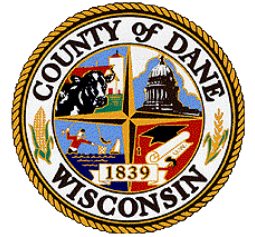


Dane County Waterbody Classification Project Overview



Background

Dane County's waters help define our county from the biggest lake to the smallest stream. Dane County has 70 named lakes and ponds, covering almost 22,000 acres, and 69 named rivers and streams, totaling 475 miles. Due to its location at a terminal glacial moraine, Dane County boasts an exceptional diversity of lakes, rivers and streams, including:

- large glacial, urbanized lakes such as the Yahara Chain of Lakes;
- small, shallow landlocked, rural lakes, such as Fish and Crystal Lakes;
- warmwater streams such as Door Creek and Koshkonong Creek, and;
- coldwater streams such as Mt. Vernon Creek, Sugar River and Black Earth Creek.

At the same time, Dane County also has:

- the second-largest – and fastest growing – metropolitan area in the state;
- Wisconsin's most economically successful and productive farming sector, and;
- substantial -- but in many places declining -- areas of natural shoreland and floodplain vegetation, wetlands, prairie and woodlands.

Dane County residents consistently rank protection of water resources among their top priorities. A 2005 random-sample survey of Dane County residents found that 86% felt that county government should pay "considerably more" (54%) or "somewhat more" (32%) attention to "managing water resources such as lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands or groundwater." Clearly, though, any management strategy must take into account the extraordinary diversity of land uses and natural characteristics of Dane County's waters.

Waterbody Classification

With grant funding provided by the Wisconsin DNR, the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission has undertaken the Dane County Waterbody Classification project to design water resource management policies tailored to the different types of waters in Dane County. Based on their existing level of development and their natural characteristics, Dane County waters are categorized into three classes:

- Urban Waters (such as Lake Mendota, Lake Monona or Starkweather Creek);
- Developing Waters (such as Marshall Millpond or Token Creek), and;
- Rural Waters (such as Hook Lake or Black Earth Creek).

Project Goals:

- Protect, enhance and restore water quality, habitat, and natural scenic beauty.
- Protect valuable community amenities.
- Treat different types of water bodies differently.
- Treat similar types of water bodies similarly.
- Provide consistency across government boundaries.
- Allow flexibility for landowner & municipalities.
- Complement other water-related efforts.
- Focus limited resources where they will do the most good.

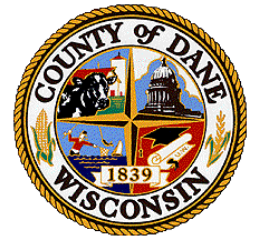
Why Focus on Shoreland Areas?

Shoreland areas are defined in state statute as areas within 300 feet of navigable rivers or streams and within 1,000 feet of navigable lakes or ponds. Shoreland areas and their associated waters are unusually sensitive to development impacts. For this reason, state law requires counties to adopt shoreland zoning ordinances to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and natural beauty. To accomplish these goals, shoreland zoning ordinances primarily do two things:

- control the intensity of development around water, and
- create a buffer around water.

A buffer is a vegetated strip of land that protects water from the impacts of nearby development, provides wildlife habitat and screens buildings when viewing from the water. If properly designed and maintained, a

Dane County Waterbody Classification Project Overview



buffer can help protect shorelands and adjacent lakes and rivers from physical, chemical, hydrological, and visual impacts.

The Dane County Waterbody Classification project seeks to protect or re-establish effective and appropriate buffers for each class of waters, or to provide equivalent protection through other methods. Under the proposal, developers or redevelopers could choose from a variety of techniques to accomplish this objective, including installing engineered infiltration practices, targeted landscaping, reducing building footprints, or complying with minimum lot sizes and setbacks.

Development near the shore is a significant contributor to sediment, runoff, habitat fragmentation and erosion near public waters, but it is by no means the only one. Agricultural practices, urban stormwater runoff and wetland destruction throughout the watershed are other sources. Other county programs, such as agricultural nutrient management, manure storage and landspreading regulations and the county stormwater and erosion control ordinances are specifically targeted at addressing these issues.

Project Status and Next Steps

As of March 2009, Phase II has included public education about the Phase I study, and broad community and stakeholder input to develop objectives and strategies appropriate to each water body class (including both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches) that build on the Dane County Comprehensive Plan.

The Lakes and Watershed Commission hosted a focus group discussion with economic advisors in mid January in order to assess the possible negative and positive impacts that the proposed shoreland performance standards in the draft Dane County Shoreland and Riparian Management Plan may have on our citizens and communities. Plan revisions in response to focus group input are now being prepared for presentation to the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission. The Commission will decide whether more investigation into these issues is necessary, and if so, when and how that will happen.

Other issues the Lakes and Watershed Commission will consider include:

- how proposed standards will apply within existing city and village boundaries and be coordinated with municipal ordinances
- whether, particularly in urban waters, modifying existing countywide stormwater and erosion control standards could provide equivalent or better protection.

After any further plan revisions requested by the Commission, it will hold one or two public hearings on the plan before it is sent to DNR for approval by the end of June in order to meet our grant deadline. The Commission will later invite further public input and work with the Dane County Board of Supervisors to develop implementation steps.

Other Resources

- Dane County Waterbody Classification Project (includes the full text of the draft plan, meeting notes and presentations): http://www.danewaters.com/management/water_body_classification.aspx
- Dane County Comprehensive Plan Survey Report: <http://danedocs.countyofdane.com/webdocs/PDF/PlanDev/ComprehensivePlan/draftplan/survey.pdf>
- WI DNR Shoreland Management (includes research findings on water quality, habitat, aesthetics and economic impacts): <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/>
- UWEX Lake Classification Fact Sheets: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/factsheets/default.asp>
- UWEX Human Impact research findings: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/humanimpact/default.asp>

For more information, contact Brian Standing at standing@co.dane.wi.us or (608) 267-4115.