

# Eau Claire County

*Sustainability Plan Work Group*

Report

6/15/2011

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## Focus of Report

The Sustainability Plan Work Group's (SPWG) goal is to develop a plan for Eau Claire County to follow as it moves toward sustainability. In 2010, County Administrator, Tom McCarty directed Matt Theisen and Erin LaFaive to form a Sustainability Planning Work Group. The SPWG began with an inventory of current County departmental activities and moved to consider potential changes that could be made.

## Background

### *Committee Members*

The members of the SWG include:

1. Matt Theisen, Eau Claire County Facilities Director
2. Meg Marshall, community member and founder of Sustainable Eau Claire
3. Erin LaFaive, Eau Claire County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator
4. Tim McMillian, Highway Department Shop Superintendent
5. Debbie Simet, Eau Claire County Purchasing Specialist
6. Other members gave input during various meetings such as Mel Erickson and Todd Andrews.

### *The Process*

Date	Description
1/8/2010	Charge and directive from Tom McCarty, County Administrator.
2/25/2010	First meeting. Determined direction of group. Document what departments are doing and make a plan for improvements.
3/18/2010	Ned Noel, Eau Claire City Assistant Planner, spoke on lessons learned from the City's Green Team process.
4/8/2010	Reports given by departments on what is already being done. Discussion started on new ideas the county could do.
5/11/2010	Same as 4/8/2010 topic.
6/22/2010	Guest speaker, Rob Peterson, chair of Western Wisconsin Initiative for Sustainable Communities, spoke about The Natural Step.
8/24/2010	Report planning
2/6/2011	Report planning
3/9/2011	Report revisions
4/28/2011	Report revisions

### ***Operational definition***

There are various definitions of sustainability. The most common definition used was formed by the Brundtland Commission<sup>1</sup>. It states, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>2</sup>

The SPWG’s operational definition of sustainability is:

*The organization of Eau Claire County will act in a sustainable manner so as to achieve environmental protection, social progress, and economic growth all at the same time. In doing so, our own impact on the Earth’s natural systems and human health will be lessened so future generations’ opportunities are not compromised.*<sup>3</sup>

### ***Why focus on sustainability?***

Tom McCarty summed up the need to focus on sustainability in his Memo to the SPWG:

“Many private and public sector organizations have moved forward with sustainability planning efforts. In order to be wise stewards of our resources and have a positive impact on the long term fiscal and environmental health of the organization and community, a strategic approach to sustainability operation for Eau Claire County operations is necessary.”

Not only does sustainability focus on maintaining the health of the environment but it also focuses on finding dollar savings. Sustainability is often seen as three types of capital – economic, social, and natural. This report took into consideration these three types of capital throughout the process.

### ***What should a sustainability plan contain?***

AXIS Performance Advisors<sup>4</sup>, a sustainability consulting firm that helps organizations implement sustainable practices, states that, “while any plan needs to be tailored to the organization that it serves, you will want to be sure to include these five basic components”:

#### **1. Sustainability framework**

The direction your efforts take will be determined by the way you define sustainability. We strongly recommend couching your program in terms of a sustainability framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the World Commission on Environment and Development

<sup>2</sup> Brundtland Report: Our Common Future, 1987, Chapter 2, <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Adopted from City of Eau Claire Green Team Report, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.axisperformance.com>

## **2. Rationale**

Your sustainability efforts should also have a solid link to your organization's strategic plan (if sustainability goals have not already been embedded into your normal business plan).

## **3. Vision**

Using your chosen framework, paint a picture of a sustainable version of your organization. Ask yourselves what your organization would look like, what it would be doing, and what it would contribute in a fully sustainable world.

## **4. Key impacts**

An analysis of your key impacts (as defined by your framework) will form the basis of your effort.

## **5. Action Plan**

Based on what you learn, formulate an action plan.

The SWG chose The Natural Step Framework<sup>5</sup> (TNS) as the framework throughout the report process. One framework that has been widely used is TNS for Sustainable Communities, developed in Sweden and used the world over. TNS is based on four guiding objectives that, "used together, can help a city, town or region systematically develop policies and practices toward sustainability. While action that moves in the direction of any one of these objectives is good, it is those practices that simultaneously move in the direction of all four that can be relied upon to truly move toward sustainability."

It is science-based, systems-based, decision making framework, and a process to help organizations and communities plan for sustainability. It is a compass to help know if a group is moving in the right direction.

TNS is a framework in which to look at sustainability. It involves four system conditions that need to be met in order for a society to become sustainable (Table 1). These conditions are based on basic laws of physics, biology, and ecology. The SPWG uses these conditions to guide the work group.

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<sup>5</sup> Note: the following information is excerpted from "The Natural Step for Communities" by Sarah Janes and Torbjorn Lahti.

Natural Step Principle <sup>6</sup>	Objective	Examples of Practices
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.	Reduce dependence on fossil fuels, extracted underground metals and minerals	Renewable energy purchased when possible, new developments or buildings heated and powered by renewable energy, use of alternative fuels in municipal fleets
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.	Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature	Green building design that reduces or eliminates toxic building materials, landscape design and park maintenance that use alternatives to chemicals, municipal purchasing focused on non-chemical product use, incentives for organic agriculture minimizing phosphorous, petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides
Nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means.	Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems	Low-impact development that minimizes degradation of habitat and reduces storm water runoff and pollution, reduce water use, recycle wash and waste water when possible, redevelop existing sites and buildings before new ones are built
People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.	Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly and efficiently	Develop affordable housing, encourage locally based businesses and local food production, use waste as a resource, foster participatory community planning and decision making, fair and efficient delivery of social programs

**Table 1: Four system conditions of a sustainable society**

TNS has been adopted by a number of Wisconsin local governments resulting in establishing themselves as an eco-municipality.<sup>7</sup> An eco-municipality aspires to develop an ecologically, economically, and socially healthy community for the long term, using the Natural Step framework for sustainability as a guide, and a democratic, highly participative development process as the method.

An eco-municipality becomes the driving force for involving citizens and sectors of the larger community in the change process toward becoming a sustainable community. An eco-municipality collaborates with other communities regionally, nationally, and internationally both to learn from others and assist others in their change processes.

<sup>6</sup> The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices. Sarah James and Torbjörn Lahti. Pgs 6-8

<sup>7</sup> Sustainable Communities Capacity Center. UWEX Sustainability Team  
<http://www3.uwsuper.edu/sustainability/Eco-Municipality.htm>

An eco-region consists of several eco-municipalities in the same region working together toward these objectives.



Figure 1: Eco-municipalities in Wisconsin

- City of Ashland
- City of Baraboo
- City of Bayfield
- Town of Bayfield
- City of Beloit
- Town of Cottage Grove
- Douglas County
- Dunn County
- Village of Johnson Creek
- City of La Crosse
- La Crosse County
- City of Madison
- City of Manitowoc
- City of Marshfield
- City of Menasha
- Town of Menasha
- City of Neenah
- City of Sheboygan
- Village of Spring Green
- City of Stevens Point
- City of Washburn

Many businesses and corporations have combined use of the Natural Step system principles with a change methodology called the ABCD strategy. Using a bottom-up approach, staff and employees work to apply the four principles to the policies and procedures of their own departments.

The ABCD strategy is described as follows:

- A:** Raise awareness: introduce and discuss the framework of the four principles
- B:** Scrutinize and take inventory of present conditions. How well are we meeting the recommended practices?
- C:** Brainstorm visions and solutions to create a positive vision of the desired future where the four principles are met. Formulate a list of actions that will help get there.
- D:** Create an action plan based on results in Step C and set priorities for actions. Does the plan aim at all four principles simultaneously? Does it create a flexible platform for future actions, or does it create a blind alley? For example, solar panels may not be feasible now, but a new building with southern exposure would allow for them later.

Does the action give a good return on the investment? Analysis to determine this must include social and environmental costs as well as economic ones. Picking low hanging fruit (actions that can be easily achieved in the short run) can demonstrate early success to participants.

ABCD differs from the usual approach of taking present conditions (which may be undesirable) and forecasting them into the future. It instead is a “backcasting” approach, keeping in mind a state of future success.

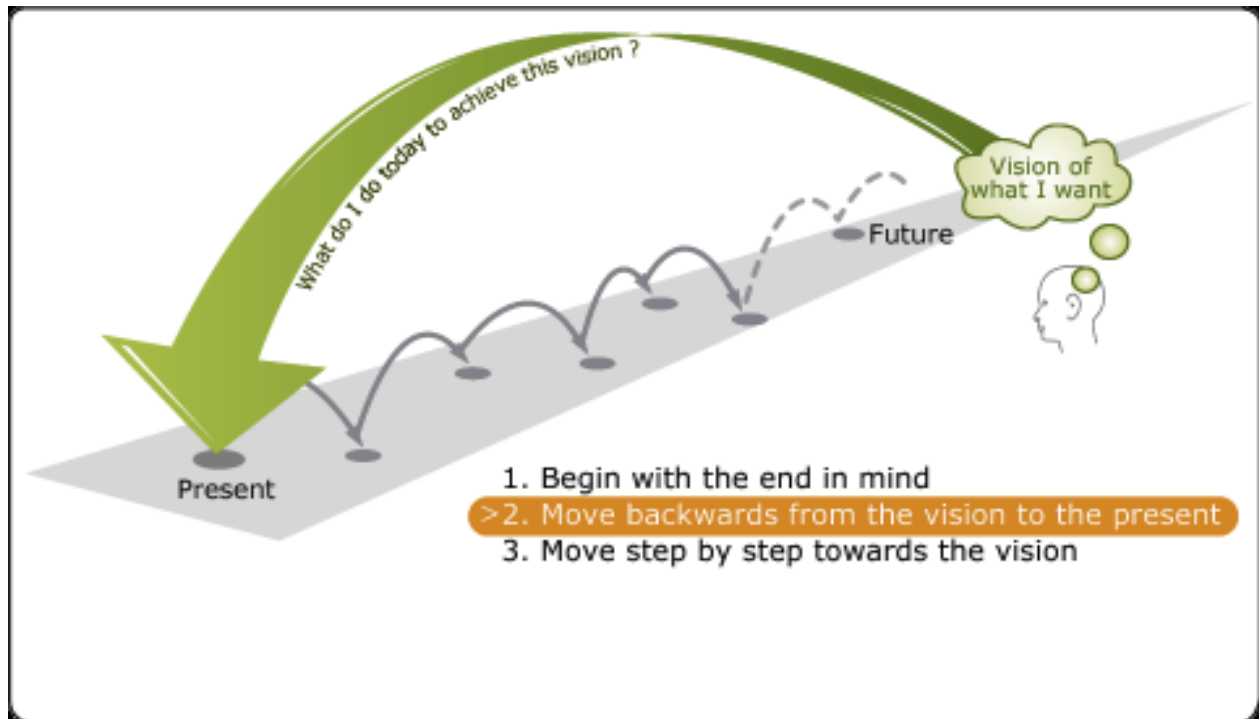


Figure 2: Backcasting (Source: The Natural Step <http://www.naturalstep.org/~natural/backcasting>)

This process was used as we began to look at the present condition of sustainability. We looked at what we could be doing and are currently doing. We began by looking at four major county divisions. As we begin to use this process we focused on facilities and grounds; purchasing and acquisition; land use and waste management; and fleet operation.

## **Division of County Operations**

### **Purchasing and Acquisition**

The purchasing department uses Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)<sup>8</sup> or Sustainable Purchasing as its guide. It refers to the procurement of products and services that have a reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance or disposal of the product or service.

#### ***Current Initiatives***

1. Full cost accounting<sup>9</sup> is taken into consideration for purchases.
2. Achieve significant increases in the percentage of purchases of more environmentally friendly goods and services by the County
3. Recommend remanufactured toners and post-consumer products
4. Energy efficient appliances, computers and vehicles
5. Recommend green alternatives for pesticides, herbicides and cleaning products
6. Use natural lighting and motion controlled light switches during courthouse remodels
7. Schedule more webinars versus attending off-site conferences
8. Consolidate printers, copiers and fax machines

#### ***Program Goals***

1. The assurance that all purchases are cost competitive (using various total cost models)
2. The education of ourselves, our vendors, and our community for the conservation of natural resources
3. The minimization of pollution
4. The reduction of water and energy usage
5. The elimination or reduction of environmental health hazards to workers and our community
6. The support of strong recycling markets
7. The reduction of materials that are landfilled
8. The increase in use and availability of environmentally preferable products
9. The recognition of vendors who reduce environmental impacts in their production and distribution systems or services.

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<sup>8</sup> Guidelines in Appendix

<sup>9</sup> Full Cost Accounting: Accounting which recognizes economic, environmental, health, and social costs of an action or decision. (businessdictionary.com)

10. Develop Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) or Sustainable Purchasing Policy

**Facilities & Grounds**

The Facilities and Grounds department is currently conducting these activities:

1. Transitioning all County Departments to using green cleaners.
2. Transitioning to green sanitary paper products.
3. Reducing energy consumption through lighting retrofits and HVAC upgrades and modifications.
4. Use green ice melt during winter for sidewalks.
5. Taking part of the Governors 25X25 plant (grant awarded).
6. Received grant through the EECBG from federal stimulus funding to increase energy efficiency

The following information is a list of activities that could be implemented for Facilities and Grounds.

***Policies***

1. Employee Energy Usage  
Develop policy regarding personal appliance usage in all County facilities. This could include only use of energy star approved appliances, limiting the use of personal appliances all together, or a combination of both. The county could also develop a policy that requires employees to turn off lights in their work areas if they are away for a certain amount of time, and de-energize power strips at the end of the workday.
2. Building Occupation Policy  
Explore the possibility of all, or certain County facilities to only be used during normal business hours. With this, the custodial staff could perform “daylight cleaning”, where they clean the building during normal business hours as well. This would allow for reduced energy usage by being able to shut down lighting, and HVAC functions after 5pm. This would be a significant challenge, but would result in significant savings.
3. Renewable Energy  
Develop a policy to use renewable energy sources to supplement non-renewable sources. A detailed plan on how this can be achieved

The City of Eau Claire, City of Altoona, and Eau Claire County partnered together and received a State of Wisconsin Energy Independent Community planning grant. This planning grant process referred to as 25 X 25.

The report “*Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Solutions*” gives a detailed (269 pages) evaluation of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures for 20 buildings.

As part of the 25 X 25 grant process, energy audits of all County buildings were conducted by Focus on Energy

Electronic copies of these reports are available from Matt Theisen, Eau Claire County Building and Grounds Superintendent.

was completed as part of the 25 X 25 planning grant process. It includes detailed analysis of solar hot water, solar photovoltaic, wind, and E85 fuel projects. This plan should be reviewed for partial or complete implementation.

### ***Building Design***

1. LEED Concepts for New Construction  
All new, occupied, County owned buildings should be designed, contracted, and built to meet at least the minimum LEED requirements for certification.
2. Remodel of Existing Buildings  
LEED also has a rating system for major renovations of existing buildings that can be incorporated into the project. During the design phase of these projects, energy efficient HVAC systems, windows, roofs, etc. should be specified.

### ***Facility Management***

1. Retro-Commission Existing County Buildings  
Existing County facilities should be put through the retro-commissioning process. The purpose of retro-commissioning is to achieve gas, electric demand, and energy savings in existing buildings. Savings are realized through the systematic evaluation of the facility systems, and implementation of cost-effective measures to improve facility operations.
2. Reduce Electrical Consumption  
There are many ways to reduce electrical consumption in our facilities. This could be as simple as turning off lights, to placing all lighting on our building automation system, using day-lighting technology, installation of VFD drives on all motors, to replacing inefficient HVAC equipment. Many smaller projects are already being completed, but all of the County facilities should be evaluated for electrical consumption reduction projects and prioritized based on payback. Through the 25 X 25 planning process, Focus on Energy did an energy audit identifying electrical use reduction projects. These should be evaluated and prioritized based on payback periods.
3. Reduce Natural Gas Consumption  
The natural gas market is very volatile, and huge price increases can occur making it very difficult to budget for. This can cause huge negative financial impacts to the County. We need to reduce our consumption of natural gas by efficiency measures such as occupancy schedules, more efficient boilers, water heaters, and geo-thermal heating sources. The County has identified geo-thermal projects at several facilities in its 25 X 25 plan. These should be evaluated and prioritized based on payback for possible implementation.

4. Reduce Water Consumption

All County facilities should be evaluated for water conservation projects. Some possible projects are motion detection faucets, motion detection flush assemblies, low flow or no flow water closets, and reduction of lawn irrigation.

5. Performance Contracting

A viable solution to address County capital and energy concerns is performance contracting. A performance contractor can help the County save energy and generate capital for equipment replacements and improvements. The County would enter into a performance contract to have a contractor research, design, build & maintain capital improvements which are expected to save energy related funds. The County would pay the contractor from the savings realized by these energy related improvements during the contract period.

6. Energy Tracking

All County buildings should be tracking energy usage through the EPA’s Portfolio Manager Program. This is a free program that can be used to set a baseline energy usage, and monitor energy savings after efficiency projects are implemented. It will also show our buildings usage compared with like buildings all over the country to see if we have energy usage that is much higher or lower than like buildings. This will be very helpful to identify problem areas, and to let us know if we are on the right track. This program was used to help with the 25 X 25 energy plan we completed in 2010. Here is Eau Claire County’s total baseline energy use annually (Figure 2).

5,567,814	kwh
287,816	therms
79,997	gallons of unleaded
179,568	gallons of diesel
568	gallons of propane

**Table 1: Baseline energy of all county facilities and fleet from 2007-2009**

7. Green Cleaning Products

Whenever possible, all County departments should be using “green” cleaning supplies in all facilities. These cleaners and sanitary paper products will be indentified with the “green seal”. The County may also want to look at purchasing “green seal” approved vacuums, and other floor machines during replacement cycles. The cost to some of these products may be greater than conventional products.

8. Capital Improvement Plans

Capital improvement plans should be built to include selected energy efficiency/renewable energy projects. Projects have already been identified in the 25 X 25 plan, and Focus on Energy audit recommendations. These projects can be prioritized using return on investment criteria.

**Grounds and Site Management**

1. Native Plants for Landscaping  
Research, and promote the use of native species in naturalized planting plans instead of non-native (high maintenance) plantings. The result will be less mowing which results in less fuel consumption and emissions, and less irrigation which results in water conservation.
2. Reduce Salt Usage  
The reduction of snow-melt salt products at County facilities will result in cost savings as well as the reduction of the dissolved salts effect on the environment from absorption into the ground, and into bodies of water. When snow melt is used, it should be an environmentally friendly product. Some employee/public education may need to be done on bare pavement expectations.

## **Land use and Waste Management**

### ***Zoning***

### ***Waste management***

No report submitted.

## **Fleet Operations**

Eau Claire County Highway *Environmental Responsibility in County Government* goal includes the objective: “Initiate work rules and programs that conserve energy, reduce fuel/utility/resource consumption...” In support of this goal, the Highway Department has adopted this Vehicle Fuel Conservation (VFC) work rule. Costs for gasoline and diesel fuel for County vehicles and motorized equipment are significant. Beyond this, fuel consumption for vehicles and motorized equipment has significant environmental impacts.

The SWG recognizes that the VFC work rule could apply to all County owned and leased vehicles and motorized equipment and the operators of these vehicles and equipment. The purpose of this work rule is to reduce the County government’s vehicle fuel consumption, wherever possible. In addition it improves fuel efficiency, maximizes the use of alternative fuels for that fuel that must be used to operate County vehicles and motorized equipment, is consistent with the need for safe, and reliable County vehicles and motorized equipment.

### **Work Rule Goals**

1. Establish the work rule foundation of responsibilities, planning, programs, standards, performance measures and the like to manage the County government’s vehicle fuel use and conserve fuel.

2. Manage vehicle and motorized equipment fuel consumption to minimize use to the greatest extent possible while maintaining safe and reliable vehicles and motorized equipment.
3. Achieve a reduction in average fuel consumption per mile annually for vehicles and per hour of operation for motorized equipment.
4. Provide for the use of alternative fuel (which may include compressed natural gas, bio-diesel, hybrid gas/electric, or the like) vehicles and motorized equipment, unless service needs cannot be met with an alternative fuel vehicle or motorized equipment.
5. Purchase vehicles and motorized equipment that meet service delivery needs with the greatest fuel efficiency possible whether alternative or traditional fuel.

### **Employee Usage Responsibilities**

Employees who operate County vehicles and motorized equipment are responsible for ensuring that:

1. Tire and fluid inspections for vehicles are performed.
2. The assigned vehicle is scheduled for maintenance service within time and/or mileage intervals identified by the shop advisor.
3. Corrective maintenance is scheduled with the shop supervisor as soon as possible when a problem with the vehicle is encountered or identified.
4. Vehicles are operated according to all applicable laws and rules of the road. This increases fuel conservation and safety.

### **Vehicle Operation**

1. Vehicles are to be operated in keeping with manufacturer's recommendations and specifications, and applicable County policy.
2. To maximize fuel efficiency, vehicles are to be serviced at intervals identified by the shop supervisor.
3. Vehicles and equipment are to be shut off when not traveling or working unless the need to recharge the batteries during traffic control operations where safety lighting is required.
4. Unnecessary travel to and from the shop is prohibited. Example: Employees should not travel from the work site back to the shop for the sole purpose to take break. Every effort shall be made to take break at the work site, turn around, etc or any other safe location.

### **Vehicle Acquisition**

1. The Department Head develops, communicates and maintains a written process for the systematic consideration of vehicle acquisition needs (whether new or replacement) and the decision-making as to the type of vehicle to be purchased, including whether it is an alternative fuel vehicle (which may include compressed

natural gas, bio-diesel, hybrid gas/electric, etc.) Among other things, this process provides for the following:

- Determination as to whether the vehicle needs to be acquired or replaced.
- Determination as to whether an alternative fuel vehicle will meet the service needs.
- Whether an alternative fuel vehicle that will meet the needs is available on State contract; or if not available on State contract otherwise available; or whether a retrofit of a standard fuel vehicle is an option.
- Analysis of the costs of the alternative vehicle versus standard fuel vehicle.

2. As part of the Item G1 process, Departments will need to prepare an annual “Vehicle Replacement Report” which includes recommended priorities for vehicle replacement. This report considers the following factors in prioritizing vehicle replacements:

- Miles driven to date (odometer reading).
- Mileage (miles per gallon) compared to baseline/industry standards for comparable vehicle.
- Repair and maintenance cost per mile for most recent 12 months, compared to baseline/industry standards for comparable vehicles.
- Vehicle use (front-line emergency response vehicle versus Motor Pool fleet vehicle).
- Overall mechanical assessment by Department staff.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

1. The Highway departments automated fuel system provides records of most fuel transactions. Other departments may obtain information regarding fuel received at other locations. This data is to be used to create performance reports.
2. Information is used to benchmark performance:
  - From year-to-year for total miles driven and average miles per gallon.
  - Compare to results for similar vehicles/vehicle use in other local governments.In addition to actual vehicle fuel performance, the County reviews other benchmarks such as reducing reliance on fossil fuel vehicles.

### **Programs**

To support vehicle fuel conservation, the County could implement a variety of programs including:

1. Employee Awareness – The County conducts communications programs to promote employee awareness of the need for fuel conservation. This includes activities such as distribution of the Vehicle Fuel Conservation Work rules, reminders via pamphlets, e-mails.

2. Incentives – Programs will be developed to improve compliance and acceptance by employees who operate County vehicles. These may include department versus department contests, financial incentives, preferred parking and the like.
3. Preventive Maintenance – Preventive Maintenance procedures are used to obtain optimal fuel-efficient operation of all equipment.
4. Repairs – Repairs/replacement of all vehicles and motorized equipment take into consideration the most cost-effective solution over the life of the repair/equipment. This includes future maintainability, improved operation, and improvements to fuel efficiency, requirement for additional or reduced preventive maintenance, and the like.
5. Innovative Strategies – The County considers and pursues innovative strategies that may reduce the need for gasoline consumption such as video conferencing, “smart travel” with other departments and County car pooling, including educating employees about these.

### **Highway Recycling**

The Highway department is currently working on recycling activities.

1. We are starting in 2011 using our collected waste oils for supplemental heating oil in one of our heated truck storage areas. This is approximately 4,000 gallons per year that will be burned using less natural gas.
2. About 1,000 pounds of oil absorbent or floor dry that did go into the landfills now goes to a recycling vender that extracts the oil and recycles the metal that often ends up with the floor dry. This product is cleaned and repackaged for sale.
3. The Highway Department uses synthetic oils when possible. This extends service intervals and can increase warranties.
4. The garbage that is picked up off the roads often contains metal and this is added to the metal that is generated from the Highway department from guard rails, bridges, truck parts, road signs and construction items like culverts. This is sold for scrap iron to one of the local dealers.
5. Products like concrete and asphalt that have out lasted their usefulness are processed back into products that will go back into the construction of the roads.

### ***Education of Employees***

In the process of working toward a sustainability plan for Eau Claire County, heads of several departments have followed the Natural Step guidelines to analyze their energy and water use, purchasing practices, fleet management, etc., to determine ways in which their activities can be more efficient. The next step should be to spread this process throughout the other departments in the county, down to the employee level.

The County should establish Green Teams headed by leaders committed to more sustainable operations for the county. The function of the Green Team would be to educate employees about what sustainability means and how it can help the county be more responsible to the

environment and save considerable money. The Green Teams would follow a process such as the one listed below.

1. Start with an explanation of The Natural Step process, including A, B, C, D.
2. Bring in speakers as necessary to assist with this process. Focus on Energy would be a good start.
3. Put the A, B, C, D process to work in each team, going forward from and using as a reference the analyses of energy use, etc., already completed by the SPWG.
4. Summarize what other counties and Green teams have accomplished.
5. Use social marketing principles to determine what barriers to change exist among staff. This could be done in the form of a conservation survey. For example, we might assume that resistance to home composting might be due to people not knowing what can and cannot be composted, but a survey might indicate that the barrier is the thought that compost might smell bad. Knowing the barrier helps to determine the right approach to overcome it.
6. Provide checklists and other documentation for them to use as a guide, such as Terry Gips' Personal Action Checklist. For example, the City of Asheville, N. C., put together a laminated sheet with energy and water saving tips and recycling information on one side and a "To Do" list on the other. Because of the lamination, it could be erased and used repeatedly. Another useful guide is the EcoTeam Green Living Handbook, which can be used by employees in their offices, as well as in their private lives, to work to achieve a greener lifestyle.
7. Use such devices as the Watts Up Pro to determine energy being used by refrigerators in cubicles and by items such as computers or chargers when they are plugged in but not being used.
8. If there is an electronic newsletter that goes out to employees monthly, this would be a good place to highlight individual employee or department achievements.
9. Asheville in 2008 launched an employee program, Better Energy Savings Today (BEST), which achieved an 11.5% voluntary employee reduction in energy usage. Examples under this system included reminder stickers on light switches, electrical outlets and thermostats and "While You Were Out" energy summaries.
10. Establish an incentives and rewards system for employees who become leaders in their departments. They know best which things will and won't work on the ground. Because of budget constraints, such incentives might include a preferred, marked parking place for the week, lunch with the department director, a picture on a bulletin board with high visibility, etc.

## **Community**

“a significant dimension to building sustainable communities is the process of engaging the entire community.”<sup>10</sup>

Efforts by the county employees should, at some point, gain foothold in the general county population. Some examples of current sustainability community initiatives include: the annual County *Recycler* newsletter, Eau Claire EcoTeams, and Sustainable Eau Claire.

The National Association of Counties Green Government Initiative identifies ten ways to green a county. One of the ways is to educate, communicate, and celebrate with the “county employees and citizens about the social, environmental and financial benefits of sustainability – both for the county and for individuals. “

The SWG encourages this practice starting at the employee level. It’s equally important to communicate county efforts with the public.

### ***Communicating County Efforts with the Public***

Sharing information about what Eau Claire County’s sustainability planning is a great way to engage the community. Another benefit is to allow the community to know that the County is making efforts to increase its environmental and fiscal responsibility. These communicating efforts could include adding information to the Eau Claire County website, press releases, or newsletters.

## **Challenges**

A more comprehensive report is needed involving other Eau Claire County departments. Other community sustainability plans have guided us. One of which is the Waukesha County sustainability Plan. It states that the key components of a successful county sustainability plan are (page 7):

1. A policy statement committing the County to sustainability principles and goals
2. the importance of at least one “program champion”, who may be a manager, technical staff or elected official
3. Active staff involvement in plan development, to ensure staff “buy-in”
4. Ongoing education and marketing/communication efforts aimed at staff, elected officials and the public regarding plan implementation and performance tracking
5. The availability of easy-to-use tools and information resources
6. Initial and periodic re-training of the requirements and tools
7. Ongoing political commitment, administrative support and periodic progress reviews by decision makers

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<sup>10</sup> Toward a Sustainable Community: A Toolkit for Local Government. Gruder, Haines, Hembd, MacKinnon, Silberstein. 2007, page 6

In constructing the SPWG plan, we reviewed plans of several other communities to understand what has worked and what barriers exist in implementing sustainability plans within the chosen framework. Most of the communities we reviewed have the good fortune to have an Office of Sustainability or Sustainability Director on staff, something not available to Eau Claire County at present.

The Asheville, North Carolina, plan employs these same ideas and appears to be fashioned on a framework very similar to the Natural Step, focusing on a future vision and devising steps to get there.

### **Sources**

The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices. Sarah James and Torbjörn Lahti. 2004. New Society Publishers.

Waukesha County Sustainability Plan 2008-2010.

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<http://www4.uwm.edu/shwec/publications/cabinet/reductionreuse/SustainabilityToolkit.pdf>

City of Eau Claire Green Team Report, 2009.

City of Asheville Sustainability Management Plan, 2009

<http://www.ashevillenc.gov/docs/sustainability/AVL.Sust.Plan.pdf>

## Appendix

### ***Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Guidelines***

#### ***Source Reduction***

Procurement activity may include:

- Institute practices that reduce waste, resulting in the purchase of fewer products whenever practicable and cost-effective, but without reducing safety or workplace quality.
- Purchase remanufactured products such as laser toner cartridges, tires, furniture, equipment and automotive parts whenever practicable, but without reducing safety, quality, or effectiveness.
- Consider short-term and long-term costs in comparing product alternatives. Include evaluation of total costs expected during the time a product is owned, including, but not limited to, acquisition, extended warranties, operation, supplies, maintenance, disposal costs, and expected lifetime compared to other alternatives.
- Purchase products that are durable, long lasting, reusable, or refillable.
- Request that vendors eliminate packaging or use the minimum amount necessary for product protection to the greatest extent practicable.
- Request packaging that is reusable, recyclable, or compostable when suitable uses and programs exist.
- Reuse pallets and packaging materials.
- Require that all equipment purchased, when practicable, be compatible with products and services that provide source reduction benefits.

#### ***Recycled Content Products***

Procurement activity may include:

- Products for which the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has established minimum recycled content standard guidelines - such as printing paper, office paper, janitorial paper, construction, landscaping, transportation, vehicles, and non-paper office products - and which contain the highest post-consumer content practicable, but no less than the minimum recycled content standards established by the U.S. EPA Guidelines.
- Copiers and printers that can be used with recycled content products.
- Re-refined lubricating and industrial oil for use in vehicles and other equipment, as long as the product is certified by the American Petroleum Institute (API) as appropriate for use in such equipment.
- Asphalt concrete, aggregate base, or portland cement concrete for road construction projects that contains recycled, reusable, or reground materials.

- Recycled content transportation products including signs, cones, parking stops, delineators, and barricades.

### ***Energy and Water Savings***

Procurement activity may include:

- Energy-efficient equipment with the most up-to-date energy efficiency functions including, but not limited to, high-efficiency heating and cooling systems.
- Efficient lighting with energy-efficient equipment.
- Products for which the U.S. EPA Energy Star certification is available and which meet Energy Star certification, when practicable. When Energy Star labels are not available, choose energy-efficient products that are in the upper 25% of energy efficiency as designated by the Federal Energy Management Program.
- Water-saving products.

### ***Landscaping***

Procurement activity may include:

- Employ sustainable landscape management techniques for design, construction and maintenance. These techniques include, but are not limited to, integrated pest management, grasscycling, drip irrigation, composting, and procurement and use of mulch and compost that give preference to those produced from regionally generated plant debris and/or food waste programs.
- Minimize waste by selecting plants that are appropriate to the microclimate, species that can grow to their natural size in the space allotted them. Place preference on native and drought tolerant plants that require no or minimal watering once established.
- Limit amount of impervious surfaces by procuring permeable substitutes such as permeable asphalt or pavers for walkways, patios, and driveways.

### ***Toxic Products and Pollution***

Procurement activity may include:

- Refrain from procuring cleaning or disinfecting products (i.e. for janitorial or automotive use) containing carcinogens, mutagens, or teratogens. Chemicals to be avoided are listed by the U.S. EPA or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on the Toxics Release Inventory.
- Phase out chlorofluorocarbon-containing refrigerants, solvents and similar products.
- Procure readily biodegradable surfactants and detergents that do not contain phosphates.

- Maintain buildings and landscapes, manage pest problems through the application of prevention techniques and physical, mechanical and biological controls
- Procure products with the lowest amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), highest recycled content, and low or no formaldehyde in materials such as paint, carpeting, adhesives, furniture and casework.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of products that contribute to the formation of dioxins and furans, including, but not limited to:
  - Paper, paper products, and janitorial paper products that are bleached or processed with chlorine or chlorine derivatives; and,
  - Products that use polyvinyl chloride (PVC), including, but not limited to, office binders, furniture, flooring, and medical supplies.
- Procure products and equipment with contain no lead or mercury. For products containing lead or mercury, give consideration to those with lower quantities of these metals and to vendors with established lead and mercury recovery programs.
- Consider vehicle procurement alternatives to diesel such as compressed natural gas, biobased fuels, hybrids, electric batteries, and fuel cells, as available.

### **Forest Conservation**

Procurement activity may include:

- Procure wood products such as lumber and paper that originate from forests harvested in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- Give consideration to wood products that are certified to be sustainably harvested by a comprehensive, performance-based certification system. The certification system shall include independent third-party audits, with standards equivalent to, or stricter than, those of the Forest Stewardship Council certification.
- When practicable, procure locally, sustainably harvested wood.