservation/Jeffris Preservation Services Fund (PFS)

This fund was established in 1998 by a gift from the Jeffris Family Foundation to the National Trust. The PSF provides funding to small towns to use in the planning stages of historic preservation projects. Eligible expenses include costs for professional consultants and educational activities. A dollar for dollar match is required for these grants.

5.14 NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and action steps has been developed to assist the town in the conservation and promotion of effective management of the local natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. These resources are important to the town.

Significant data and information is available from federal, state, local, and tribal sources pertaining to the importance of the local natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. Throughout this comprehensive plan, information was used to assist in developing goals, objectives, actions, policies, and programs in an effort to be consistent with planning principles and in protecting economically productive areas, where applicable.

Goal: Conserve, protect, manage, and enhance the town's natural resources.

Objective and Action Statements:

- 1: Preserve historic cemeteries.
 - a. Contact historical society to find location of Dogtown Cemetery.
- 2: Protection of lakes and regulations on their usage.
 - a. Maintain vigilance of federal, state, and county regulations.
- 3: Ensure groundwater protection.
 - a. Require that all installed septic systems meet state and county standards.
- 4: Control surface water run-off to lakes and streams.
 - a. Regulate the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
 - b. Research need for storm water control as development occurs.
- 5: Gain more of the town's input into disposition of public forestlands.
 - a. Ask the appropriate agencies to contact the town if changes in management of such lands occur.
- 6: Investigate logging practices, particularly with regards to clear-cutting and abandoned logging roads.
 - a. Contact the county forest department with regards to clear-cutting, selective cutting, and abandoned logging roads.
- 7: Develop parkland.
 - a. Research potential park sites.

- 8: Research hunting restrictions on public land.
- 9: Identify and preserve historic buildings.
 - a. Contact historical society to identify historical buildings.
- 10: Rustic road development.
 - a. Contact department of transportation for requirements of rustic road designation.
- 11: Maintain and protect town scenic areas (on all lands).
- 12: Preserve productive farmlands where possible.
 - a. Identify productive farming areas in the town.
 - b. Monitor the development or potential division of productive farmlands in the town.