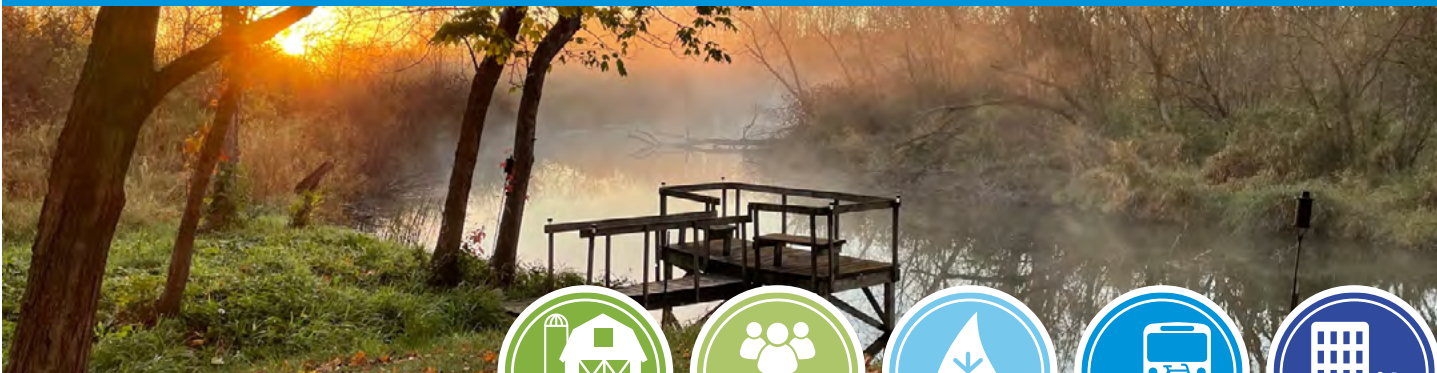


REGIONAL PLANNING NEWS

A publication of the **Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**



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SWITCH TO E-NEWS

Help save paper, printing, and mailing costs. Sign up to receive this newsletter by email at sewrpc.org/news.



Know an employer struggling to get workers to the workplace? Tell them about the Workforce Mobility Team! The Team is here to work with any employers in the Region to help them address their workforce mobility challenges.

For more information:
sewrpc.org/mobility

To arrange a meeting:
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FlexRide Milwaukee Launched

In February, UW-Milwaukee and SEWRPC launched FlexRide Milwaukee, a new on-demand transportation service being piloted through a \$1 million National Science Foundation grant. FlexRide is a technology-driven approach to closing the last-mile transportation gap—between where bus service stops and one’s ultimate destination—and getting Milwaukee residents to jobs at some of Menomonee Falls’ and Butler’s largest employers. It is being supported by numerous partners and has received widespread support and media coverage. On March 9, the project team came together with government, business, nonprofit, and other leaders for a formal launch event, streamed live on the FlexRide Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FlexRideMKE. For more information or to apply to join the FlexRide pilot, visit www.flexridemke.com.



Last-Mile Transportation Study

In parallel with the FlexRide effort, MobilISE and SEWRPC are nearing completion of another study to identify last-mile mobility solutions. The goal of this project is to develop a plan for effective, viable workforce transportation services that would serve businesses and their employees in major employment markets in eastern Waukesha County and southern Milwaukee County. Like Menomonee Falls and Butler, these are places with many jobs beyond the reach of fixed-route transit service. For more on this study and MobilISE, visit www.mobilisewi.org.



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Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Plan Completed

The Commission recently completed Community Assistance Planning Report No. 330, *A Restoration Plan for the Oak Creek Watershed*. This plan addresses water quality issues that have been identified in this 28-square mile watershed located in the Cities of Cudahy, Franklin, Greenfield, Milwaukee, Oak Creek, and South Milwaukee in Milwaukee County.

The Oak Creek watershed restoration plan is an outgrowth of the 2007 Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee watersheds. It was developed by Commission staff in response to a request from Milwaukee County, the City of South Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD). The planning effort was directed by Milwaukee County and the City of South Milwaukee and overseen by an Advisory Group consisting of representatives from County, municipal, and agency staff; local environmental groups; and local colleges and universities. Funding for the planning effort was provided by MMSD, the City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, the Fund for Lake Michigan, and SEWRPC.

The Oak Creek watershed faces numerous challenges and threats. Water quality in streams of the watershed is poor due to high concentrations of chloride, nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, and bacteria indicating fecal contamination. Stream channels in the watershed have been significantly modified by human activity. This has reduced the diversity of instream habitat types, decreased the connection of streams to their floodplains, increased flow velocities during peak-flow events, caused streambank and streambed erosion, and led to excessive sediment deposits in some stream channels. Upstream from the Mill Pond dam, the watershed contains poor to fair quality biological communities. The presence and proliferation of exotic and invasive species is degrading the quality and threatening the integrity of aquatic, wetland, riparian, and upland areas of the watershed.

The plan provides general recommendations for managing land and water resources related to water quality, habitat, and recreational access and use. It presents recommendations for addressing flooding at targeted locations and five alternatives for managing the Mill Pond and Mill Pond dam. The plan also recommends over 400 specific projects that could be implemented to address water quality, habitat, recreational access and use, and flooding. Recommendations include restoring stream channels, woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands; stabilizing eroding streambanks; managing invasive species; and establishing, enlarging, and maintaining riparian buffers. The plan places a strong emphasis on installing green infrastructure practices.



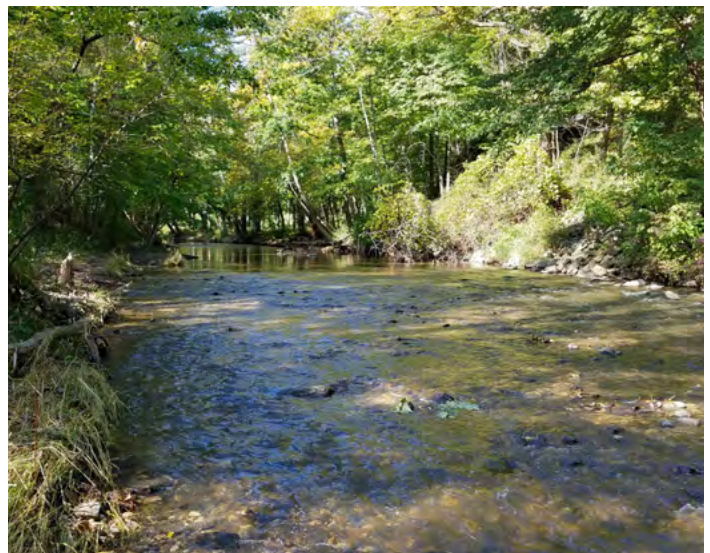
Developing this plan required multiple entities to collect extensive data on conditions in the watershed. Commission staff surveyed about 22 miles of Oak Creek, North Branch Oak Creek, and the Mitchell Field Drainage Ditch. In support of the planning effort, the City of Racine Public Health Department with assistance from staff at UW-Parkside collected water quality data in the watershed under a project funded by the Fund for Lake Michigan. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) collected data on aquatic biological communities. In addition, the Milwaukee County Parks provided data on biological conditions in County parks and natural areas.

The plan is designed to address the nine key elements the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has identified as critical for achieving improvements in water quality. The plan has been submitted to the WDNR and USEPA for review for consistency with these elements. A finding of consistency makes projects recommended under the plan eligible for funding through certain Federal programs.

Meeting the goals and objectives set for the Oak Creek watershed will be challenging. Plan implementation will require ongoing commitment and efforts by many stakeholders including the County, municipalities, government agencies, landowners, and other partners. Implementation will also need to be supported with technical and financial assistance. The plan provides a list of funding programs that might presents support for implementing recommended projects.

The plan recommends taking an adaptive approach to implementation and the Milwaukee County Environmental Services Unit will track implementation of plan recommendations. It will be important that any organization implementing projects recommended in the plan inform Environmental Services of the initiation, completion, and details of the project. The Advisory Group that oversaw development of the plan will continue to meet annually to evaluate the state of plan implementation, changes in watershed condition, and the need for any modifications to the plan. Given the comprehensive nature of this plan, it is anticipated that full implementation of the recommended measures will take 30 years or more.

Copies of the plan and other related materials can be downloaded from the Oak Creek watershed plan page on the Commission website at www.sewrpc.org/OakCreekWRP.





Southeastern Wisconsin Lake and Stream Habitat Ranking

The Commission is currently updating its Regional Natural Areas Plan, which identifies the most significant remaining natural areas in the Region as well as other areas vital to maintaining endangered, threatened, and rare plant and animal species. The designated natural areas included both terrestrial habitat, such as forests, prairie, and wetlands, as well as aquatic habitat, including individual lakes and stream reaches. Examples of high-ranking aquatic habitat from the 1997 plan include Big Cedar, Beulah, Nagawicka, and the Phantom lakes as well as reaches of the Bark, Fox, Milwaukee, Mukwonago, and Oconomowoc Rivers. The first edition of the plan was published in 1997 and has been used by counties, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and other groups to guide the preservation and protection of ecologically important areas throughout the Region.

While the plan was amended in 2010, this amendment did not include an update to the aquatic habitat ranking. Since the original publication, there are several surveys, models, and metrics that have become widely used throughout Wisconsin to evaluate biological conditions in aquatic habitat. Consequently, one element of the current plan update is to revise the schemes used to rank all the lakes, streams, and rivers in Southeastern Wisconsin. The proposed revision incorporates published and widely used biological metrics as well as verified observations of special concern, threatened, and endangered species. These ranking schemes also consider waterbody morphology (size, shape, and depth), water quality, land use, and connections to other high-quality terrestrial and aquatic habitat.

Commission staff have compiled readily available information for each lake and stream in the Region from multiple sources, including the WDNR, the United States Geological Survey, USEPA, academic research, and the Commission's own inventories. Draft ranking schemes for aquatic habitat have been presented to the Technical Advisory Committee and are currently being revised with the Committee's suggestions. They can be found at www.sewrpc.org/Aquatic-Habitat-Subcommittee. The Commission anticipates that the Regional Natural Areas Plan update will be completed by 2023.



Nagawicka Lake (left) and the Mukwonago River (right) were both identified as high-quality aquatic habitat in the 1997 Regional Natural Areas plan.

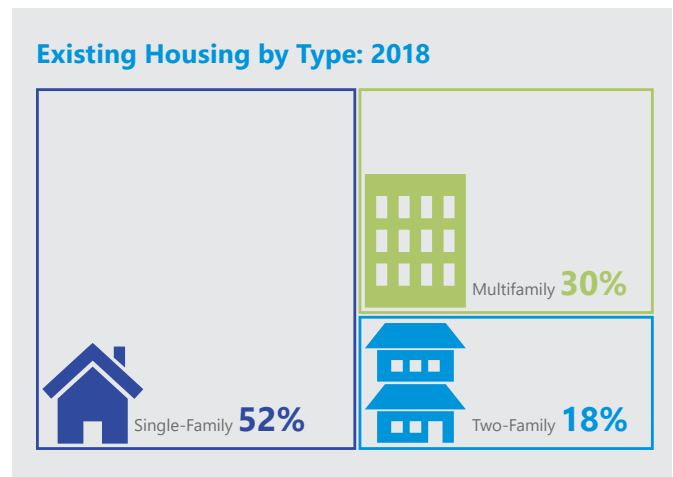


City of Cudahy Adopts Comprehensive Plan Update

The Cudahy Common Council adopted a comprehensive plan update in accordance with Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning law, which requires that comprehensive plans be updated no less than every 10 years. The City’s previous plan, designed to address growth through the year 2020, was reviewed for this update and was found to contain policies and recommendations that continue to support the City’s vision. Available at www.sewrpc.org/CAPR-339, the 10-year update was therefore developed as a supplemental report to the previous plan and includes the following:

- An update of key background information
- A review of plans that may affect land use in the City
- Recommendations related to the South Packard Corridor
- Updates to the City land use plan map, including updates to the Gateway and City Center Plan (GCCP) Planning Area and the South Packard Corridor

Key projections indicate there will be increases in the City’s population and households by the year 2050. The City contains very little undeveloped land so this growth may require new housing units to be developed as infill or through redevelopment. It may also be beneficial for the City to offer a variety of housing and transportation options to support the needs of both current and future residents.



The City’s updated comprehensive plan includes numerous long-range objectives. These objectives promote maintaining the City’s existing neighborhoods and continued development of its downtown as a vital destination. Objectives call for new development to positively impact the quality of life for, and provide amenities to support the daily needs of, the City’s residents and workforce, and to incorporate pedestrian and vehicular connections that promote multimodal accessibility. In addition to promoting catalytic new mixed-use developments at key infill and redevelopment sites, the plan objectives also promote accommodating a mix of quality uses and development, including a variety of housing opportunities and commercial and light industrial development, at appropriate densities and locations throughout the City.

2020 Regional Land Use Inventory Initiated

In order to update and extend the land use component of the regional plan (currently VISION 2050), the Commission undertakes a major update of its land use inventory at selected points in time. This inventory identifies existing land uses by detailed land use categories for the entire Region. The land use classification system used in the inventory consists of nine major categories that are divisible into more than 60 sub-categories, making the inventory suitable for land use and transportation planning; adaptable to stormwater drainage, public utility, and community facility planning; and compatible with other land use classification systems. Analyses of the inventory datasets also identify growth and change within the Region with respect to urban development and its impact on environmentally sensitive lands and prime farmlands.

The Commission’s regional land use inventory is critical not only to preparing the land use component of the regional plan, but is also vitally important to all of the Commission’s planning work. The Commission has completed regional land use inventories for the years 1963, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2010, and 2015. The Commission is now in the process of updating the land use inventory to 2020. Aerial photographs (orthophotographs) serve as the primary basis for identifying existing land use, supplemented by available oblique aerial photographs and other secondary source material as appropriate. Work on the regional land use inventory was initiated in 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Once completed, this land use inventory information will also be available to all of the local units of government within the Region, and is often used in their local and county comprehensive plans.



Integrating GIS with Surveying

Land surveyors have long depended on a variety of software and technologies to gather existing information, collect new information, make measurements, and produce maps. Geographic Information System (GIS) technology brings this functionality to one place and enables managing, reusing, and analyzing data efficiently.

The United States Public Land Survey System (USPLSS) has been extensively discussed in the Commission's annual report but instead of talking about monuments or the number of USPLSS corners that the County Surveyor has installed or maintained, this article focuses on the role GIS is now playing on corner maintenance within the Region. In the spring of 2020, the Commission unveiled a new USPLSS document search application. This application is built on a SQL database and warehouses all approximately 12,000 USPLSS corners. The migration to this database enabled the Commission to extract all attributes associated with each USPLSS corner so users could start to explore additional analysis opportunities.

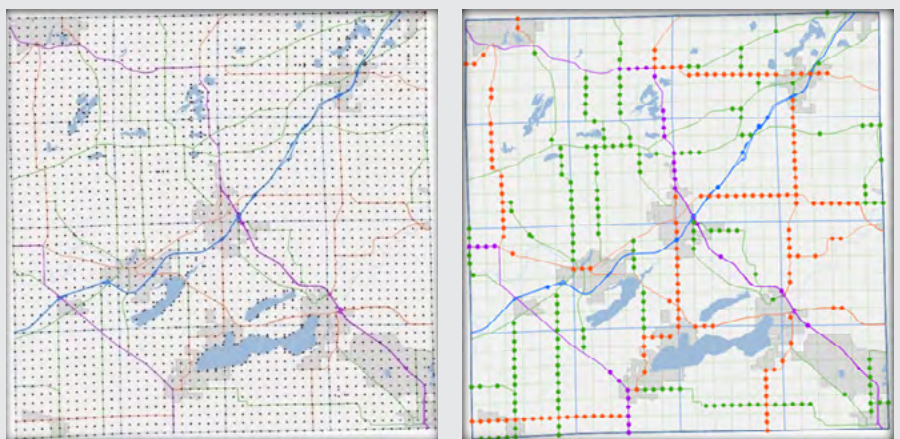
USPLSS corners are continuously subject to damage, disturbance, and destruction through rural and urban land use development activities. Typically, roadway and utility construction and reconstruction are the greatest reasons why USPLSS corners are affected. With the new search application and centralized database, the Commission now can complete query searches, which is where GIS technology can be integrated. As an example, Walworth County has 2,805 monumented locations that have substantial concrete monuments (see image) that require a survey crew to install and perpetuate the USPLSS if a corner is destroyed during construction. GIS has given Commission staff a better understanding of the number of corner locations that could be possibly at-risk or damaged during road maintenance. By using the existing road centerline base layer and USPLSS corner database the Commission can query all corners within 50 feet of the road to demonstrate the number of USPLSS corners possibly at-risk of being damaged or destroyed due to road maintenance and provide this information to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and local public works departments to make them aware of these corners. The query for Walworth County found 1,156 of the 2,805 monumented locations to be within 50 feet, meaning that over 40 percent of the monuments may be at-risk when road maintenance is completed.



Typical USPLSS Monument

GIS technology allows the Commission to work with engineers and planners to make them aware of the USPLSS corner(s) that might be at-risk during construction and inform the various agencies supporting the necessary road maintenance so the USPLSS corners can be maintained properly. The ability to integrate GIS with surveying provides an efficient way to increase awareness of the importance of the USPLSS perpetuation.

USPLSS Monuments and Corners Within 50 Feet of Walworth County's Highway System





WisDOT's FFY 2022 and FFY 2023-2026 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Program Solicitations

Earlier this year, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) began two solicitations for new transportation-related projects for the additional funds coming to the State from the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which was enacted in November 2021.

FFY 2022 BIL Program Solicitation

One solicitation involves seeking projects under WisDOT's STP-Rural, STP-Urban, and Local Bridge programs for additional Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 transportation funds made available from the BIL legislation. In addition to the normal WisDOT local program, the FFY 2022 BIL solicitation is also seeking projects for a new STP-Local program for projects located outside urban areas with a population less than 50,000 and on roadways functionally classified as minor collectors or local roads.

Since the additional 2022 BIL funds need to be "obligated" by the end of September, WisDOT has indicated that only roadway projects that can meet an August 1, 2022, deadline for completed plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) would be eligible for the additional 2022 BIL funding, with no funding available for preliminary engineering and real estate acquisition. This essentially limits the eligibility of roadway projects to those that have completed or can complete all the necessary preliminary engineering documents (environmental documents, design study reports, etc.), along with preparing all PS&E documents, by the deadline. The deadline for submitting projects for the additional FFY 2022 BIL funds is April 1, 2022. More details on the FFY 2022 BIL solicitation can be found on the following WisDOT webpage: wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/bil-lp-ffy22.aspx.

FFY 2023-2026 BIL Program Solicitation

The other solicitation involves WisDOT seeking highway and bridge (STP-Rural, STP-Urban, STP-Local, and Local Bridge) projects, along with projects eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air-Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds, for additional FFY 2023-2026 funds made available from the BIL legislation. The application process will be very similar to recent WisDOT solicitations, with preliminary engineering and real estate acquisition being eligible for funding. Applications for projects that did not receive funding from the regular Local Program solicitation occurring last fall and from the 2022 BIL solicitation can be carried over to the 2023-2026 BIL solicitation. The deadline for submitting projects for the additional FFY 2023-2026 BIL funds is June 3, 2022. WisDOT has indicated that a separate solicitation occurring this summer is anticipated for projects seeking additional Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding from the BIL legislation. More details on the FFY 2023 BIL solicitation can be found on the following WisDOT webpage: wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/bil-lp-ffy23.aspx.

Work Continues on the North-South Transit Enhancement Study

The Tier 1 Evaluation for the North-South Transit Enhancement Study has been published. This evaluation looked at what different transit technologies and route options would be the best fit for improving service along and near 27th Street in Milwaukee County. The evaluation recommended bus rapid transit (BRT) and narrowed route options under consideration. More details can be found in the report at: www.mkenorthsouth.com.

The study team is continuing work on the Tier 2 Evaluation, which focuses on more detailed analyses around station locations, ridership, impacts related to traffic and other modes of transportation, cost estimates, and more. A draft is expected this spring and will be shared at that time.



In the Community

SEWRPC has developed an internal committee focused on reaching youth in our Region to help them understand what SEWRPC does and the vast job opportunities in the career fields related to the Commission's work. Pictured below is SEWRPC staff participating as a Community Visitor to the Teen Achievers program through the YMCA and Lincoln Middle School in Kenosha.

During this presentation, staff used the floodplain model to discuss wetlands, retention ponds, and the Regional Chloride Impact Study. The youth in attendance expressed interest in the alternative options to salt, such as sand, beet juice, and brine, to combat ice and snow.



Did You Know?

County Stadium, home to the Milwaukee Brewers from April 1970 to September 2000, was built on a garbage dump. Officials had been considering a stadium for the Milwaukee area since 1909, with construction finally starting in 1950. County Stadium was built for expansion with the hope of attracting a Major League Baseball team, in addition to football games and other events. Both the St. Louis Browns and Boston Braves were interested in moving to Milwaukee, with the Braves ultimately making the move in time for the 1953 season. The Green Bay Packers also played some of their home games at County Stadium from 1953 through 1994. Miller Park replaced County Stadium in 2001. Now called American Family Field, it is the only Major League Baseball stadium to consistently sell more bratwursts than hot dogs (National Hot Dog and Sausage Council).

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