



WISCONSIN

# SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

**Aaron Brault**

*Planning & Conservation Director*

March 1, 2024

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Alayne Krause,

The Planning & Conservation Department had a successful year in 2023 completing a number of projects that benefited Sheboygan County residents. A few of these projects are highlighted below.

The dam reconstruction at the Sheboygan County Marsh began in spring and is nearly complete. The new dam will be a great asset to the Marsh and is a result of great collaboration of public and private partners including Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Fund for Lake Michigan, Sustain Our Great Lakes, and the Sheboygan County Conservation Association. When construction of the dam is completed, the County will have better control of water levels providing the opportunity to mimic natural drawdown cycles that occur in natural wetland ecosystems.

In September, during United Way's Day of Caring event, and with the help of Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership, Stantec, and Glacierland Resource Conservation & Development, the Department hosted over 100 volunteers at the Amsterdam Dunes Preservation Area to help plant trees. It was a great day of collaboration and over 1,500 native trees were planted.

The Environmental Protection Agency approved the County's first Nine Key Element Plan in June. The purpose of the Nine Key Element Plan is to develop a 20-year implementation strategy for reducing phosphorus and sediment loads in two subbasins of the Pigeon River Watershed. This plan identifies potential sources of contamination and potential management approaches to reduce the concern for water quality. The Plan also contains an implementation strategy, including benchmarks for success, estimated costs, landowner cost share incentives, additional funding sources, and agencies responsible for implementing these measures. Staff are excited to start this effort to improve and protect the Pigeon River Watershed.

As always, I would like to thank you for the continued support of the Department. To view an interactive version of this report, use the following link: <https://arcg.is/0eK8rq0>

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Brault

Planning & Conservation Director

## 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.*

The Department is responsible for the County's mapping information, many of its parks and open spaces, and helping protect the County's environment primarily in regards to water quality issues.

## Goals and Objectives achieved in 2023

- Hosted a Soil Health Workshop in conjunction with Glacierland Resource Conservation & Development to educate local producers of the importance of soil health.
- The County Shoreland and Sanitary Ordinances were officially updated.
- The ten-year update to the County's Farmland Presentation Plan was completed.
- During the United Way Day of Caring event, over 100 volunteers planted roughly 1,500 trees at Amsterdam Dunes Preservation Area.
- Completed the County's first Nine Key Element Plan for portions of the Pigeon River basin.
- Received seven applications for the Sheboygan County Stewardship Grant Program. These projects were either entirely funded or partially funded. The total amount awarded was \$71,409.
- A total of 67,720 trees were sold during our annual tree sale, filling over 1,000 orders.
- Implemented one buffer and one pollinator project in the Milwaukee River watershed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
- Installed one waste storage system and one waste transfer system, as well as restored roughly 4.5 acres of wetlands and designed one underground outlet.
- Issued seven Stormwater Erosion Control Permits, issued 101 Shoreland Zoning Permits, issued 154 Sanitary Permits, and reviewed/approved 49 Certified Survey Maps.

## Budget

	<b>2023 Budget</b>	<b>2023 Results</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Revenues	\$2,496,230	\$2,530,263	\$34,033
Expenses	\$2,532,589	\$2,653,323	-\$120,634
Transfers In/Out	\$15,609	\$21,609	\$6,000
Totals	-\$20,750	-\$101,351	-\$80,601

The noted -\$80,601 variance can be explained by four details. 1) There were rather larger overages in the Department's maintenance account due to unforeseen electrical and plumbing issues at the

Marsh. 2) Bogs at the Marsh continued to plague the budget prior to the former dam's removal. 3) Timing of payments versus when the expenses occurred for certain grants and reimbursements are contributing to the variance. 4) Lastly, the method in which the Stewardship funding is accounted for and the timing of those payments can affect the yearly variance.

Without the unexpected expenses, timing issues, and the method in which the Stewardship funding is accounted for, the budget variance would be on-target and positive.

The 2024 \$2,426,717 Department budget includes a total operating levy amount of \$1,277,935.

### **Issues and Challenges Ahead**

The Department of Safety and Professional Service's (DPS) purpose is to administer and enforce laws to ensure safe sanitary conditions in public and private buildings. Recently, DPS announced that they will be requiring a more rigorous review process for soil tests statewide when they are submitted to county offices. Currently, we do not know what this new review process will look like. On average, the Department receives close to 50 soil tests a year, and this new requirement has the potential to burden our code enforcement staff with more field work especially during the busiest time of year. Additionally, the Department continues to see retirements of long serving employees. Hiring in the tight labor market continues to be a challenge.

### **Goals and Objectives for 2024**

- Continue to work with the chosen architecture firm to plan the semi-permanent household hazardous waste and tree sale building in Sheboygan Falls.
- Start implementing the Nine Key Element Plan to implement even better management practices in the Pigeon River basin.
- Complete the dam project at the Sheboygan Marsh.
- Finalize the Stormwater Water Quality Management Plan Update.
- Continue to work with Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and other county partners to target water quality projects in the Milwaukee River Watershed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
- Oversee construction of two trail segments in the City of Plymouth to close out the Nonmotorized Transportation funding.
- Begin fundraising for the Sheboygan Marsh boardwalk project.