



# Sauk County Land Resources & Environment Department

2022 - 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN



# Aknowledgements

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# Introduction

## Why a Strategic Plan?

Strategic planning is a “deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.” (Bryson, 2011) This plan helps us determine where we are now, where we would like to be in the future, and how we will get there. It is this type of planning that helps the department to make decisions that help us improve and navigate our path to a better future. The strategic plan helps us define important policy goals, set specific directions, and clarify policy and budget priorities over a five-year term.

With the merger of the Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department with the Parks Department in May 2019; the Department identified as a goal through the 2020 and 2021 Budget process to complete a Department Strategic Plan. The Department has three services areas: Land Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and Planning and Zoning. While each service area has its own responsibilities, we realize there are combined contributions that we make to the people of Sauk County each day. A cross functional strategic plan will enable us to solve or meet complex challenges as well as to advance the goals and objectives of the department.

## How Will the Plan Be Used?

The plan represents a single department effort to work together to provide programs, policies, and projects that create a better future for the residents of Sauk County. The plan is meant to:

- Communicate the Department’s vision and mission as well as show the intended direction for the department over the next five years.
- Highlight our continued commitment to serve the residents of Sauk County.
- Serve as a baseline to show department progress in the provision of County programs relating to land

conservation, parks and recreation, and planning and zoning; and provide a mechanism for which the public can hold us accountable to for our actions and principles over time.

- Reflect our commitment to work cooperatively with the public, local businesses, community organizations, non-profit agencies, other governmental entities, and other partners to achieve broad based community goals.
- Align department employees, services, and programs with higher level principles and strategies; and provide for action items to implement those strategies.
- Inform policy, operational, and budget decisions.
- Provide structure to ensure proper oversight and management of department programs and services.
- Create a department wide framework to guide other future planning efforts.

The plan is designed for implementation over a five year period. It must be noted that not all of the suggested strategies or action items can be accomplished within this five year period. Given the County’s constrained resources, the department will need to prioritize the various strategies and actions. Although the plan is designed to inform the annual budget process, inclusion of a strategy or action item does not guarantee a specific level of funding or program/policy implementation. Constraints may result from increased mandated public services, decreased existing funding levels, and other fiscal requirements. All of these limit the department’s ability to fund everything within the plan in a given year. Given the aspirational nature of the strategies and action items, it is clear that many of these issues will not be completed or resolved within the five year time frame of the plan and will likely be included in future strategic planning documents.



# Planning Process

## How Was the Plan Developed?

The process began with a Baseline Analysis discussion with the LRE Committee as well as a discussion amongst the three service area teams. The Baseline Analysis is a process of gathering, analyzing, and collecting information concerning the internal strengths and weaknesses of the department; and the external threats and opportunities that we face. The initial review with the LRE Committee took place at their regularly scheduled meeting on April 27, 2021. The results of that analysis were shared with each of the respective service areas, whom completed the same baseline analysis at their regularly scheduled team meetings.

On May 11, 2021 the LRE Department staff met at White Mound Park for a strategic planning event. Through diverse small groups, generalized weakness, strengths, opportunities, and threats were categorized and identified. Core values and priorities for the department were also created.

From these values and priorities, general strategies were drafted. Each service area was again tasked with identifying strategies and action items for their respective area. Once each team drafted their respective strategies and action items, a final draft was provided to each team for further discussion at a second department meeting held on July 23, 2021. The second meeting finalized priorities, strategies, action items and outcome measurements for items identified in the plan. The Department mission and vision statement were also created.

The draft plan was provided to each of the staff members for review and comment prior to adoption. The LRE Committee approved the final plan at their regularly scheduled meeting on April 14, 2022.

## What Challenges and Opportunities Both Internally and Externally Does the LRE Department Face?

Prior to setting strategies and action items for the future, it was important for the department to identify the context in which the department exists today and what opportunities/challenges we are facing both internally and externally. The strategies and action items noted in the plan are intended to address these areas and move the department in a positive direction towards realizing its mission and vision.

The internal environment includes all the members of the LRE Department through the three service areas and the LRE Committee who provides oversight.

### Internal Weaknesses

- Lack of communication
- Lack of understanding across service areas
- Confusion over internal policy vs ordinance vs state mandates
- Regulatory vs voluntary dynamics across service areas
- Staff levels, retention, recruitment
- Disagreement between service areas on projects leads to “bad mojo” – unable to resolve hurt feelings
- Unable to prioritize important projects
- Budget, funding
- Lack of one centralized digital file system across service areas for staff to access
- Training, across service areas and with Committee

## Internal Strengths

- Dedicated staff
- Knowledge and expertise of staff
- Detail-oriented
- Strong leadership
- Improved collaboration between service areas and among staff
- Mission-oriented
- Flexibility and helpfulness of staff
- Broad knowledge among staff
- Area natural resources

The external environment includes other County departments, landowners, local and visiting citizens. This also includes other outside government agencies and non-profit groups.

## External Threats

- Lack of understanding between County Board and staff
- Limited by staff and budget
- Unclear or inconsistent guidance from Corp Counsel, State and Federal agencies
- Landowners expect staff to approve all projects and allow construction right away
- Events happen that are out of our control (extreme weather, pandemics, diseases to plants and animals)
- Permitting and associated fees for government – overseen project process
- Technology – Website and overreliance on personal technology
- County financial policy
- Lack of respect for staff from some County Board supervisors

## External Opportunities

- Relationships with internal/external groups, agencies, landowners, etc.
- Educational opportunities
- County Board support
- Shared community spaces and involvement
- State and federal funding opportunities
- Holistic projects that build community development
- County administration
- Becoming one department





# Mission, Vision, & Values

Even though the LRE Departments service areas on a day-to-day basis perform different roles and have different responsibilities, all of the department's employees are guided by the following mission and vision statement. The core values noted reflect our commitment to public service.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Land Resources and Environment Department protects, enhances, and supports Sauk County's natural, cultural, and historic resources through innovative approaches, public education, and collaboration with community partners.

## VISION STATEMENT

The Department will provide dedicated leadership that is inclusive, innovative, and holistic to create collaborative solutions, build trust and encourage stewardship of the natural resources of Sauk County.

## CORE VALUES

**Inclusivity:** We encourage an open, welcoming environment that supports diversity and tolerance among Department staff, Committee members, other departments, agencies, County Board Supervisors, local and visiting citizens.

**Collaboration:** We provide consistent service to citizens through cohesive teamwork that utilizes the expertise and talents of staff members throughout the Department.

**Respect:** We deliver services that exceed expectations with politeness and sensitivity to the experiences, concerns, and feelings of those we serve.

**Integrity:** We act with honesty, transparency, and respect in our interactions with co-workers, elected officials, and those we serve.

**Quality:** We deliver high quality services that focus on building relationships, mitigating issues and providing effective solutions.

**Resiliency:** We plan for the future in an effort to adapt to challenges for a positive outcome to maintain the long-term health and viability of the community.

**Innovation:** We will take innovative approaches to projects and problems for continued growth and protection of our community.





# Strategic Priorities

## Priorities, Strategies, and Action Items

The priorities, strategies and action items identified within this plan are the framework that will guide the LRE Department for the next five years, and beyond. The plan identifies six (6) priority areas for the Department.

While each of these priority areas are commendable, they are not sufficient by themselves to achieve action. For each priority, there are multiple strategies with corresponding action items to help us achieve our overall priorities. In addition, a measurement framework has been established to provide a level of accountability and the ability to track performance to ensure that the Department is generating concrete results.

The strategic plan is an opportunity to take review where we are at, and to look to and prepare for the future. These priorities, strategies, and action items reflect those of the department, employees, and leadership. They are designed to guide budget and policy decisions moving forward, with efforts made to ensure that the most important issues are addressed first. As the future is uncertain and things change, the plan will continue to remain a key resource for providing strategic direction for the department.

### PRIORITIES:

- 1. Fostering relationships:** Fostering relationships are the foundation of the Department's ability to be successful both internally and externally.
- 2. Educational programs:** The Department will create and attend events and programs for education of staff, Committee, County Board and citizens.
- 3. Collaboration:** The Department proposes greater collaboration and integration efforts among staff, Committee, County Departments, other government agencies, non-profits, local businesses and citizens.
- 4. Funding:** Appropriate funding is necessary for the operation of the Department and ability to provide service that projects the public health, safety and welfare of Sauk County residents.
- 5. Assessment:** Continued efforts will be made to assess and evaluate programs, partnerships, and Department progress.
- 6. Natural resources and resiliency:** The Department shall continue to protect and enhance the natural resources of the County and increase the natural, social, and economic resiliency of our communities.

# Fostering Relationships:

Fostering relationships are the foundation of the Department's ability to be successful both internally and externally.

## Strategy: Develop relationships with citizens, producers, and local businesses to foster holistic community partnerships.

**Goal:** Keep an ongoing and transparent dialogue with local municipalities, local businesses, producers, citizens, non-profits, Lake Associations and municipalities.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Develop an organization contact list for a point of contact for each service area or program offered.
2. Attend meetings and events when invited to provide information regarding department programs and policies.

**Goal:** Continue to build relationships centered on trust and understanding with regular park users, farmers, landowners, outdoor recreation-based businesses, non-profits, and school groups.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Meet with landowners to provide information regarding department programs and opportunities.
2. Converse with park goers to assess popular uses and future needs.
3. Encourage volunteerism.
4. Encourage field visits to become more familiar with properties and their owners.
5. Inspect all cost-share project maintenance five years after installation.

**Goal:** Continue to work with local municipalities, public services, and applicants throughout permit processes.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Utilize community input pursuant to Act 67 when reviewing permits requiring public hearings.
2. Continue to coordinate with Town government when administrating zoning code.
3. Maintain the rural addressing system.
4. Work with Town officials to review certified survey maps and proposed subdivision developments.

## Strategy: Fully integrated service areas to foster cohesive relationships.

**Goal:** Utilize technology to improve communication and collaboration with one another. Explore opportunities to reduce paper and physical filing systems.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Ensure staff members are trained on communication platforms to coordinate and share files.
2. Ensure staff members have a basic understanding to use ArcGIS.
3. Ensure staff members have access to electronic record systems (PZ Systems, Land Shark).
4. Purchase a new UAV or Drone, software, and training/pilot's license.

**Goal:** Collaborate among service areas to expand educational opportunities and identify ways in which all service areas may contribute to projects.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Increase service area collaboration and foster greater understanding of areas' workload, experience, and expertise.
2. Disseminate tasks among staff for added cross-training and lessen the workload on a single individual for a department event.
3. Establish quarterly department manager meetings to ensure consistency in operations.

**Goal:** The Department shall hold full staff meetings at a minimum of twice a year.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. The Department shall hold a full staff meeting at the end of each calendar year and another mid-way through the year.
2. Check in with staff/service areas for strategic plan progress, priorities, and to identify issues and solutions.
3. Host an annual staff think tank, which would look at ways to improve the Department and County properties.



# Educational Programs:

The Department will create and attend events and programs for the education of staff, Committee, County Board and citizens.

**Strategy: Expand knowledge base of staff through cross-trainings as well as encourage new and continuous training events.**

**Goal:** Encourage staff to attend training events to become more familiar and comfortable with new and innovative practices. Training may include:

- Webinar trainings that are both live and prerecorded.
- Professional development courses and workshops.
- Visiting lands throughout the state for edification on alternative land management styles and techniques.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Each staff member should attend at least two trainings a year, pertaining to their area of responsibility.
2. Staff should meet with other counties to discuss best practices that could be implemented in Sauk County.

**Goal:** Provide minimal cross training among staff. Staff should have the ability to answer general questions about each service area or know who to forward a citizen to if a more in-depth question is posed.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Create policy handbooks for each service or program.
2. Prepare or update process maps or cheat sheets for department staff.
3. Provide department level staff training events to educate staff on the various service area processes and responsibilities.
4. Encourage staff to shadow service areas for additional cross training and greater understanding of Department services.

**Goal:** Cultivate personal and professional growth of department staff.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Create a Departmental Succession Plan, which aims to promote employees within the department as vacancies arise.
2. Develop a comprehensive training process.

**Strategy: Increase knowledge of LRE Committee and County Board on the role and purpose of the Department.**

**Goal:** Revamp the monthly Department report to highlight an aspect of each service area's programs and activities; provide better visuals for evaluating the department accountability measures.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Create and present new monthly report options to the LRE Committee for consideration.
2. Service areas will each identify monthly or quarterly highlights to be presented with visual aids for greater impact and understanding.

**Goal:** Develop micro-learning events for LRE and BOA meetings to improve comprehension and decision making that is based on understanding of County ordinance, state statute and administrative code as well as federal legislation.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Each service areas will create 15-20-minute teaching templates for each program or service they offer that may be reused upon Committee or Board member turn-over.
2. Work with Administration to provide required training for BOA members on ordinances, statutes and codes as administered by LRE.

**Goal:** LRE Committee members will be invited to meet with each service area individually to meet staff and learn about current programs and projects.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Continue to hold annual Land Conservation and Park tours for the LRE Committee.
2. Consider the creation of Planning and Zoning tour.
3. Extend the invitation to area County Board Supervisors to attend field days, farm tours and other educational events.

**Strategy: Provide information and education in a variety of formats.**

**Goal:** Utilize social media and YouTube to:

- Create promotional videos with staff experts.
- Provide educational posts that explain objectives or purposes of ordinances.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Each service area should provide at minimum four items per year to be posted.
2. Create a policy for consistent ADA accessible videos, photos, posts, and documents.

## Educational Programs: Continued.

**Goal:** Create educational events when staffing levels and agency partnerships allow that expand knowledge and interest of the public in outdoor education, recreation, land management programs and Department services. Coordinate educational initiatives with fellow non-profit organizations that advocate similar land management goals.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. The Department will host at minimum three outdoor education/recreation tour/field days and three school aged programs each year. Available events will be expanded through partnership promotion.
2. As partnerships develop and grow, staff will promote the sharing of resources and knowledge to expand services to citizens.
3. Create and provide structured templates for educational programs and events that can be facilitated without staff present. One educational template shall be created or updated each year.
4. Provide comment cards or survey link follow-ups to obtain feedback from department events.
5. Provide rural community education events for the permit process and ordinance overview such as septic maintenance, the CUP process, etc.

**Goal:** Utilize the Conservation Chronicle to highlight common Department issues/questions; staff accomplishments; or important projects.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Every bi-annual issue should include at least one item from each service area.

**Goal:** Expand outreach and education for conservation-based programming.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Parks and Recreation*

**Action Items:**

1. Foster existing education programs such as the underwear challenge for the promotion of soil health practices.
2. Create resource packets that highlight local leaders in agriculture; literature cited studies, soil health expert testimonies (Gabe Brown and Ray Archuleta); economics of regenerative agriculture; and other Department initiatives. At minimum one resource packet should be created each year highlighting a soil health practice, local farmers, studies and testimonies.
3. Implement the Sauk County Farm Master Property Plan to transform the property into a collaborative agricultural education space where local producers, citizens, and educators collide.
4. Create an agricultural and educational mentorship program that connects local producers and educators.
5. Utilize the County Farm space for educational programming.

**Goal:** Encourage Administration to institute a County electronic communications program for citizens to sign up for specific email news notifications.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Work with the County Administrator to implement an electronic communications system (ie. GovDelivery) for residents and visitors. The system should allow citizens to sign up for topics of their interest that staff may easily send out electronic notifications, communications, promotions, education materials, etc., by sending it out via the requested topic groups.
2. Upon implementation, increase the number of citizens signed up to receive information or notifications from the department.

**Goal:** Improve website and other electronic materials to better disseminate Department informational and promote events and projects.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department & in partnership with MIS*

**Action Items:**

1. Create an easy to navigate website that minimizes the number of webpages needed to reach resources.
2. Decrease the amount of staff time needed to update or help citizens navigate the webpage.
3. Offer the sale of additional land management products through the Department on-line store.

**Goal:** Add interpretive signage to County managed properties to emphasize history, habitats, and management techniques.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Parks and Recreation*

**Action Items:**

1. Through the master planning process and plan implementation ensure that signage is added to properties.
2. Budget appropriately each year for construction of or replacement of consistent signage throughout County owned properties.

**Strategy: Recognize staff, project and program champions to promote Department initiatives.**

**Goal:** Highlight staff accomplishments utilizing social media, the Conservation Chronicle and the Department Report.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Increased recognition of the Staff and their professional specialty.
2. Highlight one staff member each year.
3. Highlight one large project each year.

**Goal:** Continue to support and highlight the producer led watershed group accomplishments; partner with them for events and the promotion of regenerative agriculture.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

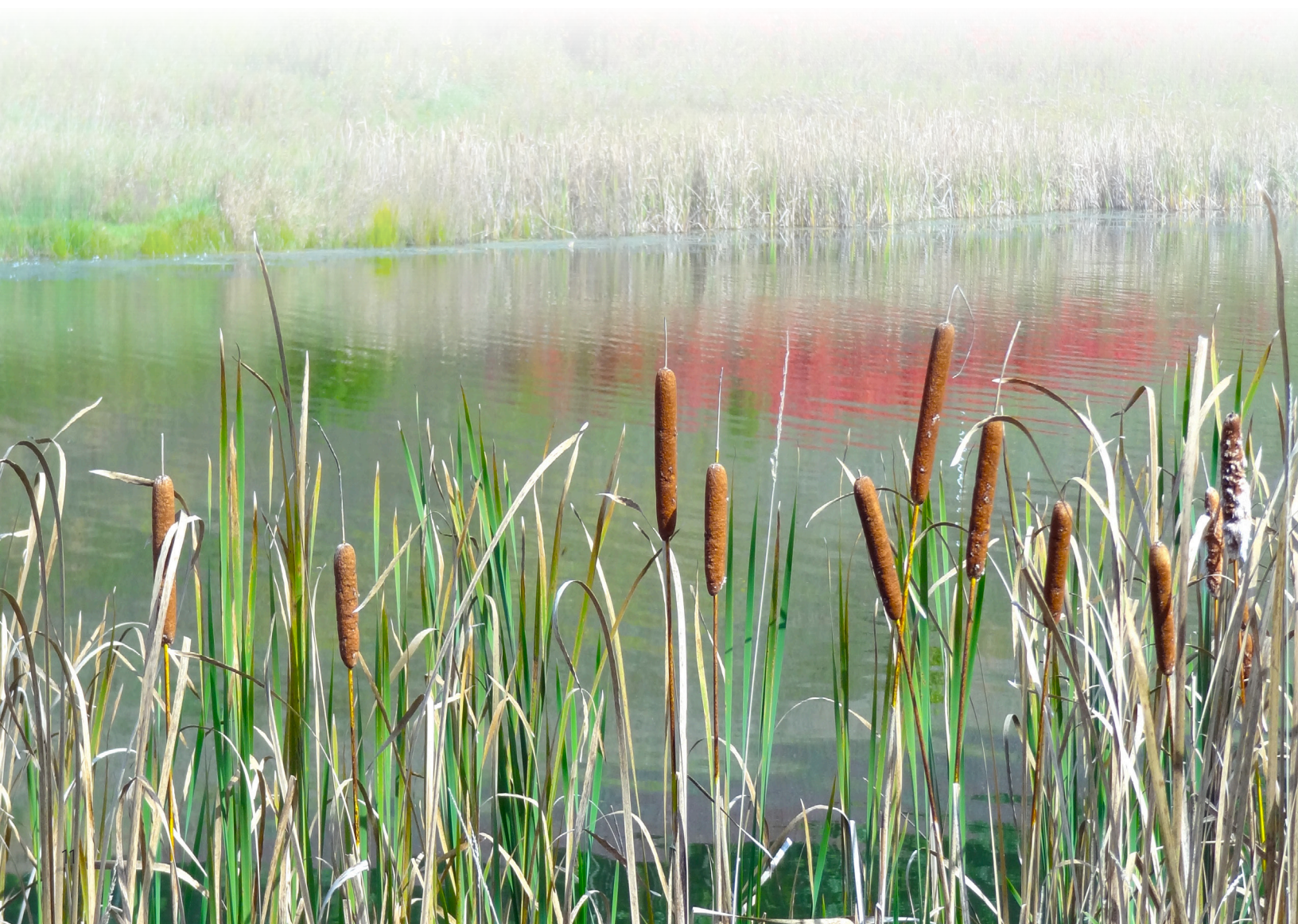
1. Highlight these farmers in promotional materials and capture their stories for increased social media presence.
2. Increase hours spent by SSWIG hosting/attending events and speaking with other farmers. Collaborate to host a minimum of one large farmer led events such as field days, pasture walks, or workshops, or group meetings annually.
3. Increase the amount of publications and research info they share.
4. Utilize the SSWIG group for expanded field demonstration events, and local producer outreach.

**Goal:** Spotlight businesses, projects or farm enterprises that receive approval through the Land Resources and Environment Committee by way of citizen interviews on social media or online story maps.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Planning and Zoning*

**Action Items:**

1. Promote a minimum of four businesses, projects, or farm enterprises annually.
2. Celebrate and recognize local agricultural producers that have successfully installed conservation practices at ag-centric events.





# Collaboration:

The Department proposes greater collaboration and integration efforts among staff, Committee, County Departments, government agencies, non-profits, local businesses and citizens.

## **Strategy: Increase stakeholder participation in programs and events.**

**Goal:** Increase written and verbal communication efforts with collaborating partners and agencies when working on projects and clearly define roles and responsibilities of those involved.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### **Action Items:**

1. All long-term partnership projects should have a written work plan outlining roles and purpose that are agreed upon by all those involved to streamline projects.
2. Partner with outside agencies and municipalities to assist with planning efforts.
3. Notify stakeholder groups of planning efforts, meetings, and new projects.
4. Develop a public participation process to be used in the ordinance amendment process. Include in person, online, and other outreach strategies to gain public comment.

**Goal:** Hold annual meetings with surveyors, realtors, contractors etc. to convey/review ordinance administration, interpretation, policies, and programs.

*Staff Responsible: Planning and Zoning*

### **Action Items:**

1. Decrease the number of permits submitted for review that must be returned due to inaccurate information or missing items.
2. Work with staff members to ensure consistency of ordinance interpretations, inspections, and permit application reviews/approvals.

**Goal:** Partner with state and federal agencies on policy development and enforcement matters.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### **Action Items:**

1. Contact state and federal agencies to partner on development applications and enforcement matters, so property owners are well informed from the beginning on requirements.
2. Create a contact list for state and federal agencies for department staff. Update as necessary.

**Goal:** Encourage civilian park enthusiasts to develop non-profit friends' groups to aid and improve park operations.

*Staff Responsible: Parks and Recreation*

### **Action Items:**

1. Work with citizens and provide guidance on friends' group formation. Seek to establish one Friends' group during the life of this strategic plan.
2. Work with established Friends groups to implement park maintenance or development projects.

## Collaboration: Continued.

**Goal:** Partner with local businesses to share resources and knowledge for educating area producers.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

1. Collaborate with local agricultural industry partners such as crop consultants, implement dealers, or co-ops on field trials, equipment demos, and education events.

**Goal:** Develop a communication/contact list of government and non-profit groups that advocate similar values.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. A full list of contacts that are available to the entire Department shall be created and continually updated that notes the following: affiliated organization; name of contact; role or title; contact info; and projects that they have assisted with.
2. Network a list of educational contacts within each local school district.

### Strategy: Greater Collaboration among County Staff.

**Goal:** Collaborate with other Department and staff on potential amendments to the County policies or when amending or developing new ordinances.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director*

**Action Items:**

1. Distribute potential county-wide policy amendments to department managers. Consolidate feedback to the appropriate department head.
2. Provide ordinance amendments to entire Department for review/comment during the ordinance development process.
3. Collaborate with County Administration to draft a written County policy regarding the publishing of videos, photo releases, and volunteer waivers for liability and ADA accessibility.

**Goal:** Be open to and encourage new opportunities for collaboration with other departments, municipalities, and government agencies.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Coordinate one project each year that utilizes the knowledge and skills of each service area for implementation.
2. Ease funding strain through partnerships with shared staff and resources.
3. Work with Administration to encourage other departments to assist with the annual Clean Sweep program.

**Goal:** Meet annually with Land Records to identify projects, needs and priorities for the Department.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Include projects in the Sauk County Land Information Plan for implementation.
2. Implement Land Information Plan in collaboration with GIS and Land Records Department.
3. Utilize GIS based applications to document Department projects.

**Goal:** Collaborate with local branches of state and federal organizations such as UW-Extension and NRCS.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

1. Increase attendance at annual Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) classes by expanding the course opportunities and the option to include enterprise budget programming, and the benefits of incorporating soil health practices.
2. Partner with NRCS to improve compliance with agricultural performance standards and promote cost-share programs.
3. Share educational and community outreach resources.

**Goal:** Work with the Highway Department to encourage Best Management Practices that protect pollinators and nesting birds while fighting invasive plant species along the County highways.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

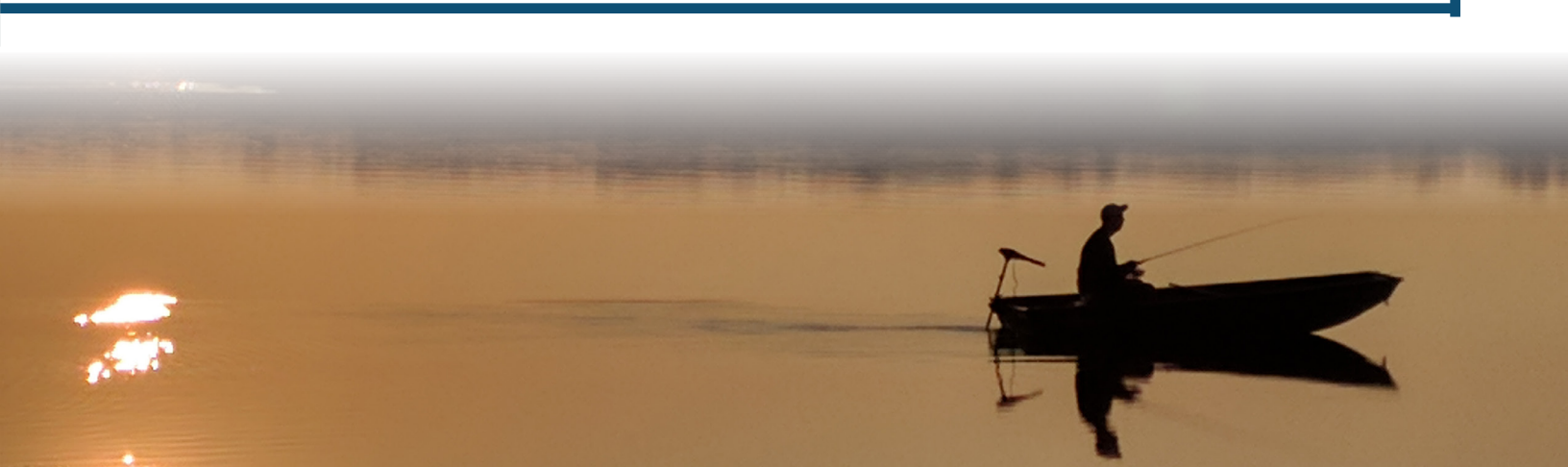
1. Conserve pollinator and bird nesting habitat.
2. Utilize the County highways as a high visibility promotion of alternative land management techniques.

**Goal:** Collaborate with Corporation Counsel to ensure that adequate staff is available, who specializes in land use law to assist in a timely fashion when necessary.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Coordinate code enforcement process to ensure compliance of violations through the court process.
2. Formulate with Corporation Counsel point persons within the office that can assist with department legal inquiries and determinations. Verify the process and timelines for responses.



# Funding:

Appropriate funding is necessary for the operation of the Department and the ability to provide service that protects the public health, safety, and welfare of Sauk County citizens.

## Strategy: Ensure necessary funding for appropriate staffing and administration of programs.

**Goal:** Evaluate the cost effectiveness of current programs and projects at the annual service area assessment; and prioritize where future efforts should focus.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Managers*

### Action Items:

1. With the budget cycle, review performance measures for each program area and determine future changes or removal.

**Goal:** Assess fee schedule on a regular basis to better reflect staff time based on permitted land uses, program costs, and activities.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Managers*

### Action Items:

1. Review the fee schedule at budget time to verify if fees should be adjusted to account for department cost increases.
2. Expand administration fees for additional services such as consultants, conservation design fees, etc.
3. Review Chapter 20 to ensure that citation fees align with department goals for compliance.

**Goal:** Align resources efficiently to invest in long-term needs.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Managers*

### Action Items:

1. Develop a five-year capital improvement plan to meet long-term planning goals.
2. Obtain additional funds through grants, sponsorships, and advertising.
3. Explore non-traditional funding opportunities department wide.
4. Consider opportunities to share positions with other Departments during the budget process.

**Goal:** Secure funding for additional staff.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Managers*

### Action Items:

1. Additional outreach and education position.
2. Full-time Parks and Facilities maintenance staff.
3. Agronomist to assist with conservation planning.
4. Develop a recruitment plan for hard to hire seasonal positions.

**Goal:** Continue to offer a hybrid or flexible work schedule.

*Staff Responsible: Department Director & Managers*

**Action Items:**

1. Update workflow, program processes, and technology to accommodate new staffing patterns.
2. Assist staff in maintaining a healthy work life balance.
3. Evaluate expanded service hours during peak times for the Department.

**Strategy: Work with local municipalities, other government agencies, and non-profits to explore opportunities to share costs or consolidate services.**

**Goal:** Consider utilizing grants and cooperative agreements to increase staffing.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

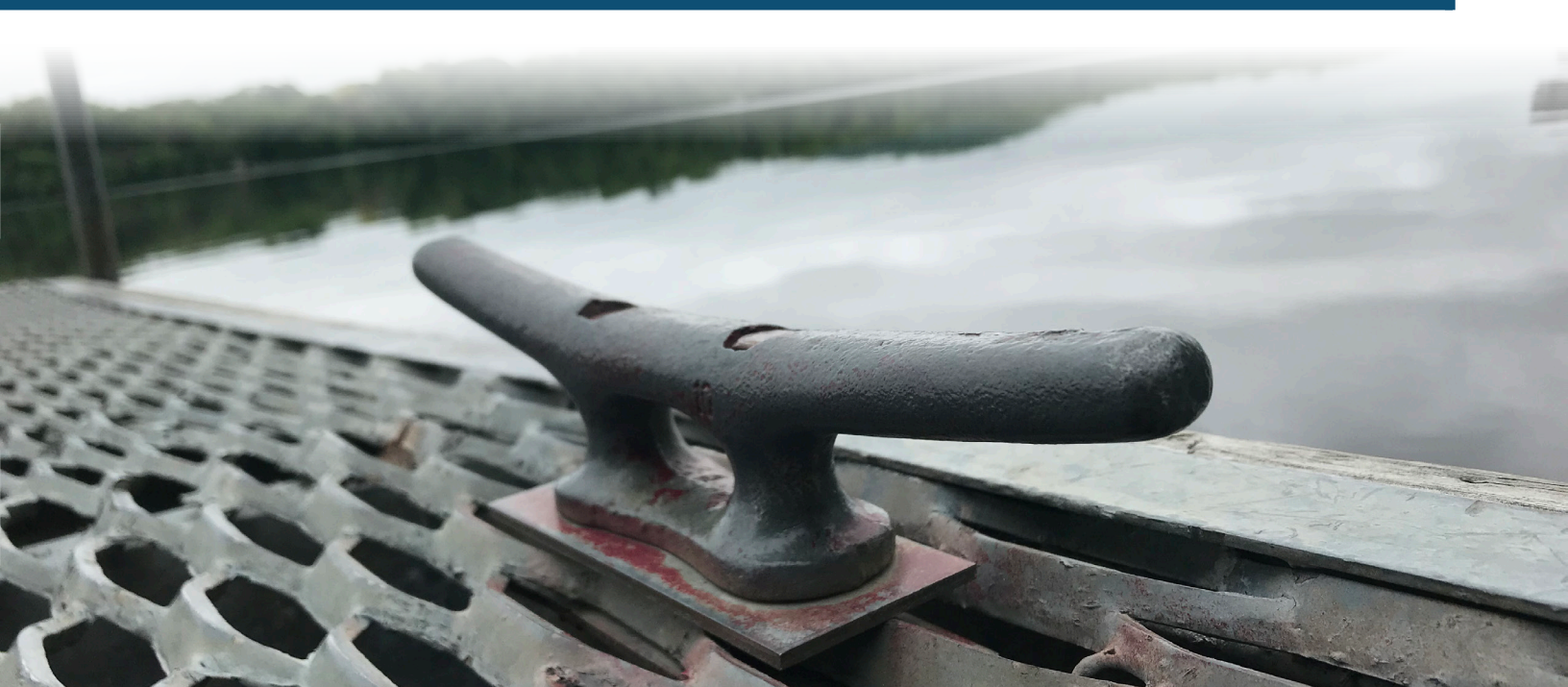
1. Continue to seek out and apply for supplemental and/or grant funding opportunities.
2. Seek out and apply for at least three (3) grants each year.

**Goal:** Develop a framework/network to share services with local municipalities, other government agencies or non-profits to reduce costs and increase effectiveness. Meet with those entities to continue the discussion about joint ventures.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department & Corporation Counsel*

**Action Items:**

1. Review current agreements and meet with elected or appointed officials to discuss amendments.
2. Develop MOUs for maintenance of the GSST with local municipalities.
3. Coordinate with communities for individual city/village development projects during the County Comprehensive Process.
4. Partner with municipalities to utilize the Water Quality Trading (WQT) and Multi-Discharge Variance (MDV) programs.
5. Explore surface water grants.
6. Continue to offer agricultural plastics recycling.



# Assessment:

Continued efforts will be made to assess and evaluate programs, partnerships and Department progress.

## Strategy: Continued public input on programs, events, and educational outreach.

**Goal:** Consider what similar departments in the surrounding region are doing when looking at additional programs or improvements to existing infrastructure.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Evaluate similar departments in other counties, utilize information gathered to determine best practices for new or existing programs.
2. Utilize trainings and email list serves to discuss emerging issues and opportunities with fellow conservation professionals.

**Goal:** Include comment or evaluation buttons within department website that links to a submittal form.

*Staff Responsible: MIS*

### Action Items:

1. Expand citizens' opportunities to provide feedback on Department services and programs.

**Goal:** Expand the Great Sauk State Trail to connect with Dane County and the 400 State Trail through a corridor plan that incorporates the participation of each municipality and community that the trail may be routed through or that may contain a spur trail.

*Staff Responsible: Parks and Recreation & Planning and Zoning*

### Action Items:

1. Develop and implement a GSST Corridor Plan for future trail phases.
2. Develop cooperative agreements with local partners along the proposed trail route, including ongoing maintenance.
3. Coordinate the engineering and construction of future phases of the GSST.

**Goal:** Update the County Farmland Preservation Plan to meet the 2025 deadline.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Planning and Zoning*

### Action Items:

1. Develop and implement a Farmland Preservation Plan by December 2025.
2. Amend the Chapter 7 Zoning Ordinance to reflect the goals of the Farmland Preservation Plan.

**Goal:** Lead efforts to adopt a County Comprehensive Plan and assist Towns with updating their Town Comprehensive Plans.

*Staff Responsible: Planning and Zoning*

**Action Items:**

1. Draft and implement a County-wide comprehensive plan.
2. Work with townships to update their existing plans and future land use maps.

**Goal: Develop and implement Master plans for all County recreational facilities.**

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Utilize information contained within the Master Plans to inform the Capital Improvement Plan.
2. Create Master Property Plans for Hemlock County Park, the County Forest, White Mound County Park, the Sauk County Farm, and a Great Sauk State Trail Corridor Plan.
3. Utilize the ADA Audit and Transition Plan for CIP planning and when creating property master plans.

**Goal: Utilize marketing and branding strategies to promote County Parks and Facilities.**

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Partner with the Friends of the Great Sauk Trail and WDNR to showcase the GSST as a destination trail.
2. Utilize the Park's logo to market the Sauk County Parks and Recreation System.
3. Brand the Sauk County Farm as an educational resource.

**Strategy: Regular evaluations of Department programs, actions, and events.**

**Goal:** Employees shall review and update their individual work plan annually to align with department and personal goals and objectives.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Managers will work with staff members to prepare a work plan outlining their personal and professional goals/tasks. The work plan shall be revised with their supervisor at their annual review.
2. Staff members will be held accountable for meeting identified goals and objectives.

**Goal:** Service areas should continue to hold regular monthly meetings to discuss topics, events, and issues in a timely manner.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Every service area will hold a monthly team meeting.

**Goal:** Each year the Department shall review their strategic plan at a full staff meeting to evaluate implementation of action items, review accomplishments, and prioritize for the coming year.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. At the end of each calendar year, the full Department meeting shall be held to prioritize for the next year.
2. Service areas will perform an annual assessment of their programs, events, and training opportunities.
3. An end of year report will be provided to the Committee of the Department's Accountability Measures and coming year's priorities.

**Goal:** Every five years the Department shall review and update their strategic plan.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. The Department will utilize the review of yearly implementation measures to strategize for the next five years.
2. A new strategic plan will be drafted for adoption in 2027.





# Natural Resources & Resiliency:

The Department shall continue to protect and enhance the natural resources of the County and increase the natural, social and economic resiliency of our communities.

## Strategy: Ensure that Department actions reflect our role and responsibility to the Natural Environment.

**Goal:** Protect and maintain the natural resources located within County properties through responsible management practices.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Maintain the oak savanna at White Mound County Park.
2. Continue prescribed burning and mowing where necessary on County managed properties.
3. Develop sustainable timber management plans for individual Sauk County woodlots and properties that incorporate healthy flora and fauna habitat guidance.
4. Maintain the Dam Safety Program through regular inspections and maintenance.
5. Continue to monitor Baraboo Range Protection Easements.
6. Continue to offer stream restoration and improvement project cost-share.
7. Continue implementation of County septic maintenance program.

**Goal:** Continue to offer exceptional outdoor recreational opportunities through a variety of environmental experiences.

*Staff Responsible: Parks and Recreation*

### Action Items:

1. Maintain trails located within County Parks and Recreational Facilities.
2. Assist the Sauk County Snowmobile and ATV Associations with grant administration for trail maintenance.
3. Maintain County camping facilities.
4. Provide shelters and recreational equipment for rent and/or loan.
5. Maintain access to water resources at County Recreational Facilities.
6. Continue to offer free annual passes to veterans.

**Goal:** When developing and amending ordinances, and when reviewing permits, ensure that provisions include protections for area natural resources.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

### Action Items:

1. Review state requirements to determine what can be enforced at the County level.
2. Review other County ordinances and policies for examples of best practices.
3. Update Department long-range plans and policies to ensure consistency with County Ordinances.
4. Collaborate with the WDNR to explore the County Forest Program.
5. Encourage the use of native species in the reclamation of non-metallic mining sites.

# Natural Resources & Resiliency: Continued.

**Goal:** Continue to encourage participation in Farmland Preservation Program.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

1. Maintain the number of acres enrolled in the program.
2. Encourage farmers to modify old agreements or sign new agreements when expiring.
3. Conduct compliance inspections on 25% of enrolled farms each year.

**Goal:** Ensure implementation of County property master plans.

*Staff Responsible: Parks and Recreation & Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Utilize Master Plans to inform the Capital Improvement Plan.
2. Park attendance will be monitored through seasonal County Park and GSST passes.
3. Acquire property when and where it is feasible to expand outdoor and environmental opportunities.

**Goal:** Begin implementing Chapter 26 with enforcement procedures to reduce the need of continually providing cost-share.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

1. Complete a manure storage inventory.
2. Send certificates of compliance with Chapter 26 and NR 151 for properties that are no longer eligible for cost-share due to current or prior compliance.
3. Develop a watershed prioritization list for ordinance implementation.
4. Monitor livestock access points to water resources.

**Strategy: Staff will promote systems-based solutions rather than simply treating the symptoms of insufficient land use.**

**Goal:** Use aspects of traditional ecological knowledge to adapt to new problems as they arise.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Encourage the restoration of natural flood storage systems.
2. Monitor the number of acres in CREP.
3. Explore Clear Water Farms Program and other farm certification programs.

**Goal:** Define regenerative agriculture for Sauk County to prioritize programs/policies for landscape and soil health practices.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation*

**Action Items:**

1. Encourage and support innovative cost share programs through producer led watershed groups. Monitor the amount of acreage utilizing cover crops, cattle gleaned cropland, no-till, and high-diversity buffer strips.
2. Make use of optional, additional cost share funding (WQT, MDV, etc.) for system-based approaches.
3. Review new studies and practices to best inform landowners and connect them to resources.
4. Continue annual transect survey to evaluate countywide soil erosion.
5. Increase acreage covered under NMPs.
6. Increase acreage in rotational grazing.
7. Continue to monitor nitrogen use efficiency sites.

**Goal:** Encourage citizens and visitors to engage with our local farmer community.

*Staff Responsible: Full Department*

**Action Items:**

1. Explore/promote local and or/ alternative farm markets.
2. Assist UW Extension to revitalize and expand upon the Farm Connect Guide.
3. Highlight our local agricultural community through implementation of the Sauk County Farm.

**Goal:** Educate and promote the relationship between waterways and a healthy landscape.

*Staff Responsible: Land Conservation & Parks and Recreation*

**Action Items:**

1. Monitor the relationship between the health of waterways and agricultural BMPs.
2. Develop 9-Key Element plans for high priority watersheds.
3. Encourage Water Action Volunteer (WAV) citizen training and monitoring.
4. Continue to monitor high priority waterways for biotic indices of health, nitrogen, and phosphorus levels.
5. Continue stream easement monitoring.
6. Continue WDNR water quality monitoring on White Mound Lake





# Implementation

## How will the plan be implemented?

At the beginning of each calendar year, the full LRE Department staff will meet to prioritize action items and review accomplishments from the previous year. Action items vary between ongoing projects, short-term goals (1-2 years) and long-term goals (3-5 years). The order in which these will be executed will depend on current staffing and funding levels, and contributing environmental factors. The annual January LRE Team meeting will be utilized to ascertain full Department goals and individual service area goals. This meeting will also serve as a tool to continually build upon staff relationships and the sharing of information between service areas. Projects will be identified where staff may share knowledge and resources, and allow staff to recognize connections and learning opportunities.

Another full LRE Team meeting will be held midway through the year. This meeting will supply a progress check-in and will serve as a budget discussion among full staff to discuss as projects move forward. This will again provide a chance to continuously foster relationships among staff and therefore build upon the Department foundation.

Service areas will continue to hold monthly meetings with staff for in-depth project discussions and problem solving. Managers will work with staff individually to meet personal professional goals.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Land Resources and Environment Department protects, enhances, and supports Sauk County's natural, cultural, and historic resources through innovative approaches, public education, and collaboration with community partners.

## Plan Reflection

This plan recognizes the ideas and concerns of all staff, but in order for successful implementation, not only will action items need to be enacted but core values will need to be maintained. These core values were developed prior to strategizing and creating action items as a way to direct and focus our efforts. Therefore, these values should be perpetuated in all interactions with one another, other Departments, agencies, County Board members, and local and visiting citizens. The Department mission and core values are reiterated as a reminder to the basis of this plan.

- **Inclusivity**
- **Collaboration**
- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Quality**
- **Resiliency**
- **Innovation**

# Appendix



## **Baseline Analysis:**

- Land Resources and Environment Committee
- Land Resources and Environment Team Meeting

## LRE Committee Baseline Analysis:

The baseline analysis is a process of gathering, analyzing, and collecting information concerning opportunities and threats facing the Department for long-term strategic planning. The baseline analysis process entails obtaining both factual and subjective information on the internal and external environments in which the Department is operating or considering entering for improving its current ability to serve the public and protect the lands of Sauk County.

<p><b>Internal:</b> The internal environment includes all members of the Department through the three service areas and the LRE Committee that oversees the Department.</p>	<p><b>Harmful:</b></p>	<p><b>Helpful:</b></p>
	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <p>Improve communication on new projects with Committee members. Need to provide proposed process and reasoning.</p> <p>Need a deadline for posting all materials to Granicus.</p> <p>Possibility of postponing agenda items when running long to allow Committee members better chance to properly think through information and allow for faster process of other agenda items.</p> <p>Additional training needed for Committee members with continuous education opportunities.</p> <p>Fully integrate all service areas into the Dept. and with one another.</p> <p>Dealing with turnover of new Committee members each election cycle.</p>	<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>Lisa. The ability to delegate responsibility</p> <p>The quality of existing and new staff</p> <p>Intertwined service areas that are working together on projects.</p> <p>Knowledge, professionalism, and comradery among staff members.</p> <p>Mission Oriented Dept. – “See the possibilities”</p> <p>Staff awareness of being there to serve the public.</p> <p>Artistic talent of Parks and the asset our outdoor spaces are in the pandemic.</p> <p>Staff feel appreciated by Committee.</p> <p>Good communication that is receptive and cordial, open to new ideas.</p> <p>Maintain professionalism.</p> <p>Understanding that not all that we do is popular and that we are dealing with people’s livelihoods.</p>

**External:**

The external environment includes other Departments within the County, landowners, local and visiting citizens. This also includes other outside government or non-profit agencies.

**Threats:**

State budget.

High volume of visiting citizens that lack the same relationship to our community and land.

**Opportunities:**

Build relationships with cities, Towns, and other municipalities.

Collaboration with our agencies within the County.

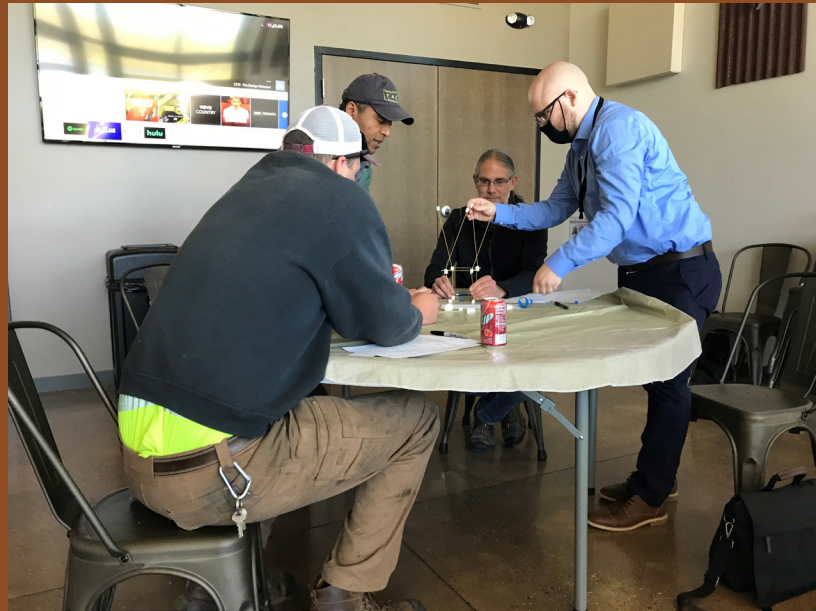
Our ability to work well with other County Departments.

Building one-on-one relationships with landowners.

# Land Resources & Environment Team Meeting



education  
collaboration



leadership  
inclusivity

resourceful  
innovative



dedication  
opportunities



## LRE Department Baseline Analysis: May 11, 2021

The baseline analysis is a process of gathering, analyzing, and collecting information concerning opportunities and threats facing the Department for long-term strategic planning. The baseline analysis process entails obtaining both factual and subjective information on the internal and external environments in which the Department is operating or considering entering for improving its current ability to serve the public and protect the lands of Sauk County.

	<b>Harmful:</b>	<b>Helpful:</b>
<p><b>Internal:</b> The internal environment includes all members of the Department through the three service areas and the LRE Committee that oversees the Department.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of communication</li> <li>• Lack of understanding across service areas</li> <li>• Confusion over internal policy vs ordinance and state mandates</li> <li>• Regulatory vs voluntary dynamics across service areas</li> <li>• Staffing levels / retention / recruitment</li> <li>• Disagreement between service areas on projects leads to “bad mojo” – unable to resolve hurt feelings</li> <li>• Unable to prioritize important projects</li> <li>• Budget + Funding</li> <li>• Lack of one centralized digital file system across service areas for all staff to access</li> <li>• Training (across service areas and Committee)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Staff</li> <li>• Knowledge and expertise of staff</li> <li>• Detail-oriented</li> <li>• Lisa – Strong leadership</li> <li>• Improved collaboration between service areas</li> <li>• Comradery among staff</li> <li>• Mission-oriented</li> <li>• Flexibility &amp; helpfulness of staff</li> <li>• Broad knowledge among staff</li> <li>• Area natural resources</li> </ul>

<p><b>External:</b></p> <p>The external environment includes other Departments within the County, landowners, local and visiting citizens. This also includes other outside government or non-profit agencies.</p>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding between county board and staff</li> <li>• Limited by staff + budget funding</li> <li>• Unclear or inconsistent guidance from corp. council and state and federal agencies</li> <li>• Land owners expect staff to approve any and all projects and start right away</li> <li>• Events out of our control (extreme weather, pandemics, diseases to plants and animals)</li> <li>• Permitting and associated fees for government-overseen project process</li> <li>• Technology – Website and overreliance on personal technology</li> <li>• County financial policy</li> <li>• Lack of respect of some staff from some county board supervisors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships with internal / external groups, agencies, landowners, etc.</li> <li>• Educational opportunities</li> <li>• County board support</li> <li>• Shared community spaces and involvement</li> <li>• State and federal funding opportunities</li> <li>• Holistic projects that build community development</li> <li>• County administration</li> <li>• Becoming one department</li> </ul>
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**CORE VALUES:**

- **Group Notes:**
  - Open / Welcoming Environment, Diversity, Inclusivity, Support, Open-Mindedness
  - Cohesiveness, Consistency, Teamwork, Collaboration
  - Trust, Transparency, Professionalism, Respect, Customer Service (“Folksy”), Integrity, Hard Working, Dependable
  - Tangible and Measurable Outcomes, Quality

- Flexibility, Public Health, Compatible Land Uses, Resilient Communities and Lands, Environmental Stewardship
- **Refined/Consolidated:**
  - **Inclusivity:** We encourage an open, welcoming environment that supports diversity and tolerance among Department staff, Committee members, other departments, agencies, County Board Supervisors, local and visiting citizens.
  - **Collaboration:** We provide consistent service to citizens through cohesive teamwork that utilizes the expertise and talents of staff members throughout the Department.
  - **Respect:** We deliver services that exceed expectations with politeness and sensitivity to the experiences, concerns, and feelings of those we serve.
  - **Integrity:** We act with honesty, transparency, and respect in our interactions with co-workers, elected officials, and those that we serve.
  - **Quality:** We deliver high quality services that focus on building relationships, mitigating issues and providing effective solutions.
  - **Resiliency:** We plan for the future in an effort to adapt to challenges for a positive outcome to maintain the long-term health and viability of the community.

## **PRIORITIES:**

- **Group Notes:**
  - Educational programs, collaborative, positive experiences
  - Build relationships with public
  - Refine and expand programs
  - Greater collaboration among stakeholders
  - Appropriate funding
  - Improved communication and understanding
  - Continue to protect condition and character of natural resources
  - Encourage innovation and resiliency in landscapes
  - Invest in staffing and training
  - Greater understanding and support of elected officials
  - Fully integrated service areas to foster cohesive relationships
- **Refined/Consolidated: Priorities**
  - **Educational programs:** The Department will create and attend events and programs for the education of staff, Committee, County Board, and citizens.
    - Strategies:**
      - Increase knowledge of LRE Committee and County Board on the role and purpose of the Department.
    - Action items:**
      - Each service area may host education events each year informing attendees of the programs and services they offer.
  - **Collaboration:** The Department proposes greater collaboration and integration efforts among staff, Committee, County departments, government agencies, non-profits, local businesses and citizens.

**Strategies:**

- Greater collaboration among stakeholders.

**Action Items:**

- Increase communication efforts both written and verbal when working on projects with all of those involved.
- **Assessment:** Continued efforts will be made to assess and evaluate programs, partnerships and Department progress.

**Strategies:**

- Review the Department Strategic Plan on a regular basis.

**Action Items:**

- Each year the Department shall review their strategic plan for successful implementation of action items.
- Every five years the Department shall review and update their strategic plan.
- **Fostering relationships:** Fostering relationships are the foundation of the Department's ability to be successful both internally and externally.

**Strategies:**

- Greater understanding and support from elected officials.

**Action Items:**

- LRE Committee members will be invited to meet with each service area individually to meet staff and learn about current programs and projects.
- Fully integrated service areas to foster cohesive relationships.
- **Funding:** Appropriate funding is necessary for the operation of the Department and ability to provide service that protects the public health, safety and welfare of Sauk County citizens.

**Strategies:**

- Work with local municipalities, other government agencies, and non-profits to explore opportunities to share costs or consolidate services.

**Action Items:**

- Develop a framework or network to share services with a local municipalities, other government agency or non-profit to reduce costs and increase effectiveness. Meet with those entities to continue the discussion about joint ventures.
- **Natural resources/resiliency:** The Department shall continue to protect and enhance the natural resources of the County and increase the natural, social and economic resiliency of our communities.

**Strategies:**

- Staff will promote systems based solutions rather than simply treating the symptoms of insufficient land use.

**Action Items:**

- Update Department plans to ensure consistency with County Ordinances.
- **Innovation:** Innovative approaches to projects and problems will be imperative for the Department and County for continued growth and protection of our community.

**Strategies:**

- Embrace new ways of working, new technologies, and new partnerships.

**Action Items:**

- Update workflow, program processes, and technology to accommodate new staffing patterns.



**SAUK COUNTY**  
PARKS + RECREATION

