

**Meeting Minutes:  
Door County “Smart Growth” Plan  
Agricultural & Natural Resources Work Group – 2nd Meeting  
March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**1. Open meeting/introductions.**

The second meeting of the Agricultural & Natural Resources Work Group was held in the Sturgeon Bay Library, Jane Greene Room, 107 S. 4th Avenue, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, on Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The meeting started at 8:07 a.m.

**Present:**

Last Name	First Name	Agency
Grimm	Mike	The Nature Conservancy
Guillette	Gale	Union, Town Of
Heimbecher	Mark	Clay Banks, Town Of
Konkol	Dale	Door County, Soil & Water
Leonard	Steve	The Ridges Sanctuary
Miller	Annie	Liberty Grove, Town Of
Paitrick	Mary	Door County Economic Development Corporation
Plzak	Chris	WDNR
Schmiling	William	Von Stiehl Winery
Seaquist	Jim	Seaquist Orchards
Skadden	Nancy	Stewardship Council
Volenberg	Dean	UW-Extension
Weidman	Dick	UW Peninsular Agricultural Research Station

**Also present:**

Mariah Goode, Door County Planning  
Becky Kerwin, Door County Planning

**2. Review previous meeting minutes.**

The minutes were accepted with no revisions.

**3. Review/discuss visioning work completed to date.**

Prior to the second meeting, the work group was to have reviewed the county visioning summary documents including the General Issues and Opportunities, the draft Vision Statement, and the County Visioning Summary – Parts A & B. The readings for the second work group are posted to the website located at [http://map.co.door.wi.us/planning/Comp-Plan/work-group\\_reading.htm](http://map.co.door.wi.us/planning/Comp-Plan/work-group_reading.htm). Preservation of agriculture and natural resources ranked highly at all four visioning sessions.

**4. Visioning exercises re: work group topic area(s).**

Goode explained that at this meeting the group would discuss the four questions listed below. She explained that an issue is a weakness that is internal to the county or it can be an external threat originating from outside the county. An opportunity is a strength that is internal to the county or it can be an external trend that could be capitalized upon within the county.

- What words or phrases best capture your preferred future vision for the county with regard to this work group’s designated topics?

- Within the context of your preferred future vision for the county, what are the key issues we currently face with regard to this work group’s designated topics?
- Again, within the context of your preferred future vision, what opportunities are available to or should be pursued for the county?
- What strategies or action items might be employed to address those issues or take advantage of those opportunities?

**What words or phrases best capture your preferred future vision for the county with regard to agricultural and natural resources?**

- More interconnection between natural resources and agriculture:
  - Treat/view as similar, intertwined (physically and in terms of issues confronting)
  - Preservation groups working together
  - Subject to similar preservation policies and goals
- Agricultural land we have now – and the community it creates – maintained/preserved
- Large, contiguous blocks of critical agricultural and natural resource land are preserved
  - Creation of and management of large blocks of open space
  - Large, contiguous blocks of forest land maintained and preserved
- Owners are encouraged to properly manage forested lands
  - Forest lands are renewable resource available to the county for economic and environmental benefit
  - Managed forests provide better habitat for wildlife
- Economic incentives should exist that encourage farming and forestry
- Environmental/habitat corridors are preserved/managed properly
- Farm support businesses (implement sales and service, crop/product processing, etc.) exist to serve local farmers and foresters
- Our economy (local, regional, state-level) needs to support farming here, for human and environmental health reasons, and for economic reasons
  - Need incentives to farm, manage forests, buy locally
  - Real potential for money to be made
- Bringing together of farmers and neighbors to work out environmental issues created by farming operations (county-level education and cooperation effort similar to Dairy Gateway Project)
- Preservation of Lake Michigan and Green Bay – important to the county and to the state for health, economic, and environmental reasons
  - Great Lakes Compact in place, signed in Wisconsin
- Clustered housing
  - More shared wells and septic systems would help water quality problems
  - Allows farmland/forest land to be maintained in larger blocks
- Encourage but don’t force agricultural/open land to remain
- Farms with economic activity/viability – value-added processing and sales on-site

**Within the context of your preferred future vision for the county, what are the key issues we currently face with regard to agricultural and natural resources?**

- Southern Door, due to highway 57 expansion:
  - Potential for sprawl from Green Bay along shoreline
  - Potential for heavy development
  - Potential loss of more agricultural land
- 20-acre zoning promotes large “estate” land ownership, fragments agricultural lands
- Forest lands are being partitioned and developed, too
  - Large chunks of forest in northern Door converting to residential
  - Lots created and sold are often not maintained with sound forestry practices
    - Forest management perceived as a “dirty word”
- Zoning ordinance regulations re: clear-cutting: 1) do they really prevent clear-cutting? 2) do they work with DNR/managed forest regulations?

- Financial issues causing people, especially farmers, to sell
  - Forest land is now taxed as recreational land, if not enrolled in Managed Forest Law program
- Dropping enrollment in Managed Forest Law program
  - Managed Forest Law program not as good a deal for property owners as it used to be – not much, if any, financial incentive to enroll or remain enrolled
  - Until a few years ago, Door County had roughly 20,000 acres enrolled in the MFL program(s) for roughly 20 years
    - Decreasing now – more land is being withdrawn than enrolled annually
    - People are pulling out of contracts before they are up – financial “penalty” to do so is nothing to potential developer
- Forestry uses need to be seen as “agricultural” (zoning, tax credit purposes, etc.), such as syrup production
- Some economic issues regarding agricultural land have to be dealt with at the state/federal level
- Converting land back to agriculture – what is allowed?
- People move into an agricultural area, and then complain about agricultural practices, especially with regard to manure and raising of animals
  - Need to educate people about where and how food is produced
- Siting regulations
  - State rules regarding large animal unit operations
  - Orchards (use of pesticides, etc.) – will or should siting be regulated?
- Growth/size of farms – large farm operations today with unsound practices can impact 1,000+ acres, lots of people
- People are pointing fingers at agricultural uses due to increasing awareness of groundwater issues, blaming farmers for their problems
- Town plan implementation in the county – many towns are looking at (or have established) larger parcel sizes in interior areas and are also decreasing density for “downtown” areas
- Conservation subdivisions
  - May not sell well to buyers
  - Only 1-2 have been done in county
  - Current regulations (public hearing) inhibit developers – re-do county regulations
  - Create incentives to use, or mandate their use in some areas?
  - Can use shared wells and septic, helping protect water quality
- Large lot size requirements are gobbling up more agricultural land and open space than previous small lot size standards
  - Development doesn’t look good, either – long driveways, utility poles and lines, scattered homes
  - Lots turn into weed patches, possibly contributing to invasives problem
  - Property owners with 10 – 20 acres sometimes look for farmers to rent “excess” land to, who usually grow hay. Property owner gets lower taxes but no one else (including the farmer) really benefits.
- Need 100+ acre blocks to preserve real beauty of open space
- Land is retirement income for many
- Seems like we don’t want farmers to be profitable, although we say we want local products:
  - Agricultural operations limited in what they can sell, when, where, and how they can advertise on-site
  - Processing facilities (like certified kitchens) not allowed on most agriculturally zoned properties, and are difficult to establish due to state regulations
    - If allowed, would require employees (job creation), but there’s no affordable housing available
- Bigger grocery stores don’t want to deal with the small farmer/producer; they want to receive large truck loads of “perfect”-looking product
  - Local economy needs to demand: “We want this here” in order for stores to carry local produce
- Consolidation of farms
  - Due to increasing costs, pressures
  - Manure and pesticide use increases

- Younger generation doesn't want to take over
- DATCP and DNR – limited staff, funds to help ensure viability of agriculture and protection of natural resources from agriculture
- Large volumes of manure spread over land impacts the groundwater; how much so is partially due to what happens with the weather
- Nutrient management plans are not being followed by some farmers
  - Factors: time/effort to do so, cost to do so, timing issues due to weather dictating farmer's schedule; they aren't necessarily ignoring plans because they want to purposefully engage in "bad" practices
  - State has put a lot of resources into the program but have not gotten much in return
  - DNR management and enforcement is lacking
- Dairying decreasing dramatically in northern Door – number of farms and number of animals
- Risks for farming far too big, particularly for the small farmer
  - 1 acre of corn costs \$500 dollars to plant (this year) and returns \$600 - \$650 in return
  - Weather risks – last year's lack of rain, for example
- Upland/hardwood forest particularly threatened
- City/county plan coordination, especially with regard to well re-charge areas for the city's wells
  - Need to coordinate with Sevastopol, too – some re-charge areas slated for commercial development
- Improper siting, installation, maintenance of sewage/private septic systems are endangering groundwater quality

**Again, within the context of your preferred future vision, what opportunities are available to or should be pursued for the county?**

- State Working Lands Initiative – maybe results/implementation will help
- Dairy Gateway Project – could follow model to establish something similar in Door County
  - One-year state-level project involving Door, Manitowoc, Kewaunee Counties (seemed to work, but funding was cut off)
  - Brought together farmers and neighbors to help work out problems
- Great Lakes Compact may help protect Lake Michigan
- Rising fuel costs may have positive impact on sales of locally produced food; food items in a typical grocery store travels an average of 1,500 miles
- Reduce the partitioning of forested land through education
- Groundwater education
- Sustainable agriculture – allow value-added processing on farms
- Better marketing of our farm markets so that producers can produce and sell more consistently (note that high influx of shoppers/increase in demand might be hard for some to handle)
- Local economy/purchasing power can dictate that they want local produce in the stores
- Large seasonal population means growers don't have to ship their product long distances – people are coming here and many will buy local products
- Encourage establishment of local processing plant; could also establish larger Algoma farm market kitchen-type places
- Education and awareness is starting to increase
- 100-mile diet challenge in Door County this year
- Influence the state to shift support to smaller farmers, including marketing local foods (some support now for value-added activities and diversification)
- Are farmers much more "up to speed" with regard to sound practices, due to SWCD programs, etc.? ... getting there? Orchard industry is, for sure.
- Larger farm(er)s might be more responsible regarding the environment, because they are more regulated; also, they are often owned by extended families which have built-in succession
- Southern Door farmland going on the market is mostly being purchased by other farmers
  - Hiring people, keeping open space
  - Many are renting out land to other farmers rather than selling it

## What strategies or action items might be employed to address those issues or take advantage of those opportunities?

- As much as possible, create incentives, not mandates to achieve goals
- Combine/coordinate natural and agricultural preservation efforts
- Zoning ordinance revisions
  - Decrease lot size requirement in agricultural areas
  - Allow value-added options/processing and sales on-site for agricultural uses
  - Make cluster housing option more attractive by increasing density bonuses, etc.
    - Consider 30+ acres as minimum size for “conserved” area
- Great Lakes Compact – endorse, or endorse more strongly
- Tap into growing “buy local” movement
  - Fuel costs may help us
  - Ensure local producers use good practices, if not organic
  - Label local produce in stores as such
  - 100-mile diet challenge in county this year should get a lot of publicity – highlight economic, environmental, and health benefits
- Create programs similar to the Dairy Gateway project that worked on developing relationships between farmers and residents and developing solutions to farming issues in residential areas
- Farmer education/outreach efforts to residents, such as the Seaquist orchard tour for “Orchards” residents in Egg Harbor
  - Encourage communication rather than adversarial reaction/situation
- Have to encourage and allow value-added processing and sales on agricultural premises (wineries, canning, drying, etc.) – will help agriculture make money and enhance availability of local products, too
- Promotion of the Sustain Door 100-mile diet - get residents signed up for this program to encourage buying food locally.
- Promote good/sustainable forestry management:
  - There are many foresters in the county available to help answer questions – people don’t know the staff/programs are here
    - DNR could do more outreach to residents (possibly tag onto other on-going efforts, such as Thursday night Ridges programs in summer)
  - Education – good management by private citizens (individual owners) would suffice for preservation purposes
- Provide more invasive species education
- Preservation groups cannot afford to buy all the land that should be preserved – need instead to teach landowners how to take care of their land
- Planning Department to work on coordination of projects with outside agencies
- County-level coordination of agricultural and nature resource groups, agencies, efforts, education, preservation with landowners; agencies already do outreach to one another
- We need to come up with ways to reach absentee landowners regarding natural resource protection measures
- Use DCPD/UWEX educational/discussion meetings for local officials as one forum for education, outreach efforts
- We need “teeth” in our ordinances with regard to fragile areas – don’t allow development there.
- Look at soil limitations, geology of property when deciding what development types should be allowed
- Karst features – use existing inventory to identify where development should(n’t) happen
- Develop ways to better market the farm markets
- Research and consider mechanisms to protect environmental corridors
- City’s comprehensive plan should address groundwater recharge areas outside of the city.
- Opportunity for the City’s comprehensive plan to address groundwater recharge areas outside of the city

- Highlighting environmental corridors – mechanism to protect? Need to research how other areas have translated identification of those corridors into protection of them.
- The Ridges Sanctuary is doing a lot of education and outreach – coordinate efforts with them and/or see if we can learn from their activities

**5. Set next meeting date.**

**8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, April 2nd, 2008**

Location: Sturgeon Bay Library Jane Greene Room

**6. Adjourn.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

*Minutes transcribed by Becky Kerwin and Mariah Goode, Door County Planning*