

Crawford County Land and Water Resource Management Plan Summary

Introduction

The Crawford County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) is intended to be a concise view of Crawford County's soil and water resources and a list of thoughtful conservation proposals to protect and enhance them. It shall also be a guide for the Land Conservation Department as it advises and assists county landowners and policy makers to protect and improve land and water resources in the county. Its goals are also a direction and a tool for evaluation of the department's activities from 2006 through 2009.

Background: Crawford County is writing a first revision of its 2001 Land and Water Plan. Several changes and trends have taken place that require this update, NR 151 rules, fewer but larger dairy herds, use value assessment, non-farm rural land ownership, and increasing land use conflicts.

Plan Development and Public Input: Agency staff and citizen groups representing a cross-section of Crawford County continues to have input in this plan. The Crawford County Land Use Group (A Local Citizen Advisory Group), The Crawford County Local Work Group, and the Land Conservation Planning and Zoning Committees all had input in the plan. A public hearing was held December 6, 2005.

Other Plans Considered: Two Basin Reports by Wisconsin's DNR, two county farmland reports and other references are used for data and insight in this plan.

Board Approval: The Crawford County LWRMP was approved by the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee on January 3, 2006; it was approved by the Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Board; and it was approved by the Crawford County Board of Supervisors on April 18, 2006.

Resource Assessment

County Snapshot:

Crawford County (population 16,998) is 375,040 acres in size, including 8,960 acres of water consisting of the Mississippi, Wisconsin and the Kickapoo rivers. The largest city is Prairie du Chien with a population of 6,018. Agriculture with dairy is the predominate land use. Apple production near Gays Mills is a multi-million dollar industry. There are no large confined dairy operations in the county, but herd size is increasing while heard numbers are decreasing. Corn and soybean acreage is increasing. Rural non-farm residents are greatly increasing.

Geography and Geology:

All of Crawford County is in the non-glaciated driftless area of southwest Wisconsin. Soils range from sandy soils in the river bottoms to silty and loamy soils on the ridge tops.

Cropland and Gully Erosion:

Transect survey, field assessments, and spot measurements show cropland soil loss rates at slightly under “T”. An increase in row crop farming has led to more conservation tillage for operators who participate in government programs.

Hydrology and Fish Habitat

The county is bounded on the West by the Mississippi, the south by the Wisconsin and is bisected North to South by the Kickapoo River. There are no major headwaters in the county. There are no inland lakes in the county. Crawford County has 40 coldwater streams, nine of which have populations of brook trout. There are 20.1 miles of Class I and 96.2 miles of Class II trout streams. High water velocities, steep gradients, and agricultural activities contribute to bank cutting and aggressive meandering of county streams. Stream sediment loading is typically due to the sediment in the valley floor and not the ridge tops.

Animal Waste:

A small number (under 10) of larger and confined dairy herds have resulted in fewer barnyard runoff issues and more land spreading problems. An active growing rotational grazing dairy population of 15% is making better use of steep land, dedicating it to pasture.

Nutrient Management:

The majority of Crawford County farms do not have an approved nutrient management plan. No large phosphorus loading has been documented in county streams, however a recent increased citizen-monitoring effort will give a more accurate picture.

Watersheds:

There are five watersheds in Crawford County; Reads and Tainter Creeks Watershed, Lower Kickapoo River Watershed, Knapp Creek Watershed, and Millville Creek Watershed.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters of Crawford County:

An exceptional resource water is surface water, which provides valuable fisheries, hydrological, or geologically unique features, outstanding recreational opportunities, unique environmental setting and which is not significantly impacted by human activities. In Crawford County, there are eight streams designated as exceptional resource waters.

Watershed Ranking and DNR Basin Plan Recommendations:

Two completed DNR Basin Plans provide data and recommendation for the two basins in Crawford County. These plans were reviewed with Cindy Koperski, DNR Program and Planning analyst at La Crosse.

The Blackhawk/Kickapoo Dam #6

The Crawford County actively operates and maintains one large, earthen embankment flood control dam build under the federal program PL566 in partnership with USDA/NRCS.

Forest Land:

More than half of Crawford County is wooded. Many woodlots are pastured due to Use Value Assessment that's given landowners a tax incentive to graze, however the impact is diminished by the inaccessibility of the steeply sloped woodlots to cattle. Participation in the Managed Forest Law has increased dramatically.

County Soils:

There are five soil areas in Crawford County. Soil areas include Uplands, Sandy terraces, Silty terraces, Silty bottoms, and Alluvial.

Wetlands:

The acreage and quality of wetlands in the county have declined. There is intense development pressure in the Mississippi River valley to ditch, tile, and drain for recreational pursuits.

Invasive Plants:

Invasive species come and stay. Farmers have wrestled with new plants and pests since first tilling the ground. The increasing recreational public is more aware of new threats to older species and is willing to get involved in control measures.

Regulatory Requirements

October 1, 2002 NR 151 Ag performance standards went into effect. It addresses polluted runoff control from farms and other sources. Crawford County will use administer this rule as follows:

Information and Education:

LCD, NRCS, and UWEX staff will inform landowners by brochure, newsletter, web post, and individual contact.

Priority Farm Identification:

Priority farms are those that drain to 303 (d) waters, those in Water Quality Management Areas, and those making Farmland Preservation applications.

Compliance Determinations:

Existing data and on-site investigation will determine compliance. Tracking of NR 151 evaluation and implementation will be done manually and then transferred to the future county Geographic Information System.

Enforcement:

DNR officials at the LaCrosse headquarters will be notified of NR 151 violations.

Appeals:

Persons may appeal decisions made by the Crawford County Land Conservation Department by requesting a hearing with the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee.

Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan & Work Action Plan

These sections provide a detailed implementation strategy for each of the plan goals. For each goal, objectives and actions are detailed. They are a who, what, when, where, how, how much, and what happened, for the people involved in soil and water conservation in the County.

- ? It is a matrix form of yearly items to be addressed.
- ? Outcomes are and will be listed and reviewed to see if conservation efforts are on target and ranked rightly.

High Priorities are:

- ? Determine the average soil loss of Crawford Co. and track trends in soil erosion
- ? Educate absentee landowners on conservation practices.
- ? Reduce soil erosion to “T” tolerable soil loss limit on all cropland
- ? Encourage landowners to address soil erosion problems
- ? Provide and document cost-share practices to landowners
- ? Educate landowners, both rural and urban, on the proper use and application of fertilizers and pesticides
- ? Reduce sediment delivery from erosion sources. Implement NR 151 strategy.
- ? Monitor surface water quality

Goals are:

- ? Reduce soil erosion on cropland and land other than cropland
- ? Increase money available for cost-sharing to install practices to prevent erosion
- ? Maintain and enhance the groundwater and surface water supply and integrity of the county
- ? Assist municipalities in land use planning
- ? Promote and assist in recycling

Information and Education

County, state, and federal cooperating agencies will inform the public about pollution. They will also explain the rules, regulations, programs and resources available to combat resource degradation.

Coordination

Government agencies and private groups with interests in natural resource management have for the most part had a good history of cooperation in the county. Their goal is to find the solution that best fits the problem and get it done.

Evaluation and Monitoring

County Transect Survey:

Crawford County does an annual cropland transect survey to determine soil loss, tillage practices, and cropping trends.

Water Quality Monitoring:

A small number of agencies and private groups are involved in water quality monitoring. They will be used to assess existing conditions, predict success of practice installation and determine the effectiveness of best management practices.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

NR 151 information, conservation practice, and permit data will be tracked using GIS technology.

Annual Accomplishment Reports:

Annual financial and accomplishment reports will be prepared for agencies having regulatory authority in compliance with their appropriate rules.