

CHAPTER 3: POLICY STATEMENT

The farmland preservation plan is a significant policy for the Marathon County Board of Supervisors. It defines the importance of agriculture in the region relative to land use, culture, resource management, and economic contributions. As policy, the plan identifies the types of services, priorities of services, and costs of services that Marathon County will initiate to preserve farmland and its contributions to the community.

The leadership by the Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) provided a community vision for agriculture as well as specific implementation strategies to guide regulations (ordinances), conservation programming, education, and landowner assistance.

The farmland preservation plan serves to advance the goals and objectives of the *Marathon County Strategic Plan 2012-2017*. Specific farmland preservation policy outcomes and performance indicators are established to monitor the effectiveness of programming and the efficiency of financial allocations for the implementation of the strategic plan.

Marathon County Strategic Plan goals addressed by the Farmland Preservation Plan

- Provide leadership for greater cooperation and collaboration among state, regional and local public and private entities.
 - Develop templates, including criteria, to be used in establishing multi-jurisdictional public and private initiatives.

- Foster and when appropriate provide services which facilitate economic development and result in the creation private sector jobs.
 - Clarify and communicate Marathon County's role in economic development.
 - Protect agricultural land by fostering the development of Agricultural Enterprise Areas.
 - Develop infrastructure policies that reflect the need of agriculture and industry.
 - Provide leadership for the use of technological innovations to assist enterprises in the management and reuse of waste materials.

- Provide leadership and services which focus on improving land use and resource planning to assure the orderly development of retail and manufacturing business, agriculture/agribusiness and residential growth while retaining the rural character of Marathon County.
 - Develop comprehensive planning and zoning ordinances that provide towns with value, so that 100% request participation in county zoning and planning.
 - Improve water quality and residential, commercial, and industrial waste management resulting in 100% of households, businesses, and industrial sites meeting water quality standards.
 - Inventory water resources, determine where we have adequate supplies, and encourage development in those areas. Develop an educational program on the quantity and quality of water supplies for state and local policy makers.

- Increase county government accountability by establishing measurable performance expectations for county programs and services. Monitor performance consistent with outcome expectations.
 - Continue development and refinement of the County's service/program monitoring and ranking system.
- Expand communication with Marathon County residents and provide educational opportunities which improve the publics' understanding of the services provided and the issues confronting Marathon County government.
 - Develop a system which allows the county government to communicate with every Marathon County household and business.

Farmland preservation policy includes four components:

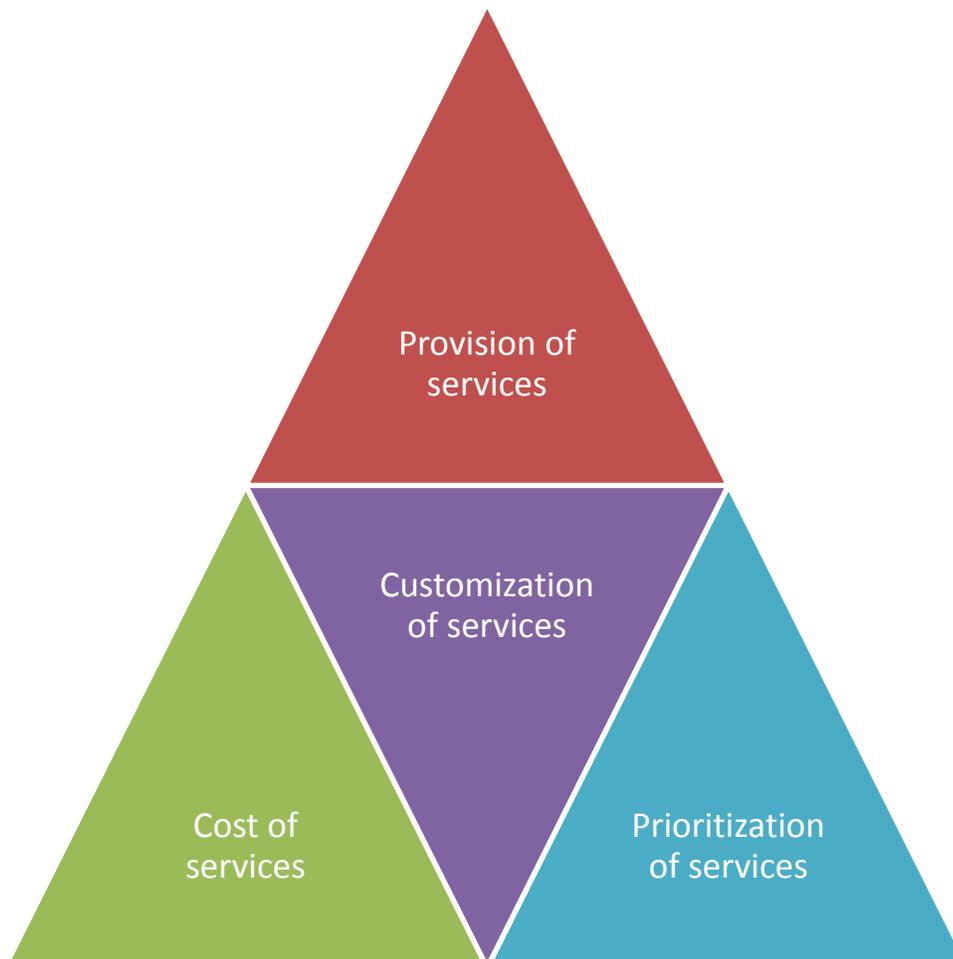


Figure 2. Building Blocks of Policy

Provision of services: Answers the question “What services do we provide?”

Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) established policy determining the type of services Marathon County will provide for economic development and land use support to communities and landowners to preserve farmland. Specifically, Marathon County will actively assist towns in development of Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) petitions and promote zoning of farmland preservation districts to maximize opportunities. The County will provide comprehensive planning, conservation compliance, agreement administration, education, economic development and zoning assistance to local communities.

Marathon County will provide the following specific service activities:

1. Education:
 - Actively engage 2-3 towns/year and landowners to promote Farmland Preservation Zoning and AEA development.
 - Develop informational newsletter to distribute quarterly to town officials and eligible landowners.
2. Comprehensive Planning:
 - Provide AEA petition support to local towns and landowners.
 - Provide standardized mapping, planning and zoning information to towns.
 - Provide data and organizational support to towns to update Comprehensive Plans.
3. Zoning:
 - Promote 2 new towns/year to adopt County zoning and farmland preservation districts:
 - In 2014, assist towns with local zoning ordinances to integrate farmland preservation district.
 - In 2014, update County zoning code as required by the State within one year of acceptance of the Farmland Preservation Plan.
 - After 2014, provide administration of zoning code.
4. Implementation:
 - Provide on farm conservation status reviews (25% status reviews of participating farmers).
 - Provide best management practices (BMP) monitoring and conservation planning assistance.
 - Offer landowner nutrient plan writing assistance to 25 farmers per year.
5. Monitoring and communication:
 - Provide landowners with results of participation compliance status reviews.
 - Provide committees and public with program performance indicator results.

Costs of Services: Answers the question “How much will it cost to provide services?”

The staff hours and cost of the identified services based on 30-35% participation levels by landowners is identified in Figure 3 and Figure 4, respectively.

Figure 3. CPZ staffing relative to service activity

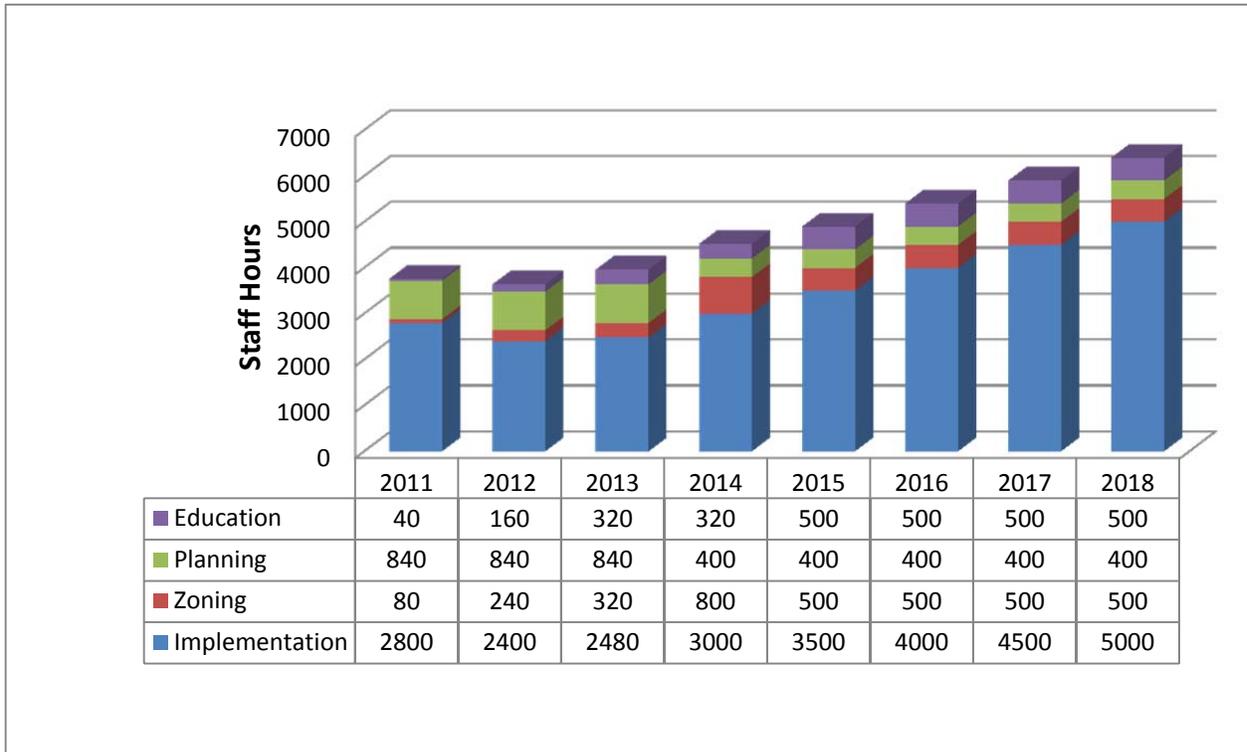


Figure 4. Estimated cost of services

Inputs	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Staff Cost	\$157,920	\$152,880	\$166,320	\$189,840	\$205,800	\$226,800	\$247,800	\$268,800
County Investment	\$64,420	\$59,880	\$73,320	\$96,340	\$112,000	\$132,800	\$153,500	\$174,100
DATCP Investment	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
User Fees	\$8,500	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,500	\$8,800	\$9,000	\$9,300	\$9,700

DATCP: Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Prioritization of Services: Answers the question of “Where should we direct services?”

Priorities for services can be defined by availability of resources and program criteria. The criteria developed by the Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) will guide department staff and partners in providing service. Priority criteria are presented in 5 main categories:

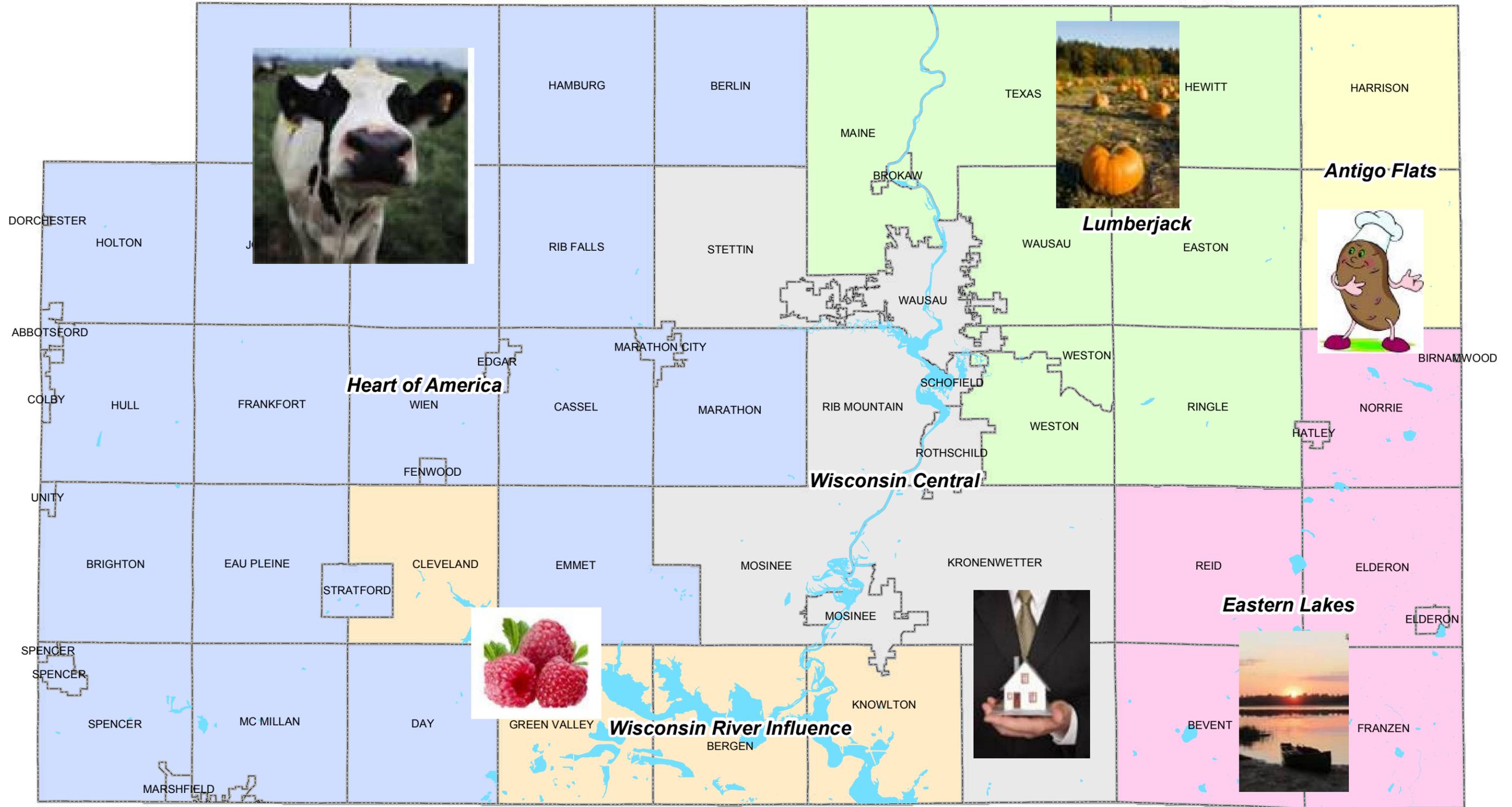
1. Human and housing density factors: manage land use conflicts and minimize inefficient extension and cost of public services (low household density, unplatted lands)
2. Property ownership: focus on privately owned productive agricultural and forest lands
3. Land use factors: focus on land currently in agricultural production
4. Program Involvement: focus on landowners, producers and communities actively engaged in farmland preservation and landuse planning programs (zoning and AEA's)
5. Resources/physical environment: focus on resource concerns identified in Land and Water Resource Management Plan

Customization of Services: Answers the question “How do we provide services that best meet the specific needs of the region?”

Marathon agriculture is diverse and extends over a large geographical region of nearly 1 million acres. During the development of the farmland preservation plan and through many citizen meetings, Marathon County recognized that a one size fits all strategy of policy would not be effective nor would it best utilize the limited resources available to serve the residents.

Marathon County has identified six unique regions that vary in demographics, land use, soils, and patterns of agriculture to best understand unique challenges and opportunities. Programs will be tailored to best serve each region's needs. (Map 1)

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM REGIONS - MARATHON COUNTY WI



Map Developed by Marathon County
Conservation, Planning and Zoning GIS



Map Print Date: 09/23/2013

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	Antigo Flats
	Eastern Lakes
	Heart of America
	Lumberjack
	Wisconsin Central
	Wisconsin River Influence
	Municipal Boundary

A short summary of the regions follows. An expanded report is included as Appendix C.

Antigo Flats

Agricultural vision: The Antigo Flats will be a nationally and internationally recognized leader in seed potato production.

The Antigo Flats region includes the towns of Harrison and Plover. The area is characterized by large tracts of publicly owned land and outdoor recreation areas (Bitzke Bird Walk, Dells of the Eau Claire, Ice Age Trail, and Plover River state fishery). Private lands are mixed agriculture and forest lands with scattered large lot residential development.

The agriculture industry in the Antigo Flats region is primarily seed potato and vegetable crops. Farms are generational and there are several Century Farms in the region.

Eight percent (8%) of the residents in the region identify themselves as working in the agricultural industry, second highest only to Heart of America. Antigo Flats is the only region in the county to see a decline in population (-4%). Housing growth is steady with county-wide housing growth at 15%.



Housing density is the lowest in the county (average of 5 homes/square mile) and on large lots (average 2.5 acres). The actual housing density is even lower given the large publicly owned land base. Residents in the area primarily go to school, work, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services from Antigo, in Langlade County. Residents do not feel connected with their county of residence.

The area is challenged with a lack of connection with Marathon County government. This can lead to both perceived and actual lack of county services.

Heart of America

Agricultural vision: Heart of America will be a leading dairy producing region in the state which supports family farms. Best management practices (BMP) will be environmentally sound and sustainable to protect farmland and natural resources. Urban and rural interests will be balanced and coordinated to ensure efficient delivery of services and maximum protection of the farmland resource.

The Heart of America region is named after the Heart of America's Dairyland Agricultural Enterprise Area in eastern Clark and western Marathon counties. The region includes the towns of Bern, Halsey, Hamburg, Berlin, Holton, Johnson, Rietbrock, Rib Falls, Hull, Frankfort, Wien, Cassel, Marathon, Brighton, Eau Pleine, Emmet, Spencer, McMillan, and Day; the villages of Dorchester, Unity, Spencer, Stratford, Fenwood, Edgar, Marathon City, and Athens; and the cities of Marshfield, Abbotsford, and Colby. Pre-settlement, the area was dominated by wetlands, which were drained to make way for agriculture. The region is characterized by a flat to gently rolling landscape, with large tracts of contiguous farmland, and forest in the wetter areas and along streams.



The agriculture industry is mostly dairy, associated crops, and agribusinesses that provide agricultural services and products. Nine percent (9%) of the residents identify themselves as working in the agricultural industry, compared to 3% county-wide. The population and housing growth in the Heart of America is moderate, similar to that of the county-wide growth. Homes in the area are scattered (about 16 homes/square mile) and on large lots (average 2.7 acres).

Residents in the area have a strong sense of community. Residents primarily live, work, attend school, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services in the small villages and cities in the region.

The area is challenged with balancing the protection of the transportation infrastructure with the needs of the agriculture industry, conflicts in the urban and rural transitional areas around villages and cities, limited groundwater quantity, and agricultural runoff. The long-term State Highway 29 corridor conversion to limited access poses additional challenges to farmers who farm on both sides of the highway.

Wisconsin River Influence

Agricultural vision: The Wisconsin River Influence region will be a balanced residential and agricultural community. Agricultural policies and programs will support agriculture that is diverse in size, ownership, and commodity produced. Residential and agricultural land practices will protect the resources of the region, especially the water resources that contribute to the quality of life, economy, and character of the region.

The Wisconsin River Influence region includes the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, Lake DuBay, Wisconsin River, Mead Wildlife Area, and the surrounding area in the towns of Cleveland, Green Valley, Bergen, and Knowlton. The region is characterized by a surface water features, forest, and farmland.

The agriculture industry is varied and includes berries, ginseng, Christmas trees, apple orchards, grain, dairy, and other livestock. While employment industry in the region is varied, the region has the highest percent of residents in management, business, science, and arts occupations (37% compared to 30% county-wide). Household income and equalized value per capita is the highest in this region than any other region in the county. The population growth in the area is tied with the

Lumberjack region at 15% for the highest growth in the county and housing growth is 24%, second to the Lumberjack region. While the housing density is relatively low overall (13 homes/square mile), homes are somewhat clustered. This discrepancy is due to the large acreage in the



region that is water. Residential lots are smaller than county-wide (average 1.6 acres), likely due to smaller water frontage lots decreasing the overall lot size in the region. Residents in this region primarily work and purchase goods and services outside the region, primarily in Stevens Point and Wausau.

The area's biggest challenge is surface water quality issues.

Wisconsin Central

Agricultural vision: Wisconsin Central will have a strong agricultural economy through technological advances and a community that is supportive of local agriculture. Policies and programs will promote and be supportive of locally produced goods and services.

Wisconsin Central region includes the cities of Wausau, Schofield, and Mosinee; the Villages of Rothschild and Kronenwetter; and the towns of Stettin, Rib Mountain, Mosinee, and Guenther. The area is the urban center of the county and serves as the employment, higher education, goods and services provider, and social recreation center of the county. Agricultural lands in the Wisconsin Central region are historically under the most non-agricultural development pressure in the county due to the availability of urban amenities. With the downturn in the economy and resulting decreased housing construction, this development pressure has lessened in recent years. However, it is anticipated to return to pre-recession levels in the future.

The agriculture industry in the Wisconsin Central region includes greenhouses, grain, ginseng, dairy, and agribusinesses that provide agricultural services and products. Wisconsin Central serves as a regional marketplace for producers to sell goods at farmers markets and local businesses.

Only 1% of the residents identify as working in the agricultural industry, compared to 3% county-wide. The population and housing growth in Wisconsin Central is the low (4% and 11% compared to 7% and 15% county-wide). Homes in the area are clustered (about 127 homes/square mile) and on small lots (average 1.2 acres), although the median lot size is much smaller because most of the housing is on smaller lots in the urbanized area. Residents in the area primarily live, work, attend school, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services within the region.



The area is challenged with loss of industry and the transition of the rural fringe areas and the more urban area that is served by public utilities.

Lumberjack

Agricultural vision: The Lumberjack region will continue to be a producer of forest products and outdoor recreational activities. The region will be a balanced mix of residential and agricultural land uses with a diverse population.

The Lumberjack region includes the towns of Maine, Texas, Hewitt, Easton, Wausau, Weston, Ringle, and the village of Weston. The area is characterized by large tracts of forested lands with scattered smaller agricultural tracts, mixed with large lot residential development.

The agriculture industry in the Lumberjack region is smaller scale grain, beef, and “lifestyle farms”. Lifestyle farming is characterized by family operations of small agri-tourism and activity farming such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and hayrides, etc.



Only 2% of the residents in the region identify as working in the agricultural industry, second lowest only to Wisconsin Central. The population and housing growth in Lumberjack region is the highest in the county (15%, 26% compared to 7% and 15% county-wide). It is thought that the population growth is partly due to the relocation of Wausau East High School and the newer elementary schools in the region. Housing density is the second highest (about 35 homes/square mile) and

on large lots (average 2.8 acres, largest in the county). Residents in the area primarily work, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services in the Wisconsin Central region.

The area is challenged with loss of agricultural land to new, large lot residential development and balancing the demand for high level, cost effective public services with available resources.

Eastern Lakes

Agricultural vision: The Eastern Lakes region will support food production through protecting the agricultural resource base by best management practices, protection of water resources, and maintaining infrastructure capable of supporting the needs of the agricultural industry.

The Eastern Lakes region includes the towns of Norrie, Elderon, Franzen, Reid, and Bevent; and the village of Hatley. The area was glaciated, resulting in a forested landscape with many kettle lakes. The area is characterized by smaller tracts of forested and agricultural lands. Many residences are seasonal lake homes and hunting cabins. Residential development averages 1.8 acres, but lot size is highly variable due to the mix of larger residential area in agricultural areas, smaller residential area in the forested areas, and smallest residential area along lakeshores.



The agriculture industry in the Eastern Lakes region is primarily irrigated crops such as sweet corn and potatoes, with a few dairies.

The Eastern Lakes region had a 5% population growth, second lowest only to Antigo Flats, which also saw a population decline. Housing growth is similar to the county-wide housing growth at 14% (15% county-wide housing growth). Housing density is second lowest in the county (average of 11

homes/square mile) and on lots that are smaller than the county-wide average (1.8 acres in the region, 2.1 acres county-wide).

Employment industry varies in the region; however, 30% of the residents identified manufacturing as their occupation. The region does not have any city or village for goods and services, therefore residents in the region go to school, work, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services from cities and villages outside the region such as Stevens Point and Rosholt in Portage County, Wausau in Marathon County, and Birnamwood and Wittenberg in Shawano County. Because of the scattered service centers, various school districts, and the prevalence of seasonal homes, there is not as strong of a sense of community as in other regions in the county.

The area is challenged with a lower residency rate than other areas of the county due to seasonal lake homes and hunting cottages. This often results in less connection with community and a lower degree of community involvement/planning than in areas with high residency rates.