

Water Planning

Recommendation #1: Create a model Water Management Plan for incorporation into the local comprehensive plans

(To include, but not limited to the following items: management of storm water runoff, watershed, surface water quality, streams (including restoration), shore land, fish and wildlife habitat, ground water, water level, flood plains, and wetlands. Wellhead protection, and aquatic vegetation preservation, water quality monitoring and assessment, erosion and sedimentation control, exotic species control, precipitation monitoring and global warming, education and public outreach, etc.)

- 1) Benefits to the region if implemented:
 - a. To local units of government: Create a consistent model for each entity or governmental body to implement and draft ordinances for enforcement.
 - b. To community at-large: Provide a comprehensive document for updating the comprehensive plan with the ultimate goal of protecting our natural resources. This process would ensure that all aspects are reviewed when updating the plan and much of the work would be completed for the local communities, which would result in a substantial time and money savings to update their plan.
 - c. To business: The draw of our natural resources is retained, which results in maintaining the economic benefit for this area.

- 2) Consequences to the region if not implemented
 - a. To local units of government: There is a continued lack of continuity among governing agencies regarding protection of water resources. Plans will continue to be inadequate from a natural resource perspective. This will result in creation and enforcement of inappropriate rules.
 - b. To community at-large: There is a potential for degradation of our water resources from the omission of some of the key issues that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan.
 - c. To business: If our water resources degrade, the draw to the area will be lost which results in the loss of economic potential.

- 3) Ideas for incentives to encourage implementation
 - a. Regional planning can provide economies of scale, which will save local agencies time and money. Implementation will retain the draw and attractiveness of the area, which provides the economic vitality for the area. Continuity between policies can provide less confusion for development across political boundaries.

- 4) Steps to implementation:
 - a. Create the comprehensive model including a checklist for the items to be included in the plan for water resource protection. All of the resources utilized to create the model should be available or embedded in the guidance document for reference for the local entities. This model needs to be promoted to the local governing bodies for encouragement of implementation as an update to their local comprehensive plans.

Complete a follow up visit to ensure there are no questions and verify the status of the comprehensive plan updates.

- 5) Timeline: The model could be created within 6-8 months; the promotion and implementation of the model would be estimated at 12 months.

Recommendation #1A: Local ordinances incorporate the key elements from the revised comprehensive plans (based on the model water management plan) and should be consistent to simplify and streamline the development process and ease enforcement across government boundaries.

- 1) Benefits to the region if implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Consistency of County/City/Township rules would improve understanding by the general public.
 - b. To community at-large: consistent rules would provide for equal treatment to all thereby sending a consistent message to all citizens. The community at large may provide influence in the policing of the regulations.
 - c. To business: developers would know what to expect no matter where they build in the region. Common rules create a level playing field across political boundaries.
- 2) Consequences to the region if not implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Higher costs to development and the loss of staff time as a result of implementing unique performance standards. (When there are inconsistent rules, there is potential for economic growth to move to other communities.)
 - b. To community at-large: No consistency from area to area provides a sense of unequal treatment across governmental boundaries. “Look what he’s doing on his lot!”
 - c. To business: inconsistent regulations create confusion and result in lost time and revenue associated with development. With consistent rules, businesses can develop where they would like versus where regulations would be less of a burden.
- 3) Ideas for incentives to encourage implementation
 - a. “Not reinventing the wheel”, a model that has continuity among communities and is something solid and comprehensive. A water based economy such as ours remains healthy as long as our water resources are protected. People come here because it is the “Lakes” Area. In addition, less government staff time will be required as rules will be consistent and more readily enforceable.
- 4) Steps to implementation:
 - a. These performance standards need to be promoted to the local governing bodies as an update to their ordinances. Counties will need to take the lead in implementing these standards and cities will have a short time to follow with the same or more restrictive rules.

- 5) Timeline: After the adoption of the updated comprehensive plans the performance standards could be adopted within 18 months.

Recommendation #2: Provide education to local governing bodies to illustrate how low impact storm water design can be an asset.

- 1) Benefits to the region if implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Developments designed to retain storm water runoff on site will likely decrease the need for investments in storm sewer infrastructure and improve water quality.
 - b. To community at-large: Water quality will be maintained, lower infrastructure installation and maintenance costs, thus maintaining the local tax rates.
 - c. To business: Cleaner lakes in the “Lakes” area’ will retain the draw for vacationers and people who desire to move to the area, which in turn maintains the local economy - “If we keep it clean – they will come!”
- 2) Consequences to the region if not implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Increased need and cost for storm sewer infrastructure and storm water treatment plants. Through the implementation of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Program (MS4’s), local entities will be regulated further without proactive storm water planning.
 - b. To community at-large: More storm water runoff from neighboring lots, potentially degrading water quality and creating a higher potential for erosion.
 - c. To business: With degradation of water quality, there would be less incentive for businesses and people to relocate here.
- 3) Steps to implementation:
 - a. Create marketing materials for promotion of low impact storm water design and development. Outline the many benefits to municipalities that implement proper storm water management planning. Work with municipalities to develop incentives for implementing low impact storm water design by providing them information on cost/benefit ratios.
- 4) Timeline: 12 months.

Recommendation #4: Create a Regional GIS Database

Enhance local Geographical Information System (GIS) databases by providing additional layers for the region. This data will be used for generating future land use maps through the analysis of the geographic features throughout the region.

- 1) Benefits to the region if implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Assists local land use planning by knowing where and where not to develop.
 - b. To community at-large: Protects the area’s natural resources and encourages wise land use planning. Local communities will save money

through economies of scale and have the potential to acquire this information where not already available.

- c. To business: Provide a logical progression of development based on all geographical features. This progression would allow for better business planning and would sustain economic growth.
- 2) Consequences to the region if not implemented
 - a. To local units of government: Inappropriate land uses could occur in sensitive geographic locations if this data is not utilized.
 - b. To community at-large: Inappropriate land planning could result in degradation of resources and costs associated to redevelopment – “Do it right the first time”.
 - c. To business: With the lack of planning the business community would have higher burden of providing geographic information to support the proposed developments.
 - 3) Ideas for incentives to encourage implementation
 - a. The incorporation of this data into the land use planning process will create a defensible comprehensive land use plan throughout the region.
 - 4) Steps to implementation:
 - a. Crow Wing County and Cass County would take responsibility for development of a central database that can be utilized by local municipalities for land use planning. Municipalities will need to share information with counties as part of the project to create the database.
 - 5) Timeline: Approximately 6 to 8 months to complete.