Town of Bergen

Comprehensive Plan

Plan Commission Draft

November 2026

Town of Bergen Comprehensive Plan

Town Board

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Prepared with the Assistance of the:

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Table of Contents

Chapters

Chapter One: Demographics 1

Chapter Two: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources 11

Chapter Three: Housing 28

Chapter Four: Transportation 37

Chapter Five: Utilities & Community Facilities 46

Chapter Six: Economic Development 54

Chapter Seven: Land Use 65

Chapter Eight: Intergovernmental Cooperation 75

Chapter Nine: Implementation 81

Maps

Map One: Planning Area 86

Map Two: Natural Resources 87

Map Three: Prime Farmland 88

Map Four: Transportation 89

Map Five: Utilities & Community Facilities 90

Map Six: Existing Land Use 91

Map Seven: Future Land Use 92

Appendices

A. Town of Bergen Official Zoning Map
B. Public Participation Plan
C. Adoption Resolution
D. Adoption Ordinance

Chapter 1

Demographics

This chapter reviews the demographics of the Town of Bergen and identifies the major trends impacting the Town over the next few decades. Both Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin are presented for comparison.

BACKGROUND

The Town is located in the south-central portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Towns of Emmet and Mosinee to the north, the Town of Green Valley to the west, the Town of Knowlton to the east and the Town of Eau Pleine (Portage County) to the south.

Planning Process

In the Fall of 2025, the Town initiated a process to update its plan. The state planning law – 66.1001 – requires that a comprehensive plan be updated every ten years. A variety of Planning Commission meetings were held over the course of 2025 & 2026 to prepare the plan. A final Planning Commission meeting was held in the Spring of 2026 to review the final draft and recommend adoption of the plan by the Town Board. The plan was adopted by the Town Board in the Summer of 2026.

Public Participation

An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provides the citizens of the Town an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues that they would like addressed regarding the future development of their town. Local officials use this input to guide policies and decisions with greater awareness of the public's desires and consensus. See the adopted Public Participation Plan in **Appendix B**. The Town of Bergen posted all Planning Commission meetings to invite the public and held a Public Hearing to collect public input.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Population and Households

Historical Trends

According to the latest data from the American Community Survey, the Town of Bergen's population was an estimated 786 people in 2023. As shown in **Table 1**, this represents a 27.8 percent increase since 2000. In comparison, the populations of Marathon County and Wisconsin both increased by nearly ten percent between 2000 and 2023, with populations also increasing between 2010 and 2023.

Table 1: Population Trends

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	2000-2023 % Change	2010-2023 % Change
Town of Bergen	615	641	740	786	27.8%	22.6%
Town of Emmet	842	931	905	1,048	24.5%	12.6%
Town of Green Valley	514	541	515	477	-7.2%	-11.8%
Town of Knowlton	1,688	1,910	1,984	1,559	-7.6%	-18.4%
Town of Mosinee	2,146	2,174	2,216	2,479	15.5%	14.0%
Marathon County	125,834	134,063	138,013	138,067	9.7%	3.0%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,892,023	9.9%	3.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2019-2023

There were 292 households in the Town of Bergen in 2023, which represents an increase of about 23.2 percent from the number of households in 2000, as shown in **Table 2**. During the same period, the number of households in Marathon County increased by 19.2 percent, while the State experienced a 17.3 percent increase during the same time period. The Town of Emmet experienced the fastest household growth among surrounding communities. In 2023, the average household size in the Town of Bergen was 2.69, up from 2.56 in 2010. In comparison, Marathon County's average household size was 2.43 in 2023, down from 2.52 in 2010.

Table 2: Households

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	2000-2023 % Change	2010-2023 % Change
Town of Bergen	237	250	281	292	23.2%	16.8%
Town of Emmet	268	347	335	386	44.0%	11.2%
Town of Green Valley	187	315	222	205	9.6%	-34.9%
Town of Knowlton	661	889	803	709	7.3%	-20.2%
Town of Mosinee	767	864	888	905	18.0%	4.7%
Marathon County	47,702	53,176	56,517	56,873	19.2%	7.0%
Wisconsin	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,428,361	2,446,028	17.3%	7.3%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2019-2023

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Projections

Table 3 compares projected population in the Town of Bergen to Marathon County, based on projections made by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The Wisconsin DOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin's official population projections. These projections are based on historical population and household growth in the community, with more recent years given a greater weight. The Town of Bergen is projected to experience a slight decrease in population between 2020 and 2050. In comparison, Marathon County is projected to decrease by about 5.5 percent during this time.

Table 4 includes household projections completed by the WDOA. The number of households in the Town of Bergen is projected to slightly decrease between 2023 and 2040. This is in contrast to the projected increase for Marathon County. Further analysis of housing unit change can be found in the Housing and Land Use Chapters of this comprehensive plan.

Table 3: Population Projections

	2020	2023	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 % Change
Town of Bergen	740	786	747	748	736	-0.5%
Marathon County	138,013	138,067	136,750	134,615	130,380	-5.5%

Source: WI DOA Official Population Projections

Table 4: Household Projections

	2023	2025	2030	2035	2040	2023-2040 % Change
Town of Bergen	293	274	283	288	291	-0.3%
Marathon County	56,873	59,611	61,524	62,958	63,730	12.1%

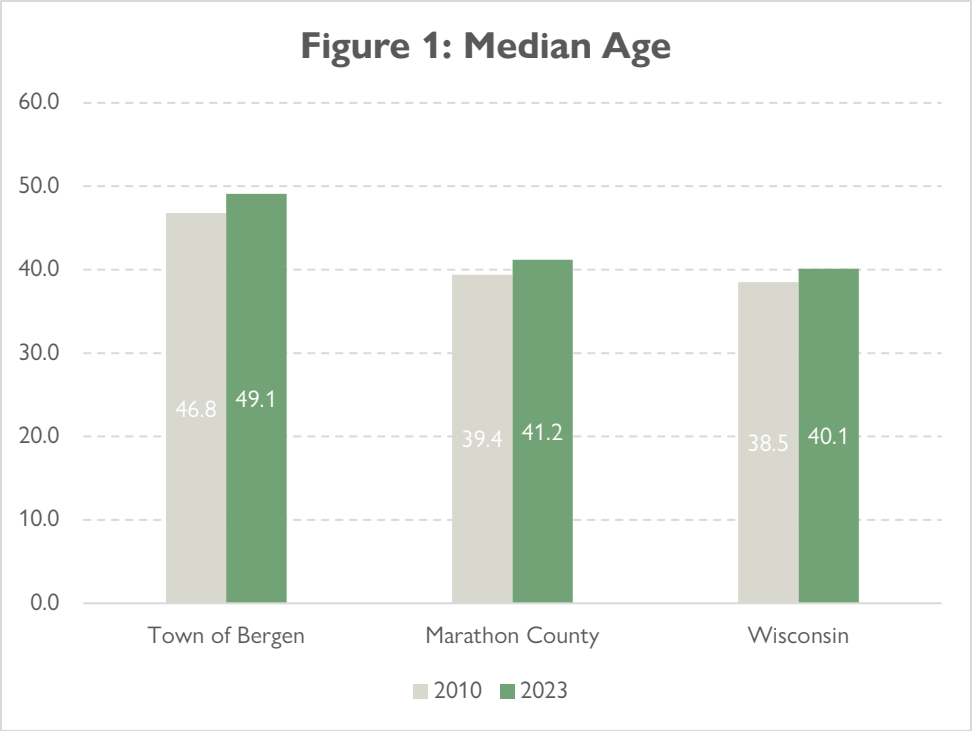
Source: WI DOA Official Population Projections

Age

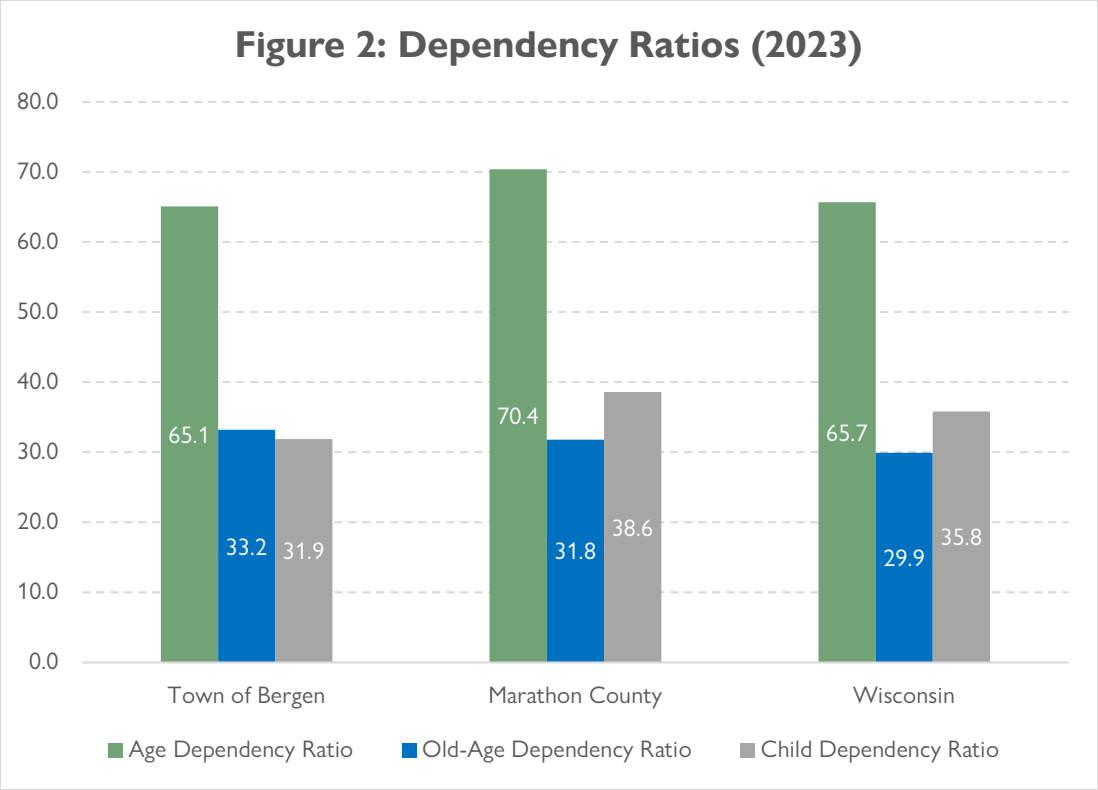
As shown in **Figure 1**, the median age in the Town of Bergen was 49.1 in 2023, slightly higher than it was in 2010 (46.8). The Town of Bergen's median age of 49.1 was slightly higher than the median age in both Marathon County (41.2) and Wisconsin (40.1) as a whole in 2023. Two age groups are particularly significant, those 65 and over and those under 18. The population under 18 is a dependent population that requires more services including quality childcare, schools, and specialized health care needs. Those 65 and over may require access to healthcare, transportation, and community services. The U.S. Census provides an age dependency ratio, which is the ratio of dependents (people younger than 15 or older than 64) to the working age population (those ages 16-64). The old age dependency ratio is the number of those over 65 divided by the number working age population and the child dependency ratio is that ratio of those under 16 divided by the working age population.

As shown in **Figure 2**, the Town of Bergen has a lower age dependency ratio, at 65.1, than Marathon County (70.4) and Wisconsin (65.7). In other words, there are over six dependents for every ten working aged adults within the Town of Bergen. The Town of Bergen has a lower Child Dependency ratio (31.9) than both the County (38.6) and the State (35.8). The Town of Bergen's Old-Age Dependency ratio of 33.2 is higher than those of Marathon County (31.8) and Wisconsin (29.9). These numbers reinforce the importance of support services in the Town, ranging from accessible healthcare, quality childcare, and social support systems.

Due to longer life expectancy and the size of the Baby Boomer generation, the 65 and older age group is expected to continue to increase in size. The trend is occurring at the state and national levels and to an even greater degree within the rural Wisconsin counties, especially in the northern one-third of the state. This population trend whereby older age categories increase significantly while younger age categories decline may impact the future labor supply, school system, and health care industry at the national, state, and local levels.



Source: ACS 2010 & 2023

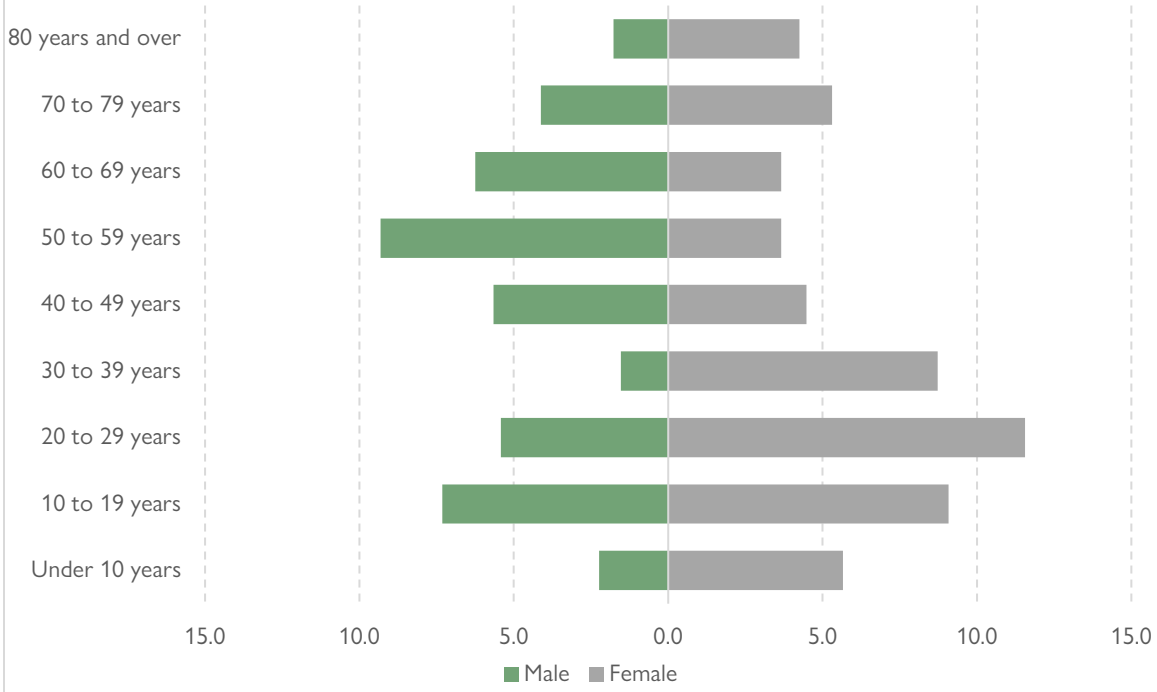


Source: ACS 2019-2023

Figures 3 and 4 compare the distribution of age groups for the Town of Bergen and Marathon County. Marathon County's population pyramid is slightly expansive showing slow and stable growth. In comparison to Marathon County, the Town of Bergen's population pyramid has more of an hourglass shape, indicating that there the Town has a lower proportion of its population in the middle age ranges (specifically the 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 age ranges) than for the younger and older age cohorts.

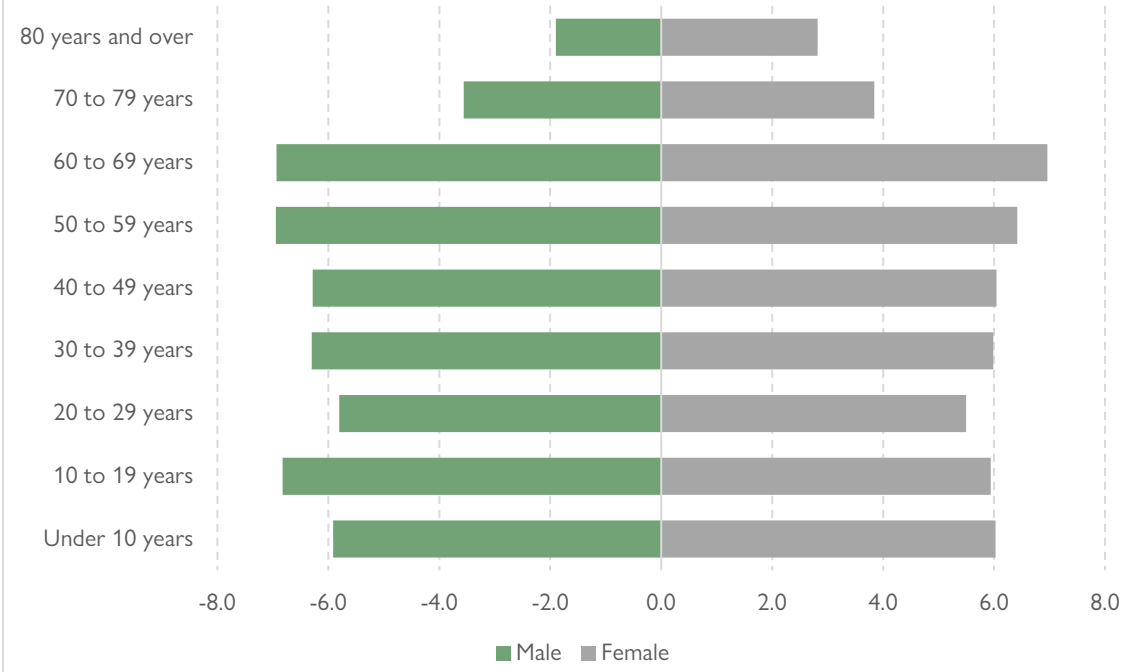
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Figure 3: Town of Bergen Population Pyramid



Source: ACS 2019-2023

Figure 4: Marathon County Population Pyramid

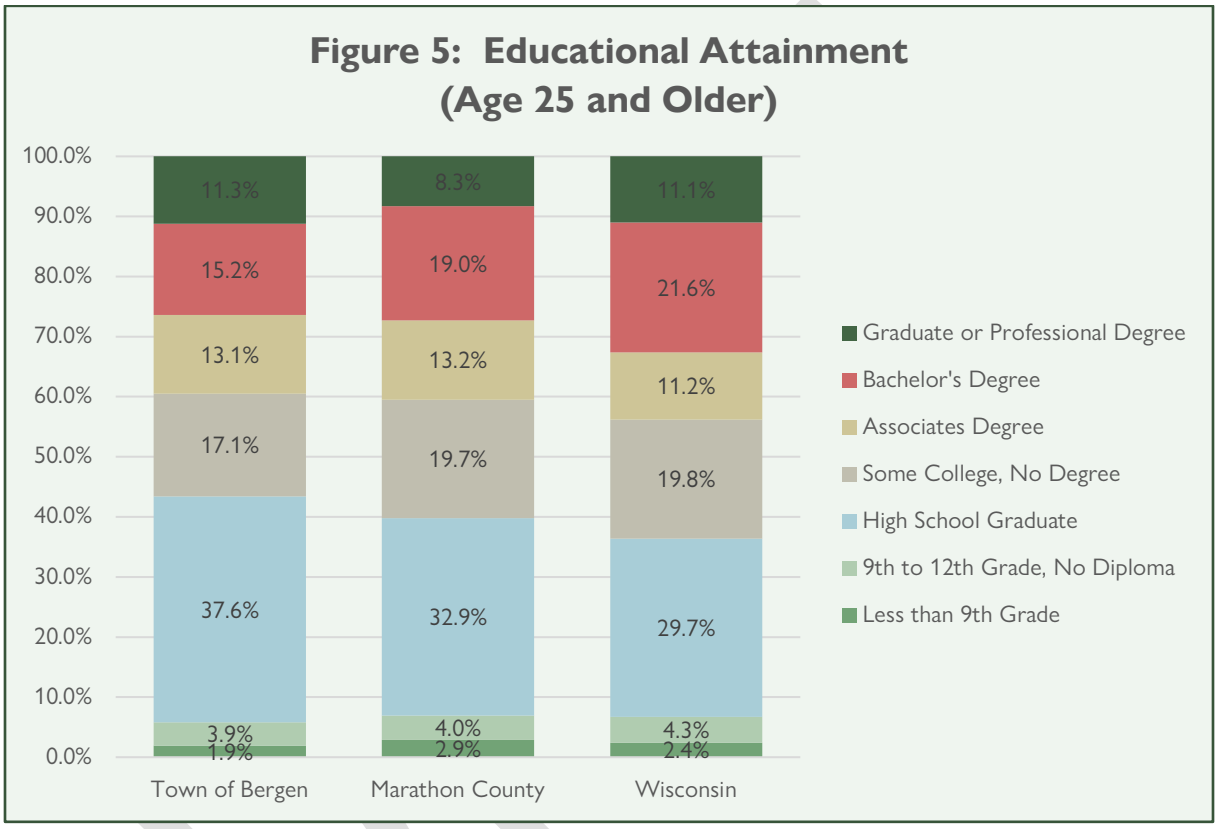


Source: ACS 2019-2023

Education and Income Levels

Education

Figure 5 compares educational attainment of those in the Town of Bergen to the County and the State by showing the highest level of education completed by residents ages 25 and older. In 2023, 94.2 percent of Town residents ages 25 and older had a high school education or higher. This was slightly higher than the County and State averages. In the Town of Bergen, over 26 percent of the population held bachelor's or other advanced degrees compared to 27 percent of County residents and 32 percent of State residents.



Source: American Community Survey (2019-2023)

Income

Median household income and per capita income are two commonly used measures of income. Median household income is the income for the middle point of households, meaning half of all households fall below that income, and half are above. Per capita income is the measure of average total income per person.

Median household income for Town of Bergen residents was $96,250 in 2023. **Table 5** shows that this was significantly higher than Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin. Median household income within the Town of Bergen was higher than the County and higher than the State in 2010. When adjusted for inflation, median household income in the Town increased by about 1.5 percent between 2010 and 2023. During this time, Marathon County experienced an increase in median household income of 6.2 percent while median household income in Wisconsin increased by 9.3 percent.

Table 6 illustrates that income per capita in the Town of Bergen was higher than both the County and the State in 2023. The Town of Bergen's per capita income was higher than both Marathon County's and Wisconsin's in 2010. When adjusted for inflation, per capita income in the Town of Bergen increased by nearly six percent between 2010 and 2023. This was a significantly slower increase than both the County and State, which rose at rates of 15 percent and 17.6 percent respectively.

Table 5: Median Household Income

Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2023	% Change 2000-23	% Change 2010-23
Town of Bergen	$94,313	$94,787	$96,250	2.1%	1.5%
Marathon County	$76,758	$71,764	$76,185	-0.7%	6.2%
Wisconsin	$74,423	$69,250	$75,670	1.7%	9.3%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)
*: Adjusted for inflation

Table 6: Per Capita Income

Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2023	% Change 2000-23	% Change 2010-23
Town of Bergen	$43,894	$44,046	$46,632	6.2%	5.9%
Marathon County	$35,185	$34,751	$39,970	13.6%	15.0%
Wisconsin	$36,150	$35,732	$42,019	16.2%	17.6%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)
*: Adjusted for inflation

Employment Characteristics

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the breakdown of the labor force and employed population living in the Town of Bergen in 2010 and 2023. The "employed population" includes those that are 16 and older. Between 2010 and 2023, the Town's labor force increased by 93 persons. This is likely due to the increase in overall population during the same time period.

Labor force participation indicates the percentage of those 16 years and over that are in the labor force. The labor force participation rate significantly decreased within the Town of Bergen from 2010 to 2023, decreasing by about four percentage points during this time. This is similar to the County and the State where labor force participation rates also significantly decreased during this time.

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Table 7: Labor Force Characteristics					
Minor Civil Division	Labor Force			Labor Participation Rate	
	2010	2023	2010-2023 % Change	2010	2023
Town of Bergen	340	433	27.4%	68.3%	64.5%
Marathon County	74,962	74,270	-0.9%	72.2%	67.2%
Wisconsin	3,078,465	3,125,057	1.5%	69.0%	65.5%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)

In 2010, the Town of Bergen had an employed population of 332 people; see **Table 8**. Employment within the Town of Bergen increased to 429 people by 2023, representing a 30 percent increase in employment since 2010. Employment increased in Marathon County during the same period, increasing by 3.0 percent. The State experienced an 8.9 percent increase in employment from 2010 to 2023. The U.S. Census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, and available to accept a job. The unemployment rate in the Town was 0.6 percent in 2023, lower than Marathon County's rate of 1.9 percent and the State's rate of 2.2 percent.

Table 8: Employment				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2023	2010-2023 % Change	Unemployment Rate
Town of Bergen	330	429	30.0%	0.6%
Marathon County	69,980	72,092	3.0%	1.9%
Wisconsin	2,869,310	3,125,057	8.9%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)

Table 9: Occupation of Employed Workers				
Occupation	Town of Bergen		Marathon County	
	2000	2023	2000	2023
Management, Professional & Related	97	155	19,745	26,665
Service	38	40	8,127	10,749
Sales & Office	72	83	17,457	14,242
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	47	60	6,716	6,473
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	78	91	14,505	13,963
Total	332	429	66,550	72,092

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)

As shown in **Table 9**, most residents in the Town of Bergen were employed in Management, business, science, and arts occupations. The second sector most represented was the Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving occupation group, followed by Sales & Office occupations. From 2010 to 2023, the most significant increase in employment were seen in Management, Professional & Related occupations.

Demographic Snapshot

- The Town of Bergen has experienced an increase in both population and the number of households since 2010. Population growth within the Town has slightly outpaced household growth during this time, leading to a slight increase in household size.

- The Town of Bergen is projected to slightly decrease in terms of the number of people through 2050 and is projected to slightly decrease in the number of households through 2040.

- There are a large number of people in the lower and older age categories. In 2023, the Town's median age of 49.1 was significantly higher than Marathon County's median age of 41.2 and Wisconsin's median age of 40.1.

- The median age slightly increased from 46.8 in 2010 to 49.1 in 2023.

- The Town of Bergen has a higher proportion of residents with a high school diploma than the County and State, a lower proportion of residents with a bachelor's degree, and a higher percentage with a graduate/professional degree than the County and State.

- The Town of Bergen's median household income of $96,250 in 2023 was higher than the median household incomes of Marathon County and Wisconsin. Additionally, per capita income within the Town was higher than both the County and State in 2023.

- The labor participation rate is slightly lower than the County or the State, and the unemployment rate of 0.6 percent in 2023 is lower than the State and the County.

- Most people in the Town of Bergen work in Management, Professional, and Related occupations.

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Chapter 2

Natural Resources

This chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. It is important to consider the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administrated at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below. Natural resources covered in this chapter include biology, geology, and geography including terrain, soils, water, forests, wetlands, wildlife, and habitat.

Cultural resources include a community's heritage, archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to indigenous peoples or other cultural groups. Cultural resources also include arts and the way of life in a community. Cultural resources are those elements around us that signify our heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinct.

PREVIOUS NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCE PLANS AND STUDIES

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by the county specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision-making regarding resource management and protection.

Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2021-2030

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of soil and water conservation in Marathon County from 2021 to 2030. The Land Conservation and Zoning Committee identified the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource protection efforts in Marathon County:

1. Land Use activities are well planned to enhance community development, minimize conflicts, maximize infrastructure investments and protect rural character.
2. Improve and protect the surface and ground water assets to enhance public health and safety, recreational opportunities and economic development.
3. Maintain the soil and water resources as productive assets through topsoil and organic matter conservation.
4. Marathon County agriculture and woodlot producers are economically strong.

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Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2024-2033

The Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan is required under Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The purpose of this plan is to guide and manage the preservation of farmland and agricultural production capacity. There are an abundance of agricultural areas in the Town, making this program of overall importance to the County in general and may have an impact on Town residents, for example, related to emerging trends such as the local foods movement.

Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Use Plan, 2021-2035

The Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Use Plan is a management guide for the Marathon County Forest and is updated every ten years. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future residents throughout the County. The report includes a number of recommendations for timber management, wildlife habitat and game management, land acquisition and forest boundary management, biodiversity management, watershed management and tourism.

Marathon County Groundwater Protection Guide, 2001

The Groundwater Protection Guide was an extension of a 1988 groundwater plan. In April 2001, the guide was created to assist county and local officials in setting policy related to groundwater. It also serves as a resource for information about groundwater and strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection. The County is considering a new groundwater planning effort.

USGS Protecting Wisconsin's Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning, 2007

In a joint effort by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the University of Wisconsin System and the U.S. Geological Survey, a website has been made available with data and information on geology, general hydrology and groundwater quantity and quality. The website was developed to aid government officials and planners in addressing groundwater in their comprehensive plans. The most recent data available for Marathon County was published in 2007. The full Marathon County report is available on the website: https://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/find/marathon/index.html.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Examining the natural environment is essential to the planning process. For instance, soils, topography, and geology can pose limitations to certain types of development, while an inventory of surface water resources, vegetation types, environmentally significant areas, and historical features identify those resources and areas which should be protected from over-development. This section of the plan identifies both the land and water resources of the Town.

Land Resources

The Town is located in the south-central portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Towns of Emmet and Mosinee to the north, the Town of Green Valley to the west, the Town of Knowlton to the east and the Town of Eau Pleine (Portage County) to the south. The Town of Bergen covers about 22,300 acres of land.

Topography and Geology

Marathon County's terrain is primarily the result of glaciation. The central area, except for the Wisconsin River Valley, is a mixed terrain of ground moraines and uplands underlain by bedrock at a depth of 2 to 20 feet. Pre-settlement this area was dominated by wetlands, which were drained to make way for agriculture. This area is characterized by a flat to gently rolling landscape, with large tracts of contiguous farmland and forest in the wetter areas and along streams.

Most of the soils found in Marathon County are best used for cropland and woodlands. The soils of Marathon County are primarily derived from the weathering of glacial drift, outwash, and bedrock. Soils play a significant role in determining the suitability for a site for development. There are no areas of steep slopes within the Town. Susceptibility for soil erosion is similar to the average soil loss experienced by Marathon County as a whole and is not a major concern.

Forests

According to land cover maps, approximately 10,000 acres, or about 45 percent of the Town of Bergen is covered by woodlands. These woodlands are an important resource in the Town. Forests provide protection for environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes, shorelands, wetlands, and flood plains. In addition, expansive forests provide recreational opportunities aesthetic benefits, and economic development.

Privately owned forestland includes approximately 2,123 acres enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, as of 2025. None of these lands are currently open to public access. These programs have been established to preserve and protect woodlands through practicing proper management techniques.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

Non-metallic mining is a widespread activity throughout the State of Wisconsin. There are currently no permitted active non-metallic mines located within the Town.

Environmentally Remediated Areas

Brownfields are commercial or industrial properties that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of these properties can be especially difficult. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) is an online database that provides information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation and clean-up of properties with contaminated soil and/or groundwater. Contaminated sites are not uncommon as all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for air emissions, groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. Contaminated sites originate when a property is used for such activities as a gas station, industrial processing facility, a landfill, or a laundromat. There are no listed open sites on the BRRTS currently in the Town of Bergen while there are three sites listed as closed.

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Rare Species and Natural Communities

Wisconsin's National Heritage Inventory Program (NHI) is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features throughout the State. The program's database, on the Wisconsin DNR website, identifies species and natural communities that are currently tracked by the NHI. As of October 2025, NHI tracked seven species and four natural communities within the Town, which are shown in **Table 10**.

Table 10: Rare Species & Natural Communities

Common Name	Status	Group
Alder Thicket	NA	Community
American Bittern	SC/M	Bird
Bald Eagle	-	Bird
Bird Rookery	SC	Other
Black-crowned Night-Heron	SC/M	Bird
Black Spruce Swamp	NA	Community
Black Tern	END - SOC	Bird
Blanding's Turtle	SC/P - SOC	Turtle
Cerulean Warbler	THR - SOC	Bird
Greater Prairie Chicken	THR	Bird
Northern Mesic Forest	NA	Community

Source: Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory

Status Definitions

- **NA** – Not Applicable
- **END** – Endangered
- **THR** – Threatened
- **SC** – Special Concern
  - **SC/P** – Fully Protected
  - **SC/M** – Fully Protected under Migratory Bird Act
- **SOC** – Species of Concern

Wisconsin's biodiversity goals are to identify, protect and manage native plants, animals, and natural communities from the very common to critically endangered for present and future generations. Knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin's native species and ecosystems are critical to their survival and greater benefit to society.

Water Resources

The Town of Bergen has an abundance of water resources. The Wisconsin River extends into a small residential area in the northeastern corner of the Town. The Big Eau Pleine River runs through the center, and the Little Eau Pleine River runs through the southwestern portion of the Town, through the George W. Mead State Wildlife Area. The Big Eau Pleine Reservoir is located in the center of the Town.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which water drains to a common point. In Wisconsin, watersheds vary in scale from major river systems to small creek drainage areas and typically range in size from 100 to 300 square miles. River basins encompass several watersheds. There are 32 river basins in Wisconsin, which range in size from 500 to over 5,000 square miles.

Marathon County is geographically located in the Central Wisconsin Basin, which is a subset of the entire Wisconsin River corridor located in Central Wisconsin. The Central Wisconsin River Basin is comprised of 29 watersheds, 17 of which are all or part in Marathon County.

The Town of Bergen is comprised of four watersheds. A small portion of the northeastern section of the Town lies within the Johnson and Peplin Creeks Watershed. The rest of the northeastern section of the Town lies within the Mosinee Flowage Watershed. The northwest and central portions of the Town lie within the Lower Big Eau Pleine River Watershed. The southern portion of the Town lies within the Little Eau Pleine River Watershed.

Surface Water

As previously mentioned, the Town of Bergen has an abundance of surface waters, as nearly 5,000 acres within the Town are covered by surface water. Prominent surface waters within the Town include the Wisconsin River, the Big Eau Pleine River, the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, the Little Eau Pleine River, and Townline Flowage.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin DNR classifies major surface water resources. These classifications allow water bodies of particular importance to be identified because of their unique resource values and water quality. The DNR has two categories which include Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state and are therefore deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries but receive or may receive water discharges.

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) share many of the same environmental and ecological characteristics. The primary difference between the two is that ORWs typically do not have any direct point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water. In addition, any pollutant load discharged to an ORW must meet background water quality at all times. Exceptions are made for certain types of discharge situations to ERWs to allow pollutant loads that are greater than background water quality when human health would otherwise be compromised. There are no waterbodies listed as an Outstanding Resource Water or an Exceptional Resource Water within the Town.

Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a list of impaired waters, commonly referred to as the "303(d) list." A water body is considered impaired if a) the current water quality does not meet the numeric or narrative criteria in a water quality standard or b) the designated use that is described in Wisconsin Administrative Code is not being achieved. A documented methodology is used to articulate the approach used to list waters in Wisconsin. Every two years, states are required to submit a list of impaired waters to EPA for approval.

There are no waterbodies located within the Town of Bergen that are listed as impaired on the most recent 303(d) list (2024). However, both the Big Eau Pleine River and the Little Eau Pleine River were listed in the Waters in Restoration List.

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Marathon County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species can alter the natural ecological relationships among native species and affect

ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. It is recommended that the Town continue to work with the Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning to develop public outreach education strategies. It is also beneficial that lake districts and associations continue to work with the DNR and property owners to manage invasive aquatic species within lakes and waterbodies throughout the Town of Bergen. The Town currently has documented cases of Eurasian Water-Milfoil, Curly-Leaf Pondweed, Purple Loosestrife, and Reed Canary Grass.

Wetlands

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle and local ecological systems. In terms of hazard mitigation, they act as water storage devices in times of high water. Like sponges, wetlands are able to absorb excess water and release it back into the watershed slowly, preventing flooding and minimizing flood damage. As more impermeable surfaces are developed, this excess capacity for water runoff storage becomes increasingly important.

Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants ranging from pesticides to animal wastes. Calm wetland waters, with their flat surface and flow characteristics, allow particles of toxins and nutrients to settle out of the water column. Plants take up certain nutrients from the water. Other substances can be stored or transformed to a less toxic state within wetlands. As a result, the lakes, rivers and streams are cleaner.

Wetlands that filter or store sediments or nutrients for extended periods may undergo fundamental changes. Sediments will eventually fill in wetlands and nutrients will eventually modify the vegetation. Such changes may result in the loss of this function over time. Eradication of wetlands can occur through the use of fill material. This can destroy the hydrological function of the site and open the area to improper development. The WDNR has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands.

Wetlands cover over 7,026 acres of land or about 31.5 percent of the Town. Wetlands are shown in **Map 2 – Natural Resources**.

Floodplains

A floodplain is generally defined as land where there is a one percent chance of flooding in any year. The primary value of floodplains is their role in natural flood control. Floodplains represent areas where excess water can be accommodated whether through drainage by streams or through storage by wetlands and other natural detention/retention areas. Specific areas that will be inundated will depend upon the amount of water, the distance and speed that water travels, and the topography of the area. If uninterrupted by development, the areas shown on a map as floodplains should be able to handle the most substantial (regional) flood, i.e. those that have a probability of occurring once every one hundred years. Floodplains are shown in **Map 2 – Natural Resources**.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. It is replenished by rain and snow melt that seeps down into cracks and crevices beneath the land's surface. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines water's pH, saturation index, and the amount

of hardness or alkalinity in water. Wells are drilled 20 to 200 feet deep to yield 5 to 50 gallons per minute, but yields of 200 gallons per minute are possible. Shallow wells in these deposits are subject to pollution.

Groundwater is the major source of water consumption in Marathon County. All public and private water supplies and most domestic, industrial, and agricultural water supplies in the county rely on groundwater. As residential development continues to expand in the rural areas of the county and agricultural methods intensify, the concern for groundwater protection grows. Depth to groundwater within the Town varies from shallow to moderately deep. Quantities are ample throughout most of the Town for current level of development and land uses. However, quantities are limited in an area along CTH C.

Contamination of groundwater typically is the result of land uses associated with modern development. Many land use activities have the potential to impact the quality of groundwater. A landfill may leach contaminants into the ground that end up contaminating groundwater. Gasoline may leak from an underground storage tank into groundwater. Fertilizers and pesticides can seep into the ground from application on farm fields, golf courses, or lawns. Leaking fluids from cars in junkyards, intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated groundwater.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture has played a dominant role in the culture and economy of Marathon County for the past century. A significant number of people throughout the county are employed in agricultural-related industries and the economic health of many rural communities is directly tied to agriculture. Agriculture in Wisconsin has experienced several changes in the past decades including relying more upon technological advances to farm successfully and conversion of significant amounts of cropland to non-farm uses. This has created more recognition of the need for meaningful farmland preservation programs.

Farmland Resources

According to land cover maps, agricultural lands comprise over 3,100 acres (14%) of the Town. Farmland is much a part of the history, culture, and economy of the Town of Bergen. Preservation and attention to these resources is and will continue to be a priority.

Prime Farm Soils

Prime farmland soils are located primarily north of the Eau Pleine Reservoir. Another area of prime farm soils is south of the Reservoir and north of CTH C. These class designations refer to the quality of soils for growing crops and are based on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifications. Class 1 soils are the best soils in Marathon County for growing all crops. Class 2 soils are also very good agricultural soils, however, they may be prone to wetness and are therefore less desirable than Class 1 soils. It should be noted that not all prime farm soils are used for farming; some have been developed with residential or other uses. The "prime farm soils" designation simply indicates that these soils are good productive farmland.

Map 3 depicts areas of prime farmland and other soil properties within the Town. Definitions for the classifications mapped in Map 3 are listed below:

- **Prime Farmland**: Soils that have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops, and are also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, range-land, forestland, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields or crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming practices.

- **Farmland of Statewide Importance**: Soils that fail to meet one or more of the requirements of prime farmland, but are important for the production of food, fiber, or forage crops. They include those soils that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

- **Prime Farmland if Drained**: Soils that would meet all prime criteria if artificial drainage or irrigation were provided. Drainage of soils is typically more common in the Midwest than irrigation.

- **Not Prime Farmland**: Soils that do not meet any qualifications for special designation.

Farmland Preservation

Farmland preservation is available to landowners within the Town of Bergen and throughout Marathon County, as it impacts local economy and culture. The **Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan** details county policies and strategies with the goal of supporting and sustaining active farms. The Farmland Preservation Plan identifies and distinguishes farm preservation areas from non-farm preservation areas and future development areas. Areas mapped as Farmland Preservation Areas within the Town are mainly located in the northern and central portions of the Town.

Property owners in farm preservation areas may participate in the Farmland Preservation Program, an income tax credit program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners can receive a state income tax credit in exchange for keeping land in agricultural use. These tax credits are intended as an incentive to keep land in active farming and meet soil conservation standards. Property owners determine if they would like to participate in farmland preservation practices.

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HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A cultural resource is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those elements that signify heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources include buildings; sites and landscape that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society.

Community History

The Town of Bergen was originally part of Knowlton, until Bergen split off in 1870 to form its own town. John Week, who ran a sawmill on the Big Eau Pleine River, was the first Town chairman. Lumber was originally floated down the Eau Pleine River, but in the 1870s the Wisconsin Valley Railroad line reached Dancy on Bergen's eastern border. Weeks built a road to Dancy and lumber was then shipped from there.

The settlement of Moon was on the border of Bergen and Mosinee to the north. Moon was first settled in 1887 by Ed O'Connor. A sawmill was established in Moon in 1889, and by the mid-1890s the settlement had 33 families and 160 loggers working in the vicinity.

Bergen is the location of the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, a manmade reservoir built in 1937 by the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company. The reservoir was created behind a two-mile long earthen dam at the lower end of the lake. The reservoir covers 6,677 acres in Bergen and Green Valley. The reservoir is one of 21 in the Wisconsin River Reservoir System that are used for flood control and low flow augmentation on the Wisconsin River.

Both Bergen and Green Valley, split off from Bergen in 1913, have been greatly affected by the Little Eau Pleine River and various efforts to drain the land. The area around the Little Eau Pleine River was low-lying and swampy, and known as Rice Lake. Various drainage efforts began as early as 1903. This area ultimately became the George W. Mead Wildlife Area, established in 1959, which covers over 4,700 acres in Bergen and large sections in Green Valley, Day, and in Wood and Portage counties.

Cultural Resources

Historic structures and cultural areas provide a sense of place, enhance community pride, and reinforce social and cultural enrichment. The identification of existing historic structures and cultural areas are an important consideration in all town planning efforts, as these features are critical to defining a community's look and character.

There are no properties within the Town listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but the Eau Pleine Dam has been determined as eligible for listing on the NRHP. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains the Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory (AHI) that identifies any properties that may have been surveyed in the past. The Eau Pleine Dam is currently the only property within the Town of Bergen listed in the AHI.

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Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Programs

There are a variety of programs available to the Town related to natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. Some of these are identified below. The following list is not all-inclusive. For specific program information, the agency or group that offers the program should be contacted.

Private Forestry

The WDNR's goal is to motivate private forest landowners to practice sustainable forestry by providing technical forestry assistance, state and federal cost-sharing on management practices, sale of state produced nursery stock for reforestation, enrollment in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law Programs, advice for the protection of endangered and threatened species, and assistance with forest disease and insect problems. Each county has at least one Department forester assigned to respond to requests for private forestland assistance. These foresters also provide educational programs for landowners, schools, and the general public. Both private and industrial forest landowners have enrolled their lands under the Managed Forest Law.

Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The purpose of the MFL is to promote good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required by way of an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (80% must be capable of producing merchantable timber) are eligible and may contract for 25 or 50 years. Open lands must allow hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and sight-seeing; however, up to 80 acres may be closed to public access by the landowner. There is a 5% yield tax applied to any wood products harvested. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Parks and Recreation Program

The WDNR gets their authority for administering the Parks and Recreation Program from Chapter 27 Wisconsin Statutes. This program provides assistance for the development of public parks and recreation facilities. Funding sources include: the general fund, the Stewardship Program, Land and Water Conservation fund (LAWCON), and program revenue funds.

Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

Nonprofit conservation organizations are eligible to obtain funding for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes and restoration of wildlife habitat. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, protection of rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail, and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Nonpoint Source Program (NSP)

Wisconsin's NPS Program, through a comprehensive network of federal, state and local agencies working in partnership with other organizations and citizens, addresses the significant nonpoint sources in the state. This program combines voluntary and regulatory approaches with financial and technical assistance. Abatement activities include agriculture, urban, forestry, wetlands and hydrologic modifications. The core

activities of the program — research, monitoring, data assessment and management, regulation and enforcement, financial and technical assistance, education and outreach and public involvement — work to address current water quality impairments and prevent future threats caused by NPS pollution. Contact the WDNR for more information.

Drinking Water and Groundwater Program

This WDNR program is responsible for assuring safe, high quality drinking water and for protecting groundwater. This is achieved by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, the investigation and sampling of drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. A team of specialists, engineers, hydrogeologists, and a program expert and program assistants staff the program. WDNR staff provide assistance to public and private well owners to help solve water quality complaints and water system problems. They also provide interested citizens with informational or educational materials about drinking water supplies and groundwater.

The Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center allows residents in the Town of Bergen and other areas in central Wisconsin to determine the safety of their well water by providing the opportunity to have their well water tested. Residents can send in water samples of their well water to any state-certified testing laboratory, including the Water and Environmental Analysis Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, which houses the Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center.

Aquatic Habitat Protection Program

The WDNR provides basic aquatic habitat protection services through their staff. Staff members include Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission-FERC) Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and their assistants (LTEs). The program assists with water regulation permits, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

Endangered Resources Program

The DNR's Endangered Resources staff provides expertise and advice on endangered resources. They manage the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI), which is used to determine the existence and location of native plant and animal communities and Endangered or Threatened Species of Special Concern. The NHI helps identify and prioritize areas suitable for State Natural Area (SNA) designation, provides information needed for feasibility studies and master plans, and maintains the list of endangered and threatened species. All management activities conducted by Wildlife Management and Forestry staff must be reviewed to determine the impact on NHI-designated species. A permit for the incidental take of an Endangered or Threatened species is required under the State Endangered Species Law. The Endangered Resources Program oversees the permit process, reviews applications and makes permit decisions. Funding for the Endangered Species Program comes from a number of sources, including tax checkoff revenue, license plates, general program revenues (GPR), gaming revenue, Natural Heritage Inventory chargebacks, wild rice permits, general gifts and Pittman Robertson grants.

Fisheries Management Program

The WDNR funds this program primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The program assists with fishery surveys, fish habitat improvement/protection, and fish community manipulation. This program may also be used to fund public relations events and a variety of permitting and administrative activities involving fisheries.

Wildlife Management Program

The DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a complex web of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives primarily directed toward wildlife habitat management and enhancement. Programs include land acquisition, development and maintenance of State Wildlife Areas, and other wild land programs such as State Natural Areas. Wildlife Staff work closely with staff of state and county forests to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. Wildlife Management staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis's, develop basin wildlife management plans and collaborate with other DNR planning efforts such as Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to assure sound habitat management. Funding comes from the federal government in the form of Endangered Species grants and Pittman-Robertson grants and from state government in the form of hunting and trapping license revenues, voluntary income tax contributions, general program revenue and Stewardship funds.

NRCS Conservation Programs

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through these programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by USDA's Farm Service Agency
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Small, Limited, and Beginning Farmer Assistance
- Working Lands for Wildlife

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program which was established to restore wetlands on lands which were previously altered for agricultural use. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other federal agencies.

Land is eligible for enrollment in the WRP if the landowner has owned that land for at least one year, and the land is restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Landowners may choose to restore wetlands with a permanent or 30-year easement, or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with the USDA. If a permanent easement is established, the landowner will receive payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100% of the wetland restoration costs. The 30-year easement payment is just 75% of what would be provided for a permanent easement on the same site, and 75% of the restoration costs. Voluntary

cost-share restoration agreements are generally for a minimum of 10 years, and 75% of the cost of restoring the land to wetlands is provided. In all instances, landowners continue to control access to their land.

Discovery Farms Program

Discovery Farms is a program administered by UW-Extension that works with over 40 farmers across the state of Wisconsin. The program's mission is to "develop on-farm and related research to determine the economic and environmental effects of agricultural practices on a diverse group of Wisconsin farms; and educates and improves communications among the agricultural community, consumers, researchers and policymakers to better identify and implement effective environmental management practices that are compatible with profitable agriculture." On-Farm projects fall under one of the following categories: Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Tile Monitoring, Leachate Collection Systems, Watershed water quality, and Edge-of-Field Runoff Monitoring.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities through the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program (PLWPG). The goal is to improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led conservation solutions by increasing on the ground practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society

This office is part of the Wisconsin Historical Society and serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. In partnership with communities, organizations and individuals, the SHPO works to identify, interpret and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Marathon County Historical Society is available to assist Town of Bergen residents with preserving their own history, and artifacts that also build upon the history in Marathon County. Their mission is to collect, preserve, and exhibit materials related to the history of Marathon County, and to use those materials to help people learn about North Central Wisconsin, connect with their roots, and explore their own historical connections.

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Natural Resources and Cultural Resources Issues

- **Run-off Impacts on Water Quality** – There is concern over fertilizer run-off into the Eau Pleine River and its impacts on water quality.

- **Lack of Current Information** – Although a brief countywide historic properties survey was carried out in 1975-77, there has been no update. Many properties identified at that time may be gone, while other properties not previously surveyed may now be evaluated in a new context. It is necessary for the County to have current information about cultural resources in order to maximize planning and make the best use of historic properties.

- **No Recognition Process** – Outside the City of Wausau, there is no process to recognize historic building or begin to plan for their protection. Once historic properties are identified, towns and villages do not have an established mechanism for recognizing them or integrating them into ongoing planning processes.

- **Rural Character and Historic Resources** – In Marathon County, residents have expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the County and raised concerns about increasing ex-urban development and the decline of working farms. An important part of rural character is the rural landscape and the buildings that convey that sense of place. While it is important to address the location and type of new development, there is also a need to preserve some visible reminders of rural character, including working farms. Without preserving some of the existing resources, including farmsteads and farmlands, the very characteristics that attracted residents will increasingly be lost.

- **Protection of Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries** – Cultural resources planning includes identification and protection of archaeological sites and historic cemeteries. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a list of reported sites and cemeteries, representing a fraction of sites that are actually present. This information is often overlooked and should be incorporated into the planning process for local communities.

- **Development of Productive Agricultural Lands** – There are concerns with potential conversion of current agricultural lands into developed lands.

- **Wind, Battery Energy Storage Systems and Data Centers** – There are concerns regarding the negative impacts that facilities can have on land and the rural character of the Town.

- **Air Quality** – There are concerns regarding the harmful impacts of blue algae on air quality throughout the Town.

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- **Water Quality** – There are concerns with algae levels in the reservoir.

- **Partnerships** – Work with partners such as EPPIC (Eau Pleine Partnership for Intergrated Conservation), BEPCO (Big Eau Pleine Citizens Organization), Marathon County Conservation Department, WDNR, UW-Extension, UWSP – College of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Valley Improvement and Consolidated Water and Power and other entities that may present themselves.

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GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Protect water quality and quantity throughout the Town.

Objectives:

- To work with Marathon County, the WI DNR and other appropriate agencies to identify critical zones, such as groundwater recharge areas, and update applicable Town ordinances.
- Work with Marathon County, the WI DNR, UW-Extension, and other applicable agencies to address fertilizer runoff in the Town and its impacts on the Big Eau Pleine River and overall water quality.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen discourages development in areas that are critical to maintaining the groundwater supply.

Strategies and Actions:

- Update applicable Town ordinances to discourage development in critical groundwater protection areas.
- Work with UW-Extension and Marathon County to address uncontrolled runoff from overuse of fertilizers and other chemicals.

Goal 2: Preserve and protect areas of environmental significance.

Objectives:

- Identify those natural resources that are of particular importance to residents, such as the Eau Pleine River, and actively pursue their protection.
- Explore public ownership of forestland.
- Encourage private participation in programs, such as the Managed Forest Law, to preserve forests.
- To explore use of public easements or land trusts to preserve forested areas.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen discourages development that will have negative impacts on natural resources, such as the Big Eau Pleine River.
- The Town of Bergen supports public ownership of forestland, to preserve this resource for the future.

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Strategies and Actions:

- Identify areas with large stands of forested area and encourage those owners to participate in the Managed Forest Law, and other applicable programs.
- Develop a program, in concert with Marathon County and surrounding municipalities, to encourage the donation of parcels to the public, for the purposes of preservation.

Goal 3: Preserve historically significant buildings and sites.

Objectives:

- To work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources so they may be considered in future planning.
- To ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials, or archaeological sites are protected from encroachment by roads or any development activities.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen supports the preservation of historical sites and structures.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin to identify and preserve historical structures and sites in the Town.

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Chapter Three

Housing

Housing characteristics and trends are important components of comprehensive planning. The physical location of housing can determine the need of many public facilities and services. Furthermore, understanding dynamics in the market likely to affect housing development in the future provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of residential development. Understanding the factors affecting people's ability to meet their own housing needs provides a basis for reinforcing community ties, fostering economic development and environmental sustainability and improving the quality of life.

Previous Plans and Studies

Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan

The Consolidated Housing Plan is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development *(HUD) in the application process required of the states in accessing formula program funds of Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Shelter Grants and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) "The Consolidated Plan provides the Framework for a planning process used by states and localities to identify housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs and resources and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting those needs."

North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2025

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan evaluates opportunities for improved and expanded housing throughout the North Central Wisconsin Region. The Regional Comprehensive Plan's housing chapter includes a listing of programs and strategies for enhancing the housing market and identifies the following issues facing housing in the Region:

- Affordability
- Availability
- Housing Condition
- Senior, Disability-friendly, and Low-Income Housing
- Seasonal Housing

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ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2023

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 22 percent of households in Marathon County that are above the federal poverty level, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities, or "ALICE" households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are largely employed but do not earn enough in wages to meet the "household survival budget," which does not allow for any savings. The report states that many ALICE households provide vital services, such as retail, health care, childcare, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

- The ALICE report shows that 11 percent of Town of Bergen households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in the Town of Bergen is more financially prosperous than the average Marathon County household at-large. This is based on 2023 data, so affordability is likely a larger challenge as housing prices and inflation have increased since then.

Housing Stock Assessment

Housing Type and Tenure

In 2023, the Town of Bergen had a total of 316 housing units, as shown in **Table 11**. The Town of Bergen had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than Marathon County (73 percent) and a significantly higher percentage than the State of Wisconsin (68 percent). The average household size of 2.69 was significantly higher than both the County (2.54) and the State (2.50). Over 11 percent of households within the Town were occupied by a single householder and about 42 percent of households had at least one individual age 60 and older.

Table 11: Housing Units by Type and Tenure, 2023

	Town of Bergen	Marathon County	Wisconsin
Total Housing Units	316	60,296	2,750,750
Total Occupied Housing Units	292	56,873	2,446,028
Vacant Housing Units	24	3,423	304,722
Seasonal Housing Units	6	787	785,681
Owner-occupied Housing Units	278	41,754	1,660,505
Renter-occupied Housing Units	14	15,119	785,523
Average Household Size	2.69	2.54	2.50
Percent Owner-occupied	95.2%	73.4%	67.9%
Percent Householder Living Alone	11.3%	27.6%	31.1%
Percent with Individuals 60 or Over	41.8%	42.5%	41.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2019-2023

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Structural Characteristics

According to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey data, all of the housing units in the Town of Bergen are classified as single-family, as shown in **Table 12**. Both the Town of Bergen and Marathon County have a housing stock with a higher percentage of single-family housing than the State as a whole. The lack of multi-family housing in the Town contrasts with Marathon County and the State as about 19 percent of housing units in Marathon County are multi-family and about 26 percent of housing units in Wisconsin are multi-family.

Table 12: Housing Units by Structural Type, 2023

	Single-Family		Multi-Family		Mobile Home		Total
Town of Bergen	316	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	316
Marathon County	47,043	78.0%	11,680	19.4%	1,573	2.6%	60,296
Wisconsin	1,945,331	70.7%	719,925	26.2%	85,494	3.1%	2,750,750

Source: American Community Survey 2019-2023

Age Characteristics

The age of a community's housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940's for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. For example, average homes constructed in the later part of the previous century and the first decade of the millennium are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Marathon County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Table 13 outlines build dates of housing units throughout the Town, County, and State based on 2023 American Community Survey data. Over 18 percent of the Town of Bergen's housing units were built before 1940, compared to about 17 percent of housing units in Marathon County and about 18 percent of housing units statewide. About 45 percent of housing units within the Town of Bergen were built between 1970 and 1999, a higher proportion than both Marathon County (37 percent) and Wisconsin (37 percent). Housing growth has slowed significantly over the past decade, as only about 8.5 percent of the Town's housing stock has been built since 2010, a trend that is also being experienced within Marathon County and Wisconsin. Nationwide, home supply has not been constructed to meet demand since the Great Recession of 2008, leading to increased competition and higher prices.

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Table 13: Year Structure Built						
	Town of Bergen		Marathon County		Wisconsin	
Before 1939	58	18.4%	10,172	16.9%	498,159	18.1%
1940-1949	23	7.3%	2,974	4.9%	147,973	5.4%
1950-1959	8	2.5%	5,969	9.9%	286,285	10.4%
1960-1969	7	2.2%	4,910	8.1%	263,412	9.6%
1970-1979	60	19.0%	8,956	14.9%	394,381	14.3%
1980-1989	23	7.3%	5,819	9.7%	262,147	9.5%
1990-1999	60	19.0%	7,764	12.9%	355,183	12.9%
2000-2009	50	15.8%	9,154	15.2%	338,275	12.3%
2010 or Later	27	8.5%	4,578	7.6%	204,935	7.5%
Total	316	100.0%	60,296	100.0%	2,750,750	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2019-2023

Value Characteristics

Table 14 details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, County, and State. In 2023, the median housing value was $253,100 in the Town of Bergen. This was significantly higher than Marathon County's median housing value of $205,500, and higher than the State of Wisconsin's median home value of $247,400. Only about 15.5 percent of the homes within the Town are valued between $100,000 and $199,999, and a majority (79.5%) of the Town's housing stock is valued at over $200,000.

Table 14: Housing Values of Owner-Occupied Units, 2023							
	Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $149,999	$150,000 to $199,999	$200,000 to $299,999	$300,000 or More	Median Value
Town of Bergen	4.3%	0.7%	7.2%	8.3%	46.0%	33.5%	$253,100
Marathon County	3.6%	8.8%	16.4%	19.4%	29.4%	22.5%	$205,500
Wisconsin	3.9%	5.9%	11.2%	15.1%	27.1%	36.8%	$247,400

Source: American Community Survey 2019-2023

Housing Affordability

Several factors contribute to the affordability of housing in Marathon County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the dwelling. Household size and income are key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban (HUD) development recommends that housing costs do not exceed 30 percent of monthly income. If housing costs exceed 30 percent of monthly income, a household is considered cost-burdened. HUD also indicates that lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is no greater than 31 percent of the monthly household income. Low-income households that pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent may have difficulty affording other household necessities such as food, childcare, and healthcare costs. Severely cost-burdened households are at risk of becoming homeless.

Table 15 shows that the percentage of owner-occupied households in the Town of Bergen that are cost-burdened is significantly lower than the County and lower than the State. Due to the low number of rental households within the Town, affordability data for rental households within the Town is not available.

Table 15: Housing Affordability (Owner-Occupied Units)

	With Mortgage	Percent Cost-Burdened	No Mortgage	Percent Cost-Burdened
Town of Bergen	$1,614	5.4%	$559	3.7%
Marathon County	$1,444	16.7%	$574	10.3%
Wisconsin	$1,652	22.1%	$647	12.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2019-2023

**Cost-Burdened means a household is paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs*

Specialized Housing

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Aging & Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin (ADRC-CW), the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout Marathon County. As the number of elderly populations increases in the coming years, there will most likely be a greater need for a wider variety of housing options.

Senior Housing

Housing for seniors typically consists of a range of housing options that provide a spectrum of assistance starting with individual units or homes with little or no assistance, independent living communities for seniors that remain independent, assisted living facilities for those who are no longer able to live on their own, and nursing homes for those that need skilled medical care.

According to research by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the overwhelming majority of seniors prefer to "age in place," or remain in their home throughout retirement. This can be difficult for those in rural areas such as the Town of Bergen, as the ability to access medical care and necessary goods and services can become burdensome.

The southwestern portion of Marathon County is served primarily by housing options in the Villages of Stratford and Spencer, and the City of Marshfield. Secondary senior housing options are in the Cities of Abbottsford, Colby, and Wausau.

Summary of Housing Characteristics

The Town of Bergen is abundant with homes and farmsteads and many residents live and work within the Town, particularly in the area of agriculture. The Town itself has an overriding rural character, and is abundant with natural resources, agricultural resources, and cultural resources.

Most housing consists of single-family detached housing that is owner-occupied. A substantial amount of the Town's stock housing was constructed before 1940 and falls into mid-valuation ranges. With the trend towards smaller and more households in the upcoming decades, the community would benefit from a wide range of housing options. Consistent with the state as a whole, new housing construction over the past decade has stalled. There is a need for construction of additional housing units to accommodate demand. It would be desirable to construct housing in a variety of styles to create affordability and more adequately meet the needs of those at various income levels and desiring a range of amenities.

There are a large number of residents nearing retirement age in the Town. Seniors typically desire housing that is smaller, accessible, and near needed healthcare services and amenities. This need will continue throughout the upcoming decades. These are important considerations when looking at future housing policy and planning.

Housing Issues

No issues related to housing within the Town of Bergen were identified.

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Housing Programs

There are a variety of state and federal housing programs geared at addressing a variety of housing issues. Grants and low interest loans are available for counties, communities, or individual homeowners and renters. The following are some housing resources administered through the state using state or federal funds that are available to participants.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
- Rental Assistance (Section 8) Programs
- Multifamily Loan Fund
- National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling
- WHEDA Advantage
- FHA Advantage
- First-Time Home Buyer Advantage
- WHEDA Tax Advantage
- WHEDA Foundation Grant Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD)

- Single Family Direct Home Loans
- Single Family Home Loan Guarantees
- Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance Grants
- Rural Housing Site Loan
- Housing Preservation & Revitalization Demonstration Loans & Grants
- Housing Preservation Grants
- Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans
- Multi-Family Housing Loan Guarantees
- Multi-Family Housing Rental Assistance

State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR)

- Housing Grants and Loans
- Homelessness Assistance and Prevention
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD)
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program
- Housing Cost Reduction Initiative Program (HCRI)
- CDBG – Small Cities Housing and Revolving Loan Program

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- The HUD Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program
- The HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- CDBG – Small Cities Program

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Goals, Objectives & Policies

Although the Town has not historically played a role in housing, it supports equal opportunity housing, and understands the importance of sound housing stock for its residents and the community as a whole. A review of housing stock assessment information has led to the establishment of the following housing policy statement:

Goal 1: Locate new residential development in appropriate areas.

Objectives:

- To discourage development in natural, undeveloped areas.
- To guide new housing to locations where the extension of service provision will be minimally impacted.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen discourages development from occurring in natural, undeveloped areas that are not contiguous with existing developed sites.

Strategies and Actions:

- Direct new housing growth to areas that are contiguous with existing developments.
- Ensure future developments will not negatively impact natural resources.

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Chapter Four

Transportation

Transportation is necessary for the effective movement of people and goods within the community. It is also essential to connect those within the Town with connections outside of the Town. Transportation is also critical to development and land use. This chapter provides an inventory of the existing transportation facilities and services within the Town of Bergen.

Transportation is a crucial component of livability and provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities within a sustainable pattern of development. The existing network, from roads to rails needs to be coordinated to maximize efficiency for the overall system. The connection between home and work is an important part of any transportation system. A range of transportation alternatives should be supported, including walkability whenever possible.

Previous Plans and Studies

Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2025

The 2025 Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, addresses issues of livability in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development, and land use. The RCP identifies the following issues facing transportation within the Region:

- A need for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Dispersed population in rural areas
- Weight limits on roads
- Rail and roadway conflicts
- Funding transportation maintenance and improvements
- An aging population's ability to continue depending on driving
- Transporting students as school enrollment declines and school facilities consolidate

Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan, 2024

Marathon County developed this five-year plan that was facilitated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs.

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Connections 2050

Connections 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted recently, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. WisDOT is currently updating several of the modal plans.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This 2018 plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across the communities. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifying other potential trail and route user groups, identifying routes and describing policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout north central Wisconsin.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2001 document [revised in 2003] clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to $108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including $91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. These funds will be distributed via formulas and grants to the states. Local units will be able to access the funds through various grant programs.

Road Network

Major roadways within the Town of Bergen include County Highway C, County Highway O, and Moon Road, which is a shared road between the Towns of Bergen, Mosinee, and Emmet. The road network within the Town of Bergen is a network of county highways together with various local roads. The jurisdictional and functional breakdown of the Town of Bergen road network is shown in **Table 16**.

Functional Classification

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of the services they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those facilities

that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access.

The functional classifications are generally defined as:

- **Principal Arterials** serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas with populations greater than 5,000 or connect major centers of activity. They carry the highest traffic volumes and are designed to accommodate longer trips.

- **Minor Arterials**, like principal arterials, minor arterials also serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intra-community continuity and service for trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.

- **Collectors** provide both land access service and traffic circulation, within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the arterials through the area to the local streets. The collectors also collect traffic from the local streets and channel it into the arterial system.

- **Local streets** comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher order systems. Local streets offer the lowest level of mobility and high volume through-traffic movement on these streets is usually discouraged.

Table 16: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class

Jurisdiction	Functional Classification			Totals
	Arterial	Collector	Local	
State*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
County	0.00	11.86	0.00	11.86
Town	0.00	2.90	22.96	25.86
Totals	0.00	14.76	22.96	37.72

Source: WisDOT & NCWRPC

**: WisDOT has jurisdiction over interstate and federal highways*

Jurisdiction

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as described above, identifies the road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a "Federal-aid highway" does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its

service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

As previously noted, these functional classifications are generally equated with the jurisdictional divisions. In the more developed larger urban communities, this relationship may not be as rigid, whereas the local community constructs and maintains all classes of the roadway system. However, in the typical rural transportation system the jurisdictional and the functional classifications maintain a closer relationship. The greatest emphasis of traffic in rural areas is generally on non-local efficient movement, whereas local access is secondary due to relatively low population densities.

Major Road Facilities

Functional classification and jurisdiction are summarized below for all major roads within the Town of Bergen.

- **County Highway C** is an east-west major collector that connects to STH 97 to the west and STH 34 to the east.
- **County Highway O** is a north-south major collector that crosses the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir in Bergen.
- **Moon Road** is a minor collector that borders the Town of Bergen.

Local Roads

The Town of Bergen local road network consists of approximately 26 miles of local roads, most of which are unpaved. As part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), WisDOT requires all local units of government to submit road condition rating data every 2 years. The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) program and WISLR are tools that local governments can use to manage pavements for improved decision making in budgeting and maintenance. Towns can use this information to develop better road budgets and monitor roads in need of repair.

Road Maintenance

The Town of Bergen uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The PASER system is the rating system used by most Wisconsin communities. The PASER system rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10. This scale is broken down as follows:

- "1" and "2" = very poor condition
- "3" = poor condition
- "4" and "5" = fair condition
- "6" and "7" = good condition
- "8" = very good condition
- "9" and "10" = excellent condition

Table 17 shows a summary of pavement conditions in the Town of Bergen. Roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below "fair" must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. The roads that display a surface rating of "good" or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions. Based on the latest PASER ratings, a significant portion of the local roads in the Town of Bergen need improvement. About 89 percent of roadways within the Town have asphalt or sealcoat surfaces, while the remaining 11 percent of roadways in the Town are gravel or unimproved roads.

Table 17: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2025

Surface Condition Rating	Miles	Percent of Total Mileage
Very Poor	3.27	12.7%
Poor	1.59	6.1%
Fair	10.98	42.5%
Good	3.84	14.8%
Very Good	0.00	0.0%
Excellent	4.74	18.3%
Not Rated	1.44	5.6%
Total	25.86	100.0%

Source: WisDOT 2025

Trucking

There are no designated long truck routes located within the Town as designated by WisDOT. I-39, U.S. Highway 10, and State Highways 107 & 153 are the closest designated long truck routes to the Town. Local truck routes often branch out from these major corridors to link local industry with the main truck routes as well as for the distribution of commodities within the local area. Local issues such as safety, weight restrictions, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

Rail

There is no rail access to the Town. Shipments needing rail service would have to be trucked to nearby cities with rail access such as Marshfield or Wausau.

Airport

Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. It is the only airport within Marathon County or neighboring counties that provides scheduled air passenger services. The Central Wisconsin Airport is located east of Mosinee and is easily accessible via I-39. In 2011, the airport underwent a terminal renovation and expansion project which increased operational space, expanded the security checkpoint, increased parking, and relocated rental cars to a separate facility. The airport is currently served by three airlines, Delta, American and United Airlines.

Bus/Transit

There is no public transit service available in the Town. North Central Health Care provides paratransit services for persons over 60 or persons with disabilities who live within Marathon County. They have demand service available with 72-hour notice. Information and services are available by calling 715-841-5101.

Bicycling and Walking

All roads are available for bicycle and pedestrian travel in the Town of Bergen. However, some roads may not provide sufficient shoulder areas for safe pedestrian access. Additionally, there is a seasonal hiking trail in the George W. Mead State Wildlife Area.

The 2018 North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommends the addition of on-road bicycle infrastructure along portions of County Highway C and County Highway O within the Town of Bergen.

ATV/UTV

All local roads and both County Highways are open for ATV/UTV use within the Town of Bergen.

Specialty

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin serves Marathon County residents with a variety of resources including those related to transportation. More details about transportation services for ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents can be found on their website. Some examples include Abby Vans, which provides weekend transportation services county-wide and Wheels to Work which assists Marathon County families/individuals to overcome transportation obstacles between home and work.

Transportation Issues

- **ATV's & UTV's on Roads** – ATV's and UTV's are allowed to use Town roads and pose safety concerns.
- **Parking along County Highways** – Parking along County Highways poses safety concerns as the speed limit on these highways is 55 miles per hour within the Town.

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Transportation Programs

Below is a listing of programs that may be of assistance to the Town with regard to the development of the local transportation system. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is the primary provider of programs to assist local transportation systems. A wide variety of programs are available to serve the gamut of jurisdictions from county down to the smallest town. The programs most likely to be utilized by rural towns such as Bergen include:

- General Transportation Aids
- Flood Damage Aids
- Town Road Improvement Program
- Town Road Improvement Program – Discretionary
- Local Bridge Improvement Assistance
- Local Transportation Enhancements
- Traffic Signing & Marking Enhancement Grant
- Rustic Roads
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

More information on these programs can be obtained by contacting the WisDOT region office in Wisconsin Rapids or on the Internet at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/index.htm.

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Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Coordinate future road development with other jurisdictions.

Objectives:

- Work with WisDOT, Marathon County, Portage County, and other municipalities to plan for future road and highway projects.

Policies:

- The Town supports development of appropriate highway extensions and improvements throughout the area.

Strategies and Actions:

- Meet with all appropriate jurisdictions, throughout the planning process, to be involved and informed about future plans and efforts.
- Work with WDOT and other agencies or communities to participate in highway development planning in the area.

Goal 2: Address the use of All Terrain Vehicle's (ATV's) on Town Roads.

Objectives:

- Revise the Town's policy on the use of ATV's on roads to address ongoing safety concerns.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen will limit the use of ATV's to Town maintained roads.

Strategies and Actions:

- Review and revise the Town's policy of ATV use on roads to address safety concerns.
- Coordinate with Marathon County to revise the Town's policy on ATV use on roads.

Goal 3: Continue to utilize a formal process for (CIP/PASER) road maintenance.

Objectives:

- Update and maintain the CIP and PASER analysis on a yearly basis.

Policies:

The Town of Bergen will continue to use the CIP and PASER analysis to budget for road maintenance.

Strategies and Actions:

- Continue to use the PASER/CIP on a yearly basis.

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Goal 4: Work with Marathon County, WisDOT, the Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin Valley Improvement, Consolidated Water Power and other appropriate agencies to address safety concerns on county highways and roadways connecting to public access points.

Objectives:

- Work with the appropriate agencies, including Marathon County, to determine the best way to address safety issues concerning parking on county highways.
- Work with appropriate agencies to obtain funding assistance for road maintenance for roadways that are heavily utilized for public access.

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Chapter Five

Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, cable and internet. Community facilities include local government buildings, libraries, educational facilities, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Utilities and community facilities play an important role in the economy and livability of a community.

Previous Plans and Studies

Marathon County All Hazards Mitigation Plan

This document examines general conditions, including an inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services throughout the County. Risk assessment is at the heart of the All-Hazards Mitigation program. In order to mitigate the risks, it is necessary to assess their relative importance. The report reviews a series of weather disasters; how they have affected the county in the past and how future instances are likely to affect the County and how local government should respond to such occurrences. The report concludes with suggested mitigation measures that might be taken by local governments to reduce the risk from identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years.

Utilities

Water Service

The Town of Bergen does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. Concerns exist over water quality as properties continue to develop.

Wastewater

There is no public sewer system in the Town of Bergen. Therefore, all development in the Town uses on-site septic systems. Generally, these private sewage systems fall into four categories:

- Conventional systems – these systems include an absorption field that is buried under the natural ground level.
- At-grade systems – consist of a septic tank and soil absorption bed. Treatment begins in the first inch of soil.

- Mound systems – these systems include an absorption field that is constructed above ground creating a "mound".
- Holding tank systems – these systems are considered a last resort and are only allowed if other septic systems cannot be used. Because of the geology and soil types in the area, most homes in the Town use holding tanks.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Harter's provides solid waste disposal service throughout the Town.

The Marathon County Solid Waste Management Department is in charge of waste management for non-hazardous solid waste. It consists of the 575-acre landfill, recycling programs, composting, and waste-to-energy.

Stormwater Management

Surface water management (also referred to as "storm water management") is one of the key components in efforts to improve water quality. It primarily involves controlling the volume, quality, and storage of runoff. Marathon County is especially concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, urban runoff, and issues often identified with rural areas such as soil erosion, animal waste and pesticides. Non-point pollution is best addressed at the watershed level.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

The Town of Bergen receives electric power from Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS). Residents of the Town of Bergen must provide their own LP gas service and storage. The Town should consider adopting an ordinance or policy that requires an environmental impact study for potential energy projects.

Solar Energy Potential

The Town of Bergen recognizes the potential impacts to our community of large-scale Solar Energy projects (100 MW or greater). Since the landscape of our Township offers prime conditions for solar energy development, the Town recognizes the need to encourage the siting of potential solar projects to specific areas that best fit the needs and desires of both the citizens and the agricultural community while minimizing negative impacts on existing land use trends and public interests.

Wind Energy Potential

The Town of Bergen recognizes both the positive and negative impacts to our community of large-scale wind energy projects. Although wind energy can be a very cost-effective source of electricity, wind energy

developments do pose potential issues for the Town, mainly regarding visibility, noise, negative impacts on property values, and harmful impacts on wildlife.

Since the landscape of our Township offers prime conditions for wind energy development, the Town should consider adopting an ordinance focused on the regulation of wind turbines that complies with the local government regulatory limitations set by 2009 Wisconsin Act 40 - ch. PSC 128, Wis. Adm. Code and State Statute §.66.0401. Under current state law, a local ordinance may require a study, money compensation, and annual reports, among other requirements.

Cable/Internet

Internet service providers serving the Town of Bergen include TDS Telecom (fixed), Bug Tussel Wireless (Wireless), Country Wireless (Wireless), Viasat (Satellite), HughesNet (Satellite), and Starlink (Satellite). Additionally, several companies provide internet access via mobile access. There are no cable providers offering service within the Town. There is currently one communication tower located within the Town.

Community Facilities

Town Operations

The Bergen Town Hall is a highly utilized multi-use facility used for reunions, receptions, Town meetings, and various other community functions year-round.

Schools

The Town of Bergen is served by the Mosinee School District. The Mosinee School District is home to three main schools: Elementary – Middle School – High School, all of which are located in the City of Mosinee, a rural virtual academy, and 4-year-old kindergarten. There are approximately 2,000 students enrolled throughout the school district.

In addition to the public school district, there are also several private schools serving the area, including Northland Lutheran High School.

Post-Secondary Education

- **Northcentral Technical College (NTC)** – located in Wausau, NTC has over 190 program offerings including two-year associates degrees that combine technical skills with general education. NTC also offers one- and two-year technical diplomas concentrated on hands-on learning and short-term certificates to improve job skills. NTC also has a transfer credit program with the UW school system.

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- **Mid-State Technical College** – located in Marshfield, is one of 16 regional colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College system, with campuses in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. They offer associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a wide variety of high demand fields.

- **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP)** – located in the City of Stevens Point, UWSP was founded in 1894. When combined with its satellite campuses in Wausau and Marshfield, total enrollment is over 8,000. The campus offers 80 baccalaureate degrees, 17 graduate programs, and 90 minors, and is known for its robust fine arts and natural resources programs.

- **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point at Wausau** – offers courses leading to a baccalaureate degree. They also offer graduate degrees including Master of Business Administration (MBA), Physician Assistant (in partnership with UW Madison), and Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (in partnership with Northern Vermont University).

- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point at Marshfield** – located in Marshfield, students can work toward a variety of bachelor's degree options including business administration, nursing, and social work.

Libraries

The Town of Bergen is served by the Marathon County Library System, as well as the municipal library in Marshfield. The Marathon County Public Library – Wausau Headquarters serves as the main branch of the library system and is located in downtown Wausau. The Mosinee Branch-Joseph Dessert Library is the closest branch of the Marathon County Library System to the Town.

Cemeteries

There are two known cemeteries located within the Town. Moon Cemetery is located on Steeple Road while the Norwegian Lutheran Our Savior Cemetery is located on County Highway C a half mile east of its intersection with County Highway O.

Public Safety

- **Law Enforcement** – Police protection for the Town of Bergen is provided by the Marathon County Sheriff's Office.

- **Fire and Emergency Response** – Fire protection and First Responder service are provided by the Mosinee Fire District. There is interest in partnering with other entities to share resources and services in an effort to improve the level of service within the Town of Bergen.

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- **E-911 Dispatch Service** – The Marathon County Sheriff's Office Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies in Marathon County.

Hospitals and Medical Services

There are three main hospitals in proximity to the Town of Bergen. Aspirus Wausau Hospital located at 425 Pine Ridge Boulevard in Wausau, serves as the major hospital in Marathon County, and is a multi-specialty regional health center. Marshfield Clinic Hospital in Weston is a regional hospital with a wide range of advanced care services. Marshfield Medical Center is located at 611 Saint Joesph Avenue in Marshfield and offers a full array of services, specialty services and a complete rehabilitation unit. Residents also report visiting the Aspirus Stevens Point Hospital located in Stevens Point. The nearest health care facility to the Town of Bergen is the Marshfield Clinic facility located in the City of Mosinee.

Childcare

The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of community- based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin. Marathon County is within Region 6, which is served by Childcaring, Inc., located in Wisconsin Rapids.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential childcare providers, and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs. Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages. There are twelve licensed childcare facilities located within 10 miles of the Town, with most being located in or near the City of Mosinee.

Recreation

Parks

The Town of Bergen does not own or operate any public parks. However, there are several park and recreation facilities not owned by the Town that are located within the Town, including the George W. Mead Wildlife Area and Big Eau Pleine Park. Descriptions of parks and other recreation facilities located within or near the Town of Bergen are provided below.

George W. Mead Wildlife Area – The George W. Mead Wildlife Area is a very large Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) conservation and recreation area in the south and west portions of the Town of Bergen, extending across Green Valley and into the Town of Day, creating a conservation area of approximately 20,000 acres. Much of the area consist of wetlands surrounding a series of lakes and flowages connected by the Little Eau Pleine River. Portions of the Mead Wildlife Area are open for hiking, hunting, and fishing.

Big Eau Pleine Park – Marathon County owns and maintains Big Eau Pleine Park, which is half in Bergen and half in Green Valley. Big Eau Pleine is the County's largest park, at 1,450 acres located on a peninsula on the north shore of the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir. Active recreation areas are concentrated in two main sites on the shores of the reservoir. Park facilities include: campgrounds, picnic tables, grills, restrooms, CCC-era shelters, drinking fountains, boat launches, swimming beaches, play equipment. The extensive trail system allows for cross-country skiing, hiking, and nature walks. Fishing is a popular activity.

Nine-Mile County Forest Recreation Area – Nine-Mile County Forest Recreation Area, located in Rib Mountain and the Town of Mosinee, is known as a recreation area with any miles of hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country ski trails. Skiing is promoted with a ski chalet and over 25 kilometers of one-way loops. The forest is open to hunting and snowmobiling. The Nine-Mile County Forest Recreation Area has over 4,900 acres of mixed uplands, marshes, and water impoundments.

Rib Mountain State Park is the closest state park to the Town of Bergen. The park's main feature is Rib Mountain, which at 1,924 feet above sea level is one of the highest elevations in the State of Wisconsin. The park surrounds the mountain and contains picnicking amenities, hiking trails, and reservable facilities that include a scenic amphitheater, indoor gathering space, and picnic shelters. The top of the park offers spectacular views of the Wausau area and Wisconsin River. Granite Peak Ski Area is on the north face of the mountain and offers downhill skiing and snowboarding.

Utilities and Community Facilities Issues

- **Well Contamination** – Residents in the Town are concerned about potential well contamination resulting from farm field runoff.
- **Septic System Failure** – Some concerns have been expressed about the potential failure of old septic systems and resulting impacts on water quality.
- **Future Recreational Facilities** – About half of the respondents to a previous community survey indicated support for establishing local recreational facilities. At this time, the Town does not have any specific plans to acquire or develop any local park and recreation facilities, but it may be something they want to explore.
- **Solar Energy Farms** – There are concerns about harmful impacts of commercial solar development on prime farmland and the agricultural landscape.
- **Wind Energy** – There are concerns about harmful impacts such as noise, health, aesthetics, negative, loss of productive farmland, and negative impacts on property values associated with wind energy developments.
- **Battery Energy Storage Systems and Data Centers** – There are concerns about harmful impacts such as noise, health, aesthetics, negative, loss of productive farmland, and negative impacts on property values associated with these developments.

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Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Maintain current provision of services.

Objectives:

- To perform annual budget allocations to fund public services.
- Continue to explore methods of cost-sharing, such as equipment sharing, with surrounding municipalities to increase the efficiency by which services are provided.
- Support efforts to consolidate the Mosinee Fire District and with other entities to improve safety and EMS services if possible.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen supports sharing services and equipment with other communities in efforts to decrease costs and increase services.

Strategies and Actions:

- Meet with surrounding communities to identify avenues of cost and equipment sharing.

Goal 2: Protect groundwater throughout the Town.

Objectives:

- Encourage homeowners to actively address failing septic systems.
- Communicate with Marathon County, UW-Extension, and other applicable agencies to address fertilizer runoff in the Town and its impacts on water quality.
- Develop a cluster subdivision ordinance that allows the construction and use of shared septic facilities.
- Work with Marathon County and other appropriate agencies to identify and address failing systems in the Town of Bergen.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages homeowners to address failing septic systems.
- The Town of Bergen encourages future developments to be designed in a conservation subdivision layout.

Strategies and Actions:

- Coordinate with Marathon County to assist residents that have failing septic systems.
- Develop a cluster subdivision ordinance.
- Coordinate with Marathon County and UW-Extension to address the over-use of fertilizer in the Town.

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Goal 3: Provide effective public safety services.

Objectives:

- Work with the Marathon County Sheriff Department and the City of Mosinee to continue to provide effective police, fire and EMS services.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen supports the continued provision of fire, EMS, and police services from existing providers.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with existing service providers to identify areas where cost savings could be achieved, or services expanded by coordinating with other service providers.

Goal 4: Support the Marathon County Park System.

Objectives:

- To encourage proper funding for maintenance of local Marathon County parks.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen supports the continued funding of the Marathon County park and forest system.

Strategies and Actions:

- Encourage adequate funding levels of the Marathon County park and forest system.

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Chapter Six

Economic Development

The economic base of the community serves as an important driver for current and future land use. Economic characteristics include such components as the size of the civilian labor force, comparative employment growth, employment by industry, unemployment rates, and commuting patterns. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Residents of one community often work in another. Similarly, changes in a major industry can impact jobs and growth far beyond the community where the business is physically located. It is therefore important to understand a local community's economy in light of its regional context.

Assessment of these components of the economic base provides an important historical perspective on current land use patterns and provides insights that help to predict possible future directions and opportunities for growth of the local economy.

Previous Plans and Studies

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2026

Marathon County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The NCWRPC is the agency responsible for maintaining that designation. As part of the designation, the NCWRPC annually prepares a CEDS. This report summarizes and assesses economic development activities over the past year and presents new and modified strategies to promote growth.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Recovery Plan, 2022

The purpose of this plan is to guide economic stabilization, recovery, and resiliency efforts within the North Central Wisconsin Region in the face of the current pandemic as well as future events that cause economic shocks. The goal of this plan is to develop a set of strategies that will help the Region's local economies recover from and become more resilient to economic shocks by identifying best practice strategies that help spur economic stabilization and recovery in the wake of economic shocks and that will help build local economic resilience. Helping local recovery and resiliency efforts will help the regional economy as a whole recover and grow back even stronger than before the disaster struck. A dashboard that monitors the status of economic metrics for broadband, childcare, housing, transportation, workforce and talent attraction, tourism, hospitality, economic indicators, and social indicators is found on NCWRPC's website.

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Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), 2025

The RCP's economic development chapter examines the Region's economy and compares it to statewide and national trends, followed by a series of economic development recommendations and local, Regional, State, and federal programs. The following issues facing economic development within the Region were identified:

- An aging workforce, retirements, and the need for a skilled and flexible workforce
- Unpredictable weather impact on agriculture, outdoor recreation, tourism, and financial resiliency
- The need for broadband expansion
- Childcare availability and affordability
- Unknown future of the forest products industry
- Limited access to active rail lines
- Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and their unknown future impact on the economy
- The increase in flexible, hybrid, and remote work and its impact on commercial real estate, local businesses, community facilities, and job recruitment strategies
- Inflation's impact on businesses, County and municipal budgets, household finances, and growing wealth gaps between households of different income levels

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2025

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 32 percent of households in Marathon County that are living in poverty or are experiencing financial hardship, making them "ALICE" households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are largely employed but do not earn enough in wages to meet the "household survival budget," which does not allow for any savings. The report states that many ALICE households provide vital services, such as retail, health care, childcare, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

- The ALICE report shows that 11 percent of Town of Bergen households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in the Town of Bergen is more financially prosperous than the average Marathon County household at-large. This is based on 2023 data, so affordability is likely a larger challenge as housing prices and inflation have increased since then.

Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, 2026

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan sets an economic development goal of being the most prosperous county in the state. The plan analyzes education, workforce development, economic development, and sets goals and objectives in these key areas. Goals include:

- Ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to receive a world-class education
- Ensuring that every worker have family supporting job and that every business has a strong workforce
- Ensuring that Marathon County is a diverse economy and place of opportunities where people and businesses can grow to be successful

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Economic Environment

County Economic Environment

Historically, the Marathon County economy was based on forest resources and diversified agriculture. Increased population and infrastructure – railroads, roads and dams for power enabled the area to evolve beyond simple agriculture and logging operations. Resources that once left the area unprocessed were now transformed into finished products in the County, providing employment opportunities and adding value in forest products and agricultural processing. A number of related manufacturing operations grew up in the area, some based on forest products and agricultural products, others supplying the existing industries with fabricated metals products. As these industries progressed, so did industries such as transportation, communications, public utilities, government, trade, finance, insurance, and real estate. The County now enjoys a well- diversified economy.

Marathon County data is presented for comparison, because the Town of Bergen is located within Marathon County. It should be noted that most of the predominant economic data for Marathon County is derived from the Wausau metropolitan region, as most of the Marathon County population is centered in this area.

Economic Sectors

Table 18 details employment by sector for the Town of Bergen and Marathon County. In 2023, there were 429 persons employed in the thirteen basic economic sectors in the Town, a 30 percent increase from the Town's total employment in 2010. In 2023, the leading industry sectors for Town of Bergen employed residents were the Education, Health & Social Services and Manufacturing sectors.

Overall, there were 72,092 persons employed in the basic economic industry sectors in Marathon County in 2023. Employment within Marathon County has increased by three percent since 2010 when there were 69,980 persons employed. The leading industry sectors within Marathon County in 2023 were the Education, Health and Social Services; Manufacturing; and Retail Trade sectors.

Between 2000 and 2023, there were several dramatic shifts in employment throughout industries within Marathon County. Four sectors – the Other Services; Public Administration; Professional Services; and the Education, Health, and Social Services sectors – experienced significant increases in employment between 2010 and 2023, with each of these sectors experiencing increases in employment of over 15 percent. Only four sectors – the Information; Manufacturing; the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining; and the Retail Trade sectors – experienced a decrease in employment within the County during this time.

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Table 18: Employment by Industry Sector						
Sector	Town of Bergen			Marathon County		
	2010	2023	% Change	2010	2023	% Change
Ag., Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	10	8	-20.0%	2,231	2,106	-5.6%
Construction	8	37	362.5%	3,891	4,029	3.5%
Manufacturing	85	83	-2.4%	16,870	14,814	-12.2%
Wholesale Trade	26	2	-92.3%	2,369	2,629	11.0%
Retail Trade	23	56	143.5%	7,697	7,604	-1.2%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	22	30	36.4%	3,116	3,247	4.2%
Information	3	5	66.7%	1,026	649	-36.7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	24	41	70.8%	5,471	5,544	1.3%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative & Waste Mgmt Services	33	23	-30.3%	3,865	4,576	18.4%
Education, Health and Social Services	68	112	64.7%	14,895	17,437	17.1%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	8	17	112.5%	4,702	4,703	0.0%
Public Administration	7	4	-42.9%	1,393	1,649	18.4%
Other Services	13	11	-15.4%	2,454	3,105	26.5%
Total	330	429	30.0%	69,980	72,092	3.0%

Source: American Community Survey (2019-2023)

Labor Force Analysis

Labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. **Table 19** compares the labor force of the Town of Bergen with that of Marathon County. Between 2010 and 2023, the Town of Bergen experienced a 27.4 percent increase in the labor force, as the Town's labor force increased from 340 residents in 2010 to 433 residents in 2023. The increase in the Town's labor force during this time is in contrast to the decrease experienced in Marathon County during the same time period. With a labor force consisting of 74,270 persons in 2023, Marathon County's labor force has decreased by 0.9 percent since 2010, when the County's labor force consisted of 74,962 persons.

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Table 19: Town of Bergen Labor Force						
	Town of Bergen			Marathon County		
	2010	2023	Percent Change	2010	2023	Percent Change
Population 16 years and over	498	671	34.7%	103,816	110,587	6.5%
Labor Force	340	433	27.4%	74,962	74,270	-0.9%
Employed	330	429	30.0%	69,980	72,092	3.0%
Unemployed	10	4	-60.0%	4,856	2,140	-55.9%
Unemployment Rate	2.0%	0.6%	-70.0%	4.7%	1.9%	-59.6%
Participation Rate	68.3%	64.5%	-5.6%	72.2%	67.2%	-6.9%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)

Unemployment

Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. Stay-at-home parents, retirees, or persons not searching for employment are not considered unemployed because they are not considered part of the labor force. In 2010, the Town of Bergen had 2.0 percent unemployment, and the 2023 unemployment rate was lower at 0.6 percent. The Town of Bergen's unemployment rate was similar to both Marathon County (1.9%) and the State of Wisconsin (2.2%) in 2023.

Workforce Participation

Workforce participation is a measure expressed in terms of a percentage of persons actively seeking employment divided by the total working age population. People not participating in the labor force may not seek employment due to a variety of reasons including retirement, disability, choice to be a homemaker, or are simply not looking for work. In 2010, over 68 percent of the Town of Bergen's population over the age of 16 was in the labor force. In 2023, the Town of Bergen had a significantly lower labor force participation rate, at 64.5 percent. The Town's labor force participation rate in 2023 was lower than Marathon County's participation rate of about 67 percent. The Town of Bergen also had a lower participation rate than the State (65.5%), while Marathon County had a slightly higher participation rate than the State.

Laborshed

A laborshed is an area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. In 2023, there were 20 jobs located within the Town of Bergen, with 19 of these jobs being filled by persons who live outside of the Town. In contrast, there were 387 workers who live in the Town of Bergen that commuted to locations outside of the Town for work, as shown in **Figure 8**. This indicates that Bergen's laborshed extends beyond its municipal borders.

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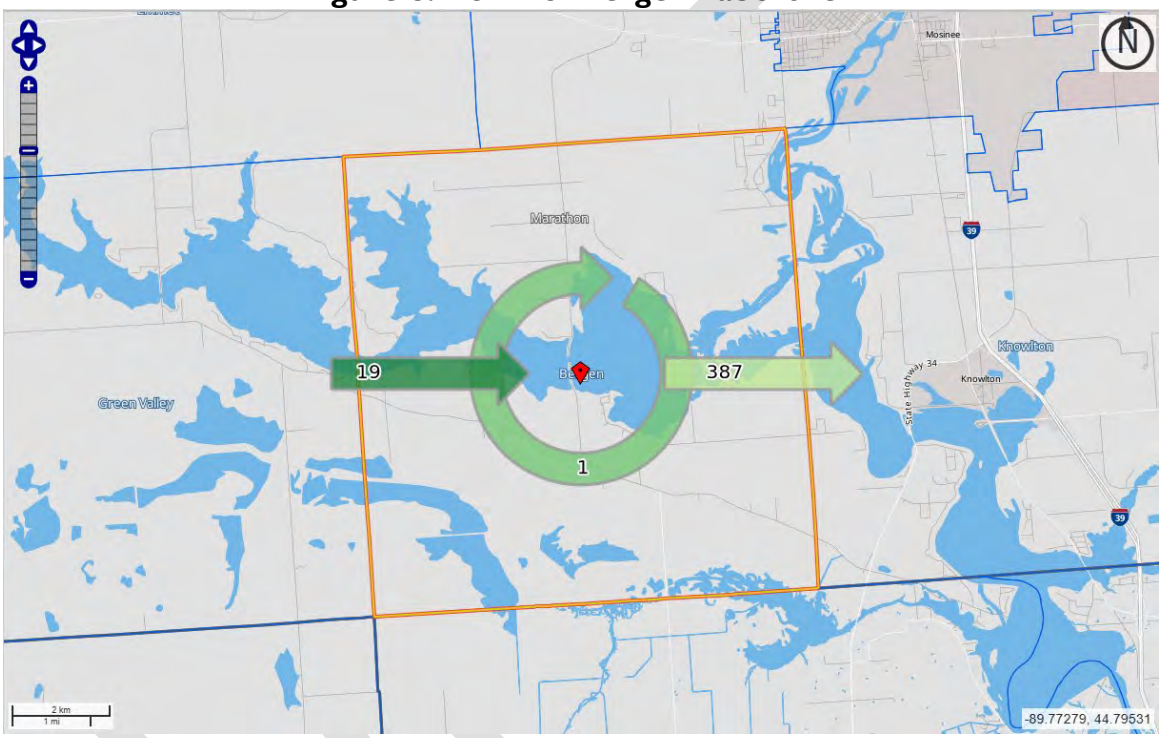
In-Migration

The majority of workers that commute into the Town for work live in close proximity to the Town, with many of these workers either living within Marathon County or in nearby Portage and Wood Counties.

Out-Migration

The most substantial group of outbound commuters (those who live in the Town but work outside of the Town) travel to the City of Wausau for work. Other common work locations for Town residents include the City of Marshfield, City of Stevens Point, City of Mosinee, Village of Weston, and City of Schofield.

Figure 8: Town of Bergen Laborshed



Source: U.S. Census On the Map

Occupations

As shown in **Table 20**, most residents in the Town of Bergen were employed in Management, business, science, and arts occupations. The second sector most represented was the Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving occupation group, followed by Sales & Office occupations. From 2010 to 2023, the most significant increase in employment were seen in Management, Professional & Related occupations.

Table 20: Occupation of Employed Workers				
Occupation	Town of Bergen		Marathon County	
	2000	2023	2000	2023
Management, Professional & Related	97	155	19,745	26,665
Service	38	40	8,127	10,749
Sales & Office	72	83	17,457	14,242
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	47	60	6,716	6,473
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	78	91	14,505	13,963
Total	332	429	66,550	72,092

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019-2023)

Economic Development Programs

There are a number of economic development programs available to businesses and local governments in Marathon County. A partial list of those programs is listed below:

Local:

Tax Increment Financing

In 2004, the WI State Legislature enacted changes to the state's Tax Increment Financing statutes. One significant change involved allowing townships to establish tax increment districts for specified economic development projects. Tax Increment Financing has been employed by numerous communities throughout the state to promote redevelopment in blighted areas and finance new industrial development.

County:

MCDEVCO

MCDEVCO acts as an economic development coordinator for all of Marathon County. The purpose of the Corporation is to promote the social and economic welfare of the residents of Marathon County. The primary focus is to lessen the burdens of government by reducing the need for public assistance; and to alleviate unemployment, relieve poverty, and eliminate blighted areas that had surfaced within the County. The organization's fundamental objectives are to bring about civic betterments and social improvements designed to promote the common good and general welfare of Marathon County.

MCDEVCO Revolving Loan Funds

MCDEVCO's Revolving Loan Funds provide gap financing that can be used to finance acquisition of existing businesses, land, building, and equipment; working capital; or construction/expansion projects. Gap financing builds strong communities for Marathon County. Economic development through gap financing attracts new businesses and allows small businesses to grow.

Regional:

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The Town is a member of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, as are all local governments in Marathon County based on county membership. Membership brings with it a variety of planning benefits and service. Benefits include participation in the Economic Development District, including eligibility for a variety of grants administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. In addition, resulting in membership with the NCWRPC, the County is a member of the Central Wisconsin Fund which manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed-rate, low down payment, low interest financing.

Central Wisconsin Development Fund

The Central Wisconsin Development Fund (CWED) manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down payment, low-interest financing. It is targeted at the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries.

State:

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purpose is to 1) foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; 2) foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and 3) promote the public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement. WEDC manages a variety of programs intended to assist businesses and communities. These include:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Industrial Sites Redevelopment Program
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program

Rural Economic Development Program

This program administrated by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) provides grants and low interest loans for small business (less than 25 employees) start-ups or expansions in rural areas. Funds may be used for "soft costs" only, such as planning, engineering, and marketing assistance.

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Wisconsin Small Cities Program

The Wisconsin Department of Administration provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to eligible municipalities for approved housing and/or public facility improvements and for economic development projects. Economic Development grants provide loans to businesses for such things as: acquisition of real estate, buildings, or equipment; construction, expansion or remodeling; and working capital for inventory and direct labor.

University of Wisconsin Extension Office

The Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, creates, applies and transfers multidisciplinary knowledge to help people understand community change and identify opportunities.

The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)

This non-profit organization is located at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater and specializes in new product and invention assessments and market expansion opportunities for innovative manufacturers, technology businesses, and independent inventors.

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The UW SBDC is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small business in Wisconsin.

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)

This program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, provides immediate assistance and funding for the cost of transportation improvements necessary for major economic development projects.

Federal:

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA offers a guaranteed loan program as well as a public works grant program. These are administered through local units of government for the benefit of the local economy and, indirectly, private enterprise.

US Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD)

The USDA Rural Development program is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America. Financial programs include support for such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

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Small Business Administration (SBA)

SBA provides business and industrial loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

Economic Development Issues

No significant issues regarding economic development within the Town of Bergen have been identified.

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Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: To maintain access to local goods and services.

Objectives:

- To support local commercial corridors in the City of Mosinee.
- To work with the City of Mosinee to develop a long-term, area strategy to promote local goods and services.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages the patronization of local merchants and businesses throughout the surrounding area.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with the City of Mosinee and the Chamber of Commerce to develop a long-term strategy to encourage residents to purchase goods and services locally.

Goal 2: To maintain active agriculture within Bergen.

Objectives:

- To support local farmers through local decision-making processes and possible development of future legislation.
- To work with North Central Technical College, Marathon County, and UW-Extension to increase access and information about agribusiness.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages the sustainability of the local agricultural economy.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with North Central Technical College, Marathon County, and UW-Extension to promote agriculture.

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Chapter Seven

Land Use

Land use is a major component of the Comprehensive Plan. Analysis of land use is a means of broadly classifying how land is used across the entire Town. Each type of use has its own characteristics that can determine compatibility and location to other land uses in the Town. Land use information is used to examine the current pattern of development and serves as the framework for formulating how land will be used in the future. There are two primary maps associated with this chapter: the first is a land use map, that examines how land is currently being used, and the second is a future land use map, that lays out desired land use in the future.

Previous Plans and Studies

Town of Bergen Comprehensive Plan, 2005

Town of Bergen Comprehensive Plan is a policy plan that describes existing and future land uses, and regulatory tools for land use. The overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide consistency between official mapping, zoning and subdivision ordinances, local plans, and other implementation tools.

Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, 2026

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan chapter on land use analyzes pattern of development, existing land use, and future land use. The plan sets the following land use goals:

- Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.
- Preserve active farming.
- Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized areas.
- Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

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Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2025

The RCP's Land Use chapter looks in detail at the land uses through the ten-county region and identifies the following issues and trends related to land use:

- **Dispersed Land Use Patterns.** As the Region continues to age, a dispersed population will impact the ability of residents to access services. There are also concerns about continuing to fund infrastructure as a result.

- **Contamination and Blight.** Older neighborhoods in the Region may have sites contaminated by former industry and structures that have fallen into disrepair. There is an opportunity to rehabilitate these properties to save infrastructure costs compared to new construction.

- **Environmental Features.** Development pressures can fragment woodlands and other wildlife habitat, increase runoff into waterways, impact aesthetics, and contribute to erosion if not designed properly.

- **Land Use Demand.** Work-from-home may increase the number of people living in certain areas, and decrease demand for commercial space, influencing land use patterns and infrastructure needs.

- **Renewable Energy.** While renewable energy provides environmental and economic opportunities, large scale solar and wind power is approved at the State level, with few tools for municipal and county government to manage its location, screening, and other impacts.

- **Comprehensive Plans.** While many communities and counties have adopted comprehensive plans, they are frequently not being updated as required by Wis. Stats. 66.1001. See Map 7 for Comprehensive Plan status.

Existing Land Use

The Town of Bergen covers about 22,300 acres in the south-central portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Towns of Emmet and Mosinee to the north, the Town of Green Valley to the west, the Town of Knowlton to the east and the Town of Eau Pleine (Portage County) to the south.

Knowledge of the existing land use patterns within a town is necessary to develop a desired "future" land use pattern. The **Existing Land Use Map** was developed using air photos from a countywide flight in 2025. Twelve basic categories were used to classify the various existing land uses. The categories include Agriculture, Commercial, Governmental/Institutional, Industrial, Open Lands, Outdoor Recreation, Quarry, Residential, Transportation, Utility, Water, and Woodlands.

Land use classifications are groups of land uses that are compatible, and that separate conflicting uses. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning but are intended for use as a guide when making land use and zoning decisions.

Existing Land Use Classifications

The **Existing Land Use Map** outlines the existing land use pattern throughout the Town. The intent of an existing land use map is to illustrate the location of existing land use categories within the Town for planning purposes. Land use classifications are grouped by the use most central to each parcel. For example, lands classified as residential may also have a barn or home-based business on site.

Existing land use classifications and acreage totals are presented in **Table 21**. Woodlands account for the largest share of the Town's land area at about 46 percent. The next largest land use category is Water at about 22 percent, followed by Agriculture and Open Lands. Uses such as Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Outdoor Recreation, Transportation, and Governmental occupy the rest of the Town.

Table 21: Existing Land Use, 2025

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Agriculture	2,928	13.1%
Commercial	16	0.1%
Governmental / Institutional	8	<0.1%
Industrial	42	0.2%
Open Lands	2,967	13.3%
Outdoor Recreation	60	0.3%
Residential	717	3.2%
Transportation	374	1.7%
Utility	2	0.0%
Water	4,941	22.2%
Woodlands	10,243	45.9%
Total	**22,298**	**100.0%**

Source: NCWRPC

Managed Forest Law & Public Lands

There are over 2,122 acres of land within the Town enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program. This is a voluntary program between willing landowners and the State of Wisconsin. The George W. Mead State Wildlife Area covers about 6,000 acres of land within the Town. Additionally, Big Eau Pleine Park covers about 935 acres of land within the Town.

Land Supply and Demand

As shown by the existing land use inventory, the majority of the Town is "undeveloped" woodland areas agricultural lands, or open lands, so the supply of land "available" for development appears to be adequate. Even under a rapid growth scenario, the supply of land in the Town of Bergen is more than sufficient to accommodate projected demand over the next 20 years for all use categories.

Land Values

Table 22 displays the assessed land values in the Town of Bergen. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other exempt lands are not included in values for Table 22. Overall, land value per acre in the Town is valued at about $10,998 per acre based on assessed land values from tax information submitted to the Department of Revenue. Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by those properties designated as commercial and other.

Table 22: Assessed Land Value (per acre), 2025

Land Classification	Total Value of Land and Improvements	Average Value per Acre
Residential	$78,807,900	$101,426
Commercial	$410,600	$37,327
Manufacturing	$0	$0
Agriculture	$718,400	$219
Undeveloped	$1,284,800	$931
Forest	$5,196,300	$2,614
Agricultural Forest	$777,700	$1,498
Other	$2,725,500	$52,413
Total	**$89,921,200**	**$10,998**

Source: WI Department of Revenue

Opportunities for Redevelopment

The vast majority of the Town currently consists of woodlands, open farmland, open lands, and wetlands. With so much of the Town's land base consisting of public lands and wetlands, the Town has received very little development. Hence the need for "redevelopment" is negligible. Some developed areas may not meet current development standards or may have fallen into disrepair since they were developed. Some of these properties may be in need of rehabilitation by property owners rather than needing a comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

Major Opportunities and Constraints

There is little incentive for younger people to take over farms. This reduces the value of land for agricultural purposes and increases its value for other purposes. The Town is also experiencing a trend where the number of farms is decreasing, while the size of farms is increasing.

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Future Land Use Map

The **Future Land Use Map** represents the long-term land use recommendations for all lands in the Town. The Land use map is based on the county zoning map. Our future land use map reflects our interest in keeping our future residential growth close to the City of Mosinee. We did this to preserve the rural character of the town. Although the map is advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, it is intended to reflect community desires and serve as a guide for local officials to coordinate future development of the Town.

The identification of desired future land use types through the map does not imply that an area is immediately appropriate for rezoning. Given service demands and a desire for controlled growth, careful consideration to the timing of zoning decisions is essential. In some places, it may be desirable to rezone land to reflect the planned land use designations as soon as possible. In other cases, it may be appropriate to wait to rezone the area until an actual development proposal is brought forward.

Future land use planning assists local governments with balancing individual property rights and community goals, minimizing conflict between different land uses, and maximizing use of public expenditures. It is essential that future land use planning is ongoing and flexible. Periodic plan updates ensure that the plan continues to reflect future community preferences.

Town of Bergen Plan Commission members participated in a mapping exercise with NCWRPC staff to identify the desired future land uses by using eleven common Land Use Map Classifications, as described below. Town Plan Commission members used their broad knowledge of the Town to draw shapes on a map representing the different land uses. The goal was to produce a generalized land use plan map (future land use) to guide the Town's growth.

The map includes nine land use categories to guide where new residential and non-residential development should be encouraged to locate or where development should be discouraged as well as classifications for water and transportation. Descriptions of each future land use category are provided below.

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Future Land Use Map Classifications

Commercial
This district promotes the sale of retail goods, personal services, and administrative establishments. This district has a minimum lot size of 0.367 acres.

Conservancy Recreation
This district provides areas that conserve existing undeveloped natural areas. This district has a minimum lot size of 2 acres.

General Agriculture
This district promotes the preservation and use of agricultural land related uses to provide for limited residential uses in a rural environment. This district provides for limited residential development with modest densities that require relatively large land areas that are compatible with the surrounding rural land use activities. This district has a minimum lot size of 10 acres.

Low Density Residential
The purpose of this district is to promote single-family residential development in a manner that provides a more orderly and efficient extension of public utilities. This district has a minimum lot size of 1 acre.

Neighborhood Commercial
This district accommodates the wide range of retail stores and personal service establishments which cater to frequent recurring needs. This district has a minimum lot size of 1 acre.

Rural Estate
This district allows for single-family residential, agricultural uses, and community, civic, and institutional uses in a rural setting. Lot sizes within this district range from 5 to 9.99 acres.

Rural Residential
This district allows for single-family residential, agricultural uses, and community, civic, and institutional uses in a rural setting. Lot sizes within this district range from 2 to 4.99 acres.

Future Development Areas
These are areas that have been identified as the most suitable for future development within the Town. Currently identified future development areas are intended to be similar to rural residential uses.

Urban Residential
This district promotes high-density residential development. Development is to consist primarily of single-family (attached or detached), planned unit development, and multi-family dwellings in groupings will provide for the efficient development and utilization of community facilities. Allowable lot sizes within this district range from 0.459 to 0.99 acres.

Land Use Programs and Tools

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program, while the primary land use tools are zoning, subdivision ordinance, and official mapping.

Comprehensive Planning Programming

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law was established in state statutes in 1999. The comprehensive plan is intended to be a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the community's future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects community-specific and locally driven planning processes.

While a local government may choose to include additional elements, a comprehensive plan must include at least all of the nine elements below as defined by the Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001).

- Issues and Opportunities (Demographics)
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation

Zoning

Basically, zoning is a set of regulations used to minimize land use conflicts and promote development that supports a community's values. It regulates how property is used and how development occurs as well as the physical placement of buildings on land. Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances.

A zoning ordinance consists of a written text and a map. The text of a zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard/lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop, while the zoning map arranges the community into districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Each of these districts has different regulations. The goal of the zoning ordinance is to establish a reasonable development pattern by keeping similar and

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related uses together and separating dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

The Town of Bergen has their own zoning ordinance and zoning map. The Town is going through with a move to county zoning and anticipates making the transition in early 2027. At that time the Town will use the county zoning map and ordinances. The Town's Zoning Map as of writing is located in **Appendix A**, while up to date versions of the Town of Bergen Zoning Map can be found here: https://www.marathoncounty.gov/services/zoning/zoning-maps.

Consistency between Land Use and Zoning

Land use and zoning designations are related, but not necessarily identical. Land use categories tend to be fairly general whereas zoning districts regulate specific land uses and development requirements. Because the land use categories are general it is common for more than one zoning district to correspond to each land use category. It is also possible that some zoning districts might be consistent with more than one land use designation.

Achieving consistency between land use and zoning is required by State Statutes. This generally occurs when a community is considering a proposed zoning change. The decision to approve a zoning change must be based on the adopted comprehensive plan, and specifically, the future land use map. Generally, if the requested zoning is consistent with the land use designation on the property it should be approved, unless unique circumstances indicated the rezoning would negatively impact surrounding properties or the community. If a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation, the community should consider denying the rezoning request.

In situations where a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation - but the community believes the requested zoning is appropriate in the specific location and would benefit the community - the zoning change can be approved, however, the land use map should be amended accordingly to establish land use and zoning consistency. The process for amending the land use map is discussed in greater detail in the Implementation Chapter.

Shoreland Zoning

All counties, including Marathon County, are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas for the entire county outside of villages and cities in accordance with state shoreland zoning standards. Towns may apply their own zoning in shoreland areas as long as it does not impose requirements regulated by a county.

Land Division

The Town of Bergen has their own Subdivision Ordinance. Subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and made ready for development. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions in exchange for the privilege of recording a plat. While

imposing conditions restricting the use of private property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process. There is some overlap between zoning and subdivision codes in terms of standards. Both ordinances, for example, can set lot sizes. Both can deal with the suitability of land for development. Implementing important plan techniques such as rural cluster development often requires use of the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance.

A town land division code can provide the Town the means to review and regulate new divisions of land to ensure consistency with the vision, goals, objectives, land protection criteria, and other recommendations of an adopted plan. The ordinance would require administration and enforcement by the Town. Therefore, local control of divisions of land would require Town oversight. It also adds a layer of government involved in regulating proposals for land divisions.

Official Mapping

An Official Map is a map adopted by a municipality that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map. Currently, the Town of Bergen does not have an official map.

Other Tools

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the Town to achieve the goals of the plan. These include but are certainly not limited to the following: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

Land Use Issues

- **Controlling Growth** bIThe Town supports land use regulations that would control growth and development.
- **Preservation of Rural / Agricultural Character** bIThe Town supports regulations aimed at preservation of the rural and agricultural character of the Town.

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Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Preserve and protect the rural / agricultural character of the Town by effectively managing new growth.

Objectives:

- Implement zoning measures that protect and preserve natural and agricultural areas in the Town of Bergen.
- To determine an appropriate lot size that will support the Town of BergenÆs concept of rural character.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages future developments to be in the form of conservation subdivisions to best preserve the existing open spaces and rural character of the community.
- Bergen will work to establish better communication with the Town and City of Mosinee to keep each other apprised of future developments on adjacent land. This includes the possibility of negotiating boundary agreements for annexation (e.g. the Moon Rd./Beans Eddy subdivision).

Strategies and Actions:

- Determine an appropriate lot size that will support the TownÆs vision of rural character.
- Communicate subdivision development plans with adjacent communities, if near a border.

Goal 2: Direct growth to appropriate locales.

Objectives:

- Identify areas that are appropriate for growth in the Town of Bergen.
- To zone contiguous land as residential.
- Control growth through regulatory means, such as Town zoning.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages future development to locate adjacent to existing developed areas to preserve natural resources, minimize costs for service provision, and maintain the rural character of the Town.

Strategies and Actions:

- Identify areas that are appropriate for future residential growth.
- Work with UWEX and Marathon County to promote and develop agricultural incubators.

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Chapter Eight

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross over political boundaries, such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth and change on one spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

Overview

Wisconsin Statute §66.30, entitled "Intergovernmental Cooperation", does enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Unfortunately, there is little public policy in Wisconsin law that encourages, let alone requires, horizontal governmental relationships such as town to town and municipality to county or town. The result is that towns, municipalities, and counties act more as adversaries than as partners.

Statewide, Wisconsin has more than 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts. Having so many governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision-making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them. Intergovernmental cooperation makes sense for many reasons including trust, cost savings, consistency, and ability to address regional issues. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. It can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. It can lead to consistency of goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities. Finally, by communicating and coordinating their actions and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. They may not understand, or even care about, the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

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A variety of factors, some long-standing and others more recent, have brought the issue of intergovernmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- Local government's financial situation;
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together;
- Elimination of duplication of services;
- Population settlement patterns and population mobility; and
- Economic and environmental interdependence.

In addition, as more jurisdictions create and implement comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

Intergovernmental Relationships

School Districts

The Town of Bergen is served by the Mosinee School District. The Mosinee School District is home to three main schools: Elementary – Middle School – High School, all of which are located in the City of Mosinee, a rural virtual academy, and 4-year-old kindergarten. There are approximately 2,000 students enrolled throughout the school district.

In addition to the public school district, there are also several private schools serving the area, including Northland Lutheran High School.

Post-Secondary Education

- **Northcentral Technical College (NTC)** – located in Wausau, NTC has over 190 program offerings including two-year associates degrees that combine technical skills with general education. NTC also offers one- and two-year technical diplomas concentrated on hands-on learning and short-term certificates to improve job skills. NTC also has a transfer credit program with the UW school system.

- **Mid-State Technical College** – located in Marshfield, is one of 16 regional colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College system, with campuses in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. They offer associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a wide variety of high demand fields.

- **University of Wisconsin** – **Stevens Point (UWSP)** – located in the City of Stevens Point, UWSP was founded in 1894. When combined with its satellite campuses in Wausau and Marshfield, total enrollment is over 8,000. The campus offers 80 baccalaureate degrees, 17 graduate programs, and 90 minors, and is known for its robust fine arts and natural resources programs.

- **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point at Wausau** – offers courses leading to a baccalaureate degree. They also offer graduate degrees including Master of Business Administration (MBA), Physician Assistant (in partnership with UW Madison), and Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (in partnership with Northern Vermont University).

- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) at Marshfield** – located in Marshfield, students can work toward a variety of bachelor's degree options including business administration, nursing, and social work.

Shared Services

- **Fire and Emergency Response** – The Town of Bergen is served by the Mosinee Fire District which also provides shared fire and EMS protection services with the City of Mosinee and Towns of Mosinee, Knowlton, and Emmet. There is interest in partnering with other entities to share resources and services in an effort to improve the level of service within the Town of Bergen.

Surrounding Communities

The Town of Bergen has good relationships with the surrounding communities. The Mosinee Fire District serves the Town of Bergen as well as the City of Mosinee and Towns of Mosinee, Knowlton, and Emmet. Costs of road maintenance on shared roads are segmented with the Towns of Mosinee, Emmet, and Knowlton.

Marathon County

Marathon County directly and indirectly provides a number of services to the Town and the Town enjoys a good working relationship with many of the responsible departments. These departments include law enforcement through the Sheriff's Office, 911 dispatch services, access permits, maintenance and improvement of county highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, private sewage system regulation, and animal waste and manure management. The county also provides oversight on compliance with County soil and water conservation policy for the Farmland Preservation Program.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, Marathon County sponsors a county-wide planning effort to complete these plans and include each individual local unit in the process and resulting final plan. Examples of this include the County Outdoor Recreation plan which maintains the eligibility for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administered park and recreation development funding of each local unit that adopts it, and All Hazard Mitigation Plans which are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in order for individual local units of government to qualify for certain types of disaster assistance funding.

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North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under §60.0309 Wis. Stats. as a voluntary association of governments within a ten-county area. Marathon County is a member of the NCWRPC, which qualifies the Town of Bergen for low-cost local planning assistance. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) land use, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

State and Federal Government

The Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources and Transportation are the primary agencies the Town might deal with regarding development activities. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, lakes, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation is responsible for the planning and development of state highways, railways, airports, and other transportation systems. State agencies make a number of grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Bergen. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Plan (LRIP), and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also a number of mandates passed down from the state that the Town must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

Most federal programs are administered by the states, so the Town would be dealing with the responsible state agency with regard to federal programs and regulations.

Programs

66.0301 – Intergovernmental Cooperation: Wisconsin Statute §66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

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66.0305 – Municipal Revenue Sharing: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0305, Municipal Revenue Sharing, gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries.

Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and the means by which the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum 10-year period.

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Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: Maintain appropriate tax base to provide minimum service levels.

Objectives:

- Analyze future developments for their impact on the community's tax base in relation to the services that they would require.
- Coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions to investigate other services that could be effectively provided jointly.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen will analyze future developments for their impact on the community tax base, in relation to the projected expenditures that they will require the community to incur.

Strategies & Actions:

- Investigate tax base sharing arrangements with neighboring municipalities.
- Work with surrounding jurisdictions to investigate other services that could be jointly provided.

Goal 2: Maintain and enhance intergovernmental relations.

Objectives:

- Support opportunities to work with other units of government to share resources and potentially consolidate services if deemed beneficial.
- To develop and hold regularly scheduled meetings along a Council of Governments model to discuss issues of regional interest.
- Communicate development plans with adjacent jurisdictions where plans may have impacts on these other communities.
- Continue to work with Fire District communities.

Policies:

- The Town of Bergen encourages the creation of a regional forum for intergovernmental discussions.
- The Town of Bergen will continue to provide support for an ongoing Fire District.

Strategies & Actions:

- Work with other regional governments to develop a regular meeting to discuss issues of regional concern (i.e.; Quarterly meetings held in a Council of Governments (COG) format).
- Increase interaction with the Town and City of Mosinee, especially as related to future land use plans for Moon Road/Bean Eddy subdivision area.
- Continue working relationships with City of Mosinee, Town of Mosinee, Town of Knowlton, and Village of Kronenwetter on the Fire District and explore increased opportunities for cooperation

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Chapter Nine

Implementation

This Plan is intended to be used as a guide by local officials, both town and county, when making decisions that affect growth and development in the Town of Bergen. It is also important that local citizens and developers become aware of the Plan.

Some steps taken to implement this Plan include the adoption of written public participation guidelines, Plan Commission formation, a Plan Commission resolution recommending Plan adoption by the Town Board, an open house meeting, a formal public hearing, Town Board approval of the Plan by ordinance, distribution of the Plan to affected government units and ongoing Plan Commission reviews and updates.

Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. The most common implementation tools are the Town official controls or regulatory codes. The zoning ordinance and subdivision (or land division) regulations are used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development as identified in this comprehensive plan. Other regulatory tools include purchase of development rights (i.e., conservation easements), transfer of development rights, and purchasing of ecosystem services. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the comprehensive plan; these generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements, staffing and maintenance. These decisions will affect the development demand and the location of development in the Town.

The State planning law requires certain programs and/or actions that affect land use must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. To meet this requirement, the Town should evaluate and update related ordinances after the adoption of the comprehensive plan update. The Town Board officially adopts these regulatory and land use control measures as ordinances (or as revisions to the existing ordinances). Some of these tools were also discussed in the Land Use Chapter.

Zoning Ordinance and Map

The Town of Bergen has their own Zoning Ordinance but in early 2027 they will join Marathon County Zoning and follow their ordinances and the zoning map the Town and the County jointly prepared. Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. Zoning ordinances typically establish detailed regulations concerning how land may be developed, including setbacks, the density or intensity of development, and the height and bulk of building and other structures. The general purpose of zoning is to minimize undesirable externalities from development by segregating and/or buffering incompatible uses and by maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's

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character or environment. The zoning ordinance also controls the scale and form of development, which heavily influences how people will interact with their environment and their neighbors.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide indicating how the property should eventually be zoned. Therefore, indiscriminate zoning changes may result in weakening of the comprehensive plan. In fact, changes to zoning district boundaries should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted land use map and the goals of the comprehensive plan.

However, there may be situations where changing the zoning district boundary makes sense and is in the best interest of the community. If changing the zoning would result in a conflict with the future land use map, the land use map should also be changed. However, the future land use map should only be changed if it does not accurately reflect the community's desired land use pattern. Achieving consistency between zoning and land use designation is also discussed in the **Land Use Chapter**.

Subdivision (Land Division) Ordinance

The Town of Bergen has their own subdivision ordinance. Subdivision regulations are an important tool ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations may regulate lot sizes, road access, street design, public utilities, storm water drainage, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development will be a public asset.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

This is an ongoing financial planning program that allows local communities to plan ahead for capital expenditures and minimize unplanned expenses. A capital improvement plan consists of a list of proposed projects according to a schedule of priorities over a four-to-six year period. It identifies needed public improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies financing methods and sources. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include:

- Public buildings (i.e., fire and police stations)
- Park and trail acquisition and development
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)
- Fire and police protection equipment

A CIP is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds. Each year the CIP should be reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet the community's changing needs.

The preparation of a CIP is normally a joint responsibility between the town board, plan commission, staff, and citizen commissions. The preparation of a capital improvement program may vary from

community to community depending on local preferences, the local form of government and available staff. The proposed capital improvement plan should be reviewed in light of the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Annual Operating Budget

The Town prepares a budget each year and it is one of the most important policy documents prepared. It is a statement of the prioritization and allocation of financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time period. The budget is based on the needs of Town residents and priorities set by the Town Board. The budget and the services provided by that budget are instrumental in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan.

Brownfield Redevelopment

Pursuing funding from state agencies for redevelopment of contaminated sites can reduce the uncertainty that otherwise prevents contaminated properties from being redeveloped. Action by the Town to evaluate contaminants or begin remediating the property is often necessary before the private sector is willing to invest in redevelopment. While this may require some upfront investment from the community, as sites generate tax base as they are improved and reused.

Other Tools:

Some additional tools that could be utilized by the Town include: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), and impact fees, among others.

Consistency Among Plan Chapters

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Chapter describe how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since Bergen completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine plan chapters. Where deemed appropriate, goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated under all applicable chapters to reinforce their importance.

Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates and Monitoring

While this comprehensive plan provides a long-term framework to guide development and public spending decisions, it must also respond to changes that occur in the community and region that were not foreseen when the plan was initially adopted. Some elements of the plan are rarely amended while others need updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. In general, key maps, such as the future land use map, should be reviewed annually to make sure they are still current.

Plan Adoption

The first step in implementing this plan involves adoption of the plan by local officials. The formal review and adoption process involves plan review by the Plan Commission (or other planning committee) who must adopt the plan by resolution of majority vote. The Plan Commission recommendation is forwarded

to the Town Board who must adopt the plan by ordinance (of majority vote). A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance prior to Board final action to adopt the plan. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the community's land use policy and goals and objectives regarding coordination of growth and development.

Plan Amendments

The Bergen Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the Town Board following the same process described above for initial Plan adoption, regardless of how minor the proposed amendment or change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity.

The following criteria shall be considered when reviewing plan amendments:

- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Town of Bergen Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development shall be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve its viability.
- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater, or the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in town actions or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- The change does not adversely affect water quality and the overall health of residents.

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Proposed amendments must be reviewed by the Plan Commission prior to final action and adopted by the Town Board. The public should be notified of proposed Plan changes and allowed an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the Town might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings prior to the official public hearing.

Plan Updates

According to the State comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates often involve re-writing of whole sections of the plan document and significant changes to supporting maps. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the community's goals and objectives based on an analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

Plan Monitoring

The adopted plan should be used as a tool by Town when making land use and development decisions. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in this plan.

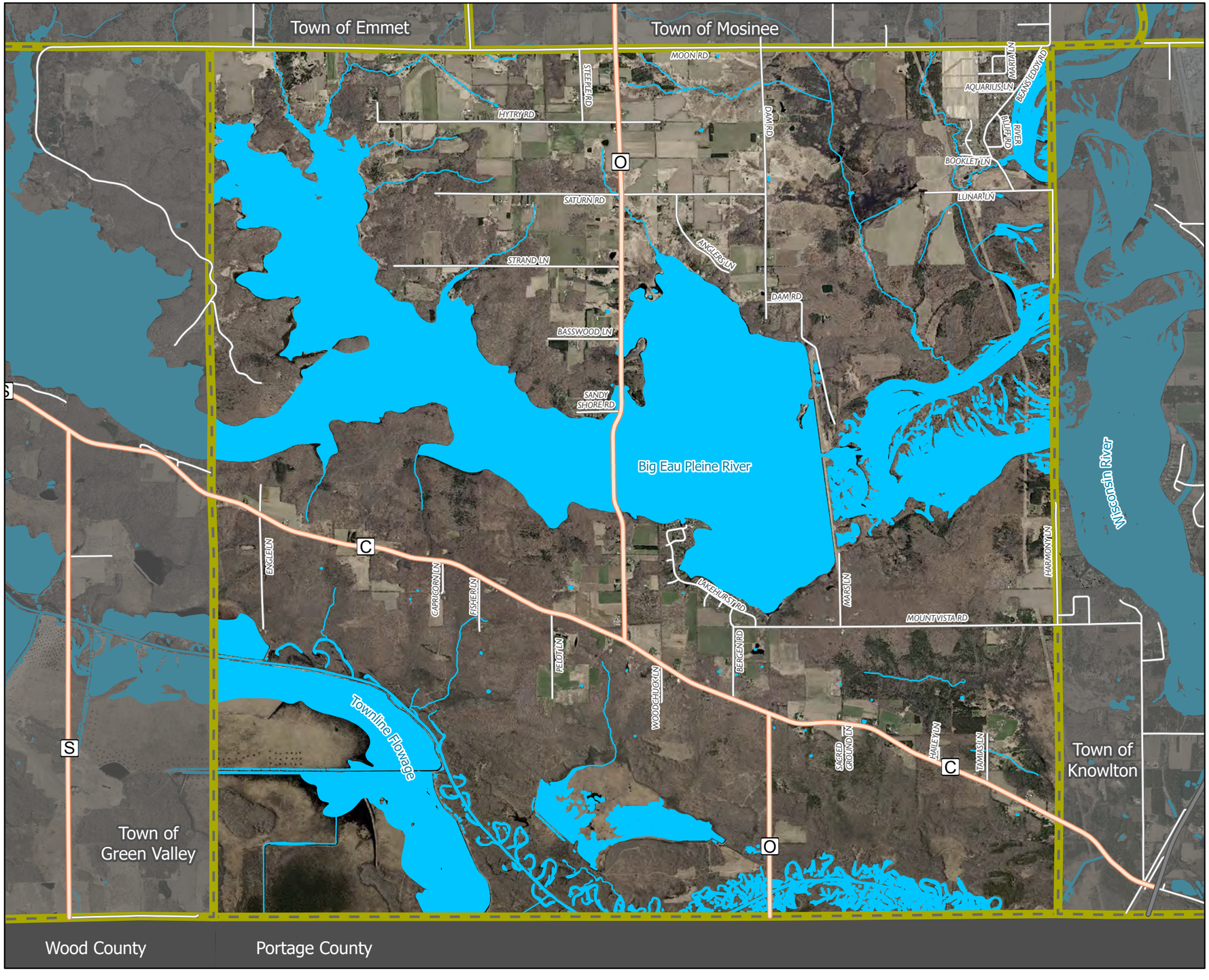
Although this plan describes policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.

This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate.

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Maps

Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 1



Planning Area

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

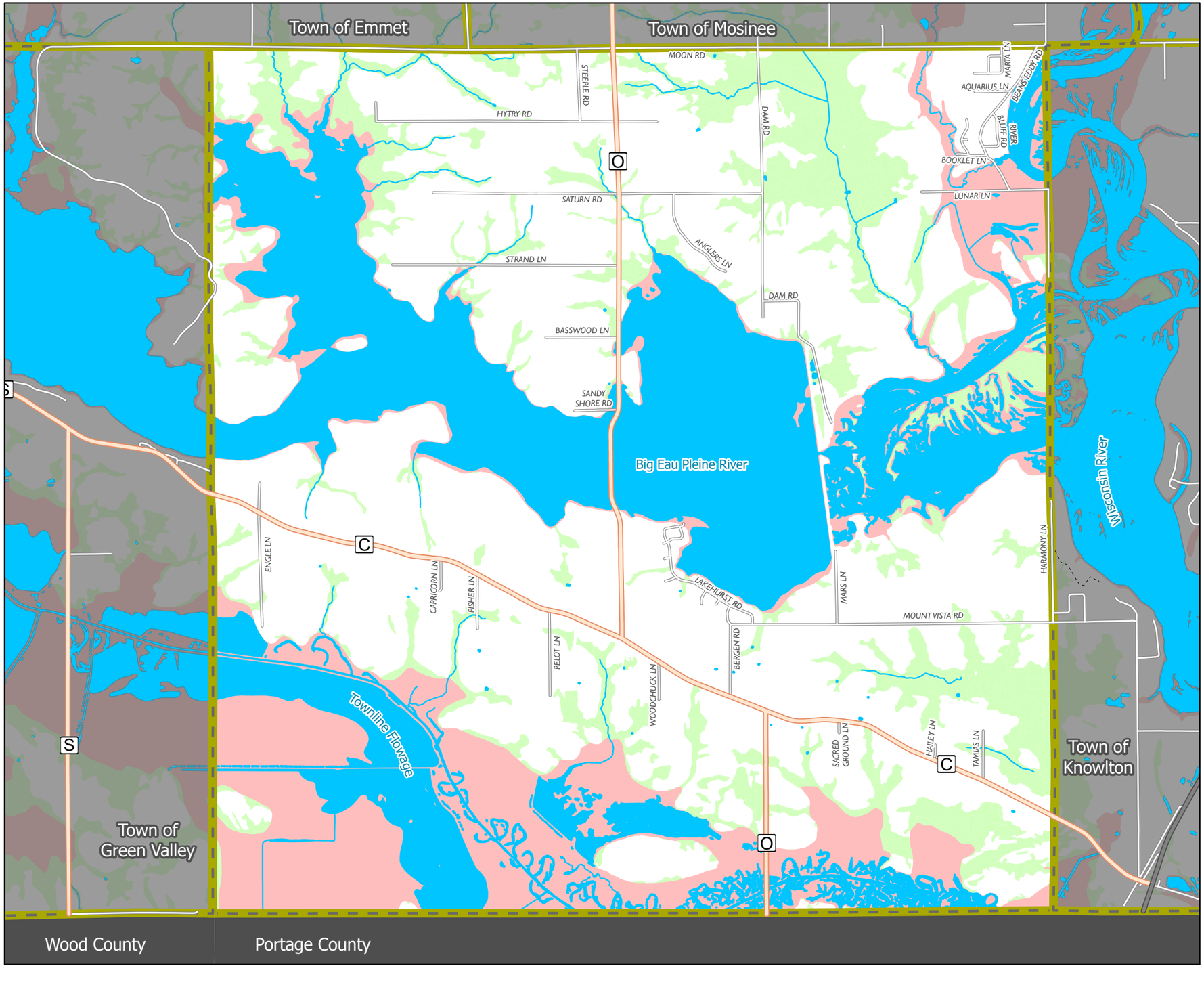
N W E S

Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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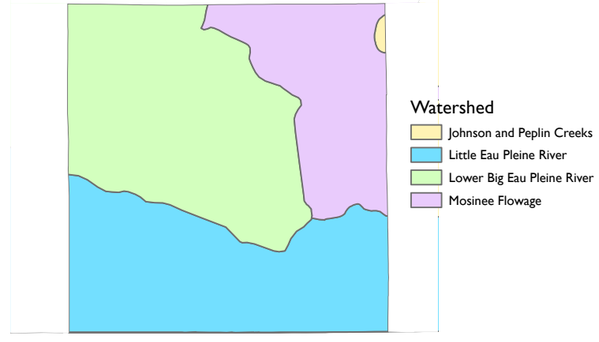
Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 2



Natural Resources

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Water

Town of Bergen Watersheds



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

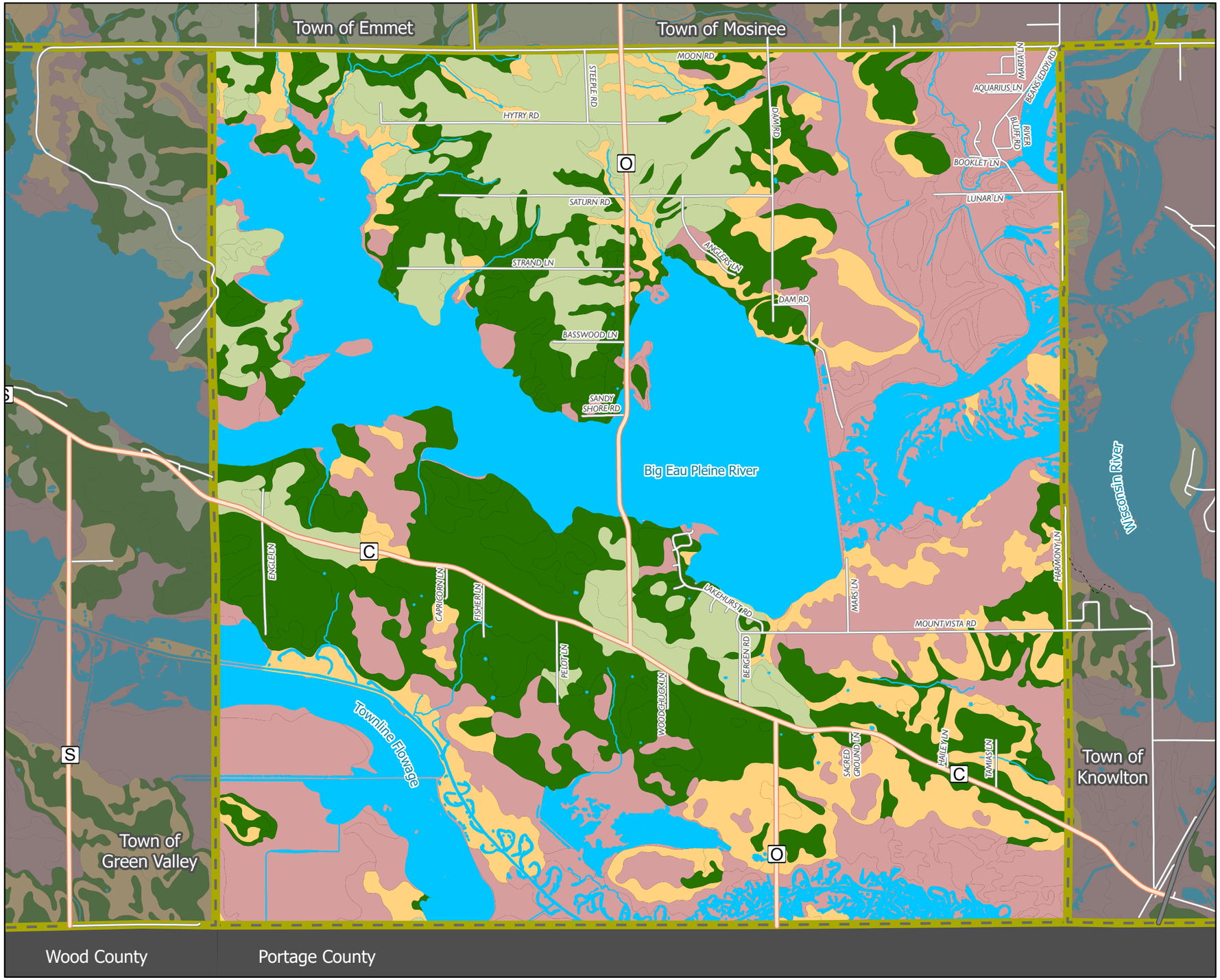
N W E S

Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co

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Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 3



Prime Farmland

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads

Farmland Classification

- Farmland of statewide importance
- All areas are prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained
- Not prime farmland
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

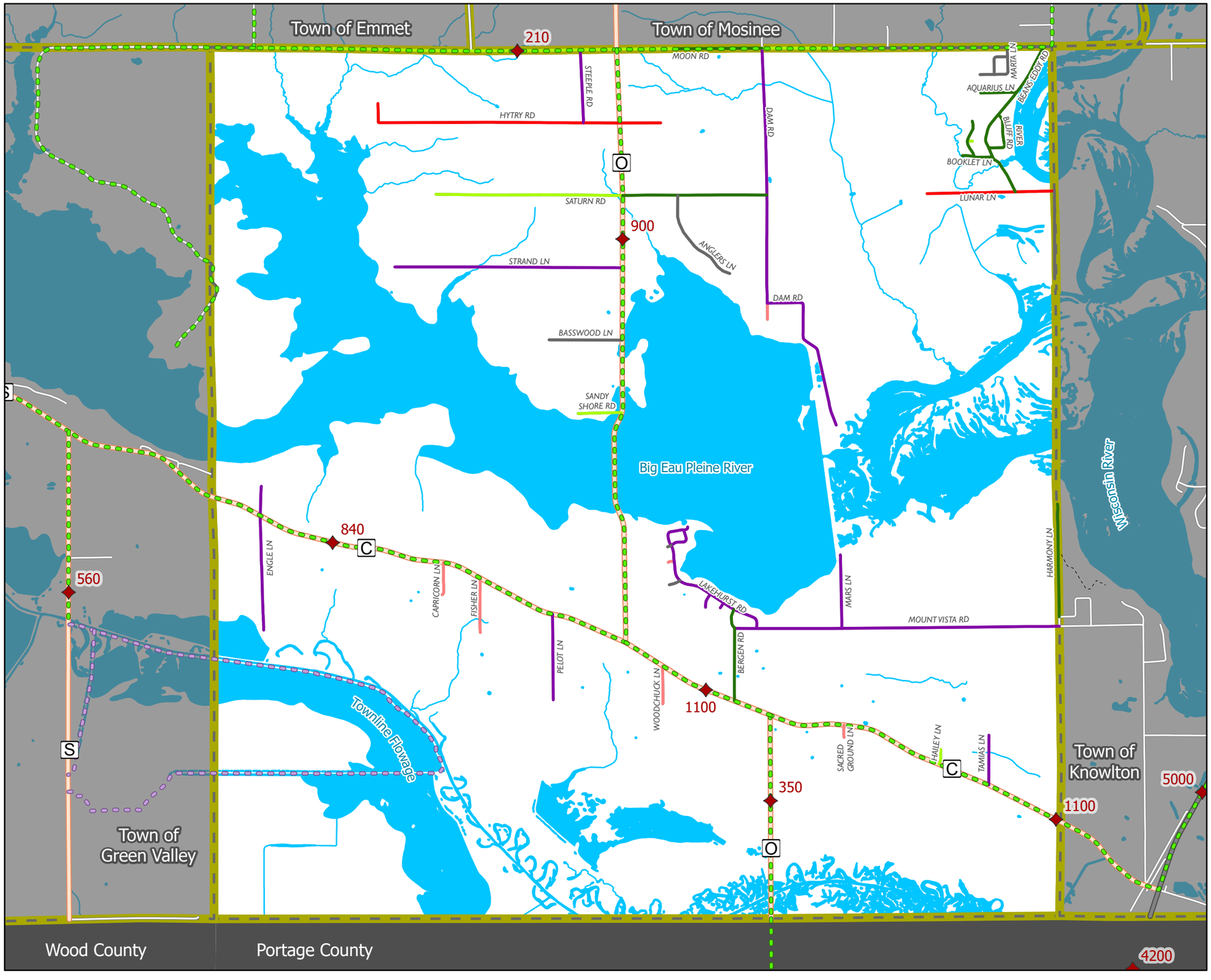
N W E S

Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co

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Prepared By:
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Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 4



Transportation

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Proposed On Road Bike Route
- Seasonal Off-Road Trail
- Traffic Counts

PASER Rating Surface Condition

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- Not Rated
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

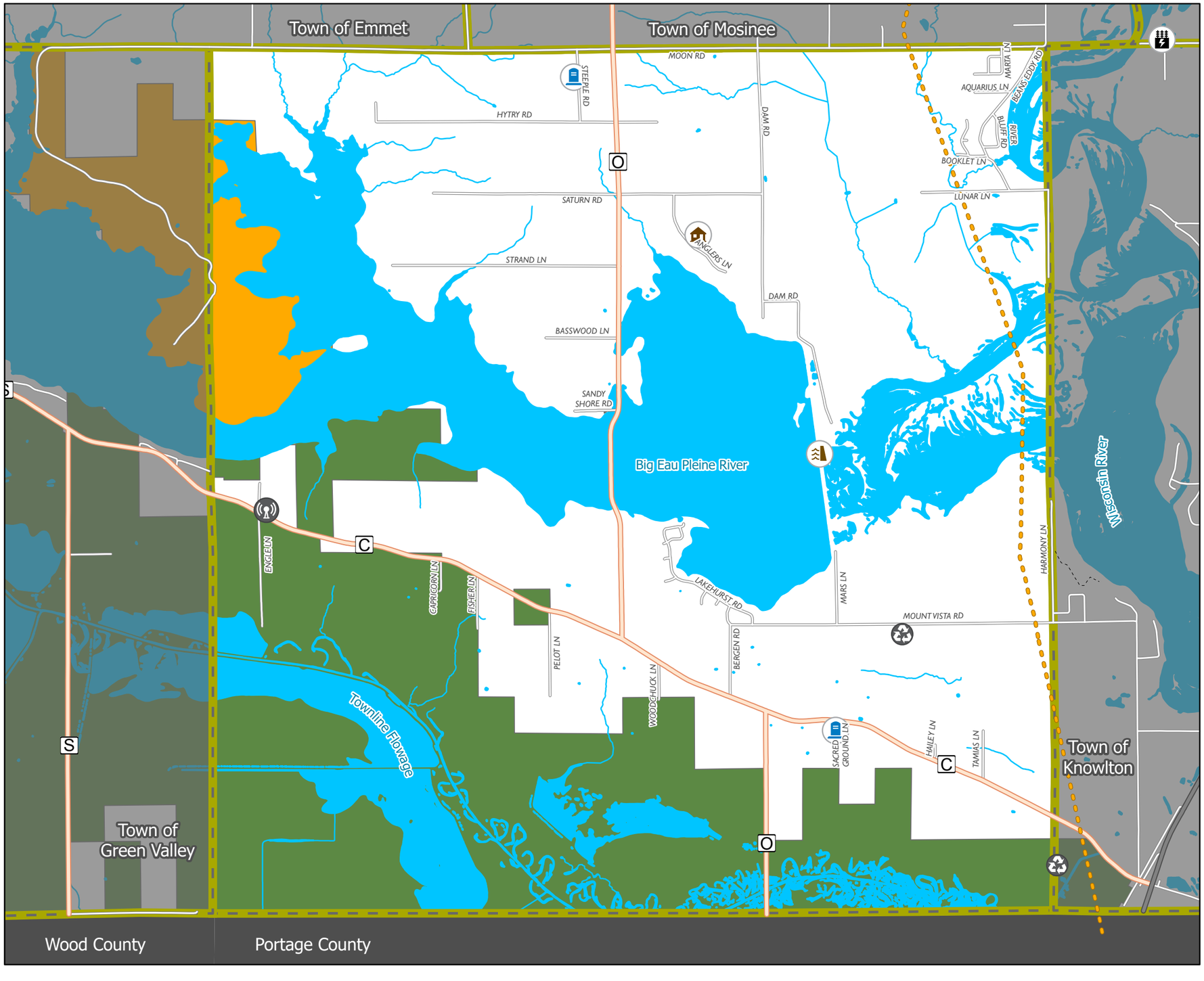
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Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 5



Utilities & Community Facilities

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- High Voltage Powerline
- Communication Towers
- Cemetery
- Former Landfill
- Town Hall
- Dams
- Substation
- George W. Mead State Wildlife Area
- Big Eau Pleine Park
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

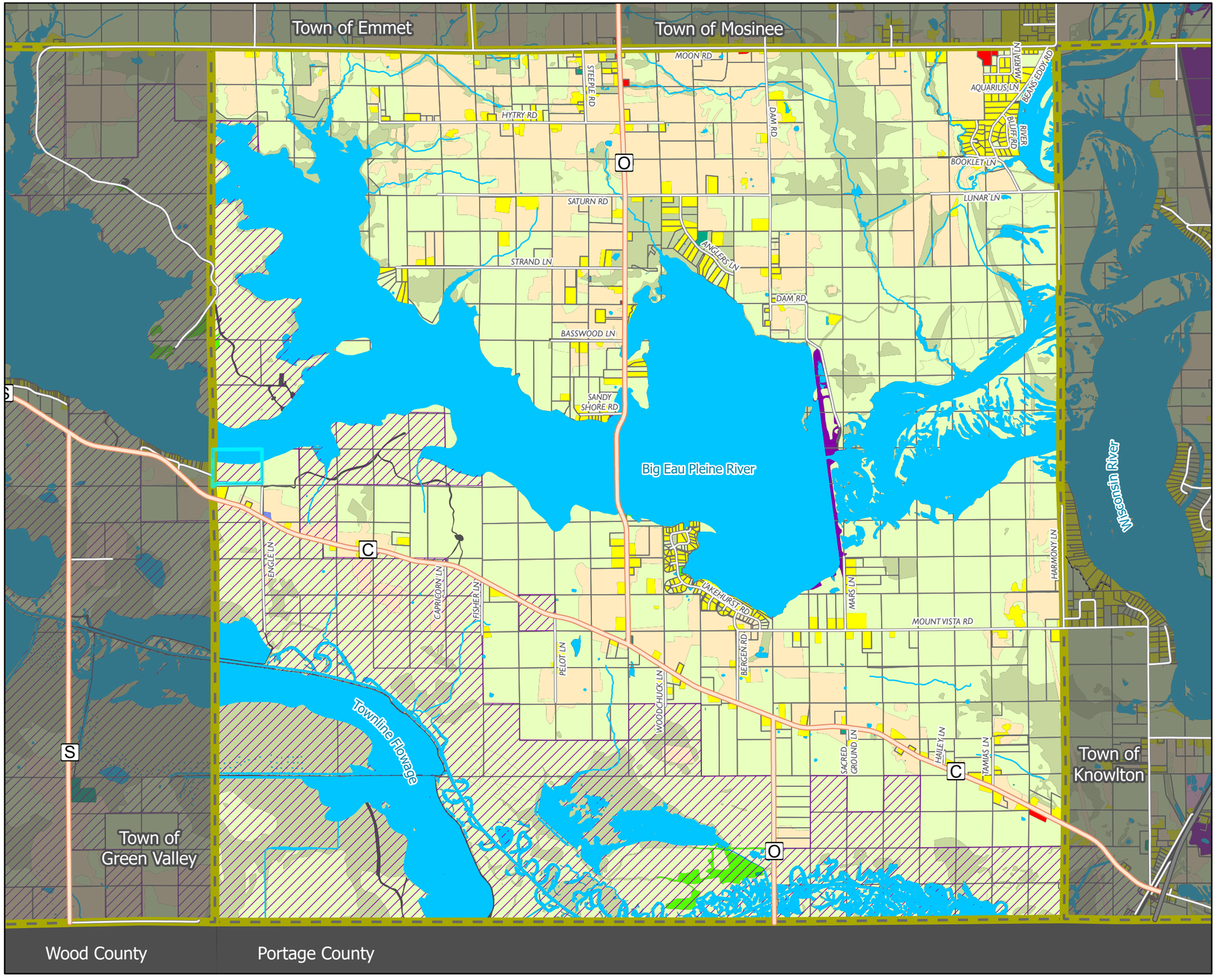
N W E S

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Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 6



Existing Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Public Lands
- Parcels

Existing Land Use 2025

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Quarry
- Residential
- Transportation
- Utility
- Woodlands
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

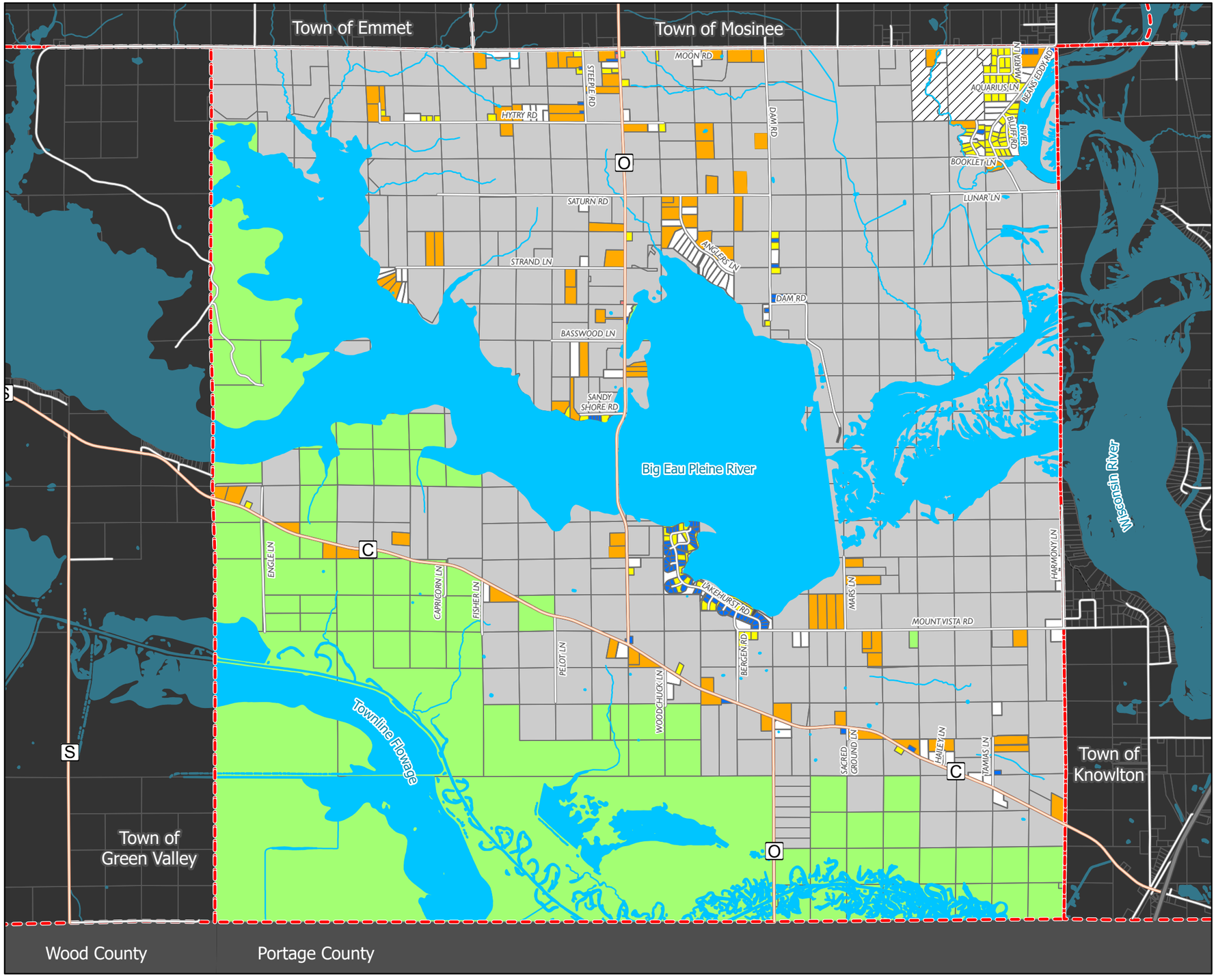
N W E S

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Town of Bergen - Marathon County Comprehensive Plan DRAFT Map 7



Future Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Parcels

Future Land Use

- Commercial
- Conservancy Recreation
- General Agriculture
- Low Density Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Rural Estate
- Rural Residential
- Future Development Areas
- Urban Residential
- Transportation
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

N W E S

Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co

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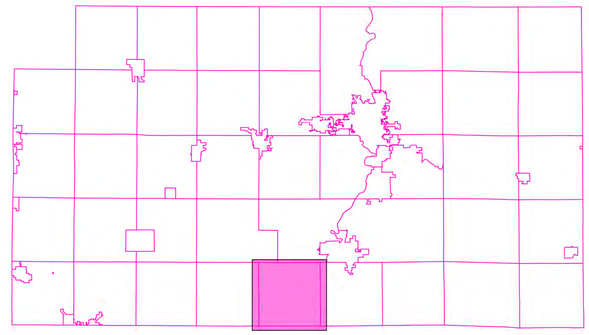
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Appendix A
Town of Bergen Official Zoning Map

Town of Bergen

Preliminary Zoning Map

Minimum 0.367 Acres	Commercial (C)
Minimum 2 Acres	Conservancy Recreation (C-V/R-C)
10+ Acres	General Agriculture (G-A)
1 to 1.99 Acres	Low Density Residential (L-D-R)
5 to 9.99 Acres	Rural Estate (R-E)
2 to 4.99 Acres	Rural Residential (R-R)
0.459 to 0.99 Acres	Urban Residential (U-R)
	Municipal Boundary
	Water Features



The information depicted on this map is a compilation of public record information including aerial photography and other base maps. No warranty is made, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy of the information used. The data layers are a representation of current data to the best of our knowledge. This is not a legal recorded map and cannot be substituted for field information.

Errors may be reported to:

Marathon County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department
1100 Lake View Drive
Suite 400
Wausau, WI 54403

Tel. 715.261.6000

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MARATHON COUNTY
MAP CREATED BY
MARATHON COUNTY CPZ GIS

1 Mile

Draft Date: 9/30/2026

Appendix B
Public Participation Plan

Appendix C
Adoption Resolution

Appendix D
Adoption Ordinance

Town of Bergen

Comprehensive Plan

2026