



Downtown Stillwater and the St. Croix River

Chapter 4 - Land Use



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Executive Summary

The overall purpose of the Land Use chapter is to protect natural, cultural, and water resources along the shoreland, stream, and riverway areas of Washington County. Additionally, the county seeks the continuation of the extraction of valuable mineral resources – while protecting the county’s adjacent land uses and natural, cultural, and water resources.

Local land use plans should help promote Washington County principles: to preserve the existing natural resources, retain existing character, and provide a high quality of life.



Background Information

Washington County land use jurisdiction has changed since the original publication of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. In 1996 and 2010, Washington County and all of the county townships prepared comprehensive plans. Because these comprehensive plans were consistent with the Metropolitan System Plan, the Metropolitan Council acknowledged they could be implemented.

As Washington County townships have grown, it became increasingly apparent that land use planning and zoning should be directed to the local unit of government – since many issues are local in nature, and the townships have the ability to regulate land use. All townships have comprehensive plans that are consistent with the regional systems, and all have zoning codes in place.

Over the course of 2014-16, Washington County staff and county commissioners met with township representatives, collaboratively reviewed land use plans, and compared zoning codes. The resulting decision determined it was in the best interest of the townships and the county for the townships to assume general land use and zoning responsibilities for their respective jurisdictions, except in those instances where the township and the county have determined that the county will continue to have the following official controls:

- Subdivision
- Lower St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Management
- Official Map
- Shoreland Management
- Mining
- Floodplain
- Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS)

Existing Conditions

Washington County's diverse land use patterns include historic rivertowns and villages along the St. Croix River, rural fringes, exurban residential communities, and growing suburban communities. These areas are interspersed with natural areas, wetlands, lakes, bluffs, and agricultural areas. The variety of developed and open space areas provides a mixture of visual landscapes unique to Washington County.

Mineral Resources

Mining is an important industry for Washington County due to the abundance of sand and gravel deposits, specifically minable bedrock and gravel. Current permitting processes in the county have been able to satisfy the demand during past high-production years, and Washington County is committed to working with the industry to maintain appropriate regulation to meet future growth needs.

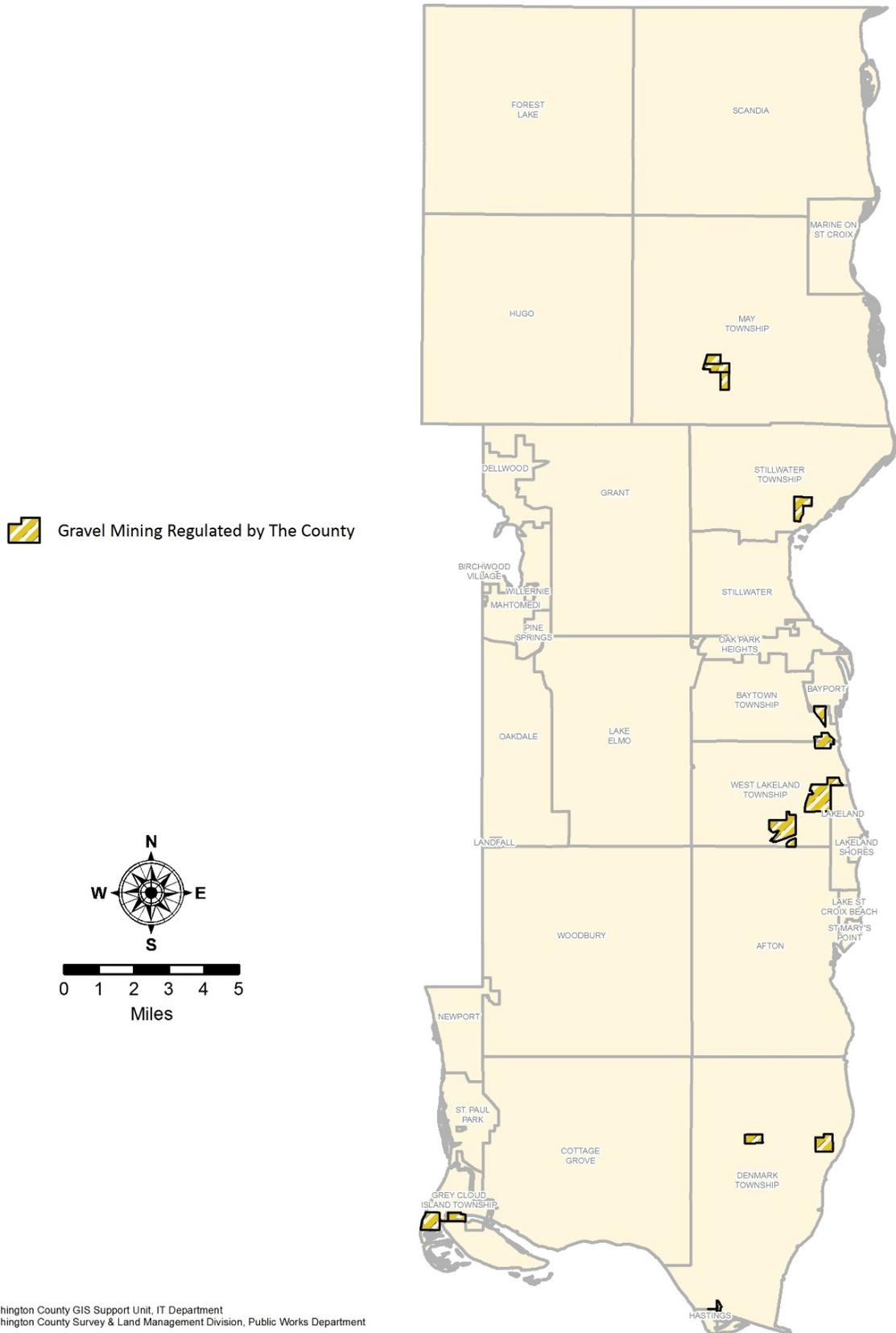
The Minnesota Legislature has directed each local government in the metropolitan area to address issues related to aggregate when such resources are present in the community.

Presently, Washington County regulates nine mining operations in Grey Cloud, Denmark, West Lakeland, Baytown, Stillwater, and May townships (see Figure 1). Other mining operations are located in the cities of Woodbury, Cottage Grove, and Scandia. Materials mined in the county include: gravel, sand, limestone, and rock. Mining activities include, but are not limited to: the recycling of used concrete, asphalt, soil, and aggregate; hot mix asphalt production; and the stockpiling and crushing of aggregate.



There is a need to provide for the economic viability of the removal and processing of sand, gravel, rock, soil, and other aggregate materials vital to the economic well-being of the region – while protecting adjacent land uses and natural resources against adverse impacts. The county will work with land owners and local communities to reserve enough potentially productive aggregate areas from development to meet long-term regional needs. All mining is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Washington County Mining Ordinance to provide for the orderly, economic, and safe removal and processing of sand, gravel, rock, and soil, including the reclamation of mined sites.

Figure 1: Washington County Mining Operations



Prepared By: Washington County GIS Support Unit, IT Department
Data Source: Washington County Survey & Land Management Division, Public Works Department

Buffer Law Implementation

In 2015, Minnesota enacted a state law aimed at enhancing the protection of Minnesota’s waters. The law is an initiative to implement an important conservation practice called a “buffer” – also known as riparian filter strips, or vegetated land adjacent to a stream, lake, or wetland. These strips of land help keep water clean by filtering out phosphorous, nitrogen, and sediment. Buffer protection maps were completed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 2016, and show all waters in the state that are subject to the new requirements.

Landowners with property within a protected area are expected to comply with the new standards, and work with local soil and water conservation districts for technical assistance, financial assistance options, or development of alternative practices for water protection on their property.

The new law specifies that buffers must be in place on all public waters by November 1, 2017, and on all public drainage systems by November 1, 2018 (see Figure 2). The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources oversees the new law, but the Washington Conservation District is the first point of contact for information about the law, or when noncompliance is identified. If a landowner fails to install buffers on identified waters, penalties may include a fine.

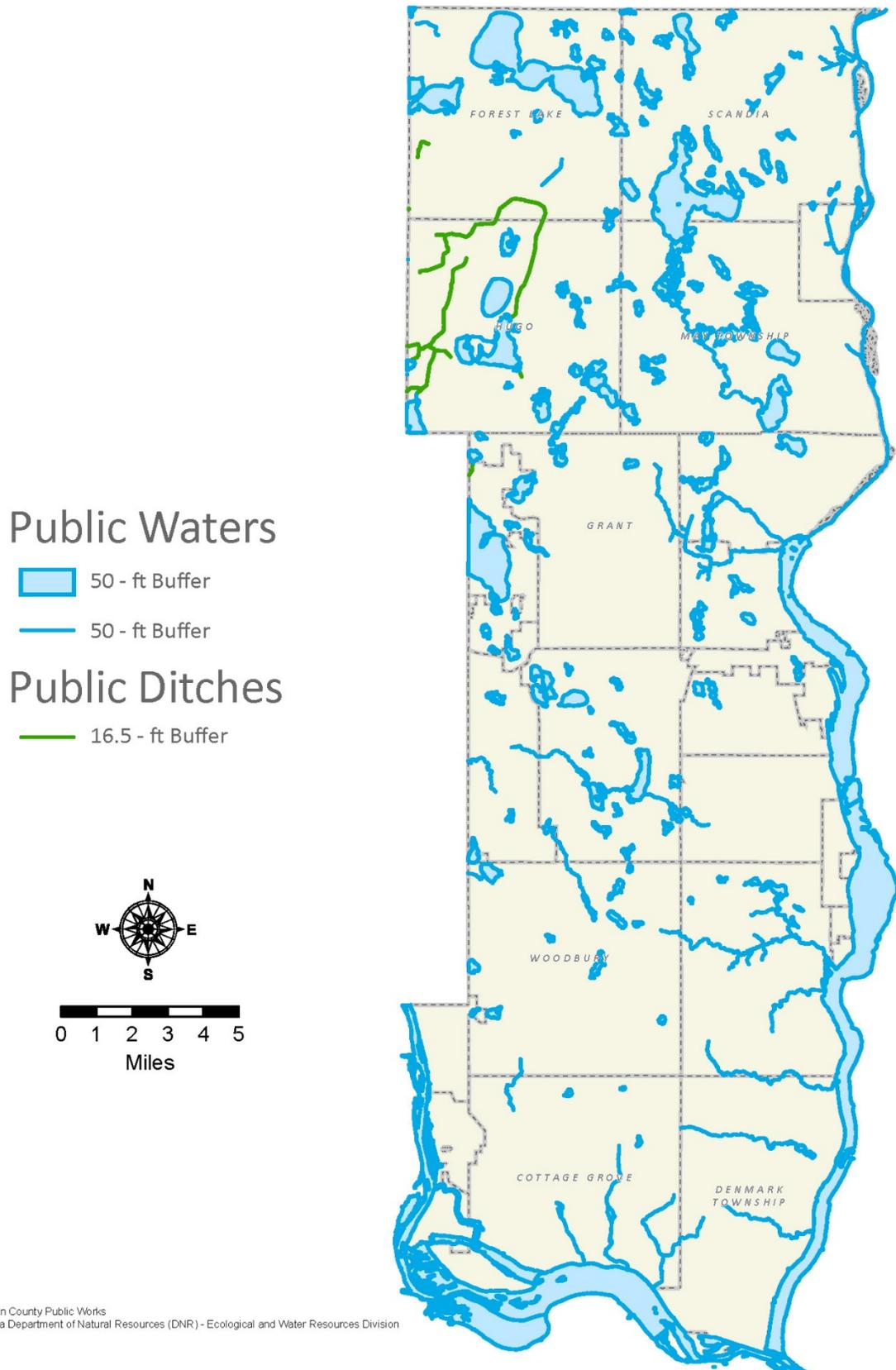
Airports

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) completed a 2035 Lake Elmo Airport Long Term Comprehensive Plan in September 2016. Major elements of the plan include relocating 30th St. N., and relocating and extending the length of the primary and crosswind runways. MAC has collaborated closely with Washington County’s plans for the relocation and connection of 30th St. N. with Neal Ave., and reflects this consideration in plan alternatives. The plan recommends identifying steps for installation of sanitary sewer and water services at the airport and conducting a cost-benefit analysis for provision of those services.

The plan notes that once the Lake Elmo Airport’s future development plan is finalized, MAC will convene a Joint Airport Zoning Board (JAZB) that will include Washington County, the City of Lake Elmo, Baytown Township, and West Lakeland Township, in order to develop an ordinance that provides a reasonable level of public safety while also facilitating compatible off-airport development.

MAC has adopted the 2035 Preferred Alternative Contours for noise. The Federal Aviation Administration requires the delineation of 70, 65, and 60 decibel noise level (DNL) contours. 55 DNL contour are also required by the Metropolitan Council for airports lying mostly outside of the Metropolitan Urban Services Area.

Figure 2: Buffer Law Protection Waters



Prepared By: Washinton County Public Works
Data Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - Ecological and Water Resources Division

Ordinances Under Washington County Jurisdiction

Shoreland Ordinance

The uncontrolled use of shorelands in Washington County affects the public health, safety, and general welfare by contributing to pollution of public waters, and potentially decreasing property value. All lands within the designated shoreland areas of lakes and rivers in the unincorporated areas of the county are governed by the Washington County Shoreland Management Ordinance.



Through the shoreland ordinance, the county regulates the subdivision, use, and development of shorelands of public waters in order to preserve and enhance the quality of surface waters, conserve the economic and natural environmental values of the shorelands, and provide for wise use of waters and related land resources. Public waters are designated as natural environment or recreational development, tributaries, transition rivers, and streams.

St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Management Ordinance

The St. Croix River, in Washington County, is part of the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The upper 10-mile stretch of river is classified as a scenic district, while the lower 42 miles from the City of Marine on St. Croix to the City of Prescott are classified as a recreational district. On average, the St. Croix Riverway District extends a quarter-mile out from the river, following the bluffline. In some communities, the Riverway boundary extends well beyond the river and in other places the Riverway boundary is very narrow. The St. Croix River is one of only 201 Wild and Scenic Rivers in North America. It is the only river in Minnesota listed under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Landowners along the river provide the stewardship of the land and water to preserve this natural treasure for future generations.

The riverway is managed jointly by the National Park Service, the Minnesota DNR, and Washington County under MN Rules chapter 6505 (6105.0351 – 6105.0550). This ordinance regulates land development and natural resource management to protect the scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational aspects of the Lower St. Croix Wild and Scenic River Corridor (see Figure 3).

The purpose of the ordinance is to:

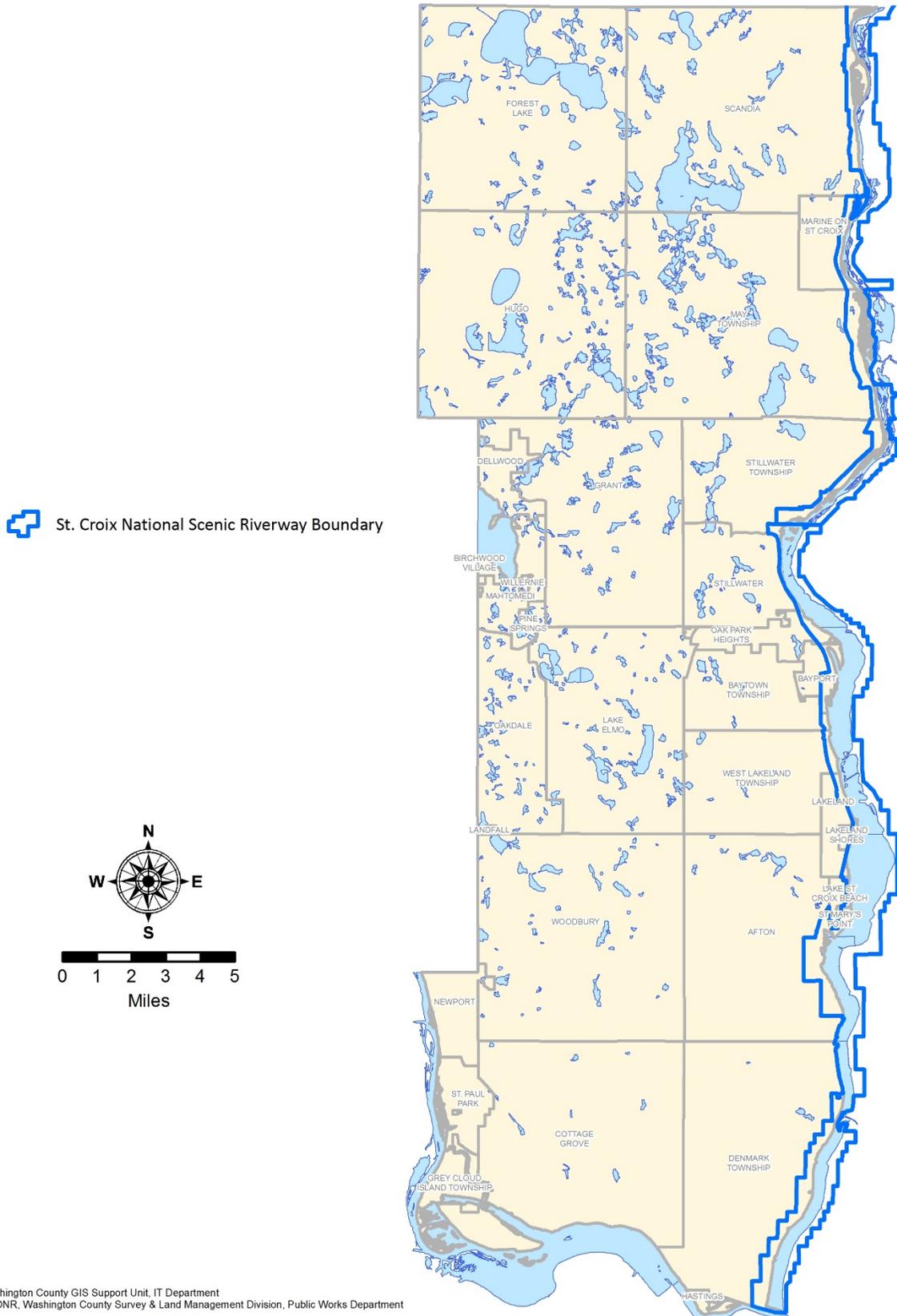
1. Designate suitable land use districts along the bluffland and shoreland of the Lower St Croix River.
2. Regulate the area of a lot, and the length of bluffland and water frontage suitable for building sites.
3. Regulate the setback of structures and sanitary waste treatment facilities from blufflines to protect the existing and/or natural scenic values, vegetation, soils, water, and bedrock from disruption by man-made structures or facilities.
4. Regulate the setback of structures and sanitary waste treatment facilities from shorelines to protect the natural scenic value, floodplain, and water quality.
5. Regulate alterations of the natural vegetation and topography.
6. Conserve and protect the natural scenic values and resources of the river valley and maintain a high standard of environmental quality to comply with Minnesota DNR Standards and Criteria for the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

Riverway regulations cover issues concerned with ordinary high water level (OHWL), building setback from bluffline, minimum lot width at building setback line, minimum lot width at water line, minimum lot size, maximum impervious surface, height of structure, water quality, vegetative management, habitat, and earth tone color requirements. Local ordinances may be more restrictive than the Riverway rules, so it is important for landowners to understand local and St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Management Ordinances before investing in plans for existing and new development.

The St. Croix River Association, in collaboration with Washington County, has developed a guide to help explain landowner regulations along the Lower St. Croix Riverway.



Figure 3: St. Croix Wild and Scenic River Corridor



Floodplain Ordinance

Washington County regulates flood hazard areas within those unincorporated areas that are subject to periodic inundation. The floodplain ordinance regulates new development as well as the extension, conversion, or structural alteration of buildings in the floodway, flood fringe, or general floodplain districts (see Figure 5). These regulations prevent or limit building or expanding structures in floodplains in order to protect public health, safety, and general welfare, and to conserve and enhance natural resources by preserving the capacity of floodplains to carry and discharge regional floods.

Washington County participates in the Flood Insurance Program. The Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Maps were updated in 2016. These maps are used by insurance companies and mortgage companies to determine the need for flood insurance on properties.



The county uses its Floodplain Ordinance to reduce the severity and extent of flooding by controlling new development as well as the extension, conversion, or structural alteration of existing structures in the Floodway, Flood Fringe, or General Floodplain Districts. Two major regulations pertain to all new development in the floodplain.

1. The minimum lowest floor elevation must be two feet above the 100-year storm event or natural outlet elevation, whichever is greater. Where this is not feasible, the landowner may provide an outlet or mitigate with other acceptable methods.
2. Prior to subdivision approval, the county requires a 100-year flood elevation to be established around all wetlands, lakes, and rivers.

Surface Water

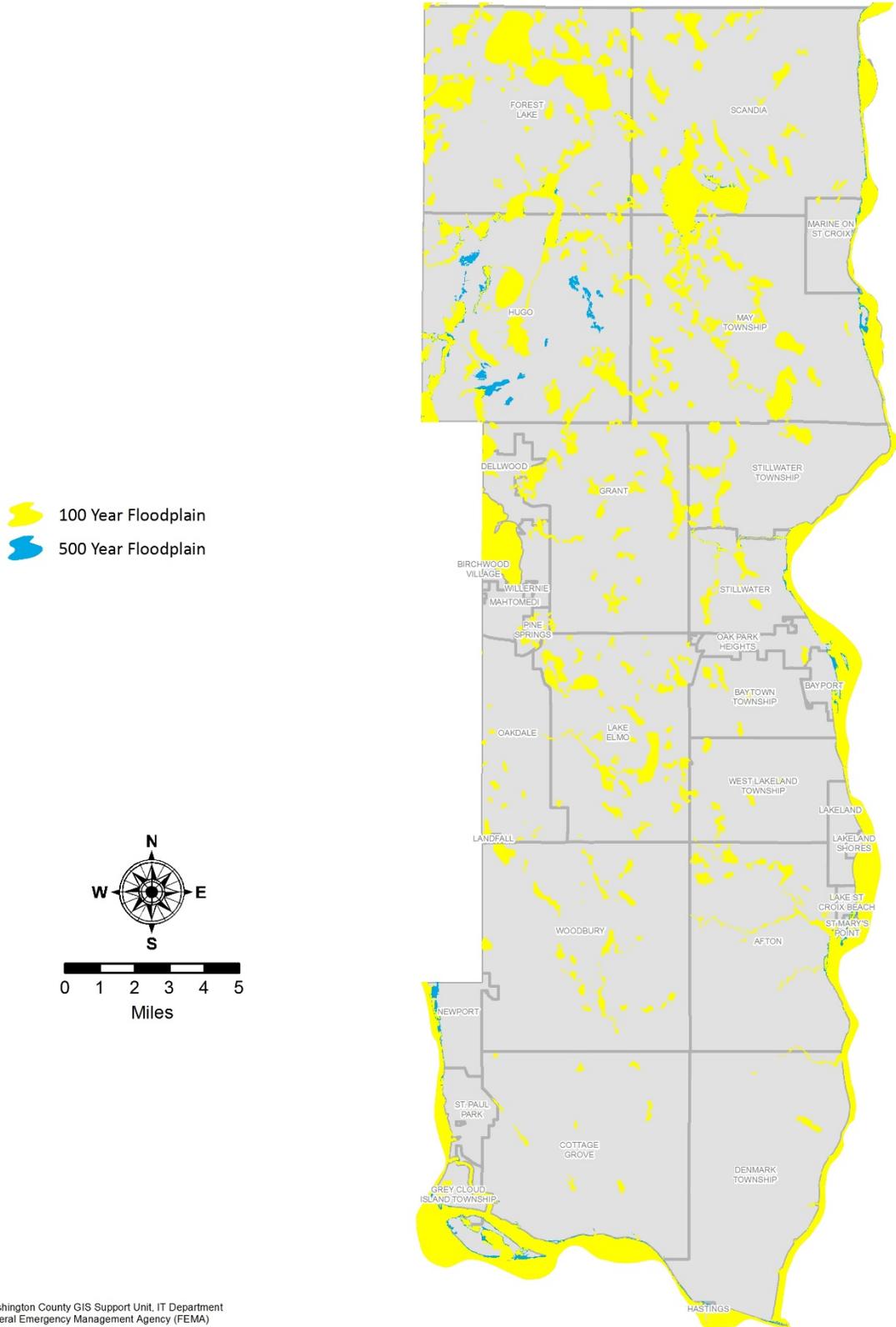
Washington County encourages local land use ordinance which directs surface water to be controlled to reduce erosion and the incidence of flooding. Land use regulations must be in place to control overland runoff, erosion of natural drainage routes and river banks, and obstruction of natural drainage.

The county strongly encourages zoning and other land use controls that will minimize point and nonpoint sources of pollution and require stormwater runoff to be treated to remove pollutants before entering surface waters. Wetlands will be used to pretreat surface water runoff. Wise and efficient use, storage, handling, and disposal of pesticides and fertilizers will be encouraged.

Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) Ordinance

This ordinance regulates the design, installation, use, and maintenance of community and subsurface sewage treatment systems to provide for orderly development of areas of the county that are not serviced by central public wastewater systems. See the Water Resource Chapter for more detail on this ordinance.

Figure 5: Washington County Floodplain Areas



Prepared By: Washington County GIS Support Unit, IT Department
Data Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Mining Ordinance

Washington County has identified mineral deposits having significant economic potential and discourages encroachment of development in those areas. All mining is conducted in accordance with the county's mining ordinance in order to provide for orderly, economic, and safe removal and processing of sand, gravel, rock, and soil and reclamation of the mined sites. Mining is allowed in commercial, agricultural, and rural residential zones through a conditional-use permit, which establishes conditions to ensure mined areas are restored to existing or planned land use patterns. This approach makes available a large number of high-quality mining sites, while not requiring excessively detailed or prescriptive exclusive use districts or overlay zones.

Official Map Ordinance

Washington County has adopted an ordinance setting up a process to allow the county to designate land needed for future public purposes such as roads, parks, and land use. The county has an ordinance adopting the official map designating the boundaries of the Big Marine Lake Regional Park.

Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) Plan

The Minnesota DNR has established districts, minimum standards, and criteria to guide land use and development within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), consistent with purpose of Minn. Stat. § 116G.15 (2015). These rules, in effect on January 4, 2017, replace Executive Order 79-19 (1973), which previously guided land use and development. The Metropolitan Council's MRCCA Plan Outline has been consulted to provide guidance for this document.



The MRCCA extends 72 miles from Anoka and Hennepin counties to the southern border of Washington County (see Figure 6). The lands and waters within the MRCCA are to be managed to conserve and protect the existing and potential recreational, scenic, natural, and historic resources and uses for the use and enjoyment of the surrounding region. Open space is to be provided in the open river valley lands for public use and the protection of unique natural and scenic resources.

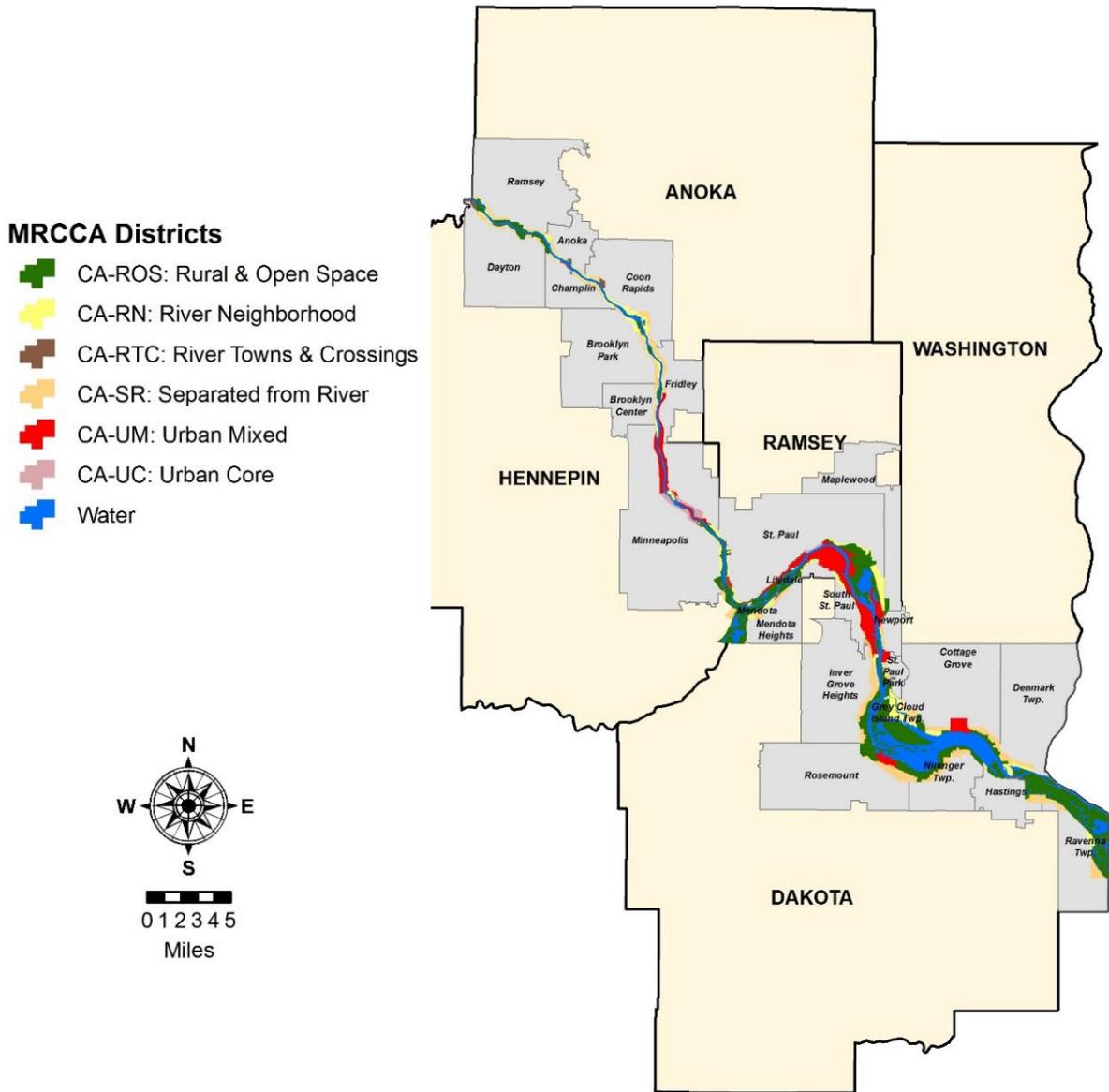
All local governments in the river corridor are required to have a plan that meets the MRCCA requirements, including the establishment of a permit program for vegetation management and land alterations in specific environmentally sensitive areas. Chapter 6 of the Washington County Development Code: Shoreland Management Ordinance, Critical Area Ordinance – does comply with the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan as well as the requirements of federal and state legislation, within 1,000 feet of the Mississippi River. Appendix F includes detailed information regarding the MRCCA and Washington County's role in conservation efforts.

Grey Cloud Island and Denmark townships are within the MRCCA and are classified as a rural and open space, river neighborhood, and separated from river districts. Washington County has land use authority in the shoreline management districts; however, Grey Cloud Island Township and Denmark Township create and administer zoning and land use plans. The shoreland area of Grey Cloud Island Township is zoned as parkland and rural residential. River terraces in this area include bluffs and steep slopes and floodplain that form narrow

corridors along the river and backwater lakes, greatly limiting the development potential. In Denmark Township, the best sites for rural residential development within the MRCCA are already developed. The remaining areas lack good road access or have steep slopes that limit their development potential.

Washington County will continue to collaboratively work in coordination with the townships of Grey Cloud Island and Denmark.

Figure 6: MRCCA Boundary



Prepared By: Washington County GIS Support Unit, IT Department
 Data Source: MN Department of Natural Resources

Historic and Cultural Resources

Summary

Washington County, Minnesota, was originally organized as part of the Wisconsin Territory from 1836-1849. It was one of the nine original counties created in the new Minnesota Territory (organized in 1849) and was named for George Washington, first President of the United States. It was in Washington County on May 11, 1858, that the State of Minnesota had its beginning as the 32nd state. Some of the state's oldest cities and towns are located in Washington County.

Washington County's long history has evolved through many eras including Native American habitation, early exploration and fur trade, territorial government and settlement, lumbering, navigation, agriculture, tourism, and suburban housing. Many properties, buildings, and landscapes from these eras remain today. Washington County has been the subject of a number of pre-settlement and archaeological studies and reports, especially in Grey Cloud Island Township and Cottage Grove.

Washington County is home to some of the state's most successful historic preservation programs and restoration projects. The county relies on the efforts of individuals, communities, and the State Historic Preservation Office to assess cultural resources. Federal, state, tribal, and local partnerships work to protect historic properties. This section calls particular attention to historic and cultural resources within Washington County jurisdiction – locations along county roadways, the protected St. Croix Scenic Riverway, or shoreline districts.

Forty-two properties and four districts within Washington County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, 137 known archaeological sites are protected by the Office of the State Archaeologist and one cemetery is protected through the Minnesota Private Cemetery Act. Washington County owns and operates the Washington County Historic Courthouse, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as the oldest standing courthouse in Minnesota.

Washington County does not have a formal historic preservation commission or historic preservation ordinance that regulates historic structures, sites, or districts. However, the county strives to preserve and enhance the character of historic villages and rural areas through its land development process in unincorporated areas. Also, the county evaluates the potential impact on historical and archaeological resources of its capital projects and attempts to avoid or mitigate any potential impacts.

Existing Conditions

Washington County Historic Courthouse - A National Register Site

Washington County owns and operates the Washington County Historic Courthouse, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as the oldest standing courthouse in Minnesota. The purpose of the Historic Courthouse is to preserve, re-adapt, restore, and interpret this historic landmark for current and future generations. This is accomplished through programs and community events that foster knowledge and appreciation of the county's heritage. [<link to Historic Courthouse section in Parks chapter>](#). Please see the *'Parks, Trails, and Open Space'* chapter for information on the Historic Courthouse's role in the parks system and the *'Goals and Policies'* chapter for policies and strategies that will guide the facility's future.

Historic Resources Protection Framework

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historic properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of preservation for their significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historical and archaeological heritage. The National Park Service administers the program under the Secretary of the Interior. Listing in the National Register is the first step towards eligibility for National Park Service administered federal preservation tax credits and National Park Service grant programs like Save America's Treasures and Preserve America. National Register sites include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that meet specific criteria.

Properties of national, state, or local significance under private or local/state government ownership may be nominated to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing in the National Register does not mean that the federal government will acquire the property, place restrictive covenants on the land, or dictate the color or materials used on individual buildings. State and local ordinances, local historical commissions, or laws establishing restrictive zoning, special design review committees, or review of exterior alterations, are also not required as part of the National Register recognition.

National Park Service – Secretary of the Interior Standards

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all programs under departmental authority and for advising federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The intent of the ten standards for rehabilitation projects are to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. The standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and interior of the buildings. They also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. Washington County projects that involve districts or properties on the National Register of Historic Places follow National Park Service Guidelines for treatment of cultural landscapes.

State Historic Preservation Office

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 also provided for a network of historic preservation offices in every state to help carry out the nation's historic preservation program. State statute in 1969 created Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to provide statewide leadership. The act requires agencies to protect the physical features and historical character of properties listed on the National Register to seek ways to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on listed properties before carrying out any undertaking, funding, or licensing an undertaking by other parties. The director of the Minnesota Historical Society serves as State Historic Preservation Officer. The SHPO fulfills its mission to preserve and promote Minnesota history by working to identify, evaluate, register, and protect Minnesota's historic and archaeological properties; encouraging the development of local history organizations and activities; and assisting government agencies in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities. The SHPO has a program whereby it empowers local groups to more effectively protect historic features. A county, city, or township with a qualifying heritage preservation ordinance and heritage preservation commission may apply to SHPO to become a Certified Local

Government (CLG). CLG status enables the local government to apply for federal matching grants to preserve historic properties. This local-state-federal partnership encourages the integration of historic preservation into local government policy.

Archaeological Sites

The Field Archaeology Act of 1963 created the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) to protect known or suspected archaeological sites on non-federal, publicly-owned, or leased land or waters, or on land or waters affected by publicly-funded projects. Among its many duties, the OSA is charged with sponsoring, conducting, and directing research into the prehistoric and historic archaeology of Minnesota; protecting and preserving archaeological sites and objects; disseminating archaeological information through the publication of reports and articles; identifying, authenticating, and protecting human burial sites; reviewing and licensing archaeological fieldwork conducted within the state; and enforcing provisions.

Cemeteries

Minnesota's Private Cemeteries Act (M.S. Chapter 307.08) affords all human remains and burials older than 50 years, and located outside of platted, recorded, or identified cemeteries, protection from unauthorized disturbance. This statute applies to burials on either public or private lands or waters.

Federal Section 106 and State Historic Preservation Requirements

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires consideration of the effects of federal, federally-licensed, and federally-assisted projects on historic properties listed on or determined eligible for the National Register. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency, guides this consultation process which is intended to assure that the value of the historic property is considered in project planning.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 138 requires that state departments and agencies protect the physical features and historical character of properties listed in the National Register by consulting with the Minnesota Historical Society to determine appropriate treatments and seek ways to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on listed properties before carrying out any undertaking, funding, or licensing an undertaking by other parties.

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board rules require preparation of an environmental assessment worksheet by the responsible unit of government for any proposed demolition of a property listed on the National Register. Privately funded new construction is not reviewed for impact on historic resources, unless located within the St. Croix Scenic Riverway.

The county is prepared to coordinate with the SHPO and the OSA for plans involving new construction and reconstruction of any county facility. In some cases, the county may need to conduct archaeological and historical investigations prior to commencing a project.

The county currently gathers site-specific historical data for environmental assessments and Section 106 reviews on sites proposed to be impacted by a county capital project, and attempts to avoid or mitigate the impacts to historic structures as much as possible. Some recent studies conducted as part of the environmental and Section 106 review processes provided excellent in-depth survey and analysis of archaeological and/or architectural resources. These include CSAH 18 – East/West in the City of Afton (2010), Hardwood Creek Trail Extension in the City of Hugo (2013), CSAH 4 Improvement Project – Ostrum Trail North/Broadway Street in Marine of St. Croix (2016), and CSAH 18/21 – Downtown Afton (2017).

Washington County Historic Sites

National Register of Historic Places

Forty-four individual properties and four districts within Washington County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These are shown on Figure 7 and are described in Appendix G. An additional 22 properties have been evaluated for National Register eligibility by either the SHPO or the National Park Service but are not officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Archaeological Sites

A database of the state's identified archaeological sites, maintained by the OSA, contains 137 archaeological sites located in Washington County.

Cemeteries

Washington County operates one cemetery that is protected under the Private Cemeteries Act. The cemetery is located in a regional park.

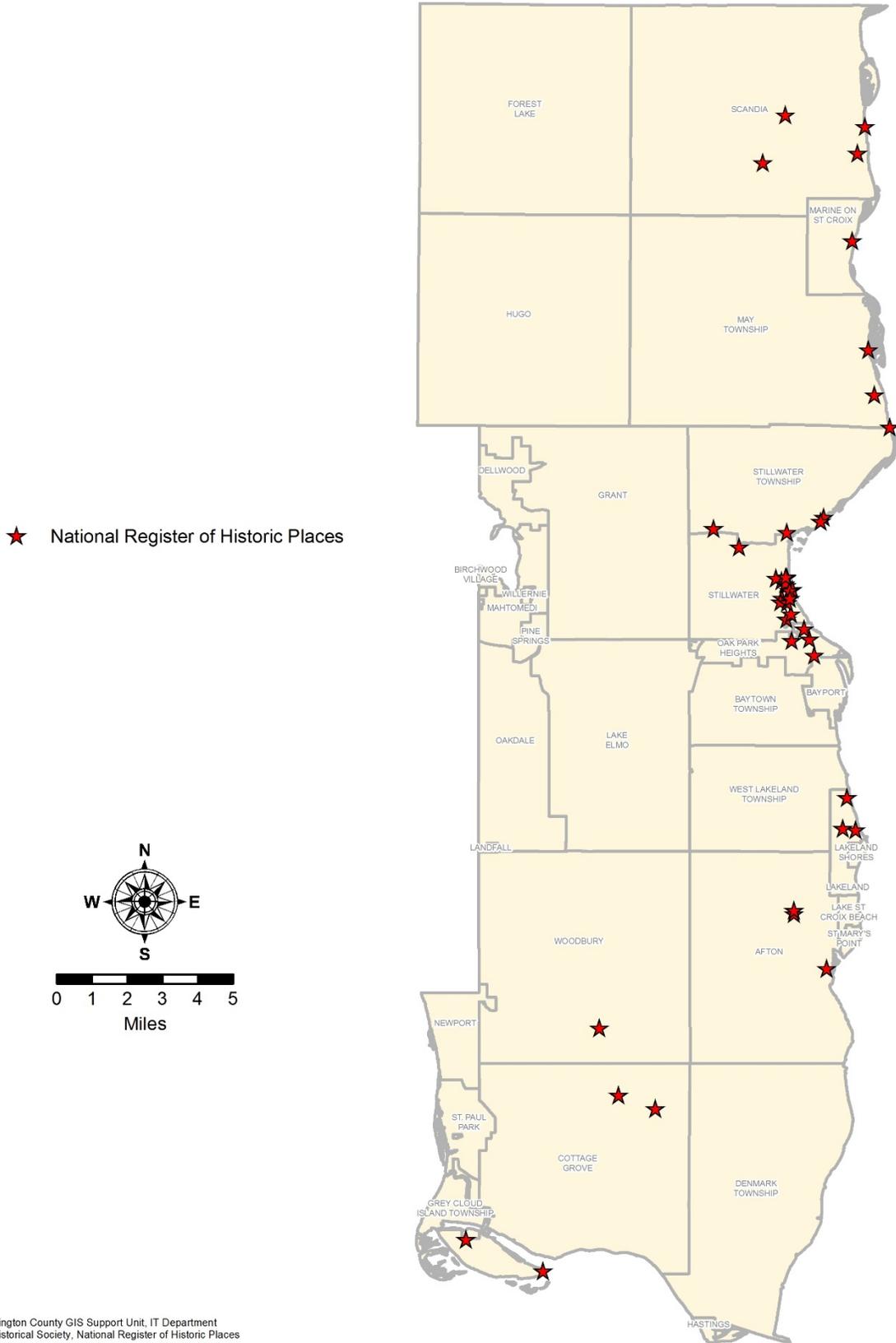
Other Historic Sites

The SHPO has compiled a database of 2,303 sites in Washington County that meet the state standards as a place of historical significance. Appendix H contains a list of the number of sites by community. Documentation on the sites varies from detailed investigations to windshield surveys from the late 1970s.

In addition, the Washington County History Network, a group of volunteers who are interested in history, has compiled a database of 502 historic sites in the county.

The SHPO and Washington County History Network databases have strong coverage in different areas of the county, with some overlap. The SHPO database offers thorough coverage for the Cottage Grove and Stillwater areas, while the History Network database has a stronger focus on Afton, Woodbury, Marine on St. Croix, and Scandia.

Figure 7: National Register of Historic Places Locations in Washington County Map



Prepared By: Washington County GIS Support Unit, IT Department
 Data Source: MN Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places

Washington County Historic Contexts

Washington County, with funding from the St. Croix Community Foundation, conducted a historic contexts study in 1999 to create a framework for preservation planning in the county. The study was intended to assist communities and the county in determining the appropriate historic preservation roles and priorities. The study incorporated a number of existing inventories and reports.

Historic contexts, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation Planning, provide frames of reference that establish the relative significance of cultural resources, and provide a framework for making management decisions about the resources. Historic contexts group information about related types of properties based on a common theme, a defined geographical area, and a specific and defined chronological period. Historic contexts can be developed at any scale, from a single neighborhood to a county or state. Each context includes a narrative describing the general history and characteristics of the context and a list describing the general types of properties that can be expected to be associated with the context. Further, to localize the broad contexts for each community, the study contains a brief history and recommendations for further planning and assessment.

The Historic Contexts Study described the following historic contexts for Washington County:

1. Townsite Development: 1849 –1965.
2. Immigration and Ethnicity: 1838 –1920.
3. County and Township Government and Public Education: 1840 –1960.
4. Tourism and Recreation: 1849 –1969.
5. Agriculture: 1840 –1960.

Washington County is included in three statewide historic contexts:

1. Railroads and Agricultural Development: 1870 –1940.
2. St. Croix Triangle Lumbering: 1830s –1900s.
3. Minnesota’s Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions: 1870 –1945.

These historic contexts describe aspects of Washington County’s broadest patterns of development from permanent white settlement in the late 1830s to approximately 1960. Sections on European exploration as well as an overview of suburban growth, transportation, and housing trends in the period 1960–2000 are also included. Some historic contexts, such as the lumber industry, have strong historical narratives but relatively few remaining buildings. Historic contexts, such as agriculture, are applicable to all communities, while tourism and recreation apply primarily to river and lakeshore areas. Some buildings, sites, areas, and communities are included in more than one context.



Historic context studies and preservation planning typically precede more detailed inventory efforts. The National Register and Local Preservation Planning National Register nominations have been prepared for a number of historic properties around the county, most notably in the cities of Stillwater and Marine on St. Croix, where there are historic districts. In 1977, the State Historic Preservation Office conducted a countywide reconnaissance level inventory, which resulted in a multiple property nomination to the National Register.

Local Historic Preservation Activities

Washington County Historical Society

The Washington County Historical Society (WCHS), founded on April 11, 1934, is a private, non-profit educational institution organized to investigate and study the history of Washington County and the State of Minnesota. In doing so, the WCHS:

- Operates two interpretive museums showcasing county heritage.
- Provides educational programs to schools and to the public.
- Assists researchers to document their own, county, and state history.
- Provides expertise to help community groups conserve collections and produce exhibits.
- Investigates and publishes county history.
- Collects and preserves cultural artifacts and documents for future generations.
- Showcases county history through exhibits and displays throughout the county.

The WCHS owns and operates four historic sites; three are buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1. In 1941, the WCHS purchased the Warden's House Museum in Stillwater from the State of Minnesota. It is one of the state's oldest buildings as well as its second oldest continuously operating house museum. The society's research library is now housed in the reconstructed carriage house behind the Warden's House Museum.
2. In 1974, the WCHS leased the Hay Lake School for a museum and, in 1978, purchased it from the Forest Lake School District.
3. In the early 1980s, the Johannes Erickson Log House, adjacent to the Hay Lake School, was donated to the WCHS. It was moved to the Hay Lake School site and restored.
4. In 1978, the WCHS purchased the historic family-owned Boutwell Cemetery west of Stillwater.

Washington County History Network

Most communities do not have current historic property inventories. The amount of local designation and review of building permits for alterations to historic properties varies among the communities. The communities that do have active historic preservation efforts work together as part of the Washington County History Network to promote and support county history with events, brochures, and publications.

The cities of Stillwater, Cottage Grove, and Newport have active Heritage Preservation Commissions and participate in the CLG Program. These communities have been the subject of a number of inventories and historic context studies.

Communities such as Woodbury, Lake Elmo, Afton, Oakdale, Scandia, Mahtomedi, and Denmark Township have historical organizations but no ordinances or other tools to assist in preserving privately-owned historic and cultural resources.

Historic Resources Plan

Washington County has a particularly important role in preserving part of Minnesota's early history in its work as the owner of the state's first courthouse. Historic preservation is also an important element in the county's plans for stewardship related to shoreline and scenic riverway protections, transportation, transit, parks, facilities, accessibility, and access to trail systems. Rehabilitating old buildings instead of demolishing them has important social as well as environmental benefits. Historic preservation can provide educational opportunities allowing new generations to see evidence of previous economies, landscapes, buildings, and social patterns.



Goals, Policies, and Strategies

To guide future decision making and county actions, goals, policies and strategies have been developed specific to the land use element. The following pages outline four goals with corresponding policies and strategies that set the course for the county’s future. Chapter 3, Goals, Polices, and Strategies, also provides the information contained within this section, along with the goals for the other plan elements. Chapter 11, Implementation, provides tools that can be utilized while working to achieve these goals.

Land Use Goal 1: Utilize land and related natural, cultural, and water resources in the shoreland and riverways, so they are conserved for future generations.	
Land Use Policy	Land Use Strategy
Regulate land use for the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Washington County.	Maintain land use regulations that provide for the orderly growth and renewal of the county; allow wise use of the land; protect and conserve the county’s natural resources and ecological systems; and provide for economic stability.
Promote the proper management of natural, historic, and cultural resources for future generations.	Collaborate with other agencies to implement a variety of strategies to protect the groundwater and surface water quality, and sensitive natural features such as wetlands, steep slopes, and native plant communities when making land use decisions.
	Where practical, encourage the extension of sewer and water lines to well advisory areas and areas that have been identified with groundwater contamination.
	Protect groundwater through the Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance.
	Plan land use patterns that will facilitate groundwater recharge to protect the region’s water supply.
	Follow the Lower St. Croix Riverway land development regulations.
	Observe present floodplain rules while anticipating reduced assistance for flood protection.
	Identify, acknowledge, and seek alternatives to preserve, rehabilitate, and restore important cultural or historic sites, structures, and landscapes during the development process.
	Collaborate with local governments and watershed management organizations when setting their policies and regulations and when making land use decisions.
	Follow the policies and strategies contained in the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Plan Chapter.

<p>Support the preservation of natural and open landscapes of the county’s rural areas.</p>	<p>Support township land use regulations that allow open space developments whereby residential structures are clustered on small lots, leaving some land undivided for common use by all residents of the development, for lease to a farmer, or for conveyance to a public or a conservancy organization.</p>
	<p>Require adequate buffers from mining operations in order to preserve viewsheds from road corridors.</p>
	<p>Support programs to promote and manage roads that have significant scenic and/or historic value.</p>
	<p>Promote sensitive road design, bicycle-facility planning, signage, and regulations addressing building setbacks, site planning, and clearcutting along roadways designated as scenic.</p>
	<p>Encourage communities to identify important natural areas that will be preserved during the development process.</p>
<p>Conserve long-term land use options.</p>	<p>Regulate land uses and densities adjacent to developing communities to preserve the option for future urban development.</p>
	<p>Gradually expand the urban service area to meet demand.</p>
	<p>Support staged growth areas within communities, orderly annexation agreements, and joint powers agreements developed cooperatively between cities and townships in defined future metropolitan urban service areas.</p>
<p>Encourage sustainable agriculture as a land use and a viable economic activity in the county.</p>	<p>Encourage land use regulations that allow agricultural uses, particularly in prime farmland areas.</p>
	<p>Encourage land use regulations that locate incompatible uses away from agricultural areas to minimize conflicts.</p>
	<p>Take actions to ensure farmers’ abilities to maintain their farms and to provide a variety of farming opportunities.</p>
	<p>Support using sound scientific methods to assess agriculture and turf management impacts to groundwater resources and to develop education and best management practices programs.</p>
<p>Help maintain financially healthy governments through the wise planning of land and public facilities such as roads, parks, trails, and buildings.</p>	<p>Encourage communities to request expansions of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area in a gradual manner based upon analyses of available land, forecasted growth, and the capacity of regional systems.</p>
	<p>Encourage low development densities in rural areas not served by public waste treatment facilities, so as to preclude the need for untimely extension of public sewer or water lines.</p>
	<p>Coordinate county road improvement plans and land uses.</p>
	<p>Provide access to the county road system according to the county access standards.</p>

<p>Help maintain financially healthy governments through the wise planning of land and public facilities such as roads, parks, trails, and buildings. (Continued)</p>	<p>During the subdivision and development review process, identify, dedicate, or acquire future trail easements if they are identified on the county master plan system or provide a community link.</p>
	<p>Coordinate the Recreation and Open Space System Plan (see Chapter 7) with land uses and recreational facilities in local communities.</p>
	<p>Plan and site county facilities (e.g., service centers, libraries, roads, and parks) to support designated land uses.</p>
	<p>When possible, identify potential mining sites, and ensure county regulation does not preclude the feasibility of mining as a use.</p>
<p>Land Use Goal 2: Support the growth of attractive urban communities while preserving rural functions and appearances.</p>	
<p>Land Use Policy</p>	<p>Land Use Strategy</p>
<p>Foster a low-density, truly rural land use pattern in areas without public sewer and water.</p>	<p>Support the extension of utilities and expansion of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area to strategically influence development patterns and safeguard the region’s rural character.</p>
<p>Encourage transit-oriented development (TOD), pedestrian-oriented, neotraditional, suburban-style growth that uses land in an efficient manner in locations that connect to transportation and transit systems.</p>	<p>Encourage communities to adopt higher densities and mixed land uses within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area that support multimodal transportation, transit-oriented development.</p>
	<p>Encourage communities to revitalize or expand traditional commercial districts in keeping with their present function and appearance.</p>
	<p>Encourage communities to approve developments that have a pedestrian orientation, civic focus, and preserve historic structures and districts.</p>
	<p>Encourage communities to keep local streets interconnected and relatively narrow so as to disperse and slow traffic.</p>
	<p>Encourage communities to efficiently reuse land through infill development, rehabilitation, and selective redevelopment.</p>
	<p>Review future planned land use designations to ensure that options for high-density development in the county’s planned transitways, transit corridors, and nodes are retained.</p>
<p>Recognize and plan for the county's share of metropolitan growth.</p>	<p>Encourage communities within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area to plan for staged, serviced residential, commercial, and industrial growth to the limits of the area.</p>

<p>Promote land uses throughout the county that encourage active and sustainable living.</p>	<p>Encourage cities to plan residential, commercial, office, and industrial developments that support transit, especially along identified transit corridors.</p>
	<p>Encourage cities and developers to create development patterns, including mixed land uses that provide good pedestrian and non-motorized circulation to provide the opportunities for residents to be more physically active.</p>
<p>Encourage land uses that promote a full spectrum of life cycle housing types for all incomes, ages, and races.</p>	
<p>Land Use Goal 3: Design the land use plan to support economic development.</p>	
<p>Land Use Policy</p>	<p>Land Use Strategy</p>
<p>Locate commercial and industrial growth where urban services are available; continue to prohibit commercial and industrial land use in unsewered areas.</p>	<p>Zone commercial and industrial development in areas with urban services and with access to transportation systems capable of supporting the land uses.</p>
	<p>Encourage the extension of sanitary sewer lines and water mains to previously unserved areas in order to accommodate imminent demand for office, industrial, retail, or service businesses that appear to have potential for significant numbers of jobs and increases in the tax base.</p>
<p>Promote commercial and industrial development in planned clusters such as business parks and mixed-use developments.</p>	<p>Review the Development Code to ensure that it allows for this type of development.</p>
<p>Provide for the removal and processing of sand and gravel, rock, soil, and other aggregate materials vital to the economic well-being of the region, while protecting adjacent land uses from adverse impacts.</p>	<p>Administer the Washington County Mining Regulations.</p>
<p>Support land use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, transportation, transit, and retail and commercial centers.</p>	<p>Support development that accommodates non-motorized travel and provides connections to housing, services, jobs, and open space.</p>

Land Use Goal 4: Work to retain important historic contexts and features, including structures, landscapes, archaeological sites, and pedestrian-oriented village development patterns.	
Land Use Policy	Land Use Strategy
Continue to acknowledge the county’s history when planning, preserving, and developing its infrastructure.	Through the environmental review and Section 106 process, follow state and federal laws in protecting historic sites on the Historic Register when designing and siting county sponsored projects such as facilities, roads, parks, and other physical structures. Avoid impacts where possible and mitigate where not.
	Be sensitive to sites that are not on the National Register but which are historically important locally or are locally designated. Review and update landscaping and maintenance work to include historically-accurate plantings and design features to accommodate use of the grounds by public and private clients.
	Use information from the Washington County Historic Contexts Study, as well as state and local contexts, as a baseline for evaluating properties.
	Use historical information and assessments in county planning processes.
	Investigate opportunities to identify and interpret historic Native American activities in the Washington County park system.
Continue to preserve natural, scenic, open, and agricultural landscapes and encourage preservation of historic sites through land planning activities.	Encourage low-density housing development and site new houses carefully through lot averaging and open space design developments.
	Advocate development that is in keeping with historic town land use patterns.
	Encourage open space developments as a way to preserve historic landscapes.
	Analyze the impact on historical resources during the development process.
	Encourage local governments and others to preserve significant historic sites, such as churches, residences, industrial sites, bridges, railroad depots, archaeological sites, and landscapes.
Provide stewardship of county-owned historic properties.	Consider public and private funding sources to adequately maintain the county’s historic properties.
	Identify opportunities to acquire, preserve, rehabilitate, or restore important cultural or historic sites, structures, and landscapes.
Collaborate with the Washington County Historical Society, cities, and others to promote and interpret county history with events and public information.	Support the interpretation of historic structures and contexts located in county parks.
	Include a historic preservation and stewardship component in all Washington County park master plans.
	Investigate a county signage program along county roads and trails to identify and/or interpret historic sites.
	Continue supporting activities at the Washington County Historic Courthouse that foster knowledge and appreciation of the county’s heritage.

Provide information on historic sites to the appropriate organization as surveys and information are available.	Work with the State Historical Preservation Office and local history groups to maintain and provide information on historic sites.
	Help provide information to aid historic preservation.
	Document and evaluate the historical aspects of county owned properties as part of maintenance and development plans.
Encourage communities to preserve historic properties through their planning and preservation efforts.	