

Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and
Development (RC&D) Council, Inc.

AREA PLAN

December 2007 – November 2012

All programs and assistance of the Southwest Badger RC&D Council, Inc. are available without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, marital or family status, political beliefs, sexual orientation or disability.

INTRODUCTION

Our Area Plan is a 5-year guideline which assists the Southwest Badger RC&D Council focus on strengthening its council by implementing natural resource conservation, managed growth and sustainable rural economic development. The Area Plan identifies problems and opportunities which lead to the development of goals and objectives, which helps direct the Council in its work. Information leading to the development of the Area Plan was solicited through a public participation process from over 100 people who interact at various levels with Southwest Badger RC&D, including (but not limited to) Council members, Committee members, sponsors and at-large members.

The efforts of Southwest Badger RC&D Council, Inc. are vital to realizing an improved quality of life in southwest Wisconsin and this Area Plan serves as a concise, accurate and useful focal point that stimulates the Council into productive leadership.

Established in 1992, Southwest Badger RC&D Council, Inc. is a 501(c) (3), not for profit organization that addresses natural resource conservation and development issues in the nine Southwest Wisconsin counties of Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk and Vernon.

VISION

The incubator for innovative, economic, and sustainable use of local resources in the Southwest Badger area.

MISSION

Implement natural resource conservation, managed growth, and sustainable rural economic development in Grant, Green, Iowa, La Crosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk and Vernon Counties.

Needs & Opportunities

Needs are “undesirable conditions with some type of damage occurring;” opportunities are “chances to improve an existing condition”.

Land Conservation

Need: Reduce excessive erosion occurring from cropland, gulley and streambank erosion

Opportunity: Assist our partners in maintaining and increasing conservation staff

Opportunity: Promote perennial crops, cover crops and sustainable farming practices

Opportunity: Work with farm organizations to make conservation a priority

Opportunity: Apply for federal funds to implement large scale watershed projects

Opportunity: Develop a GIS based targeting system that targets priority areas on a field basis rather than watershed

Need: Reduce the environmental impacts of increased cash grain production

Opportunity: Promote and develop markets for perennial crops

Opportunity: Build interest in using biomass crops for bioenergy and renewable fuels

Opportunity: Accelerate the development of celulosic ethanol production

Need: Better education for farmers and general public on conservation problems, issues and solutions

Opportunity: Partner with farm and conservation organizations to develop forums and workshops

Opportunity: Develop a media plan to get the conservation message out

Opportunity: Target high school environmental education programs as an avenue to educate our youth on problems and solutions

Opportunity: Staff an environmental educator

Need: More conservation staff, watershed projects and general technical assistance to farmers

Need: Environmentally Friendly Economically Viable Farming Systems

Need: Address the decline in bonified farmers and the conversion of Ag land to other uses

Water Management

Need: Reduce impacts to surface and groundwater quality from Agricultural Operations

Need: Reduce degradation occurring to our rivers, streams, wetlands & lakes

Community Development

Need: Utilize renewable energy that is sustainable and environmentally sound

Opportunity: Apply for grants to apply new technology

Opportunity: Work with legislators to develop bills that address renewable energy

Opportunity: Publicize innovative businesses in the Midwest that are successfully utilizing green energy in their operations

Land Management

Need: Stop the spread of forest, grassland and aquatic invasive species

Opportunity: Secure funding to staff specialist's to work one-on-one with landowners

Opportunity: Develop the regional capacity to deliver one-on-one technical assistance for invasive species issues to landowners across the Southwest Badger area

Opportunity: Work with partners to form Weed Management Areas

Opportunity: Hold field days and develop press releases to increase awareness

Opportunities: Develop a monitoring program to identify large infestations and their rate of spread

Need: Reduce urban sprawl and the fragmentation of farmland, forest and wildlife habitat

Opportunity: Develop information and education programs targeting developers, town board officials, absentee landowners and the general public

Opportunity: Provide resource data to townships on prime farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors

Opportunity: Promote USDA protection programs such as Farmland Preservation Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and perpetual easements through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Opportunity: Help our conservation partners to secure funding for staff dedicated to land preservation

Need: Better forest management especially on a landscape scale

Opportunity: Work to strengthen existing forest landowner organization and build new ones where needed

Opportunity: Pursue funding for more forestry staff

Opportunity: Develop markets for low grade material generated through timber stand improvement practices

Opportunity: Develop information and education programs on forest management

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Element: Water Management

Goal 1: Protect, preserve, and restore land, water and related resources, to assure the quality of the natural resource base for future generations

Objective: Secure a million dollars in conservation funding by 2012

Strategies:

- Provide leadership and funding assistance to counties and watershed based organizations in the Southwest Badger Area
- Provide administrative and technical assistance to the Driftless Area Initiative
- Provide administrative and technical assistance to the Platte River Coalition

Objective: 7,500 acres of woodland and oak savanna improved through planning and management

Strategies:

- Seek continued funding for Southwest Badger Forester
- Develop the regional capacity to provide technical assistance on invasive species issues.
- Seek funding for Invasive species staff
- Hold regional field days and workshops

Objective: 10,000 acres of grassland, grazing land and farmland improved for diversity and productivity

Strategies:

- Seek continued funding for Grazing Specialist
- Seek continued funding for Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area Coordinator
- Hold pasture walks annually to encourage rotational grazing
- Implement agroforestry demonstrations and field days

Objective: Provide training opportunities for 1,000 landowners and resource professionals

Strategies:

- Hold a minimum of 3 field days or workshops annually
- Assist partnering agencies and organizations with field days, demonstrations, and workshops
- Conduct presentations and staff informational booths at local/regional meetings and conferences

Element: Community Development

Goal 2: Support development and enhancement of the local economy through wise use of local resources to improve the standard of living and provide adequate incomes for area residents

Objective: Ten new businesses started as a result of RC&D assistance

Strategies:

- Hold Agricultural Entrepreneur and other business development workshops
- Work with partners to assist entrepreneurs with business start-up
- Serve an active role on the Emerging Agricultural Markets Team & local food networks

Objective: Work with RC&D partners to create, expand or diversify 20 agricultural based Businesses

Strategies:

- Promote farm fresh/local foods
- Develop beginning farmer programs
- Continue the Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative
- Hold workshops on how to develop winning proposals

Element: Land Management

Goal 3: Be a Leader in the Development of Renewable Energy Sources that are Sustainable and Environmentally Sound

Objective: Assist with the implementation of two new bio-based industries by 2012

Strategies:

- Apply for State and Federal renewable energy grants to apply new technologies
- Assist landowners and businesses with the development of grant proposals for renewable energy projects
- Work with existing renewable energy business parks to recruit new tenants

Objective: Identify sources of readily available biomass feedstock's that can be sustainably harvested in an affordable manner

Strategies:

- Develop grant proposals to fund county specific projects
- Implement the Biomass Inventory and Analysis Project
- Pursue funding for county biomass audits
- Assist with the development of biomass aggregators

Objective: Implement biomass planting, harvesting and processing demonstrations at 10 sites

Strategies:

- Pursue funding for Warm Season Grass Biomass Trials
- Implement the True Cost of Harvesting Woody Biomass in the Driftless Area Project

Element: Community Development

Goal 4: Support the enhancement of southwest Wisconsin to maintain and improve this area as an attractive, healthful, safe, and satisfying place to live, visit, work and play

Objective: Work with Southwest WI Communities to plan 10 new recreational projects and implement five projects by 2012 that allow communities to connect with the natural resources in their area

Strategies:

- Continue working with Crawford County Highway bike routes
- Continue working with Lafayette County on Belmont-Platteville Trail
- Continue working with HPT/La Crosse County on Bluff land trails
- Continue working on Platte River Canoe Trail
- Provide assistance to Sauk County organizations with Canoe & Recreational Maps
- Partner with Regional Planning Commissions to plan and implement regional projects
- Explore options for trails in other counties
- Assist with protection, enhancement, and/or development of cultural resources

Objective: Work with Southwest WI Communities to promote sound conservation, sustainable landuse, and watershed wide runoff management to reduce flooding

Strategies:

- Pursue funding for development of demonstration rain gardens and rain garden workshops
- Encourage communities to develop stormwater management plans, provide technical and financial assistance as available
- Explore options for green communities/neighborhood certification
- Encourage communities to implement “green” policies
- Operation and maintenance agreements

Objective: Work with Southwest WI Communities to promote safe and sustainable development of the wildland-urban interface

Strategies:

- Provide information and education about the Firewise Communities Program
- Encourage communities to conduct a community fire assessment
- Participate in Smart Growth planning
- Promote sustainable development and conservation minded landuse

Goal 5: Enhance the capacity of the organization to meet its mission

Objective: Secure annual non-grant revenue of \$50,000 per year

Strategies:

- Contract the services of Southwest Badger Employees when appropriate
- Continue investing in short and long term interest bearing investments
- Continue tree shelter sales
- Implement Reforestation Aids Marketing plan
- Organize and develop a Southwest Badger Foundation
- Develop major donor program
- Market Southwest Badger RC&D as a charitable organization
- Promote corporate membership on the council

Timeframe of Plan

This Area Plan provides a roadmap for Council activities from November 2007 through October 2012. The plan will be reviewed regularly and the Council will make revisions as the needs of our area, or our role in addressing them change.

USDA Partnerships/Public Input

The Needs and Opportunities Questionnaire that was used in part to develop this document was sent to all NRCS Conservationists and Land and Water Conservation Departments in the Southwest Badger RC&D Area. The questionnaire was also sent to all of our partnering agencies and organizations. In addition, three Council meetings included working sessions for developing the Area Plan. Following is a list of attendees to these Council meetings:

- Southwest Badger RC&D Council: Roger Reynolds, Iowa County At-Large, Virgil Butteris, Crawford County; Pete Flesch, Crawford County Alternate, George Booth, Grant County; Lester Wiese, Sauk County; Lance McNaughton, Lafayette County At-Large, Mark Shepard, Richland County At-Large, Don Bina, LaCrosse County, Dean Thoreson, Lafayette County; Marc Schultz, La Crosse County At-Large; John Schindler, Grant County At-Large; Virginia Wiedenfeld, Richland County; Bob Hoesly, Green County; Will Beitlich, Vernon County;
- Southwest Badger RC&D staff: David Wilson, Angie Wright, Katie Abbott, Patrick Dayton, Barb Thompson
- NRCS: Steve Bertjens, Southwest Badger RC&D Coordinator; Patti Jackson-Kelly, Assistant State Conservationist; Janet Vosberg, Iowa County, Greg Yakle, LaCrosse County; Joe VanBerkel, Sauk County; Dan Cotter, Lafayette County; Rick Lange, Crawford County; Nancy Brereton, Sauk County; Jean Stramel; Peggie James, Richland County; Mike Dreischmeier, Richland County; Andy Walsh, Iowa County; Melissa Bartz, Grant County; Jason Thomas; Duane Simonson, Richland County
- LWCD: Cathy Cooper, Richland County; Beth Peterson, Vernon County
- Others: John Nielsen, Wisconsin DNR Forestry; Bill Carlson, WI DNR Forestry; Hans Rudolf, WI DNR; John McKenna, Sauk County; Dan Arnold, Vernon County

