



## **Comprehensive Plan**

# **TOWN OF RIB FALLS**

**Marathon County  
Wisconsin**

**Plan Editions:**

Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls – 1999

Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls – 2003

Comprehensive Plan: Town of Rib Falls - 2017

Submitted to the Rib Falls Town Board on April 11, 2017.

# *Town of Rib Falls*

## *Comprehensive Plan*

### *2017*

*Adopted by the Town of Rib Falls Board of Supervisors  
Based upon the recommendations and resolution prepared  
by the Town of Rib Falls Planning Commission.*

#### **Town Board:**

*Bill Wunsch, Chairman  
Ryan DeBroux, Supervisor 1  
John Hummer, Supervisor 2  
Cindy Beaty, Clerk  
Don Koeller, Treasurer*

#### **Planning Commission:**

*Andy Johnson, Chairman  
Bill Wunsch  
Randy Ross  
Marla Berg  
Jim Draeger*

# Town of Rib Falls: Comprehensive Plan

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1:	<b>Introduction.</b>	Page
	Location of Town of Rib Falls .....	
	Historical Planning Efforts .....	
	Comprehensive Plan Process .....	
	Local Governance .....	
	Guiding Principals .....	
Chapter 2:	<b>Town History.</b>	
	Background: The Settling of Rib Falls.....	
	Transition from Lumber to Agriculture.....	
	Transition from Agriculture to Executive Community .....	
Chapter 3:	<b>Public Participation Planning</b>	
	Process and Strategies .....	
	Community Surveys .....	
	Informational Meeting .....	
	Public Hearing .....	
Chapter 4:	<b>Demographics and Housing</b>	
	Population Characteristics.....	
	Educational Characteristics .....	
	Income and Employment Characteristics .....	
	Housing Characteristics.....	
	Community Character .....	
	Issues and Considerations .....	
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....	
Chapter 5:	<b>Public Safety and Community Services</b>	
	Public Safety Services.....	
	Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2011-2016 .....	
	Issues and Considerations .....	
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....	
Chapter 6:	<b>Recreation and Community Services</b>	
	Parks and Recreational Areas .....	
	Community Infrastructure .....	
	Issues and Considerations .....	
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....	
Chapter 7:	<b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>	
	Road and Bridge Network .....	
	Marathon County Highway Department.....	
	Issues and Considerations .....	
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....	

Chapter 8:	<b>Land Use</b>
	Current Land Use .....
	Land Use Changes.....
	Current Land Use Regulations .....
	Farmland Preservation .....
	Issues and Considerations .....
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....
Chapter 9:	<b>Natural Resources</b>
	Current Resource Management Plans and Studies .....
	Land Resources .....
	Issues and Considerations .....
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....
Chapter 10:	<b>Water Resources</b>
	Current Resource Management Plans.....
	Surface Water .....
	Groundwater .....
	Issues and Considerations .....
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....
Chapter 11:	<b>Economic Activity and Development</b>
	Agricultural Industry.....
	Woodland Industry .....
	Nonmetallic Mining Industry .....
	Issues and Considerations .....
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....
Chapter 12:	<b>Intergovernmental Cooperation and Partnership Initiatives.</b>
	Marathon County Plans.....
	Marathon County Ordinances.....
	Village of Edgar Comprehensive Plan .....
	Village of Marathon City Comprehensive Plan.....
	WI Department of Transportation – State Highway 29 Corridor Plan .....
	Intergovernmental Tools and Regulations .....
	Issues and Considerations .....
	Chapter Goals & Objectives .....
Chapter 13:	<b>Implementation and Strategic Plan</b>
	Regulatory Strategies .....
	Non-regulatory Strategies.....
	Community Partnerships: Agreements, Plans and Programs .....
	Chapter Goals & Actions .....

## **Lists of Maps**

Map 1.1:	Location of Rib Falls .....
Map 4.1:	Local School Districts serving Rib Falls .....
Map 5.1:	Fire Service and Emergency Response Boundaries serving Rib Falls.....
Map 6.1:	Marathon County Parks and Recreational Areas Serving Rib Falls .....
Map 7.1:	Roads of Rib Falls .....
Map 8.1:	2010 Land Use Map .....
Map 8.2:	Future Land Use Map.....
Map 8.3:	Current Zoning Map .....
Map 8.4:	Farmland Preservation Area Map.....
Map 8.5:	Nonmetallic Mining Areas .....
Map 9.1:	Soils of Rib Falls.....
Map 9.2:	Depth of Bedrock.....
Map 10.1:	Surface Water Resources .....
Map 10.2:	Groundwater Susceptibility Map .....

## **List of Tables**

Table 4.1:	Age Distribution of Rib Falls .....
Table 4.2:	Population and Racial Composition .....
Table 4.3:	Educational Attainment.....
Table 4.4:	Household Income Profile .....
Table 11.1:	Occupation by Sector .....
Table 11.2:	Industrial Sector Employment.....

## **List of Figures**

Fig 1:	1998 Sense of Livability.....
Fig 2:	2015 Sense of Livability.....
Fig 3:	Resident “Likes” about Rib Falls.....
Fig 4:	Resident’s Beneficial Suggestions.....
Fig 5:	Town Support to Neighboring Communities .....
Fig 6:	Town Collaboration with Neighboring Communities.....
Fig 7:	Housing Preferences.....
Fig 8:	Town Role in Recreational Development.....
Fig 9:	Bridge Inventory .....
Fig 10:	Town Support for Conservation .....
Fig 11:	Industrial and Commercial Development .....
Fig 12:	Importance of Farmland Preservation.....
Fig 13:	Support of Farmland Preservation Planning .....
Fig 14:	Water Resource Protection .....
Fig 15:	Wisconsin River Phosphorus Concentration Values .....

## **Appendices**

Appendix A:	Listing of Ordinances .....
Appendix B:	Listing of Resolutions.....
Appendix C:	Citizen Survey Results.....

## RESOLUTION #01-2017

### 2017 TOWN OF RIB FALLS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: RESOLUTION TO ADOPT

**Whereas**, on March 14, 1996, the Town of Rib Falls adopted Resolution 11-1996 to create a Land Use Plan in response to the State of Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislative initiatives to coordinate multi-governmental planning throughout the State; and

**Whereas**, in April 2003, the town updated the Land Use Plan (1999) as part of a countywide initiative to support local comprehensive planning; and

**Whereas**, the planning commission developed a public participation plan for the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that residents and adjacent communities were engaged and informed throughout the planning process; and

**Whereas**, the planning commission conducted a citizen survey to better understand the local resident's understandings and preferences concerning governmental services, community development, and regional growth; and

**Whereas**, the planning commission communicated with local neighboring municipalities and towns to foster regional cooperation and coordination; and

**Whereas**, the planning commission held a public information meeting on April 10, 2017, to inform and engage local officials and residents about the comprehensive plan draft recommendations, and

**Whereas**, the Comprehensive Plan may be used as the basis for establishing and updating a zoning ordinance, recommending infrastructure improvements, developing recreational facilities and lands, establishing transportation plans, establishing policies for the town regarding elements in the plan, and as a guide for approving or disapproving actions affecting growth and development under the jurisdiction of the Town of Rib Falls.

**Now, Therefore Be It Resolved**, by the town of Rib Falls that Ordinance 24-2000 entitled *Town of Rib Falls Land Use Planning Initiative* is hereby repealed and recreated pursuant to the attachment; and

**Be it Further Resolved**, that the said resolution acknowledges the Town of Rib Falls has executed its duties as prescribed by state and local requirements in the development of the 2017 Rib Falls Comprehensive Plan and that recommendations accurately reflect local and regional needs and capacities.

Adopted the \_\_\_\_\_ day of April, 2017. \_\_\_\_\_ Cindy Beaty, Clerk

Town of Rib Falls: Board of Supervisors.

\_\_\_\_\_ William Wunsch, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Ryan DeBroux, Supervisor 1

\_\_\_\_\_ John Hummer, Supervisor 2

## ORDINANCE #01-2017

### 2017 TOWN OF RIB FALLS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: ORDINANCE TO ADOPT

**Whereas**, on March 14, 2000, the Town of Rib Falls adopted (Ordinance 24-2000) its first Comprehensive Land Use Plan in response to the State of Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislative initiatives to coordinate multi-governmental planning throughout the State; and

**Whereas**, in April 2003, the town updated the Land Use Plan (1999) as part of a countywide initiative and state funded effort to support local comprehensive planning; and

**Whereas**, sec. 66.1001(4), Wis. Stats., establishes procedures for a local government to adopt a comprehensive plan, and Sec. 66.1001(2) identifies the required planning elements; and

**Whereas**, sec. 6.1001(4)(a), Wis. Stats., requires that the local governing planning body shall adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation at every stage of the comprehensive plan preparation; and

**Whereas**, on April 1, 2017, the town board reviewed and accepted the findings and recommendations of the Rib Falls Planning Commission; and

**Whereas**, the town board held a public hearing on April 10, 2017 for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, with notice in compliance with the requirements of sec. 66.1001(4)(d) Wis. Stats., and

**Whereas**, the Comprehensive Plan may be used as the basis for establishing and updating a zoning ordinance, recommending infrastructure improvements, developing recreational facilities and lands, establishing transportation plans, establishing policies for the town regarding elements in the plan, and as a guide for approving or disapproving actions affecting growth and development under the jurisdiction of the Town of Rib Falls, and

**Whereas**, the Comprehensive Plan may from time to time be amended, extended, or added to in greater detail; and

**Now, Therefore Be It Ordained and Resolved**, by the town of Rib Falls that Ordinances 01-03 entitled *Town of Rib Falls Comprehensive Plan: Adoption* and is hereby repealed and recreated pursuant to the attachment; and

**Be it Further Ordained and Resolved**, that the said ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

Adopted the \_\_\_\_\_ day of April, 2017. \_\_\_\_\_ Cindy Beaty, Clerk

Town of Rib Falls: Board of Supervisors.

\_\_\_\_\_ William Wunsch, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Ryan DeBroux, Supervisor 1

\_\_\_\_\_ John Hummer, Supervisor 2

## **NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TOWN OF RIB FALLS, WISCONSIN**

April 10, 2017 and April 11, 2017

Please be advised that the Town of Rib Falls Town Board will be holding two meetings to hear comments and concerns related to the 2017 Town of Rib Falls Comprehensive Plan. Both meetings will be held at the Rib Falls Town Hall located at 1744 County Highway S, Edgar, WI. An informational meeting hosted by the Rib Falls planning commission will be held on Monday April 10, 2017 at 6:00 PM to discuss findings and recommendations relative to the Comprehensive Plan. Then, on Tuesday April 11, 2017 at 6:45 PM, the Town Board will hold a public hearing to review the planning commission's recommendations, resolution, and official maps.

The comprehensive plan includes extensive data concerning existing conditions and issues, and provides goals, objectives, and actions for such elements as land use, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, transportation, safety services, utilities, and recreation as required by 66.1001 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The draft plan is available for review at the Town Hall by appointment and on the Town's Web page at <http://www.http://ribfallstownship.wixsite.com/town-of-rib-falls> .

Written comments on the proposed documents should be submitted to the planning commission (attention Andy Johnson, 851 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Str., Edgar, WI) by noon on April 10, 2017. All written comments will be forwarded to the Town Board for their consideration. Any person planning to attend needing special accommodations in order to participate should call the Town at (715) 443-3553.

Dated this 2nd<sup>h</sup> day of March, 2017

Cindy Beaty, Town Clerk

Published as a legal ad in the Record Review on Thursday March 9, 2017.



# *Chapter One:*

## *Introduction*

### **Location**

The Town of Rib Falls is located in central Marathon County, close to the metropolitan areas of Wausau and Marshfield (See Map 1.1). While Rib Falls is still considered a rural township, it is contiguous to several developing communities. The Villages of Marathon City and Edgar are located southeast and southwest, respectively of the town and represent communities actively growing along their north boundaries. Both villages hope to maximize the economic development opportunities that are created by the interchange access along State Highway 29. The town is located approximately 6 miles west of the City of Wausau, 11 miles from the City of Merrill, 20 miles from the City of Marshfield, and 18 miles from the City of Medford. These urban centers provide employment opportunities for commuters while offering rural living opportunities in the town.

### **Historical Planning Efforts**

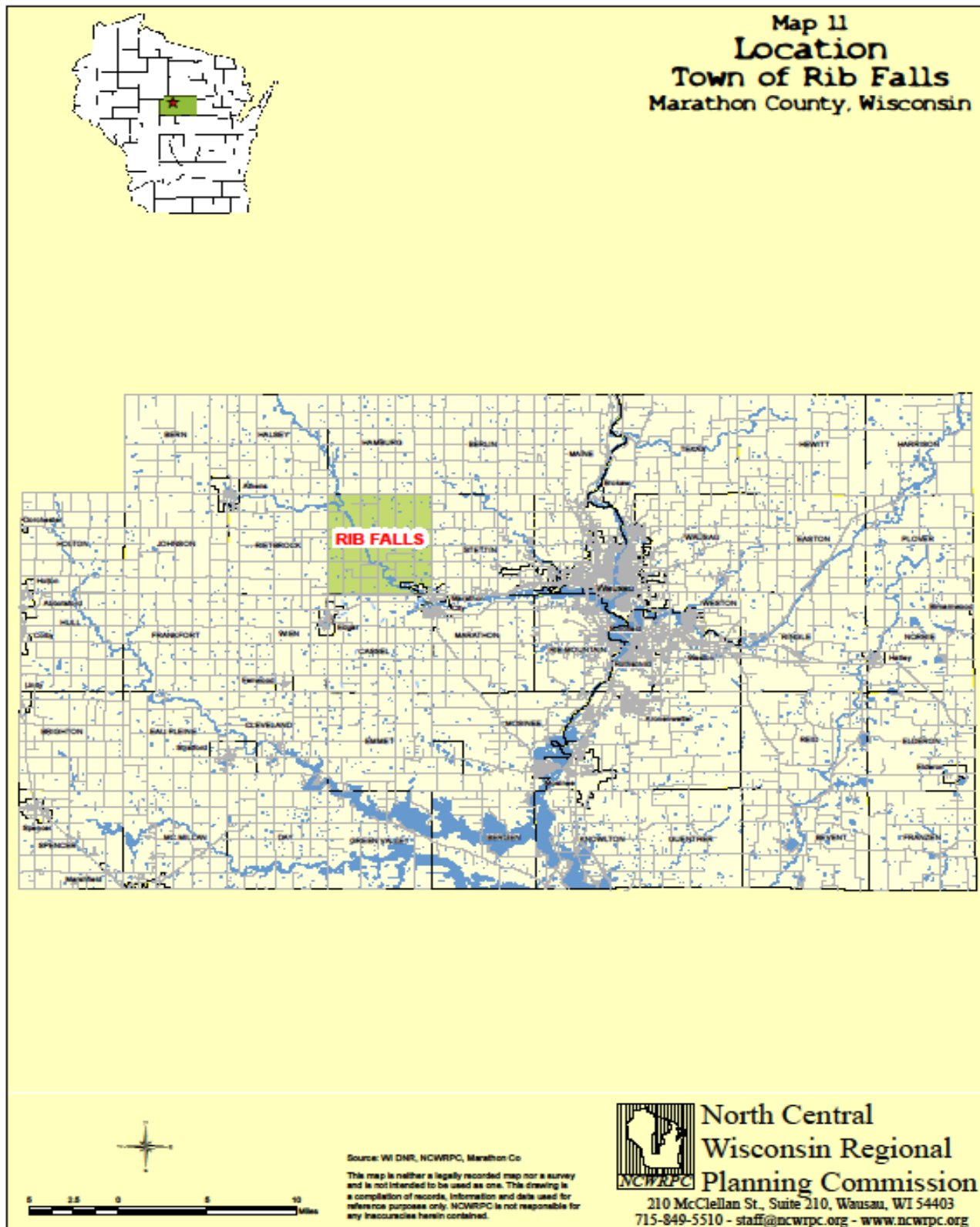
The Town of Rib Falls has a strong tradition of planning. Three major comprehensive planning efforts have taken place since 1996 to ensure that land use policies, official mapping, programs, and services are consistent with the state Smart Growth law. In 2006, Marathon County developed its first comprehensive plan. The town understands that Marathon County is the primary local governmental partner in the implementation of its planning goals and objectives. Therefore, to the extent possible, town planning activities will be consistent with the Marathon County plan and recognize that the development of a strong and effective program partnership between the town and county is imperative to the success of implementation. This plan will enhance and extend the historical service reach of town government through the maximization of private and public partnerships.

Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001 requires that the following planning elements must be addressed in a comprehensive plan:

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

A short summary of previous planning initiatives, recommendations, and accomplishments is provided in the following narrative.

Map 1: Location



1. **Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls – 1999.** On March 14, 2000, the Town of Rib Falls adopted its first Comprehensive Land Use Plan in response to the State of Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislative (See Ordinance #24-2000). The first plan emphasized the importance of maintaining the rural and agricultural character of the town. Prior to the adoption of the Land Use Plan, the Town of Rib Falls utilized the Marathon County Zoning Ordinance and an assortment of local ordinances and resolutions to respond to land use and public safety issues (See Appendix A and Appendix B).

In the first Land Use Plan (1999), the Town Board presented the following six recommendations:

- a. Establish a five (5) member Planning Commission.

**Note:** *Town of Rib Falls passed Resolution 16-2000 (March 2000) which formally established a planning commission. The planning commission is charged with supporting the town board in the review, development, and implementation of the land use plan. The planning commission assesses policy and action recommendations to ensure consistency with the land use plan.*

- b. Establish a Land Use Plan Review Process.

**Note:** *The planning commission is assigned the responsibility to annually review the land use plan to ensure that it accurately reflects and addresses the community's trends, challenges, and opportunities relative to land use.*

- c. Establish a two (2) acre minimum lot size for non-agricultural land and a five (5) acre minimum lot size for agricultural land and the Rib River corridor overlay.

**Note 1:** *In Ordinance 03-1977: Regulation of Residential Lot Size, the town board adopted (prior to county zoning) a two (2) acre minimum lot size. In 1986, the Town adopted zoning services from Marathon County through the Marathon County Zoning Ordinance. Minimum lot size is established by districts. In 2005, the Marathon County Zoning Ordinance changed establishing a minimum lot size of 5 acres for residential districts. In April of 2016, the town board adopted (Resolution #01-2016), districting changes to the Marathon County Zoning Code. The current code establishes Rural Estate (RE) and Rural Residential (RR) districts with minimum lot sizes of 5 and 10 acres, respectively.*

**Note 2:** *A minimum lot size of 5 acres for lands within the River Corridor overlay has not been established to date.*

- d. Develop a review process for large scale livestock operations (> 300 animal units) and nonmetallic mining operations relative to equipment weight and size to protect investments in local infrastructure; minimize nuisance issues (noise and dust); and ensure traffic safety.

**Note 1:** *In 2006 Marathon County adopted the Marathon County Livestock Facilities Siting Ordinance (0-24-06). This ordinance regulates prescribed water and air quality standards for livestock operations between 500-999 animal units. The ordinance was amended in 2012 (Ordinance O-27-12).*

**Note 2:** *In 1988 Marathon County adopted the Marathon County Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance (0-13-88) to balance the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the mining industry. This regulation establishes site reclamation standards and expectations. The ordinance was amended in 2001 (Ordinance 0-03-03) and 2007 (Ordinance O-02-07).*

**Note 3:** *To address the infrastructure concerns (roads and bridge investments), the town enforces weight and size limits/standards for equipment, vehicles, and implements of husbandry (IOH) established by standardized state statutes and codes. Administration of state codes on town controlled roads is the responsibility of the town board.*

**Note 4:** In 2005 the town adopted Haul Road Ordinance 29-05. This ordinance requires permits and negotiated dust and maintenance controls on local roads for high intensity, short duration traffic activities.

- e. Establish policy relative to utility corridor development such as electrical transmission lines and communication towers.

**Note:** Currently, there is no local policy established for the development or maintenance of utility corridors.

- f. Develop working dialogue with Marathon County Park Department to establish development ideas, timetables, and funding needs relative to the Rib Falls Park.

**Note:** Since 2003 the town board and planning commission have been in conversation the Marathon County to ensure that the 1982 resolution supporting the reclamation of the mining site into a regional park is honored. The original warranty deed or the sale of park lands from the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company to Marathon County required that a reclamation fund be established from operational costs associated with the mining.

- 2. **Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls – 2003.** In April 2003 the town updated the Land Use Plan (1999) as part of a countywide initiative to support local comprehensive planning. In the plan, the planning commission advanced the following specific strategies and goals for implementation:

- a. Establish a Land Use Plan review process that provides timely updates and revisions of the Land Use Plan.

**Note:** The planning commission functions as an administrative support committee for the town board and community to implement the Land Use Plan through recommendations and resolutions. The planning commission reviews the Land Use Plan annually to ensure that the plan continues to represent the vision and mission of the community. The omission also ensures progress toward stated goals.

- b. Adopt a Land Division Ordinance that establishes conditions and review procedures relative to lot sizes and development specifications for the Rib River Corridor, agricultural districts, and non-agricultural districts, large scale livestock facilities, and nonmetallic mining activities.

**Note:** In 2004, the planning commission drafted a town land division ordinance for consideration by the town board. The local ordinance did not advance due to the administrative costs associated with the recommendation. The town board decided to allow Marathon County to administer a countywide land division and surveying ordinance (Ordinance 0-6-87). The purpose of this ordinance is to control the division of land, and to promote the public health, safety and general welfare. The ordinance was last amended in 2016.

- c. Create productive working relationships with neighboring communities and the various state and county agencies that influence land use activities and policies.

**Note:** The town board and planning commission recognizes the extreme importance of working collaboratively with adjoining town and municipal communities to advance prosperity, health, and safety. Marathon County serves as an important partner to administer local policies and programs available to local units of government. See chapter 12 for a complete listing of partnerships. The town governance will continue to improve these partnerships in the future.

3. **Comprehensive Plan: Town of Rib Falls - 2017.** In 2017, the land-use plan is being updated. Whereas in previous plans, the emphasis was on land issues, this plan will be more comprehensive in scope to include considerations such as local housing, transportation, social, and health issues. Furthermore, the plan will identify and discuss strategies to maximize the role of partnerships with public and private stakeholders that share a common purpose.

## **Purpose of Comprehensive Plan**

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan law (Stats. 66.1001) requires the town to have a comprehensive plan with nine prescribed elements in order to undertake certain activities such as zoning, land division, and official mapping. Furthermore, the law requires that the town update and revise the local comprehensive plan every 10 years to respond to demographic and land use trends. The Rib Falls planning commission is responsible to lead the local planning efforts with the guidance and authority of the town board. The planning commission will also evaluate the effectiveness of local partnerships and programming efforts toward realizing specific goals and outcomes.

## **Comprehensive Plan Process**

The Comprehensive Planning effort extended from April 2015 to March 2017. The planning commission provided the main oversight in facilitating communications with residents; local stakeholders; and neighboring towns and villages. The planning commission developed the narrative, official maps, and recommendations found within the plan. The North Central Regional Planning Commission and Marathon County assisted the town with map development, evaluating data evaluation, and editorial assistance.

Public input was sought during the planning process, where the planning commission reached out to all immediately surrounding governmental units (towns and villages) and Marathon County. An open house and informational meeting was held on April 10, 2017 to inform citizens about the planning process and to share recommendations. Input and reactions to proposed recommendations were documented and shared with the town board.

## **Local Governance**

The purpose of local government is to provide basic services to citizens and visitors within the community that support common social, health, community, and environmental concerns. The government of Rib Falls reflects a conservative view of local governance that is characterized by a desire to limit the scale of governmental services and regulatory activities, as well as promoting market-based solutions to local and regional initiatives.

**Vision:** The Town of Rib Falls is a rural community that provides its residents, businesses, and visitors a safe and healthy environment that supports individual and regional opportunities to prosper.

**Mission.** The Town of Rib Falls serves our community by:

- Coordinating initiatives that protect the safety and value of individuals and property.
- Developing programs and facilities that protect our natural and cultural resources.
- Supporting economic opportunities on working lands (mining, agriculture, and timber).
- Maintaining a safe and affordable road and bridge system.
- Developing and conserving recreational and natural resources.
- Developing effective service collaborations with local partners.

**Guiding Principles of Planning: Rib Falls will:**

- Support and protect vulnerable individuals.
- Respect and protect local control governance.
- Respect individual property rights and self- determination.
- Respect for the diversity of our citizen's backgrounds, opinions, and perspectives.
- Balance residential and industrial/commercial activities.
- Respect the local knowledge of the land and its capacities.
- Define goals and activities that minimize community conflicts.
- Protect property values.
- Develop guidelines and criteria to respond to various scales and intensities of use

***Note:** Acknowledge that the "scale" of land use activities (not only the type of land use) impacts the acceptability of land uses and activities.*

## **Organizational Structure.**

Town Board. The town board consists of three (3) elected officials: Chairman and two supervisors. The board is supported by a Clerk and Treasurer. Powers and authority of the board are prescribed by authority of Statute 59.

Since 1998, the town has appointed a five (5) member planning commission to provide stewardship to the local comprehensive planning document and process. The planning commission provides review and recommendations for the board on matters addressed in the comprehensive plan.

## *Chapter Two:*

# *Town History*

### **Settlement Along the Big Rib River: Lumber and Water-powered Mills**

John and Ernestina Baesemann along with seven children arrived in the Town of Rib Falls on June 16, 1866. John purchased land covered with virgin timber and immediately set out to build a water-powered sawmill. By 1869, Baesemann had completed construction of the dam and sawmill.

Initially, there were no logs for sale from the Rib Falls area, because it was too expensive to transport the lumber by sleigh to the Wausau area. However, farmers could get lumber and shingles for their buildings and fences, keeping the mill busy throughout the year. The water-operated sawmill provided employment for many people. At full capacity, the mill ran two shifts cutting the lumber and shingles that helped to build the new community.

By 1876 a gristmill for grinding grain into flour was in full operation which was of great importance to area farmers. The gristmill located on the north bank of the river stood four stories tall and was powered by three separate water wheels. The mill saved farmers from a 15-mile trip to Wausau on a bad road. People would travel from miles around to have their grain ground into high quality flour at Rib Falls. The gristmill operated until 1925.

Most of the land purchased by John Baesemann was sold to Wausau Lumber Company in 1905. In 1906 a large, steam-powered saw and planing mill was constructed by the Wausau Lumber Company on the south bank of the river. It was serviced by the Chicago and Northwestern railroad spur that was constructed in 1905 from the Village of Marathon. This sawmill operated until 1927 when it was finally shut down due to lack of timber in its immediate vicinity. The spur was removed in 1936.

The town enjoyed rapid growth after the mills were established, and by 1927 was one of the most populous towns in the county.

The Town of Rib Falls was organized as a separate town in the spring of 1877 with the election of town officers. John Baesemann was elected the first chairman. The town is now limited to Town 29 North and Range 5 East after it was set off from the Town of Stettin.

The population of Rib Falls at the turn of the century (1900) was nearly 1,000 compared to its present population of 1,126. When you look around the quiet, scenic town today you can still see signs of the prosperous lumber industry complete with blacksmith shops, boarding houses, hotels and train depot that once flourished on the banks of the Rib River.



## Communities of Faith

The first church in Rib Falls was St. John's Lutheran, formally organized in 1878. The present St. John's Church was built in 1918. Next was the Immanuel church, built around 1928. These churches supported the German Evangelical Lutheran settlers. By 1952, the town had four churches.

Photos of churches



## **Education**

A little red schoolhouse was built in 1887. By 1920, Rib Falls had nine separate school districts within its own boundary with more than 80 children attending school. Today three consolidated school districts (Edgar, Marathon and Athens) serve the residents of Rib Falls.

## **Photos**

## **Transition from Lumber to Agriculture**

As the lumber industry faded out of prominence by 1930, agriculture became the main economic activity and cultural element. In the sawmill era, the town did have one cheese factory. Initially, small grain farming followed the loggers. Over the next 20 years dairy farming would come to dominate the landscape. Today only 17 dairy farm operations are active within the Town. With the changing technologies and low profit margins afforded to milk and crop production, the farms continue to consolidate production facilities and land base.

Over the years, the production of ginseng as a specialty crop has been quite common on small acreage plots. Although still grown today, the number of acres in ginseng production has declined over the last few years as the profit margins have declined.

As the number of farming operations have declined so have the number of households involved in farming. Therefore, the demographics have reflected a changing resident that is less connected to the farming industry and the local markets in nearby villages.

## **Photos of Agriculture Transition**

## **The Blending of Agriculture and Commuting Community**

Today with a population of approximately 1,126 residents, the Town of Rib Falls is experiencing another transition in the population and land use. Specifically, the town is experiencing a slow conversion of agricultural land to other uses. There is still a rural landscape dominated by cropland and woodland, but increasingly the people that live within the town are professionals and service providers commuting to nearby urban centers for employment. This commuting lifestyle is facilitated by the easy access to State Highway 29, a major east-west freeway arterial in the region.

Residents in the town should anticipate and prepare for the possibility that demand for improved local roads, public recreational facilities, broadband communication systems, and enhanced emergency services will be expected of local government in the future.

Furthermore, the local town government will need to improve partnership capacities with nearby urban municipalities, Marathon County, and the State of Wisconsin to leverage local delivery of services.

As the cost of services rise, the town will need to assess their role in economic development. Within the interior of the town, economic development will likely involve the support of sand and gravel operations, woodland/timber activities, and agriculture. However, along the access interchange areas near State Highway 29, the town will need to develop cooperative agreements to build a tax base based upon commercial and industrial activities to help generate revenues to support service costs throughout the town. These activities will be supported while ensuring that the soil and water resources of the region are protected.

The evolving population and need for economic development in the region is not limited to Rib Falls. In the nearby villages of Marathon City and Edgar, the pressure to grow a local economy is strong too. Rib Falls will actively participate in discussions and planning activities that support the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the community.

Photos of land use urban-rural fringe, farms, industry

## *Chapter Three:*

# *Public Participation Planning*

Since 1998 the Town of Rib Falls' planning commission has served the town board to develop and implement the town's comprehensive planning activities. In 2000 (Resolution No. 16-2000) the town board formally created a planning commission of five (5) members that serve three (3) year terms. The role of the planning commission is to provide recommendations to the town board that support the town's Comprehensive Plan.

A primary responsibility of the planning commission was to develop a public participation plan that provided public engagement opportunities for residents, property owners, and nearby governmental officials throughout the planning process. The specific purposes of our public engagement strategy are as follows:

- Inform all residents and landowners of planning and participation processes.
- Inform citizens and governmental partners of comprehensive planning goals and objectives.
- Educate citizens on the value of and the need for planning and regional partnerships
- Inform proposed policy decisions that influence land division, environmental protection, transportation, and zoning activities.
- Promote public engagement with residents and local stakeholders.
- Monitor and assess trends relative to the impacts, economic value, scale and intensity of activities such as non-metallic mining, agriculture, residential housing, recreation, and commercial and industrial activities.

### **Process and Strategies:**

Per Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(4)(a), the Town of Rib Falls adopted written procedures to foster public participation, including open discussion and public meetings for which notice was provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a comprehensive plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public.

### **Community Surveys**

During the comprehensive planning process, education and public participation activities extended over a period of fifteen months. The initial public outreach activity was a community survey. The intent of the survey was to introduce, and engage the residents, to share their thoughts relative to values, likes, dislikes, and preferences with their town and local government.

In March 2015 the community survey was sent to all residents in the town, as well as to non-residents that had land holdings in the town. In June 2015 with forty-three percent (43%) of the surveys returned, the results were compiled and presented to the community at the town's Annual Meeting in April 2017. See Appendix C for a summary of survey results.

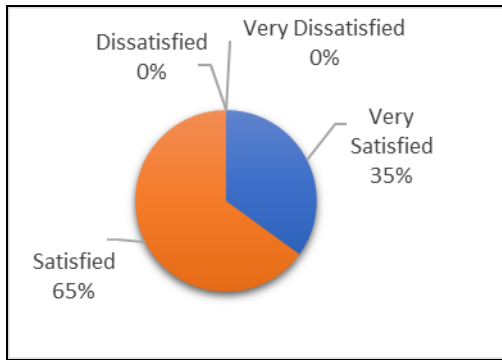


Figure 1: 1998 Sense of Livability

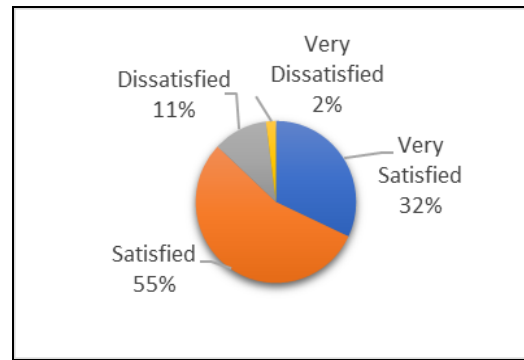


Figure 2: 2015 Sense of Livability

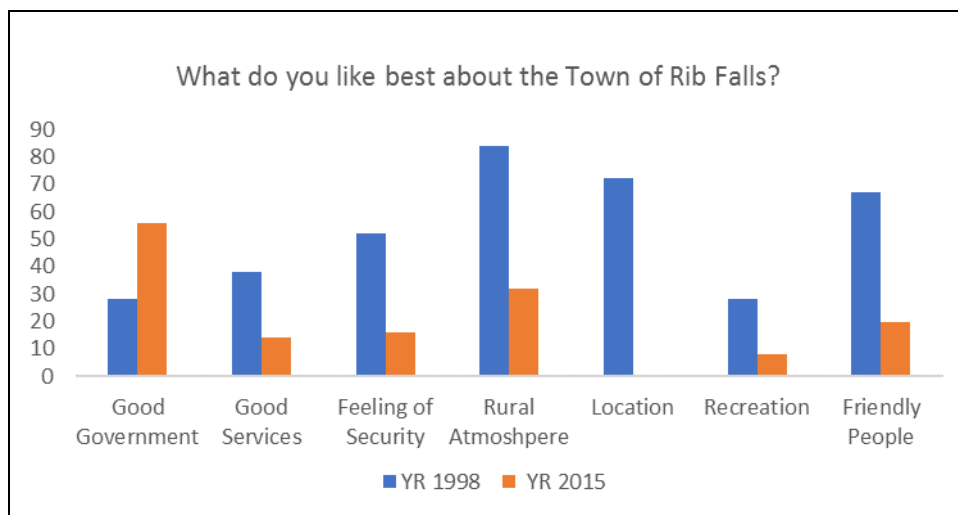


Figure 3: Rib Falls Likes

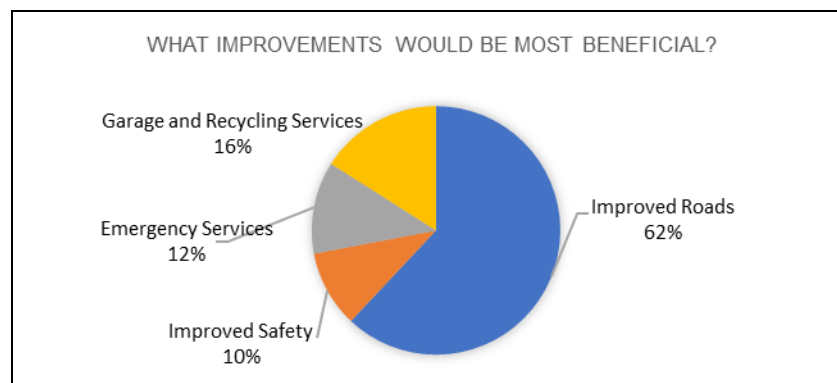


Figure 4: Suggested Beneficial Improvements

## Informational Meetings:

During the planning process, the town met with adjacent town and village representatives. Examples of meetings included the following:

1. Village of Edgar - Four Corners Group. On October 10, 2016 the town met with representatives of the village of Edgar, and towns of Wien, Rietbrock, and Cassel to discuss common interests relative to transportation, farmland preservation, emergency response, and water quality trading opportunities. Additionally, town officials meet with local officials at quarterly Western Towns and Villages Association meetings.

Rib Falls will continue to meet with the planning commissions of the towns of Wien, Rietbrock, and Cassel, and the Village of Edgar to discuss common points of interest relative to land division and land use. Additionally, this group will seek to develop criteria for the development of moderate and large scale housing and commercial enterprises. We will seek to direct development that requires significant public services to areas of the community that can most efficiently and economically provide needed service.

2. Village of Marathon City: Four Corners Group. Throughout the planning process, the town met with planning and board members from the Village of Marathon City to discuss land use and transportation and emergency support issues along the Highway 29 corridor.

It is the intent to begin land division planning efforts with the Village of Marathon City and surrounding area communities to discuss and plan development adjacent to the State Highway 29 and 107 interchange after the comprehensive plan is complete and adopted.

Rib Falls will continue to meet with the planning commissions of the Village of Marathon City, as well as the towns of Stettin, Marathon, and Cassel to discuss common points of interest relative to land division and land use. Additionally, this group will seek to develop criteria for the development of moderate and large scale housing and commercial enterprises. We will seek to direct development that requires significant public services to areas of the community that can most efficiently and economically provide needed services.

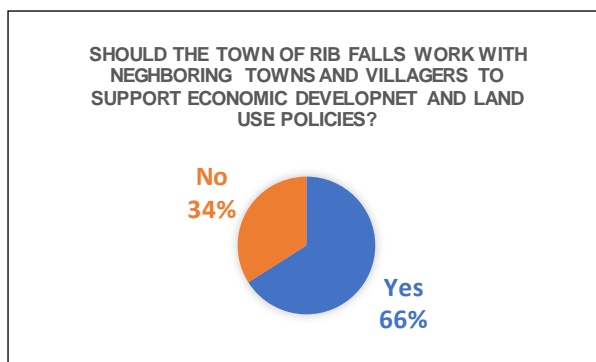


Fig 5: Town and Village Support

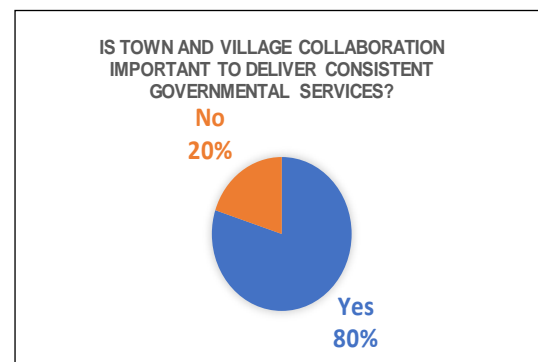


Fig 6: Town and Village Collaboration

3. Open House: On April 10, 2017 the Town of Rib Falls hosted an informational meeting for town residents and neighboring community officials. The planning commission provided an overview of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and specific recommendations. Comments from residents were documented and forwarded to the town board.

After the informational meeting, edits were made to the comprehensive plan and final recommendations were forwarded to the town board for action.

#### Photos of meeting

4. Public Hearing: April 11, 2017. Per Wisconsin state statute 66.1001 (4), the Town of Rib Falls may adopt an ordinance approving the Comprehensive Plan after a minimum of one public hearing at which time the proposed ordinance and support resolution are discussed. On April 11, 2017, the town board held a public hearing to review the resolution and recommendations from the planning commission relative to the 2017 Town of Rib Falls Comprehensive Plan.

Per state statute, the notice of the hearing was advertised as a class 1 notice published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The class 1 public hearing notice contained the following information:

- a. The date, time and place of the hearing.
- b. A summary, which may include a map, of the proposed comprehensive plan.
- c. The name of an individual designated as the town contact person who may provide additional information regarding the proposed ordinance.
- d. Information relating to where and when the proposed comprehensive plan may be inspected before the hearing, and how a copy of the plan or amendment may be obtained.

## Chapter Four:

# Demographics and Housing

### Population

In 1930 Rib Falls Township had a population of 1,010 people. At that time, the population began a slow yet steady decline until 1960 when the population hit 757 people. Over the last 50+ years, the population has steadily increased to its present-day number of 1,126 people. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) statistically estimates population and household projections for Wisconsin in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 16.96. At our present rate of new housing starts, the projected population in 2040 will approximately 1,283 people, a 14% increase.

Similarly, household projections based on the WDOA population projections indicate that Marathon County is projected to increase over 7,500 households by the year 2040, a 20% growth.

### Age Distribution of Rib Falls Residents

The age distribution of town residents indicates that nearly 25% of the people are of school age. These young families make many trips daily to activities and demand safe roadways. Since the three public and parochial school districts provide schooling outside the town, school busing needs relative to visibility and snow plowing are very important servicing priorities. Approximately 16.7% of our residents are of retirement age (62 and older). The town should consider and plan to ensure that special housing and emergency services are available to them. The median age of a Rib Falls resident in 2015 was 41.8 years (*source: American Fact Finder – US Census*). See Table 4.1 for distribution of age over the past 25 years.

**TABLE 4.1 Distribution of Age of Rib Falls Residents**

Year	< 5	5-17	18-20	21-24	25-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65-74	Over
1990	60	230	38	34	273	89	47	17	23	56
2000	56	190	50	30	286	128	29	45	59	36
2010	61	246	42	28	238	182	84	40	29	50
2015	40	241	48	48	230	208	72	75	100	64

*Source: American Fact Finder – US Census*

## Racial Composition

The racial composition of Marathon County and Rib Falls in 2010 is shown in table 4.2. Marathon County has experienced growth in racial diversity over the last two decades. Both Marathon County and Wisconsin are majority white but are becoming more diverse. Marathon County has the highest Asian population percentage of all counties in Wisconsin.

Per the U.S. Census the Hispanic population in Marathon County grew by over 2,000 people between 2000 and 2010. Countywide, Hispanics made up 2.2 percent of the population in 2010. Several western Marathon County municipalities have larger Hispanic population percentages, including the Village of Athens (4.9%), Town of Brighton (6.5%), the City of Colby (14.9%), and the City of Abbotsford (39.9%). In the Town of Rib Falls, there are no residents of Hispanic ethnicity.

**Table 4.2 POPULATION and RACIAL COMPOSITION**

	RIB FALLS			MARATHON COUNTY		WISCONSIN	
	2000	2010	2015	2000	2010	2000	2010
Total Population	907	993	1,126	125,834	134,063	5,363,715	5,686,986
White	902	967	1,120	118,079	122,446	4,769,8987	4,902,067
African America	1	3	0	347	841	304,460	359,148
American Indian	2	1	-	435	634	47,228	54,526
Asian	1	9	3	5,715	7,146	88,763	129,234
Hispanic	3	9		324	1,223	84,842	135,867
Two or More Races	3	4	3	908	1,741	66,895	104,317
% White	99.4	97.4	99.6	93.8	91.3	88.9	86.2
% Other	.6	2.6	0.4	6.2	8.7	11.1	13.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Population and Race Data, Wisconsin, Census 2000 and 2010 Comparisons



## Educational Characteristics:

Table 4.3 shows the levels of education attainment of Marathon County and town residents. Since 1990 Marathon County has seen an increase in the percent of the population with a high school and bachelor degrees. The town has also seen an increase in these percentages.

**Table 4.3: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (Population 25 years and over)**

	RIB FALLS		MARATHON COUNTY		WISCONSIN	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1.7	2.6	5.2	4.0	3.7	3.1
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> , No Diploma	6.1	4.2	6.3	5.0	6.9	5.8
High School Graduate	46.8	43.8	37.8	37.1	34.	32.
Some College, No Diploma	18.6	18.7	19.	18.5	20.6	21.1
Associate Degree	9.3	13.8	10.8	11.7	9.	10.1
Bachelor's Degree	11.9	12.8	13.9	16.1	17.1	18.4
Professional Degree	5.6	4.1	6.9	7.6	8.6	9.4
High School Graduate or Higher	92.2	93.2	-	-	-	-

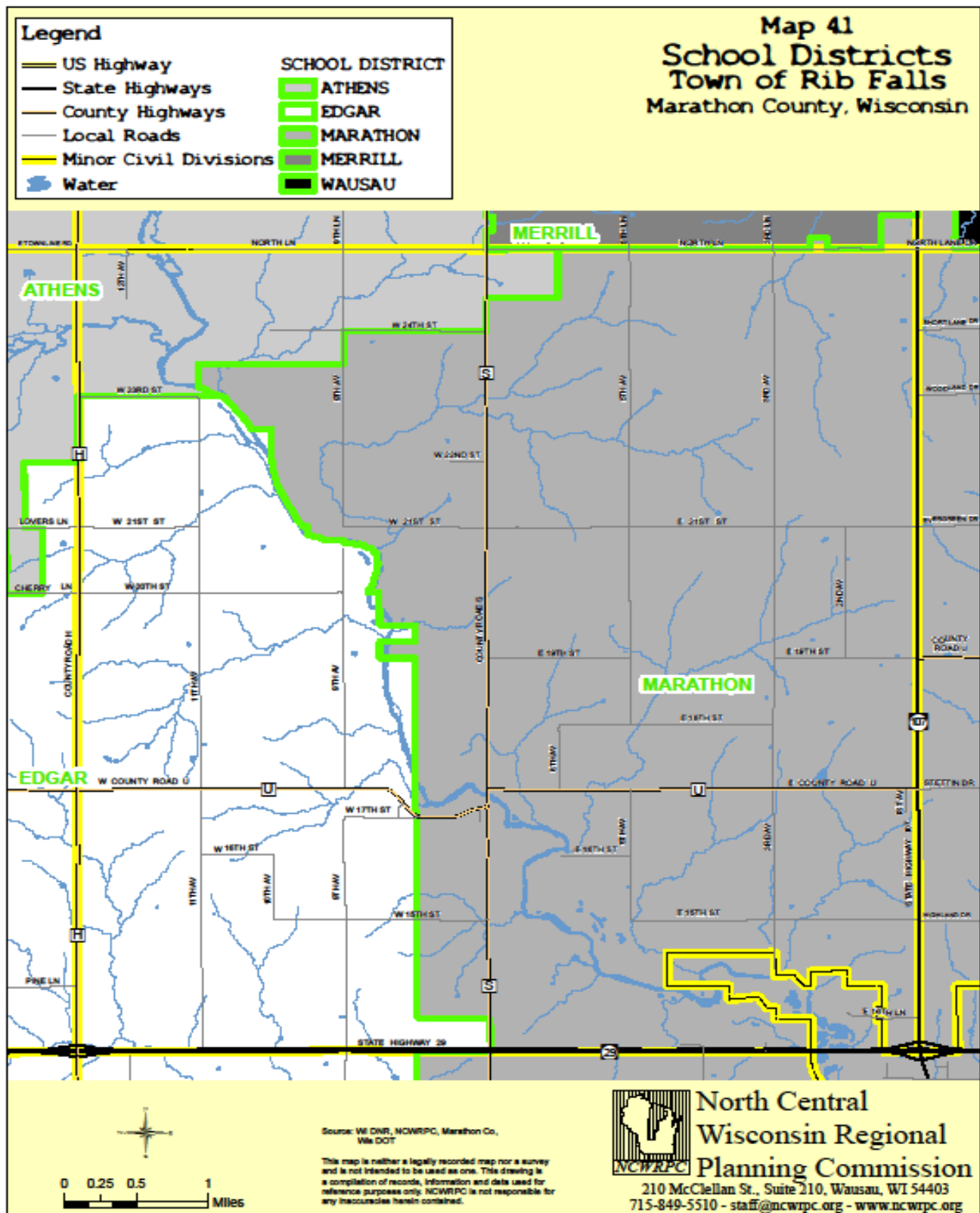
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates

## School District Characteristics

In the 1930s Rib Falls had nine individual school districts. Today, through consolidation, three public districts including Marathon, Edgar and Athens serve our K-12 needs (See Map 4.1). There are also several parochial schools located in each of the three school districts.

Residents can access technical training beyond high school at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau. The area post high school students are within driving distance of the University of Wisconsin centers in Wausau, Marshfield and Stevens Point.

Map 4.1: School Districts



## Income and Employment Characteristics

Table 4.4 provides the household income distribution for households in Rib Falls.

	<b>RIB FALLS</b>		<b>MARATHON COUNTY</b>		<b>WISCONSIN</b>	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Less than \$10,000	1.9	0.5	4.2	5.1	6.0	5.9
\$10,000 - \$14,999	7.7	0.5	4.5	4.5	5.4	5.2
\$15,000 - \$24,999	9.9	5.5	10.7	11.4	11.0	10.7
\$25,000 - \$34,999	2.5	6.9	11.4	10.2	11.0	10.6
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11.6	13.2	15.8	15.0	15.0	14.4
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.7	24.3	22.0	20.5	20.6	19.7
\$75,000 - \$99,999	24.0	24.0	15.2	14.6	13.7	13.5
\$100,000 - \$149,999	18.7	15.0	11.4	12.5	11.6	13
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2.2	6.9	2.7	3.4	3.1	3.9
\$200,000 or more	2.8	3.2	2.1	2.8	2.6	3.3
Median Household Income	\$71,979	\$74,205	\$53,471	\$54,083	\$51,598	\$53,357

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates

## Housing Characteristics

Housing is a fundamental component of any comprehensive planning effort. Housing considerations include more than merely shelter, but rather involves an assessment of quality, availability, and types of housing which shape and define the rural areas within Rib Falls. Community character refers to the natural and built features that shape a community's identity.

There are a limited variety of housing options available within the town. Most housing for special populations, such as the elderly or lower-income, is concentrated in nearby incorporated municipalities; particularly in the Wausau metropolitan area. These areas are generally more able to provide necessary support facilities (medical facilities, public transportation, etc.) and therefore will likely continue to be where specialized housing is in the future. With the aging of the rural population, demand for senior housing is expected to increase.

Most of the housing stock is generally in good condition, however, there are areas where older structures are beginning to experience deterioration and need rehabilitation to remain safe and viable dwellings. The town is not directly involved in housing rehabilitation.

Households in the town are primarily single family dwellings. However, the number of duplexes and other multi-family homes is increasing within the nearby villages, thus providing a wider variety of housing choices.

The Marathon County Zoning department administers zoning permits and sanitary permits for the town for new construction and significant remodeling. The town also monitors new housing construction and significant remodeling activity through Town Ordinance 11-90. Driveway access (and subsequent culvert placement) is administered by the Marathon County Highway Department on County **Trunk** roads and by the town on local roads. No public transportation system is available in the town for residents.

Higher density residential development is presently limited to the east edge and southeastern part of the town. In addition to the agricultural areas that are more suitable for farming, there are specific areas of the township not suitable for residential housing development. These areas include sites with wet soils, steep slopes, floodplains, and wetlands along the Big Rib River, and shallow soils over bedrock.

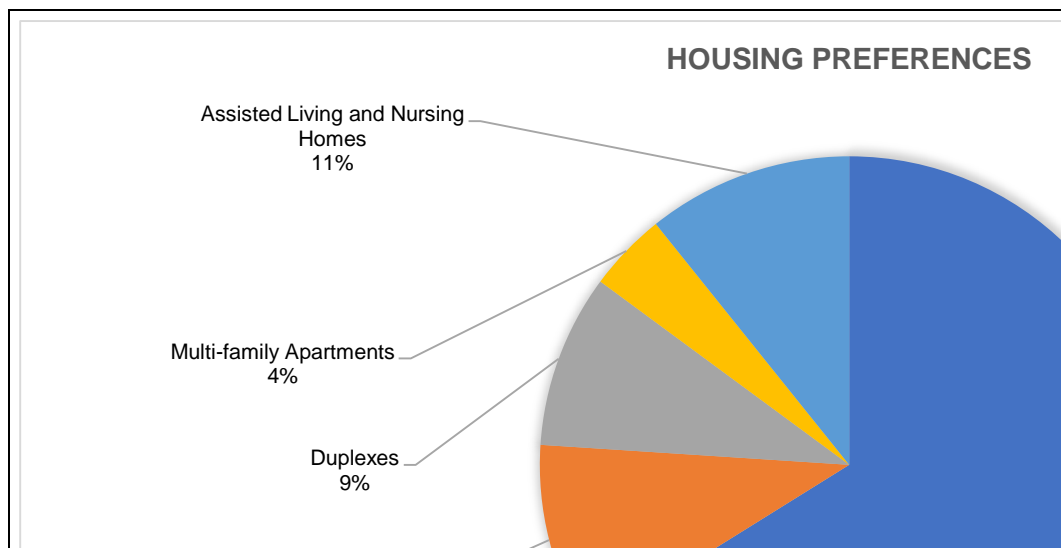


Figure 7: Housing Preferences

## Housing Age

The age of housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, amenities, and overall condition or associated maintenance costs. Average homes constructed in the 1980s and 1990s are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Census data shows that over 12 units were built in Rib Falls between 2000 and 2010. At the other end of the spectrum, it should be noted that approximately 40.9 % (prior to 1970) of town's housing stock was built prior to 1970. This could indicate a need for housing rehabilitation and private on-site wastewater treatment systems upgrades to assist in the maintenance of these older homes.

## Special Housing

1. Senior and Subsidized Housing. Multi-family units are uncommon in the town and are usually temporary arrangements associated with an elderly parent living with a child's family.

For Rib Falls, housing and health care arrangements for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Marathon County Aging and Disability Resource Center, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout the County. As the number of elderly persons increases in the coming years, there will most likely be an increased need for these types of housing options.

2. Migrant Worker Housing. Some nearby communities have identified concerns about providing adequate housing for migrant workers, particularly in the western half of the county. Currently, many of these migrant workers pass through Marathon County to work on large agricultural operations. Trends indicate that Hispanic and other immigrating farm labor for larger dairies may also utilize multi-family living arrangements.

## Community Character

Community character is less quantifiable than other aspects of comprehensive planning, but it is equally important to the creation of livable and viable communities. Rib Falls' landscape is diverse, including rolling farmlands, woodlands, and scenic natural areas.

Maintaining "rural character" was mentioned in the citizen survey results and previous planning documents. A sense of rural character and its enhancement is important to our residents. Rural character in this case may typically be defined as: a landscape where the predominant feature is the natural environment, such as farmland, woodlands, open space, or water bodies, and the placement of development is minimal.

This plan provides guidance for the creation and maintenance of specific attributes when considering community characteristics. The physical components of community character generally include the following design elements:

- Preserve working lands (cropland, woodland, and riparian areas).
- Street patterns.
- Open spaces and preserved resources.

Local zoning, land division ordinances, and subdivision ordinances can guide the overall character of the desired community and should be considered in the future.

## **Issues and Considerations**

1. The number of retired, elderly residents is increasing. Subsequently, the need to provide housing and service for the elderly will increase. The town will need to communicate with rural and metro municipalities to ensure the resident's needs are met. The town will not seek to advocate for this type of housing.
2. The population of school age children continues to decline, the local school districts will continue to experience declining enrollments which directly lowers state aid for education. The town will engage local school districts to understand population trends for school districts and support efforts to increase households and student population.
3. The workforce is becoming less connected to farming, timber production, and nonmetallic mining activities. As commuter traffic increases, the local road surfacing policy may need to be revised to increase the use of hard surfaces.
4. Aging housing stock leads to conditions of abandoned or dilapidated residential and agricultural buildings. Town will need to address and support efforts to rehabilitate and clean up properties, especially sanitary systems. The town will support efforts to prioritize services aimed at upgrading failing (surface discharge) private sanitary systems.

## **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options.
2. Preserve and protect the town's rural landscape and environmentally sensitive lands.
3. Promote low density residential land use development in areas of the town not available to public sanitary, improved road systems, and public water services.
4. Promote high density residential and commercial land use development in areas available to public sanitary, stormwater management controls, and public water systems.
5. Promote special housing types such as elderly and multi-family that require public services near the nearby villages to provide access to health care, shopping, and social services.
6. Preserve rural character by development standards consistent with historical patterns of transportation, housing, and economic well-being.

## *Chapter Five:*

# *Public Safety and Community Services*

The welfare and protection of the public is a common mission of many public safety organizations within Marathon County. Organizations that provide public safety services to the Town of Rib Falls residents and businesses are discussed in this chapter and include law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, and emergency management departments.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES**

#### **Sheriff's Office**

The Marathon County Sheriff's Office consists of five different divisions: Administration, Communications, Corrections, Investigations, and Patrol. In addition to the five divisions, the Sheriff's Department also has several teams with specialized duties and equipment for unique response situations. These specialized units are S.W.A.T., the Dive/Rescue Team, the Bomb Squad, and the Crisis Negotiation Team. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office has several special assignments including the K-9 Program, the Honor Guard, The Crash Reconstruction team, Animal Control, and Crime Stoppers, among others.

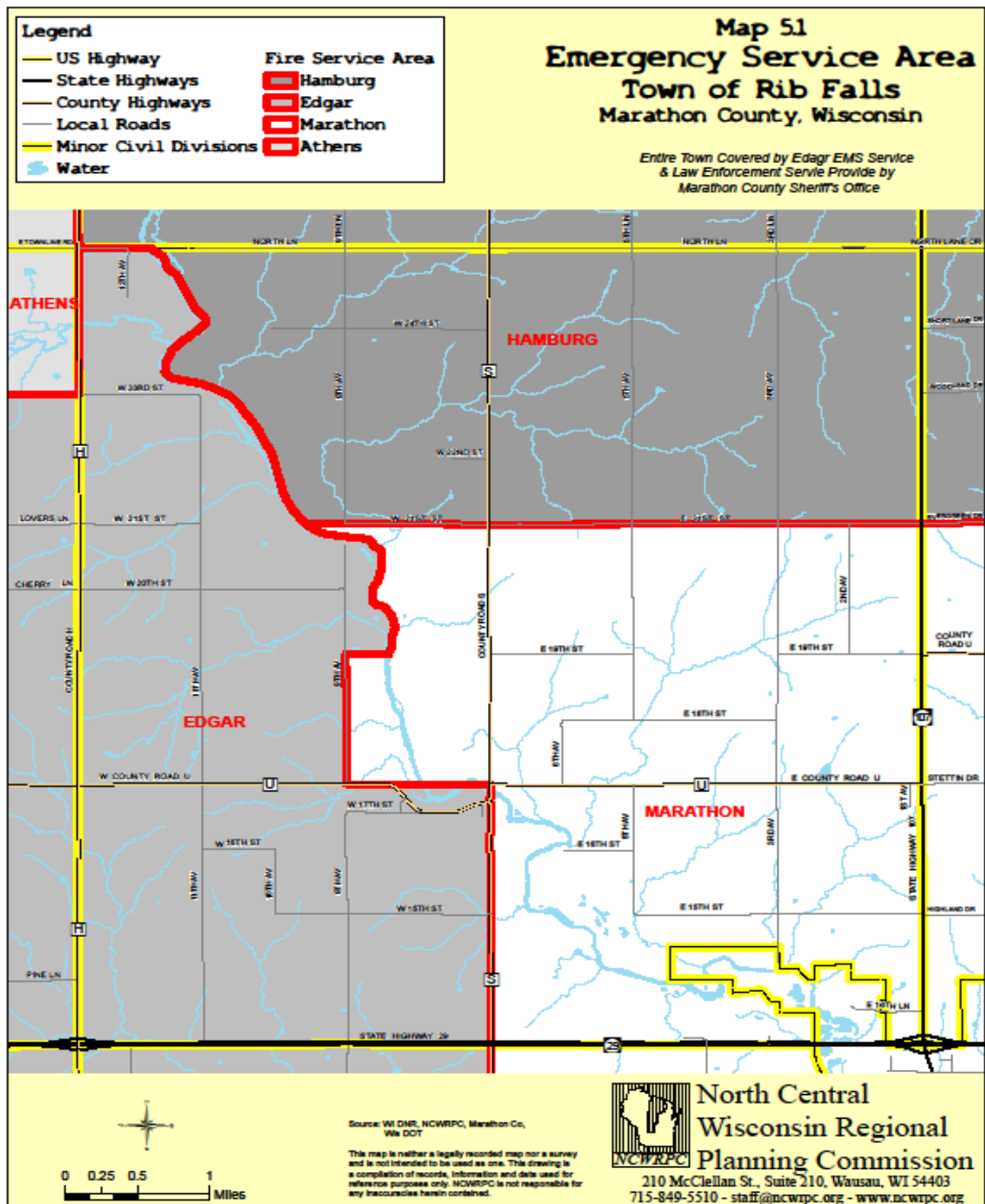
The Town of Rib Falls relies on the Marathon County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. The Patrol Division is responsible for the protection of life and property, as well as the enforcement of federal, state, and county laws and ordinances. The patrol function involves the prevention and intervention of adult and juvenile crime, rendering assistance to citizens in need of service, apprehension of law violators, and traffic enforcement. Patrol responds to dispatched calls and prepares reports on action taken.

#### **Emergency Services**

Emergency services in Marathon County consist of a very large framework of Police Departments, Fire Departments, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The town of Rib Falls does not have its own fire department, but is part of a multi-jurisdictional fire department that includes the Town of Hamburg, and the Villages of Marathon City and Edgar. Map 5.2 shows the boundaries of the fire services in the Rib Falls area. Most fire departments also provide emergency response service, hazardous materials response, and public education, among other public services. Most of the fire departments are made up of volunteers.

Emergency ambulance services are contracted through the Villages of Marathon City and Edgar. The services for fire and ambulance protection are reviewed annually by the town board. Each area fire department has mutual aid contracts with each other and includes the Athens Fire Department. Rib Falls, in conjunction with the Towns of Marathon, Wien, Cassel, Emmet, Rietbrock, Stettin, and Mosinee and the Village of Fenwood, utilize two common water tankers for fire calls.

Map 5.1: Emergency service districts





## **Rescue and Other Services**

The Sheriff's Office's Dive/Rescue Team is the only dive team in Marathon County. The Team provides dive support to all fire and law enforcement agencies in Marathon County, and is capable of diving in all weather conditions to perform search and recovery, surface rescue, and underwater investigations. The Marathon County Emergency Response Team and the Wausau Fire Department's Regional Response Hazardous Materials Team both provide hazardous materials response along with technical rescue capability to supplement local fire department responses to structure collapse, trench collapse, ropes, and confined space incidents.

The Communications Center is responsible for activating public warning systems.

## **The Future of Emergency Communications**

Next generation 911 dispatches will be equipped to receive other types of media from callers including text messages, images, and videos. In 2018, Marathon County will implement a Uniform Addressing system to provide greater confidence in response capabilities.

## **Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2011-2016**

The Marathon County Emergency Management department is responsible for the implementation of the Emergency Response Plans for the County. These plans deal with preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation of natural and man-made hazards. Mitigation can reduce or eliminate the need for an emergency response and greatly reduce the recovery period. The most common hazards were hail, snow or ice, tornadoes, extreme temperature, flood, and lightning.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is responsible for forest and wild fires in most areas of Marathon County through five wildfire districts. Hazard mitigation is defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as "any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards".

Although the Town of Rib Falls has the potential to experience a myriad of different risks from both natural and manmade hazards, the Hazard Mitigation Plan concentrates on those hazards that have the greatest potential to impact people in Marathon County, and also focuses on impacts to vulnerable structures/facilities and vulnerable populations. Potential hazards addressed by the plan include winter storms, tornadoes, flooding, dam failure, fire, transportation incidents, severe thunderstorms, agricultural/hydrologic drought, hazardous materials incidents, and groundwater contamination.

**Issues and Considerations:**

1. Emergency response services are provided to the town through a number of partnerships with local, county, and state agencies and teams. The town will continue to inform residents about the services available.
2. Communications and dispatches of emergency calls are moving to Next Generation 911 technology to ensure that cellular technology such as text messages, photos and videos can be processed. The town will continue to follow technology changes occurring in communications and emergency response.
3. Marathon County will implement the Uniform Addressing System in the town in 2018. Rib Falls will be required to change its addressing signage and street names. The town will monitor the implementation details of the Uniform Addressing Ordinance and seek ways to lower implementation costs to residents.
4. The citizen survey comments indicated that many residents desire improved broadband and communication capabilities. The town will monitor county and state efforts to increase broadband service to rural Wisconsin.

**Goals:****Objectives:**

1. Strengthen partnerships with local emergency response and law enforcement service providers to ensure safety and response capabilities.
2. Work with Marathon County Emergency Management Office to ensure that emergency preparedness is adequate.
3. Support Marathon County to develop and implement the uniform address.
4. Review and assess the fire and emergency response contracted services to ensure efficiency and adequacy of response.
5. Evaluate and support road system plans that ensure quick response times for emergency services throughout the town. (County Road S is a point of emphasis)
6. Educate residents and business of emergency response details within the town.

## Chapter Six:

# Recreation and Community Resources

This chapter describes the recreation amenities and cultural resources in Rib Falls. The recreation amenities consist primarily of a single county park within the town boundaries. However, Rib Falls' residents do have access to a regional park and forest unit system.

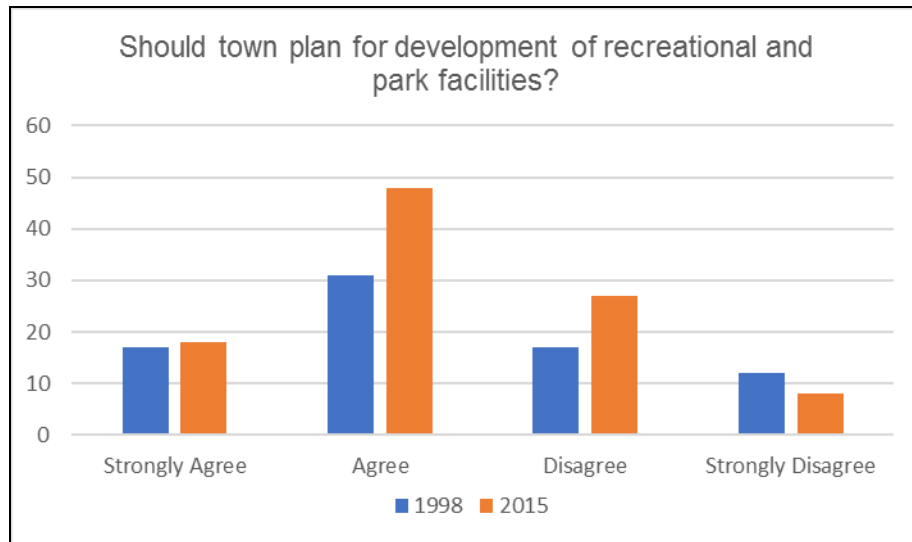


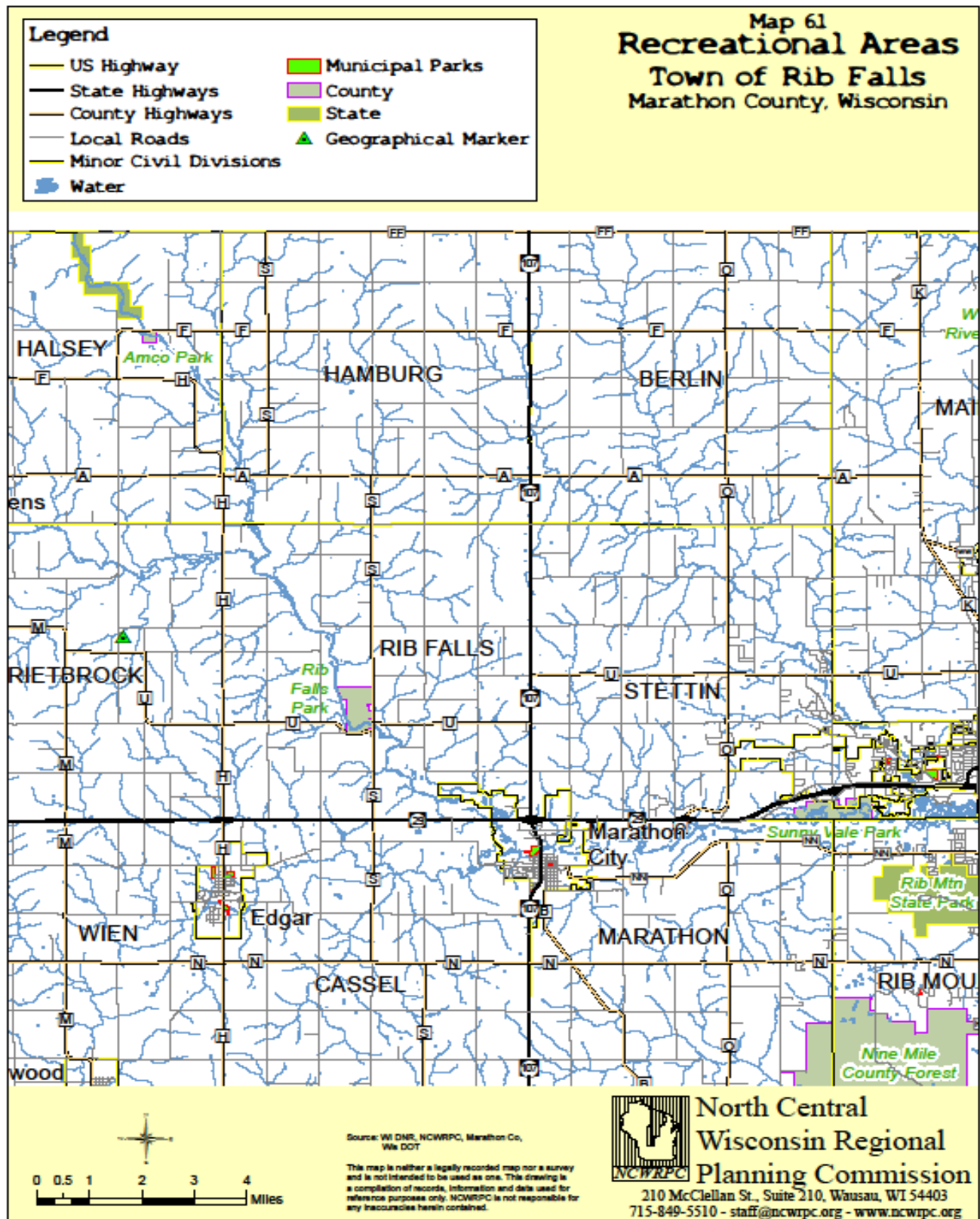
Figure 8: Town Role in Recreation

### PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

The area abounds with many recreational opportunities such as hunting, snowmobiling, canoeing and biking. Much of the snowmobiling is on private lands with an extensive trail system developed under the supervision of the Marathon County Snowmobile Coordinator along with many private clubs. The Rib River has several access points along its banks to permit canoeist and fisherman access. In the center of the township is a County maintained park of nearly 315 acres with playground equipment (See Map 6.1).

The Rib Falls Park was established in 1982 by Marathon County when the land was secured from the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company. In resolutions adopted by Marathon County and the Town of Rib Falls, the park area was utilized as a sand and gravel source by Marathon County's Highway Department, as well as County Materials Corporation. As a result of the nonmetallic mining activities, all operational costs associated with mining activities were charged a 5% reclamation fee for future park reclamation and development. Over many years of mining, the resulting reclamation fund will support the efforts to create a regional park facility.

Map 6.1 Recreational Areas



## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES.**

Community resources include infrastructure or essential physical structures and facilities required for a community to operate and thrive. These structures and facilities include the transportation network or roads, rail, and other means of moving people and goods, as well as the public and private utility systems for water and sewer, power, and telecommunications, among others.

### **Airports**

Marathon County is home to two major airports, the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee and the Wausau Municipal Airport located in Wausau. The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is classified as an Air Carrier/Air Cargo airport, which means it is designed to accommodate virtually all aircraft up to, and in some cases including, wide body jets and large military transports. CWA is one of nine airports in Wisconsin that provide scheduled commercial air passenger service on a year-round basis.

### **Trucking Service and Facilities**

Truck freight services are essential to the local and regional movement of goods. Most finished consumer goods arrive by truck and trucking is very cost effective for shorter distance shipping.

State and County highways provide a high Level Of Service (LOS) throughout most of the County. Still, there may be some instances due to weight limits, particularly on bridges, or at times of spring thaw, where trucks are prohibited. Large trucks on local roads are a concern in some communities because of the road damage created and the resulting need for maintenance.

The Marathon County Highway Department has a policy which defines overweight and oversized vehicles, requiring permits for these vehicles. This policy is in place to ensure the safety of the traveling public and minimize potential damage to County Highways and other infrastructure.

### **Utilities**

Wisconsin Public Service provides for the electrical needs of the town residents and businesses. Electrical distribution within the town is limited to distribution wires either buried or overhead within appropriate public rights-of-way. A transmission line does run along the south side of State Highway 29 in the Town of Cassel.

Most electricity in Wisconsin is produced by coal-fired and nuclear powered generating plants, although several newer power plants are fueled by natural gas. Other technologies such as wind power, bio-fuels, fuel cells, etc. are becoming more competitive and are also considered part of the State's long-term strategy to ensure sufficient power generation.

WPS currently operates four power plants (Weston 1, 2, 3, and 4) all located in the villages of Kronenwetter and Rothschild. These plants provide up to 896 megawatts of coal-fired capacity. Weston 4, which began operating in 2008 uses clean coal technology, and is one of the cleanest power plants of its kind in the country.

## **Natural Gas**

Wisconsin Public Service is the County's largest supplier of natural gas, serving over 30,000 customers. In areas without access to municipal gas lines, liquid propane and heating oil are the primary means of natural gas.

## **Telecommunication Facilities and Services**

Telecommunications include telephone systems, cell towers, and fiber optics. Rib Falls is serviced by Verizon for basic telephone services. Verizon transmission lines include both overhead and buried wires. The Town has one cell tower located in section 34 (northeast corner of County Road S and State Highway 29). This telecommunication tower has the capacity to service the linking needs of 4-6 private cell phone companies. Currently, there are no fiber optic cables serving the Town.

Private companies; such as T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T, Cellcom, TDS, Country Wireless, and Charter; provide telecommunication services in the town.

The need for faster internet speeds is understood in Marathon County. Several studies have been conducted in recent years on the topic, including an extensive Broadband Gap Analysis in 2009. The currently available means of connecting to the internet are via cable modem, digital subscriber line (DSL), fixed wireless service, mobile or cellular wireless, and satellite-based internet service. These options provide a range of speeds and costs to residents and businesses, but are not all available in every part of the county.

## **Wastewater Management Planning**

Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) for sewage disposal are found primarily in the unincorporated areas of Marathon County. These systems include a septic tank or aerobic treatment tank and some type of absorption field alone or in combination with passive or active treatment components or holding tanks. Areas determined unsuitable for septic systems, for reasons such as high bedrock or high water tables, are not conducive to installation of conventional, in ground absorption fields and must use other methods. Regulations for POWTS in Marathon County are found in Chapter 15 of the County General Code of Ordinances. All premises intended for human occupancy and not served by public sewer are required to have a private sewage system.

## **Private Water Wells**

Private wells are the primary water source for most residents and businesses located in Rib Falls. Approximately 275 private wells provide water for human consumption and agricultural activities such as livestock watering. Well water is generally of very good quality. More information about groundwater can be found in Chapter 10, Water Resources.

## **Solid Waste Management**

The Marathon County Solid Waste Department oversees the collection of solid waste and recycling services in the County. These services include coordinating collection with private haulers and municipalities, waste reduction programming, and running the County landfill in the Town of Ringle. The Marathon County Landfill is on 575 acres of county land in the Town of Ringle. The landfill is separated into several different areas. Area A opened in 1980 and was closed in 1993 upon reaching capacity with 1.5 million tons of waste. The current active landfill is Area B, 31.5 acres with a capacity of 2.4 million tons, has an expected remaining life of 8 to 10 years.

Waste collection in the town is primarily contracted through private waste management service providers.

## **Recycling**

Recycling throughout the County is contracted by residents or municipalities with private companies. The Solid Waste Department recycling accepts co-mingle recycling, cardboard, electronics, appliances, hazardous waste, tires, metal, used motor oil, car batteries, shingles, and other miscellaneous materials. Each year, the town hosts an “Old Tire and Appliance Day” and provides for monthly recycling pickup services to increase participation in recycling.

## **Issues and Considerations**

1. Recreational facilities and opportunities are offered through the Marathon County Parks, recreation, and Forestry Department. The town will coordinate with Marathon County to determine the status of the reclamation fund for the Rib Falls Park. The town will also work with the county to support the reclamation and recreational facility plans for the park.
2. In the citizen survey, the costs of garbage services were identified as a possible improvement. The town will assess the feasibility and interest of residents to contracted garbage and recycling services through a single contracted provider.

## **Goals:**

## **Objectives:**

1. Develop Rib Falls Park into a community based recreational facility.
2. Develop a recreational plan that identifies and assesses the development of public and private trail system that integrates roadways, reclaimed mining areas, old rail beds, and easements.
3. Develop strategies to enhance and expand biking and hiking trails within the community.
4. Study the possibility to consolidate garbage and recycling services.
5. Support improved communication facilities and capabilities within the town.



# Chapter Seven:

## Transportation and Infrastructure

### Road and Bridge Network

The Town of Rib Falls transportation system is comprised of 59.74 miles of State, County and Town roads (Map 7.1). Specifically, the Town is responsible for nearly 35 miles of unpaved roads and 9.2 miles of paved roads (44.57 miles total). There are 15.17 miles of County roads (S and U) bisecting Rib Falls. The town is bound by State Highway 29 on the south, State Highway 107 on the east and County Road H on the west. There are two (2) interchanges that service State Highway 107 and County Road H.

Currently, there are three (3) town roads (11<sup>th</sup> Ave., 9<sup>th</sup> Ave, and Stieber Lane) and one county trunk highway (County Road S) that access directly at-grade to State Highway 29. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has long range plans to discontinue these direct access roads as Highway 29 is transitioned into a freeway.

Bridges in the town are generally steel or concrete structures with many being 40 years or older. The town has two bridges over twenty (20) feet long:

**Note:** The town is responsible for the inventory and assessment of bridges less than twenty (20) feet in length.

**Figure 9: Bridge Inventory (> 20 feet long)**

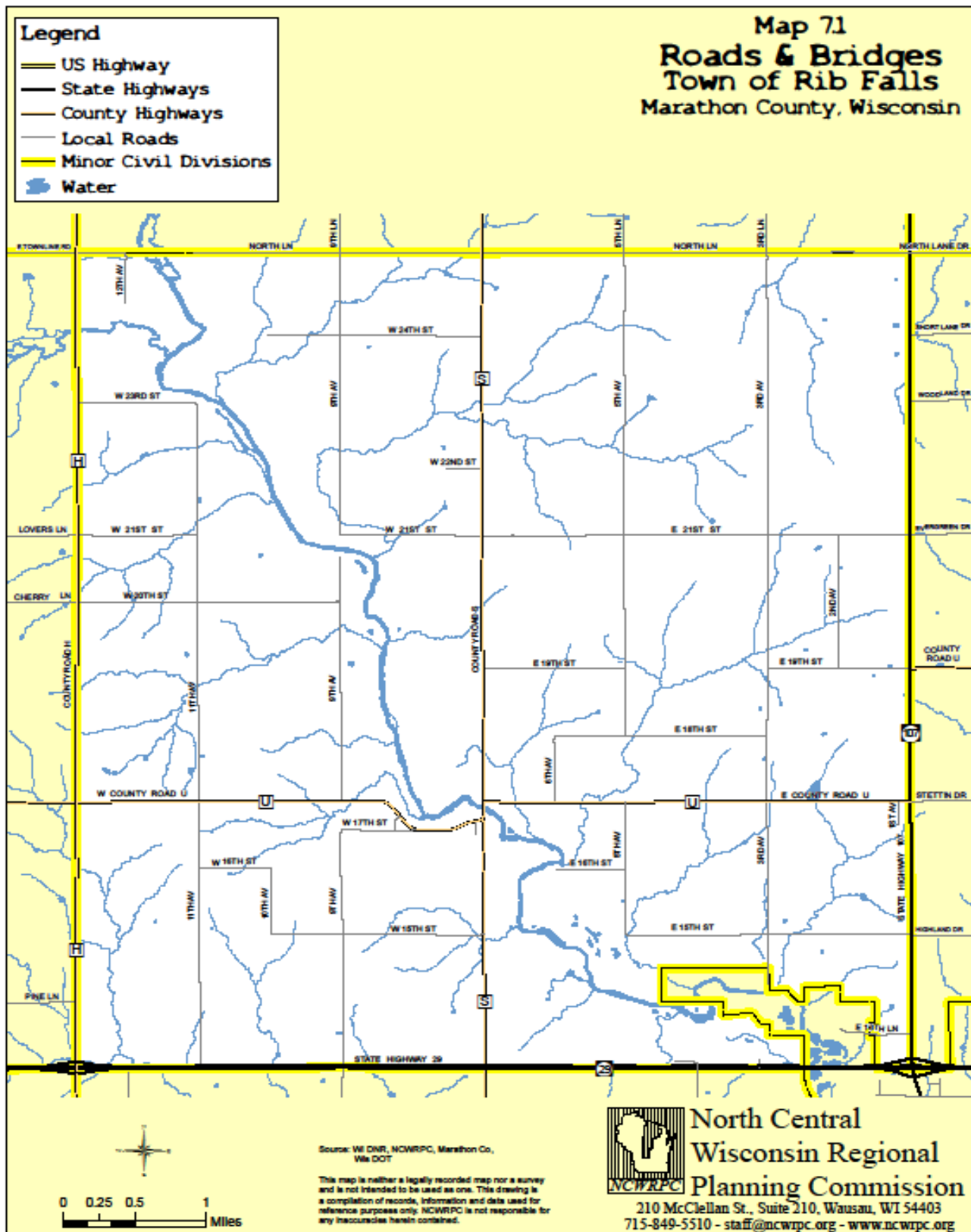
Bridge ID	Road Location	Condition	Comments
P-37-192	24 <sup>th</sup> Street	Poor	Replace entire structure and install object markers
P-37-194	18 <sup>th</sup> Street	Poor	Replace entire structure. Add rip rap for scour counter measures. Clean deck. Replace object markers.

Source. Marathon County Highway Department (2016)

Every two years the town and Marathon County Highway Department assess the condition and function of individual bridges to determine condition and maintenance needs. At the County and town level, bridge maintenance and replacement is dependent upon the help of State and Federal aid. The bridge replacement is required for both safety and to carry larger machinery loads.

The scale of farming and nonmetallic mining operations that operate along town roads will need to be closely monitored so that traffic demands are compatible with infrastructure capacities. For example, the town must be aware of truck, tractor, and car counts on all serviced roads to assure that safety, nuisances, and maintenance are controlled and limited to meet design criteria.

Map 7.1: Rib Falls Roads



## Marathon County Highway Department

The Marathon County Highway Department is responsible for operation, maintenance, and improvements to the County road system. This system currently includes over 600 miles of roadways. Additional major activities of the Highway Department are administration, planning, design, construction, and traffic operations. The Department's function is critical to the provision of the County's transportation facilities.

A functional classification system groups streets and highways into classes per the character of service they provide. The five classifications are principal arterial, minor arterial, major collector, minor collector, and local road. By the rural system, principal arterials and minor arterials in Marathon County are all state and federal highways, while major collectors are a mix of state and county highways. Major collectors consist mostly of county roads outside of the City of Wausau. The classification of minor collector is only used in rural areas.

The State of Wisconsin and Marathon County Highway Department keep records of planned roadway improvements which have been identified for implementation and for which funding commitments are likely. WisDOT prepares a statewide Six Year Highway Improvement Program; the current plan covers 2015-2020.

A major effort underway, which will impact the County for many years, is the upgrade of State Highway (STH) 29 to a freeway. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is currently designing and conducting environmental studies to preserve right-of-way and functionality. As those plans are finalized and constructed there will be changes along the corridor, including future interchanges, overpasses and local road modifications. All of this is being done to maintain a safe and efficient STH 29 as part of the State Highway network. Beyond impacts on the transportation system within the County, these changes will impact land use along the corridor. Community planning efforts near STH 29 should incorporate and address these transportation changes.

## Surface Characteristics and Policy

The surface characteristics of the town's road system represent the original roadbed. In many situations, the surface consists of both stable and unstable (topsoil, sod, and sawdust) material overlaid throughout the years with red granite. The 9.2 miles of paved roads consist of the original roadbed overlaid with either 2 inches of asphalt hot mix or double sealcoat which consists of hot asphalt oil base and overlaid with 3/8-inch rock chips. It is our policy to follow a five-year road program for all major capital improvement initiatives utilizing the "Pacer" program instituted by the State of Wisconsin. The Pacer program rates our roads as to condition and usage, thereby allowing the five-year road program to be followed and track our cost effectiveness.

The Town of Rib Falls uses the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system to rate our road conditions. The rating system is conducted every two years and is used by the Township to plan our major maintenance projects. The rating was last updated in 2015. Check usage of "town" vs "township".

## Capital Improvements Program

## **Construction and Maintenance**

The Town of Rib Falls road policy for reconstruction of existing roads is to remove the original road bed and replace it with a new base course which meets established specifications. The new road base is then overlain with red granite to a minimum compacted depth of eight (8) inches. Where appropriate, road improvement projects shall include sizing and replacement of culverts as well as reshaping of ditches to accommodate stormwater runoff. Proper seeding and mulching activities shall support any land disturbances associated with road work to minimize sediment delivery into waterways or onto adjoining properties.

The town may establish a policy to identify, target, and assist landowners with a direct sanitary system discharges into the town's road rights-of-way. Direct discharges to the ground surface are not allowed by State law. Therefore, roadway ditching projects should include the correction of these discharges.

All new subdivision roads must be constructed per town standards, as specified by Ordinance, and overlain with a minimum of 3 inches of hot mix asphalt. Specifications for road construction will be available to any developer. Road construction shall include adequate ditching design and culvert design to control stormwater runoff concerns.

The Town of Rib Falls has provisions to review the needs for road upgrades and/or maintenance protocol for activities such as large scale trucking and farming operations. The Town will utilize impact assessments to determine if heavy use or high intensity use of roads by various activities are consistent with the design capacities of the road and with safety concerns.

All reconstruction is based on using the five-year road Capital Improvement Program which is updated on a yearly basis. Additionally, the Pacer road rating program is utilized to evaluate road maintenance needs. The Town uses a culvert inspection condition report which is updated annually. By using these tools, our maintenance personnel and supervisors are allowed an easy means of tracking costs and maintaining the roads as required in a modern world.

The Town of Rib Falls roads are maintained on a daily basis year-round. Maintenance activities include road grading, resurfacing and reconstruction, installation of new culverts and grass/ brush cutting. The extent of maintenance is dictated by budget realities set by the Board and residents at the annual meeting. Wintertime maintenance includes plowing and widening of roads with our grader and truck plow. To facilitate snow plowing, Rib Falls has implemented a road snow plowing schedule in conjunction with the local school bus contractors and is reviewed each year prior to the start of the school year. This schedule is used to designate class B and C roads to promote the safety of our roads and facilitate the movement of traffic to major routes.

## **Funding**

Rib Falls uses various means of funding our local roads maintenance program. The state funded Town Road Improvement Program (TRIP) is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation provides funding and administrative assistance for road improvements. Other means of funding such as 50/50 culvert or 80/20 bridge aids are supported by state highway funding on a per mile basis and local tax levy.

### **Connections 2030 – (2009)**

This is Wisconsin's latest long-range, statewide multi-modal transportation plan, written by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Connections 2030 identifies a series of system-level priority corridors that are critical to Wisconsin's travel patterns and the state's economy. The following priority corridors have been identified with routes through Marathon County: **1)** Wausau Metropolitan Planning Area is overseen by the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization and includes all or portions of 17 contiguous villages, cities, or towns in the Wausau Metro area; and **2)** Wisconsin Heartland corridor from Eau Claire to Green Bay traverses Marathon County from east to west along STH 29.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Non-Urbanized Area of Marathon County – (1996)**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan established policy and facility options for non-motorized transportation in the rural portions of Marathon County. Currently, the policy of the Marathon County Highway Department is to pave a wider shoulder (approximately 3 feet) on the County Highways for approximately 2 miles extending from all the cities and villages not in the Wausau metro area.

**photos**

**Issues and Considerations:**

1. The local road and bridge system is constructed and maintained through a partnership of local, state, and federal resources. The town will need to collaborate with these partners to secure financial resources to repair, replace, and maintain this infrastructure.
2. Commuting traffic miles is increasing in the town due to changing occupational and population demographic trends. The town will need to balance road surfacing and signage policies between the need of agriculture, trucking, and commuter traffic considerations such as safety and nuisance control.
3. The investments into re-construction and maintenance of roads and bridges are extensive. The town must develop traffic policy relative to equipment weight and size to protect these investments and to recognize the condition of this infrastructure.
4. New investments in road and bridge re-construction and maintenance must manage in a way that reflects the limited budgetary resources available to local government. The town will continue to collaborate with Marathon County Highway Department to assess the condition and safety of local roads and bridges. Furthermore, the town will develop a Capital Improvement Plan that identifies and prioritizes road and bridge maintenance.
5. Direct discharge of private sanitary systems into town road rights-of-way is not allowed by state law and Marathon County Ordinance Chapter 15. The town will establish methods to identify and prioritize non-complying sanitary systems as part of all local roadway and ditching initiatives. The town will collaborate with the Marathon County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department to assist landowners with the upgrade of failing sanitary systems.
6. The scale and seasonal distribution of manure by livestock producers are negatively impacting the surface and shoulder condition of local roads. The town will support farmers who chose to distribute liquid manures through dragline hose technology by developing policy that allows conditional use of rights-of-way for temporary placement of distribution lines.

**Goals:****Objectives:**

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies, prioritizes, and budgets for local road and bridge re-construction and maintenance projects. The CIP should reflect findings of PACER and TRIP assessments.
2. Establish a method to identify failing sanitary systems that outlet into town roadway rights-of-way.
3. Develop policy and procedures to support use of town roadway rights-of-way for manure distribution lines.
4. Evaluate the safety and administrative responsibilities of the town relative to the utilization of local roads by All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).

## Chapter Eight:

# Land Use

### CURRENT LAND USE

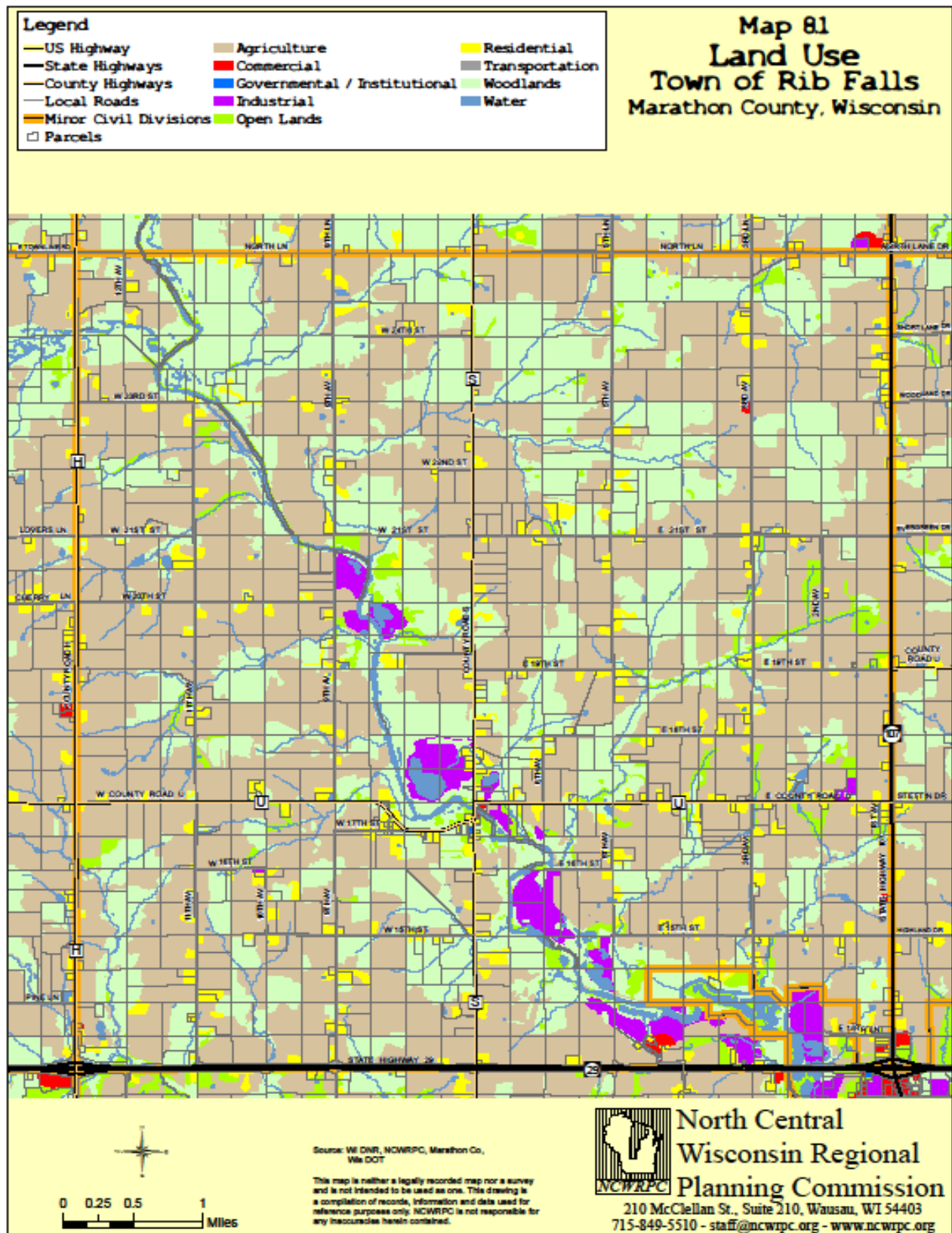
The primary land uses in Rib Falls Township are agriculture and woodland. Secondary land uses include untitled agricultural such as pasture and swamp and single family residential housing. The general distribution of 2015 land use in the town is represented on Map 8.1. Commercial and industrial uses are currently very limited. However, several moderate to large scale industrial activities associated with nonmetallic mining for sand and gravel do exist (mostly along the Rib River in alluvial deposits).

Most existing commercial or industrial uses are located on small parcels of land located throughout the town, usually functioning as a home occupation activity. The town has no industrial park, however the town will need to recognize the potential of such a development as the Village of Marathon City extends its boundary and business activities toward this interchange.

**Table 8.1: 2015 Land Use Types Distribution**

Land Use Type	Acres
Agriculture	13,298
Commercial	23
Governmental / Institutional	1
Industrial	397
Open Lands	585
Outdoor Recreation	6
Residential	972
Transportation	640
Water	317
Woodlands	6,255
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>22,494</b>

Map 8.1: Current Land Use





The area was settled in the mid-nineteenth century to take advantage of its abundant pine forests. The Rib River bisects the town and provided the waterpower necessary to haul and process the lumber. As the forests declined, Rib Falls became active in agriculture, specifically dairy production. The current land use patterns in the town still reflect the original woodland and agricultural activities of the town. However, over the last 20 years the land uses within the town have changed significantly seeing nearly 1,000 acres of agricultural cropland converted from production. The agricultural land was converted to woodland (300 acres), residential uses (200 acres), idle (400 acres) and swamp (100 acres). In a rural community, land use conversion is important because much of the local economy is based upon "working lands" that produce commodities.

As land is converted to uses that are not economically productive and residential, the type and cost of delivering town services may increase. The cost of town government is increasing. Specifically, between 1981 and 2001 local levy increased by 450% where inflation increased 229%. As a policy issue, the town must track and assess this trend of tax increases as it relates to land use trends. Specifically, the town needs to balance land uses with high service cost needs relative to land uses with lower or service costs. The town will also need to assess its role in promoting commercial and industrial land use that have the potential to generate revenues that can offset increasing service costs. Map 8.2 shows the future land use projections for the town.

Each local jurisdiction must make local land use decisions that are consistent with their own comprehensive plan. It is important to note that villages may include areas in adjacent towns in their plans under extra-territorial jurisdiction. Therefore, planning for land uses along jurisdictional borders will require coordination and intergovernmental cooperation.

Land use associated with open land, recreation, and riparian corridors are an important part of the town's landscape and environmental health. Figure 10 indicates the residents' support for the protection and enhancement of these lands.

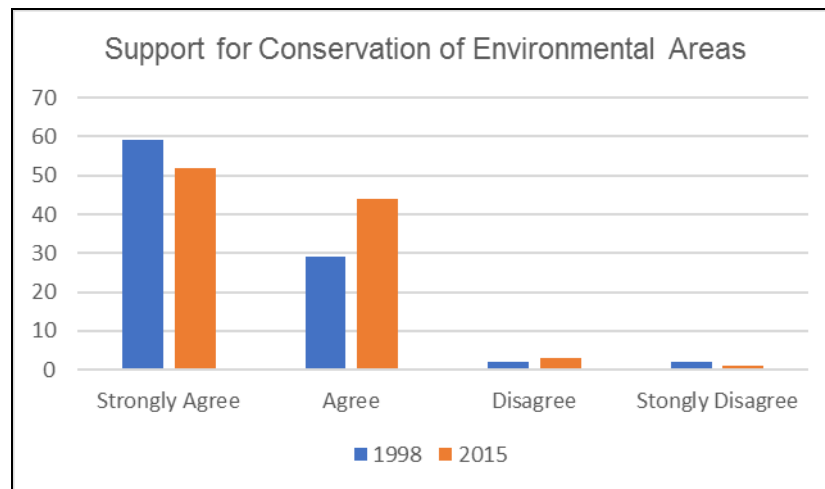
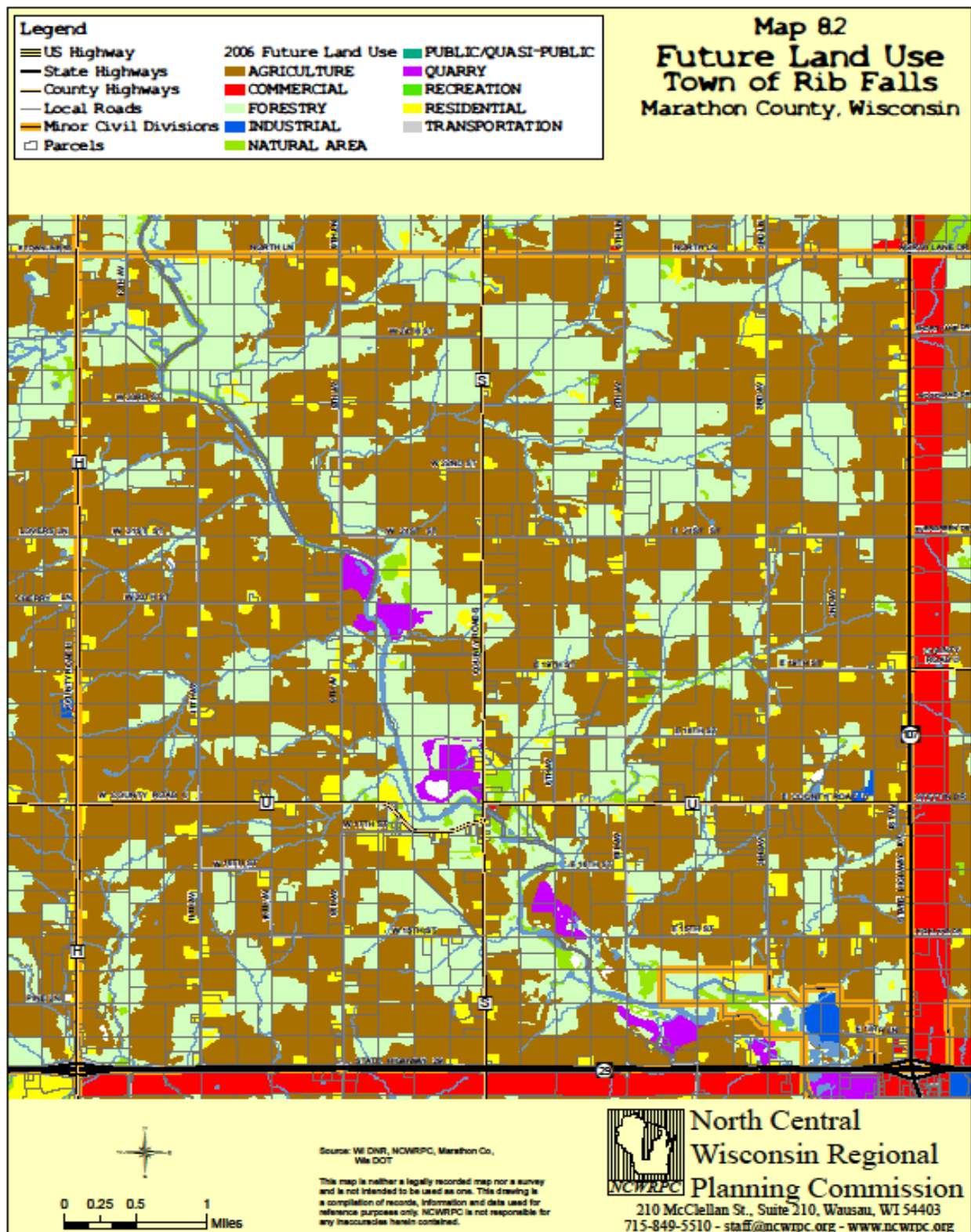


Figure 10: Town Support for Conservation

Map 8.2: Future land use



## Agriculture/Cropland

Rib Falls' farmers utilize almost 13,300 total acres of land (60%) (*source NCRPC 2015*) for commercial crop production. This land base generally coincides with the soils most suitable for sustaining agriculture. To encourage preservation of prime farmland, Marathon County developed a Farmland Preservation Plan. This plan promotes and guides programs to maintain the town's agricultural production capacity, protect soil and water resources, while respecting private property rights.

The farmland preservation plan identifies two strategic tools to help preserve agricultural land use. Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) and farmland preservation zoning. In western Marathon County, the *Heart of America's Dairyland* represents a major AEA that could extend to the town. Although the town has zoning, it has not adopted a farmland preservation district. With both zoning and AEAs, farmland owners who participate are eligible for state income tax credits.

The agricultural production model has experienced several changes in the past few decades. Significant amounts of cropland have been converted to non-farm uses or idled. Marathon County had over 20,000 acres of farmland converted to other uses since 2000. The number of farms has decreased while the average farm size has increased. More conflicts are occurring between farm and non-farm uses.

## Woodland

Rib Falls was once covered in woodlands. Today, there are about 6,255 acres (*source NCRPC 2015*) of wooded lands. An estimated 30% of town area is forested. The state's Managed Forest Program and Agricultural Enterprise Areas present program opportunities for landowners to manage their lands for woods for multi-use purposes while realizing tax incentives.

## Industrial and Commercial

The major industries in the town are farming, timber production, and nonmetallic mining. Several small private businesses exist adjacent to local residences. The town has designated a one-half mile strip along State Highway 29 as an industrial overlay district to potentially guide that land use activity to locations with access to interchanges. Figure 11 shows the citizen's opinions relative the land use planning for industrial and commercial land uses.

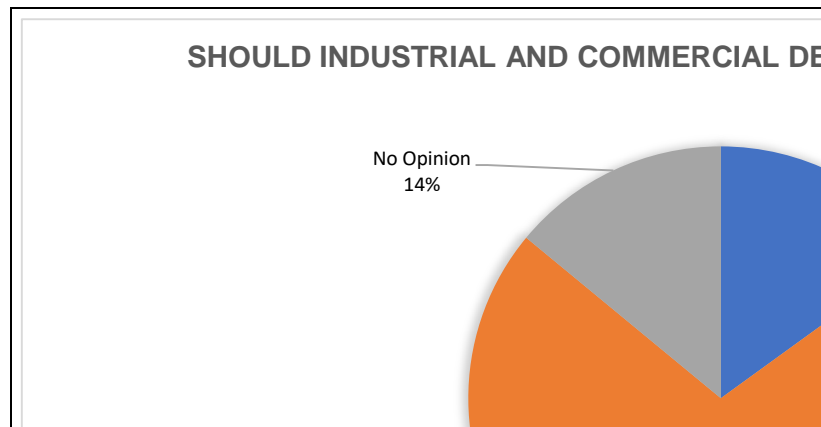


Figure 11: Industrial and Commercial

## **CURRENT LAND USE REGULATIONS**

### **Zoning**

The Town of Rib Falls first adopted zoning in 1984 (Resolution 6-1984). This zoning was limited to a minimum parcel size of 2 acres. In April 1994 the County Board adopted Ordinance 0-11-94 to include the Town of Rib Falls under county administered County Zoning. Map 8.3 shows the current zoning districts for the town which were updated in 2016.

The Town of Rib Falls has supported the use of zoning for the following purposes:

1. Minimize land use conflicts which include consideration of use type, scale of use, public safety, public health, and nuisances.
2. Support and protect the value of public and private property.
3. Support and protect natural resources.
4. Support and protect the cultural and economic importance of agriculture, nonmetallic mining, and woodland activities.
5. Balance residential and intensive industrial/commercial activities.

The current the county zoning code identifies 16 zoning classifications. The Town of Rib Falls utilizes 8 of the district types, plus the State Highway 29 industrial corridor. In the future, the town may consider an overlay district for the main stem of the Rib River For each zoning district classification; the code identifies permitted uses, special exceptions, and height, yard, and area requirements. The zoning code can be found in Chapter 17 of the General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County. In 2016 (Resolution R-1-16) Rib Falls adopted Marathon County zoning code.

The County Board has authority to approve or deny zoning requests in participating towns like Rib Falls. The County Board takes the local town's recommendations into account when they take final action. While the County Board generally follows the recommendations of the local Town Board, they are not required to concur with the town's recommendations. However, towns have veto authority if the County Board approves a zoning amendment over the town's recommendation to deny. On the other hand, the County Board can deny a request that a town recommends for approval, in which case, the town has no recourse and the County Board decision is final.

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 indicate the rezoning would negatively impact surrounding properties or the community.

### **Farmland Preservation Zoning**

Marathon County zoning code provides for the designation of a farmland preservation district. The zoning district requires a minimum parcel size of 35 acres. The town has not identified the farmland preservation district into the official zoning map.

## Farmland Preservation Program

The State of Wisconsin has a Farmland Preservation Program. The goals of the program are to minimize farmland use conversion, improve soil and water conservation practices, and to provide income tax relief to farmland owners.

The preservation of farmland is very important in Marathon County because of the importance of agriculture to the local economy and identity. The Farmland Preservation Plan details policies and strategies to which the County is committed in the effort to support and sustain active farms.

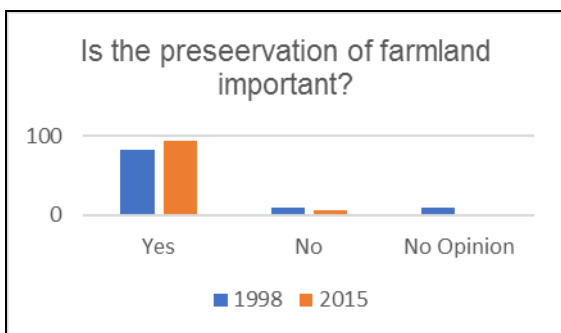


Figure 11: Importance of Preserving Farmland

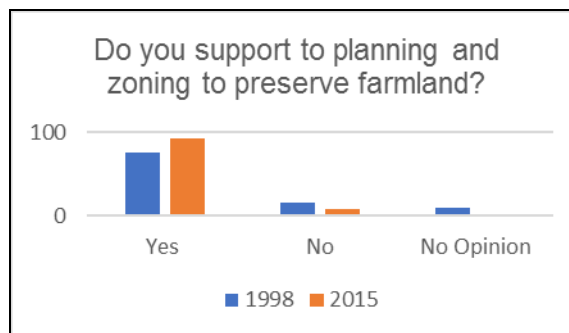


Figure 12: Support for Farmland

## Planning

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 & 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. Tax credits are intended as an incentive to keep land in active farming and meet soil conservation standards. The Marathon County CPZ is responsible for administering the soil conservation plan and monitoring compliance with soil conservation standards.

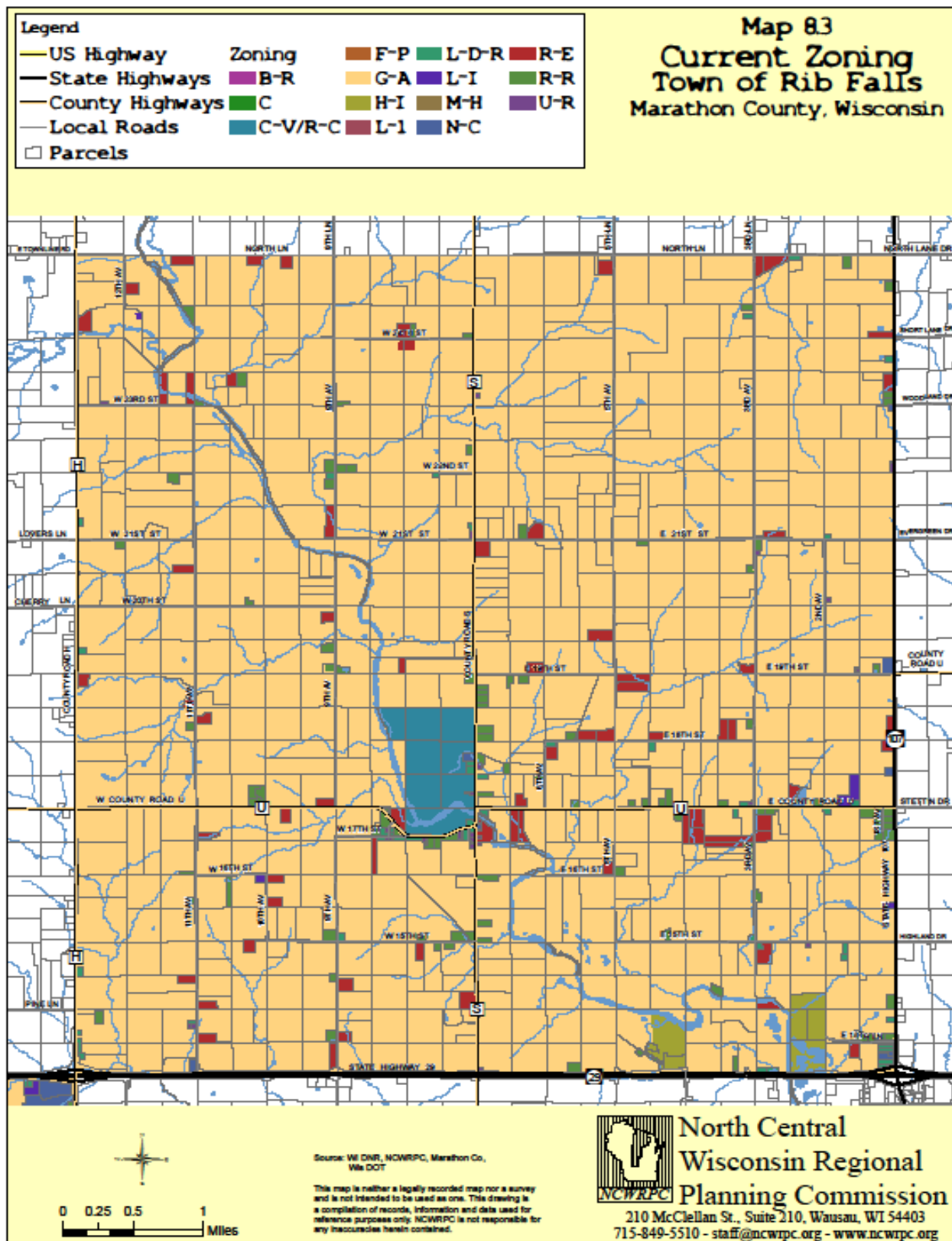
Map 8.4 indicates the areas of Rib Falls identified by the planning commission as potential Farmland Preservation areas.

## Nonmetallic Mining Areas

As of 2015 Rib Falls has 15 active nonmetallic mines, covering approximately 385 permitted acres), and 7 reclaimed sites. These mines are important sources of construction aggregate and stone products that are used and marketed locally and regionally. As a land use, nonmetallic mining is important as it is associated most commonly with the Rib River. Active and reclaimed mining sites have an impact on the groundwater flow, base river flow, and recreational opportunities within the river corridor overlay district. Furthermore, reclaimed areas will be considered in the future as potential recreational areas such as the Rib Falls Park and a riparian trail system.

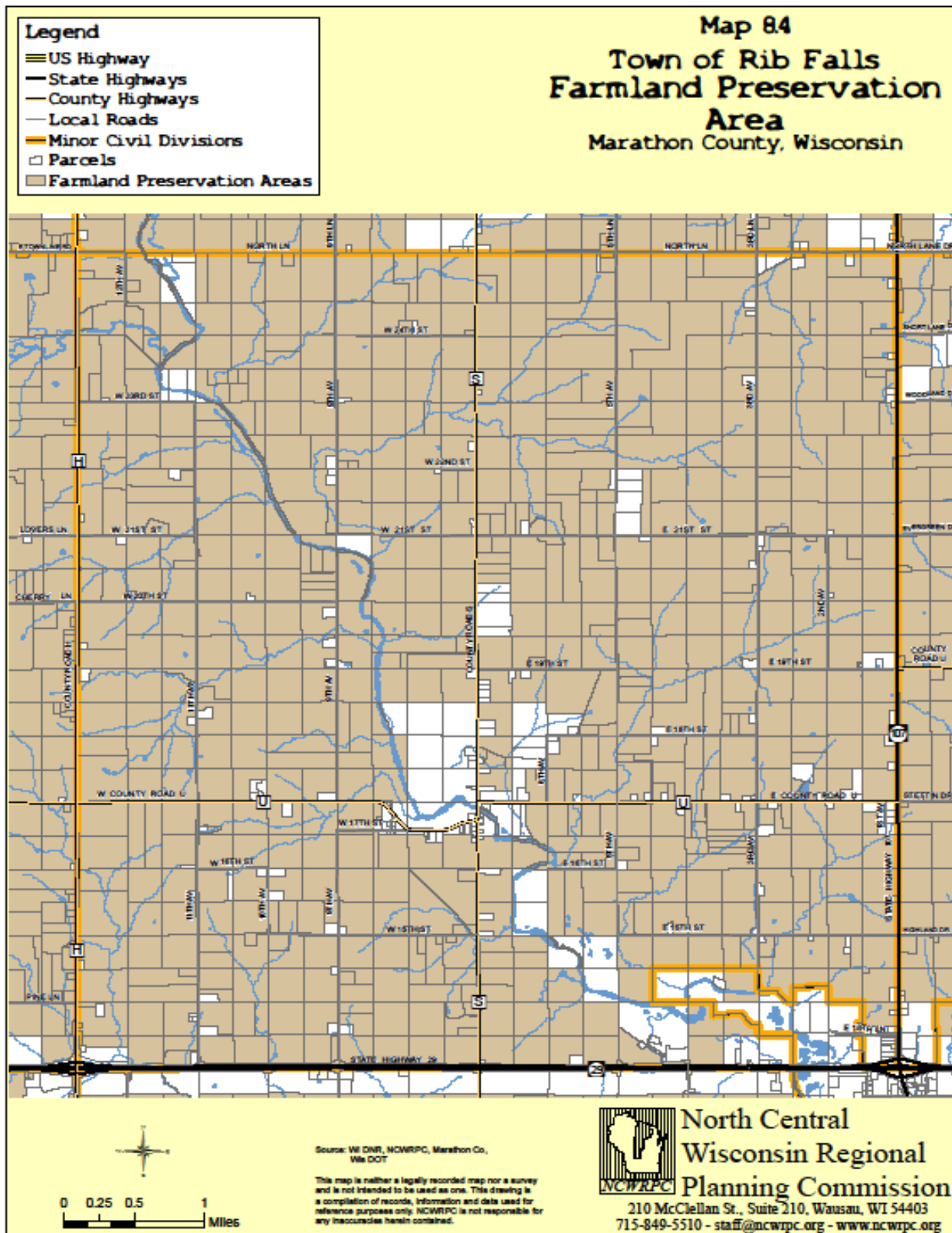
Map 8.5 indicates the location of local nonmetallic mining sites.

Map 8.3: Current Zoning

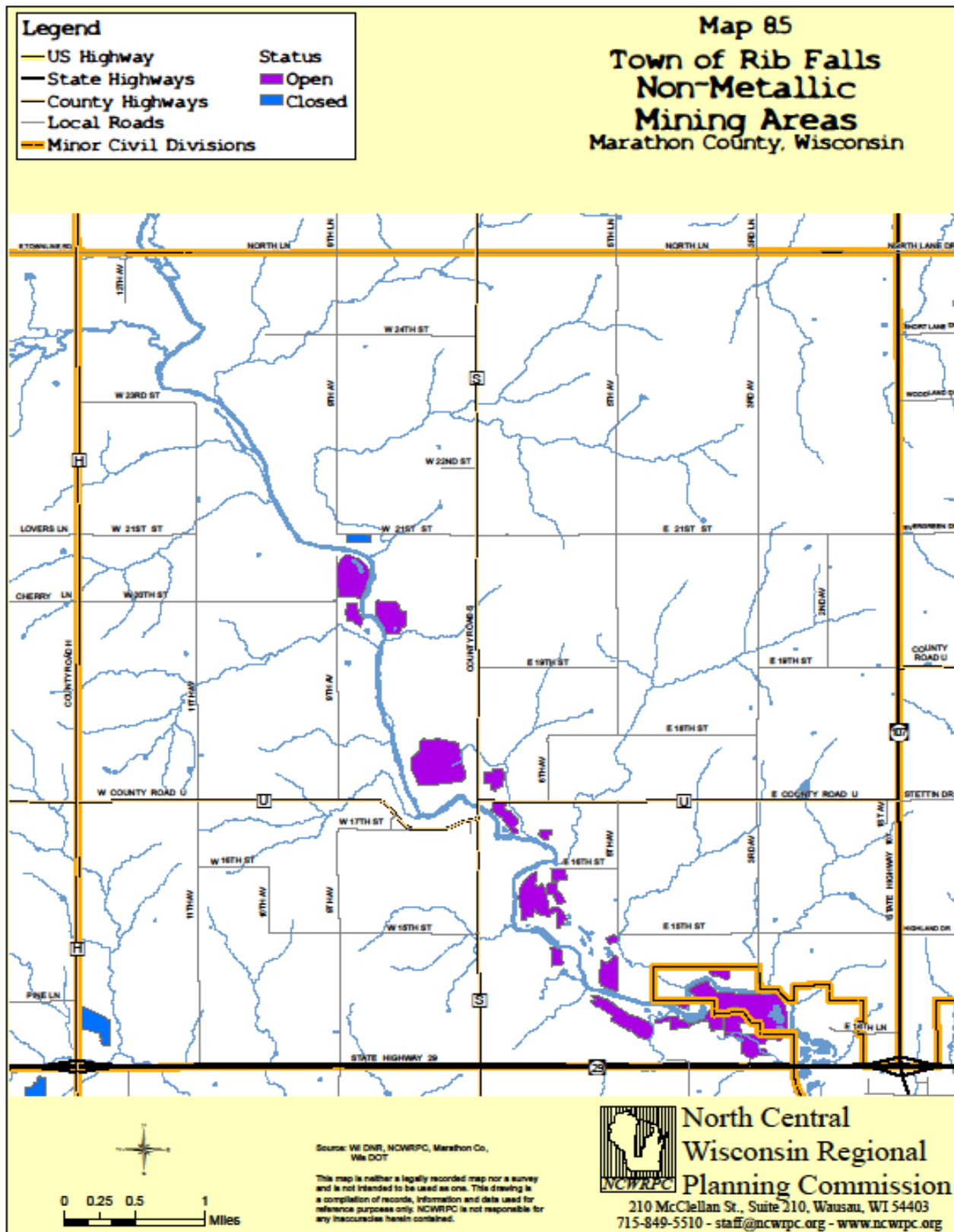




## 8.4: Farmland Preservation



## 8.5: Nonmetallic sites





## Shoreland Zoning

Shoreland, wetlands, and floodplain regulations are applicable in all geographic areas of the town. Wisconsin law mandates that counties adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates land use in shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas for the entire area of the county outside of villages and cities. This ordinance supersedes any town ordinance, **unless a town ordinance is more restrictive**. The shoreland/wetland and floodplain area covered under this zoning is the area that lies within 1,000 feet of a lake and within 300 feet of a navigable stream or to the landward side of a floodplain, whichever distance is greater. Most of the development regulations are aimed at establishing buffers and minimizing runoff to protect water quality. While the County enforces shoreland regulations within Marathon County, the WDNR maintains oversight responsibilities to ensure compliance with State Statutes.

## Land Division Regulations

Marathon County regulates the division of land in accordance with Chapter 18 of the Marathon County Code. The County's land division regulations apply in all unincorporated areas of the County. Where a town has land division regulations that are more restrictive than the County's, the local regulations apply. General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County Chapter 18 includes regulations for minimum lot sizes, street design and access requirements, land dedication, surface drainage and erosion control. The County also has permitting authority over private septic systems, which are addressed in General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County Chapter 15.

## Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) is a landowner incentive program that encourages sustainable forestry on private woodland. In exchange for following sound forest management, the landowner pays reduced property taxes. MFL was enacted in 1985 and replaced **d the been and** the Forest Crop Law.

MFL is the only forest tax law that is open to enrollment. Land enrolled in the MFL program must be managed according to a plan agreed to by the landowner. Landowners may close to the public up to 160 acres of their forest lands set aside under the MFL. The remaining program acres must be open to public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing and cross-country skiing.

In 2017 the town had approximately 1,344 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program. (source WI DNR 2015)

## **Issues and Considerations**

1. Agricultural activities represent an important economic and cultural land use for the community. The Town of Rib Falls will support and encourage agricultural production and cropland protection through the Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan that may include Agricultural Enterprise Areas and zoning.
2. Promote policies and programs that foster small and moderate scaled farm enterprises to prosper in the community economically, socially, and culturally. The town will coordinate with nearby villages to promote transitional zoning districts for farmer markets, entrepreneurial processing support, and zoning/overlays in groundwater limited areas or river corridors.
3. To control housing and residential development, the town will seek land division and development policies that limit densities, cropland fragmentation and conflicts of land use among other-residents and businesses.
4. The town will support activities that promote farmland and woodland conservation via County, State, and Federal programs to protect soil health and water quality.
5. The town will promote zoning of different land uses to minimize or avoid nuisance issues to protect the value of existing assets.
6. Develop strategies to assess impact fees for land uses requesting high levels of service and/or infrastructure support.
7. Develop criteria to minimize use conflicts due to scale of normally acceptable practices or uses.

## **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.
2. Preserve active farming.
3. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

## *Chapter Nine:*

# *Natural Resources*

Natural resources, the soil, water, and air, are critical to the Town of Rib Falls. These resources are highly valued for the beauty, wildlife, economic, and recreational opportunities.

### **PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES**

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by Marathon County to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans will be used to identify and guide opportunities for the town to develop partnerships to protect and enhance natural resources.

#### **Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) – 2010**

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan identifies and quantifies specific resources concerns facing the community, including the town. Also, the plan outlines strategies and programs for the conservation of soil and water conservation resources. See Chapter 12.

The Marathon County Land Conservation and Zoning Committee identified the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource management efforts that are consistent with the town:

- Community and economic development plans are balanced and appropriately scaled to encourage growth and economic opportunities while respecting existing uses and values.
- Resident and business land use conflicts from neighboring land uses are minimized.
- Public infrastructure investments (road, bridge, and park facilities) are protected.
- Rural character of the landscape and land use is preserved.
- Soil and water resources are protected as productive and recreational assets.
- Rib Falls agriculture and woodlot producers are economically strong.

#### **Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – 2013**

The Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan represents a strategic and program guide for the preservation of rural character by minimizing the conversion of agricultural and woodland to other land uses. For all lands enrolled in this program, the farmer must comply with soil and water conservations standards to be eligible for income tax benefits. See Chapter 12.

## **LAND RESOURCES**

### **Soil Resources**

Most of the soils found in the town are best used for cropland and woodlands, and are primarily derived from the weathering of glacial drift, outwash, and bedrock. Soils are described in terms of their location on the landscape, profile characteristics, relationship to one another, suitability for various uses, and needs for types of management. See map 9.1 for the soil mapping units found in the town.

Soils play a significant role in determining the suitability for a site for development. Most soils in Rib Falls are suitable for agriculture, except those with excessive slopes or areas that are poorly drained. Areas most suitable for agricultural production with minimal limitations and requiring minimal inputs for successful production have been identified as “prime farm lands” by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

### **Soil Erosion**

The primary concerns about soil erosion are the potential loss of productive farm soils and the impact of sediment and nutrient runoff on water quality. To maintain soil productivity, an average soil erosion rate of three to five tons per acre per year for cropland is considered allowable or tolerable (“T” level). The average soil loss rate for Rib Falls’ soil is 2.2 tons per acre per year. To preserve water quality, the County’s goal is to keep soil erosion rates below “T” levels, particularly in water-quality management areas. Most soil erosion in the town is associated with agricultural activities. Soil erosion can also be a problem related to mining, development of buildings and roads, and forest clearing.

In June 1999, Marathon County conducted its first transect survey. The survey has been repeated every other year from 2000 to 2014. The average annual “tolerable” soil loss rate (“T”) per acre for Marathon County is 4.4 tons per acre per year. Note that the transect data does not include ephemeral or snow melt erosion contributions which are significant in the watershed.

### **Depth to Bedrock**

The depth of bedrock below the soil surface can affect the suitability of land for development and other uses. In areas with shallow depth to bedrock construction of homes and other buildings may be limited since the cost to excavate the bedrock can be cost-prohibitive. Likewise, high bedrock may preclude installation of conventional on-site septic systems. The quantity of available water from low producing bedrock aquifers is a serious concern which may limit the expansion of residential and business in Rib Falls.

Some areas the town have shallower bedrock with depths from 40 to 60 inches below the surface. A few isolated areas have bedrock 20-40 inches below the surface.

**Legend**

- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Minor Civil Divisions

**Map 91**  
**Town of Rib Falls**  
**Soils**  
**Marathon County, Wisconsin**

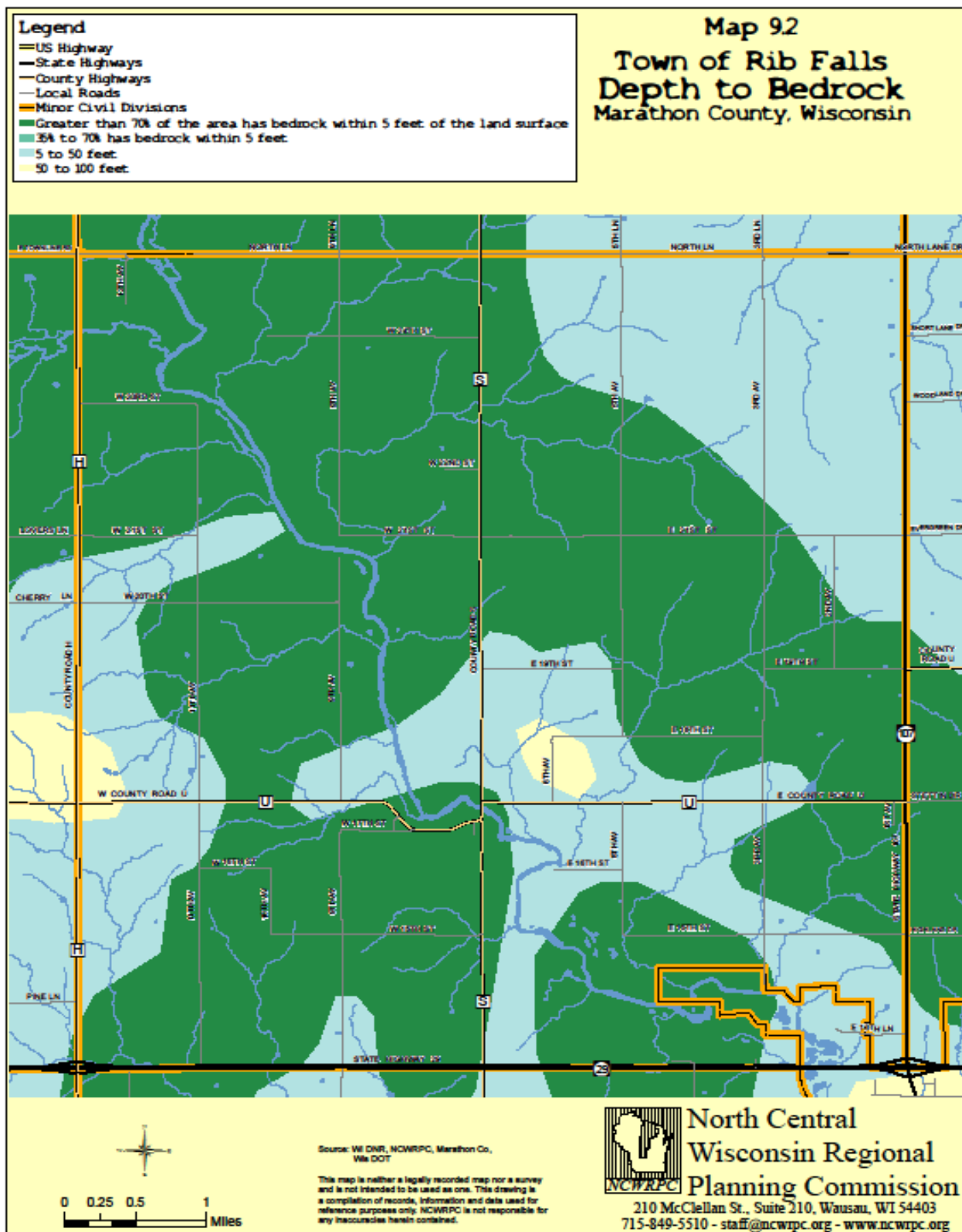
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Source: WI DNR, NCRPC, Marathon Co., Wis DOT

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. NCRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

**North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**  
 210 McClellan St., Suite 210, Wausau, WI 54403  
 715-849-5510 - staff@ncwrpc.org - www.ncwrpc.org

Map 9.2: Depth to Bedrock



**Issues and Considerations:**

1. Prime soils are important determinant of the agricultural and woodland production within the town. Soil erosion rates have been increasing over the past 10 years. The town will promote programs and practices that reduce soil erosion rates below tolerable rates. The town will promote programs to promote and improve the soil health of the community's soil.
2. The Rib River corridor is an intensely used non-metallic area of the town. The town will promote regulations to ensure ground and surface waters are protected from these activities, as well as reclaim lands to aesthetic, stable landscapes. The town will assess the ability to utilize reclaimed sites to recreational uses.

**Goals:****Objectives:**

1. Reduce soil erosion rates to below 4.0 tons per acre per year
2. Protect and improve soil health.
3. Ensure mine reclamation and reuse.
4. Preserve prime agricultural soils.
5. Preserve prime woodland soils.

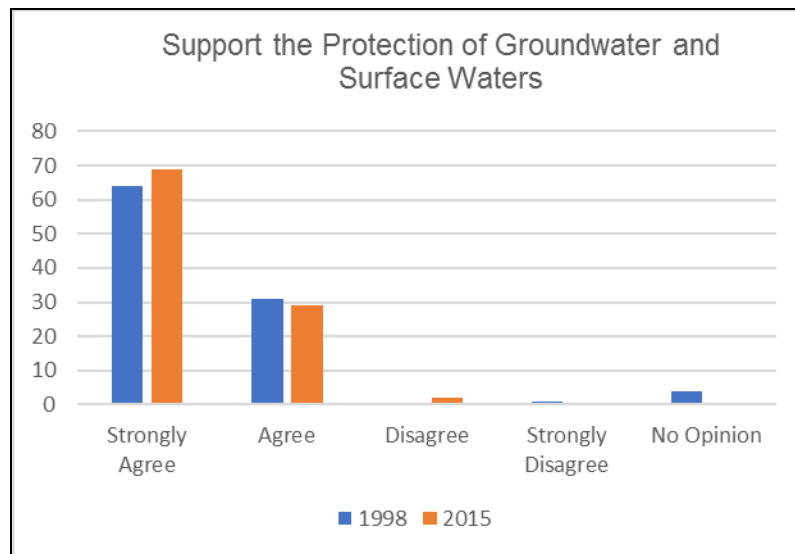
## Chapter Ten:

# Water Resources

Rib Falls depends on its water resources. They are economically and ecologically important to the health and welfare of its citizens. These water resources provide drinking water from both surface and groundwater sources. They provide very important recreational benefits as well as contribute to a diverse ecosystem. The Rib River is the main surface water feature within the town, and to a large extent the corridor is relatively undeveloped. However, changes in land use and population shifts have increased demands for these water resources.

Nonpoint runoff problems are both water quality and quantity based. Nonpoint pollution is a result of activities that take place on the land surface, and how water runs off the land surface or seeps into the ground. Most land use activities have the potential to contribute to nonpoint pollution problems.

Figure 13 indicates the town resident's perspective on the role of the town to protect the water resources.



**Figure 13: Water Resources Protection**

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan addresses water quality concerns through a partnership of local, state, and federal programs. See Chapter 12.



## **Wetlands**

Wetlands consist of transitional areas between uplands and open water. Wetlands perform important ecological functions such as flood retention and water quality improvements. They provide valuable wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunities. In Rib Falls wetlands were severely impacted or destroyed by agricultural activities from the late 1940s through the 1970s. Many were drained for cropland through the creation of “w” ditches, which consist of a narrow, raised field with a ditch on either side. Many of these ditches still exist.

Permits are required for activities that impact wetlands, such as land and road development.

Wetlands that remain in the town are generally located adjacent to rivers, creeks, and floodplains. Most are wooded, although several types of WDNR classified wetlands can be found throughout the County.

Public awareness of wetlands as a valuable resource continues to increase. Over many years of developing the agricultural landscape, the town saw the conversion of wetland to cropland. Minimizing the loss of wetland with their buffering capacity is a high priority for the enhancement of water resources in the town. Building wetland function adjacent to cropland is an important element in the reduction of nonpoint runoff and promotion of groundwater recharge. Wetland restoration and sediment control are important water quality tools that will be promoted over the next 10 years.

## **Floodplains**

Floodplains consist of the “floodway” and “flood fringe”. The “floodway” is defined as the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel required to carry the regional flood discharge. **Definition of flood fringe?**

In the Town of Rib Falls, areas within the 100-year floodplain are typically located immediately adjacent to rivers, streams and creeks. Likewise, floodplains usually do not exist along river segments with steep or high banks, although these areas experience greater flood depths due to constricted flow.

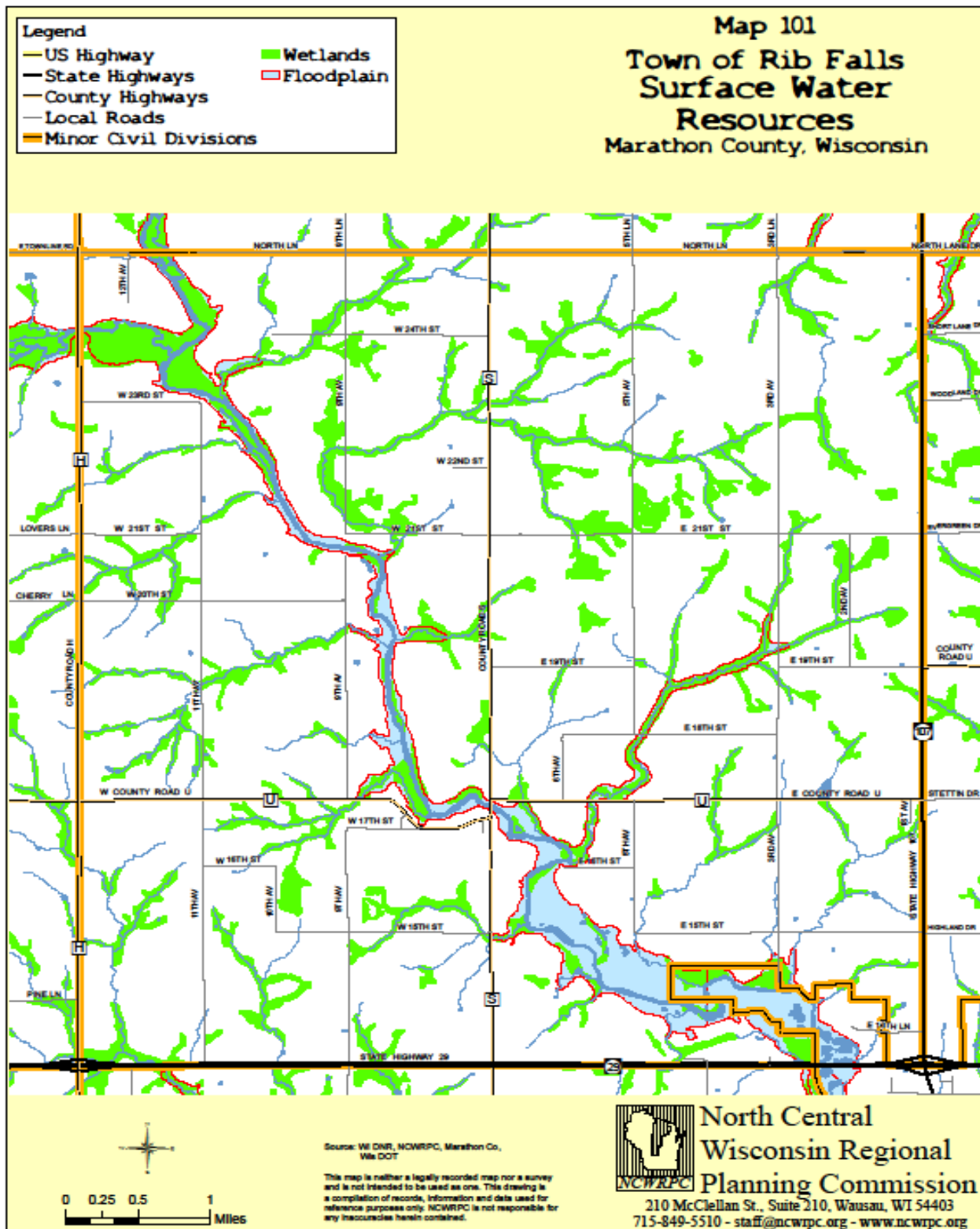
Like wetlands, floodplains provide areas where water from swollen rivers and streams can over-flow. They also provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Map 10.1 shows all the surface waters within the Town of Rib Falls.

## **Surface Water Quality**

Nonpoint sources, including soil erosion, animal waste runoff, pesticide runoff, and urban runoff have been identified as significant sources of pollution that need to be controlled to meet State water quality goals. The impact of these pollutants includes eutrophication, well contamination, fish kills, algae blooms, beach closings, high bacteria counts, turbidity, and loss of aquatic habitat. Most surface waters designated as 303d impacted waters are impacted by phosphorus. To a large degree, the Upper Wisconsin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan which includes the Town of Rib Falls will focus upon the reduction of phosphorus delivery to surface water.

Map 10.1: Surface waters



## Total Maximum Daily Load Planning – 2015

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act established the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program. The TMDL program identifies and restores polluted rivers, lakes, streams, and other surface waterbodies with problems and contributing sources of pollution. The TMDL determines how much a pollutant needs to be reduced to meet water quality standards, and provides the foundation for taking actions locally to restore a waterbody to fishable and swimmable standards.

Figure 14 identifies the main river tributaries in Marathon County that flow into the Wisconsin River along with their respective phosphorus concentrations. Current in-stream water quality standards for the Rib River for phosphorus in 75 micrograms per liter.

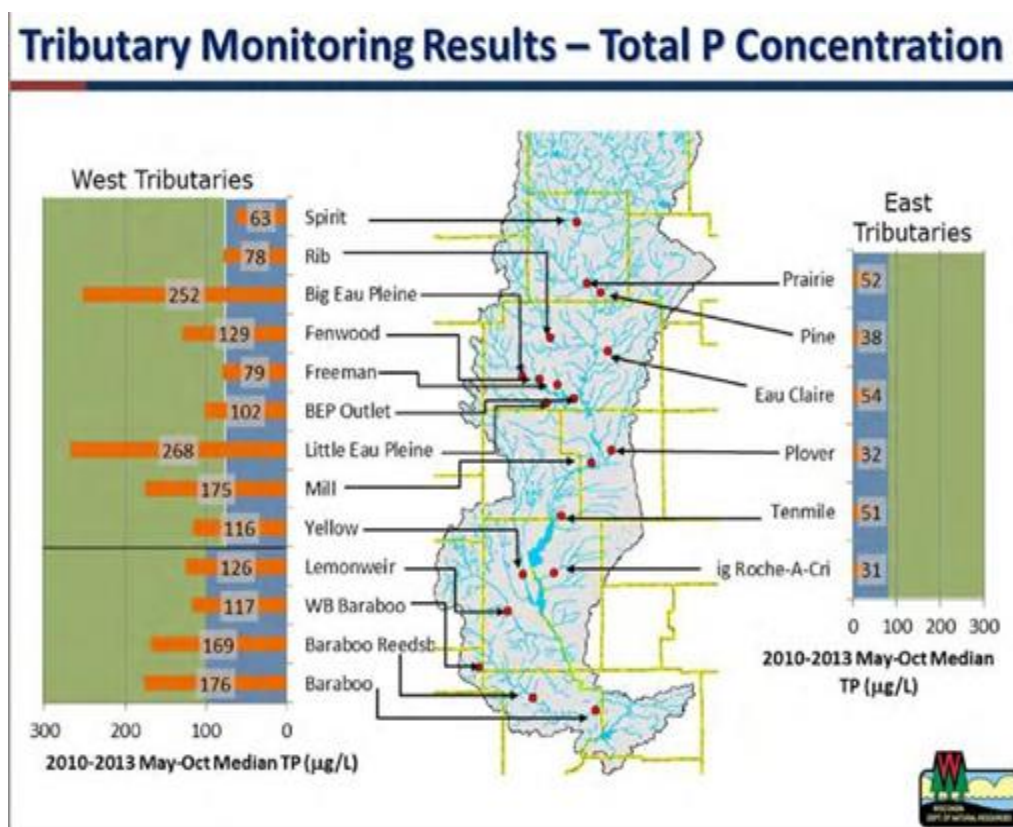


Figure 14 – WI River TMDL In Stream Phosphorus Concentrations.

Source:

The Upper Wisconsin River TMDL is scheduled for completion in 2017. This plan specific pollutant allocation limits for all dischargers in the watershed to achieve statewide water quality goals. The town's agricultural and woodland do contribute phosphorus in runoff that leads to the degradation of the river.

The TMDL plan will prescribe best management practices at the edge of cropland fields to reduce the runoff potential of these drainage ditches, as well as to enhance the wetland capacity of the watershed.

## Groundwater and Susceptibility to Contaminants

Groundwater is the primary source of water consumption by the town. As groundwater use in the town increases and the scale of agricultural activities increasingly threaten the groundwater, conservation efforts to protect the resource will need to increase.

Susceptibility of groundwater to pollutants is the ease with which a contaminant can be transported from the land surface to the top of the groundwater called the “water table”. Many materials that overlie the groundwater offer good protection from contaminants that might be transported by infiltrating waters. In some areas, the overlying soil and bedrock materials allow contaminants to reach the groundwater more easily than in other areas. Many of the soils along the Highway 29 corridor are very shallow in depth over the bedrock and therefore susceptible to groundwater contamination from surface activities.

Five physical resource characteristics are used to determine how easily a contaminant can be carried through overlying materials to the groundwater. These characteristics are depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, soil characteristics, depth to water table, and characteristics of surficial deposits.

Map 10.1 shows the relatively depth of groundwater within the town.

## Pollution and Contamination

Since groundwater gets into the ground at the land surface, it makes sense that what happens on the land surface may have impact on groundwater. A great many land use activities have the potential to impact the natural quality of groundwater. For examples, 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 too much application on farm fields, golf courses, or lawns. Intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated ground or surface water.

In the town, with many private wells, groundwater contamination is a concern especially where the soil types are highly permeable or bedrock is shallow. Sources of groundwater contamination, such as landfills, chemical spills, and high nitrates in runoff, are often linked to human activities. The Water Testing Lab at the Marathon County Health Department and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point monitor public and private drinking water systems and recreational waters and tests for several microbiological and chemical parameters.

**Map 101**  
**Town of Rib Falls**  
**Surface Water**  
**Resources**  
Marathon County, Wisconsin

**Legend**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 2px; background-color: black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> US Highway</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 2px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> State Highways</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 2px dashed black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> County Highways</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 2px dotted black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Local Roads</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 2px solid orange; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Minor Civil Divisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Wetlands</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid red; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Floodplain</li> </ul>
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## **Issues and Considerations**

1. The Town of Rib Falls is in the Upper Wisconsin River TMDL that is impacted negatively by excessive amounts of phosphorus in the Rib River. The town will support efforts to manage land use activities to reduce soil sediment and agricultural runoff discharge to the river or its tributaries.
2. The town will promote and support the development of a Rib River overlay area that would be the focus of targeted efforts to implements conservation and water quality efforts to lower phosphorus delivery to the river.
3. The town will support programs that provide technical and financial incentives to improve local soil and water conservation compliance relative to State Agricultural Performance standards.
4. While the quality of the groundwater in Marathon County is generally very good, contamination has occurred in some areas usually because of human activities. The town concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, soil erosion, manure runoff, nitrates and other chemicals in runoff. The town will support education and programs that support efforts to protect groundwater quality.
5. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are standards which describe the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. WDNR is currently implementing a plan to improve water quality in the Wisconsin River Basin, which includes Rib Falls. The town will work with surrounding towns and villages to collectively meet watershed water quality standards of 75 micrograms per liter.

## **Goals:**

## **Objectives:**

1. Protect and enhance surface water resources and natural habitat areas.
2. Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.
3. Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment and nutrients).
4. Support and participate in water quality trading programs within rural and urban communities.

# *Chapter Eleven*

## *Economic Activity and Development*

### **AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY**

#### **Dairy**

Since the end of the lumber era (1930s), the Town of Rib Falls' economy has been supported by production of agricultural commodities. Specifically, the production of milk. Historical census information indicates that Rib Falls at one time was home to 138 dairy farms. Today only 17 working dairy farms produce a raw milk product. Although the number of farms is declining, the scale of dairy production on individual farms has dramatically increased. For example, in 1930 the average farm milked 18 cows (usually a colored breed), but today the average farm milks nearly 80 cows (most likely a Holstein breed). Currently, there are no Concentrated Animal Feedlot Operations (CAFOs) with over 1000 animal units in the town. Collectively, the town's dairy operations are part of Marathon County's 300-million-dollar dairy industry. Although the number of dairy producers is in decline, the combination of agricultural production and processing creates nearly 20% of the jobs in the County. The county is home to several milk and cheese processing plants. Most milk produced in Wisconsin is processed to cheese.

#### **Cropping**

The other large contributor to the agri-business in the town is ginseng production. Marathon County is the largest producer of ginseng in the state producing over one million pounds of roots annually. Most of the root commodity is sold to international Asian markets. Over the past several years, the market for ginseng has been hard hit by low commodity prices and increased regulation on chemicals utilized in production.

Other significant agricultural commodities grown in the town include corn, hay, and soybeans. The many acres of corn and soybeans are primarily used as protein and energy feed sources for the dairy and beef operations.

#### **Woodland and Forestry Activity**

The production of timber and pulp wood as a cash crop is still a valuable crop in Rib Falls. Through selective cutting and harvesting the available woodlands produce an income for the land owners.

#### **Industrial and Commercial**

The sand and gravel industries are active within the town, especially along the Rib River. This industry provides the raw materials for road surfacing material, concrete batching activities, and many trucking jobs. The town has (2) concrete plants located in adjacent to Rib Falls, which employ approximately 250 people from the surrounding areas of Marathon, Edgar, and the Towns of Cassel, Wien, Rietbrock and others.



## Employment by Occupation

Occupation is about the tasks that an employee does, while industry is about the final product or service a business produces. Although the mining, agriculture, and woodland land uses in the town provide many jobs to residents, the occupational composition of our town residents is very diverse. Increasingly, the town continues to see the influence of the commuter who lives in the town but works in a neighboring urban center.

In 2010 the County had an employed population of 69,248. The largest occupation sectors are management, professional and related occupations (31.8%) and sales and office occupations (24.0%). Typical annual salaries in Marathon County range from \$18,590 for people in food preparation and serving related occupations to \$86,820 for people in management. Only 23 percent of the occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for a one adult household with two or fewer children. Only 41 percent of the occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for two adults (one working) households with two or fewer children and 68 percent of occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for two adult households with two children.

## Employment Characteristics

Tables 11.1 and 11.2 illustrate the breakdown, by occupation, of the employed population of Rib Falls and Marathon County in 2010 and 2015. The “employed population” is defined as people living in the County who are 16 years and older. The three sectors with the highest employment in the town were Management, Business; Production, Transportation, and Material Moving; and Natural Resources-Construction occupations.

**Table 11.1: OCCUPATIONS BY SECTOR**

Sector Occupations	RIB FALLS				MARATHON COUNTY			
	2010		2015		2010		2015	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Management, Business, etc.	189	35.5	233	37.6	21,212	30.3	23,464	33.6
Service	66	12.4	42	6.8	9,919	14.2	9,802	14.0
Sales & Office	84	15.8	135	21.8	17,063	24.4	16,916	24.2
Natural Resources, Construction, etc.	92	17.3	61	9.9	6,970	10.0	6,099	8.7
Production, Transportation, etc.	101	19.0	148	23.9	14,816	21.2	13,553	19.4
Employed Population 16 years and over	532	100%	619	100%	69,980	100%	69,834	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey



**Table 11.2: INDUSTRIAL BY SECTOR**

	RIB FALLS				MARATHON COUNTY			
	2010		2015		2010		2015	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining	47	8.8	70	11.3	2,231	3.2	2,819	4.0
Construction	50	9.4	47	7.6	3,891	5.6	3,368	4.8
Manufacturing	158	29.7	170	27.5	16,870	24.1	14,183	20.3
Wholesale trade	18	3.4	0	0	2,369	3.4	2,277	3.3
Retail trade	34	6.4	54	8.7	7,697	11.0	8,570	12.3
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	13	2.4	45	7.3	3,116	4.5	3,391	4.9
Information	0	0	5	.8	1,026	1.5	805	1.2
Finance and insurance, and real estate	39	7.3	42	6.8	5,471	7.8	5,758	8.2
Professional, scientific, management, and administrative	15	2.8	30	4.8	3,865	5.5	3,723	5.3
Education services, health care, & social assistance	113	21.2	119	19.2	14,895	21.3	15,933	22.8
Arts, entertainment, recreation, food services	26	4.9	10	1.6	4,702	6.7	4,839	6.9
Other services, except public administration	16	3.0	13	2.1	2,454	3.5	2,527	3.6
Public administration	2	.6	14	2.3	1,393	2.0	1,641	2.3
Total	532	100%	619	100%	69,980	100%	69,834	100%
Civilian employed population 16years and over								

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates

## **Issues and Considerations**

1. Historically, the Town of Rib Falls is an agricultural community and will remain that way for the foreseeable future if action is taken to protect and enhance its profitability. The low profitability of all commodity production has created the situation where the number of acres in production is in decline and maybe more importantly, the number of people (families) involved in production is in decline. At a time when the age of the farmer is increasing (56 years), the number of new entries into production agriculture is at an all-time low. This trend of declining agriculture in the town will continue unless policies are initiated at all levels of public and private activities to increase the profitability and sustainability of small and moderate scaled farms. The town will support market-based programs to increase the profitability of farmers and woodland owners.
2. The economic impact to Rib Falls is significant through job creation, value-added commodity processing, and export marketing. The sand and gravel is extracted from the mines and is used to produce ready-mix concrete, culverts and concrete blocks. The town will support efforts to support jobs and industrial based upon the mining industry and processing activities.

## **Goals:**

## **Objectives:**

1. Develop a review policy for nonmetallic mining activities to assure that the scale and intensity of the operations are consistent with the safety, capacities, and maintenance concerns of town infrastructure.
2. Develop a review and permit process for large scale livestock and agricultural operations to assure that local infrastructure concerns relative to maintenance, loading and density capacities, and safety are addressed.
3. Review opportunities with other communities and governmental sectors to connect agricultural producers and processors.
4. Develop land division specifications to minimize conflicts of agriculture and rural residences, cropland fragmentation, and high density housing.
5. Review opportunities to promote farm economic diversification in areas of woodland production, energy production, biosolids processing, recreational access, and other activities that increase the profitability of "working land".

# *Chapter Twelve*

## *Intergovernmental Cooperation*

This chapter describes existing activities that the Town of Rib Falls uses to coordinate with other various units of government including municipalities, school districts, the State of Wisconsin and the federal government. This chapter will also summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and identify mechanisms for cooperation and coordination, including intergovernmental agreements, contracts, and regulatory authority.

The Town of Rib Falls is governed by Wisconsin State Statutes and collaborates with the following governmental programs to support local services:

### **1. Marathon County Comprehensive Plan – 2016**

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan guides decision makers on a wide array of issues over the next twenty years. The overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to add a county-level perspective and planning direction that complements and strengthens local planning efforts.

### **2. Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan – 2010**

The Marathon County LWRM Plan identifies the soil and water resource concerns within the county. The plan also identifies specific strategies, programming, and best management practices (voluntary and regulatory) that will be promoted to assist landowners to meet State Agricultural Performance Standards.

### **3. Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – 2013**

In 2013 Marathon County adopted the Farmland Preservation Plan to help guide farmland preservation and resource conservation activities for the next 15 years. The primary purpose of the program is to minimize the conversion of farmland to other uses and to protect soil and water resources from the impacts of agricultural runoff. Marathon County has goal to minimize conversion to less than 1500 acres annually.

There are two program strategies that Marathon County will utilize to preserve farmland use:

1. Farmland Preservation Zoning
2. Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)



#### **4. Marathon County Highway and Transportation Plan**

The Marathon County Highway Department operates the highway system to provide a safe and convenient means for the vehicular transportation of people and goods.

The Highway Department also provides technical assistance, financial aid, and various services to other local units of government. These services are critical to maintaining a safe, convenient, and efficient transportation system serving communities, residents, and businesses.

#### **5. Marathon County General Zoning and Ordinance – 2016.**

The General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County is adopted to promote and protect public health, safety, comfort, convenience, aesthetics and other aspects of the general welfare and, to fix reasonable standards to which buildings and structures shall conform, to regulate and restrict lot coverage and population density, to guide the proper distribution and location of various land uses by the establishment of zoning districts.

#### **6. Floodplain and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance**

Marathon County shoreland, wetland, and floodplain regulations are applicable in all areas of the town. This ordinance supersedes any town ordinance, **unless a town ordinance is more restrictive.** The shoreland/wetland and floodplain area covered under this zoning is the area that lies within 1,000 feet of a lake and within 300 feet of a navigable stream or to the landward side of a floodplain, whichever distance is greater. Most of the development regulations are aimed at establishing buffers and minimizing runoff to protect water quality.

#### **7. Marathon County Land Division Ordinance – 2017**

The County regulates the division of land in accordance with General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County Chapter 18. The County's land division regulations apply in all areas of the town. However, where a town has land division regulations that are more restrictive than the County's, both the County's regulations and the local regulations apply. Chapter 18 includes regulations for minimum lot sizes, access requirements, surface drainage and erosion control.

#### **8. Marathon County Nonmetallic Mining Ordinance**

The intent of nonmetallic mining regulation is to minimize environmental impacts of mining and to assure that proper reclamation of the mining sites occurs. By requiring plans of operational activities, the County can minimize off-site discharges, groundwater concerns, public nuisances, and sediment releases. In agricultural zoned districts, the zoning code requires a conditional use permit on the parcel with the requirement that the land be returned to an agricultural use at the completion of mining operations.

## **9. Marathon County Park and Recreational Plan**

County parks provide unique or specialized recreational opportunities to County residents. Rib Falls Park is a 314.65 acre county park that is located along the Rib River. Park facilities include: an open shelter, toilet, well, and children's play equipment adjacent to the falls area of the river. The remains of an old saw and grist mill and dam are located on the Big Rib River which flows through the site. The park property includes an active gravel pit that is being managed for the development of a 40-acre lake and associated improvements.

## **10. Managed Forest Law**

Rib Falls has approximately 1,344 acres of land currently enrolled in the forest crop protection plan and will continue to keep the land in forest but to provide a continuing growth of forest products

## **11. Marathon County Uniform Addressing Ordinance**

The Marathon County administers the addressing regulations for all parts of Rib Falls. In February 2016 the county adopted regulations to create a single uniform address grid all unincorporated parts of the county. In 2018 new street names and unique address numbers will be assigned all residences and businesses. The goal of the uniform address system is to ensure that residents receive the right emergency response services at the right location in the most timely way.

## **12. Marathon County Groundwater Protection Guide – 2000**

The plan identifies sources of groundwater in the county as well as consumption trends for the various communities. The Groundwater Plan and Central Wisconsin Basin Plan identify risk concerns relative to type of pollutant sources.

## **13. Marathon County Animal Waste and Nutrient Management Ordinance**

Marathon County adopted a waste storage facility and nutrient management ordinance is to regulate the proper siting and construction of livestock waste storage facilities, as well as the land spreading of manure onto cropland.

## **14. Marathon County Livestock Siting Ordinance – 2006**

The livestock siting ordinance regulates the siting and management of livestock operations between 500 and 999 animal units. The intent of the ordinance is to safeguard the ground and surface waters in and around large scale concentrated livestock operations. The county oversees the management and structural practices associated with open feedlots, feed storage, waste storage structures, and land spreading of manure onto cropland.

## **15. WI Department of Transportation – Highway 29 Corridor Preservation Plan**

WIS 29 carries approximately 18,700 vehicles per day between Abbotsford and Wausau. One of the primary objectives of the WIS 29 corridor preservation plan is to ensure that this important highway continues to operate safely and efficiently, and to protect the state's investment in this important east/west route. By officially mapping and preserving the right of way, the department can protect the state's long-term investment in the highway while providing local communities with information needed to plan for future development.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL TOOLS AND REGULATIONS**

This section lists the various tools used to facilitate and implement planning efforts related to intergovernmental cooperation.

### **Annexation**

Wisconsin law generally places annexation power in the hands of individual property owners, making it difficult for local municipalities (villages, cities, and towns) to control where or when annexation will occur. Wisconsin Statutes (s. 66.021) outlines three procedures for petitioning annexation. The most common involves a petition signed unanimously by all the electors residing in the territory or all owners of property to be annexed. A petition for annexation can also be requested through a referendum election, but this requires signatures of at least 20 percent of the electors in the territory and is not a process that is often used.

### **Extraterritorial Zoning (ETZ)**

Wisconsin Statutes allow cities and villages authority to assert zoning control over an area extending 1½ to 3 miles around their border, depending on their size. All villages near Rib Falls are limited to 1½ miles. To exercise ETZ, a committee must be formed with members of the affected city/village and town. This committee is charged with determining land uses and zoning in the extraterritorial area and must approve zoning changes. The committee is given two years to complete its work, although a one-year extension is allowed.

### **Extraterritorial Subdivision Review**

Cities and villages have the option of exercising extraterritorial plat review authority, which affects the same area defined by ETZ. If they use this authority they have the right to review and approve land divisions within this area. The purpose of extraterritorial plat review is to give cities and villages some control over development patterns along their borders. Unlike ETZ, extraterritorial subdivision review does not have a time limit.

### **Intergovernmental Agreements**

Wisconsin Statutes authorize local communities to establish cooperative intergovernmental agreements. These are most commonly used in the context of shared public services such as police, fire, and EMS. Cooperative agreements can also be established regarding revenue sharing and to deal with boundary changes in a coordinated, planned manner.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Emergency Response**

The communities of Hamburg, Marathon City, and Edgar provide Emergency Response in conjunction with their fire department services. The Town of Rib Falls also has First Responders, volunteers who are trained to provide immediate lifesaving actions in their neighborhood or community before an ambulance or Emergency Response team can get there.

Marathon County has 31 fire service providers, many of which encompass more than one municipality and service is provided through mutual aid agreements between adjacent communities. The bulk of the fire service providers are made up of volunteers unless noted below. EMS service is also typically provided through the fire service provider.

### **E-911 Dispatch Service**

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services agencies in Marathon County. The communications division services 85 user agencies and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, among others.

The users are served by a microwave linked voted repeater radio system, consisting of a control center at the Sheriff's Department, and nine remote radio tower sites spread throughout the County. The system is also utilized by the Marathon County Highway Department and the Wausau Fire Department to support their radio communications.

### **Law Enforcement**

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement and police protection to the Town of Rib Falls. In addition, some local police departments provide back-up service to the Marathon County Sheriff's Department on an as-needed basis.

## **FACILITIES**

### **Library System**

The Marathon County Library system consists of eight branch facilities including the villages of Athens, Edgar, and Marathon City. The headquarters facility is located in downtown Wausau.

### **School Districts**

The town is served by three school districts, some of which also extend into adjacent towns. School facilities can significantly impact surrounding development, traffic patterns and volumes, and utility needs; therefore it is essential to coordinate planning for school facilities with affected municipalities.

### **Towns & Villages Association**

The town is a member of the Wisconsin Towns & Villages Association. The town participates in state and Marathon County level meetings such as the annual statewide convention and area training programs to keep informed on trends in state and local issues and policies.

## Issues and Considerations

1. **Regionalization.** The Town of Rib Falls has increasingly engaged the neighboring towns and villages in planning efforts to share resources and problem solving across a wide array of topics including economic development, land use, emergency services, transportation, and environmental protection. Town efforts should focus on working together to attract development projects and jobs to locations that best benefit the region and best utilize public resources.
2. **Regulatory Structure.** There seems to be some frustration over the various levels of government involved in regulation of natural resources and the potential for the rules to change, which creates confusion and complicates enforcement. While the town has virtually no control over changes in State or Federal regulations or procedures, as the most direct local unit of government, the town can play an important role in communicating changes and making people aware of current regulations and permitting procedures.
3. **Transportation Coordination.** The County maintains a highway network throughout the entire County. The town needs to maintain communication with the Highway Department to provide the best service and to coordinate engineering services and state funds toward local infrastructure projects. In addition, coordination needs to be maintained related to bicycle routes and trails.
4. **Zoning Coordination.** The town has adopted County zoning. In addition, the County administers shoreland throughout the entire town. The town will need to assure that zoning rules are communicated consistently to landowners, as well as the purposes of zoning are realized.

## Goals:

### Objectives:

1. Encourage proactive conflict resolution.
2. Promote cost-effective public services.
3. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities.
4. Encourage participation in all levels of government.
5. Develop a project to access the Marathon County Environmental Impact Fund for recreational facilities at the Rib Falls Park.



## *Chapter Thirteen:*

# *Strategic Plan and Implementation*

The primary function of this comprehensive plan is to establish a framework to develop consistent and effective policy decisions. The plan also provides a blueprint for growth and development to maintain rural and community character. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

1. The development and implementation of programs and support systems.
2. The implementation of specific goals and actions as identified in this plan.
3. The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances identified in this plan.
4. The establishment of a planning process for periodic review and updates to this plan.

### **IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS**

Having the appropriate tools to implement the actions in this comprehensive plan is critical. There are two primary types of implementation tools: Non-regulatory and Regulatory.

Non-regulatory approaches generally involve decisions related to policy services and about how the town will spend its financial resources. The town annually prepares both an operational budget and a capital improvement plan. Regulatory approaches involve implementing various rules and regulations, mainly related to land use and transportation regulations. The zoning ordinance and subdivision (or land division) regulations comprise the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth.

#### **Zoning Ordinance:**

Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. Changes to the zoning districts should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted future land use map.

The future land use map should only be changed if it does not accurately reflect the community's desired land use pattern. The comprehensive plan, including the future land use map should be periodically reviewed and updated to adjust for unforeseen changes or events that were not considered at the time the initial plan and land use map were developed.

#### **Land Division Ordinance:**

Land Division regulations serve an important function by ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations provide the procedures and standards for dividing a large parcel of land into smaller parcels. Land Division ordinances set forth reasonable regulations for lot sizes, road access and design, public utilities, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development does not conflict with surrounding land uses and/or cause unreasonable burdens on provision of services.

## **Plan Adoption, Monitoring, and Amendments**

While this comprehensive plan is intended to provide a long-term framework to guide both public spending decisions and development, it must also respond to continuous changes that occur that may not have been foreseen when the plan was adopted. It is appropriate that some chapters of the plan are rarely amended while others are subject to 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 Amendments**

The Rib Falls Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time. There should be very few instances that the plan will need to be amended. However, if circumstances do arise that require policies to change to accommodate a proposal that is in the best interest of the town the amendment will need to be reviewed by the planning commission prior to review and adoption by the town board. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the life cycle 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 public should be notified of proposed Plan amendments to allow an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the town might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings with town partners prior to the official public hearing.

## **Plan Evaluation**

This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years, and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the town board, planning 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 to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. The evaluation should also include an updated timetable of actions to clarify priorities.

## **Plan Updates**

Per 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 town'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.

## **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 the Town of Rib Falls completed all planning chapters

simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the plan chapters.

This Comprehensive Plan also references previous and concurrent related planning efforts to ensure they are considered in planning decisions in conjunction with the recommendations of this Plan. Recommendations from other plans have been summarized and incorporated in this plan as deemed appropriate, to foster coordination and consistency between plans.

## **STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

The Strategic Action Plan will identify the overarching goals, objectives and actions to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Each Comprehensive Plan chapter concluded with the town's understanding of issues and trends, followed by a listing of goals. The Plan compiles the goal and objectives from each chapter and includes a list of action steps.

The action steps proposed in this plan are recommended to help the town move forward toward its mission and vision. Some action steps are continuations of things the town currently does.

### **Chapter 4: Demographics and Housing**

#### **Goals:**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options.

#### **Action:**

2. Preserve and protect the town's rural landscape and environmentally sensitive lands.

#### **Action:**

3. Promote low density residential land use development in areas of the town not available to public sanitary, improved road systems, and public water services.

#### **Action:**

4. Promote high density residential and commercial land use development in areas available to public sanitary, stormwater management controls, and public water systems.

#### **Action:**

5. Promote special housing types such as elderly and multi-family that require public services in the nearby villages to provide access to health care, shopping, and social services.

#### **Action:**

6. Preserve rural character by development standards consistent with historical patterns of transportation, housing, and economic well-being.

#### **Action:**

## **Chapter 5: Public Safety and Community Services**

### **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Strengthen partnerships with local emergency response and law enforcement service providers to ensure safety and response capabilities.

#### **Action:**

2. Work with Marathon County Emergency Management Office to ensure that emergency preparedness is adequate.

#### **Action:**

3. Support Marathon County to develop and implement the uniform address.

#### **Action:**

4. Review and assess the fire and emergency response contracted services to ensure efficiency and adequacy of response.

#### **Action:**

5. Evaluate and support road system plans that ensure quick response times for emergency services throughout the town. (County Road S is a point of emphasis)

#### **Action:**

6. Educate residents and business of emergency response details within the town.

#### **Action:**

## **Chapter 6: Recreation and Community Resources**

### **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Develop Rib Falls Park into a community based recreational facility.

#### **Action:**

2. Develop recreational plan that identifies and assesses the development of public and private trail system that integrates roadways, reclaimed mining areas, old rail beds, and easements.

#### **Action:**

3. Develop strategies to enhance and expand biking and hiking trails within the community.

#### **Action:**

4. Study the possibility to consolidate garbage and recycling services.

**Action:**

5. Support improved communication facilities and capabilities within the town.

**Action:**

## **Chapter 7: Transportation and Infrastructure**

**Goals:**

**Objectives:**

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies, prioritizes, and budgets for local road and bridge re-construction and maintenance projects. The CIP should reflect findings of PACER and TRIP assessments.

**Action:**

2. Establish a method to identify failing sanitary systems that outlet into town roadway rights-of-way.

**Action:**

3. Develop policy and procedures to support use of town roadway rights-of-way for manure distribution lines.

**Action:**

4. Evaluate the safety and administrative responsibilities of the town relative to the utilization of local roads by All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).

**Action:**

## **Chapter 8: Land Use**

**Goals:**

**Objectives:**

1. Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.

**Action:**

2. Preserve active farming.

**Action:**

3. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

**Action:**

## **Chapter 9: Natural Resources**

### **Goals:**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Reduce soil erosion rates to below 4.0 tons per acre per year

#### **Action:**

2. Protect and improve soil health.

#### **Action:**

3. Ensure mine reclamation and reuse.

#### **Action:**

4. Preserve prime agricultural soils.

#### **Action:**

5. Preserve prime woodland soils.

#### **Action:**

## **Chapter 10: Water Resources**

### **Goals:**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Protect and enhance surface water resources and natural habitat areas.

#### **Action:**

2. Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.

#### **Action:**

3. Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment and nutrients).

#### **Action:**

4. Support and participate in water quality trading programs within rural and urban.

#### **Action:**

## **Chapter 11: Economic Activity and Development**

### **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Develop a review policy for nonmetallic mining activities to assure that the scale and intensity of the operations are consistent with the safety, capacities, and maintenance concerns of town infrastructure.

#### **Action:**

2. Develop a review and permit process for large scale livestock and agricultural operations to assure that local infrastructure concerns relative to maintenance, loading and density capacities, and safety are addressed.

#### **Action:**

3. Review opportunities with other communities and governmental sectors to connect agricultural producers and processors.

#### **Action:**

4. Develop land division specifications to minimize conflicts of agriculture and rural residences, cropland fragmentation, and high density housing.

#### **Action:**

5. Review opportunities to promote farm economic diversification in areas of woodland production, energy production, biosolids processing, recreational access, and other activities that increase the profitability of "working land".

#### **Action:**

## **Chapter 12: Intergovernmental Cooperation**

### **Goals:**

### **Objectives:**

1. Encourage proactive conflict resolution.

#### **Action:**

2. Promote cost-effective public services.

#### **Action:**

3. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities.

#### **Action:**

4. Encourage participation in all levels of government.

#### **Action:**

5. Develop a project to access the Marathon County Environmental Impact Fund for recreational facilities at the Rib Falls Park.

#### **Action:**

# Appendix



# Appendix A

## Listing of Town Ordinances

### TOWN OF RIB FALLS

	<u>Title</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Adopted</u>
1.	An Ordinance to Assign Town Road Names.....		January 26, 1977
2.	Regulation of Residential Lot Size .....	3B .....	June 11, 1977
3.	Policy on Legal Settlement and Work Relief .....	5.....	September 13, 1982
4.	Highway Ordinance .....	6.....	August 31, 1983
	Addendum to Highway Ordinance-Section D.....		July 9, 1996
5.	Highway Obstruction Ordinance .....	7.....	November 12, 1984
6.	Use of Town Hall .....	9.....	April 8, 1985
	Addendum to Ordinance-Use of Town Hall.....		May 12, 1998
7.	Burning Ordinance.....	10.....	December 16, 1988
8.	Building Permit Ordinance .....	11.....	January 9, 1990
9.	Mandatory Recycling .....	12.....	???
10.	Stop Sign at E.15 <sup>th</sup> St. and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave. ....	13.....	May 14, 1991
11.	Fireworks.....	14.....	February 11, 1992
12.	Amendment to Mandatory Recycling .....	15.....	March 8, 1994
13.	Stop Sign at E. 21 <sup>st</sup> St. and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave.....	15.....	August 8, 1995
14.	Stop Sign at North Lane and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave .....	16.....	June 25, 1996
	Stop Sign at North Lane and 5 <sup>th</sup> Ave.....	16.....	June 25, 1996
15.	Stop Sign at 5 <sup>th</sup> Ave. and E. 21 <sup>st</sup> St.....	17.....	September 9, 1997
	Stop Sign at 11 <sup>th</sup> Ave. and W. 20 <sup>th</sup> St.....	17.....	September 9, 1997
16.	Liquor License .....	18.....	July 13, 1998
17.	Stop Sign at E. 15 <sup>th</sup> St. and 9 <sup>th</sup> Ave.....	19 .....	June 9, 1998
	Stop Sign at W. 15 <sup>th</sup> St. and 9 <sup>th</sup> Ave.....	19 .....	June 9, 1998

	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>Adopted</u></b>
18.	Utilities in the Right-of-Way .....	20 .....	November 10, 1998
19.	Driveways.....	21 .....	April 12, 1999
	Amendment to Ordinance 21 – Driveway .....	???	
20.	Stop Sign at 9 <sup>th</sup> Ave. and Townline Rd. ....	22 .....	July 13, 1999
21,	Fire Protection (Rescinded 01/08/2001) .....	22 .....	November 9, 199
22.	Fire and Ambulance Protection .....	22 .....	January 8, 2001
23.	Erotic Dancing .....	23 .....	January 10, 2000
24.	Adoption of Land Use Plan .....	24 .....	March 14, 2000
25.	Wine Sales License .....	25 .....	September 13, 2000
26.	House and Building Numbering .....	23 .....	September 9, 2002
27.	Sign Damage.....	???	
28.	Telecommunications Facilities Ordinance.....	29 .....	???
29.	Haul Road Permit Ordinance.....	30 .....	???
30.	Private Driveway Access Permit.....	31 .....	???
31.	13 <sup>th</sup> Lane Speed Limit (35 MPH).....	32 .....	February 14, 2017

# Appendix B

## Listing of Town Resolutions

### TOWN OF RIB FALLS

	<u>Title</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Date</u>
1.	Mining Moratorium.....		July 12, 1982
2.	Bank Accounts .....		April 10, 1989
3.	Banking Institutions .....		April 10, 1989
4.	Construction of 13 <sup>th</sup> Lane.....		May 9, 1989
5.	Work Related Injuries .....		October 10, 1989
6.	Rib Falls Zoning .....		April 21, 1984
7.	Daniel Klockziem – Variance .....		June 8, 1993
8.	Mandatory Recycling .....		February 8, 1994
9.	Disposition of Obsolete Equipment.....		June 11, 1995
10.	Culverts .....		October 10, 1995
	Addendum No. 1: Section B, Items 4 and 5 .....		March 11, 1997
11.	Land Use Study .....		June 25, 1996
12.	Common Access .....		June 25, 1997
13.	Reconstruction of 8 <sup>th</sup> Ave.....		September 14, 1999
14.	Opposition to Electric Transmission Line .....		November 9, 1999
15.	Fire Department Contracts .....		November 9, 1999
16.	Land Use Planning Commission.....		March 14, 2000
17.	River Corridor and Cropland Acreage Requirements.....		March 14, 2000
18.	Sign Damage.....		March 14, 2000
19.	8 <sup>th</sup> Ave. Property to Baesemanns' .....		March 14, 2000
20.	Disapproval of Electric Transmission Line .....		May 9, 2000
21.	Creation of Wards .....		July 10, 2001
22.	WI DOT Highway 29 Preservation Plan .....		February 6, 2008

# **Appendix C**

## **Community Survey Results**