

## **CHAPTER 5      Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element**

### **Section 5.1      Introduction**

The residents of the Town of Buena Vista recognize the value of their unique landscape and understand that it supports and sustains a way of life they are proud of. Substantial natural woodlands and wetlands, varied abundant wildlife, productive farmland, and diverse topography come together to create a landscape rare in Wisconsin. For those who choose to farm the land here, the community supports their efforts and works to minimize barriers that impede this economically viable industry.

The residents also understand that the identification and protection of the historical and cultural resources of the community will help sustain a rich quality of life that is enjoyed by all who settle here.

### **Section 5.2      Agricultural Resources**

#### **A.    Agricultural Potential Based on Land Evaluation Rating (LE-SA)**

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) is a tool that can be helpful in assisting Town leaders to identify land that has the highest value for agricultural use within the community. The LESA system is a point-based approach that can be used for rating the relative value of agricultural land resources. It does so by defining and measuring two separate sets of factors. The first set, **Land Evaluation**, includes factors that measure the inherent soil-based qualities of land as they relate to agricultural suitability. The second set, **Site Assessment**, includes factors that are intended to measure social, economic, and geographic attributes that also contribute to the overall value of agricultural land.

A Land Evaluation (LE) rating was developed for use across all of Portage County. Three soil property indexes, all published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), were combined to produce the LE rating: prime farmland classification, land capability class – natural condition, and productivity index. LE ratings reflect the productivity potential, as well as the economic and environmental costs of producing a crop. Possible LE ratings range from 0 to 100, with **higher numbers meaning greater value for agriculture**. Many physical and chemical soil properties are considered in the LE rating, either directly or indirectly, including soil texture and rock fragments, slope, wetness and flooding, soil erodibility, climate, available water capacity, pH (alkalinity versus acidity), and permeability.

A Site Assessment (SA) rating was also developed for the Town of Buena Vista. The site assessment factors are further evaluated in the Land Use element of this plan. As with the LE rating, SA ratings range from 0 to 100, with higher numbers meaning greater value for agriculture. The LE and SA scores are combined to yield a score for each two-acre block of land within the Town ranging between 0 and 200 points, with a score of 200 representing lands that are of the highest value for agriculture (excluding specialty crops such as cranberries). Communities will then determine an appropriate threshold for ranking lands recommended for protection (i.e. areas with a score higher than 150 and greater than 40 contiguous acres in size). Weighting factors can be changed by each community to reflect its own priorities. See Appendix E for a complete explanation of this system.

The Town of Buena Vista has decided to use the LESA model as an advisory tool to help identify areas in the community that are recommended to remain in agricultural use.

## B. Highly Productive Agricultural Soils

Highly productive agricultural soils in the Town of Buena Vista have been identified, with the assistance of the County Conservationist, based on highest productivity and lowest degree of limitations for farming (Map 5.1 Highly Productive Agricultural Soils). Slopes greater than 6% were excluded from the “highly productive” designation (due to severe hazard for water or wind erosion), along with small parcels and stony, rough, and eroded sites. Highly Productive Soils in Buena Vista include:

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Mosinee Sandy Loam, 2-6% Slopes             | Mecan Sandy Loam, 2-6% Slopes    |
| Wyocena Sandy Loam, 2-6% Slopes             | Rosholt Loam, 2-6% Slopes        |
| Billett Sandy Loam, 0-2% Slopes             | Richford Loamy Sand, 0-2% Slopes |
| Rosholt Loam, Loamy Substratum, 0-2% Slopes | Richford Loamy Sand, 2-6% Slopes |

The Town has a limited amount of soil listed as prime, however, due to intensive management practices (including drainage, irrigation, fertilizing, and aerial spraying); many areas of the Town have been rendered highly productive. Some of these practices may have detrimental impacts to natural resources, such as high nitrate levels in groundwater.

## C. Farming Systems, Demographics, and Land Tenure

The agricultural landscape of the Town of Buena Vista can best be described as a confluence or ‘coming together’ of farming systems. First and most prominent is the dairy region. In Wisconsin, dairying is most concentrated in a belt that begins near Hudson (St. Croix County), heads east to Wausau (Marathon County) and Green Bay (Brown County), then turns southwest through Fond du Lac, Madison and ends near Dubuque (Iowa County). Wisconsin Department of Agriculture 2002 permit information list eleven (11) active grade-A dairy farms operating in the Town of Buena Vista. To the south in Pine Grove, there were three (3) farms; and in Almond, there were three (3) farms; to the north in Amherst, there were sixteen (16) farms, in Plover, there were three (3) farms, and in Stockton there were twenty-nine (29) farms. To the west in Grant, there were three (3) farms; and to the east in Lanark, there were eight (8).

The second farming region that includes Buena Vista is that of fresh vegetable production. The irrigated sands of the “golden sands” region of Wisconsin lay between Amherst, the Stevens Point area and south into Waushara and Adams Counties. There are a number of producers who have vegetable operations throughout the Town. The presence of pivot irrigation rigs is one key indicator of vegetable production. There were approximately 120 irrigation pivots in Buena Vista, with 9,935 acres of irrigated farmland in 2000. There was also an abundance of non-irrigated fields being farmed (8,932 acres) in 2000.

The amount of land dedicated to agricultural production does change regularly from year to year. In 2000, the Portage County Planning and Zoning Office analyzed aerial photography for the Town of Buena Vista to identify active farmland within the Community. Total agricultural acres identified were 20,550.

There were 97 persons employed in an agriculturally related field in the Town of Buena Vista in 2000 (Table 1.9, Issues and Opportunities element). This represented 14.5% of employment for the Town. This is down from the 1980 figure of 112 persons (29.8%). However, Buena Vista does have a higher percentage of Agriculture related employment when compared to the Town average (6.9%) and Portage County (3.5%) for 2000. Decreasing farm employment is not a unique trend by any means. Farm numbers are down in many parts of the state, while acreage per farm is up. Farm consolidation is a common practice in this industry.

**Map 5.1 Highly Productive Agricultural Soils**

#### D. Farm Economy and Infrastructure

Because of the lack of farm economy information available at the town level, a detailed discussion of the farm economy at the town level is not practical. Please see the complete discussion of the Portage County farm economy in the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources element of the Portage County Comprehensive Plan.

#### E. Other Local Influences on Agriculture

The Buena Vista area has seen increased pressure for the development of rural residential properties, especially along STH 54. However, with the new USH 10 four-lane upgrade being constructed through the Amherst area, there is the potential for increasing development pressure in the Town of Buena Vista. The Town also foresees continued growth along or near STH 54.

Other factors that affect the agricultural community include modifications that have been made to the landscape to favor agricultural practices. The Portage County Drainage District was organized in 1903 to develop and maintain a series of drainage ditches that would make agriculture on and near the Buena Vista Marsh possible. Construction began in 1907 and was completed in 1915. Due to such adverse conditions as acid soil, fire, frost, and the high cost of re-dredging, farming became unprofitable and the district dissolved in 1923. Increased interest in irrigated agriculture for mint, potatoes, hay and pasture led to the re-dredging of the ditches in the late 1960's. Currently, the Portage County Drainage District is the largest active district in the State. (Lake Wazeecha Watershed Inventory Report, 1993)

The Drainage District is approximately 87 square miles in size. The ditch network contains approximately 93 miles of District operated ditches, 41.5 miles of "private drains" and 5 miles of perennial streams. The construction and maintenance of District operated ditches is regulated by a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource "Maintenance Dredging Agreement" and ATCP 48 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code under DATCP. (Prototype Management Plan for the Portage County Drainage District, 1994)

In 2004, the Portage County Drainage Board drafted regulations that would help to ensure proper management of the ditches within the District. The regulations include restricting residences and other structures within 100 feet of the drainage ditches to allow for routine maintenance of the ditches and to serve as a buffer for protecting water quality.

#### E. Agricultural Programs

A number of programs are available to agricultural landowners to help achieve desired outcomes ranging from enhancing wildlife habitat to minimizing soil erosion. The following is a partial list from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). For more information about these and other programs contact the local NRCS office at 715-346-1325 or the Farm Service Agency at 715-346-1313.

##### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

The Conservation Reserve Program, administered through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, one can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Participants enroll in CRP for 10 to 15 years.

##### **Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (EQIP)**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program. It supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP,

farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of eligible conservation practices. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a farmer to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, and wildlife habitat management.

### **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program to restore and protect wetlands on private property. It is an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore wetlands that have been drained for agriculture.

Landowners who choose to participate in WRP may sell a conservation easement or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with USDA to restore and protect wetlands. The landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, yet retains private ownership. The landowner and NRCS develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland.

The program offers landowners three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum of 10-year duration

### **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is a voluntary program for people who want to develop or improve wildlife habitat on private lands. It provides both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Landowners agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to implement the wildlife habitat restoration practices.

## **Section 5.3 Agricultural Issues**

The following issues relating to agriculture were raised during the planning process:

- Farm numbers are declining, but agricultural land is for the most part remaining in use. To what extent can the Town protect the agricultural community?
- How do we encourage rural residential in designated areas of the Town?
- How can agricultural land be classified for vegetable (potato) production?
- Nitrates and agricultural chemicals get into groundwater. To what extent can the Town protect the quality of groundwater?
- There are urban residents moving into a rural Town and complaining about the agricultural practices and unpaved roads. How can the Town educate its residents about living in a rural area?

## **Section 5.4 Agricultural Goals, Objectives and Policies**

### **A. Goals**

1. The agricultural community is economically viable.
2. Protect productive agricultural operations from development pressures.
3. Protect the principal use and purpose of the drainage ditches, namely, agriculture.

## B. Objectives

1. Encourage agricultural practices that are environmentally sensitive and protect air, soil, water, and wildlife resources.
2. Minimize conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.
3. Educate the public about the operations and activities of the agriculture community.

## C. Policies

1. Adhere to the policies set by Portage County Drainage Board.
2. Use the LESA system to help identify productive ag areas.
3. Develop and distribute a “Code of Country Living” brochure.
4. Limit residential development in areas of concentrated agricultural use.
5. Allow agricultural lands that have been idle to be re-zoned for higher uses, provided that use is compatible with surrounding uses.
6. Educational efforts to promote the use of good agricultural practices including the use of feasible new technology in the areas of: soil and water conservation, irrigation, abatement of chemical leaching, aerial spraying, land drainage and woodland management.
7. Use Exclusive Agricultural (A-1) zoning to help protect productive farmland.
8. Recommend that agricultural lands within the Drainage District are zoned A-1, Exclusive Agriculture.
9. Submit the Town’s revised zoning map showing exclusive agricultural zoning to the State Land and Water Conservation Board to enable local farms to become eligible for the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program.

## **Section 5.5 Natural Resources**

Natural resources in the Town of Buena Vista serve as the foundation for residents physical and economic well being – from groundwater quality to land suitability for agricultural, residential, or commercial development. According to the results of the 2001 Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Survey, Town residents favored managing the natural resources that support and sustain them. This section will describe the existing natural resources inventory and state the issues, goals, objectives, and policies that were identified and adopted by the Town of Buena Vista Plan Commission and Town Board.

### A. Geomorphology

The physical environment and geology of the area traces its origin to the affects of the melting glaciers over 10,000 years ago. The western panhandle of the Town is part of Wisconsin’s “driftless“ area, never having glacial deposits or “drift” left behind. This area is characterized by sand deposits that extend in excess of 100 feet down to bedrock. These deep sand deposits function as an extensive aquifer which has changed previously nonproductive lands into highly productive and valuable farmland, by way of high capacity irrigation, which provides needed moisture to the droughty, sandy soils.

The groundwater is so plentiful that much of the sand plain region has a highwater table which limits non-farm development due mainly to adverse affects on septic waste disposal systems.

This high water was an historical limitation to crop production until much of the area had its water table lowered by drainage ditches. The Town has approximately 26 miles of drainage ditches. The moist zone has diversified potential as a wildlife habitat, livestock production and specialty field crops.

The eastern half of the Town developed as a glacial outwash where moraine hills and ridges were formed by glacial deposits. This part of the Town was formed when the glacial ice sheets started melting and receding, and in the process depositing varying depths of outwash deposits, mostly sand, from the meltwater flowing from the glacier westward to what is now the Wisconsin River Valley. The effect of the rolling glacial deposits have made this area of the Town very scenic. The hilly moraine area presents a significant problem in many areas for large scale farming. Elevation ranges from 1,055 feet above sea level in western areas of the Town to 1,290 feet along the moraines of the eastern areas (Map 5.2).

#### B. Soil Associations

The Town of Buena Vista is characterized by three zones with significantly different types of soil. The soils in the western third of the Town are characterized by being very wet. The most prevalent soil type is Roscommon Muck. This area is part of the Buena Vista Marsh. These soils are subject to heaving and swelling due to frost action, thereby presenting potential agricultural difficulty.

Soils in the central part of the Town are generally soils on outwash plains. They formed in loamy sand deposits and the underlying outwash sand. Permeability is moderately rapid. Most of this area is used for irrigated crop production with the exception of the moraine running through the middle.

Soils on the eastern part of the Town are gently sloping to steep, well drained soils. They formed in loamy deposits and the underlying sandy glacial till. Permeability is moderately rapid, and available water capacity is minimum. Many areas are used for crops, while the steeper areas are used for pasture or as woodland.

Soils in the Town can be grouped into four soil associations (Map 5.3):

- Kranski-Coloma- Mecan Association: Excessively drained and well-drained, gently sloping to very steep soils that formed in sandy glacial till or in deep sandy deposits.
- Richford – Rosholt-Billett Association: Well drained, nearly level to gently sloping soils that formed in sandy loamy deposits and outwash sand and gravel.
- Roscommon –Meehan\_Markey Association: Somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained, nearly level soils that formed in deep sandy deposits or, in places, in organic deposits that overlie the sand.
- Markey- Seelyeville-Cathro Association: Very poorly drained, nearly level soils that formed in organic deposits over sandy and loamy deposits.

#### C. Surface Water, Wetlands, and Flood plains (Map 5.4)

There are four small natural lakes in the Town that were created by the glaciers. The only other natural surface water consists of approximately two miles of the Buena Vista Creek, which has been straightened to form a man-made ditch, and approximately one half-mile of Duck Creek, which is not part of a formal drainage ditch. There are also four small man-made ponds located adjacent to Interstate 39.

**Map 5.2 Topography**

**Map 5.3      General Soils Associations**

**Map 5.4 Wetlands and Watersheds**

**Map 5.5      Groundwater Flow**

The majority of the Town is located in the Fourmile and Fivemile Creek Watershed while the remaining eastern portion is located in the Tomorrow-Waupaca River Watershed. Surface waters that drain from the Tomorrow-Waupaca River Watershed end up in Lake Michigan while surface waters in the western three fourths of the Town drain into the Wisconsin River. A watershed can be defined as an interconnected area of land draining from surrounding ridge tops to a common point such as a lake or stream.

Wetlands are an important part of the watershed, as they act as a filter system for pollutants, nutrients, and sediments, along with serving as buffers for shorelands and providing essential wildlife habitat, flood control and groundwater recharge.

Wetlands within the Town of Buena Vista include three general types: forested, scrub or shrub, and emergent/wet meadow.

- Forested wetlands include bogs and forested floodplain complexes that are characterized by trees 20 feet or more in height such as, tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, and silver maple. These are found in areas primarily near the Buena Vista Creek and Isherwood Lateral.
- Emergent/wet meadow consist of areas that may have saturated soils more often than having standing water. Vegetation includes: sedges, grasses and reeds as dominant plants, but may also include: blue flag iris, milkweed, sneezeweed, mint and several species of goldenrod and aster. Many of these wetlands are found on DNR or Prairie Chicken lands.
- Scrub/shrub wetlands include bogs and alder thickets, are characterized by wood shrubs and small trees such as: tag aster, bog birch, willow and dogwood. These areas are also found primarily on DNR and Prairie Chicken lands.

#### D. Groundwater

The majority of the Town of Buena Vista is located in a geologic province known as the sand-plain province. The sand-plain province is considerably different from the rest of the County in that the basement sandstone bedrock is far from the surface, and the unconsolidated aquifers above it are not very limited. The depth to bedrock is greater than 75 feet, and the depth to groundwater varies greatly, between 3 and 200 feet.

All Town residential water use comes from groundwater sources, therefore, protection of this resource is important. There is generally a thick unsaturated zone, however, given the sandy soil type, there exists little second line defense against pollutants regardless of the nature of the subsurface materials. Although some of the soils ranked moderate to good in pollution attenuation, this area of the County should be considered vulnerable overall given the sandy soil type.

Potential pumping yield rates for groundwater generally range from 500-1,000+ gallons per minute throughout the Town. This rate is high when compared to areas west of the Wisconsin River where rates rarely exceed 50 gallons per minute.

An interesting feature to point out is the presence of a groundwater divide that has a north-south orientation in the eastern third of the Town (Map 5.5). Water to the east of the divide is part of a larger drainage basin that flows or drains into Lake Michigan, while groundwater to the west of

the divide drains into the Wisconsin River and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. The exact position and width of the divide is not known, but is depicted based on the most recent data set available to the County. Data collection for groundwater monitoring is an on-going process and the Town should work with Portage County and other research organizations to maintain the most current information possible. Knowing groundwater flow can be a helpful piece of information when determining proper siting of well and on-site waste systems. More specific information and recommendations regarding groundwater can be found in the *Portage County Groundwater Management Plan*, adopted by the County Board in March, 2004.

#### Atrazine Prohibition Areas

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is researching the health effects of atrazine in water. Drinking water that contains atrazine will not cause an immediate sickness or health problems (acute toxicity). However, consuming low levels of atrazine over time may cause health problems (chronic toxicity). The EPA is also concerned that atrazine may be an endocrine disruptor which can cause unintentional hormone-like activity in the body.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is responsible for protecting Wisconsin's groundwater from contamination by pesticides and fertilizers. Their authority to restrict the use of a pesticide that is contaminating groundwater at levels above health-based standards is found in the Wisconsin Groundwater Law, [Chapter 160 of the Wisconsin Statutes](#), and by department rule in [ATCP 31, Groundwater Protection Program](#).

The rules for restricting the use of atrazine and other pesticides in Wisconsin are part of [ATCP 30 - Pesticide Product Restrictions](#) and the County maps showing the location of the prohibition areas can also be found in the rule in [ATCP 30 - Appendix A](#).

Atrazine has not been detected above the Enforcement Standard of 3 micrograms per liter in wells within the Town of Buena Vista, and because of this no prohibition area has been defined within the community.

#### E. Wildlife Habitat and Forested Areas

When people think about wildlife; birds, fish, and mammals most likely come to mind. It is important, however, to consider all organisms that make up an ecosystem in order for that system to continue providing the maximum benefit to humans and the environment. Town residents recognize the fact that human beings play a role in protecting or restoring, as well as degrading or destroying, wildlife and its habitat. They also recognize that it will be very difficult to preserve all ecosystems in the Town from human encroachment or interaction, therefore, it is the desire of residents to protect wildlife habitat where practicable.

The biggest threats to wildlife are loss of habitat quality and quantity. These threats can be attributed primarily to fragmentation, invasive species, and pollution. Fragmentation refers to the loss of large, contiguous sections of land through subdivision into smaller parts. These subdivisions can lead to an alteration and possible degradation of the native plant and animal communities. Invasive species, both plant and animal, tend to out compete or prey on native species also altering the native ecosystem. Pollution can lead to habitat degradation and cause birth defects and increased mortality rates in animal species. Habitat areas are important for providing food and cover for nesting, brooding, and sheltering. Farmland is one type of habitat that also provides food, as well as travel corridors between wetlands and woodlands.

**Map 5.6      Forested Land**

Woodlands or forested lands comprise 25% of the land area in Buena Vista (Map 5.6 above) while wetlands make up 9%. Woodlands that are present in the Town are due primarily to an inability to sustain successful agricultural practices.

One option open to all private landowners owning ten or more acres of woodlands is the Managed Forest Law Program. The MFL program is intended to foster timber production on private forests while promoting other benefits that forested lands provide. Participants in this program have the option to choose a 25 or 50 year contract period and pay property taxes at a reduced rate on enrolled lands. A portion of the difference in property taxes is recouped by the state at the time of a timber harvest when a yield tax is imposed based on the volume of timber removed. For more information regarding specific requirements and how to enroll in this program, contact the WI Department of Natural Resources.

According to 2001 County survey data, 81% of residents felt that an effort should be made to identify and protect woodlands, and 80% felt the same about wetlands and floodplains. Loss of these habitat types can threaten the viability of certain species.

Portions of Portage County contain suitable habitat needed to sustain a remnant population of the Greater Prairie Chicken, a species found only in the United States. In 2005, prairie chicken management lands totaled 2,647 acres or 6.7% of Town's total area. The prairie chicken lands are all located in the western half of the Town in an area commonly known as the Buena Vista Marsh (Map 5.6). Some of these lands are privately owned, but managed by the State Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) under long term lease arrangements.

#### 1. Threatened and Endangered Species

Known rare and endangered animal species and plant communities identified by the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) that are located within the Town of Buena Vista (Townships 42208 & 42209) include: Greater Prairie-Chicken, Northern Dry-Mesic Forest, Northern Mesic Forest, Franklin's Ground Squirrel, White-Tailed Jackrabbit, and Karner Blue Butterfly. These elements should be taken into consideration when development and protection measures are considered. A more detailed description of each species or plant community can be obtained by contacting the WI DNR.

#### F. Air Quality

The following information comes from the WI DNR and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: A few common air pollutants are found all over the United States. These pollutants can injure health, harm the environment and cause property damage. The Environmental Protection Agency calls these pollutants **criteria air pollutants** because the agency has regulated them by first developing health-based **criteria** (science-based guidelines) as the basis for setting permissible levels. These pollutants include: ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and lead.

One set of limits (**primary standard**) is designed to protect public health, including the health of "sensitive" populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly; another set of limits (**secondary standard**) is intended to protect public welfare, including protection against decreased visibility and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. A geographic area that meets or does better than the primary standard is called an **attainment area**; areas that don't meet the primary standard are called **nonattainment areas**.

All of Portage County, including the Town of Buena Vista, is listed as an attainment area by the WI DNR.

## G. Non-Metallic Mining

The glacial and geologic history of Portage County has made conditions suitable for certain types of non-metallic mining. Along the moraines in the eastern third of the County, glacial deposits have resulted in some lands that are desirable for gravel and aggregate extraction. This is in contrast with lands west of the Wisconsin River where soils are heavier and have a higher clay content.

There are currently three active sand and gravel extraction sites located in the central part of Buena Vista (Map 8.1).

### **Section 5.6 Natural Resources Issues**

The following issues relating to natural resources were identified through the planning process:

- Nitrates and agricultural chemicals possibly contaminating the groundwater supply. To what extent can the Town protect the quality of groundwater?
- Groundwater levels are dropping or have limited volumes east of the moraine. What impact does fluctuating water tables have on area residents?
- How can development around lakes be carefully managed to ensure lasting resource quality? Should conservancy zoning be considered on some of these lakes?
- Can the community impose a severance tax per yard of materials mined to cover issues relating to non-metallic mineral extraction operational and reclamation concerns?
- How can conflicts with non-metallic mineral operations be minimized?
- There is a perception that non-metallic mining operations are being assessed as agricultural land. To what extent can the Town optimize its tax base while providing accurate information regarding tax assessment on lands within Buena Vista?

### **Section 5.7 Natural Resources Goals, Objectives and Policies**

#### A. Goals

1. Manage, preserve and protect natural resources throughout the Town.

#### B. Objectives

1. Educate citizens about non-metallic mining operations.
2. Utilize Agricultural practices that are environmentally sensitive and protect air, soil, water and wildlife resources.
3. Development takes into consideration the protection of our natural resources.
4. Local units of government work together to define and develop appropriate public access to natural resources.
5. Develop an ongoing educational program for municipal boards and the public related to natural resources issues.
6. Develop partnership efforts that result in the preservation and restoration of natural resources.
7. Recreational opportunities on public land are managed to ensure their lasting presence.
8. Retain the Town's tax base; however, acknowledge that prairie chicken management is a continuing goal of the DNR in the Buena Vista area.

### C. Policies

1. Implement Conservancy Zoning to protect natural resources, such as near water bodies and other sensitive areas.
2. Protect the quality of the groundwater aquifer which supplies drinking water to the Town and surrounding area.
3. Continued cooperation by the Town government and residents with other units of government and the university system to take all actions feasible to minimize groundwater contamination.
4. Plan and regulate the location and density of residential and non-residential uses in a fashion necessary to avoid groundwater degradation from septic systems.
5. Protect wetland zones, prairie chicken lands, and other important wildlife habitat areas.
6. Protect the area's scenic beauty, including the avoidance of unnecessary signs, billboards, and structural blight.
7. Work with non-metallic mineral operators to help minimize conflicts with surrounding residents.

### **Section 5.8 Cultural Resources**

How can you know where you're going if you don't know where you've been? Cultural and historic resources often help link the past with the present and can give a community a sense of place or identity. These resources can include historic buildings and structures along with ancient and archeological sites.

Burial sites are one example of a resource that can add to a community's sense of history as well as provide a great deal of genealogical information. Formally catalogued burial sites are protected from disturbance in Wisconsin and are given tax treatment equal to that of operating cemeteries.

Information regarding cultural and historic resources in the Town is constrained by limited financial and human resources. This section will provide goals and policies that promote the effective management of historic and cultural resources.

#### A. Cultural and Historic Resources Inventory

A wide range of historic properties have been documented that help create Wisconsin's distinct cultural landscape. Descriptions of existing locations are identified on the list of historic places by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Keep in mind many of the properties included in this inventory are privately owned and not necessarily open to the public. At this time, there are 5 listings in Buena Vista, with more notable sites including:

- A brick sided, Colonial Revival style one to six room school, located at the junction of Weid Road and State Highway 54 East. The current name is the John Weid Property.
- A clapboard sided, Gothic Revival style church, built in 1880 and located at 6799 State Highway 54 East.

Another source of information comes from the National and State Register of Historic Places. There are currently fourteen sites listed throughout Portage County; none, however, are located in the Town of Buena Vista.

Other sources of identifying cultural and historic sites can come from the residents that live in the area. The following cultural or historical sites were identified through the planning process include:

- Prairie Chicken land - There are currently 2,647 acres of Prairie Chicken land in the Township, making up 6.7% of Town. See the Wildlife Habitat section in the Natural Resources portion of this chapter.
- Moore Barn – This former stagecoach stop is located at the intersection of County Rd BB and STH 54. It is currently used as a tavern.
- Ma Feltz – This former grocery store is located at the intersection of STH 54 and County Highway J. Although the building still stands, the store is no longer in operation. A residence is also located on this site.
- Polly School – This one-room school house is located on County Highway K. It is currently vacant.
- Keene Bar – This former tavern, mentioned in the Issues and Opportunities Element, is situated near the intersection of County Roads BB and JJ and is used as a residence.

#### B. Cultural Resource Programs

At the state level, the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board (WHRAB) works in association with the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Board's activity falls primarily into three areas:

- Provides guidance and assistance to archives and records management programs in Wisconsin
- Promotes the value of historical records as keys to our cultural heritage and works through partnerships with statewide organizations whose purpose and goals support that end
- Brings federal grant funds to Wisconsin for improving access and preservation of historical records.

### **Section 5.9 Cultural Resource Issues**

There were no issues identified through the planning process relating to cultural or historic resources in the Town.

### **Section 5.10 Cultural Resource Goals, Objectives and Policies**

#### A. Goals

1. Encourage the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the Town of Buena Vista.

#### B. Objectives

1. Encourage Town residents to identify cultural and historic sites in the Town.
2. Work with the Portage County Historical Society to help fund the preservation of buildings identified as having cultural or historic significance.