

## Chapter 6

# Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources

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## Purpose

In accordance with Wisconsin State Statutes 66.1001, the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter is a “compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation, and promotion of the effective management, of natural resources such as groundwater, forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources consistent with zoning limitations under s. 295.20 (2), parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources.”

## Groundwater

Our groundwater is a very important natural resource that if adversely affected, can have serious impacts on human health and wellbeing. Certain types of soil are more susceptible to allowing groundwater contamination and should be protected. If the groundwater becomes contaminated, there are few alternative sources of potable water for residents.

Wellhead protection ordinances and animal waste management ordinances are the most prevalent methods of groundwater protection in Pierce County at this time. Wellhead protection plans are developed to achieve groundwater pollution prevention measures within public water supply wellhead areas. Well abandonment ordinances require that once a residence is annexed into the Village it must connect to the Village’s water systems and abandon any private wells.

The Village of Ellsworth has wellhead protection and well abandonment ordinances in place along with ordinances regarding solid waste and solid waste storage, collection, and disposal.

There are properties in the Village limits that continue operate private wells and septic systems. The Village issues well permits to those properties operating private wells. Properties with private septic systems are not tied into the municipal sewer systems due to distances from main sewer lines, but Village ordinances require that once sewer mains be extended to those properties they are required to connect to the municipal system within one year.

## Surface Water, Stream Corridors, & Wetlands

Surface waters and stream corridors provide habitat for a wide variety of animals and plants and serves to attract tourism and recreation. Protection of these water resources is critical to maintaining the water quality, and diversity of wildlife.

Threats to these water resources are typically sedimentation and pollution, coming from both point and non-point sources, typically caused by the disturbance of the land cover due to urban/rural development and agricultural practices.

Development within the watersheds that contributes runoff into local lakes and rivers or their tributaries should be completed in a way that minimizes the impact on the natural system, and addresses potential pollution problems through the use of best management practices. Best Management Practices (BMP) designed to control storm water runoff rates, volumes, and water quality can be used to protect water resources in developed areas and include retention and detention ponds, erosion control, and the preservation of natural environmental corridors.

The Isabelle Creek meanders through the eastern portion of the Village. The Village of Ellsworth is located in the Trimbelle River/Isabelle Creek watershed, part of the Lower Chippewa River water management unit, located in the Mississippi River Basin.

Wetlands act as natural filters, removing sediments and contaminants from water. Wetlands regulate water levels by containing water during periods of excessive rain or snowmelt. These unique environments are host to a wide variety of plant and animal communities, including some threatened and endangered species. Wetlands serve as rest areas for migratory waterfowl during the fall and spring months and serve as sources of groundwater recharge and flood control. In the past decade, strict regulation on disturbing wetlands has slowed the loss of habitat and made conversion to other uses too expensive and impractical. The Army Corp of Engineers and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources regulates wetlands, particularly the disturbance of wetlands. Most of the identified wetlands in the Village of Ellsworth are located along portions of the Isabelle Creek.

Figure 6-1: Pierce County Watersheds



## Floodplains

Floodplains are areas, which have been, or may become inundated with water during a regional flood. A regional flood is often referred to as a 100-year flood or having a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. Because of dangers posed during a flood event, most structural development within a floodway is not allowed. Development within the flood fringe is generally accepted, provided adequate flood proofing measures are taken.

Floodplains are located along the Isabelle Creek near Railroad Avenue and near C.T.H. C, along the Village's southeastern border.

## Threatened or Endangered Species & Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Wildlife Habitats

There are no specifically listed threatened, endangered, or rare species, environmentally sensitive areas, or natural habitats listed within the municipal limits of Ellsworth. Although a variety of threatened and endangered species exist within Pierce County,

education and management practices can help protect these species and habitats from extinction within the County.

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## **Metallic/Non-metallic Mineral Resources**

Metallic and Non-metallic mineral resources are naturally occurring sources of metal-bearing ore and non-metallic (rock or sand and gravel) materials, respectively. When economically viable, these materials may be removed through mining to process the raw materials into commercial or industrial products. Metallic mining is regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Non-metallic mining is regulated by local counties and Pierce County has ordinances in place regulating non-metallic mining and reclamation following completion of mining activities.

There are no metallic or non-metallic mines within the Village of Ellsworth.

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## **Parks, Open Space, & Recreational Resources**

The Village of Ellsworth operates two Village parks, Summit Park located in the center of the Village, and East End Park located just north of Highway 10/63 in the eastern portion of the Village.

Summit Park covers 16 acres of land in the midway district of Ellsworth. Access to the park is gained on W. Grove Street and off from W. Summit Ave. where parking is available. Picnic tables and shelters, grills, drinking fountain, playground equipment, tennis courts, softball field, volleyball courts, concession stand/restroom facility, and park benches are available at the site. Summit Park is the site of the Bob Young Ball field and is the home of the popular Ellsworth Hubber Baseball Team. The park is used for passive recreation, as well as festival activities.

Sometime in the early 1900's, several of the East Ellsworth business people got together and built a dance pavilion in the East End Park, known as the Park Pavilion. It was built on pillars, because of the danger of floods in the park. The pavilion flourished until 1919 when the Fair Ground Pavilion was built and then collapsed. Later it burned. A pillar from the old pavilion still stands in the East End Park today. In 1922, the Ox-Bow Inn was officially opened in 1922; the tourist kitchen was built of logs near the Park Pavilion. Ox-Bow Inn still stands today, and is used for various festival activities (source: Village of Ellsworth Parks & Recreation).



East End Park is located on Hwy 10/63 and E. Wall St., close to the East Ellsworth business district. Off street parking for East End Park is available off N. Crosscut Street. Picnic tables and shelters, grills, drinking fountain, benches, restroom facility, basketball hoop, and playground equipment are available at the site. The park is used for family gatherings, as well as festival activities. The park has been the site for weddings and special occasions. The park is a favorite spot for tourists and motorists passing thru Ellsworth (source: Village of Ellsworth Parks & Recreation).

In addition to the Village operated parks, Ellsworth is home to the Piece County Fairgrounds, multiple school parks, and the Cairns Woods.

The Pierce County Fairgrounds cover approximately 10 acres, completely located within the Village limits. There are 27 buildings within the fairground property. These buildings facilitate the many events hosted there, including the ever-popular Polka Fest, Cheese Curd Festival, Old Car Club Show, Truck Demo Derby, along with many other festivals and activities. Camping is also available on the fairgrounds (source: Village of Ellsworth Parks & Recreation, Pierce County Fair Board).

The Village has a variety of recreational resources. Ellsworth is the hub of Pierce County's 210 plus miles of snowmobile trails. Several of the nearby streams provide outstanding trout fishing. Ellsworth is also near to many recreation options, including the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, State and County parks, hiking trails, and golf courses (source: Village of Ellsworth Parks & Recreation).

The Cairns Woods can be accessed off North Cairns Street. Cairns Woods provides groomed and non-groomed walking trails for both leisurely strolls and high-energy workouts.

As the Village expands, it would like to have more parkland, open space, and recreational opportunities. Currently the Subdivision Ordinance requires that a public park site, open space, or public recreation area be platted at the time of land division(s). The Village feels that additional parkland may be needed in the northern part of the Village to accompany the recent residential growth. Additionally, residents have voiced a need for walking paths throughout the Village and additional ball fields.

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## Forests

Forests provide valuable wildlife habitat and are often the home to threatened and endangered plant and wildlife. These areas also provide erosion control for riverbanks and steep slopes. A contiguous forest is extremely important as fragmented forests can result in the disruption of habitat and can lead to problems between wildlife and humans.

There are no large tracts of contiguous forests in the Village, but stands of forested land are located along the northwestern boundary of the Village, the Cairns Woods, and northeast of the Village.

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## Historical/Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are defined as historic buildings and structures as well as historic and ancient archeological sites. The preservation and promotion of cultural resources can have a positive impact by acknowledging the historical development of the Village of Ellsworth and instilling pride in residents.

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) maintains a database of known archaeological sites and historical buildings. There may be other sites not yet identified. WHS has identified almost fifty historical architectural buildings or structures in the Village of

Ellsworth. The Village Plan Commission reviewed the WHS list and has identified four structures with local historical significance, as shown in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 – Architecture and History Inventory

AHI #	County	Village	Location	Historic Name	Resource Type
16352	Pierce	Ellsworth	414 W Main Street	Pierce County Courthouse	Courthouse
25214	Pierce	Ellsworth	Maple Street N., Pierce County Fairgrounds	Freier School (on Bldg)	-
25215	Pierce	Ellsworth	Maple Street N., Pierce County Fairgrounds	-	Centric Barn
25223	Pierce	Ellsworth	Piety Street S., and Strickland St. SW Corner, 200 Block	Living Waters Church	Church

Source: Wisconsin Historical Society

A search of the WHS database reveals two archeological sites within the Village of Ellsworth (Table 6-2). The locations are general in nature to discourage human disturbance.

There are current laws and statutes in place that protect these sites. Federal projects need to ensure that their projects, such as a highway, do not adversely affect archeological sites. In Wisconsin State Statutes, State projects (Sec. 44.40), political subdivisions (Sec. 44.43), burial sites (Sec. 157.70), rock art sites (Sec. 943.01), public lands (Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979), and State lands (Sec. 44.47) are all protected.

Table 6-2: Archaeological Sites: Village of Ellsworth

Burial Code	Site Name	Site Type	Township Range Section
BPI-0155	Poor Farm Cemetery	Cemetery/burial	T26 R17 W S7
PI-0569	Pierce County Poor Farm Site	Redeposited artifacts	T26 R17 W S7

Source: Wisconsin Historical Society

## Productive Agriculture Areas

As shown in Table 6-2 the overall number of farms in Pierce County and the amount land in farming has increased. However, the average size of a farm has decreased over the last ten years. This may indicate that family farms are passing down to the next generation and creating more farmsteads, but continuing to farm the same land.

Table 6-2 – Pierce County Agricultural Statistics

	1997	2002	2007
Number of Farms	1,265	1,510	1,531
Land in Farms (acres)	267,586	267,311	271,178
Average size of Farm (acres)	212	177	177

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

The increasing demand for residential and industrial development has been part of the cause of the value of farmland to increase (Table 6-3). Farmland is desirable for such

development because the land is generally flat, relatively good soils and very little excavation is necessary when preparing to develop the land. The estimated value of farmland per acre in Pierce County has nearly tripled between 1997 and 2007.

Table 6-3 – Pierce County Agricultural Statistics: Estimated Value of Farm, Land, and Buildings

	1997	2002	2007	% change 1997-2007
Average/farm	\$244,146.00	\$439,725.00	\$591,718.00	142.4%
Average/acre	\$1,130.00	\$2,320.00	\$3,341.00	195.7%

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Table 6-4 reveals that the majority of farms in Pierce County are between 50 to 179 acres in size. The number of farms between 50 to 179 acres in size has increased since 1997, and continues to be the most abundant size of farm in the County. Few farms exist on less than 9 acres, or greater than 1,000 acres, although both categories have increased slightly since 1997.

Table 6-4 – Pierce County Agricultural Statistics

Farms by Size	1997	2002	2007
1 to 9 acres	51	73	55
10 to 49 acres	208	389	462
50 to 179 acres	486	609	606
180 to 499 acres	420	346	295
500 to 999 acres	72	60	73
1,000 acres or more	28	33	40

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture,  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

Pierce County has been experiencing a large amount of development pressure in the recent past, and will likely see more pressure in the future.

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## Community Design

Community Design Standards should represent the best qualities of Ellsworth or those qualities the Village would like to encourage. The Village has identified designs standards within the Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance, Chapter 45.07.

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## Other Resources

Two cemeteries are located within the Village. These cemeteries can provide a plethora of information related to original area settlers, family history, or family heritages'. It is important to maintain the Village's cemeteries for their historical and cultural significance.

Additionally, there are some man made caves within the Village. These caves were once used for the making of spirits. The caves were also used for storage of food materials in the event of disasters during the World Wars. These caves are privately owned, but hold some historical importance in the Village.

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## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

**Goal 1:** Protect the Village's natural resources.

**Objectives:**

1. Preserve the Village's natural aesthetics.
2. Protect the Village's groundwater and surface waters.

**Policies:**

1. Consider limiting the fragmentation of the Village's environmental corridors when land is developed.
2. Continue to enforce the Village's wellhead protection ordinance.
3. Continue to enforce the Village's well abandonment ordinance.
4. Continue to limit development within or directly adjacent to floodplains.
5. Continue to enforce Village ordinances regarding solid waste storage, disposal, and collection.
6. Consider updating the Village's subdivision code to require the incorporation of landscaping in redevelopment projects.
7. Continue to enforce landscaping regulation in the Village's subdivision code.

**Goal 2:** Encourage the maintenance and creation of public parks, open space, and recreational resources in the Village of Ellsworth.

**Objectives:**

1. Ensure adequate parks, open space, and recreational resources for future growth.
2. Continue to meet the recreational needs of Village residents.
3. Enhance the Village's natural resources.

**Policies:**

1. Explore methods and funding sources for acquisition of land for parks and open space.
2. Enforce the Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance to ensure adequate park land/open space is provided when new developments are created, and enforce the development of those park and/or recreation facilities.
3. Consider the development of future walking/multipurpose trails within the Village.
4. Investigate methods to preserve floodplains, wetlands, and woodlands while providing recreational opportunities.

**Goal 3:** Promote and preserve the cultural and historical resources in the Village of Ellsworth.

**Objectives:**

1. Identify the Village's historical resources.
2. Provide opportunities for residents and visitors to learn about the Village's history.

**Policies:**

1. Encourage residents who feel they may have an archeological site or historical property on their land who want to contact the Wisconsin Historical Society to learn ways to preserve or register them.
2. Support the Pierce County Historical Association and assist in efforts to document the Village's history.
3. Support the protection and preservation of the Village's cemeteries.
4. Support the protection and preservation of private caves within the Village.
5. Consider requesting a preservation committee collect old photos of life in Ellsworth and create a display or historical picture book for public viewing.