



# ***Sheboygan County*** ***Planning & Conservation Department***

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Director

Aaron C. Brault

February 26, 2016

The Honorable County Board of Supervisors and  
County Administrator Adam Payne  
508 New York Avenue  
Sheboygan, WI 53081

Dear Supervisors and Mr. Payne:

The year 2015 was successful for the Planning & Conservation Department as it was involved in a number of projects and programs that benefited the County's entire population. We also ended the year with a positive budget variance.

Conservation staff, with our partner, the Nature Conservancy, successfully implemented a number of practices in the ongoing watershed study funded in-part by the Kohler Trust for Preservation. The study's primary goal is to determine the best practices to help reduce phosphorus loading to our waterways. In addition, staff helped protect the County's water resources even further by designing and installing 3 manure storage pits, over 3 acres of buffers, two milkhouse treatment projects, and over 5 acres of grassed waterways.

The federally-funded Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program witnessed implementation of all projects planned in 2015. Nearly \$1 million was invested in the City of Sheboygan. The Taylor Drive project will begin in 2016.

The controversial boat landing and campground fee implemented in 2010 saw a successful fifth complete year in 2015. We were able to utilize those dollars collected to complete much needed maintenance, repair the Gerber Lake launch pad, update the privies at Little Elkhart Lake and Jetzer's Lake, and keep the lights on and toilets cleaned.

The new multi-purpose building at the Marsh Park came closer to becoming a reality. The Friends of the Marsh finalized building plans to develop a solid estimate before fundraising. Near the end of the year, a large donation was secured that will provide over ¼ of the estimated \$2 million project. The group is on pace to have the building be the region's first Platinum Level Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Certified structure. It will certainly be a positive addition to our community and one of a kind, though still cost-effective.

The Department continued to help facilitate economic growth in the community. The \$400,000 brownfield assessment grant helped complete environmental due diligence at two redevelopment projects in downtown Sheboygan. These two completed assessments are being utilized to redevelop areas that are currently tax-exempt properties which will eventually be taxable once the projects are complete.

Lastly, the biggest news in the Department was the completed purchase of the Amsterdam Dunes Wetland Mitigation Bank and Preservation Area property in July.

As with every year, we have, no doubt, faced many challenges and opportunities in the Planning & Conservation Department. Your support and continued dedication to the County helps make all of our successes possible.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Brault', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Aaron Brault, Director

# Sheboygan County Planning and Conservation Department Annual Report 2015

## Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The Planning & Conservation Department is committed to providing sound information and knowledge on environmental issues that affect our community, protecting our County's natural resources, and, first and foremost, working with the public which we serve in a straightforward, honest approach.

## Planning Division Responsibilities

- Administer and enforce the state-mandated *Sheboygan County Sanitary Ordinance*.
- Administer and enforce the state-mandated *Sheboygan County Shoreland & Floodplain Ordinances*.
- Administer and enforce the *Sheboygan County Subdivision Ordinance*.
- Administer and enforce the *Sheboygan County Parks & Recreation Facilities Ordinance*.
- Administer and enforce the County's Sanitary Maintenance program.
- Administer the County's Household Hazardous Waste program.
- Administer the County's Waste Pharmaceutical Collection program.
- Coordinate the implementation of the Federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot program that provides up to \$25 million for the development of a nonmotorized transportation network throughout the County.
- Administer State recreation grant-in-aid funds including the Snowmobile Funds, Fish-And-Game Aids, Stewardship, and other grant programs for which we qualify as they become available.
- Administer programs to comply with the State Farmland Preservation Program.
- Develop and maintain emergency response mapping for emergency responders in the County.
- Administer *Uniform Rural Numbering System Ordinance*, and maintain accurate address mapping throughout the County.
- Maintain, coordinate, and oversee the daily operation and management of County recreational facilities including the Old Plank Road Trail, Interurban Trail, Shoreland 400 Rail Trail, Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park, Gerber Lake Wildlife Area, Amsterdam Dunes, and boat access sites at Gerber Lake, Jetzer's Lake, Crystal Lake, Little Elkhart Lake, and Elkhart Lake.
- Maintain Geographic Information System data for the County including parcels, roads, navigability, hydrology, shoreland and floodplain jurisdictional boundaries, voting wards, school districts, and zoning.
- Administer the recreational fee program.
- Provide planning and mapping assistance to local communities and other County departments.
- Maintain and revise components of the mandated County's comprehensive plan.
- Administer the County's Stewardship grant program.
- Administer the Wisconsin Fund program that provides financial assistance for individuals with limited income to replace failing septic systems.
- Assist in administering the Community Development Block Grant Program for the County.
- Administer the Public Snowmobile Trail Program.
- Administer the US Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grant.

## Conservation Division Responsibilities

- Administer the County's *Water Quality Improvement Program* (buffer strips), providing contracting and installation of vegetated buffer strips on Sheboygan County's waterways for water quality improvement.
- Administer the County's *Land and Water Resource Management Program* providing survey, design, construction and cost-share assistance funds to County landowners to install conservation practices to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.
- Coordinate the County's compliance with mandated State Administrative Code NR-216 Phase II for stormwater management.
- Administer compliance in the Farmland Preservation Program conservation planning to ensure that the 437 participating landowners in Sheboygan County are in compliance with the County's soil erosion standards on approximately 71,000 acres of cropland. In the most recent tax year available, these landowners received a total of \$507,260 in income tax credits (averages \$1,100 in Sheboygan County).

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- Administer and enforce state mandated *County Chapter 75-Erosion Control & Stormwater Management Ordinance* requiring permits for erosion control and stormwater management plans for any land disturbance over one acre in the unincorporated areas of Sheboygan County.
- Administer and enforce state mandated *County Chapter 78-Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Program/Ordinance* by reviewing, approving, and permitting reclamation plans for nonmetallic mines.
- Administer and enforce the state-mandated *County Chapter 77-Animal Waste Management Regulations/Permitting Program* permitting new animal waste storage facilities, feedlots, animal waste facility closures, and any modifications to these facilities to ensure applicable County, State, and Federal standards are followed.
- Coordinate the Tree and Shrub Program, encouraging tree and shrub plantings in the County. Over 57,000 trees and shrubs were sold in 2015, which is about the same amount as the prior year, to 700 landowners. Over one million trees & shrubs have been sold since 1997.
- Review Subdivision Plats for compliance with Sheboygan County's Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- Provide technical service and conservation planning assistance to landowners and units of government.
- Coordinate the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program.
- Provide technical assistance to United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, and the Local Workgroup.
- Assist in coordinating the yearly well water drinking water testing program.
- Serve as the lead investigative unit for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in responding to complaints regarding manure structure failures or manure/bio-solid spreading violations; also, enforce compliance with Nutrient Management Plans.
- Serve as the primary implementation agency to assure compliance with NR-151, WDNR's non-point pollution rule.

### **Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2015**

- The Department continued progress on implementation of the federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program. Funding has been authorized for 33 projects; 30 are complete. One project, located in the City of Sheboygan, was completed in 2015, totaling about \$1 million. A \$6.5 million project, the Program's largest to date, is expected to be started in 2016.
- Issued four erosion control permits per Chapter 75.
- The Department, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy and with funding from the Kohler Trust for Preservation, continued working on a study which compares a control watershed to a test watershed to determine what best management practices (BMPs) have the greatest effect on farm field runoff and the associated water quality, primarily phosphorus. The \$1.6 million partnership is moving into the post-implementation monitoring phase in 2016.
- The Department began the process of developing a stormwater program in order to maintain compliance with NR 216, State statutes governing County-owned stormwater facilities in its urbanized area.
- The Amsterdam Dunes Advisory Committee held several meetings in 2015 to discuss the future of the newly-acquired Amsterdam Dunes property. Restoration planning also began.
- Approved 760 acres for mining between the 15 active permits. As of last year, there were 215 acres being actively mined; the Department anticipates the reclamation of nearly 50 of these acres in 2016.
- Awarded \$112,400 in Stewardship funds for seven projects around the County in 2015.
- The Sheboygan County Pedestrian and Bicycle Comprehensive Plan 2015 was adopted by the County Board.
- The Department continues to work on updating, cross-checking, and applying the City's digital mapping data, primarily the parcel and address data, to County standards. In 2015, 163 split documents, which consist of Certified Survey Maps, parcel divisions, condominiums, and mergers, were mapped by the Department.
- Implemented 8 additional geographical information system apps on the Department website for public use.

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- 180 sanitary permits were issued, a decrease of 2% from 2014. A total of 7,637 sanitary maintenance reports were filed with the Department in 2015.
- Issued five animal waste management permits.
- Planted 230 swamp white oak trees, 180 red osier dogwood shrubs, and 440 tamarack trees at the Abler/Schneiter airport wooded wetland mitigation site.
- Issued 94 shoreland permits and one conditional use permit; this is the same numbers of permits as the prior year. As was observed in previous years, the complexity of the permit issuance process and type and size of the projects continues to grow, increasing the time spent per permit especially considering recent changes to statute at the State.
- The Department reviewed and approved 46 certified survey maps in 2015, the same number as the prior year. Zero new subdivision plats or local plats were approved. The certified survey maps created 87 new lots encompassing 1,190 acres, increases of 4% and 46% over 2015 respectively.
- Assisted in obtaining a combined total of \$18,634 in reimbursement grant money from the State for septic system replacement for families below a certain income threshold.
- Four household hazardous waste collection events were held in 2015, with over 920 participants.
- The County's Water Quality Improvement Program funded four riparian grass buffer projects in 2015, allocating the \$20,000 to renew two expired contracts for 5,110 linear feet (8.5 acres) and to sign two new contracts for 4,500 linear feet (3.7 acres). These segments of streams will now be protected for the next 10-15 years.
- With the support of a stakeholder's group, facilitated the update of the County Subdivision Ordinance.
- The Department continued to assist in implementation of the Community Development Block Grant program; in 2015, four new loans for home rehabilitation were secured through the program.
- As part of the Nonmetallic Mining Program, the Department certified completion of the final reclamation of 40 acres of land at the "Strack Pit" in the Town of Sherman. It also approved the reclamation plan for a new 30 acre site in the Town of Plymouth.
- The Erie Avenue trailhead was rejuvenated in 2015. Overgrown parking lot islands were cleared and mulched, new parking stops were put in place, trees were removed and trimmed, planting areas were cleaned up and re-mulched, and a small wooden bridge was replaced.
- A new approach was put in place at the Gerber Lake Wildlife Area's boat landing to replace the broken pad.
- Bogs were removed from the Sheboygan Marsh three times in 2015, totaling over 100 truckloads of bogs.
- In an attempt to bring attention to the spreading of invasive aquatics, stenciling was performed at each of the boat landings to remind boaters to remove all vegetation and drain any water before leaving the area.
- New partitions were added to the privies located at Jetzer Lake and the south campground area of the Sheboygan Marsh Park.
- In 2015, 3,747 boat launch passes were sold, totaling \$34,308; of this, about 27% was collected from visitors outside of Sheboygan County. About 65% of the total passes sold in 2015 were daily passes, while the remainder was yearly passes.
- Issued 97 new addresses in 2015.
- Through periodic water sampling, continued to analyze the effect on phosphorus & nitrate/nitrite concentration in drainage tile water resulting from the installation of the State's first bioreactor.
- Issued 31 Certificates of Compliance, 1 Notice of Non-Compliance, 11 Schedules of Compliance, and conducted 17 Farmstead Inspections and 115 Status Reviews for the Farmland Preservation Program.
- As required, and with the guidance of a local Citizens Advisory Committee, the Sheboygan County Land and Water Resource Management Plan was updated.
- The Sheboygan County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan was adopted by the County Board.
- The Sheboygan Marsh Park and Campground Master Plan was updated.
- Reviewed and entered into a tracking system 88 Nutrient Management Plans encompassing 52,000 acres.

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## Budget

In **actual** revenues and expenses the Planning & Conservation Department shows a positive variance of approximately \$33,754 for 2015. The positive variance is within 1.2% of **actual** expenses (\$2,827,837) and within 1.25% of **budgeted** expenses (\$2,687,189). **Actual** revenue was \$2,861,591; **budgeted** revenue was \$2,622,860. The Department's budgeted 2015 tax levy was \$1,079,518 which is 3.9% above the 2014 levy.

The 2016 budgeted expenses are \$2,132,094. The budgeted 2016 levy is \$1,049,959, a decrease of \$29,559 or 2.74%.

## Issues and Challenges Ahead

- Increasing complications related to Ordinance regulation. Permit issuance continues to become increasingly difficult, with site configurations that are more challenging, new confusing and inconsistent state statutes and project types that have not been encountered before.
- Continued implementation of the changes to the County Shoreland Ordinance to comply with further state-mandated revisions to NR 115 and applicable new confusing and inconsistent State Statutes.
- Increasing difficulty to have farmers participate in the Water Quality Improvement Program. Commodity prices fluctuate rapidly, meaning that farmers are more reluctant to participate.

## Goals and Objectives for 2016

- Revise the Sheboygan County Shoreland Ordinance to comply with new changes to NR 115 and update the official Shoreland Zoning Map to reflect navigability determinations made by the Wisconsin DNR.
- Revise the Sheboygan County Floodplain Ordinance to reflect changes resulting from Dam Failure Analysis and floodplain analyses completed at the Sheboygan Marsh.
- Follow management plan set forth by the Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Advisory Committee for the Department's recreational facilities.
- Successfully implement the Community Development Block Grant program.
- Revise the Sheboygan County Sanitary Ordinance to reflect Administrative Code changes.
- Continue to collaborate with UW-Stevens Point and the Microbial Induced Corrosion Task Force.
- Encourage landowners to install riparian grass buffer strips through the Water Quality Improvement Program.
- Continue to partner with the Elkhart Lake Improvement Association to plan, design, and seek funding for a small watershed project adjacent to the Lake. It will emphasize the reduction of dissolved and particulate phosphorus currently being discharged into Elkhart Lake.
- Continued implementation of the federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program projects.
- Continue the collection of hazardous wastes from households, farms, and small businesses.
- Continue to secure outside funding from various sources.
- Coordinate with a landowner in the Mullet River watershed, in continued partnership with TNC, to repair a cattle lane and move a cattle water source farther from the nearby stream, improving the water quality in the watershed.
- Implement a web-based version of the POWTS tracking system.
- Continue implementing conservation practices on farms related to The Nature Conservancy watershed grant.
- Continue to work on fundraising and planning activities for a new educational multi-purpose building at the Sheboygan Marsh.
- Continue to implement the County's \$400,000 brownfields assessment grant.
- Update the County's Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Ordinance to more closely align with State Administrative Code, and place more emphasis on enforcement of the implementation and maintenance of best management practices.
- Continue to collect data on the economic impact that trails and other recreational assets have on the County.
- Continue to facilitate the goals of the Abler/Schneiter wetland mitigation site through maintenance, monitoring, and the planting of necessary trees.
- Continue implementing the Amsterdam Dunes wetland mitigation bank project, and continue to work with the Amsterdam Dunes Advisory Committee to determine how to best restore the property.