

NCWRPC NEWS

A Newsletter of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). Serving Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas and Wood Counties for over 30 years.

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2004

Welcome

As we begin 2004 there is still much discussion about comprehensive planning throughout the Region. Nearly five years after the law was created, our counties are taking different approaches to this law. Lincoln County has already completed a plan, while Adams, Marathon, Portage and Vilas are in various stages of completion. The remaining five counties are waiting to see what happens with new legislation that has been introduced in Madison, mainly AB 435, the repeal bill, and 608 the revision bill. AB 435 had a hearing in October and is currently stalled in committee. AB 608 also had a hearing and has moved out of committee and is scheduled for an Assembly vote in early February. Additional bills will likely be introduced. We will continue to monitor this important issue.

This edition of NCWRPC NEWS highlights some projects recently completed, including the Regional Plan, the Rhinelander Area Pathways Plan, and a mapping project in Langlade County.

As always, please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Dennis Lawrence, AICP
Executive Director

Quarterly Quote:

“The future ain’t what it used to be.”

Yogi Berra

Commission Meeting Highlights

With unanimous support at its last meeting of 2003, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission adopted the Regional Master Plan...Regional Comprehensive Plan (See page 2) and the 2004 Transportation Work Program. The Regional Plan has been a three-year effort that will provide guidance to local planning efforts. Paul Millan, Steering Committee Chair, reiterated that “This is only an advisory document and it has no formal authority. The hope is that each local unit will develop their own plan, using this plan as a general reference.”



The Transportation Work Program identifies ten program areas and numerous local projects that staff will be working on in 2004. In addition, thirteen projects were reviewed through the Referrals process totaling over \$5.5 million dollars. All were approved. The 2003-2004 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was also amended to add an additional project in Juneau County.

The next NCWRPC meeting will be held in Wausau on February 25, 2004. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Regional Plan Approved

At its December 10, 2003, meeting the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission adopted the Regional Master Plan, also known as the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). This is the first regional plan completed in the state under the new comprehensive planning standards. According to state statute, each regional planning commission is required to prepare a “master plan” for its Region, and this plan must incorporate the requirements outlined in the comprehensive planning statutes. In 1981 the NCWRPC prepared its original master plan called the “Framework for Regional Development”. The statute also states that the “master plan”, or now “regional plan”, are advisory documents.

This plan was the culmination of a three-year process involving data collection, mapping, review of existing plans, surveys of elected officials and the general public, open-house meetings held throughout the Region. It was overseen by a Steering Committee with representation from each of the Region’s ten counties.

The regional planning effort has always had two basic goals: first, to update the dated 1981 plan; and the second goal was to collect and assemble the data and prepare base mapping for the Region. This will save our member governments time and money as they prepared their own local plans. In addition, our hope is that the RCP can be used as a general reference for all and lend guidance to local governments as they prepare their own plans.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan is currently being printed. Copies will be provided to all local units of government in the Region this winter. It is also posted on our website at www.ncwrpc.org. Call Dennis Lawrence at (715) 849-5510, Extension 304, or email at dlawrence@ncwrpc.org if you have any questions on the Regional Comprehensive Plan.



Regional Comprehensive Plan: A Look Back

In 1998, the NCWRPC made the decision to update the 1981 “Framework for Regional Development”. That plan, much like this “Regional Comprehensive Plan”, was designed as an advisory document providing “long-range policy direction for making public and private investment decisions”. After designing a planning process, grant applications were prepared and submitted in 1999 and 2000 to fund the effort. With funding secured, the planning process began.

The Plan examines demographic trends, natural resources, housing, transportation, community facilities, economic development, land use, intergovernmental cooperation and implementation recommendations. The document covers 340 pages and includes 82 tables and 80 maps. Each element contains three basic sections:

- Background...review existing plans, collect data, and prepare base maps.
- Analysis...examine the last 20 years and project trends for next 20 years.
- Strategy...developed goals, objectives and recommendations local communities might consider as they do their own local plans

During the planning process a Steering Committee of 10 persons (one from each county) was created. They met every other month and at times every month, providing review as each element was developed, including the creation of the goals, objectives and recommendations.

Some of the major milestones were a survey of elected officials in 2002, a random survey of the general public in 2003, and “Open House” meetings in each of the three sub-regions. Preliminary drafts were distributed in early August to all counties and numerous others. The Steering Committee made a motion to “recommend approval” on October 1, 2003. Recommended drafts were distributed in early October to all counties, libraries, and adjoining counties.

Throughout the process we mailed updates to nearly all elected officials in the Region and other interested parties. In addition, all agendas, minutes, and plan documents have been available on our website. To date, over 700 persons have visited that site.

If you have any questions on the planning process, please contact Dennis Lawrence at (715) 849-5510, Extension 304, or email at dlawrence@ncwrpc.org.

Transportation Plan Completed

The NCWRPC has completed a long-range transportation plan for the South Wood County Urban Area. RPC Staff worked with elected officials and staff of ten communities in the South Wood County area. The plan proposes an east side arterial and fourth river crossing that will combine to relieve traffic congestion on key routes throughout the urban area. The plan also envisions rerouting of state highways 13, 54, 73 and 173 to improve traffic flow. Rather than focusing only on their individual self-interest, communities came together to develop a plan benefiting the urban area as a whole, impressing DOT officials.

For more information, contact Darryl Landeau, AICP at 715-849-5510, Extension 308, or email dlandeau@ncwrpc.org.

City Approves Trail Plan

The City Council has unanimously adopted its Rhinelander Area Pathways Project (RAPP) plan. The RAPP is a bike and pedestrian plan prepared with the assistance of the NCWRPC. Commission Staff first put together a successful enhancements grant to fund the process. The Commission then worked with the Mayor's Office and a Citizen Advisory Committee to develop a plan that links the downtown with schools, parks and other key destinations around the City. The proposed trails also network with a planned countywide trail system. Rhinelander's



children and other citizens will benefit from this safe, convenient non-motorized transportation alternative. The NCWRPC will assist the City in preparing grant applications to DOT and DNR to begin building the first segment of the trail in 2004.

For more information, contact Darryl Landeau, AICP at 715-849-5510, Extension 308, or email dlandeau@ncwrpc.org.

Adams Co. AHMP Receives Praise

The Adams County All Hazards Mitigation Plan (AHMP) prepared by the NCWRPC has been praised by Wisconsin's Emergency Management Department (WEM). WEM recently completed a review of the draft plan calling it "an excellent document with good demographics and maps." The draft required only minor changes to meet federal planning requirements. All hazards mitigation plans are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for counties and local units of government to be eligible for federal disaster aid and to apply for grants to implement projects designed to mitigate the impacts of future disasters.



The plan includes a detailed risk assessment for a variety of potential hazards including: flooding, dam failure, severe thunderstorms, tornados, wild fires and winter storms. It was interesting to note that Adams County has a slightly higher probability of thunderstorms with hurricane force winds than the state as a whole. The plan includes proposed mitigation strategies such as distribution of NOAA weather radios, development of storm water management plans, and revision of building and zoning codes, among others.

WEM indicated that this plan "will serve as a good model for other counties developing an all hazards mitigation plan." The revised draft has been submitted to FEMA for final approval.

For more information, contact Darryl Landeau, AICP at 715-849-5510, Extension 308, or dlandeau@ncwrpc.org.

RPC Road Rating Assistance

The NCWRPC has assisted 20 communities in submitting their road pavement ratings as mandated by the state. State Statute 86.302(2) requires all counties and local governments to evaluate the condition of their streets and highways and submit them to WisDOT every two years. The RPC collected and sent in ratings for Forest County, 6 cities and villages, and 13 towns. Full pavement management plans were also prepared for Forest County and the Towns of Cassian and Harding. These plans establish 5-year maintenance programs and establish eligibility for local road improvement program funding. The RPC is currently planning pavement rating training sessions for local units in 2005.

For more information, contact Darryl Landeau, AICP at 715-849-5510, Extension 308, or email at dlandeau@ncwrpc.org.

Technology Zone Update

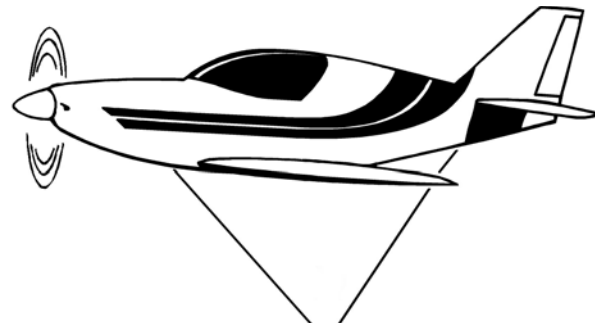
The NCWRPC is the administrator of the Wisconsin Department of Commerce's Technology Zone Program. In 2001, the NCWRPC applied for and received \$5 million dollars in tax credits to spur economic development in the Region.

Our zone, which is named the North Central Advantage Technology Zone, has been one of the most active zones in the state. At its last meeting Skyward, Inc. in Stevens Point was awarded \$300,000 in tax credits. Previous applications have been approved for Eagle Fuel Cells of Eagle River (\$70,000), Dental Crafters of Marshfield (\$189,000), Paget Equipment of Marshfield (\$200,000), and Eastbay, Inc. of Wausau (\$250,000). All of these companies will use these tax credits to expand their businesses and add new high-tech jobs within the Region.

For more information about this program, contact Craig Stahl at (715) 849-5510, Extension 311, or email at cstahl@ncwrpc.org.

Langlade Orthophoto Project

Recently North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission staff completed a countywide orthophoto production project for Langlade County. Airphotos were acquired by the county in 2003 and the raw images were converted into orthophotos by the NCWRPC using OrthoMapper®. OrthoMapper® is software that creates orthophotos from scanned unrectified photos. Orthophotos are used by many county departments for forest management, surveying, and zoning, among other things.



By using the NCWRPC, the county saved about seventy five thousand dollars. The completed orthophotos will then be tiled and run through an image compression program by the DNR. The final product becomes images tiled by townships. This project is an example of how local, regional and state agencies can work together.

If other counties are interested in having airphotos converted into orthophotos, contact Andy Faust at (715) 849-5510, Extension 305, or by email at afaust@ncwrpc.org.

E911 Wireless Grant

In December, the NCWRPC held a meeting to discuss submitting a multi-county grant application to assist with the purchase of equipment for the implementation of a Phase II E911 wireless dispatch system. The overall project is expected to cost about \$1.3 million.

An initial application is being submitted to the Public Safety Foundation for nearly \$500,000. By applying as a Region, we have a better chance of being funded and we will also have a more uniform Regional system. If this application is successful we will then apply to the State to fund the other parts of the project.

If anyone has any questions or would like any additional information, please contact Andy Faust at (715) 849-5510, Extension 305, or by email afaust@ncwrpc.org

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