

NOTICE OF MEETING

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY PLANNING, RESOURCES,
AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION COMMITTEE

May 26, 2026

3:30 PM

UW Extension Office
UW Sheboygan Campus
5 University Drive
Sheboygan, WI
Room 5024

Remote Access:

(312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 995 6557 9787

Passcode: 919025

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/99565579787?pwd=1u8fomPuhXGf1KA8q9MBVYTvl6pb1U.1&from=addon>

*** AGENDA ***

Call Meeting to Order

Certification of Compliance with Open Meeting Law
Approval of March 24, 2026 Minutes

Correspondence

Register of Deeds –

Consideration of 2025 Fourth Quarter Variance

Discussion on Property Fraud

Planning & Conservation –

Consideration of Advisory Committee Assignments

Consideration of 2025 Fourth Quarter Variance

Consideration of 2026 First Quarter Variance

Consideration of Resolution Authorizing Land Swap for Shoreland 400 Rail Trail

Consideration of Marsh Management Plan

Consideration of Use of Non-Lapsing Funds

Review of Department Vehicle Inventory

UW Extension-

Consideration of UW Extension's 2025 Fourth Quarter Variance Report

Review and Approve Vouchers

Area Extension Director Report

- 2026 Community Needs Forum Update/Invite
- Semi Annual Educator Reports- attached
- Ag Crops Position Survey Results
- Human Development and Relationship Educator position update

Sarah Feider 4-H Program Educator Report

Other Department Project and Program Management Updates- *This report is a summary of key activities in the Department. No action will be taken resulting from the report unless it is a specific item on the agenda.*

Consideration and Approval of Attendance at Other Meetings/Functions

Travel Report and Report of Meetings and Functions Attended by Committee Members

Review and Approve Vouchers

Adjournment

Next meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2026, at 3:30PM.

Prepared by:
Sharon Harvey, Recording Secretary
(920) 459-1370

Approved by:
Rebecca Clarke, Chairperson
(920) 395-6609

NOTE: The Committee welcomes all visitors to listen & observe, but only Committee members & those invited to speak will be permitted to do so, except for the Public Hearing portion of this meeting where any interested person can speak. Person with disabilities needing assistance to attend or participate should contact the County Planning & Conservation Department at 920/459-1370 prior to the meeting so that accommodations may be arranged.

NOTE: A majority of the members of the County Board of Supervisors or any of its committees may be present at this meeting to listen, observe and participate. If a majority of any such body is present, their presence constitutes a "meeting" under the Open Meeting Law as interpreted in *State ex rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Board*, Wis. 2d 553 (1993), even though the visiting body will take no action at this meeting.

**SHEBOYGAN COUNTY PLANNING, RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE & EXTENSION
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Sheboygan County UW-Extension Office
5 University Drive
Sheboygan, WI
Room 5024
and
Remote

March 24, 2026

Called to Order: 3:30 PM

Adjourned: 4:07 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Rebecca Clarke(Remote), Supervisor Henry Nelson, Supervisor John Nelson, Supervisor Joe Liebau Jr., Supervisor David Otte, Ag Community Member Travis Luedke

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Jayna Hintz, Emily Lamb, Diana Hammer, Kirtis Orendorff, Tyler Betry, David Huenink(Remote), Michael, Stephanie

Chairperson Rebecca Clarke called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM and verified the meeting notice had been posted on March 23 at 9:00 AM and the meeting complied with the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law.

Supervisor Henry Nelson moved to approve the February 24, 2026 minutes. Motion seconded by Supervisor John Nelson. Motion carried.

Correspondence: None.

Planning & Conservation-

Consideration of Non-Lapsing Water Quality Funds Project Framework. Supervisor David Otte moved to approve the draft. Motion seconded by Supervisor Henry Nelson. Motion carried.

Extension-

Area Extension Director Report. Jayna Hintz and gave an update and answered questions on Extension's staffing, noting that the Crops & Soil Educator resigned

Kirtis Orendorff New Community Development Educator Introduction. Jayna Hintz introduced Kirtis. Kirtis Orendorff gave an update on municipality discussions, meetings, and trainings he is working on and attending.

Diana Hammer, Positive Youth Development Educator Report. Diana Hammer gave an update on programming she is working on highlighting Sheboygan County Youth in Government Day field trips.

Consideration and Approval of Attendance at Other Meetings/Functions. None.

Travel Report and Report of Meetings and Functions Attended. Supervisor John Nelson attended the Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers annual meeting on February 13, 2026

Review and Approve Vouchers. Supervisor John Nelson moved to approve the vouchers. Supervisor David Otte seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Supervisor Henry Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting. Supervisor John Nelson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:07 PM.

Next meeting (Planning & Conservation Focus) is scheduled for April 14, 2026, at 3:30 PM.

Emily Lamb
Recording Secretary

John Nelson
Committee Secretary

**VARIANCE REPORT FOR DEPARTMENT -- REGISTER OF DEEDS
FOR THE QUARTER ENDING 12/31/2025**

TIMING	G/L CATEGORY	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
	Revenues		
	Public Charges for Services	95,105.07	Revenue fluctuates due to real estate and encumbrance activity which is
	Expenses		
	Wages & Benefits	24,008.95	Saffings from staffing vacancy.
	Operating Expenses	35,282.01	Budgeted for anticipated consulting services which was not needed this
	Interdepartmental Charges	4,445.13	Savings from staffing vacancy.
	Variances Less Than Justification Threshold	(2,193.95)	
	TOTAL	156,647.21	Positive

FBI Boston Issues Quit Claim Deed Fraud Warning

April 10, 2025

The Boston Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) **issued a warning** about the steady increase in reports of quit claim deed fraud it has received.

Also called home title theft or seller impersonation fraud, the schemes involve fraudsters who forge documents to record a phony transfer of property ownership. Criminals can then sell either the vacant land or home, take out a mortgage on it, or even rent it out to make a profit, forcing the real owners to head to court to reclaim their property.

Deed fraud often involves identity theft where criminals will use personal information gleaned from the internet or elsewhere to assume your identity or claim to represent you to steal your property.

“Folks across the region are having their roots literally pulled out from under them and are being left with no place to call home. They’re suffering deeply personal losses that have inflicted a significant financial and emotional toll, including shock, anger, and even embarrassment,” said Jodi Cohen, special agent in charge of the FBI Boston Division. “We are urging the public to heed this warning and to take proactive steps to avoid losing your property. Anyone who is a victim of this type of fraud should report it to us.”

Law enforcement and the FBI have been alerted to the fraud at all points in the process and have received reports involving a variety of fraudulent scenarios, including:

Scammers who comb through public records to find vacant parcels of land and properties that don’t have a mortgage or other lien and then impersonate the landowner, asking a real estate agent to list the property. Homeowners whose properties have been listed for sale don’t know it until they’re alerted, sometimes after the sales have gone through.

Family members, often the elderly, targeted by their own relatives and close associates who convince them to transfer the property into their name for their own financial gain. Fraudsters known as “title pirates” who use fraudulent or forged deeds and other documents to convey title to a property. Often these scams go undetected until after the money has been wired to the scammer in the fraudulent sale and the sale has been recorded.

The FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), which provides the public with a means of reporting internet-facilitated crimes, does not have specific statistics solely for quit claim deed fraud, but it does fall into the real estate crime category. Nationwide, from 2019

through 2023, 58,141 victims reported \$1.3 billion in losses relating to real estate fraud. Here in the Boston Division—which includes all of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island—during the same period, 2,301 victims reported losing more than \$61.5 million.

- 262 victims in Maine lost \$6,253,008.
- 1,576 victims in Massachusetts lost \$46,269,818.
- 239 victims in New Hampshire lost \$4,144,467.
- 224 victims in Rhode Island lost \$4,852,220.

The reported losses are most likely much higher due to that fact that many don't know where to report it, are embarrassed, or haven't yet realized they have been scammed.

FBI Boston is working with property owners, realtors, county registers, title companies and insurance companies to thwart the fraud schemes.

ALTA Resources

- **Seller Impersonation Fraud in Real Estate:** Title companies can use this document to train staff on the red flags and how to take precautions to help prevent these scams.
- **Savvy Consumer:** This document can be used to educate consumers about how they can protect themselves from seller impersonation fraud.
- **What Is Deed Fraud?:** This handout provides education and solutions to these real estate scams.
- **Tips for Checking State Identification Cards:** ALTA and the National Notary Association developed tips to help verify and check state identification cards during an in-person notarization.

ALTA's Efforts

Not only has ALTA helped develop several resources to provide education about seller impersonation, the association and other trade groups also developed an **issue brief** with recommendations to help combat the increase in deed fraud. AARP, Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA), National Association of Realtors (NAR), National Notary Association (NNA) and Property Records Industry Association (PRIA) all helped create the What Is Deed Fraud brief.

The document outlines numerous ways to help prevent and mitigate deed fraud, including:

- Providing identity verification options for notarizations performed in the physical presence of the notary.
- Providing better security for access to public records.
- Requiring continuing education for real estate professionals and notaries.
- Allowing local government offices to report suspected fraudulent documents to law enforcement.
- Offering property owners free access to property recording notification systems.

Contact ALTA at 202-296-3671 or communications@alta.org.

FBI Boston Warns Of Growing Title Fraud

Apr 14, 2025



Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division



By Lew Sichelman

Staff Writer

Fraudsters forging documents to sell properties or take out mortgages on them, FBI says

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Boston office has seen "a steady increase" in title theft — so much so that it has issued a warning to property owners and real estate professionals to beware.

The scams the G-men have labeled as "quit claim deed fraud" have resulted in "devastating consequences" for owners who had no idea their properties were being sold "right out from under them."

The schemes involve fraudsters who forge documents to record a phony transfer of property ownership. Criminals either sell the properties — typically vacant land parcels or unoccupied houses — or take out a mortgage on them. Some go so far as to rent houses, the FBI said.

Whatever the ploy, the real owners are forced to go to court to reclaim their properties. The Bureau's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), which provides the public with a means of reporting internet-facilitated crimes, does not have specific statistics solely for quit claim deed fraud. Rather, that falls into the real estate crime category.

Nationwide, from 2019 through 2023, 58,141 victims reported \$1.3 billion in losses relating to real estate fraud. In the Boston Division — which includes all of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island — 2,301 victims reported losing more than \$61.5 million during the same period.

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The vast majority of these victims were in Massachusetts. But the reported losses are most likely much higher everywhere because many victims have yet to realize they've been had, don't know where to report the crime, or are too embarrassed to do so.

“Anyone who is a victim of this type of fraud should report it to us,” said Jodi Cohen, the special agent in charge of the Boston Division. Unfortunately, there’s only a 72-hour window within which the FBI is likely to be able to snatch lost properties or funds back from the scammers.

Cohen said homeowners in her region “are having their roots literally pulled out from under them and are being left with no place to call home. They’re suffering deeply personal losses that have inflicted a significant financial and emotional toll, including shock, anger, and even embarrassment.”

FBI Boston is working with property owners, real estate agents, county registers, title companies, and insurance companies to thwart the fraud schemes. But it’s no easy task, if only because these scams take many forms.

For instance, scammers might comb through public records to find vacant parcels of land and properties that don’t have a mortgage or other lien and then impersonate the landowner, asking a real estate agent to list the property for sale. Owners have no clue their properties have been listed until they’re alerted, sometimes after a sale has already gone through.

Family members, often the elderly, are sometimes targeted by their own relatives and close associates, who convince them to transfer the property into their name for their own financial gain.

In other instances, so-called “title pirates” use fraudulent or forged deeds and other documents to convey title to a property. Often this scheme goes undetected until after the money has been wired to the scammer in the fraudulent sale, and the sale has been recorded.

In urging the public, realty agents, and loan professionals to take its warning seriously, Cohen suggested people monitor their property records and set up online search alerts. Many local records offices offer such a service. But their alerts come after the fact – after the “dirty deed” has been done, no pun intended.

One new service, EquityProtect, goes beyond monitoring to safeguard titles with a patented process that locks down the title and protects the rightful owner from any transfers or new liens. Using facial recognition, the Reno, Nevada-based company will verify owners are indeed who they say they are, and will unlock the title only at their request.

The service, which Hancock County, Indiana, among several others, now offers free to its residents, also uses multiple data aggregators to verify ownership by challenging scammers with questions to which only the rightful owner knows the answers. In Benton County, Indiana, the service is being offered to owners at a half-price discounted subscription rate.

Meanwhile, the FBI also suggests owners visit their vacant properties periodically and ask neighbors to report suspicious activities. Also, owners should take action if utility or property tax bills suddenly increase or stop coming.

In addition, the Bureau wants realty and mortgage professionals to avoid remote closing when possible and request copies of documents only the true property owner would have, including their most recent tax bill, utility bill, or survey from when the property was acquired.

They also should send a certified letter to the address of record on the tax bill and look up the phone number by reverse search or through the phone carrier and call to verify ownership. The public notary should confirm the owner has attested to the documents.

Fraud or suspected fraud can be reported to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.

**VARIANCE REPORT FOR DEPARTMENT -- COUNTY PLANNING & RESOURCES
FOR THE QUARTER ENDING 12/31/2025**

TIMING	G/L CATEGORY	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
	Revenues		
x	Intergovernmental Revenues	109,618.76	Timing of SOGL Marsh & Brownfield's grant funding. Budget neutral. Timing of Snowmobile grant funding. Budget neutral. More local government revenue from DNR Multi-Discharger Phosphorus Variance (MDV) Program.
	Licenses and Permits	20,938.80	More revenue from erosion control permits, boat launch fees, and sanitary permits.
	Public Charges for Services	34,554.12	More business revenue than expected for DNR Multi-Discharger Phosphorus Variance (MDV) Program. RCPP Reimbursement for employee wages.
	Interest and Other Revenues	57,421.15	More rent for the Kohler Center for Marsh Education (KCME) than expected. Reimbursements for Rocky Knoll Flow Trail and Three Guys & a Grill lodge repairs.
x	Interdepartmental Revenues	(2,295.00)	Timing of payment for non-metallic mining accrued from Highway department.
	Expenses		
	Wages & Benefits	4,922.92	Fulltime employee working less hours during off-season.
x	Operating Expenses	(225,991.83)	Stewardship unused funds from prior years that were recouped in 2024 and used in 2025. Budget neutral. Expenses for County Road E and Brownfields projects to be reimbursed. Budget neutral. Expense for new Marsh electrical service to be partially covered by non-lapsing account.
	Interdepartmental Charges	(32,098.07)	Employee opting-in for insurance under Sheboygan County.
	Variances Less Than Justification Threshold	19,014.43	
	TOTAL	(13,914.72) Negative	

**VARIANCE REPORT FOR DEPARTMENT -- COUNTY PLANNING & RESOURCES
FOR THE QUARTER ENDING 3/31/2026**

TIMING	G/L CATEGORY	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
	Revenues		
X	Intergovernmental Revenues	(64,872.50)	Timing of Snowmobile Grant funds. More than expected for MDV funds.
X	Licenses and Permits	(74,978.96)	Timing of Household Hazardous Waste fees. Timing of journal entries by Finance for POWTS fees. Journal entries in 2nd quarter.
	Public Charges for Services	(5,583.73)	Less tree sale revenue than expected. Budget neutral.
	Interest and Other Revenues	3,399.00	More revenue than expected for the KCME. Marsh boardwalk reimbursement.
	Expenses		
	Wages & Benefits	37,384.86	Fulltime employee working less hours during off-season. Retirement of fulltime employee.
X	Operating Expenses	2,839.95	Timing of Snowmobile Grant expenses.
	Interdepartmental Charges	4,610.42	Less expense than expected for highway department work.
X	Capital Outlay	16,000.00	Timing of expense of new zero turn lawn mower. Expense in 2nd quarter.
	Variances Less Than Justification Threshold	45,733.43	
	TOTAL	(35,467.53) Negative	

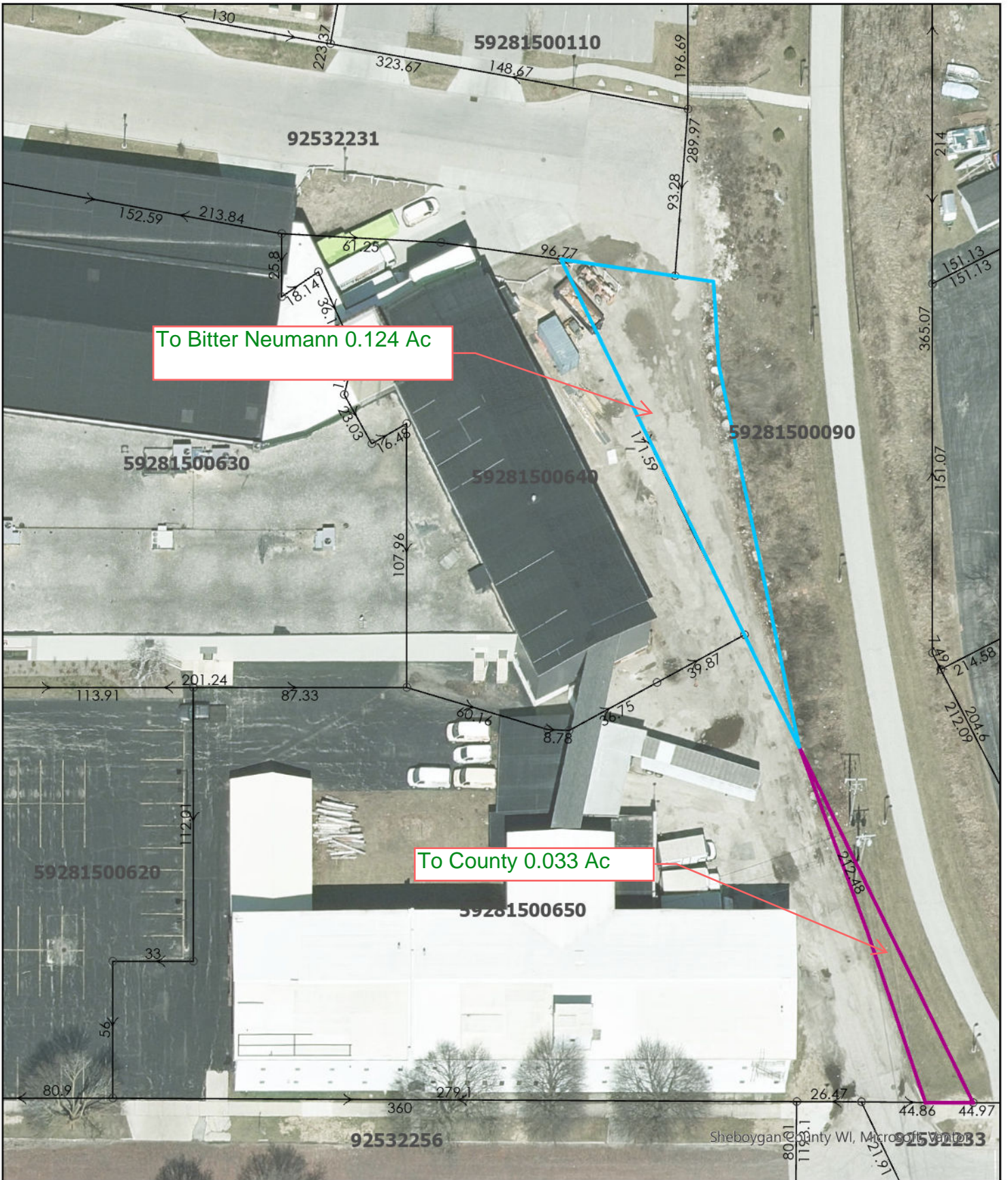


Exhibit A

Broughton Sheboygan Marsh

Strategic Management Plan

2026 Update



Public Open House / Information Meetings

- April 7, 2025
- April 10, 2025

Approvals

- Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Advisory Committee — *April 27, 2026*
- Planning, Resources, Agriculture & Extension Committee — *May 2026*
- Sheboygan County Board — *June 2026*



Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Strategic Management Plan 2026 Update

prepared under & authorized by

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' PLANNING, RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE & EXTENSION COMMITTEE (PRAECom)

Rebecca Clarke, Chairman (District 5)
Henry Nelson, Vice Chairman (District 6)
John Nelson, Secretary (District 16)
Joe Liebau, (District 15)
David Otte, (District 25)
Stan Lammers (post-mortem), (District 25)
Travis Luedke, (Agricultural Representative)

lead agency

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY PLANNING & CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

Aaron Brault, Director

Tyler Betry, County Conservationist

project team

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Keith Abler, Sheboygan County Board Chairman
Jon Kuhlow, Sheboygan County Board Property Committee Rep
Rebecca Clarke, PRAECom Rep
Josh McDole, Sheboygan County Conservation Association
Phil Mersberger, Sheboygan County Conservation Association
Dan Schmahl, Town of Russell
Tanner Klein, Wisconsin DNR
Jeremiah Dentz, Outdoor Skills & Education Center
Dave D'Angelico, Marsh Park Facilities Manager
Mike Holden, Northern Kettle Moraine Snowmobile Association
Dale Katsma, Citizen
Lil Pipping, Citizen
Brett Edgerle, Citizen
Dave Derus, Citizen
Mike Heidt, Citizen

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Acknowledgments

Preparation of the *Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Strategic Management Plan 2026 Update* was financially sponsored by Sheboygan County in its annual operating budget. The Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation Department was the lead agency in defining and developing the *2026 Plan Update* and in identifying its implementation strategies. The Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Advisory Committee provided valuable insight and guidance throughout the entire plan update process. Their hard work and dedication is appreciated.

A special thanks should be made to those individuals who are comprised of the original team that crafted the original *2001 Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Strategic Management Plan*. As with any planning document, the goals and objectives and implementation strategies will change over time. However, as the original *2001 Plan* was so well written and thought out, the *2013 and 2026 Updates* went very smoothly. Similar to the 2013 Update, other than a number of goals, and objectives and implementation items, not much has changed for the 2026 Update.

An additional thanks and appreciation should be made to all the individuals who attended the public input sessions and completed the online survey. There was a very good, commendable response from both forms of input.

Tanner Klein of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provided valuable insight to the survey questions, provided important and relevant information at the public input sessions, and provided much of the updated WDNR information listed in the report.

The collaborative efforts of local, county, and state agency personnel, the Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Advisory Committee (SCRFMAC) should be commended.

Aaron Brault, Sheboygan County's Planning & Conservation Director, was the *2026 Plan Update's* principal author. It should be noted that much of the text from the *2001 Plan and the 2013 Plan Update* was still relevant, especially the background text, and that the authors of the *2001 Plan* deserve much credit in the *2013 and 2026 Plan Updates* as well.

Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Strategic Management Plan 2026 Update

Mission & Vision

This plan will be a guide to the successful management of the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh's future. The plan will be based on science and proven management techniques guiding the stewardship of the treasured resource that is the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh.

Goals & Objectives

1. To preserve this ecologically, geologically, & archaeologically significant area of Wisconsin for present and future generations.
2. To provide recreational & educational opportunities that are clearly complementary & compatible with the natural environment of ***Sheboygan Marsh***.
3. To protect species, communities, & ecosystems and demonstrate sound resource management.
4. To retain a place to experience and embrace nature.
5. To develop those programs and facilities that will promote the natural and cultural resources of ***Sheboygan Marsh***, and enhance the use and enjoyment of this ***special place***.
6. To support opportunities to add lands that are deemed necessary to protect the waters, lands, and living resources at ***Sheboygan Marsh***.
7. To encourage consideration of conservation values in the management of ***privately-owned***, adjoining lands and waters.
8. To strengthen relationships with neighboring landowners, conservation organizations, and local municipalities.
9. To foster public participation and increase public understanding of how the management decisions regarding the ***Sheboygan Marsh*** are made and applied.
10. To manage today, for tomorrow, with the vision of Charles E. Broughton yesterday.

Executive Summary

The Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area is the prominent feature in a 133 square mile watershed of the Sheboygan River. This area contains about 14,000 acres of land and surface water, of which 7,528 acres are owned by Sheboygan County and an additional 871 acres are owned by the State of Wisconsin. The balance is under private ownership.

The Marsh exists due to the retreat of the last glacier that covered the region. Melt waters and successive flows were blocked by a prominent rock outcropping which served as a dam. Over thousands of years, the original glacial lake formed behind the outcropping filled with decaying plant matter to form the present-day Marsh. In fact, up to 100 feet of marl and peat fill the basin.

The Marsh is home to white tail deer, wild turkey, coyotes, fox, great blue herons, sandhill cranes, ruffed grouse, red-tail hawks, sora rails, yellow-headed blackbirds, rabbits, raccoons, muskrats, and mink. The Marsh is an important waterfowl nesting and staging area. Fish species include northern pike, bass, black bullhead, and panfish, though, like many marsh ecosystems it is not an abundant fishery. In addition to these larger and widely known animals, the Marsh is a biological repository for countless other organisms, many of which may never be seen by the casual observer.

Most people would probably agree that preserving the Marsh is a good idea, but that was not the case from about 1870 to about 1930. During those years, there were several schemes to drain the Marsh and convert it to farmland. Enormous steam-powered dredges were used to dig ditches, and more than 20 miles of those drainage ditches can still be seen and traversed in the Marsh today.

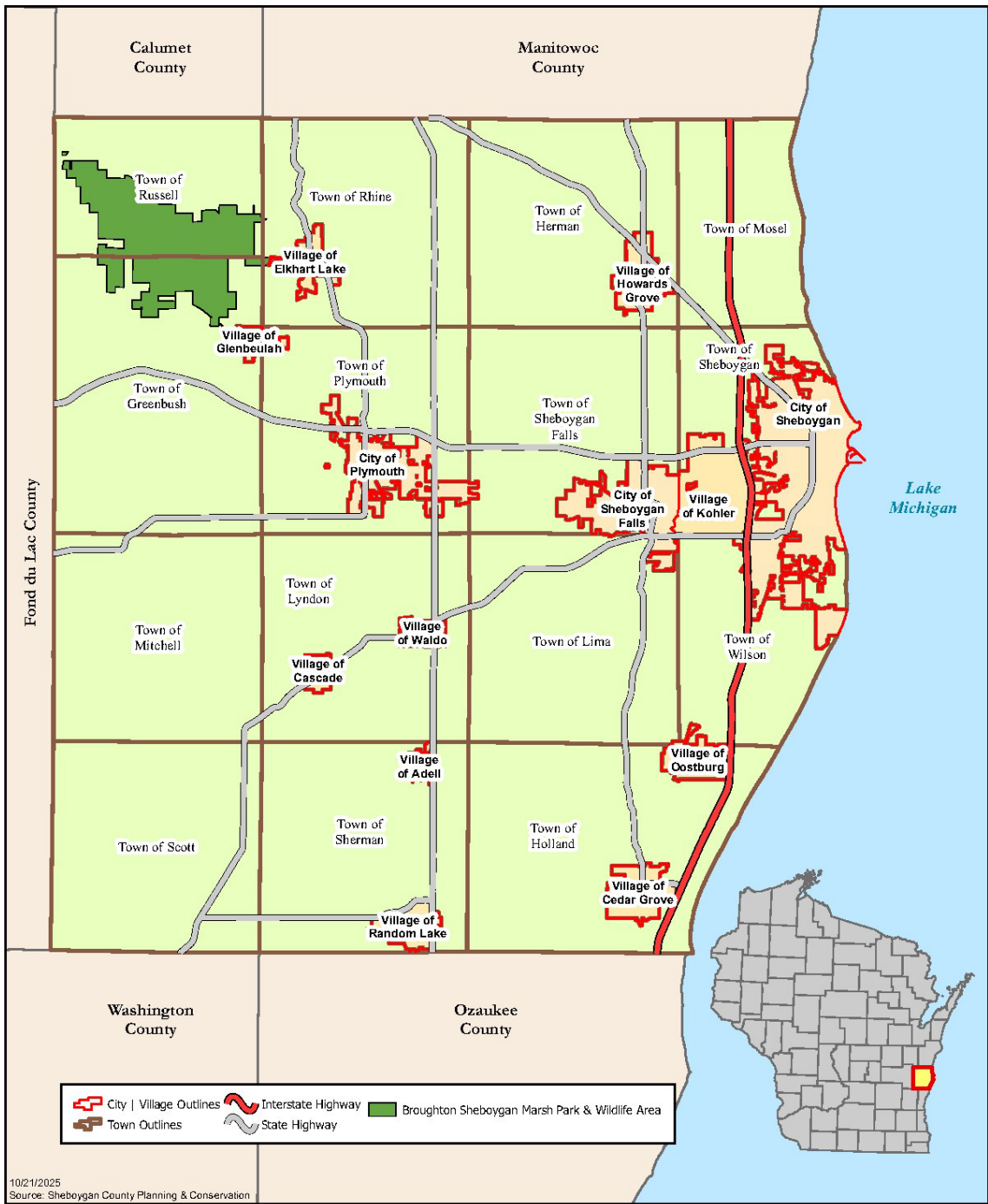
Large parts of the Marsh were actually drained by these attempts, but the personal fortunes of investors were squandered as sales of the drained lands never materialized. Instead of the "Utopia" proponents had hoped for, draining the Marsh resulted in environmental devastation, and large areas of the Marsh became wastelands instead of wetlands.

Beginning in 1927, conservation-minded citizens began attempts to restore the Marsh. These efforts were led by Charles E. Broughton and the Sheboygan Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. Mr. Broughton started by donating 80 acres of the land to Sheboygan County. The County subsequently purchased 6,349 acres at a public foreclosure. In 1938, a dam was constructed by the Federal Works Progress Administration. The new dam quickly reflooded the area, and the Marsh once again flourished as it does to this day.

Just based on this short history, one can see that there are many issues that surround the management of the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh. From water level management to acquisitions, the ultimate goal of this plan is to provide Sheboygan County and its partners with a sound, scientific guidance on how best to oversee the various matters which take place at Sheboygan County's most significant ecological resource.

Compared to the *2013 Plan*, the most significant changes to this plan include the drive for more educational and recreational opportunities, the implementation strategies concerning bog management, forestry management and fishery management, as well as the operation of the new dam and Kohler Center for Marsh Education (KCME).

As with any plan, this document is a guide and should be a living, working document that changes or is updated due to future circumstances that may take place not foreseen at the time of publishing. Only then will its guidance be accurate and logical.



Location of Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area



Figure 0 - Marsh Location Map

Chapter 1 – Priority Issues, Concerns, & Topics

Introductory Comments

The priority issues, concerns, and topics set forth in this plan were identified and prioritized through information gathered at two public input sessions, through an online survey, and a random direct mailing to 500 Sheboygan County households. These methods employed a structured public input process ([See Appendix A](#)).

Priority Issues, Concerns, & Topics

As with the original *2001 Plan*, a number of issues, concerns, and/or topics became a consistent theme throughout the discussions. From the input gathered for the *2026 Plan Update*, those issues, concerns, and/or topics that were most prevalent were:

- *Continue to provide and expand the educational opportunities at the Marsh*
- *Research & implement better cattail management at the Marsh*
- *Proper planning, keep the surrounding area from being developed*
- *Provide more recreational opportunities at the Marsh like boardwalks, trails, and kayaking*
- *Manage the Marsh for what it is, a marsh*
- *Maintain a fishery and hunting opportunities*
- *Clear ditches of debris to make more accessible and consider dredging South Ditch*

Because of the diverse user groups at the Marsh, there is no way that the decisions made from the guidance of this plan will ever please everyone. That is why, the implementation strategies regarding the above and other identified issues, concerns, and/or topics are based on scientific and professional knowledge, not hearsay or whims.

Each of the above-mentioned issues, concerns, and/or topics is explored in further detail below.

Educational Opportunities

Since 1992, the Camp Y-Koda Outdoor Skills Center has held environmental educational opportunities at the Marsh for children and teens of all ages. Each year thousands of area school district children and teens embark upon the Marsh to learn about wetland ecology. Though not limited to the following, the participants partake in a canoe tour of the wetland learning about the natural history, and observing biodiversity and ecological interactions within the area. Discussions are generated around key concepts including: succession, ecosystems, community, food chains, wetland functions and more. Students participate in an activity showing how wetlands have been diminished over time. Students also use the scientific method to determine if the marsh is a healthy

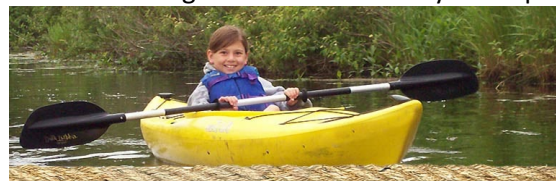


Figure 1 - Kayaking at the Marsh

ecosystem based on macro invertebrate sampling and identification. Students also participate in activities that demonstrate the relationship of predator and prey, and competition.

The public input survey responses listed educational opportunities as a top answer. The Camp Y-Koda Outdoor Skills Center has become such a popular educational opportunity for the local school districts, space is at a premium and the program is now run out of the Kohler Center for Marsh Education (KCME). The KCME provides a world-class educational setting where the building itself is an educational tool. The environmental programming director(s) of Camp Y-Koda would also like to expand into more year-round offerings as demand continues to grow. The construction of the KCME definitely helps the educational opportunities maintain and improve their success.

Educational opportunities as those afforded by Camp Y-Koda’s programming provide lifelong lessons in proper and appropriate care for our environment. A legacy of knowledge regarding the Marsh’s health is provided through the educational programming. Further enhancing these opportunities can only help protect the Marsh. Time and time again during the public input meetings and after reviewing the online survey in all of the plan updates we have heard or seen quotes like the following detailing the strong support for maintaining and improving the educational opportunities.

“Develop any type of activity that would educate/introduce our youth to the great outdoors, in particular something that drives home the importance of hunting/fishing as a game management tool. Let’s develop/offer activities that teach all ages that the Sheboygan Marsh is a great resource to be shared by all.”

Quote from online survey response.

Water Level Management

Throughout modern history, water level management at the Marsh has been on the forefront of any discussion about the resource. The water level dialogue is quite broad as it affects many different aspects of the Marsh. For example, drawdowns have been scientifically shown to mimic ecological effects of drought conditions prior to any attempt at human management. In essence, drawdowns are a necessary tool in providing for a diverse, healthy marsh ecosystem. However, drawdowns can be quite



Figure 3 - Marsh Drawdown 2011

controversial in that they no doubt affect a number of different user-groups such as fishermen. That said, while past public input sessions and surveys saw large responses in regards to drawdowns, both for and against, during this update, there was very little mention of drawdowns. The new dam has proven wildly successful in keeping water levels steady, which was one of the main goals of building the new structure. Perhaps this has led to the user-groups at the Marsh to focus on other concerns, or,



Figure 2 - Cattail Removal 2011

perhaps, the stakeholders have come to realize drawdowns are a necessary function of maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Or, perhaps there it is a combination of both or something entirely different. No matter, there is certainly less discussion surrounding drawdowns. It should be noted too that although the vast majority of survey respondents state that the Marsh should be managed as a Marsh, not as a fishery, providing for and maintaining a fishery was one of the top responses at the public input sessions. Drawdown cycles obviously do not promote an extensive fishery.

A water level management issue that arose after the manmade dam was built in 1938 was controlling the floating cattail mats that back up behind dam. These mats are a result of the rapid fluctuation of the waterbody after heavy rain events as the mats were “ripped” away from their roots and eventually float downstream to behind the dam. In 1968, a bypass tube was installed around the northside of the dam to try and help control the water level fluctuations. This tube, however, proved too small and the cattail problem persisted. Luckily, in 2012 Ducks Unlimited took an interest in the problem and agreed to partner with Sheboygan County and the WDNR to conduct a feasibility study as to how to better control water levels of the waterbody. The ultimate goal was to allow more water to pass during heavy rain events or thaws. After nearly a decade of planning and fundraising, the new dam became reality in 2024. Time will tell, but since the installation of the new dam, there have been no cattail removal events. As the following tables show, the rapid fluctuations of the water level have substantially subsided as well. In the past, the dam used to see fluctuations in terms of feet; now it is typically inches or less.

Overall, the primary reasons for water level management at the Marsh are: 1) to reduce problems with floating cattail mats, and 2) to improve the ecological

Year	Cost	Notes
1880s		Bertschy attempts drainage - (lowers 7" +/-)
1910s		Land & Lime Co. drains marsh
1921-1937		Drawdown & peat fires
1938		Dam built to restore water levels, Works Progress Project
1953		Concern builds over loss of cattail bogs during high water
1968		Problems w/ floating cattails noted. Drawdown and installation of bypass
1980		Problems w/ floating cattails noted.
1981		Cattail blockages @ dam & river
1984		Cattail removal prior to partial drawdown
1985		Bulrush removed, high water
1986		Flooding in September/fish kill
1987		Complete drawdown & fish eradication
1988		Drought 13" +/- below dam
1993	\$ 2,409.00	Flooding
1994	\$ 1,842.00	
1995	\$ 351.00	Partial drawdown
1996-2000	\$ 82,840.00	
2001	\$ 39,191.00	First strategic management plan completed
2002	\$ 666.00	Drawdown from May-Nov
2004	\$ 1,211.00	High water early summer, at time all-time record water level over dam 34" +/-
2006	\$ 509.00	Helicopter spraying of ditches, lake area and river blockages
2007	\$ 1,177.00	
2008	\$ 4,947.00	Cattail spraying, high water 34" +/-
2009	\$ 4,570.00	
2010	\$ 67,300.00	Over 500 quad-axle dump truck loads of cattail bogs hauled away.
2011	\$ 47,689.00	Drawdown from May-Nov
2012		Summer drought, no cattail removals. Spraying from helicopter
2013	\$ 653.00	Second strategic management plan completed
2014	\$ 4,940.00	
2015	\$ 10,956.00	
2016	\$ 26,155.00	Work begins on planning for a new dam
2017	\$ 55,639.00	Drawdown planned, but too wet
2018	\$ 74,146.00	Drawdown planned, but too wet
2019	\$ 32,203.00	Drawdown planned, but too wet
2020	\$ 50,841.00	Drawdown planned, but too wet
2021	\$ 53,390.00	Drawdown planned, but too wet
2022	\$ 18,272.00	
2023	\$ 15,961.00	New dam construction begins mid-summer
2024		New dam installed to better control water levels
Total*	\$ 597,858.00	

*Note - Costs are only those for which the Department has records of. The actual total is likely much higher.

Table 1 - Historical Bog Removal Costs

diversity thereby improving all wildlife habitat as a result.

What follows is mostly text from the *2001 Plan* that provides a detailed history of the water level issues and the water level strategies available. The thoughts in this area of the *2001 Plan* are no different than what they were in the *2013 Plan Update* and now the *2026 Plan Update*.

Water Level History

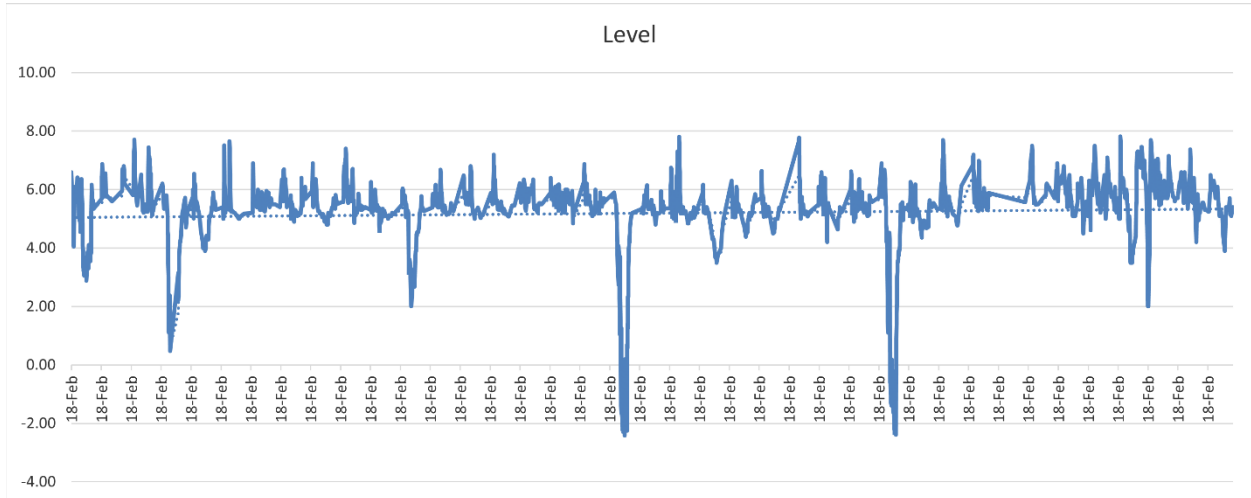


Figure 4a - Water Level History 1984-2022

Water Level History

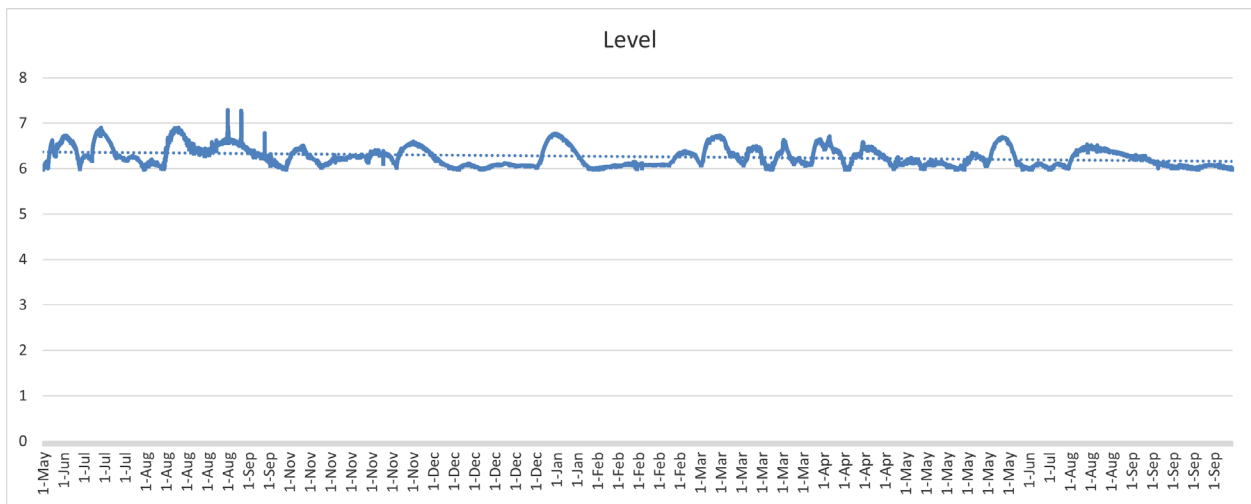


Figure 4b - Water Level History 2024-2026

The Sheboygan Marsh “flowage” is in fact a restored wetland; restoration was completed in 1938 with the installation of the dam (the Sheboygan Marsh is the largest restored wetland in the Lake Michigan and Lake Superior basins of Wisconsin). The water levels were restored, “according to the engineer in charge, to about what it was between the years of 1868 to 1921.” This level was verified by a field investigation in 1999 & 2000 ([Chapter 3](#)). Water level does not mean depth, however. The depths in 1938 were much greater than the depths reported by Peterson and Sinz in 1905. “No data was given in the government surveys of 1837, but undoubtedly the Marsh was deeper in places in 1938 than it was in 1837” (Herman, 1941). This was probably the result of peat fires and normal oxidation of the soils during the period that the Marsh was drained between 1921 and 1937.

While the problems with floating cattail mats and the “opening up” of the Marsh was well-evidenced back in the 1940s and 1950s, media accounts documented those problems beginning in the late 1960s. In a more recent timeframe, flood events in 1995 and 1997 exasperated the floating cattail mats prior to the 2002 drawdown. In 2010 and 2011, record amounts of monies were spent to rid the cattail mats. High water levels, high wind events and the time lag between drawdowns appeared to be the primary culprits in these years. In some instances, over 3-acres of cattail mats backed up behind the dam. The following figures illustrate those backups.



Figure 5 - Cattail Backup Spring 2011 Prior to Drawdown



Figure 6 - Cattail Backup Fall 2010

Over the recorded history of the Marsh the water levels have been manipulated quite frequently in one way or another. The following table, Table 2, chronicles over a century of these manipulations.

Table 2 - Historic Water Level History

Timeframe	Event
1870-1890	John Bertschy attempted drainage – but succeed in lowering the limestone ledge at the outlet only 6-8 inches (1).
1904-1905	Peterson & Sinz conducted an engineering study on how to drain the marsh (1). Description of the outer edge of the marsh indicated occurrence of tamarack and brush similar to what it is today. They wrote, “The Central portion is a prairie covered with tall marsh grass, which is a source of large fires each fall.” They also wrote, “The limestone ledge is the main cause of the existence of the swamp...the cross section of the channel at this point being so very small as compared to that in the swamp, in time of flood flow it is entirely too small to carry all the water. In the spring of the year the eastern part of the swamp for two to three miles up is entirely covered.”
1912-1921	Sheboygan Valley Land & Lime Company attempted to drain the marsh. More than 20 miles of ditches, varying in depth from 6’ to 20’ were dug. A channel was blasted through the limestone ledge on the eastern edge of the marsh. The project was fairly successful, but post-war farmland prices were low and availability high. The promoters eventually defaulted on their taxes.
1921-1927	Peat fires, oxidation, and compaction lowered the bottom of the marsh.
1928 & 1931	A local group of concerned citizens built a temporary dam.
1936	Site of the dam and adjoining 8 acres purchased by C.E. Broughton
1937-1938	W.P.A. built the present dam
1938	Dam completed in March. Water levels restored; according to engineer in charge, to about what it was between the years 1868 to 1921. Water levels were probably about the same but peat fires, oxidation, and compaction of the bottom sediments meant water depths were greater than found in 1921.
1938, 1941, 1942, 1949, 1952	“The area of open water on the Sheboygan Marsh has been increasing in size since 1942. Previously, this particular area had a considerable stand of wild rice, hardstem and river bulrush, and some seed grass. When visited in 1949, the area of open water appeared to be at least 150 acres in size. It is believed that this increase in size of the open water area is due in a large measure to the high water level held at the dam (2).”
1953	Water level raised another 6 inches by the installation of a 6-inch I-beam as flashboards on top of the spillway.
1968	A bypass was installed around the dam with state, county, and sportsmens funds. “The purpose was to allow water-level management in the marsh to improve hunting and fishing and to reduce loss associated with marsh bogs.” (Sheboygan Press, April 1967, March 1968).
1981-1983	Floating mats of cattails blocked flow at the dam, and in the river downstream of the dam.
1984	Sheboygan Marsh Master Plan & Management Agreement between state and county was completed. Removal of 6” I-beams from the top of the spillway. Partial summer drawdown (~18” below the spillway). Redredged the south ditch. Great response by annual wet-soil plants such as smartweed and bidens.
1985	Perennial plants appear such as softstem bulrush, arrowhead, bur-reed, water plantain and some new cattail growth. Good response by wildlife with black terns and yellow-headed blackbirds returning. Ducks and muskrats increasing in numbers.

Timeframe	Event
1986	Heavy fall rains (record 13" in September) result in a fish kill and floating bulrush mats at the dam.
1987	Complete summer drawdown to conduct chemical fish eradication. Redredged area in front of the dam. Smartweeds and bidens respond well.
1988	A drought year with a natural partial drawdown of water levels to almost 13 inches below the spillway in August of that year. This allowed for expansion of cattails throughout the lake area.
1993	Problems with floating cattail mats after record-setting rainfall during the spring and summer. (Fond du Lac County declared a disaster area for federal flood damage funds). Approximately 250 acres of cattails float to the dam area.
1995	Partial drawdown with low precipitation – causing levels to go down to 3 feet below the spillway for approximately one week in July. Hot, dry summer with partial fish kill. Poor response by annual aquatic plants and very little cattail expansion.
1996	Some response by soft-stem bulrush, arrowhead, giant bur-reed and large quantities of duck weed.
1997	Unusual rainfall periods (i.e. >6" in 3 days in June).
1998 -2001	Continuing problems with floating cattail mats at the dam.
2002	Full drawdown takes place.
2008-2009	Bog removal efforts creep up.
2010-2011	Bog removal efforts are extraordinary. Over 700 truckloads of material have to be removed in 2010 and another 450 in 2011 prior to the full drawdown.
2011	Full summer drawdown. Good growth of bidens, bulrush, and other native species.
2012	Partial drawdown due to drought. No cattail mat removal needed.
2013	Management Plan Update completed, little cattail mat removal needed.
2017-2022	Per the Management Plan a drawdown every 5 years or as ecological conditions warrant should happen. For the next 5 years, a summer drawdown is attempted, but failed due to very wet conditions. In fact, this stretch of time is potentially the wettest on record to date.

The record removals prompted a serious discussion on how to try and help resolve this issue, and, as mentioned, starting soon after the *2013 Plan Update* adoption, the County, WDNR and Ducks Unlimited started working on implementing the goal of a new dam to allow for better water control.

Water Level Strategies

The following impact analysis is based on published literature, experience with water level management of similar flowages in the state, and on past experience with water level management on *Sheboygan Marsh*.

There are two written reports from two “outside” experts, after field visits on the Sheboygan Marsh: Art Techlow, DNR fishery biologist with extensive experience on the Winnebago Lakes system (1998); and Russ Terry, a Ducks Unlimited habitat biologist (1999). In 2011, as part of the plan update process, Mr. John C. Panuska, Ph.D., P.E, a Natural Resources Extension Specialist in the Biological Systems Engineering

Department at the University of Wisconsin, presented to those on the planning team as well as interested citizens regarding drawdowns, drawdown effects, and possible alternatives. Similar to the findings Mr. Techlow and Mr. Terry provided for the *2001 Plan*, Mr. Panuska also stated drawdowns are a beneficial tool towards wetland health.

Mr. Techlow stated, *“Floating cattail mats are symptomatic of flowages with high water levels, and with too long of intervals between drawdowns.”* In comparing similar problems at nearby Eldorado Marsh and Rush Lake, he noted, *“The best managed marshes typically have more frequent drawdowns, 4- to 5-year intervals, and keep lower water levels.”*

Mr. Terry reported, *“Floating cattail mats most commonly occur in impounded areas that are infrequently or never drawn down.”* He felt the partial drawdowns every 5-7 years were too infrequent, and concluded, *“I recommend a water level management scheme where water is slowly drawn down every 2-4 years.”*

Mr. Panuska stated too that drawdowns every 4-6 years, or if ecological indicators illustrate the need sooner, are important to thwart the undesired consequences of floating cattail mats at the Marsh.

In his book *Freshwater Marshes – Ecology and Management* world renowned expert M.W. Weller also discusses loss of emergent aquatics in marshes which is a subject directly related to drawdowns. One can see in the following figures the effects hydrology and vegetation have on wildlife populations.

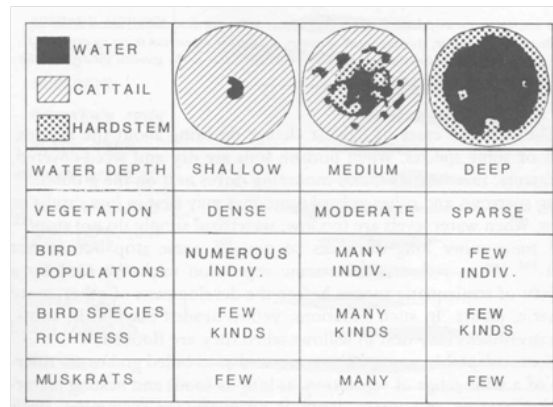


Figure 7 - Emergent Aquatics Illustration

As a marsh passes from dense vegetation to open water because of the action of high water and muskrat activity, considerable change takes place in the numbers of muskrats and birds, and a major change in bird-species richness. The same differences in numbers or species tend to occur in wetlands that, because of water depth, remain in these “stages” for long periods. (Weller, M.W. Freshwater Marshes – Ecology and Management. 1981)

Decline of wet-meadow and mud-flat species concurrent with growth in abundance of cattail. Following reflooding, wet-meadow species such as beggars-tick (*Bidens*) and smartweed were eliminated in one or two years. Marsh-edge species like arrowhead and softstem bulrush survived two to four years of flooding, whereas cattail increased for several years until it was eaten out by muskrats or floated up by high water. (Weller, M.W. *Freshwater Marshes – Ecology and Management*. 1981)

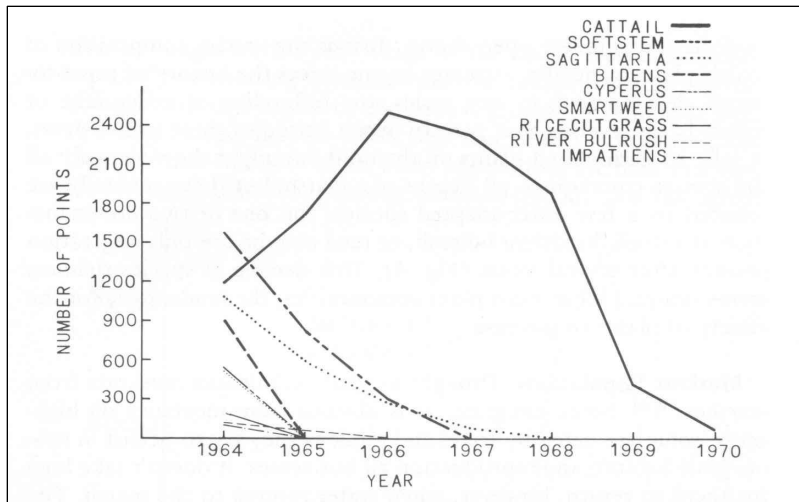


Figure 8 - Cattail Growth Consequences

Considering the input received from the public and from what professional experts reported in both the 2001 Plan and as part of the 2013 Plan Update the following alternative impact analysis was completed. Each of the presented alternatives was analyzed by evaluating the likely impacts to: 1) aquatic vegetation, 2) wildlife, 3) fish, 4) navigation/boating, 5) other environmental impacts, and 6) upland vegetation. Six strategies were reviewed and evaluated. These strategies and associated matrix are still relevant for the 2026 Plan Update:

1. Maintain “normal/natural” water levels.
2. Maintain “normal/natural” water levels, except for bypassing water during peak flows in spring & fall.
3. Lower the average water level by 0.5 to 1.0 feet.
4. Conduct winter drawdowns.
5. Conduct partial summer drawdowns.
6. Conduct full summer drawdowns.

Table 3 - Water Management Impact Analysis

Water Level Strategy	Aquatic Vegetation		Wetland Wildlife		Fish		Boating & Navigation		Other Env. Impacts		Upland Vegetation		Total Score	Comments
	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term		
Normal Water Levels	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-6	
Normal w/ Peak Attenuation	1	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-4	
Lower Levels by 0.5-1.0 Feet	1	-1	1	-1	1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-4	

Water Level Strategy	Aquatic Vegetation		Wetland Wildlife		Fish		Boating & Navigation		Other Env. Impacts		Upland Vegetation		Total Score	Comments
	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term		
Winter Drawdowns	1	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-6	Hazardous for ATV & Snowmobile Users
Partial Summer Drawdown	1	1	1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	1	0	0	0	
Complete Summer Drawdown	1	1	1	1	-1	0	-1	0	-1	1	0	0	2	Carp Control Possible, Dredging Possible

Analysis Indicators Considered Short-term & Long-term Effects
1 = Positive, -1 = Negative, 0 = No Impact

1. Maintain “normal” water levels.

Under this water level strategy, normal water level fluctuations would occur without any attempt to control water levels with the dam gates. There would be larger water level fluctuations than occur now especially because of the new dam’s abilities to control levels, especially in the spring and fall.

- **Aquatic vegetation:** The diversity and quantity of emergent plants would continue to decline as wave action, ice and carp dislodge cattail mats along the edge of the open “lake” area. Submergent plant diversity would likely decline as well, from increased suspension of silt and less sunlight penetration.
- **Wildlife:** Less cover and lower plant diversity would result in lower numbers and diversity of wildlife using the deep marsh area. Waterfowl numbers would decline during the breeding season (less cover for nesting and brood habitat) and migration (less cover and food), except for an increase in use by diving ducks during the latter part of migration. Muskrat and mink numbers would decline, as well. There would also be a decline in shorebird and wading bird use, as well as in use by terns and songbirds.
- **Fish:** This alternative would have the least impact to fish communities in the Marsh. Populations would experience natural fluctuations in population size and length structure.
- **Navigation/boating recreation:** Opportunities for this activity would likely increase during spring, early summer, and fall. Dense growth of coontail and milfoil would likely restrict boating activities during mid-summer and early fall.
- **Other environmental impacts:** As plant diversity decreases and suspended sediments increase, the diversity and number of invertebrates, and planktonic species will decrease. The open water area of the marsh will continue to increase and emergent vegetation will decline; this will lead to increased wave action and suspension of sediments.

2. Maintain “normal” water levels, except for flushing water during peak flows in spring and fall by opening the dam’s gates.

We would expect similar results as found with strategy 1. Northern pike may be negatively impacted by this alternative as flooded vegetation would be less available in most years during the egg laying and incubation period at ice out. Northern pike fry and fingerling may be stranded in isolated pockets of water.

3. Lower average water levels by 0.5 to 1.0 foot.

The mudflats that would be exposed would initially sprout a variety of annual and then perennial plants. But, within 3 to 4 years those areas would likely fill in with cattails. The area of open water would be reduced by about 25-percent and the remaining area would be shallower by 0.5 to 1.0 foot. Cattails may invade more of the remaining “lake” area, as the optimal depth for cattail growth is 1.5 to 2.5 feet. Water level fluctuations would continue to be a problem and floating cattail mats may be even more of a problem.

- Aquatic vegetation: Would increase the amount of emergent vegetation because of shallower water levels. Problems with floating cattail mats would likely continue, and may become worse. Submergent plants would decrease because of less area but would be dense in the remaining “open” water areas.
- Wildlife: Waterfowl and other water birds would likely increase initially but may decline over time, as the diversity of emergent vegetation declines. Use by migrating diving ducks would likely decline. Muskrat and mink populations would increase initially and then decline as emergent vegetation declines. General loss of wetland species with the loss of deep water marsh habitat.
- Fish: The lowered residence time of water in the Marsh may be beneficial to many fish species. The faster exchange of water should be especially beneficial in winter when stagnant areas of the Marsh experience depleted oxygen conditions. Fish would be more confined to flowing areas of the Marsh in natural and man-made channels.
- Navigation/boating recreation: The opportunities for this activity would decline, especially in the spring and fall. Opportunities on the river itself would remain about the same.
- Other environmental impacts: There would be an increase shrub and tree growth with lower water. Over time more area of shrub-carr, lowland timber, and wet meadow wetland types would develop.

4. Winter drawdowns.

Water levels would be drawn off after ice has formed, likely in early December. Another approach would be to keep water levels high until February, or early March, and then draw down in anticipation of spring runoff. Late winter drawdowns would have less severe impacts on wildlife and aquatic plants. Regardless of the method, the water levels would be kept as low as possible until after all the frost had left the ground and cattail mats.

- Aquatic vegetation: The large watershed, 133 square miles, limits the efficacy of this technique in reducing flooding and dislodging of cattails. This technique may reduce floating cattail problems but would impact survival of some aquatic plants because of freezing under the ice. Loss of muskrats may limit their impact on reducing the area of cattails. The diversity of submergent plants would be reduced, as well as quantity. Without periodic drawdowns during the growing season the variety and quantity of emergent plants would also decline.
- Wildlife: Muskrats, mink, otter, and beaver would likely be impacted to some unknown degree. Loss of muskrats through winter freeze-outs would be likely. If the variety of aquatic vegetation were reduced there would likely be a reduction in wetland birds, including waterfowl.
- Fish: The impacts of this alternative are similar to those in Alternative 3. The lowered residence time of water would reduce the areas impacted by low oxygen conditions. Fish would be more confined to flowing areas of the Marsh.
- Navigation/boating recreation: Minimal impacts to boating. Hazardous conditions would likely develop for snowmobilers and ATV users using frozen navigation routes for recreation during the winter.
- Other environmental impacts: Lower survival of invertebrates, mollusks, and herptiles, etc.

5. Partial summer drawdowns.

Partial summer drawdowns were conducted in 1984 and 1995, in an attempt to limit problems with floating cattail mats and improve wetland wildlife habitat while limiting impacts to the fishery. The 1984 drawdown was successful in stimulating germination and growth of aquatic vegetation. There was some new cattail growth around the fringes of the remaining cattail areas. The 1995 partial drawdown did not seem to be effective in stabilizing the large mass of floating cattails for more than that year (Table 1).

- Aquatic vegetation: Vegetation response to the 1984 partial drawdown was textbook: submergents were primarily coontail and about 40 acres of wild celery; the annual, first year, emergents were composed of dense stands of smartweed and bidens, with perennials showing up the next year—primarily softstem bulrush but also wild rice, arrowhead, burreed, and some cattail expansion—mostly along existing cattail beds. Cattail mats were stabilized until flooding in September of 1986 (Table 1); even with the parking lot flooded in fall of 1985, cattails were not a problem.
- Wildlife: There was a good response to improved habitat conditions with a big increase in migratory waterfowl use the first fall (> 3500 ducks staging), as well as breeding bird increases seen for ducks, black terns, wading birds, and yellow headed blackbirds. Although no formal surveys were done, many more muskrat houses were evident in 1985 and 1986.

- Fish: Fish populations have declined during past partial drawdowns. The declines were temporary in scope with recovery generally occurring within 4 years of the drawdown. Temperature and low oxygen stress were the most likely causes of summer kills of fish during past partial drawdowns.
- Navigation/boating recreation: Partial drawdowns would decrease opportunity and use by boaters from June through August, although some access would still be available for canoes.
- Other environmental impacts: Scientific literature on drawdowns indicate that allowing vegetated aquatic areas to remain, as in a partial drawdown, provides areas for invertebrates and mollusks to survive and repopulate the flowage at full pool. Partial drawdowns retain more habitat for waterfowl, muskrats, and other wetland species during the year of the drawdown than a complete drawdown would provide. Water clarity and quality improves the year of and for a year of two after partial drawdowns.

6. Complete summer drawdowns.

Complete summer drawdowns were conducted in 1968, to install the bypass tube, and again in 1987, to allow a fish eradication project. There were also complete summer drawdowns in 2002, 2011, and in 2023 during the new dam construction. There are not good records for years following the 1968 drawdown, but initial response was likely very similar to the results from the partial drawdown in 1984. Apparently, there were not major problems with floating cattail mats because there are no records of having to remove cattails until around 1981 when newspaper accounts and file records indicate that cattail mats were blocking water flow at the dam and downstream in the river. Response to the 2002 drawdown was good in that cattails did not again become an issue until 2009. There were vast issues with floating mats in 2009, 2010 and then in early 2011 prior to the effects of that complete drawdown.

- Aquatic vegetation: 2011 and 2023 vegetation response was again as would be expected, with dense growth of smartweed and bidens showing up the first year; followed by perennials like bulrush, arrowhead, burreed, and wild rice. File references and photos indicate that cattails expanded along the existing cattail beds but not into the “lake” area during the 1968 drawdown. The complete drawdown in 1987 was followed by a drought in 1988 that lowered water levels about 18 inches, equivalent to a partial drawdown; the result of back-to-back drawdowns was germination and then growth of cattails throughout the “lake” area of the marsh. The cattails were stressed by deeper water in the “lake” area (~ 3 feet) after 1988 but persisted and slowly expanded, especially the root complex, through 1992. There were no problems noted with floating cattail mats from 1987 through 1993, when major floods occurred throughout the Midwest. Flood conditions existed in April, June, and July of 1993, ripping up cattail mats

throughout the “lake” area, approximately 250 acres. Similar to the 1987-1988 drawdown period, the 2011 drawdown witnessed a drought in the following year leading to water levels dropping approximately 10 inches. There were no cattail removals necessary in 2012. WDNR staff estimated that the cattail growth in 2012 replaced what was lost in 2009, 2010, and 2011 during the heavy flow of cattail mats to the dam area. In 2023 and then again in 2024, the vegetation response was phenomenal. Wild rice stands were present along with dense growth of smartweed and bidens. Unfortunately, cattails started to crowd out some of the successful areas in 2025. With the new dam and the associated better water control, it will be somewhat of a learning experience as time progresses as to how the vegetation will respond long-term.

- Wildlife: The response from wetland wildlife species were similar to those reported under partial drawdowns above for both the 1968 (D. G. Olson, 1969, Sheboygan Marsh Renewal, Wisconsin Conservation Bull. Vol. 34, No. 3) and 1987 drawdowns (DNR file references). Production of wetland dependent wildlife species is reduced during the years of



Figure 9 - Vegetation Response in 2024

- complete drawdowns but improved habitat in subsequent years more than makes up for these losses. However, certain bird species thrive during drawdowns.
- Fish: Full drawdowns have the greatest negative impact on fish communities in the Marsh. However, full drawdowns present the opportunity to temporarily control carp which are then confined to small areas of the Marsh where they may be eliminated with the application of the chemical rotenone. Recovery of the fishery occurs generally within four years of the full drawdowns.
- Navigation/boating recreation: Obviously boating access is very limited during the time that the water levels are down (June through August), with only limited canoe access on the river channel itself.
- Other environmental impacts: Although no surveys were done on impacts to mollusks, invertebrates, and herptiles, it can be assumed that a full drawdown does impact abundance during the year of the drawdown; Increased vegetation and nutrient release from the drawdowns likely increase these production of these organisms in subsequent years. Increased vegetation and compaction of sediments during the drawdowns improves water clarity, and probably water quality in the marsh and river. As seen in Figures 7 & 8 the most commonly accepted scenario for optimal wildlife habitat in a deep-water marsh is to provide approximately 50% dispersion of emergent vegetation with open water (termed a hemi-marsh). This scenario provides the best

condition for many individuals and greatest variety of wildlife. The accepted method to produce hemi-marsh conditions is through drawdowns of water levels.

Land Use Planning

In the *2026 Plan Update* public input sessions, planning and zoning measures were not readily brought up as they were in 2013. That said, it is still appropriate to recognize that appropriate planning and zoning measures are important to protect the unique natural areas Sheboygan County is blessed with.

It is no surprise that the towns surrounding the Marsh have been progressive in their planning efforts. These entities have realized the value of the Marsh and have planned accordingly. The Towns of Russell, Greenbush, and Rhine, within which the entirety of the Marsh is located, have all adopted Smart Growth plans and all of the entities are zoned.

As illustrated in Figure 10, the Towns have essentially zoned all of the undeveloped lands at the Sheboygan Marsh as either Lowland Conservancy (C-1) or Upland Conservancy (C-2). This stewardship is also reflected in each of their Smart Growth land use plans where much, if not all, of the land surrounding the current publicly owned Marsh land is planned as “Natural Area” or equivalent.

Sheboygan County, through its zoning authority, has also restricted many land uses surrounding the Marsh through Chapter 70 of the County Shoreland-Floodplain Ordinance. This ordinance was enacted in 1970 and has gone through several revisions since that time with the latest update occurring in 2022. See Figure 11.

Better nutrient and runoff management should continue as future project considerations. Nutrients such as nitrogen, a common ingredient in fertilizer, enter the Marsh ecosystem through poor runoff management practices. The County and WDNR have both recognized this issue as significant problem to our water resources as these additional nutrients spawn excessive vegetative growth and promote algal blooms. Both entities have programs to help combat this issue, however, there has never been a targeted effort to work with the surrounding landowners of the Marsh. To that end, since the *2013 Update*, the County has worked with a number of landowners to install best management practices, both hard and soft, in the Sheboygan Marsh Basin. These practices include: two waste transfer systems, one underground outlet, four manure storage closures, three leachate collections systems, installation of two new manure storage systems, installation of two buffers, installation of two phosphorus filters, implementation of two nutrient management plans and one well decommissioning.

In the *2013 Plan Update*, a high scoring planning item mentioned was redeveloping or developing wetland areas upstream of the Marsh. This sentiment is still relevant for the *2026 Plan Update*. Having these areas exist would help filter nutrients prior to those waters entering the Marsh, they would provide additional flood storage to help alleviate the rapid fluctuations currently seen at the Marsh, and they would ultimately provide additional habitat. As the public lands of the Marsh nearly run to the Sheboygan County line, Sheboygan County, WDNR, and Fond du Lac County will have to work collaboratively to make this planning effort a reality.

Though not directly stated as a high priority in 2013 or 2026, additional land acquisitions surrounding the Marsh will help aid in the above two planning factors that were directly stated. According to the adopted

Sheboygan County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Open Space Plan, a number of parcels adjacent to the Marsh are considered high priority acquisition areas (see Figure 12). These areas are considered high priority because they lie in watersheds that are degraded and are in need rehabilitation and protection and/or they have natural features that need to

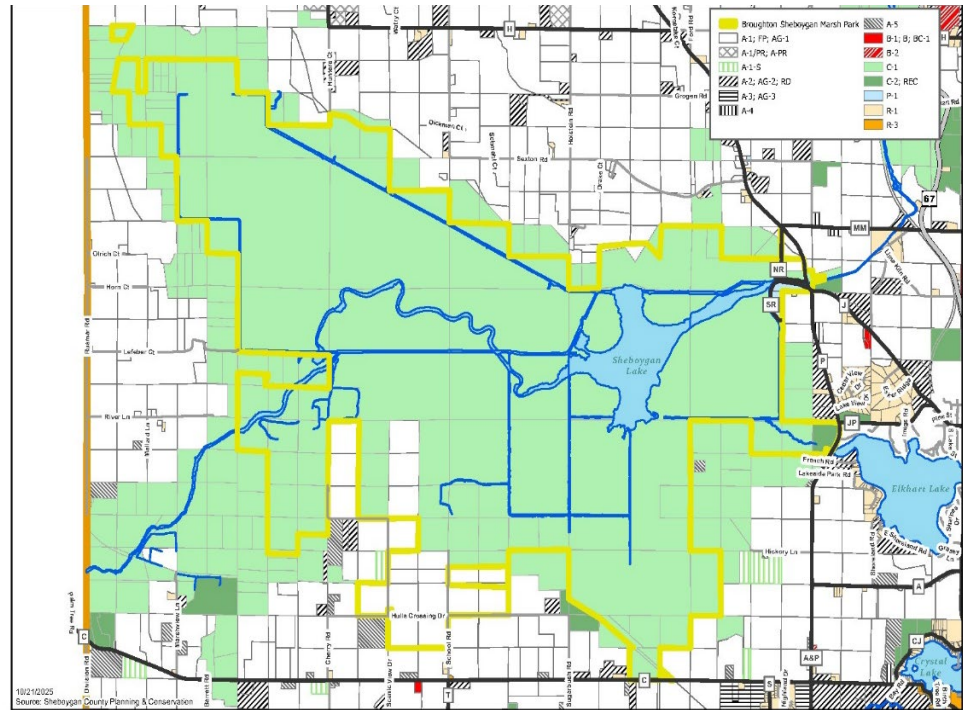
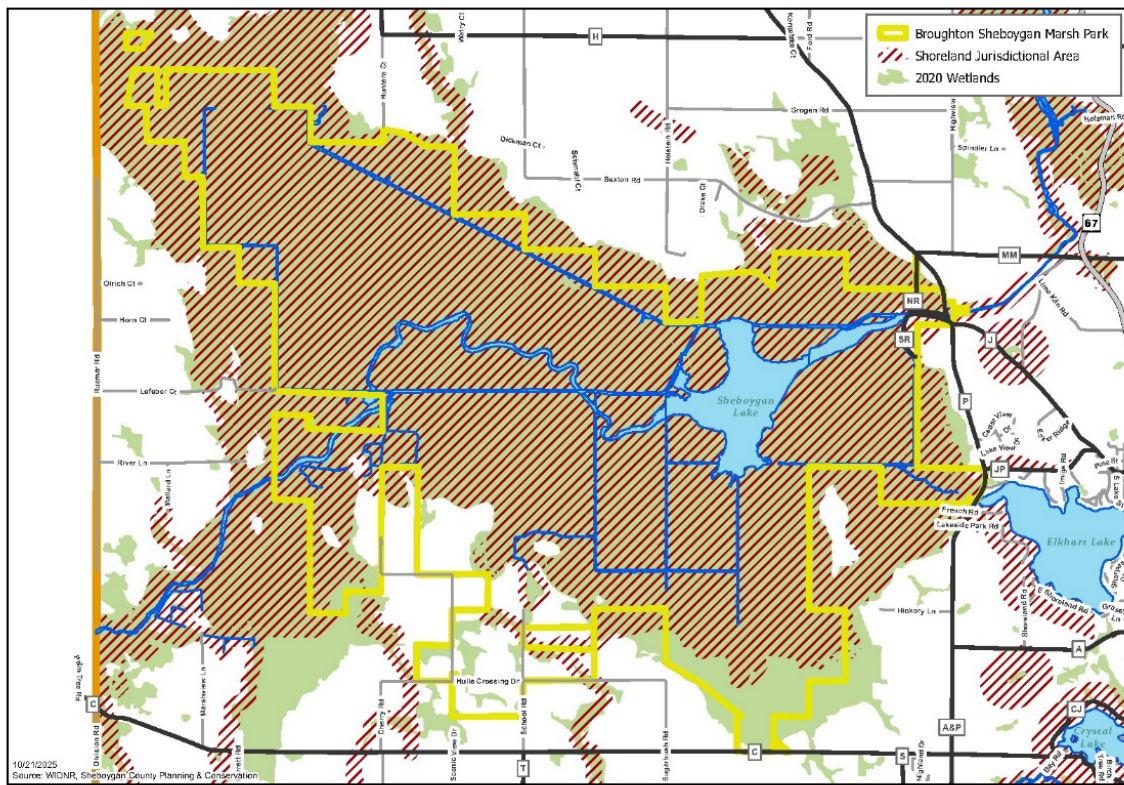


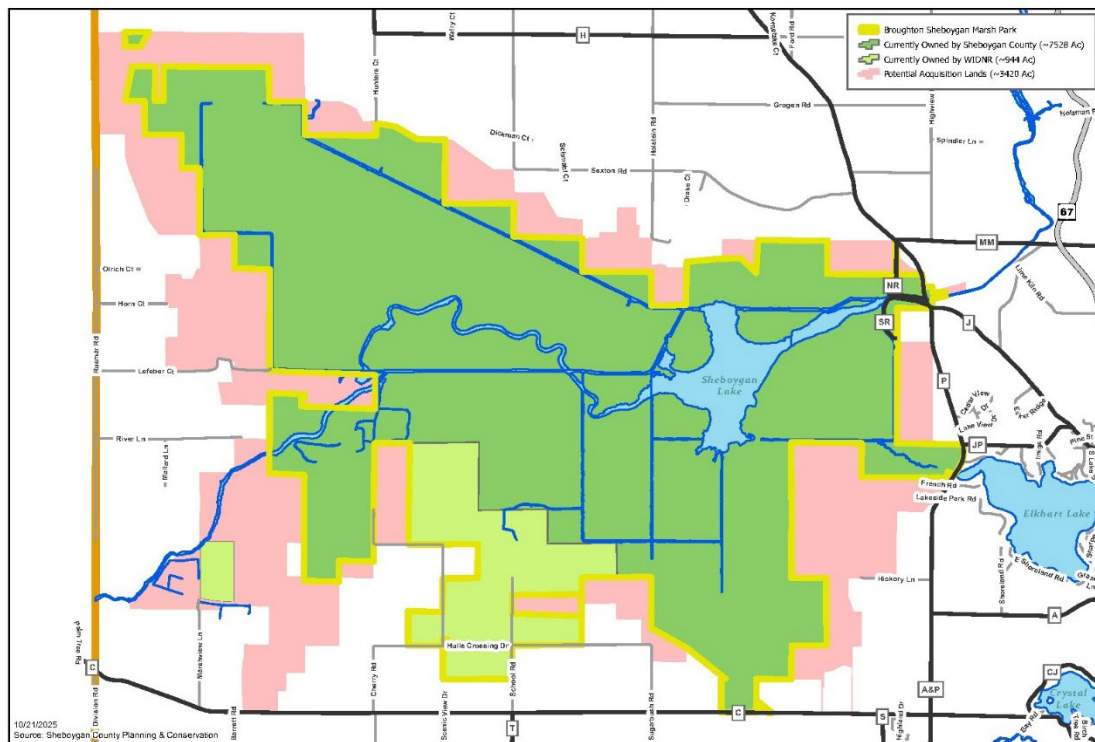
Figure 10 - Current Area Zoning

be protected. Some of the areas identified are also part of the WDNR’s Land Legacy Program. The goal of that program is to identify the places believed to be most important to meet the state’s conservation and recreation needs over the next 50 years.



Shoreland Zoning Jurisdictional Area

Figure 11 - County Shoreland Jurisdictional Areas



Current Public Lands & Potential Acquisition Sites

Figure 12 - Current Public Lands & Potential Priority Acquisition Areas



It is the policy of the WDNR and the County to purchase land only from willing sellers through friendly negotiations. The goal for both entities is to purchase land fee simple, but both may consider purchasing rights as conservation easements as well. Since the *2013 Plan Update*, over 100 acres of land have been added to the Marsh as County public property. These donations and/or purchases are as follows: 40-acre donation from the Sheboygan County Conservation Association (2014), 13-acre Voelker purchase through Ducks Unlimited cash donation (2023), 10-acre Walter donation (2023), and 40-acre Meyer purchase through Ducks Unlimited cash donation (2024).

Recreational Opportunities

In the *2001 and 2013 Plans*, recreational opportunities were identified as a priority issues. This is no different in 2026. Also, similar to the *2013 Plan*, one of the primary recreational components mentioned during the public input sessions and the online survey was the support to develop a trail, water trail,

Should the updated Master Plan include the development of better access amenities (i.e. trails, boardwalks, etc.)?
139 responses

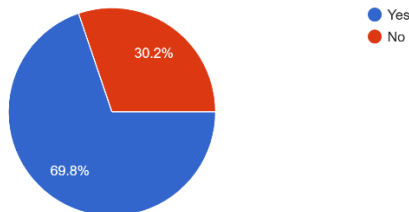


Figure 13 - Online Survey Response

and/or boardwalk network at the Marsh. When asked the question if the Marsh Master Plan should include the development of better access to amenities, just under 70% of respondents said yes. This is 10% higher than the *2013 Plan Update*. Furthermore, in the open comments section of the

survey, adding a boardwalk, water trail and/or trail system was the most common comment in the *2026 Plan Update*. Another prevalent theme in the open comment section was providing more youth education opportunities. This is also similar to the *2013 Plan Update* and would fit well with a boardwalk/trail/water trail as educational components would surely be part of any trail network.

If pedestrian trails are developed it might add to the stress already in place at the Marsh in regards to competing user-groups vying for the same, limited space. Fishing, hunting, trapping, boating/canoeing, snowmobiling, ATV riding, nordic skiing, camping, picnicking, nature study, and pleasure driving/wildlife viewing are among the recreational activities already enjoyed at the Sheboygan Marsh. Minimizing future conflicts between competing activities is key to increasing satisfaction for all participants. That is evident nationwide, statewide and countywide, and it is crucial at Marsh.

The *2001 Plan* noted that ATV use on non-designated areas was significant concern at the time and that aggressive enforcement was beginning to take place to curb that trend. At the time of development of the *2013 Plan Update* and again in the *2026 Plan Update*, it appears the corrective action that took place in the early 2000's succeeded. ATV users seem to be using designated areas and are no longer wreaking havoc on sensitive vegetation and wildlife in non-designated areas. The Marsh is still a "State Managed" area per the formal management agreement between the WDNR and Sheboygan County. This agreement prohibits motorized vehicles on public lands of the Sheboygan Marsh Wildlife Area except in expressly

designated areas or as permitted by WDNR (with County input) for handicap accessibility or through existing easements.

Though both the WDNR and County are managing more land and resources with less staff, each entity should continue enforcing the rules dictating the Marsh to protect the sensitive nature of the resource.

Wildlife & Ecological Management

As with the competing recreational uses at the Marsh, there is also competing philosophies on what the Marsh should be managed for in regard to wildlife and ecology, and no matter what philosophy one

considers, it all relates back to water level management. The three competing ideals mentioned most are to manage the Marsh as a marsh first and foremost, manage the Marsh as a fishery, or manage the Marsh for deer and other game. Similar to the information gathered in the *2001 & 2013 Plans*, the ideal that gains the most support is managing the Marsh as a marsh

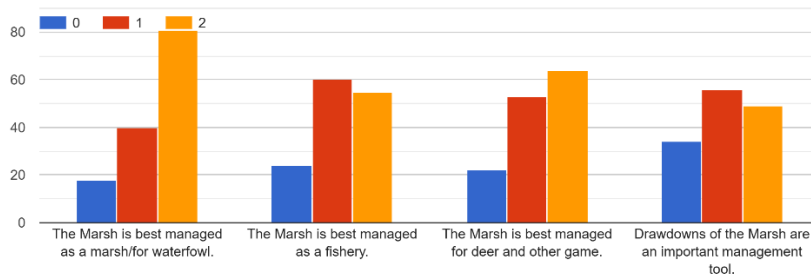


Figure 14 - Managing the Marsh

first and consider ancillary benefits of a fishery and deer habitat second. This ideal corresponds to professional scientific belief and when one considers the positives and negatives surrounding the six indicators listed in Table 3, this ideal proves the most beneficial for the overall health of the entire resource. Because of these reasons, this is the direction the County and WDNR will take in their management activities at the Marsh.

However, with that said, the other ideals should not be ignored. Throughout the *2026 Plan Update* input gathering many comments were received regarding the Marsh's fishery. Though still not popular, as compared to the public indignation surrounding the 2002 drawdown, the 2011 and the 2023 drawdowns did not receive nearly as much outcry from the different user-groups, especially fishermen. It appears that the sentiment amongst the user-groups is that drawdowns are necessary to the overall health of the resource. In fact, two public input sessions were held prior to the 2011 drawdown and excluding County and WDNR staff, only 11 members of the public attended. This compares to hundreds that attended the input sessions prior to the 2002 drawdown. In 2023, no complaints were logged about the necessary drawdown for the new dam construction.

To help mollify some of the previous negative sentiment towards the drawdowns, WDNR has restocked the Marsh with northern pike following the drawdowns. In addition to WDNR's efforts, after the drawdown in 2011, the County and the Sheboygan County Conservation Association partnered to restock

panfish in the Marsh as well. These types of activities should continue after future drawdowns. [Chapter 2](#) shows this as an implementation objective provided the WDNR has staff capacity.

It should also be noted that there are many other area lakes, streams, trails, and parks available in this region to accommodate fishing and other recreational demands. A dozen popular and productive fishing lakes lie a short distance from, or within a 30-minute drive of, the Sheboygan Marsh: Elkhart Lake (whose outlet feeds the Marsh), Crystal Lake, Gerber Lakes, Little Elkhart Lake, Jetzer Lake, Lake Ellen, Random Lake, Crooked Lake, Long Lake, Beechwood Lake, Lake Seven, and Wolf Lake. Moreover, some of the best fishing and water recreation in North America are available a short drive east or west on Lake Michigan and Lake Winnebago, respectively.

Sheboygan Marsh should not be expected to accommodate the diversity of increasingly incompatible recreational uses. In 2026, as it was during past planning efforts, the public seems to recognize the *Sheboygan Marsh* has a “*carrying capacity*” that is being approached and needs to be addressed.

Another wildlife related issue is concern for long-term maintenance of white cedar on the Marsh. White cedar is an important, and relatively rare, habitat type in this part of the state. It provides important food and cover for wintering deer. It is also important to other wildlife species, including ruffed grouse. Poor reproduction of white cedar is related to high deer densities and other environmental conditions.

Chapter 2 - Issues, Concerns, & Topics Implementation Objectives

Introductory Comments

The *2026 Plan Update's* implementation objectives are based on scientific methods, history, and expertise. Management of a resource, especially as extensive as the Sheboygan Marsh, must be consistent, professional, and knowledge-based. At times, the implementation of a certain method or practice may not be popular with certain user-groups of the Sheboygan Marsh. However, the implementation objectives listed in the plan set aside the temptation to please certain user-group's special interests. Rather, they are meant to serve the overall public interest of maintaining an exceptional resource for all to enjoy.

The items listed below were the prevalent issues, concerns, and/or comments consistently brought up in the online survey ([see Appendix A](#)) and at the two *2026 Plan Update* public input meetings ([see Appendix A](#)). Many of the issues, concerns, and/or comments were quite similar to those gathered in the 2001 and 2013 planning efforts.

<u>Issue/Concern/Comment</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Financials</u>
Floating Cattail Bogs	County & WDNR will partner to moderate water level fluctuations and manage floating cattail mats through removals and spraying and water control coordination	County & WDNR joint effort	As Needed	No direct cost for water level management, ~\$150-\$200/truckload to remove cattail mats, \$2-5K for yearly spraying
Water Level Management	County & WDNR will aggressively pursue both partial and total drawdowns on a minimum of 5-year intervals or as such ecological indicators warrant.	County, WDNR, & Public	5 Years or Sooner from last drawdown if Ecological Indicators Warrant	Cost-savings to County and WDNR if implemented. Bog removal has cost in excess of \$70,000 in certain years after lack of drawdowns.
	Actively manage water levels to maintain as close as possible a water level of 906' AMSL	County & WDNR	Review daily	None other than mileage and staff time to manage gate levels and \$2,000 annually for gauge software.
	Manage the Sheboygan Marsh as a marsh first, not as a fishery, or for a specific wildlife population	County, WDNR	Annually	No direct cost
Smart Growth Planning & Zoning	County & adjoining Towns of Russell, Greenbush, & Rhine should collaborate on subdivision controls, zoning, & land acquisition strategies	County, Towns, DNR, & local Land Trusts	Every 10 years from adoption of Smart Growth Plan and as needed	Varies

<u>Issue/Concern /Comment</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Financials</u>
	County & DNR to work on better nutrient management on lands surrounding the Marsh. Collaborative effort through County buffer program, conservation easements, etc. County & DNR to create a plan of prioritized adjacent land to target	County & WDNR	2030 or sooner	Varies, dependent on best management practice
Land Acquisitions to Create Buffers, & Protect Existing Investments & Expand Access	County, WDNR, Towns, SCCA, Fond du Lac County & local land trusts to collaborate in acquisitions for strategic areas around & adjacent to existing public lands, especially those areas critical for protection of the Marsh as a resource and providing a western public access point. County & WDNR to pursue & secure available public and/or private funding if an opportunity presents itself.	County, Towns, DNR, SCCA & local Land Trusts	As Opportunities Arise	\$3000-\$5000/acre for recreational land in 2026 costs
Continued Investments at the Sheboygan Marsh	County and State should commit to Plan's project recommendations in its annual operating budget and/or 5-year Capital Plan. Both entities should maximize leveraging public and private funding sources.	County, Towns, DNR, SCCA & local Land Trusts	Annually	Varies Project & associated budget derived
Maintain and/or Increase Educational Opportunities	Develop an ADA Kayak/Canoe Launch	County	2027	\$40,000
	Develop an Educational & Interpretive Trail/Boardwalk System	County, WDNR, SCCA, Friends of the Marsh, & Other Citizen/Corporate Sponsorship	2026-2027	\$1.5-2.0M

<u>Issue/Concern /Comment</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Financials</u>
	Continue to host educational activities at the Kohler Center for Marsh Education and expand offerings if feasible	County, WDNR, SCCA, Friends of the Marsh	As feasible, goal of at least 1 event per year	Negligible
	Develop an educational water trail through portions of the Marsh	County, WDNR, SCCA, Friends of the Marsh & Other Citizen/Corporate Sponsorship	2026-2027	\$3,000-5,000
County & State Cooperation	County & WDNR should execute a new, formal Management Agreement for professional wildlife, fishery, & forestry management, development, protection, & maintenance	County & WDNR	2030	No direct cost
Fish Management	Survey & monitor fish; consider restocking after drawdowns if staff and budget allow.	County, WDNR, & SCCA	Annually & post-drawdown	\$2,000-5,000
Wildlife Management	Farming agreement with adjoining farmers where pertinent	WDNR	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Maintain and increase grassland acreage	WDNR	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Maintain two runoff ponds & associated structures	WDNR	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Monitor waterfowl, & pheasant populations	WDNR	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Monitor & record water levels	WDNR & County	Daily	WDNR & County Operating
	Maintain posted refuge lines	WDNR	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Monitor & control exotic animal species	WDNR, County	Annually	WDNR Operating
	Wildlife Management (cont.)	Gravel & grade perimeter parking lots & access areas	WDNR, County	Annually
Partner w/ Ducks Unlimited & Pheasants Forever to		WDNR, County, SCCA, & Friends of	Annually	Project-specific

<u>Issue/Concern /Comment</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Financials</u>
	execute habitat improvements	the Sheboygan Marsh		
	Coordinate bog removal	WDNR coordinates w/ County for equipment & manpower	Annually	WDNR & County Operating
Forest Management	Update the vegetation inventory of the Sheboygan Marsh to determine the health of the forest, vigor of the trees, and the presence and extent of any invasive plants or pests.	WDNR & County	2027-2032	WDNR & County Operating
	Based on inventory develop a harvest schedule of the forest resources to meet the goals of the County	County	2033	County
	Monitor & control exotic plant species	WDNR & County	Annually	WDNR Operating

Chapter 3 – Facility & Resource Inventory & Analysis

Jurisdictions & Assignments

In the far past, management of the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area fell to the Sheboygan County Board’s Property liaison committee. There was no direct staff support by a County department.

Not having day-to-day management staff responsible for the Marsh proved detrimental at times, and as such, in late 1984 the Sheboygan County Board had the foresight to transfer management from the Property liaison committee to, at that time, the Resources liaison committee. The Resources committee soon after decided that the daily management belonged to what is now the Planning & Conservation Department. It has remained this way since that time.

Wildlife, fisheries, and forestry management services at the Marsh are provided by the field staff at the Plymouth WDNR office under a formal management agreement with the County ([see Appendix C](#)).

In 1984, a seven-member *Marsh Management Advisory Committee* was created to foster, facilitate and make recommendations on the wise and sound management of the Marsh. In 2000, that *Management Advisory Committee* was expanded to thirteen members to broaden its base of interests and improve its effectiveness. In 2011, the Sheboygan County Board had the foresight to yet again revise the makeup and function of the *Management Advisory Committee* to include advising on all of the County’s recreational facilities, not just the Marsh. The new committee, *the Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Advisory Committee (SCRFMAC)*, added an additional representative from the Sheboygan County Conservation Association and two additional members at large.



Figure 15 - Marsh Tower

Furthermore, the *Friends of the Marsh* formed in 2005 to help protect and promote the Marsh. Their mission is to promote the increased use and appreciation of the unique beauty of the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh through education and recreation. They have been instrumental in building the Marsh Tower and the Kohler Center for Marsh Education and have now taken on fundraising efforts for an educational boardwalk.

Investments

The most recent major investment at the Marsh has been the construction of the new dam in 2024 to provide better water control and ecological management. The dam was a huge endeavor with numerous partners. Special thanks must be given to Governor Tony Evers, Senator Devin LeMahieu, and Representative Terry Katsma for their support at the State level. Large financial sponsors for the \$3.3 million project were: Sheboygan County, WDNR, Ducks Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fund for Lake Michigan, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Sheboygan County Conservation Association. There were many other individual donors who contributed to the success of the project and their generosity cannot be thanked enough.



Figure 16 - Marsh Dam Funding Partners Plaque

Just prior to the new dam, the \$2.3 million Kohler Center for Marsh Education was constructed in 2021 and dedicated in the spring of 2022. The new building provides a world-class setting for wetland ecology classes each spring and fall for thousands of area students. The east wing of the building houses some of the nicest new camp showers that exist. One goal of the building was to be a learning tool in itself. As such, the atrium is held up by an ash tree that was dropped less than 1,000' away from where it currently stands. In fact, the entire atrium and west wing of the building are supported by whole trees. Another educational aspect of the building is its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The building is very energy efficient with many of its features having been manufactured and/or sourced locally (i.e. walls, lighting, and plumbing fixtures).



Figure 17 - KCME Landscaping

In 2006, soon after formally becoming an entity, the Friends of the Marsh (Friends) started to raise money to construct the observation tower. The kickoff began by hoisting local media and interested citizens up 100' in a fire truck bucket. Fundraising started by collecting spare change in buckets at local events. However, progress soon began in earnest when many large donations from local foundations and employers became a reality.

In 2008, the Friends applied for and were granted official non-profit status to help further the fundraising efforts, but soon after, the economic downturn of the time period took its toll on donations. Fortunately, the local construction company, Jos. Schmitt & Sons, found it in their heart to build the Tower with the promise of the Friends repaying them as they could.

With much fanfare, the Tower opened to the public Christmas Day 2009 and stands at an impressive 80' above the surrounding landscape offering expansive views of the jewel that is the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area.

In the *2001 Plan*, a common sentiment noted at the public meetings was that the County never spends anything at the Marsh. Based on the comments made at the public input meetings and the survey responses for the *2013 and 2026 Plan Updates*, the sentiment was more that people would like to see the money spent on items other than cattail removal. Though this sentiment likely stemmed from the recent memory of the two extremely large years of cattail removal (both quantity and cost), it is still a valid point. However, take away the amounts spent on cattail removal, which is an average of \$18,575 per year from 1993-2024, and the average for Marsh expenditures is approximately \$70,000 per year. This is not a small sum.

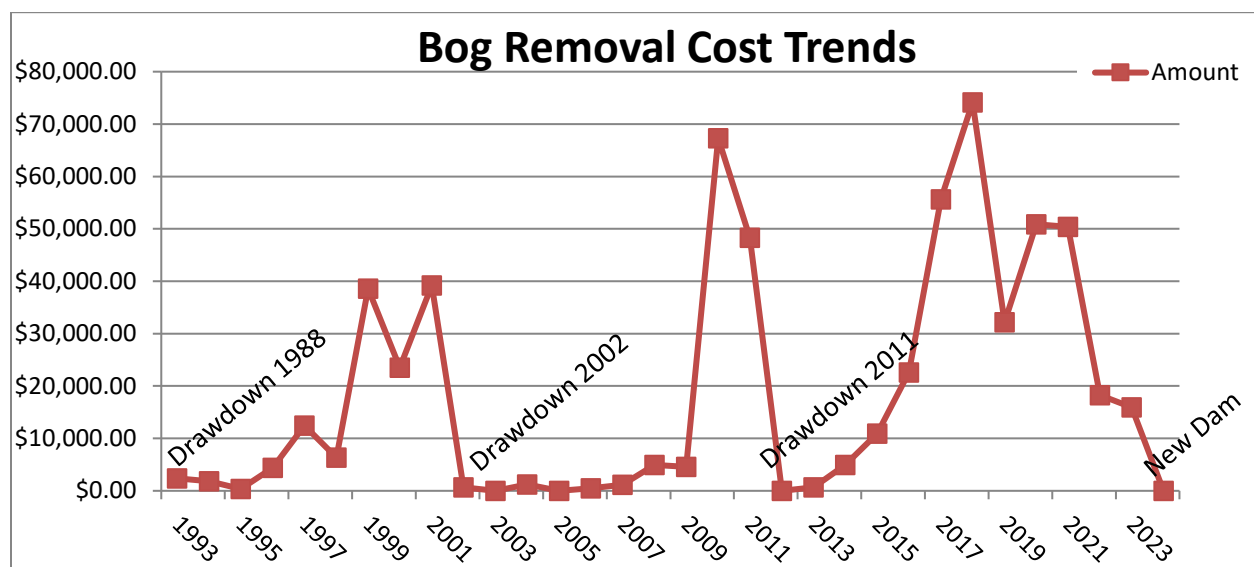


Figure 18 - Bog Removal Cost Trends

The County has been investing in the Marsh since Charles Broughton’s initial 80-acre donation in 1937. As of 2026, the size of the County publicly-owned areas of the Marsh has increased nearly a hundred-fold. There are currently 8,472 acres of publicly-owned land that make up the Marsh. Of that amount, 7,528 acres are in County ownership and 944 acres are in State ownership. During the 20-year period 1968-1988 alone, the County authorized slightly over \$1 million in acquisition and development projects. Of that, over 40% was secured in grants from the WDNR and Sheboygan County Conservation Association (SCCA). At that time of publication of this document the County is still engaged in land acquisition discussions with SCCA along with entities like the Glacial Lakes Conservancy Land Trust to protect the valuable resource of the Marsh. As mentioned earlier, since the last *2013 Plan Update*, over 100 acres has been added to the Marsh.

The table in [Appendix B](#), *Historical Expenditures at the Marsh*, provides a glimpse of the investments made at the Marsh. Undoubtedly, this is not an entire depiction of the expenditures that have been made over the years. The table only represents those figures and/or documents that were able to have been easily

retrieved. The table also does not show or calculate an amount for the tremendous volunteer activities and labor that have been witnessed on various projects. This has been significant over time. In fact, in 2026 on a single project rehabilitating the playground area and painting structures, 100 hours were donated by Kohler Company employees. There are many other examples as this as well.

Historic Water Levels, Geology & Soils – 1999/2000 Field Investigations

(Note: The following language is taken nearly verbatim from the *2001 Plan* as it is still accurate and relevant in 2026.)

Abstract

An investigation of local geology and historic water elevations was conducted around the Sheboygan Marsh by Department of Natural Resources staff during 1999 and 2000. The purpose of the investigation was to locate the historic spill point on the east end of the Marsh and compare the elevation with the present-day Marsh elevation.

By finding the historic dolomite spill point on the east side of the Marsh, it was hoped that conclusions could be made concerning the elevation of the Marsh before man attempted to alter water levels in the late 1800s. The investigation included field mapping, soil probing, surveying, and the evaluation of historical records and research papers.

The easternmost spill point of the Sheboygan Marsh was located on the Quasius property in an abandoned river channel within the abandoned Town of Rhine Mills. It was located on a bifurcated section of the river illustrated in Figure 19 about a quarter mile south of the railroad bridge (Figure 20).

The difference in elevation from the present Marsh water levels to the base of the old channel in Rhine Mills is 10.67 feet. Historic records show that there was approximately 9 feet of elevation change between Rhine Mills and the west end of the Marsh during the late 1800s (Peterson & Sinz, 1905). Assuming there were approximately 1.5 feet of water in the old channel, it appears that current water levels in the Marsh are very close to the historic levels prior to 1870.

A review of the original land surveys indicates that vegetative patterns on the Marsh in 1835 were similar to present wetland dependent vegetation patterns. An evaluation of the soils data and observed characteristics of soil profiles, slopes, types of rock and other pertinent soil facts also supports this conclusion.

Geology

The Sheboygan Marsh was formed on Silurian Dolomite which is some of the youngest bedrock in Wisconsin. The Silurian Dolomite is exposed to the east of the project site in an abandoned lime quarry on the Quasius property located in the abandoned Town of Rhine Mills. Bedrock supported hills surround the Sheboygan Marsh on the west, south and north margins.

The Sheboygan Marsh lies directly behind the front of the Green Bay glacial lobe, which was deposited during the last glacial advance. The formation of the Marsh was the result of the stagnation of a large ice block during the last glacial advance. The stagnant ice melted slowly, due to the insulating effects of the surrounding till and the sediments covering the ice block. As the ice block melted, the sediments covering the ice were sorted and deposited on the flanks of the ice block. Ridges of sorted sediments (kame type deposits) can be found surrounding the Marsh to this day. The melting ice and deep bedrock valley created a typical kettle lake surrounded by these kame terrace deposits.

As the glacial lake matured, biological activity increased and sedimentation also increased. Cores drilled in the Marsh have found up to 30 feet of marl deposits rich in shell fragments. During this period, wave activity continued to re-work sorted kame terrace deposits on the flanks of “paleo-Lake Sheboygan.” After being a deep open water system for thousands of years, sedimentation eventually caused the lake to transform into a shallow water marsh. The marsh environment increased the deposition rate of organic rich matter. Cores taken in the Marsh have found up to 20 feet of peat on top of the open water marl deposits.

Historical Review

Former DNR Biologist John Masterson discovered a map at the Sheboygan County Historical Society that shows the bifurcated channel in the Sheboygan River in the abandoned Town of Rhine Mills (Figure 19). This map led to the discovery of the old channel on the Quasius property adjacent to the Limestone Quarry. Since the current Sheboygan River channel was blasted and lowered in the early 1870s and between 1912 and 1921, it was important to find an undisturbed “spill point” to evaluate historic water levels. Since there were two mills in the Town of Rhine Mills, the gradient of the water must have been sufficient to support the power demands of the milling operations.

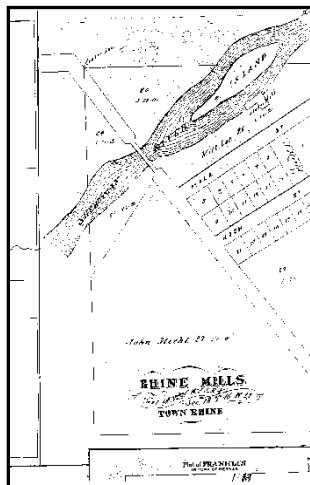


Figure 19 - 1889 Plat of the Town of Rhine

In a 1905, U.W. Madison thesis by H. Peterson & E. Sinz titled Plans for Draining the Sheboygan Marsh, it is stated that there was 9 feet of head between Rhine Mills and the west end of the marsh. Since the head difference across the Marsh is negligible, the water elevation difference between the historic outlet (current Marsh Park) and Rhine Mills (Quasius Property) would



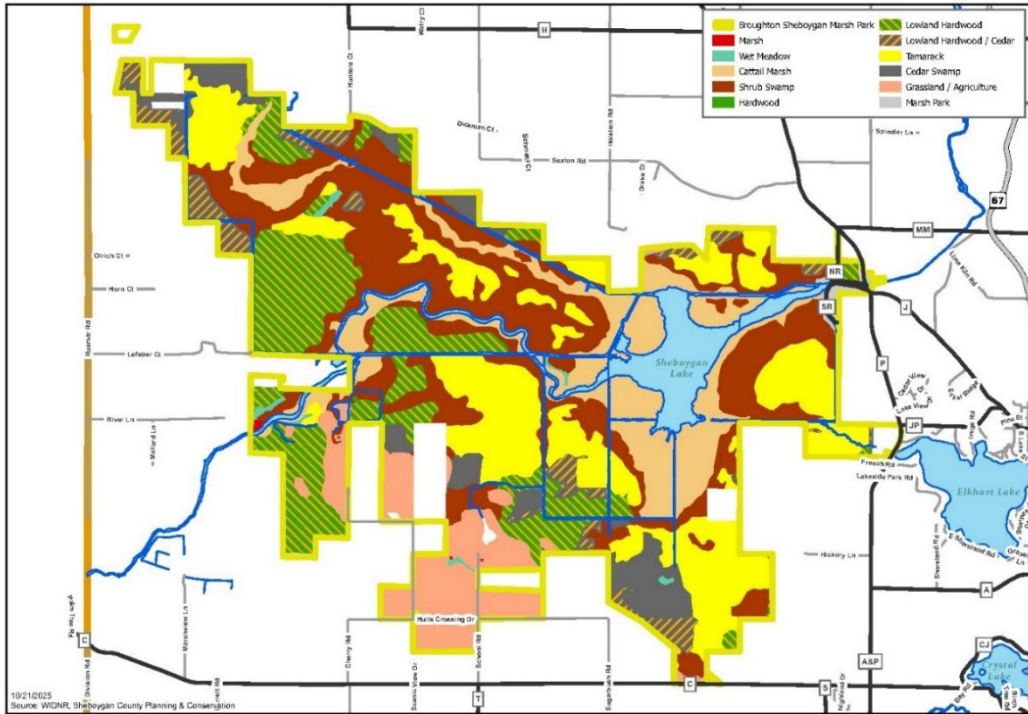
Figure 20 - 1875 View of Rhine Mills Prior to the Dredging of the River

have been approximately 9 feet. This would have been more than enough head to power the grist and oil mills that operated in Rhine Mills.

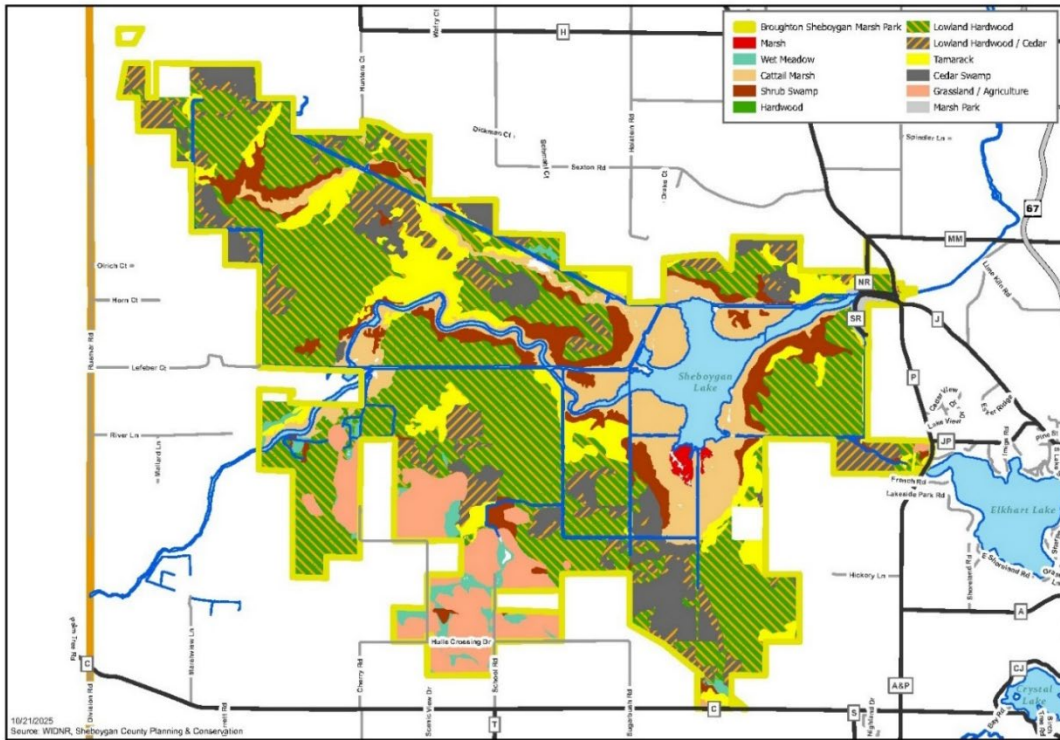
This information indicates that under normal water conditions prior to the first dredging attempts (1870), the glacial kame deposits located near the present-day Marsh Park served as the spill point for the water levels in the Marsh. During times of high rainfall and snow melt, the narrow 15-foot-wide limestone/dolomite channel east of the Marsh Park restricted flow and backed up water from the dolomite outcrop in the Town of Rhine Mills to the current dam location in Marsh Park. Soil probes taken during field evaluations confirm that the low area east of the current Marsh Park was often inundated, resulting in soils with rich organic sequences.

A review of the original land surveys of 1835 was conducted to determine vegetation types and water levels at the time European settlement. Surveyors noted trees, water, and vegetation changes as they traversed the land plotting legal descriptions for future land sales, etc. The records indicate that the vegetative cover was similar in 1835 to what exists today. There are notes of 12-inch DBH (diameter at breast height) tamarack and 17-inch DBH white cedar where tamarack and cedar exist today. There are records of marsh and cranberry marsh where emergent wetlands exist today. Other notes that support similar water levels are notes on the locations and widths of streams and rivers, as well as the edge of the pond; these locations are the same as the existing water areas. These records are consistent with the geological and soil records of water levels, and compare very closely with water levels that are currently maintained at the Sheboygan Marsh.

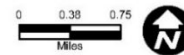
The landcover of the Marsh is ever evolving. This is seen in the following figures which compare the landcover in 1987 to that in 2008 and again in 2020 (Figures 21, 22, & 23). It should be noted that the 1987 data is not as accurate as both the 2008 and 2020 data. The technology to capture information as this is much more sophisticated now than it was in the 1980's.



WI DNR Land Cover - 1987
Figure 22 - WDNR 1987 Landcover



WI DNR Land Cover - 2008
Figure 21 - WDNR 2008 Landcover



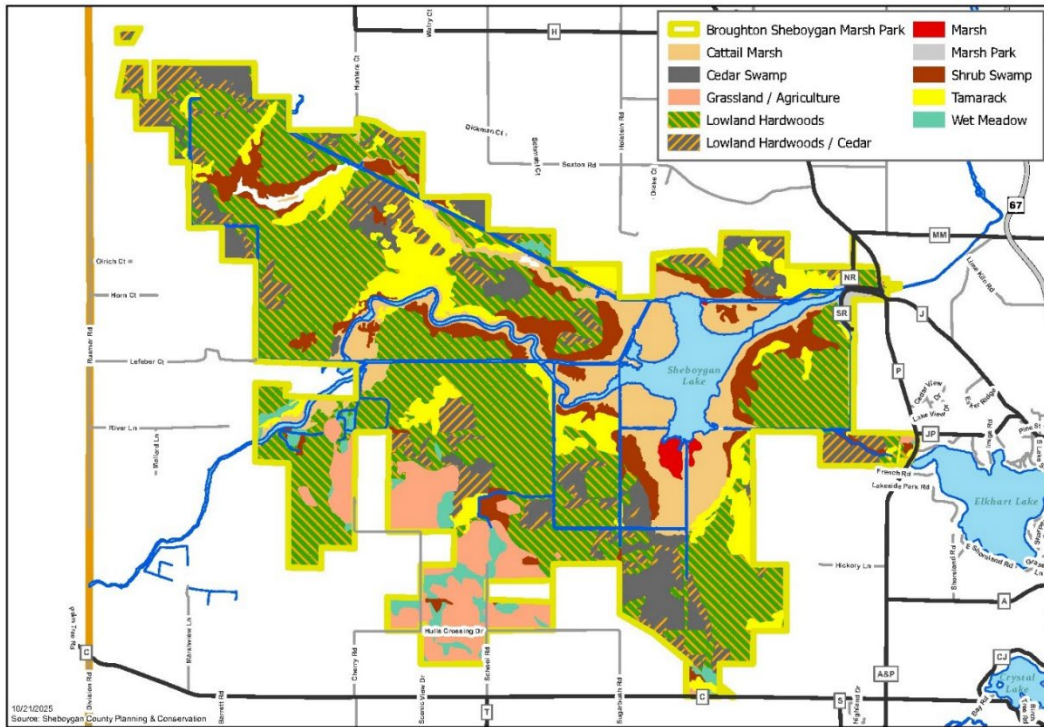


Table 4 - Acreages of Cover Types 1987 vs. 2008 vs. 2020

Cover Types	1987	2008	2020	Percent Change '87-'08	Percent Change '87-'20	Percent Change '08-'20
Cattail Marsh	1053	997	1171	-5.32%	11.21%	17.45%
Cedar Swamp	474	533	541	12.45%	14.14%	1.50%
Deep Water Marsh	537	535	317	-0.37%	-40.97%	-40.75%
Grassland /Ag	648	635	632	-2.01%	-2.47%	-0.47%
Hardwood Forest	20	0	0	-100.00%	-100.00%	NC
Lowland Hardwood	1303	3306	3473	153.72%	166.54%	5.05%
Lowland Hardwood/Cedar	349	650	689	86.25%	97.42%	6.00%
Marsh	10	32	53	220.00%	430.00%	65.63%
Marsh Park	52	50	50	-3.85%	-3.85%	0.00%
Pond	8	26	26	225.00%	225.00%	0.00%
Runoff Pond	29	29	29	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Shrub Swamp	2050	578	588	-71.80%	-71.32%	1.73%
Tamarack	1579	700	730	-55.67%	-53.77%	4.29%
Wet Meadow	39	164	172	320.51%	341.03%	4.88%
Totals	8151	8235	8471			

Similar to landcover, the actual waterbody of the Marsh is ever evolving. The below graphic shows comparisons over time that were developed by digitizing the main waterbody of the Marsh on airphotos dating back to 1937. These figures are approximate, but nonetheless, they show the Marsh is truly a dynamic system.

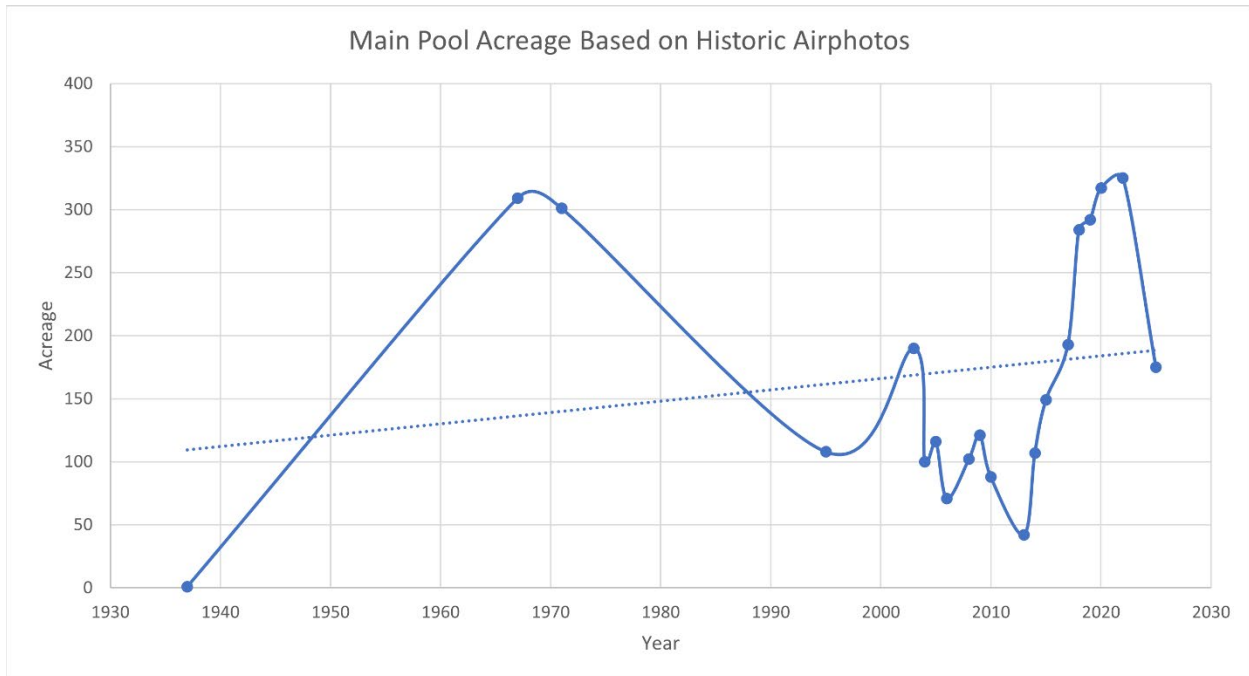


Figure 24 - Main Pool Acreage Based on Historic Airphotos

Field Evaluations

In the fall of 1999, Department of Natural Resources scientists surveyed the elevations of the current Sheboygan Marsh dam, the soil investigation locations, the dolomite outcrops, and important geologic features on the east end of the Marsh. Table 5 entitled “Sheboygan Marsh Study,” contains the survey elevation information collected.

Department scientists also conducted a thorough field evaluation of the geology and soil characteristics on the east side of the Sheboygan Marsh downstream to the County Road MM Bridge. Silurian dolomite bedrock was found in the Sheboygan River channel several hundred feet west of the County Road MM Bridge. Blast holes were photographed in the dolomite along the exposed bedrock outcrop in the Sheboygan River channel where the bedrock was lowered in an attempt to drain the Marsh (Figure 25).

A soil evaluation was conducted of the Marsh and surrounding areas in the fall of 1999. The study included reviewing field survey maps, soil probing investigations in and around the Marsh, and an investigation of dug soil profile pits. Based on the available soils information, there is no indication that major sedimentation has occurred recently in the Marsh. This conclusion is made from the fact that the



Figure 25 - A Young Dale Katsma Points to Evidence of Blasting

sediments in the soil profiles along the Marsh are uniform, there is an absence of sediment layers in the peat, and there is an absence of buried horizons in the soil profiles along the edge of the Marsh. The original physiography and distribution of soils is mainly the result of glacial outwash, alluvial and lacustrine deposits which buried the dolomite bedrock with unconsolidated deposits ranging from a few feet (1/2 mile east of the marsh) to several hundred feet in thickness.

As the glacier retreated in the Towns of Russell, Greenbush and Rhine, they left a mass of loamy material or glacial till. The main soil types, Hochheim, Theresa, Nenno, and Lamartine, formed in this material. Water from the melting glaciers transported, sorted, and deposited some of the glacial till as stratified gravel and sand on outwash plains. This is how the Casco soils on the north edge of the Marsh and the Fox soils on the east and south edge of the Marsh were primarily formed.

The low wetland areas were formed from an old glacial lake basin with areas of lacustrine soils consisting of a mixture of silt, sand, and clay. In other areas, residue from water-tolerant plants accumulated to form organic soils over the mineral soils and marl with the thickness of the muck depending on the depth of the water table, substratum and type of vegetation.

The evaluation of the information including observed characteristics of the soil profiles, slopes, types of rocks and other pertinent soil facts supports the conclusion that the current water levels compare very closely with the water level goal of 906' AMSL that is currently maintained at the Sheboygan Marsh.

Table 5 - Sheboygan Marsh Elevation Study

Sheboygan Marsh Study		
Lime Kiln Survey elevations with the adjustments based upon the Railroad Bridge Marker		
Site #	Description of the Elevation	Measured ELEVATION
1	LIMEKILN – Elevation of river bottom, downstream about 300' from abandoned bridge.	892.080
2	LIMEKILN – Elevation of river bottom, just below/east bridge (approximately 100').	892.350
3	LIMEKILN – Elevation of river at Sheboygan River shoreline, northeast of County Road MM Bridge, SW¼ NE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E.	893.270
4	LIMEKILN – Elevation of river bottom, approximately mid channel at 150' upstream from abandoned bridge.	893.910
5	LIMEKILN – Elevation of river's shoreline near abandoned bridge.	894.090
6	DAM – Bottom of stream bed downstream from dam, above concrete ledge.	894.165
7	DAM – Bottom of stream bed downstream near culvert overflow, approximately 200' below dam.	895.045
8	LIMEKILN – Elevation of old channel around island west adjacent to abandoned Lime Kiln Road, NW¼ SE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E.	895.200
9	DAM – Elevation of top of concrete ledge below dam, under water surface by 2 1/8".	896.46
10	DAM – Downstream from dam at bottom of overflow culvert on left bank.	897.225
11	LIMEKILN – Bridge marker north of County Road MM, SW¼ NE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E.	901.914
12	LIMEKILN – Marker nails, Quasius driveway, NW¼ SE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E.	901.925
13	LIMEKILN – Elevation over streambank area closer to the County Road MM roadway and bridge.	903.665
14	DAM – Top of spillway ledge behind dam , 5"-6" of water going over top of ledge. Water level of the Marsh/Sheboygan Lake would be approx.	905.870 906.300
15	LIMEKILN – East end of County Road MM bridge over river, SW¼ NE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E. Based on the topography map, the surface elevation of Sheboygan Lake was determined to be 276.2 meters or 906.2122 feet.	905.885 906.2122
16	DAM – Upstream – Elevation of marsh water at dock area adjacent to lodge.	906.260
17	LIMEKILN – Elevation of overbank area measured west of old road bed.	907.73
18	DAM – Elevation of ground at base of step bridge that goes over the dam in park.	910.830
19	DAM – Elevation of flagpole base adjacent to the dam in the park.	911.020
20	DAM – PSC Brass marker on the top of the dam in the park.	910.880

Sheboygan Marsh Study

Lime Kiln Survey elevations with the adjustments based upon the Railroad Bridge Marker

Site #	Description of the Elevation	Measured ELEVATION
21	DAM – DOT marker on County Road J, south of park entrance.	912.290
22	DAM – Sheboygan County Park at Marsh roadway entrance marker.	913.080
23	LIMEKILN – Elevation of old bridge deck with dirt overlayment.	913.300
24	LIMEKILN – Survey marker, County Road MM, 1100' west of bridge at north entrance to abandoned Lime Kiln Road, NW¼ SE¼, Section 18, T16N R21E.	945.505
<i>Elevation of soil pits dug by the University of Wisconsin - Geosciences</i>		
1	Soils Pit # 1	971.176
2	Soils Pit # 2	944.928
3	Soils pit # 3 Groundwater encountered at 150 cm. or 4.921 ft.	912.118 907.197
4	Soils pit # 4	921.960
5	Soils pit # 5	912.118
6	Soils pit # 6 Groundwater encountered at 50 cm. or 1.640 ft.	905.556 903.916
7	Core # 1	907.1965
8	Core # 2	905.556
9	Core # 3	905.000

The Quasius family now owns the property where the dolomite was mined and converted to lime in kilns adjacent to the abandoned dolomite/limestone quarry. The abandoned Town of Rhine Mills existed to serve the workers of the mining, milling, and lime production operations located on the east end of the Sheboygan Marsh. Tamarack trees from the marsh were used as fuel in the lime kilns; the tamarack logs were hauled out of the Marsh on sleds pulled by draft horses. An ice road was created and maintained each winter adjacent to the river for the hauling operation (Delmar Schuler, Town of Rhine, personal communication). Some of the original equipment used to maintain the ice road still exists on the Joel Schuler farm (formerly Delmar Schuler farm) as well as some of the wooden structures that sat upon the dredge machinery.

Conclusions:

- Cores samples taken within the Sheboygan Marsh show that Glacial Lake Sheboygan was at one time over 50 feet in depth.
- Up to 30 feet of marl and 20 feet of peat have been deposited in Glacial Lake Sheboygan (Sheboygan Marsh). The fluvial/lacustrine sedimentary deposits found in the Sheboygan Marsh portray a normal evolution of a glacial lake to a shallow marsh.
- The study confirms that current water elevations in the Marsh are close to mid-1800 elevations.

- Historical records show approximately 9 feet of elevation change between the historic “spill point” of the Sheboygan Marsh and old settlement of Rhine Mills. The current difference in elevation between the dam “spill point” and the old bifurcated channel (Quasius property Rhine Mills) is 10.67 feet. By assuming 1.5 feet of water in the old channel, current water elevation in the Marsh is very close to original water levels prior to blasting the Marsh outlet (refer to Table 5).
- Records of vegetation and water areas from the original land surveys are similar to existing conditions, and therefore corroborates that water levels today are close to those at the time of settlement.

Water Resources & Wetlands

The colored maps on the following two pages depict the Sheboygan River Basin (Figure 26) and the Sheboygan River Watershed (Figure 27). They extend into the adjoining counties of Fond du Lac, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Ozaukee. *Sheboygan Marsh* lies in a 133 square mile watershed.

SHEBOYGAN LAKE/MARSH
 T16N R20E, Section 23, 26; WBIC - 0058900, Sheboygan County, Sheboygan River Watershed
 Surface Acres = 674, S.D.F. = 3.35, Maximum Depth = 3.5

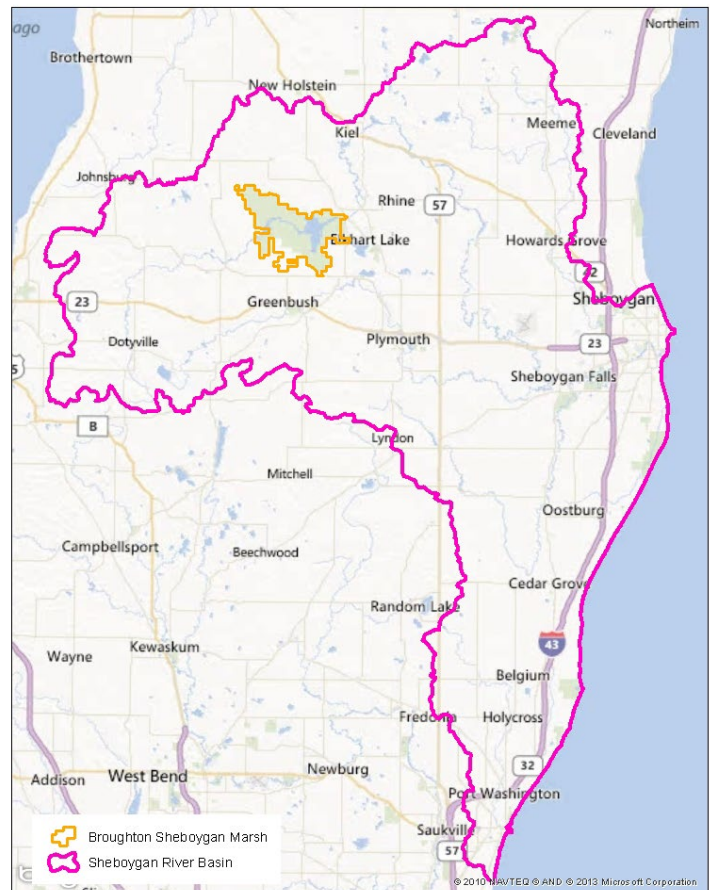
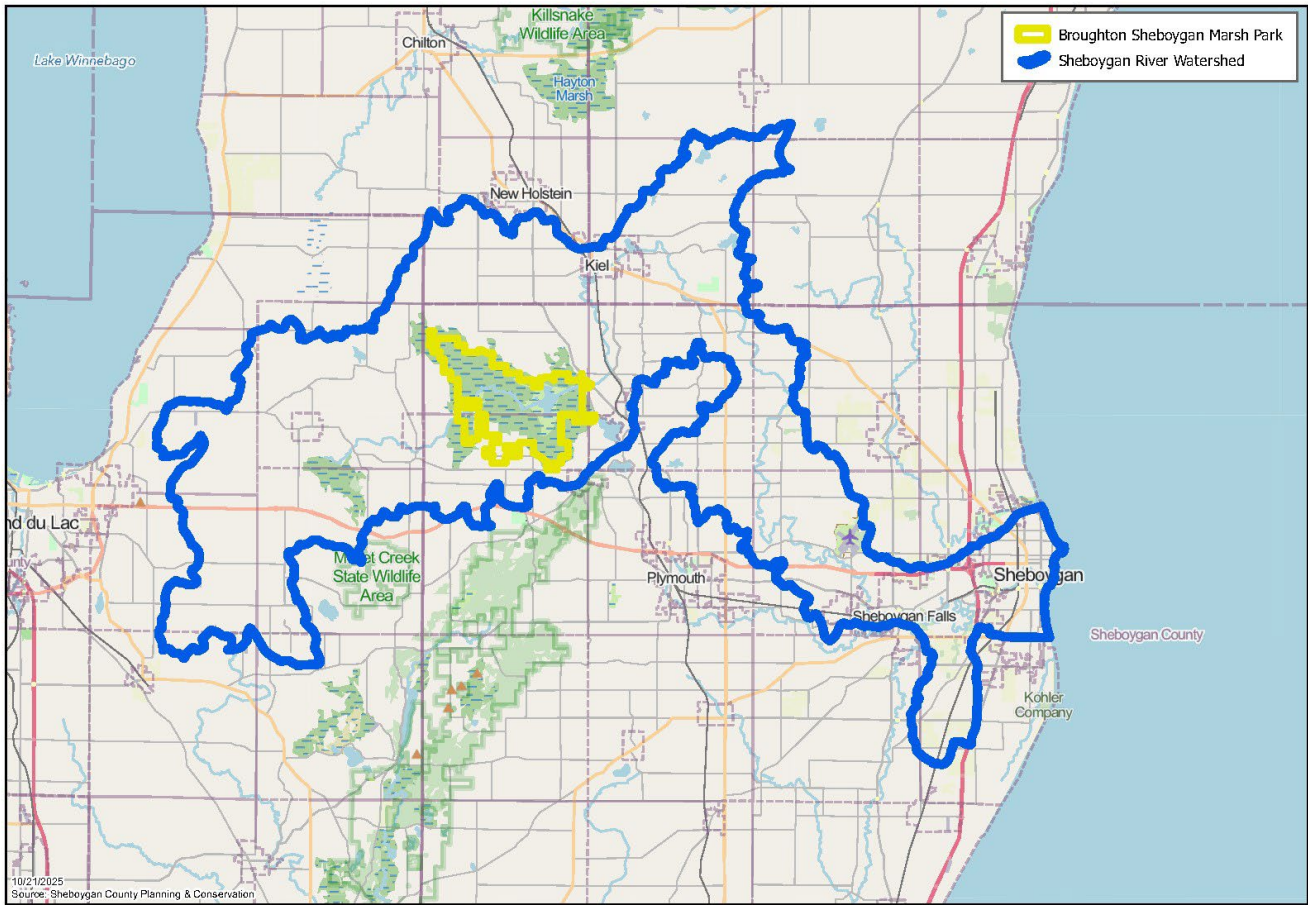


Figure 21
 Sheboygan River Basin

Figure 26 - Sheboygan River Basin



Sheboygan River Watershed (SH03)



Figure 27 - Sheboygan River Watershed

Sheboygan Marsh is an extensive lake/impoundment within the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area. With over 14,000 acres of restored land, the lake and marsh areas have become important recreational and hunting lands. Flow of water into the marsh is mainly from the Sheboygan River, but also from an outlet of Big Elkhart Lake, St. Anna Creek, and several unnamed tributaries. Based on the 2026 County Orthophotography flight, the total open water acreage is divided into the main lake (175 acres), the Sheboygan River (75 acres), St. Anna Creek (0.33 acres), and a series of artificial ditches (136 acres). (See Table 6, *Water Areas Within The Sheboygan Marsh*). These roughly 386 acres are about 315 acres less than what was reported in the *2001 Plan*. This decrease can likely be attributed to primarily two reasons. The marsh is doing what a marsh does over time; fill in with vegetation. The measuring



Figure 28 - 2013 Spring Melt Flows

techniques when this plan was written are significantly better than when previous plans were published. As is characteristic of many marsh lakes, the water is light brown in color and is occasionally low in dissolved oxygen (DO). Over 75 percent of the surface waters are less than 3 feet deep and the maximum depth is 3.5 feet. The dredged channels range in depth from 3 to 9 feet with a 5-foot average depth. The channels also vary in width with many of the less utilized channels starting to fill in with vegetation. During a typical winter, the main body of the marsh and the river channel becomes very low in dissolved oxygen (DO). DO is often down to less than one ppm just above the dam. Some fish mortality occurs throughout the marsh most winters. Fish likely winter in upstream river reaches, spring areas as well as the South Ditch.

Table 6 - Water Areas Within the Sheboygan Marsh*

Waterbody Name	Length (miles)	Width (feet)	Acres
Main Lake			175.0
Sheboygan River	4.6		75.11
St. Anna Creek	2.7	~1	0.33
<u>Ditches</u>			
Vic's	1.3	40	6.3
Froelich	1.1	40	5.3
Bergin	1.2	50	7.3
South	2.0	50	15.5
Southwest	0.4	30	1.5
South-connecting	0.5	30	0.5
Main	7.0	75	63.6
North	3.6	75	36.0
Total	~24.4	~451	~386.44

**Acreage calculated from 2025 Orthophotography.*

Table 7 - Change in Open Water on Sheboygan Lake

Waterbody Name	2001 Plan Figure	2009 Orthophoto	2025 Orthophoto
Sheboygan Lake	368 acres	177 acres	175 acres

Source: The 2009 & 2025 figures were calculated by digitizing open water on the spring countywide orthophotography flights taken in those respective years.

Elkhart Lake Creek (unofficial name) originates as an outlet from the northwest end of Elkhart Lake, adjacent to the public boat launch near County Road P. This low gradient stream meanders approximately 0.8 miles through a large wetland complex that is part of the Sheboygan Marsh, and discharges to the

South Ditch of the marsh. The surrounding watershed is primarily wetland and provides an excellent buffer for the stream.

WDNR personnel surveyed approximately 200 meters of the stream's fish community and habitat in August 2000. Only 33 fish were captured during the fish shocking survey; too few to calculate an index of biotic integrity. Fish species that were present included bluegill, pumpkinseed, johnny darter, central mudminnow, black bullhead, common carp, largemouth bass, and northern pike. Fish communities may be limited primarily due to lack of fish cover and low flows. Stream habitat was limited due to the lack of fish cover and habitat types. The bottom substrate consists primarily of sand and silt, and the number of riffles and pools are very few.

Fish use the outlet area of Elkhart Lake as a refuge when DO levels are low in the Sheboygan Marsh. This has been observed during the hot summer months. During the winter, the flow from the creek entering the south ditch helps maintain higher DO levels and provides refuge for fish in the marsh.

Zebra mussels can be abundant in this stream near the outlet of Elkhart Lake with the population diminishing downstream towards the South Ditch. Zebra mussels extend the length of the stream and zebra mussels have been found in the Sheboygan Marsh South Ditch in low concentrations. However, due to the mucky bottom of the Marsh (an environment zebra mussels do not thrive in) the chances of zebra mussels proliferating in the Marsh are minimal.

Plant & Wildlife Communities

"Communities" usually bear the name of their dominant plant species; however, the community includes all the plants living in association with the dominant species, plus all of the animals present at a given time. The following *communities* are the main types found on *Sheboygan Marsh*.

Plant Community

Coniferous swamps are white cedar or tamarack wetlands that are usually associated with lowland hardwoods. Prior to European settlement, these cover types were probably more prevalent among the forested lowland forests in the area and they are still more abundant than indicated by wetland maps (Figures 21-23).

These wetlands may be inundated in spring and saturated for most of the growing season. Soils are organic peat or muck, with tamarack more common in acid soils and white cedar more common in alkaline soils.

While coniferous swamps are common in northern Wisconsin, they are rare in the southern half of the state and are home to many rare plants, such as lady slipper orchids. Other groundlayer plants include ferns, jack-in-the-pulpit, and sedge. Shrub species include alder and sumac.

Many of the same species found in lowland hardwood forests are also found in the coniferous swamps because of their close association and size in this area. They provide habitat for birds such as saw-whet owl, veery, hermit thrush, cedar waxwing, swamp sparrow, and many species of sparrows and warblers. Many northern bird species (white-throated sparrow, northern water thrush, and veery) are found in southern coniferous swamps. Mammals that use coniferous swamps year-around, or seasonally for winter cover, include deer, fox, coyote, and small mammals. White cedar provides both food and cover for wintering deer; deer concentrate, or “yard up,” in these cedar areas during the winter. Coniferous swamps are important to maintaining a population of ruffed grouse in this area of the state as well.

Marshes (deep and shallow marshes) have characteristic emergent aquatic plants in permanent to seasonal shallow water. Emergent aquatic plants typically become established during low water periods or when substrate is exposed, and persist for varying periods of time after water levels return to normal. High water or rapidly fluctuating water levels tend to uproot or kill some of the emergents.

Deep water marsh, from 6 inches to 3 feet, have emergent plants like cattail, softstem bulrush, pickerelweed, giant bur-reed, Phragmites, wild rice, pond weeds, and water lilies. Floating and submergent plants include duckweed, coontail, water milfoil, and wild celery.

Shallow marshes occur in areas where the soil is saturated to up to six inches of water. They contain many of the same emergent plants as deep water marshes, along with arrowheads, herbaceous plants and sedges. It is possible that an exotic plant, purple loosestrife or phragmites, could take over in shallow marsh areas and reduce the diversity and quality of this type of habitat.

Marshes are very productive wetlands for water birds and furbearers, and can provide spawning and nursery habitat for fish species. Ducks, rails, herons, and songbirds use marshes for breeding and feeding. Ospreys and northern harriers (marsh hawks) use marshes for hunting. Mammals that use the marsh habitat include muskrats, mink, otter, and beaver. Upland wildlife such as pheasant and rabbits may use them for winter cover. Fox and coyote use them during the winter for hunting. Besides providing wildlife habitat, marshes provide environmental benefits like floodwater retention, buffering shorelines from erosion, taking up nutrients, and trapping sediments.

Shrub swamps or shrub-carr wetlands are dominated by woody vegetation like small willows, red osier, and silky dogwoods. They occur on saturated or seasonally flooded muck soils and on the mineral soils of floodplains. Wet meadows may become shrub swamps after drainage and fire suppression. Shrub swamps provide excellent winter cover for pheasants, deer, and cottontail rabbits. Common birds found in these areas include northern harrier, snipe, woodcock, ruffed grouse, downy woodpecker, willow flycatcher, eastern phoebe, eastern kingbird and catbird.

Lowland Forests (Southern Hardwood Swamps, Southern Wet-mesic Forests) are a major component of natural habitat found in the Sheboygan Marsh (Table 4). In fact, this type of forest saw a large increase in acreage of the Marsh when comparing the 1987 landcover dataset versus the 2008 landcover dataset (2008 vs. 2020 saw an increase as well though not as much). This type of plant

community dominates the large blocks of wetlands along the western and southern edges of the Sheboygan Marsh. This type of forest can be found in old lake basins in southern Wisconsin.

Common trees found in hardwood swamps are black ash, red maple, silver maple, yellow birch, and elm. The shrub layer is comprised of seedlings of the dominant tree species, dogwoods, and alder. Groundlayer plants include ferns, sedges, grasses and forbs similar to wet meadows, and characteristic plants like skunk cabbage and marsh marigold.

Hardwood swamps adjacent to rivers and streams are extremely important for floodwater storage. They also act as reservoirs to help maintain water flow in streams during dry periods and for groundwater recharge.

The large blocks of lowland forests interconnected by corridors of similar cover along the Sheboygan River and tributary streams enhance this habitat type for many species of migratory songbirds. These large blocks of forest contiguous with other wetland cover types increase diversity of plant and wildlife in this area.

The relatively open canopy and variety of moisture regimes make lowland forests an extremely diverse habitat for reptiles and amphibians. Amphibians that occur in lowland forests include American toads, eastern gray tree frogs, spring peepers, wood frogs, blue-spotted salamanders, central newt, red-backed salamanders, and spotted salamanders. Reptiles that are commonly found in lowland forests include eastern garter, northern water, northern ringneck, brown, and red-bellied snakes. Common turtle species include painted and snapping turtles.

A rather distinct group of birds (some endangered or threatened status) inhabit floodplain forests, including prothonotary warbler, cerulean warbler, acadian flycatcher, and cardinal. Water-associated birds include belted kingfishers, green-backed herons, spotted sandpipers, woodducks, and mallards. Woodpeckers such as the flicker, red-bellied, red-headed, and pileated are present as well as many other cavity nesters (e.g., barred owls, wood ducks, hooded mergansers, great-crested flycatchers, and house wrens). Another state listed threatened bird that is likely nesting in these large blocks of lowland forests is the red-shouldered hawk.

Most mammals common to southern Wisconsin make use of the lowland forests in the Sheboygan Marsh. The stream and river corridors allow movement between cover types and increases the value of blocks of cover. The riverine and wetland areas provide ideal habitat for aquatic animals like muskrat, mink, and raccoons. White-tailed deer make extensive use of these lowland forests as cover areas during hunting seasons and during winter.

Wet meadows (sedge meadows) are vegetated with grasses, sedges and showy flowering plants like marsh milkweed, goldenrod and asters. Woody plants are absent and standing water is present only after heavy rains or spring runoff. Wet meadows are especially important for water quality protection since they are generally buffers between uplands and waterways where their dense vegetation traps sediments

and takes up nutrients. An example of wet meadows on the Sheboygan Marsh is the north prairie area located in the northwest quarter of the Marsh.

Wet meadows provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including sandhill cranes (at least one pair nests along St. Anna Creek in the wet meadow areas), pheasants, and many small mammals that provide food for mink, fox, coyote, and raptors. Sedge meadows are particularly important for reptiles, amphibians and invertebrate species. They are important as feeding areas for shorebirds and waterfowls, especially during seasonal flood events.

Grasslands, including croplands provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species—especially bird species and invertebrates. Sample and Mossman’s (1997) “Managing Habitat for Grassland Birds” lists 105 species of birds that use grasslands for some part of their breeding cycle. Hayfields provide nesting habitat for ground nesting birds like pheasants and ducks, if mowing is delayed until after the nesting season. Crop fields provide food and cover for pheasants, deer, turkeys, Canada geese, raccoons and other species.

Original land surveys from 1835 indicate that the area immediately south of the wetlands of the Sheboygan Marsh held oak and oak savannah plant communities. Open landscapes continue to be maintained on the uplands on the south side of the Marsh by sharecropping with local farmers and planting areas to permanent grass cover. There are about 200 acres of land maintained in agricultural crops through sharecropping and approximately 435 (up from 250 reported in the *2001 Plan*) acres are maintained as grasslands (per the *2008 & 2020 WDNR Landcover Dataset*); prescribed burns should be used to maintain grassland areas.

Interspersed among the upland habitats are small wetland areas; some have these have been developed or restored for wildlife habitat. There are two runoff ponds—7 acres and 12 acres—where water levels can be managed to enhance wetland habitat. There are also 4 dugout ponds which when combined with the runoff ponds equate to about 29 acres. Wetlands have been restored in several areas, including two small wetland scrapes, a tile break, and a ditch block/scrape on state lands on the south side of the Marsh.

Wildlife Community

Fish Management

The earliest fish management information is the documentation of a winterkill in 1939. The Sheboygan Marsh has a lengthy history of low oxygen levels in winter except in the South Ditch area. The South Ditch oxygen levels remain suitable to support fish during winter due to the inflow of well-oxygenated water from Elkhart Lake.

Winterkills and summerkills have been a common occurrence in Sheboygan Marsh. The kills are a natural process in the Marsh due to its shallow nature and the abundance of aquatic vegetation. In winter, the decaying of vegetation uses most of the free oxygen in the water bodies of the Marsh. In summer, extremely high-water temperatures and low night-time oxygen levels cause periodic fish kills. A severe fish kill in September, 1986 was associated with a major flood as oxygen depleted water from flooded

terrestrial areas entered the Marsh. The Marsh was drawn down the following year and the chemical rotenone was applied to remove approximately 90 tons of carp that remained following the 1986 fish kill. The Marsh was subsequently stocked with northern pike, panfish and largemouth bass.

Periodic fish stocking has taken place in Sheboygan Marsh since 1935. The stockings took place to facilitate recovery from fish kills and drawdowns. A variety of species have been stocked at various times including northern pike, bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, yellow perch, largemouth bass and walleye. The fishery continues to be dominated by natural populations of northern pike, bluegills, black crappie, yellow perch and carp. In 2012, following the 2011 drawdown northern pike were stocked from funding provided by the WDNR. Panfish, approximately 1,600 bluegill and 1,600 yellow perch, were also stocked by funding from the SCCA as well as the Sheboygan County Stewardship fund.

A winter fish refuge was established in the South Ditch area from 1949 to 1968, apparently to prevent over-harvest by anglers. The refuge was apparently enforced only during times when the fish trap was operated. The fish traps were located at each end of the South Ditch to remove rough fish such as carp. The rough fish removal program was in operation as early as 1940 and continued until drawdown in 1968.

Conservation Warden Glenn Popple announced that the state's rough fish removal crew is again busy removing carp from the Sheboygan Marsh, and fish are on sale there now to the general public at a very low price. Those purchasing fish must bring their own containers. Fish weighing 5 pounds or less will be sold for 5¢ a pound and fish weighing over 5 pounds will cost 10¢ a pound.

*January 21, 1951
Sheboygan Press*

Drawdowns of the Sheboygan Marsh were conducted in 1968, 1984, 1987, 1995, 2001, 2011, and again in 2023. An unplanned natural drawdown occurred during a period of drought in 1988 as well as 2012. The human controlled drawdowns were conducted to compact bottom sediments and to manage emergent aquatic plants. It is typical that the fishery is negatively impacted by the drawdowns for several years as fish either migrate downstream or die during summer due to exposure to high water temperatures. The fish community has recovered quickly in most instances due to both stocking and natural recruitment processes.

Fishing regulations for Sheboygan Marsh generally followed the standard statewide regulations with two exceptions. Sheboygan Marsh has been regulated by a continuous open gamefish season to allow the harvest of fish in winter that are vulnerable to winterkill. Northern pike were excluded from the Southern Wisconsin northern pike regulations (26" minimum size limit, 2 bag limit) in 1999. The current northern pike regulation for Sheboygan Marsh is no minimum size limit and 5 daily bag (this is the same as in the *2001 & 2013 Plans*) limit during season that lasts from May to March.

Fish Populations

Northern pike have traditionally been the dominant gamefish in the Marsh. Fish populations are comprised of mostly smaller fish, a condition that has persisted through time and is likely because of drawdowns.

Historically, yellow perch and pumpkinseed sunfish have been the dominant panfish species of Sheboygan Marsh. Since the *2001 Plan*, this may have changed (see Table 8). Even though perch and pumpkinseed are best suited for waters that experience low oxygen conditions, bluegill and black crappie appear to have increased in abundance and have been providing good quality fishing for anglers near Sheboygan Marsh Park in recent years per the *2013 Plan*.

Table 8 - 2012 WDNR Fish Survey

	Northern Pike	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Black Crappie	Pumpkin Seed	Bullhead	Common Carp
1-Sep-11	2	1	4	3	2	15	25
2-Sep-11	0	8	12	1	0	9	9
Totals	2	9	16	4	2	24	34

As seen in the above table, black bullhead remain abundant in Sheboygan Marsh but, are generally small in size. Largemouth bass are present, mostly in the South Ditch area and occasionally provide good angling. White sucker, mudminnow and golden shiner provide forage for northern pike.

In general, the size and abundance of gamefish and panfish has fluctuated widely with drawdowns of water levels in Sheboygan Marsh. Experience has shown that the populations recover well within five years of a drawdown and can provide good angling opportunities especially near the Sheboygan Marsh Park area as well as deeper pockets of water throughout the Marsh.

Fish Management Problems

The main water body of Sheboygan Marsh experiences low oxygen levels during most winters by mid-February. The decaying of submergent vegetation in the main water body results in low oxygen conditions. Fish that are unable to find areas of well oxygenated water either move downstream of the Marsh Dam or die. Fish that are able to move into the South Ditch area of the Marsh are able to survive because well oxygenated water enters the South Ditch from the outlet of Elkhart Lake.

Plant respiration in the main water body of the Marsh in summer can cause low oxygen levels as well. The problem is especially acute during periods of high water temperatures. Respiration effects are especially bad during night time hours when plant respiration is greatest and no oxygen is produced by photosynthesis. Northern pike and white sucker are most susceptible to summer kills.

Carp Abundance

In the *2001 Plan*, common carp were reported to have been abundant in Sheboygan Marsh. Then, carp were observed in large concentrations in the main water body, the South Ditch, and the outlet stream from Elkhart Lake. Carp cause problems by uprooting of valuable waterfowl food in the form of submergent vegetation.

A carp eradication measure took place in 2004. According to then WDNR fisheries biologist John Nelson, over 60,000 pounds of carp were removed from the Sheboygan Marsh that winter. The carp were trapped at the South Ditch culverts and then shipped to a local organic farm for fertilizer. Three single axle trucks were filled.



Figure 29 - Carp Being Harvested

Since that time, no coordinated efforts have taken place to remove carp. They have not seemed to be a problem over the past decade, which was confirmed by WDNR’s current fisheries biologist Drew Wallace. During this plan update he stated, “Based on the numbers I’ve observed I don’t think I’d say they are a problem yet.” When they start to be more prevalent remediation actions should again be considered. This sentiment is also reflected in the implementation strategies identified in [Chapter 2](#).

As it was noted in the *2001 Plan*, total elimination of carp through the use of chemicals is not feasible in the Sheboygan River watershed above the Sheboygan Marsh Dam. Therefore, the only available means of control would be the harvest of carp from traps as they move into confined areas such as the South Ditch. An additional fish trap could be established near the north end of the South Ditch to capture many of the carp as they enter the South Ditch in search of well oxygenated water in winter.

Wildlife Management

A Sheboygan Press article of the time reported the following responses immediately after completion of the dam in 1938:

“As the water backed up in the old drainage ditches forming a new Sheboygan lake, the wild fowl instinctively found this new haven and soon ducks of all kinds, bittern, coots, tern, killdeer, Florida Gallinule, marsh hawks, geese and great blue heron began to take up homes in the hidden recesses of the area. Conservation clubs and sportsmen planted wild rice and wild celery to keep the birds well fed. Muskrats soon found the marsh and the shy beaver, almost impossible to see, left evidence of his presence by his dams and houses and carefully cut down trees along the spoil banks. Other birds not of the aquatic variety also find the marsh a fine nesting place. Pheasants abound in the woods and fields around the edges of the marsh, and Virginia rails, yellow-billed cuckoos, song sparrows,

rose breasted grosbeaks, martins, brown thrashers, several varieties of swallows and numerous other birds have all been seen in the marsh area.”

State wildlife management staff have been active in the management of the Sheboygan Marsh since the 1950s. A management agreement that was part of the 1984 master plan detailed the roles and responsibilities of the county and state regarding management activities, including; habitat management, recreational uses, timber management, wildlife refuges, enforcement of public uses, water level management, and other areas.

The earliest state wildlife management information is found in a 1953 Pittman-Robertson report that summarized waterfowl habitat surveys by Wisconsin Conservation Department biologists from 1938 through 1952 (Zimmerman, 1953):

“The area of open water on the Sheboygan Marsh has been increasing in size since 1942. Previously, this particular area had a considerable stand of wild rice, hard stem and river bulrush, and some reed grass. When visited in 1949, the area of open water appeared to be at least 150 acres in size. It is believed that this increase in size of the open water area is due in a large measure to the high-water level held at the dam.”

A faunal survey was done as part of a requirement for a Master of Science degree from Kansas State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1939 and 1940 by E.F. Herman (1941). This survey documented reptile, amphibian, mollusks, plankton, fish, bird, and mammal species present on the marsh the first two years after being reflowed.

A management report done in 1958 by Game Manager, Les Neustadter included recommendations on wildlife refuge changes and observations on water level management. This report included some interesting hunter success data, presented below:

Table 9 - Historic Hunter Record

Year	Dates	No. Hunters	Birds Bagged		Birds Lost	
			Ducks	Coots	Ducks	Coots
1943	Sept 25	292	357	1,792	?	?
1947	Oct 7	23	45	42	6	?
1948	Oct 15,16,17	259	160	414	20	?
1949	Oct 14,15,16	441	371	650	182	?
1954	?	381	157	116	81	?
1955	Oct 1,2	394	381	87	137	?
1956	Oct 1,2,6,7	560	475	437	182	49
1957	Oct 1,5	286	360	156	79	8

Various wildlife and habitat surveys have been completed on the Sheboygan Marsh. Ruffed Grouse drumming surveys were conducted starting in 1977 (Figure 30), but were discontinued soon after the

2013 Plan Update. Grouse numbers have been greatly diminished in the area likely due to habitat loss, though from time-to-time one can still hear a bit of drumming in the Marsh.

Duck banding has been conducted on the Sheboygan Marsh annually since 1979 (Table 10). Hunter car counts and success on opening day of the waterfowl season have been recorded, almost every year, since 1965 (Table 11).

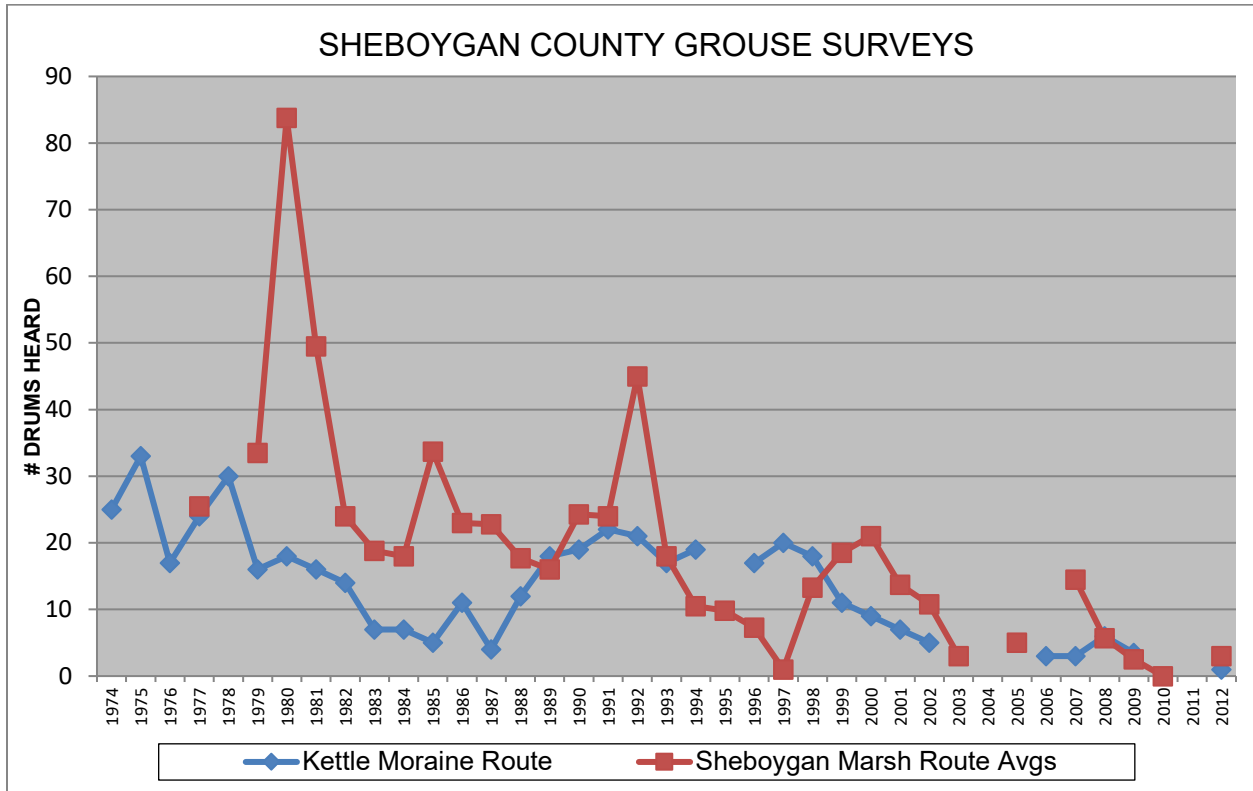


Figure 30 - Historic Grouse Surveys

Table 10 - Summary of Duck Banding Records-Sheboygan Marsh

Summary of Duck Banding Records - Sheboygan Marsh				
Year	Total Mallards	Total Wood Ducks	Total GWT	Grand Total
1979	103	269	3	375
1980	212	145	6	363
1981	<i>No banding</i>			
1982	780	31	1	812
1983	491	67	13	571
1984	<i>No banding due to Marsh drawdown</i>			
1985	453	39	3	495
1986	598	26	2	626
1987	52	8	0	60
1988	193	101	63	357
1989	72	209	118	399

Summary of Duck Banding Records - Sheboygan Marsh				
Year	Total Mallards	Total Wood Ducks	Total GWT	Grand Total
1990	472	66	23	561
1991	601	83	9	693
1992	1008	109	1	1118
1993	391	143	1	535
1994	319	316	1	636
1995	59	127	43	229
1996	768	67	2	837
1997	44	70	3	117
1998	549	76	0	625
1999	348	151	0	499
2000	319	150	0	469
2001	333	51	0	384
2002	<i>No banding due to Marsh drawdown</i>			
2003	<i>No banding due to statewide CWD workload</i>			
2004	177	24	0	201
2005	<i>No banding due to statewide CWD workload</i>			
2006	267	154	0	421
2007	513	70	0	583
2008	16	145	0	161
2009	111	252	0	363
2010	87	455	0	542
2011	274	25	0	299
2012	520	42	0	562
Total	9658	3405	269	13332

Table 11 - Duck Season Opening Day Surveys-Sheboygan Marsh

DUCK SEASON OPENING DAY SURVEYS - SHEBOYGAN MARSH								
SEASON OPENER	# CARS	# HUNTERS CHECKED	# DUCKS	SUCCESS	% MALLARD	% BWT	% GWT	% WD
10/9/1965		195	135	0.69	15.56	7.41	2.96	1.48
10/8/1966	212	51	187	3.67	34.76	5.35	15.51	6.95
10/7/1967								
10/12/1968*								
10/4/1969	351	113	107	0.95	35.51	37.38	8.41	2.80
10/3/1970	282	98	63	0.64	26.98	31.75	3.17	1.59
10/2/1971	91	219	235	1.07	32.34	55.32	5.11	1.70
10/7/1972								

DUCK SEASON OPENING DAY SURVEYS - SHEBOYGAN MARSH								
SEASON OPENER	# CARS	# HUNTERS CHECKED	# DUCKS	SUCCESS	% MALLARD	% BWT	% GWT	% WD
10/1/1973	168	30	35	1.17	25.71	48.57	5.71	0.00
10/2/1974	80	33	26	0.79				
10/1/1975	99	91	160	1.76				
10/1/1976	163			0.77				
10/1/1977	238			0.43				
10/1/1978	143	145	142	0.98	16.20	52.82	12.68	7.75
10/1/1979	91	159	158	0.99	21.52	43.04	8.86	8.86
10/6/1980	80	113	62	0.55	19.35	9.68	4.84	12.90
10/4/1981	91	74	30	0.41	26.67	46.67	6.67	23.33
10/1/1982	64	79	85	1.08	15.29	45.88	3.53	28.24
10/1/1983	51	80	81	1.01	8.64	38.27	2.47	35.80
10/01/1984~	55	75	74	0.99	8.11	55.41	9.46	8.11
10/5/1985	80	134	122	0.91	12.00	50.00	11.00	2.00
10/4/1986	76	99	93	0.94	10.75	69.89	12.90	3.23
10/01/1987*	25	39	20	0.51	40.00	25.00	10.00	15.00
10/08/1988+	80	104	88	0.85	18.18	25.00	32.95	15.91
10/7/1989	100							
10/6/1990		58	67	1.16	16.42	41.79	20.90	10.45
10/5/1991	64	71	89	1.25	22.47	43.82	25.84	2.25
10/3/1992	101	94	58	0.62	24.14	24.14	36.21	8.62
10/2/1993	90	83	102	1.23	26.47	27.45	18.63	11.76
10/1/1994	78	104	51	0.49	39.22	23.53	21.57	7.84
09/30/1995~	80	91	187	2.05	3.74	68.45	5.35	20.32
9/28/1996	86	91	129	1.42	24.00	56.00		15.50
10/4/1997	83	85	64	0.75	17.00	38.00	25.00	19.00
10/3/1998	64	66	56	0.85	18.00	39.00	36.00	4.00
10/2/1999	58	69	92	1.33	7.53	60.00	27.96	2.15
9/30/2000	53	80	55	0.69	29.10	52.70	10.90	7.27
9/29/2001		90	36	0.40	14.00	37.00	6.00	31.00
2002*	<i>No survey due to drawdown conditions</i>							
2003	<i>No survey due to statewide CWD workload</i>							
2004	<i>No survey due to statewide CWD workload</i>							
2005	<i>No survey due to statewide CWD workload</i>							
9/30/2006	64	84	91	1.08	6.59	40.66	26.37	21.98
9/29/2007	48	85	83	0.98	17.00	48.00	7.00	14.50
10/4/2008	39	50	56	1.12	7.00	52.00	7.00	20.00

DUCK SEASON OPENING DAY SURVEYS - SHEBOYGAN MARSH								
SEASON OPENER	# CARS	# HUNTERS CHECKED	# DUCKS	SUCCESS	% MALLARD	% BWT	% GWT	% WD
10/3/2009	48	70	17	0.24	18.00	41.00	6.00	35.00
10/2/2010	53	59	42	0.71	12.00	48.00	0.00	21.00
10/01/2011*	26	<i>No survey due to drawdown conditions</i>						
09/29/2012+	88	44	70	1.59	9.00	47.00	9.00	13.00
Average	102.2	94.2	92.2	1.0	20.6	41.9	13.7	12.7

<p>* Complete drawdown on Sheboygan Marsh + Drought year ~ Partial drawdown</p>

A number of other activities benefiting wildlife have taken place on the Marsh during its managed history. They are:

- 1941 – First wildlife refuge established.
- 1960s – Developed 1.6 miles of flowage (i.e. dike & ditch system), a seven-acre runoff pond as well as blasted potholes to create permanent open water areas.
- 1966 & 1971 – 1,662 Mallard ducks of differing strains (i.e. game farm vs. wild) stocked.
- 1989 & 1992 – Relocation of 99 Canada geese to the Marsh to establish a breeding stock.
- 1990s – Converted 250 acres of upland grassland habitat.
- 1990 & 1991 – Tag alder cut to improve cover value of woodcock and ruffed grouse.
- 2000 – Developed a 10 acre runoff pond.
- 2011 & Ongoing – County developed recreational facilities management plan that is updated yearly and lists anticipated activities for the following budget year.
- 2012, 2022, 2023 – Cattail spraying to provide better habitat diversity in monoculture stands.
- 2023 & 2024 – New dam installation to maintain water levels.
- Ongoing – Purple loosestrife monitoring and control.
- Ongoing – Sharecropping agreements providing 200 acres of agriculture that provides food and cover.

Lastly, wildlife management literature recommends that deep water marshes be managed to improve the distribution of emergent plants to provide the best habitat for most wetland species (Weller, 1981). Drawdowns allow aquatic vegetation a chance to germinate and grow in more areas of the Marsh, providing more food and cover for wildlife. The abundance and variety of aquatic plants begins to decline after three or four years of maintaining consistent water levels (see [Water Level Strategies](#) in Chapter 1).

Timber

The Sheboygan Marsh is about 50% forested per the historic landcover data outlined earlier in this chapter and its health is driven by both human influence and weather cycles. Major timber types include (1) Swamp Hardwoods, which are a mixture of soft maple, elm, northern white cedar, and tamarack; and (2)

Northern Hardwoods, which are a mixture of upland species such as hard maple, basswood, and some oak. In the *2013 Plan Update*, according to former local WDNR Forester Tim Beyer, “most of these species are adapted to having their feet (roots) wet most of the year, but they are also very sensitive to large fluctuations of the water table.” The high population of the white-tailed deer and a fluctuating water table are probably the primary reasons for the diminishing and/or consistent forest acreage. It should be noted as well that the tamarack population experienced a large die-off following 2001. Many felt the drawdown of 2001 was the cause, however, die-offs took place around many other areas of the State during the same timeframe. The drawdown likely added additional stress to an existing problem. With the new dam’s ability to better control water levels, it will be interesting to see if tree cover starts to expand over time due to the decline in large water level fluctuations. It should also be noted that most, if not all, of the ash have died in the Marsh due to the Emerald Ash Borer.

In the *2013 Plan Update*, Mr. Beyer also noted that invasive pests and plants are a major threat to the vegetation in this area. “Invasive buckthorn, reed canary grass, phragmites, and Japanese knotweed can greatly alter wetland environments and the natural vegetation. Emerald Ash Borer can cause widespread mortality of ash and the Columbian Timber Beetle in addition a number of other timber beetles are causing log degradates and top dieback in red and silver maple.”

Mr. Beyer suggested that if the long-term management of the Sheboygan Marsh includes timber harvesting for revenue, or maintenance of natural timber types, it is vital to manage the threats whether they be non-native, native, or as simple as thinning stands when the densities or age of the trees cause the stands to become stressed and decline in health. Three major elements are responsible for the current timber types. They include soil type, ditching practices, and the water table.

Soils & Timber

Trees will grow and thrive only as well as the soils allow. Water and soil nutrient availability are the two major elements that contribute to tree growth. The predominant soils in the Sheboygan Marsh are Palms, Houghton, and Boots Muck. All three soils are similar in nature. All were formed in depressional areas on old glacial lake plains, in stream valleys, or on outwash plains. They all are poorly drained soils, which are high in organic matter.

In a representative soil profile, the organic layers are 50-60 inches thick and the upper 12-16 inches are black muck. Natural soil fertility is low because of rapid leaching of nutrients. Because of the drainage, the soils are poorly aerated. Poor soil aeration generally leads to slow tree growth and, eventually, mortality.

Ditches, Channels & Timber

Many years ago, ditches and channels were established as a means of lowering the water table; the intent was to create and market rich farmland. The effects of this channelization were beneficial for tree establishment between 1921 and 1937. Some fine stands of soft maple presently thrive along the channel system. Many of the fallen dead ash trees block portions of many of the channels.

Water Table & Timber

The tree root zone is limited by the water table. The water table throughout Sheboygan Marsh is at or near the surface the majority of the time. A slight rise in the water table of 6 inches or more could cause significant tree mortality. Thus, tree root systems are shallow and trees are subject to windfall before they reach maturity.

The high-water table and slow-moving groundwater restrict aeration (oxygen) and are responsible for extremely slow tree growth. A typical site index for tamarack under these conditions can be 30-40 (30-40 feet tall in 50 years).

Timber - Past, Present, & Future Management

Timber management and harvesting in the Sheboygan Marsh over the past 50 years has been minimal. Harvesting permits have been granted at various times to Sportsmen's Clubs to cut cedar posts. In 1975, Larry Baer, the local DNR forester, conducted an elm salvage sale. Mature stands of white cedar, soft maple, and tamarack do exist and could be commercially thinned. However, poor equipment accessibility and wet soil conditions make removal almost impossible.

If harvesting were to occur, it is feared that the white cedar type, for example, would be eliminated due to the high deer populations which browse on cedar regeneration. The cedar type serves as a deeryard over the cold winter months, when food for deer is scarce. The soft maple stands could also be lost by over-harvesting. Soft maple stands that are harvested too heavily can easily revert into canary grass. Once canary grass invades a site, tree growth gets choked out.

Timber Recommendations

- (a) Maintain the present timber types.
- (b) Maintain the forested acreage for recreational and wildlife management purposes.
- (c) Attempt to increase, or at least maintain, the current forested acreage by controlling the current water levels in the marsh.
- (d) Develop a forestry management plan.

Archaeological & Historical Characteristics

The Sheboygan Marsh is one of a number of extensive wetland systems in east-central Wisconsin that are situated atop the Niagara Escarpment. This escarpment is one of the major topographic features of the geographic province designated as the Eastern Ridges and Lowlands of Wisconsin. According to the Wisconsin Geological Survey, "The Niagara Escarpment stretches in a wide arc from eastern Wisconsin through Michigan's Upper Peninsula, across Ontario, Canada, and on past the Niagara Falls in New York. The rock forming the escarpment was originally deposited as lime mud on an ancient sea floor about 430 million years ago. What remains is the result of weathering and erosion. The Escarpment is home to over 240 different rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, including white cedar trees that are more than 1,000 years old. It is also an important source of groundwater recharge."

The Sheboygan Marsh is one of several reservoirs of the Sheboygan River. The Marsh is essentially a eutrophic glacial lake formed by meltwaters of the last Wisconsinan glaciation that, along with till and other sediments, filled the pre-glacial valley of the Sheboygan River. The Physical Geography of Wisconsin (1965) notes,

The latter was formerly a lake, for it has beach ridges, wave-cut cliffs, and ice ramparts. The swamp covers 15 4/5 square miles. It was originally occupied by a body of water a little larger than Lake Mendota at Madison. Borings show that it was at least 45 feet deep. It has 9 feet of peat at the surface, underlain by marl and clay. Elkhart Lake is a part of the original Sheboygan Lake. There was also a shallow lake in the middle of the present marsh before 1868. In that year \$50,000 was expended in an attempt to drain the marsh, half of this sum being provided by the state.

In spite of its large size and suspected glacial history, little extensive geophysical study has been conducted at the Sheboygan Marsh and its history is undoubtedly more complex than presently documented.

The following archaeological and historical perspective was prepared by David F. Overstreet, Ph.D., President of Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center, Inc., and published in *Archaeological Investigations in the Sheboygan River Watershed, 1989–1990 Narrative Summary*.

“Prior to clearing in the early- to mid-19th century, the Sheboygan Marsh region was characterized by southern hardwood forest. Both mesic and xeric components are in abundant evidence with oaks, maples, and pines at higher elevations. At lower elevations, water tolerant species such as black ash and tamarack are predominant. Because northwestern Sheboygan County is within the limits of the so-called tension zone, pockets of conifer-hardwood forest also may have been major elements of the floral communities surrounding the Marsh. In addition, a few pockets of prairie or oak openings may have occurred here, but at the time of historic contact the nearest major distribution of these communities was found in east-central and northeast Fond du Lac County.

Detailed post-glacial vegetation succession has not been developed for Sheboygan County, but it is likely that the immediate post-glacial habitat, from approximately 12,000 to 10,000 BC, was a mixed tundra spruce forest. With warming and drying, pines began to replace the spruce some time after approximately 9,000 to 8,000 B.C. With continued lengthy periods of drought and dry period, the mid-Holocene hypsothermal, oaks and the associated southern hardwood species became the dominant arboreal species. There has likely been little vegetational change in the region from approximately 3000 BC to the advent of historic period land clearing.

Undoubtedly the major floristic communities were exploited by prehistoric populations for mast crops, large and small mammalian species that occupied the forests, and other understory plant resources. However, the concentrated and abundant aquatic species of

plants and animals certainly provided the major elements of subsistence for the region's prehistoric populations up until about AD 1000, at which time corn horticulture was introduced into the region.

Fish, waterfowl, aquatic mammals (especially muskrat and beaver), and turtles were easily acquired by the residents of the marsh fringe. Aquatic tubers also were an important food source for the prehistoric residents. The marsh/lake seemed the key to local subsistence.

Archaeological investigations conducted in and around the Sheboygan Marsh during the 1980s/1990s have yielded significant results. Surveys resulted in the identification and verification of nearly 100 prehistoric archaeological sites within the limits of the Sheboygan Marsh tract owned by Sheboygan County, or immediately adjacent to these public lands. Archaeological site locations have been mapped, but are not included in this Plan due to the risk of unwarranted or illegal exploitation.

These sites demonstrate that the Marsh environs encompass virtually the entire spectrum of prehistoric occupation in Wisconsin. For approximately 12,000 years, prehistoric inhabitants of the region utilized the post-glacial lake and its extensive aquatic habitats for both hunting and gathering.

Collectively, the known and suspected historic and prehistoric archaeological sites represent a vast storehouse of potential research with regard to aboriginal lifeways following the end of the last glacial advance.

The contexts in which these archaeological sites occur and their surrounding marsh/bog environs present superior opportunities to reconstruct the ecological setting within which human adaptations took place. The deep peat records of the Marsh contain a pollen record of climatic variations following the demise of the Wisconsin ice sheets. They also, likely, include plant macro-fossils of twigs, bark, seeds nuts, algae, and fungi, all useful indices of past climate and flora. The record of fossil remains of such forms as mastodon, mammoth, musk ox, barren ground caribou, dire wolf, giant beaver, and big horned bison is significant, but spotty. The Sheboygan Marsh provides, because of its periodic draw-downs, a fine opportunity to implement such research.

The Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park is a focal point for public use and interpretation. Numerous federal and state surveys relating to tourism interest have demonstrated that historic and archaeological sites are consistently near the top of stated reasons why travelers select certain locations. Coupled with regional emphases on ice-age landscapes and interpretive centers, the Sheboygan Marsh is a most appropriate locality to enhance the interpretation of human activity from the last glacial recession to historic times."

Archaeologist Alphonse Gerund, in 1920, noted:

The Sheboygan marsh, an extinct lake of about the size of Lake Mendota at Madison, still indicated on maps as Sheboygan Lake occupies the northwest corner of the county. This marsh or lake and surrounding area is undoubtedly one of the most interesting regions in Wisconsin from the standpoint of its Indian remains, village sites, hunting and fishing grounds. Its banks were one continuous village site. Here the Indian probably made his last stand in the county, until about 1870, when he left to seek another home.

Gerund continued:

Almost everywhere along its margin have been found numerous Indian artifacts. Numerous collections of these from these banks and surrounding territory have been made. Specimens found here have been scattered widely throughout the county. Many have found their way to larger collections in Wisconsin, into eastern museums, as the Smithsonian and the Museum of Natural History, New York. The H.H. Hayssen collection now in the Milwaukee Public Museum was largely collected here.

Archaeological investigations in the Sheboygan River watershed, focused on the Sheboygan Marsh area, demonstrating that the preservation and research potential for cultural resources is inordinately high. Historic and prehistoric archaeological sites in intimate association with deep sedimentary, saturated contexts also provides a unique opportunity to reconstruct not only the lifeways of the past 10,000-12,000 years, but also to develop an absolute chronology and description of the post-ice age habitats to which these past populations adjusted those methods.

Some of the newly reported sites may have been cited in the literature (e.g., Gerund 1920, Thomas 1894) and collections from the sites are housed locally in private hands, at the Smithsonian Institution, the Milwaukee Public Museum, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the Museum of The American Indian – Heye Foundation. In this respect, documentation is certainly not complete and refinement of this information should be an on-going process. It should also be noted that a very robust private collection is maintained at the Henschel Museum of Indian History which is located near the northwest corner of the Marsh.

Dam Site & Waterfront

The prior permanent dam on the Sheboygan River at the northeastern-most corner of Sheboygan Marsh was completed under the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) during 1937 & 1938.

The county's 1937 dam construction application to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin stated that its purposes are, *"To maintain a constant water level in the Sheboygan Marsh, for fire protection and conservation purposes."*

The concrete structure had a height of 8 feet, with a top width of 65 feet and a base width of about 90 feet. During the 1990s, Sheboygan County made routine repairs to the concrete spillway and wingwalls as well as to the banks above and below the dam. In 2011, a dam inspection was completed. The inspection recommended a number of items that were required to take place to ensure the integrity of the structure. Routine repairs were made in 2011 as well as 2012.

This former structure stood the test of time, but almost from the start, its ability to control the rapid water fluctuations of the Sheboygan Marsh became an issue. These rapid water fluctuations tore cattail mats away from their roots which then eventually floated downstream and backed up behind the then fixed-crest structure. At times, there were over 4-acres worth of cattail mats backed up behind the dam. Some years were so bad that it cost the County over \$70,000 to remove them. That figure likely rises to well above \$100,000 when you figure in the costs of the County's removal partner, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Like with all successful projects, a strong partnership formed between the County, Ducks Unlimited and the WDNR to tackle the issue and come up with a solution. Ayres Associates ultimately formed the fourth cog in the partnership and designed a state-of-the-art structure that now allows the County and WDNR to maintain water levels at the desired level and avoid the aforementioned rapid fluctuations. As such, since the dam's opening in 2023 and publishing this plan, the County and WDNR have not had a single cattail removal effort. The partners are now consistently able to maintain water levels to within ½ a foot or less. That is nothing short of amazing on a 14,000-acre complex that is part of a 133-square mile watershed. With the fixed-crest structure, water fluctuations would be in feet, not inches when a large precipitation event took place.

Perhaps most importantly, the consistent water level now feasible also contributes to a healthier ecosystem. Once abundant vegetation is now starting to move back into areas formerly overtaken by the dominant invasive hybrid cattail that blankets many areas of the Marsh. This improved vegetation in turn leads to better wildlife habitat for a number of critters and birds.

Rewinding back to 1968, a 250-foot long bypass pipe, 5 feet in diameter, was constructed just north of the prior dam to facilitate raising and lowering the water levels. Up until 2008, the bypass was operated manually, employing a worm gear and pinion. In 1993 and again 2008, an electric motor was installed to help aid in its operation. When the new dam was installed in 2023/2024, the bypass controls and gate were removed and sold for scrap. The bypass pipe was slurry filled its entire length to avoid any future collapse. Before it was filled, it was noted that the bypass pipe was well rusted and had numerous holes throughout its length. It was on borrowed time.

Prior to the new dam installation, the collection and removal of floating cattail bogs at the dam site was an on-going (and expensive) maintenance responsibility for the county. A boom had been cabled upstream of the dam to prevent overtopping or blockage, and to accommodate bog retrieval. In the late-1990s, a \$20,000 concrete approach was completed above the dam to better accommodate the backhoes used to pick out the floating bogs which are manually pushed from boats toward shore by WDNR and County staff. It is planned this platform will be upgraded in the future. As of writing this document, it is to be seen if the boom will be re-established.

A fairly primitive, two-lane concrete boat ramp exists on the north shore adjacent to the large north side gravel parking lot. It provides adequate access to Marsh users and was upgraded during the new dam construction. The upgrades included removing the middle cement wall to make ingress and egress easier (boats have gotten bigger), installing wooden platforms on both sides to help boaters get in and out of their craft safer, and the installation of gravel on the north side of the launch to provide a second launch area. The electric pole was moved to facilitate the latter as well.

In the mid- 1990's, downstream of the dam on both sides of the channel, the County's Land & Water Department (now the Conservation Division) and the County's Highway Department (now the Transportation Department), with the aid of Wisconsin Conservation Corps created walkable fishing access areas. The structures on the south side of the channel were updated in 2012 by County Planning & Conservation staff with the generous help of Home Depot staff through the countywide Volunteer Center Day of Caring event. During the new dam construction in 2023/2024, new steps were added to this area to provide safer access. The slope on the north side of the channel was also graded more gently to provide kayak access. Two large cement fishing platforms were also installed for better and safer public access than what existed prior to the new dam.

Regional Context

At 14,000 acres (8,472 publicly owned), the *Sheboygan Marsh* is regionally significant and ecologically important.

It accommodates a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. However, it is most ecologically well-suited, and widely recognized, for its wildlife habitat of statewide significance. Its primary importance as a migratory waterfowl spring nesting and fall staging area is well understood in the scientific community. As such, its management has focused on wildlife; waterfowl hunting has always been the premiere recreational activity enjoyed at *Sheboygan Marsh*.

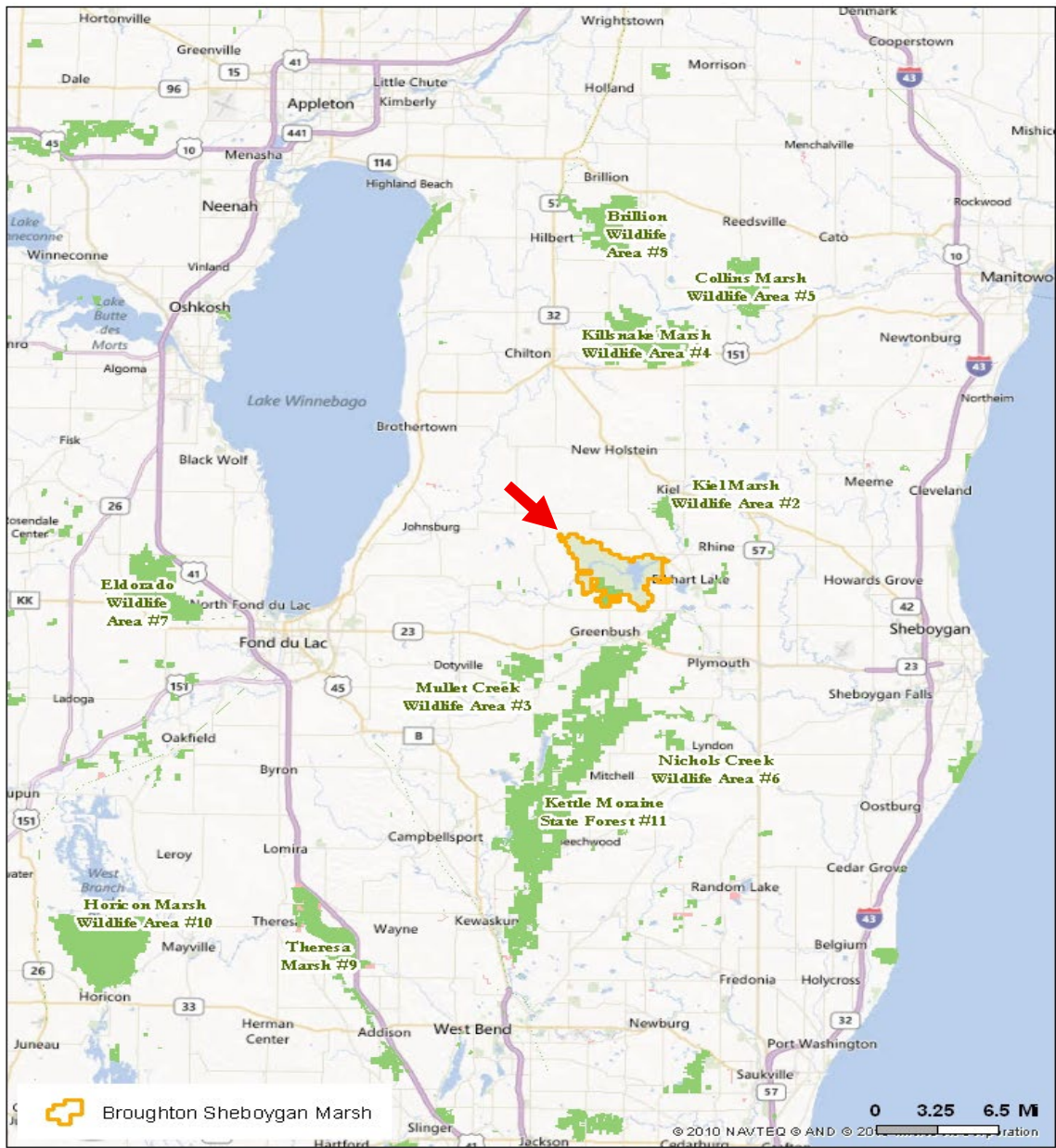
The Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park & Wildlife Area enjoys an interesting regional context. Figure 25 illustrates its geographic location in relation to the following nine State Wildlife Areas, listed in order of nearness to Sheboygan Marsh:

- Kiel Marsh Wildlife Area (Map #2)
- Mullet Creek Wildlife Area (Map #3)
- Killsnake Marsh Wildlife Area (Map #4)
- Collins Marsh Wildlife Area (Map #5)
- Nichols Creek Wildlife Area (Map #6)
- Eldorado Wildlife Area (Map #7)
- Brillion Wildlife Area (Map #8)
- Theresa Marsh (Map #9)
- Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area (Map #10)

- Kettle Moraine North (Map #11)

The most noteworthy State of Wisconsin Wildlife Areas which form the regional context of *Sheboygan Marsh* are depicted in Figure 31 and profiled below:

- **Kiel Marsh Wildlife Area** (Map #2). 843 acres, lying along the Sheboygan River along a 3-county boundary at north-central Sheboygan County, southwest Manitowoc County, and southeast Calumet County. It features public hunting and fishing, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Kiel Marsh Wildlife Area is located just 4 miles north of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Mullet Creek Wildlife Area** (Map #3). 2,217 acres, lying east of Mullet Lake in east-central Fond du Lac County. It features public hunting and fishing, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Mullet Creek Wildlife Area is located about 10 miles southwest of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Killsnake Marsh Wildlife Area** (Map #4). 7,000 acres, lying along the south-central boundary of Calumet and Manitowoc counties. It features public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Killsnake Marsh Wildlife Area is located about 12 miles north of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Collins Marsh Wildlife Area** (Map #5). 4,200 acres, lying in central Manitowoc County. It features public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Collins Marsh Wildlife Area is located about 14 miles north-northeast of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Nichols Creek Wildlife Area** (Map #6). 612 acres, lying within the Northern Unit, Kettle Moraine State Forest, in southwest Sheboygan County. It features public fishing on Nichols Creek, a Class I trout stream, plus public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Nichols Creek Wildlife Area is located about 12 miles south of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Eldorado Wildlife Area** (Map #7). 6,381 acres, lying in north-central Fond Du Lac County. It features public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Eldorado Wildlife Area is located about 24 miles west of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Brillion Wildlife Area** (Map #8). 4,800 acres, lying in the northeast corner of Calumet County. It features public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Brillion Wildlife Area is located about 20 miles north of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Theresa Marsh** (Map #9). 5,990 acres, lying just east of the famous Horicon Marsh, at the Washington County and Dodge County boundary. It features public hunting, wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Theresa Marsh is located about 26 miles southwest of Sheboygan Marsh.
- **Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area** (Map #10). 33,000 acres, lying in central Dodge County. This internationally famous waterfowl nesting and staging area—primarily Canada geese—also features public hunting and fishing, unparalleled wildlife observation, and nature-based outdoor recreation. The Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area is located about 30 miles southwest of Sheboygan Marsh and is the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the world.



Broughton Sheboygan Marsh & Comparable State of Wisconsin Wildlife Areas



Figure 31 - Regional Wildlife Areas

Chapter 4 – Recreational Activities: Demands & Needs

Introductory Comments

As with many, if not all, recreational resources there are competing demands on the Sheboygan Marsh. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Marsh hosts a variety of user groups ranging from fisherman to birders. Ecologically speaking, managing the Marsh for waterfowl and wildlife habitat proves the most appropriate from a scientific perspective. This is also reflected, as previously mentioned again, in the public input and survey results.

It is assumed, the recreational uses at the Marsh generally reflect statewide recreational demands. Overall, outdoor recreation is a \$11.2 billion industry in the State that provides \$5.4 billion in wages for 97,000 jobs (*U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023*). The State breakdown of the various uses seen prevalently at the Marsh is reflected in Table 12 which is derived from the *2025-2030 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. It is assumed that these numbers accurately reflect Sheboygan County trends as well. The format of the Statewide Plan changed a bit, so it is no longer possible to directly compare use percentages as was possible in previous plans.

Table 12 - Wisconsin Recreational Demands Top 10

Activity	# WI Participating	# of Participants*
Hiking/Walking/Running on Trails	68%	4,102,780
Swimming in lakes, rivers	46%	2,775,410
Wildlife Viewing	45%	2,715,075
Picnicking	44%	2,654,740
Fishing	40%	2,413,400
Boating	40%	2,413,400
Visiting Nature Centers	40%	2,413,400
Canoeing, kayaking, SUPs, etc.	36%	2,172,060
Biking	34%	2,051,390
Gardening	31%	1,870,385
(Source: 2026-2030 Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Plan)		
*Using 2026 statewide population estimate of 6,033,500		

Many of these uses have a strong presence at the Marsh. And, based on its statewide popularity it is no surprise that increasing “Walking” and “Hiking” opportunities (i.e. trails, boardwalks, etc.) at the Marsh was one of the most prevalent comments at the public input sessions and in the survey. Kayaking shows a strong increase since the last plan so developing amenities such as a water trail make sense especially considering the relatively cheap cost to implement. It should also be noted that though hunting is not listed in the top 10 statewide outdoor recreational activities, it still has a strong presence at the Marsh.

The following paragraphs provide further detail regarding the varied uses at the Marsh.

Hunting & Sport Shooting

“Father of Marsh Restoration Declares It Will Be Open to Hunters Forever – This announcement was made by C.E. Broughton...to definitely brand false a recent rumor that the Marsh was going to be converted into a wildlife refuge, and Mr. Broughton pledged that as long as he and his associates live, as long as a state conservation department exists, this will never come to pass. Sheboygan Press – September 9, 1940.”

Hunting—whether big game or small game, waterfowl, or upland gamebird—is undoubtedly one of the most popular outdoor recreational activity enjoyed at Sheboygan Marsh. Wildlife habitat of such size and complexity as that found at Sheboygan Marsh is rare in this region of Wisconsin. Thus, it enjoys popularity from a wide geographical area. A large percentage of the State’s population is within a two-hour drive so the pressure will undoubtedly increase.

Hunting and sport shooting are virtually a part of the heritage of Wisconsin and Sheboygan County as well. The hunting tradition is weaved into the fabric of this state and this county as witnessed by the opening quote from Mr. Broughton. Wisconsin’s *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* lists that hunting of any type consists of 18.8% (a decrease of about 15% since the *2013 Plan Update*) of the State’s adult population or about 1,134,298 people over the age of 16.

Game animals available in Sheboygan County, particularly at the Marsh, are illustrated in the following table.

Table 13 - Sheboygan County Game Animals

Game Animals in Sheboygan County & Marsh		
Species	Abundance	Probable Future Status
White-tailed Deer	Abundant	Increasing
Cottontail Rabbit	Abundant	Stable
Gray Squirrel	Abundant	Stable
Fox Squirrel	Common	Stable
Turkey	Abundant	Stable
Ring-necked Pheasant	Common (stocked, minimal wild reproduction)	
Mourning Dove	Common	Stable
Ruffed Grouse	Rare	Decreasing
Woodcock	Common	Stable
Canada Goose	Abundant	Increasing
Ducks	Abundant	Stable
Red Fox	Common	Stable
Gray Fox	Common	Stable

Game Animals in Sheboygan County & Marsh		
Species	Abundance	Probable Future Status
Coyote	Common	Increasing
Raccoon	Abundant	Increasing
Mink	Common	Stable
Otter	Common	Increasing
Muskrat	Abundant	Stable
Beaver	Rare	Stable

A 2022 national survey by the US Fish & Wildlife Service states that there about 14 million hunters in the United States that generate \$133 billion in economic output and support more than 1.3 million jobs (*Sportsmen’s Alliance Foundation, 2024*). Of that \$133 billion it states that in Wisconsin hunting is \$1.6 billion a year industry that supports over 11,350 jobs. Other reports say these figures are at or about these levels as well. Regardless of what report you are looking at, it is no doubt an important economic driver for Wisconsin. In fact, many reports put Wisconsin at or near the top of states as far as the economic benefit generated from hunting.

In 2025, Wisconsin’s population was 6,033,500 with approximately 1,135,000 of those individuals who hunt. That equates into a per capita hunting economic benefit of \$1,410 if one uses the above figure of \$1.6 billion. If that is extrapolated to Sheboygan County’s 2026 population of 118,667, and using the 18.8% figure of those who hunt mentioned above, 22,309 Sheboygan County residents hunt and generate \$31,455,690 in economic benefit annually in regards to hunting. Granted, those dollars are not all spent in Sheboygan County, but even with that said, the economic impact of this activity is significant and deserves consideration in long-range resource planning.

Another important factor to note about hunting is its availability in regard to appropriate land on which to conduct the activity. Nationwide, statewide, and countywide less high-quality hunting land is available for use. Due to a number of factors (i.e. levy limits, continued pressure to cut environmental-related funding, etc.), additions to public land have been and will continue to be scarce due to limited resources. And, in the Sheboygan County area and the rest of Southeast Wisconsin more and more land is being used for residential development (both primary and secondary homes) and agricultural use. Permanent protection of high-quality corridors is key for many reasons, including hunting availability, and should be a focus on any entity’s long-range land use planning.

Fishing

Fishing has always been one of the most popular, and productive, outdoor recreational activities at the Sheboygan Marsh – enjoyed during all 4 seasons, by young and old alike.

In the overall management regime at Sheboygan Marsh—e.g., fish, wildlife, forestry, water levels—fish and fishing must be considered a “bonus” resource and activity. The aggressive management for an

“optimal fishery” would compromise the sound, scientific, and priority management for wildlife, forestry, and vegetation, and could upset the ecological balance at Sheboygan Marsh. This sentiment was also prevalent in the *2001 Plan and 2013 Plan Updates*. Nonetheless, the open waters of Sheboygan Marsh remain attractive for fishing, whether from boats, piers, shores, or through the ice.

Most fishing effort is directed at panfish, specifically bluegill, yellow perch and black crappie. Anglers also target northern pike, especially in winter through the ice. Black bullheads generally are small in size, but provide fishing action for many anglers.

There have been many efforts to improve and supplement the fish population near the Marsh Park through stocking. Local conservation clubs have donated funds, the County has allocated funding through the Stewardship program, and the WDNR has allocated funding and manpower to stock the Marsh. All these efforts and expenditures are an indication that the demand for quality fish in the Marsh exceeds the availability of those fish.

There are 2,169 acres of inland fishable surface waters (1,169 acres of inland lakes and 1,000 acres of rivers and streams, see Table 14). These figures represent an approximate reduction of 480 acres over what was reported in *2001 Plan*. Most of this reduction is attributed to the decrease in open water at the Marsh. Other figures compared to the *2001 Plan* decreased or increased slightly as well. This is likely due to a number of factors including other waterbodies filling in similar to the Marsh as well as a much more accurate means for measurement available (i.e. detailed orthophotography) as compared to when the *2001 Plan* was written.

Table 14 - Fishable Inland Surface Waters of Sheboygan County

Water Body	Acres	Water Body	Acres
Beechwood Lake	22	Crystal Lake	124
Butler Lake	7	Lake Ellen	116
Crooked Lake	82	Little Elkhart Lake	58
Gerber Lakes	24	Random Lake	216
Lake Seven	27	Sheboygan Lake	175
		(Marsh)	
Jetzer’s Lake	18	Rivers & Streams	~1000
Elkhart Lake	298	Total Acres	2167

WDNR estimates that angling has approximately a \$2.3 billion economic impact on the State while providing roughly 21,500 jobs. Using the figures in Table 12, a per capita figure of about \$953 is generated per Wisconsin angler. Using that same table which shows about 40% of our population fish and Sheboygan County’s 2026 population of approximately 118,667, 47,467 residents fish generating about \$45,235,860 in economic activity. No specific studies of the economic impact at the Marsh exist. As with hunting, the angling economic benefit in the County is significant.

Trapping

The Marsh is home to an abundance of furbearing animals. Trapping and the Marsh have been synonymous for centuries and likely dates back 12,000 years to the area's time of native occupation. Centuries ago, beaver, otter, mink, muskrat, raccoon, coyote, wolf, red and gray fox were found in abundance. Today, with the exception of beaver, otter, and wolf, the remainder of the species are present in noteworthy numbers at the Marsh. That said, trapping opportunities remain good at the Sheboygan Marsh.

Boating/Canoeing

Water recreation in Wisconsin seems to be evolving. While pleasure boating and personal watercraft (i.e. waverunners) are still quite popular, the trend to "silent" watercraft use is becoming increasingly prevalent. According to the *2025-2030 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, kayaking's popularity was at a 36% participation rate. This compares to a 7% rate in the *2011-2016 Plan*, or a 414% increase. A large increase of 605% was also witnessed when comparing figures in the 1994 and 2009 plans. Cheaper entry points compared to motorized watercraft and the continuous push for healthier lifestyles tend to be the driving forces behind kayaking's and canoeing's growing popularity.

The increase in "silent" watercraft activity has also helped spur new pressures on lake management with more and more user conflicts becoming ever present. The good news for the Marsh is that speed boating, personal watercraft use, and pleasure boating are not that popular on the Marsh for a variety of reasons. Smaller boats with smaller engines tend to be the norm at the Marsh. Therefore, user conflicts present on other lakes are not typically seen.

Snowmobiling, ATV Use, & Nordic Skiing

The frozen waters of the Marsh become a true paradise for snowmobilers, ATV riders, and Nordic skiers. With nearly 400 acres of the main lake area, the Sheboygan River, and the over 20 miles of ditches, the area for use almost seems endless. Furthermore, the Marsh lies within the County's 253-mile public snowmobile trail system. The Marsh Restaurant also provides a nice reprieve for users.

The accommodation of these activities is sometimes a "double-edged sword." The user enjoyment and economic impact of these uses are clear and documented. However, there are a number of issues that take place each year. Even though users must abide by pertinent State codes (i.e. Chapter 45) that designate certain areas for use and that since 1998 the County's ordinance states there are specific entry points to the ice, certain renegade users feel it necessary to traverse critical vegetation and wildlife habitat areas. Though these nuisance activities have subsisted since the *2001 Plan* and the implementation of counter-measures at that time, consideration of improved management and enforcement is still warranted.

Wildlife Viewing

The *Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030* reaffirms that *Wildlife Viewing* (45%) participation continues to be a popular recreational activity enjoyed by Wisconsin adults.

The Marsh provides many opportunities for observing a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife, whether it be from within the developed Marsh Park, the parking areas that exist around the entire resource, or the lightly traveled perimeter roadways. When the planned boardwalk becomes a reality, opportunities will only grow. Sound land use planning as well as zoning controls are key to ensuring the Marsh remains an inviting, exciting, and unique visitor destination.

Appendix A – Public Input & Survey Information

The 2026 Marsh Management Plan sought much public participation. Three primary vehicles were used to gather information. The Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Committee began discussing the *Plan Update* in 2024. It was decided that two public open input sessions would take place as well as an online survey. These sessions and survey were advertised in all the local written media venues, on the County’s website, as well as by targeting specific stakeholder groups (i.e. Sheboygan County Conservation Association) with announcements. The public input sessions were held on March 7, 2026 and March 10, 2026 in Elkhart Lake and Sheboygan respectively.

The public input sessions were run by first having a brief presentation by County and WDNR staff. After that three simple questions were asked; 1) What do you like about the Marsh?, 2) What do you not like about the Marsh?, and 3) What would you like see happen at the Marsh in the future if anything? It was felt that leaving the questions rather general would facilitate more discussion and/or brainstorming than asking succinct questions. This theory appeared to prove true in that the discussions were lively and copious. After the brainstorm sessions, the audience was asked to rate their top three answers from the brainstorm list for each of the three original questions. These answers are below.

Compared to the public input sessions, the online survey contained more succinct questions. Over 230 responses were gathered. The survey included ten questions. These questions along with their responses follow the public input session questions.

March 7 & 10 Public Input Session Responses

Compared to year’s past, few members of the public attended the public input sessions. All told, about 20 members of the public attended both meetings combined. The attendees were asked three general questions. They were then asked to review all of the responses and vote for their top three issues of importance.	
Question 1: What Do You Currently Like About the Marsh?	
Answers	# of Top 3 Responses
Hunting	8
Fishing	8
Birding	7
Kayaking/Canoeing	6
Public Accessibility	3
New Dam/Better Water Control	2
Kohler Center for Marsh Education	2
Tower	1

Question 2: What Do You Not Currently Like About the Marsh?	
Answers	# of Top 3 Responses
Water Levels	7
Fallen timber blocking waterways	6

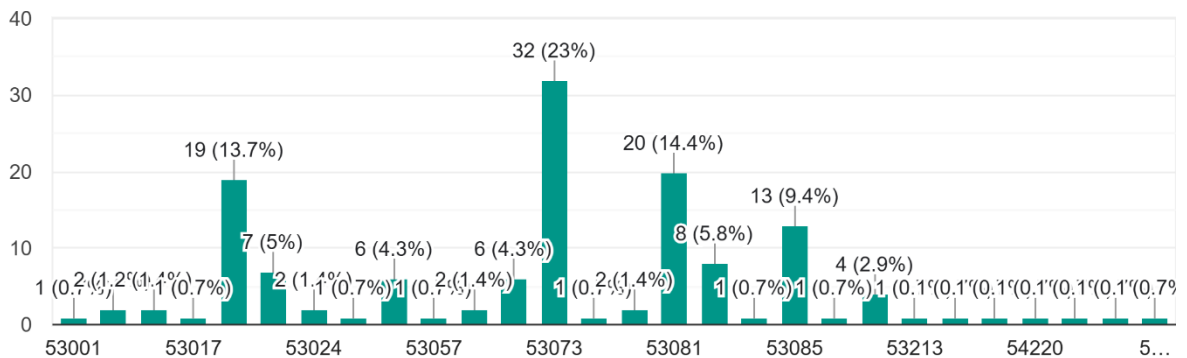
Invasive species	6
Lack of a fishery	4
Bogs	3
Boat launch fees	2

Question 3: What Would You Like to See Happen at the Marsh if Anything in the Future?	
Answers	# of Top 3 Responses
Kayak Launch (ADA)	9
Better fishery	7
More cattail management	7
Better fishing access	7
Better bird habitat	4
Open KCME to public more	2
Dredge the South Ditch	2
Keep doing drawdowns	2
Establish boardwalk	2
Get rid of fees	2
Pave the parking lot	2
Improve the landing	1
Install cabins	0

2026 Marsh Management Plan Questionnaire Results (139 Responses)

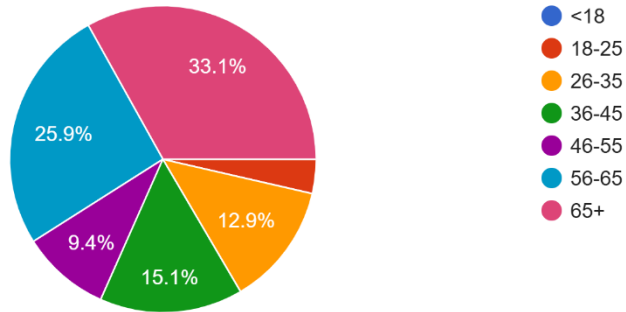
Please enter your zip code.

139 responses



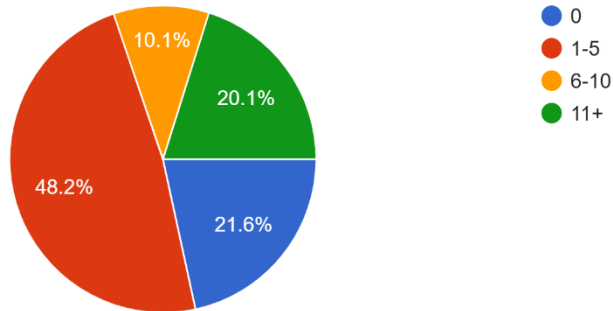
What is your age range?

139 responses



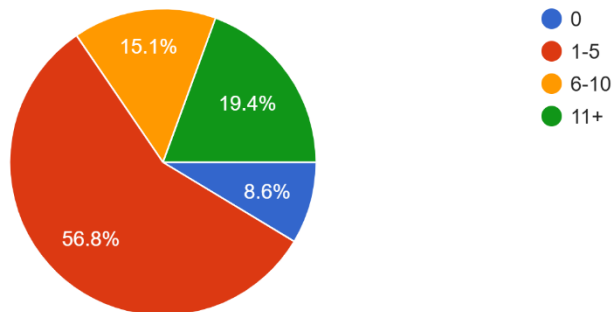
How many times per year do you use the resource of the Sheboygan Marsh (i.e. hunting, fishing, etc.)?

139 responses



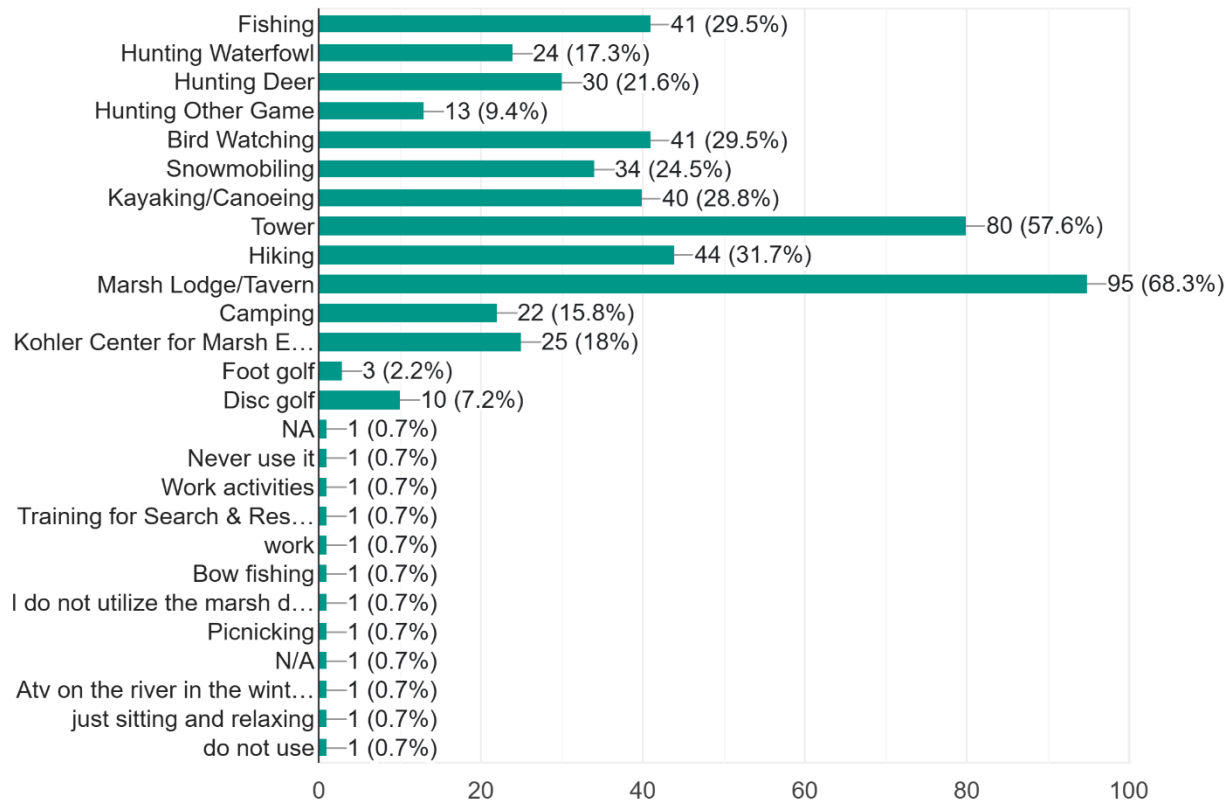
How many times per year do you use the amenities of the Sheboygan Marsh (i.e. tavern, tower, campground, etc.)?

139 responses

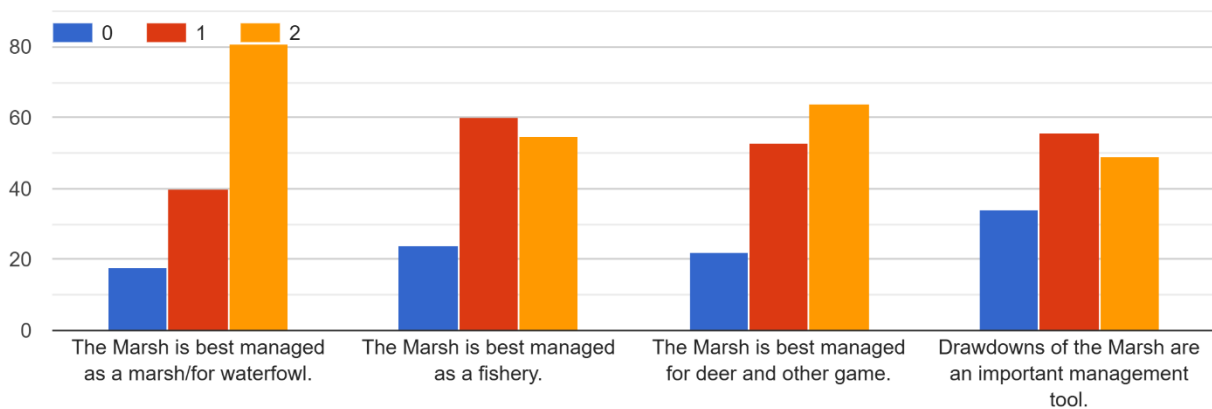


What do you use the Marsh and/or Marsh Park for (check all that apply)?

139 responses

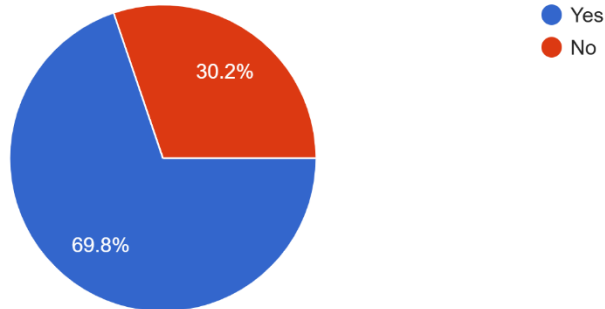


On a scale of 0-2, with zero being unimportant to you, 1 is you're indifferent, and 2 being very important to you, please rate the following questions



Should the updated Master Plan include the development of better access amenities (i.e. trails, boardwalks, etc.)?

139 responses



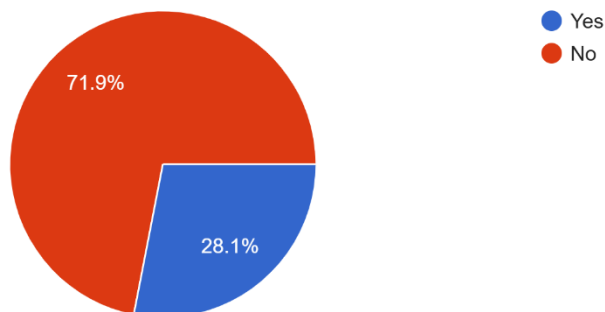
Please check the below item that best relates to how you think the upkeep and maintenance of the Marsh and it's amenities should be funded.

139 responses



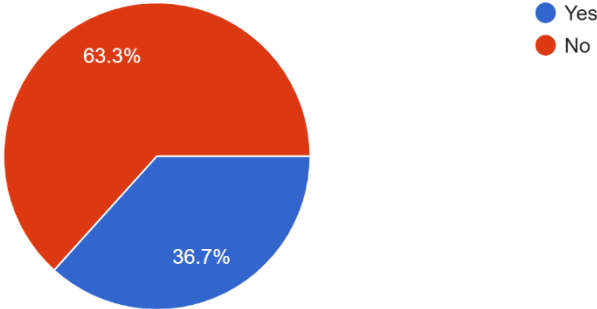
Should the County add additional dedicated campground sites?

139 responses



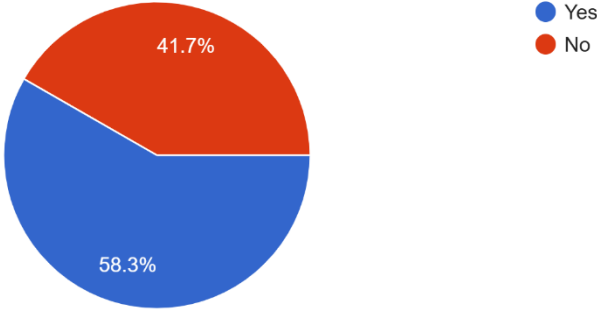
Should the County repurpose an area of the unused Marsh Lodge parking lot for two pickleball courts?

139 responses



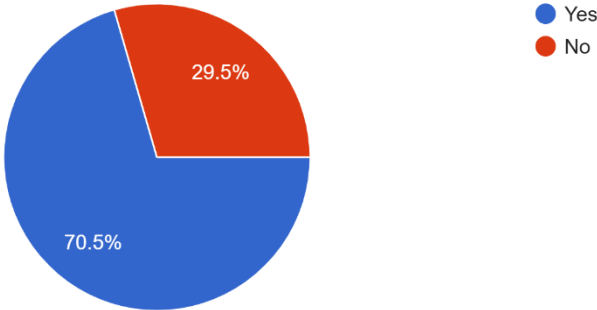
Are you supportive of adding a few permanent cabins for rental?

139 responses



Should the County install an ADA kayak/canoe launch?

139 responses



What other types of recreational activities/amenities might you like to see at the Marsh and/or Marsh Park?

- Boardwalk
- More opportunities for our youth
- Improvements to the disc golf course and maintenance of the fairways
- Paddle boat rentals
- Hiking
- Not sure. My sister and son visit weekly. She home schools and uses area for all kinds of activities
- Unsure
- Established nature trail
- Fishing pier
- An improved disc golf course. Dog park/more dog friendly. Wildlife education programs. Bike paths.
- Snow shoe trails
- NA
- Fishing pier
- Mountain biking
- na
- sketti wrasling
- Movies
- More hiking or maybe a water trail to learn more about the water resources and aquatic plants
- Dirt bike use
- Nothing else in particular
- canoe renting
- Wildlife a and native plant workshopd
- Splash pad for kids
- More snowshoeing trails
- I AM SATIFIED WITH ALL THE IS NOW AVAILABLE
- campsite water and electric more conveniently located
- boardwalk, kids education,
- Better waterfowl improvement
- Boardwalk in marsh
- ATV/UTV access and trails
- More camping sites
- hiking trails / boardwalk
- None
- Snow hill for tubing or skiing, golf
- The current list covers anything we'd be interested in doing at the marsh.
- More playground equipment for younger kids
- More snowmobile trails
- Pickle ball, corn hole

- I could see possibly bean bag court
- None
- Feasibility study to determine the need/use of kayaks, canoes, row boats
- shuffle board
- Better fishing. Like the old days
- Boardwalk to allow for better hiking access, allowing more people to see the marsh itself and the impacts of drawdowns.

Summary

Boardwalk/Trails => 14

Disc Golf/Other Active Amenities => 12

Youth/Education Opportunities => 7

Fishing => 2

Please add any additional information you feel is pertinent.

- Support widespread snowmobiling use throughout the marsh
- this is a beautiful property for sheboygan county we need to keep it up!
- Sheboygan county seems to be far behind surrounding counties in there investment and dedication to public parks and there accessibility to our citizens. A increased investment in our public spaces would have a positive impact to our county
- This survey should be directed to those that visit the park. Are new trails needed? Is there a demand for ADA access? Land should be kept for natural beauty not polluting it with cabins or concrete. Keep it a natural sanctuary.
- Snowmobiling is an important part of the marsh, drawdowns hurt this in a big way
- Trails! Also love the id3a of kayak launch and would also love kayak rentals like Mauthe Lake.
- The camping fees should be reduced for county residents
- Accessibility for all
- The north channel should be cleared from cattails from blocking the channel to go to the d a m!! Now the north ditch water has to turn into the main Lake which I feel is lifting up a lot of cattails going towards the dam
- DNR presumably as result of pressure from Ducks Unlimited (the people with money) has done its best to destroy the Sheboygan Marsh fishery. At one time the marsh had a substantial population of Northern, Perch and bullheads. The cattails only became a problem after Ducks Unlimited set its eyes on the marsh and it had its first draw down. Late 60's?
- The marsh should be managed as a natural area, not a rec area. Preference should be given to hunting and fishing activities.
- Make sure the marsh remains open for snowmobiling in winter.
- We have enjoyed our time at the marsh. We would like to see it kept for nature and for the wildlife. For people to view and enjoy.
- More PRIVATE camping sites

- Keep Open access for all including powersports/motorized.
- i reckon pannin for gold should be allowed on the marsh, been a prospector for 35 years
- I believe the county needs to be responsible for the maintenance of the marsh park. I also believe that upgrades and improvements need to be paid for from the parks or county planning. I believe the county has an obligation to keep this park in good repair at all times. We take good care of the Lake Michigan lakefront and this should be no different.
- The marsh is certainly best suited for waterfowl. There has been a tremendous increase in waterfowl numbers on the marsh this year in comparison to the previous years before the drawdown. The drawdown created fantastic habitat for waterfowl by increasing vegetation growth in the previously open water. I do believe however that prescribed cattail burns would be very beneficial for the marsh. There are certain sections of cattails that have no trees in them and are surrounded on all sides by the river or ditches that could be burnt easily during winter or drawdowns. This would create more diverse and less dense vegetation that would hold ducks as opposed to the dense monoculture stands of cattails that form over time.
- We are taking way too much land in Sheboygan...leave it natural
- NO ADDITIONAL
- Day use/annual fees should be the primary funding mechanism for all recreational amenities within the park.
- Perhaps add guided naturalist hikes or other organized events sharing history & fun facts about the marsh similar to what Maywood does during the day a few times a year. Foot golf tournament? Dedicated corn hole area near the play ground. More outdoor stuff for the locals & campers to enjoy that unique space. Camp store/vending machine with camping essentials like bug spray.
- None at this time
- An option for usage should be related to trapping I.
- The funding with tax dollars or user fees question i am not very informed on. This all depends on the amount and how the money is to be used.
- Maintaining a consistent water level and controlling the cattails should be top priority. Would also like to see some of the ditches dredged out. They are getting very shallow. What about controlled burns? Could this be used to control cattails and clean up some of the dead ash trees?
- Keep open snowmobile trails
- Keeping an open area to set up tents for wedding receptions or other events should continue. If this would be a conflict in adding pickleball courts, I'd rather see the space for event tents etc. If there is any area where more campsites could be added and if there is a need for more, then it would be good to make more campsites.
- You must keep it open for snowmobiling.
- better safe guards along the road going to the center, guess that might be the highway dept. job.
- The Marsh is unique that it is rustic and holds a diverse animal population that is important to many hunters. By implementing all of these amenities, boardwalks, etc. we will be taking away from the rustic aesthetic and pressuring animals to go deeper into the marsh and making it harder to hunt them during prime season. If anything, I would love to see the old fishing piers rebuilt and have more fish brought into the marsh. I remember it used to be a fishing haven on

the south ditch, and with all of the drainings in recent years, the fishing is not what it once was. Please do not put boardwalks into the Marsh and pressure the wildlife by bringing tons more traffic into those sacred areas.

- Get rid of the invasive cattail plant the draw downs aren't helping like it was figured
- Drawdowns and raising of waterlevel should be done at slower rate to maintain root systems of plantlife.
- The marsh parking lots are an important drop off point for snowmobiles and ATV's for winter sports as well.
- Add electric vehicle charging stations
- more guidelines along the road going to the south ditch as there is no edging
- Update improve access to information about the camping and amenities. Pictures of camping sites, interactive map including trails and points of interest.
- Clubs should continue to support the marsh
- Please maintain the tavern/restaurant as it is a unique and most attractive feature at the park.
- There needs to be a burn plan for the marsh to further help with invasive species control and accessibility.

Summary

More Investment in Amenities/Maintenance => 10

Continued or better resource management => 6

Keep as preserve rather than further develop => 6

Keep snowmobiling => 4

Comments on fees => 3

Road safety => 2

Appendix B – Historical Information

Table 15 - Historical Expenditures at the Marsh

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
1937	80-acre acquisition	550	550	Charles Broughton	
1937	6349-acre acquisition	17,646			17,646
1938	Dam & public park construction	169,740	130,000	WPA	39,740
1966	north parking lot and launch ramp	11,016	3,860	Water Access	7,156
1966	Ditch dredging	3,350	1,638	Fish & Game	1,712
1967	Sipple flowage & pump	3,800	3,800	ASCS & Waterfowl Mgmt Fund	
1968	Dam by-pass	16,087	6,552	Fish & Game	9,535

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
1968	Toilet facilities, campsites, firepits, electricity	21,142	7,500	LAWCON	13,642
1968	Blasted potholes	30,000	30,000	State & Federal grants & Koenigs Conservation Club	
1969	Fencing	1,181			1,181
1971	Ditch dredging	9,719	3,401	Fish & Game & SCCA	6,318
1972	Picnic Shelter	1,156	578	Fish & Game	578
1972	Water control structure	4,191	1,938	Fish & Game	2,253
1973	Rustic park entrance sign	181			181
1975	14' Boats (3)	2,850			2,850
1975	Holbrook Farm Privy	4,980	4,980	State Snowmobile Aids	
1975	Runoff pond	2,728	2,500	ORAP	228
1977	Dike Work	2,971	1,486	Fish & Game	1,485
1978	South Ditch Road and parking area	3,972	725	Fish & Game	3,247
1979	Dike repair, water control structure	1,154	577	Fish & Game	577
1980	Acquisitions	144,030	69,879	LAWCON	74,151
1980	Slide gate at runoff pond	500	500	Waterfowl stamp	
1981	Feeder ditch dredge & dike road	5,700	5,700	Waterfowl stamp	
1982	Subsurface and surface drainage, road & parking pavement, playground, electricity	74,901	28,150		46,751
1983	Acquisitions	40,000	22,000	LAWCON, SCCA, Grafenstein	18,000
1983	Goff parking area	500	500	Johnsonville Rod & Gun	
1984	BBQ Grills	918			918
1984	Dredge South Ditch	23,768	13,250	Fish & Game & SCCA	10,518
1984	South Ditch Dredging	23,768	13,250	Fish & Game & SCCA	10,518
1985	Canoes, paddles and life cushions	2,398			2,398
1985	Excavation for water craft	800			800
1985	Campground rehabilitation	10,209			10,209
1985	Information Shelter	1,365	1,365	AFSCME Local 1749	
1985	Cooler Evaporator in Old Lodge	200			200
1985	Privy rehab	1,748			1,748
1986	New Marsh Lodge	272,32			272,326
1986	New Marsh Lodge Accessories	20,352	2,150	Dan Johnson	18,202
1986	Campground rehabilitation	513			513
1986	Well house renovation	2,601	75		2,526
1986	New RV Campground Development	7,301			7,301
1986	Main pier North	3,000	3,000	Koenigs Conservation Club	
1986	Main pier South	4,000	3,279	Fish & Game & Winooski Bowmen	721

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
1986	Custom park bench	265	265	John Knaus Family	
1986	Exterior restoration of old lodge	14,665	7,700	Greatwood Log Homes & Dan Johnson	6,965
1986	Interior restoration of old lodge	18,850	17,900	Crystal Lake Sportsmen, Greatwood Log Homes, Dan Johnson, Kohler Company	950
1986	Four dug wildlife ponds	4,800	4,800	Waterfowl stamp	
1986	DNR pole shed	20,000	20,000	Fish & Wildlife	
1986	Acquisitions	19,500	19,500	SCCA	
1987	Front pool dredging & waterfront restoration	27,232	10,100	SCCA, Johnsonville Rod & Gun	17,132
1987	Boat ramp	600	600	Johnsonville Rod & Gun	
1988	New RV Campground Development	60,000	30,000	LAWCON	30,000
1988	Kitchen Hood & Fire Suppression	944			944
1988	Kitchen hood	1,147			1,147
1988	RV Dump Station	3,588			3,588
1988	Charbroiler	2,553			2,553
1988	Dredging above dam	7,862			7,862
1988	Mobile home for manager	20,000			20,000
1989	Broughton lodge door	377			377
1989	blacktopping	5,638			5,638
1989	Paddles	55			55
1989	Reroof Broughton Lodge	3,575			3,575
1989	Stepladder	70			70
1989	TV Tower	700			700
1989	Remodeling Broughton Lodge	2,900			2,900
1989	Prairie grass 8 acres	800	800	WDNR	
1990	Exterior Maintenance	8,050			8,050
1990	Sandblast & paint bridge	4,500			4,500
1990	Marsh Lodge HVAC	22,792			22,792
1990	Life cushions	72			72
1990	Stackable chairs	445			445
1990	Security system	1,995			1,995
1990	Safe	849			849
1990	Antenna rotor	93			93
1990	landscaping	2,911			2,911
1990	Remodeling Broughton Lodge	2,602			2,602
1990	Dining tables	245			245
1990	Marsh Lodge Remodeling	1,242			1,242

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
1990	Shed Overhead Door	540			540
1991	Canoes, paddles and life cushions	1,685			1,685
1991	Dishwashing system	7,918			7,918
1991	Pesticide Sprayer	84			84
1991	Dam repair	7,800			7,800
1991	Stools	915			915
1991	Marsh Lodge Remodeling	9,802			9,802
1991	Park Bench	70	70	Peterman's Sportsmen	
1991	Park Bench	70	70	Smerke's Sportsmen	
1992	Well pump	1,026			1,026
1992	Mower deck	1,350			1,350
1992	Ice cuber	1,200			1,200
1992	Marsh Lodge Remodeling	2,447			2,447
1992	Alder regeneration cuts	3,000	3,000	Ruffed Grouse Society	
1993	Pave roads in campground	35,389			35,389
1993	Fire pites	3,750			3,750
1993	Dam bypass valve	7,300			7,300
1993	Well pump	960			960
1993	Relighting	1,572			1,572
1993	Park HVAC Controls	750			750
1993	Mower deck	689			689
1993	Boat	650			650
1994	Riverbank erosion control project	54,019			54,019
1994	Picnic Tables	650			650
1994	Deepfryer	1,604			1,604
1994	Charbroiler fan	926			926
1994	Ice Bin	310			310
1994	Marsh Lodge Doors	1,241			1,241
1994	Food & Equipment Inventory	7,626			7,626
1994	Blasting, staining, caulking – both lodges	16,457			16,457
1994	6200 Trees & Shrubs	2,000	2,000	WDNR	
1994	Osprey Platform	500	500	Elmer Becker Memorial	
1995	Shower room remodel	26,020			26,020
1995	Picnic Tables	1,404			1,404
1995	Campfire pits	1,185			1,185
1995	Branding iron	111			111
1995	Prairie grass 12 acres	1,200	1,200	WDNR	
1996	Dam repair	21,600			21,600

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
1996	Prairie grass 16 acres	1,500	1,500	WDNR	
1997	Picnic Shelter	26,849			26,849
1997	Small wetland creation (3)	600	600	WDNR	
1997	Prairie grass 17 acres	1,500	1,500	WDNR	
1998	Shelter parking lot	5,560			5,560
1998	Prairie grass 21 acres	1,900	1,900	WDNR	
1998	Pump and structure removal	3,000	3,000	WDNR	
1999	Bog removal platform	19,000			19,000
1999	Freezer	1,515			1,515
2000	Cooler floor	979			979
2000	Charbroiler	1,735			1,735
2000	10 acre runoff pond	19,000	19,000	NAWCA & DU	
2001	Water softener	3,165			3,165
2001	Acquisitions	112,200	112,200	State & SCCA	
2006	fiberglass reinforced backer panels	570			570
2006	service upgrade supplies	1,355			1,355
2006	install new evaporator coil in back bar	693			693
2006	Marsh tower brochure	1,209	1,209	Friends of the Marsh	
2006	warewasher	620			620
2006	replace compressor for walkin freezer	1,462			1,462
2006	inspect & repair holding tank	1,826			1,826
2006	Misc	628			628
2006	Nine 6' pressure treated park chief tables	3,245			3,245
2006	Marsh dumpster pad	1,118			1,118
2006	cutting brush	622			622
2006	Marsh tower brochure	1,251			1,251
2006	Replace cracked windows	512			512
2007	door for well pumphouse	732			732
2007	repair work	820			820
2007	snow removal	688			688
2007	install new compressor & condenser fan	904			904
2007	bathroom toilet partitions	1,565			1,565
2007	bog removal	1,177			1,177
2007	revamp kitchen to UL 300 standards	1,700			1,700
2007	electrical work	938			938
2007	repair work	524			524
2007	repair work	608			608
2007	repair work	1,447			1,447
2007	warewasher	639			639

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
2007	run #2 wire from campsite to tower	1,500	1,500	Friends of the Marsh	
2007	marsh pedestals project	5,118	5,118	Friends of the Marsh	
2007	const of bathrooms	16,118			16,118
2007	tower project	1,588			1,588
2007	run electrical wire, panels, etc.	9,360			9,360
2007	repair work	669			669
2007	tower	17,150	17,150	Friends of the Marsh	
2007	electrical supplies	4,396			4,396
2007	electrical supplies	5,013			5,013
2007	tower	2,340			2,340
2007	new electrical service	1,029			1,029
2007	windows on log lodge bldg	1,050			1,050
2007	repair walkin freezer	738			738
2008	water treatment	1,246			1,246
2008	transfer Marsh tower to Friends	169,134	169,134	Friends of the Marsh	
2008	snow removal	650			650
2008	repair work	887			887
2008	floodplain computations	500			500
2008	repair work	740			740
2008	repair work	440			440
2008	warewasher @ marsh lodge	671			671
2008	repair work	1,100			1,100
2008	bog removal	3,389			3,389
2008	catch basin repair	545			545
2008	filing fee for Friends of Marsh Form 1023	750	750	Friends of the Marsh	
2008	repair work	653			653
2008	electrify bypass control	500			500
2008	repair work	640			640
2008	bog removal	974			974
2008	repair work	2,195			2,195
2008	tower – revisions for rebidding	6,876	6,876	Friends of the Marsh	
2009	bog removal	815			815
2009	repair work	968			968
2009	repair work	1,149			1,149
2009	bog removal	754			754
2009	commercial door	2,084			2,084
2009	bog removal	1,085			1,085
2009	add gravel at SR	1,507			1,507
2009	res ext-pressure wash, repaint	5,900			5,900

Year	Description	Total Cost (\$)	Grants/ Donations	Donor/Grantee	County Cost (\$)
2009	bog removal	1,916			1,916
2009	repair work	1,789			1,789
2010	bog removal	8,080			8,080
2010	plumbing wk @ premade bldg	4,284			4,284
2010	water line repair	2,114			2,114
2010	bog removal	20,062			20,062
2010	water line repair	1,092			1,092
2010	bog removal	4,110			4,110
2010	remove underground tank @ campground well	978			978
2010	bog removal	19,873			19,873
2010	install 2 water heaters	3,377			3,377
2010	bog removal	4,415			4,415
2010	bog removal	8,028			8,028
2010	replace hose faucet @ campsite #60	551			551
2010		838			838
2010	concrete repair at Marsh sign	2,753			2,753
2010	repair work	670			670
2010	bog removal	2,406			2,406
2010	replace heat exchanger	3,331			3,331
2010	inspection	500			500
2010	snow removal	676			676
2010	repair work	1,344			1,344
2011	bog removal	632			632
2011	dam inspection	2,200			2,200
2011	blacktopping	584			584
2011	wages	572			572
2011	survey services – Marsh dam	575			575
2011	chainsaw, pole pruner, trimmer	977			977
2011	bog removal	6,848			6,848
2011	repair water leak behind old lodge	655			655
2011	bog removal	27,032			27,032
2011	reroof kiosk	10,375			10,375
2011	bog removal	13,810			13,810
2011	60 w LED fwd throw wallpk	857			857
2011	Custom park bench	750	750	Shirley Quasius Family	
2012	annual inspection of tower	4,573			4,573
2012	landscaping	508			508
2012	boat ramp/dock repair	875			875
2012	gate repair	1,206			1,206

The Sheboygan Press

THE PAST IS GONE WE LIVE TODAY

SHEBOYGAN, WIS., SATURDAY MAY 21, 1938

Restoring The Marsh To Nature



SHEBOYGAN MARSH - AUGUST, 1931, BURNED OVER TIMBER, SMOLDERING PEAT BEDS AND MOUNDS OF HOT ASHES. WILD LIFE AND ITS BREEDING SPOTS DESTROYED. ONE LITTLE POT HOLE IN A DRY BED OF PEAT, ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE SHEBOYGAN RIVER. SURELY A DESOLATE PICTURE OF OUR GREAT OUTDOORS.



KLESSIO
SHEBOYGAN PRESS

SHEBOYGAN MARSH - MAY, 1938, AFTER REFLOODING OPERATIONS. THE MARSH IS NOW A PARADISE OF FISH-GAME AND BIRD LIFE. BURNING PEAT BEDS ARE EXTINGUISHED, THE TIMBER LAND HAS CEASED TO BE A BLAZING INFERNO. NEW GROWTHS OF TIMBER AND SHRUBBERY ARE SPRINGING INTO LIFE. YES, SHEBOYGAN MARSH IS COMING BACK INTO ITS OWN!

Figure 33 - 1938 Press Article

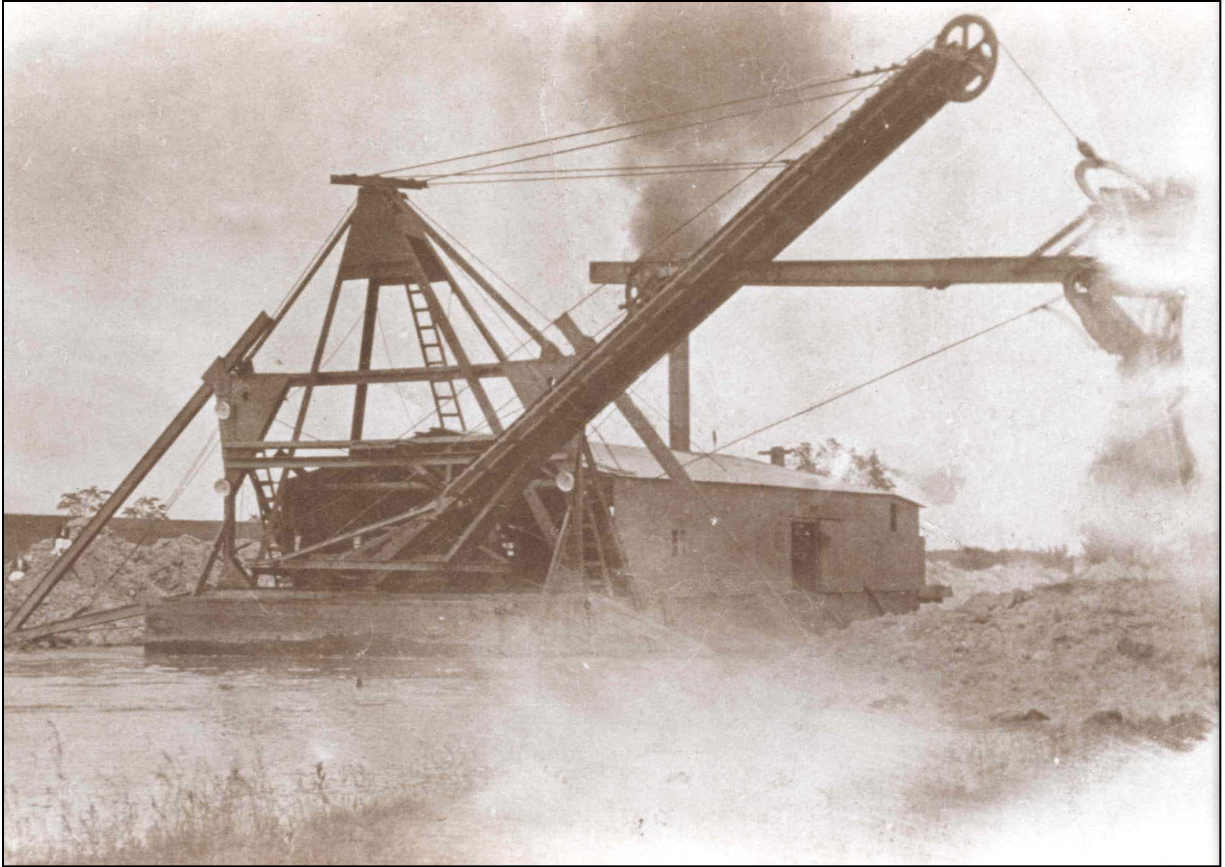


Figure 34 - Digging Ditches at the Marsh 1912

Members of the Sheboygan County Board took time off Monday afternoon to enjoy the annual "duck dinner" at the Sheboygan Marsh, and to a man, they will claim the afternoon was not wasted.

Members of the county board and guests numbering slightly over 50 persons in all, attended the dinner the like of which never has been held before. Everyone sang the praises of Mr. and Mrs. Joel Ferrel and their assistants for the fine dinner.

Upon arriving at the marsh the members of the board made a "tour" of the park property, inspecting the various buildings, looking over the zoo and marveling at the many improvements made since their last visit.

*November 27, 1940
Sheboygan Press*

The Sheboygan marsh area, if it is to propagate fish and game, must have men of vision looking ahead, for an outlay of money will bring little in recreation for the great masses, if we do not furnish the maximum of protection for conservation.

*December 1, 1941
Sheboygan Press Editorial*

Sheboygan marsh, with its 15 square miles of flat, swampy surface, its strange plant and animal life, and its solitude as complete as if it lay in the heart of some unexplored country hundreds of miles from civilization, never fails to stir the imagination and excite emotions of mystery and romance.

*Senator G.W. Buchen
June 29, 1945
Sheboygan Press*

We know of no other region or locality in the midwestern United States where the relational environmental contexts are so readily accessible. We view the Sheboygan Marsh...as an ice-age and post ice-age laboratory...unique...of national and international significance.

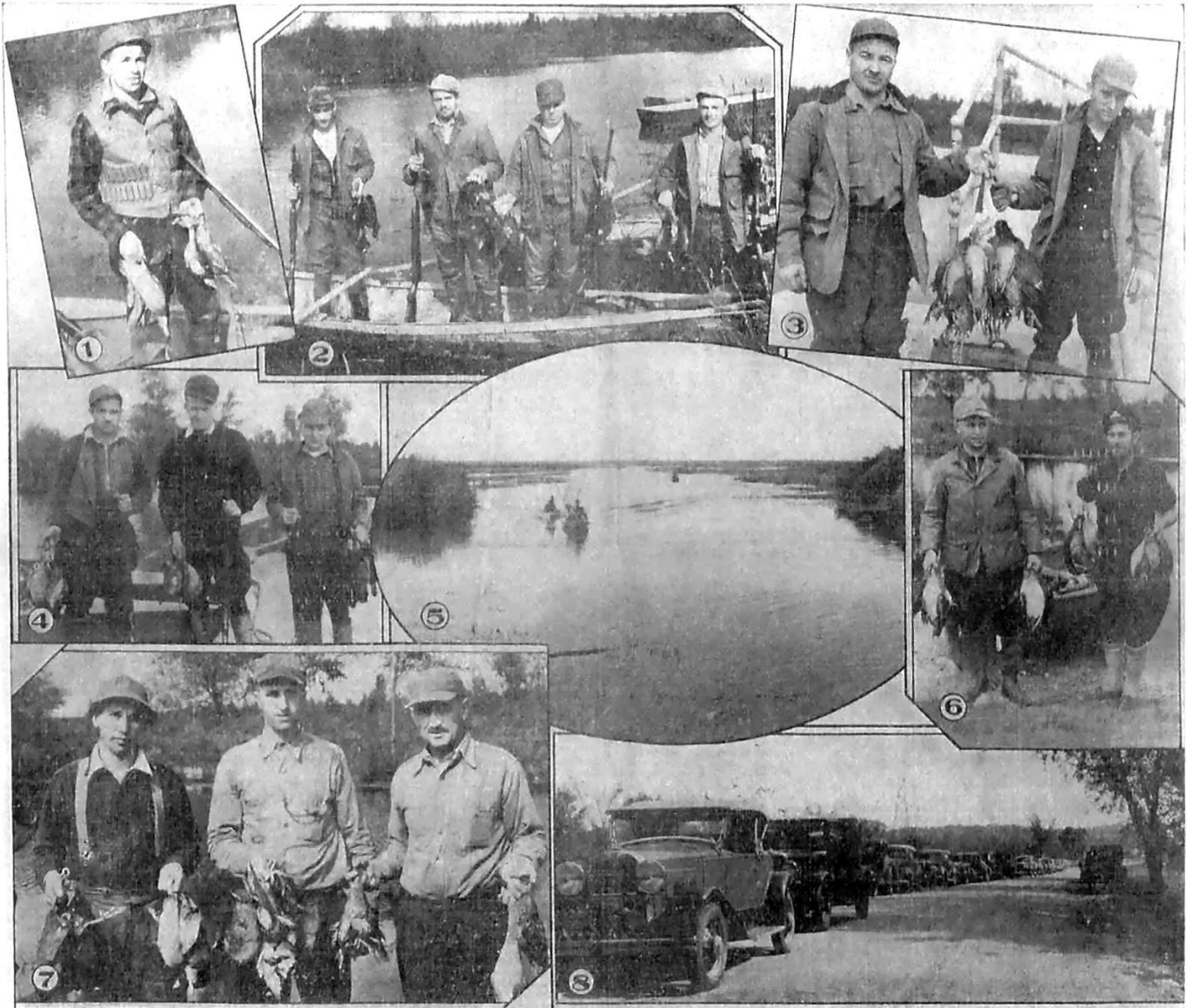
*1989-1990
Dr. David Overstreet, President
Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center, Inc.*

The Sheboygan Press

Sheboygan, Wis.

October 3, 1938

Camera Records Activities Of Hunters At Sheboygan Marsh



The duck season opened literally with a bang Saturday as hunters from far and wide swarmed over the marshes and areas known to be the favorite haunts of ducks and "hens" and with trigger fingers tensed for action, brought down hundreds of the feathered game as they were caught in the cross fire of an unknown number of hunters' guns. One of the favorite hunting areas on the opening day was the Sheboygan marsh. Here several boat loads of hunters were requested to display their catches before the camera

as they returned from their trips up the marsh and in picture No. 1 we have Neal McDonald of Milwaukee with his bag of four teal and one spoonbill. In the second picture Steve Guetchow, George Andre, Jim McBair and Roman Steinbruecker are shown with their catch of two mallards and nine teal. Picture No. 3 shows Roland Froh and George Parker with their mixed bag of 19 teal and mudhens. In No. 4 Roman Versch, Russell Lunger and Ben Cole are shown with 10 teal and seven mudhens. Picture No. 5 is

a view looking up Sheboygan marsh as a few of the returning hunters came into view in their boats. In the sixth picture E. Keller and Bert Liethen are shown with their full catch of 14 teal, one shoveler and five mallards. Picture No. 7 depicts John Grober, Al. Lutgen and Art Polzin with their catch of seven teal, one pintail and 10 mudhens. In the eighth picture appears a glimpse of the long line of hunters' cars parked on the Sheboygan marsh road near the dam while the opening of the 1938 duck season was taking place.—Press photos.

Figure 35 - October 1938 Press Article



Figure 36 - New Marsh Dam Ribbon Cutting May 2024



Figure 37 - Early Stages of New Dam Construction June 2023



Figure 38 - Completed New Dam May 2024



Figure 39 - New South Ditch Xing and Control Structures 2022



Figure 40 - Kohler Center for Marsh Education Ribbon Cutting Sept 2022



Figure 41 - Kohler Center for Marsh Education Glory Tree Install April 2021



Figure 42 - Kohler Center for Marsh Education Landscaping Work July 2025



Figure 43 - Kohler Center for Marsh Education West Edifice Sept 2022

Appendix C – “Marsh Management Agreement” Between Sheboygan County & WDNR

“SHEBOYGAN MARSH MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT” BETWEEN SHEBOYGAN COUNTY & WDNR

Management Agreement

Agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the County of Sheboygan for the management, development, protection, and maintenance of the county-owned lands on the Sheboygan Marsh in the Town of Russell and north part of Town of Greenbush, all in Township 16 North, Range 20 East, excluding the 38 acre developed Broughton County Marsh Park in Sections 13 and 24.

This agreement, is made and entered into this 13th day of November, 2002, by and between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, hereinafter referred to as the WDNR, and Sheboygan County, hereinafter referred to as the County.

WITNESSETH

WHEREAS, S. 23.09(2)(h), Stats., authorizes the WDNR to enter into cooperative agreements with governmental agencies for purposes consistent with S. 23.09, Stats.; and

WHEREAS, the WDNR and County both own substantial acreage within Sheboygan Marsh with current acreages of approximately 753 and 7,385, respectively, and

WHEREAS, the WDNR and Sheboygan County are desirous of cooperating to assure coordinated and effective efforts in the management of natural resources and especially the fish and wildlife resources of the Sheboygan Marsh; and

WHEREAS, the WDNR and the County are desirous in defining the roles and responsibilities of the management of the natural resources of the Sheboygan Marsh; and

WHEREAS, the WDNR through its land, water, and forestry divisions and Sheboygan County, through its Resources Committee, will formulate a comprehensive management plan for the Sheboygan Marsh and further desire to cooperate in management, protection, and development of the Sheboygan Marsh in accordance with the concepts of said plan and any future revisions that are mutually agreed upon.

NOW, THEREFORE, the WDNR and the County mutually agree as follows:

1. Habitat Management: The WDNR will provide resource management service for the mutual benefit of the State and County. The WDNR shall have authority to manipulate vegetative cover types for the maintenance and perpetuation of fish and wildlife on Sheboygan Marsh as outlined in the plan. Manipulation of vegetative types shall include the use of the following techniques: bulldozer, herbicide control, cutting, timber harvesting, mowing, prescribed burning, various agricultural techniques, and other necessary, feasible methods. The WDNR may contract with other parties for the maintenance and development of wildlife habitat.
2. Recreational Activities: Outdoor recreational activities shall be permitted throughout the above designated area as long as they are compatible with the fish and wildlife management program.
3. Timber Harvests: The County agrees to leave to the discretion of WDNR “representatives” (local forester and wildlife manager), any decisions regarding the harvest of forest products. Timber harvest shall be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. The County reserves the right to all forest products, and revenue from the sale of timber, from its lands.
4. Wildlife Refuges: The WDNR may establish refuges as delineated in the Master Plan and/or Wisconsin Administrative Codes.

5. Hunting & Fishing: The County agrees to allow any person or persons to hunt, pursue, take, catch, and kill game and fish in any legal manner on said described lands during the open season for such fish and game.
6. Enforcement of Public Use: The WDNR agrees to enforce laws pertaining to conservation of the above described lands wherein it is within the provision of their action (Chapter 45 of Wisconsin Administrative codes included). The County agrees to assist WDNR in regulating vehicular use on the above described property.
7. Land Ownership: The County agrees that none of the lands described herein will be sold or otherwise disposed of while this agreement is in effect. This agreement will also cover any additional lands acquired by the County as part of the Sheboygan Marsh complex.
8. Management on Small Impoundments: The WDNR will maintain the dikes, and ditches, and water control structures associated with the small flowages. The WDNR will have sole authority for water level manipulation of these flowages. The County may provide funds for material that are necessary to maintain said flowages. This will also apply to any new flowages developed on the Sheboygan Marsh complex.
9. Water Levels: a) The County and the WDNR agree to manage water levels according to the recommended management regime described in the Master Plan and the laws and regulations governing the management of flowages in the State. Refusal to allow such management will justify the termination of this agreement. b) The County will designate an individual to assist WDNR personnel in the maintenance of water levels on the marsh according to guidelines established through the Master Plan and/or public hearings on water level maintenance. The WDNR personnel and County Assistant will maintain records of water levels as deemed necessary by the County and the WDNR.
10. Periodic Review: This agreement shall become effective when signed by the parties hereto and shall continue in force until terminated by mutual agreement or at the option of either party upon one year's notice given upon any anniversary date hereof. The agreement shall be reviewed by the County and the WDNR biennially and at such other times as may be requested by either party on 60 days written notice. An annual activity report shall be prepared by the WDNR and presented to the County during the 1st quarter of each year or within 30 days of written request. Project proposals submitted by the WDNR or the County that will affect the above described area shall be reviewed by the other party.
11. Liaison and Coordination Responsibilities: To provide for the primary point of contact between WDNR and the County, the fish manager and wildlife manager at the Plymouth Field Station of WDNR and the Resources Committee of the County Board are assigned.
12. All rights and responsibilities of the WDNR and Sheboygan County contained herein are subject to the availability of future legislative appropriations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto cause this agreement to be executed on the date hereinabove first set forth.



 Secretary of the WDNR



 Sheboygan County Board Chairman

CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUNDING REQUEST

In 2023, Sheboygan County received a settlement from Monsanto, a major agricultural biotechnology corporation. Between 1930 and 1977, Monsanto manufactured a class of PCBs that contributed to environmental contamination. On January 16, 2024, the County Board adopted Resolution No. 20 (2023/24), authorizing the settlement funds to be placed into an endowment. Interest generated from the endowment can then be designated to support conservation projects that protect the landscape and improve water quality within the County. To date, the endowment has generated \$116,729.53 in interest, which is available for allocation pending Committee approval. Below is a recent funding request for your consideration:

Owner(s) Name:	Dan Francis et al. (also Keltner & Scott families)	Project Type:	Permanent cover of native pollinator plants
Property Address:	W7179 County Rd Z Plymouth WI	Project Acreage:	10.0
Parcel Number(s):	See below	Timeline:	Early summer 2026
Funding Request:	\$22,500 (\$7,500 for each landowner)		

Project Description:

Three landowners that own adjoining land are interesting in planting 10 acres of permanent pollinator habitat. We cap our pollinator cost sharing at \$7,500 per landowner.

Why Funding is Needed:

We have successfully used Water Quality Improvement Funds for pollinator plantings in the past; however, all available funding for this year has already been fully allocated to other projects. As a result, we would like to utilize Monsanto Funds to help support this project.

Partners Involved:

DNR Plymouth staff for equipment and Miles Thompson local contractor for project implementation.

Conservation Benefits, Significance, and/or Uniqueness:

Pollinator projects offer some of the best conservation related benefits. Based on typical STEPL model pollutant loading estimates, conversion of 10 acres of fallow farmland to permanent pollinator habitat is expected to reduce annual sediment loading by approximately 3–8 tons, phosphorus by 5–12 pounds, and nitrogen by 50 pounds through reduced erosion and improved nutrient retention.

Does This Project Fit Within an Existing Conservation Initiative?

Yes, the properties are located within both the Northeast Lakeshore TMDL and the Milwaukee River TMDL. The primary objective of these TMDLs is to reduce nutrient loading from the landscape in order to improve water quality throughout the region. The portion of the property located within the Milwaukee River Watershed is also eligible to be counted toward the goals and objectives of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

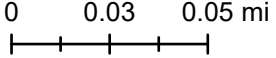


This map is intended for advisory purposes only. This information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, including public surveys and records. In areas where discrepancies occur between equivalent legal records, the records shall prevail and remain until such time as they are corrected. Sherrill County does not warrant the accuracy of this information on an "as is" basis and no warranties are implied.



Date Printed: 5/21/2026

Francis et al Planting



CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUNDING REQUEST

In 2023, Sheboygan County received a settlement from Monsanto, a major agricultural biotechnology corporation. Between 1930 and 1977, Monsanto manufactured a class of PCBs that contributed to environmental contamination. On January 16, 2024, the County Board adopted Resolution No. 20 (2023/24), authorizing the settlement funds to be placed into an endowment. Interest generated from the endowment can then be designated to support conservation projects that protect the landscape and improve water quality within the County. To date, the endowment has generated \$116,729.53 in interest, which is available for allocation pending Committee approval. Below is a recent funding request for your consideration.

Owner(s) Name:	Louie Gentine	Project Type:	Permanent cover of pollinator plants
Property Address:	W6607 Sandstone Lane Plymouth	Project Acreage:	2.25
Parcel Number(s):	59016217442, 59016217441	Timeline:	2026
Funding Request:	\$6,750.00		

Project Description:

These 2.25 acres will be planted in permanent cover consisting of pollinators. This is one component of a larger habitat restoration that also includes invasive species removal and forest health improvements, such as dead ash removal and new tree plantings. The site contains wetlands intermixed with higher upland areas that were farmed in recent years. All sloped areas will be planted to help prevent soil erosion.

Why Funding is Needed:

We have successfully used Water Quality Improvement Funds for pollinator plantings in the past; however, all available funding for this year has already been fully allocated to other projects. As a result, we would like to utilize Monsanto Funds to help support this project.

Partners Involved:

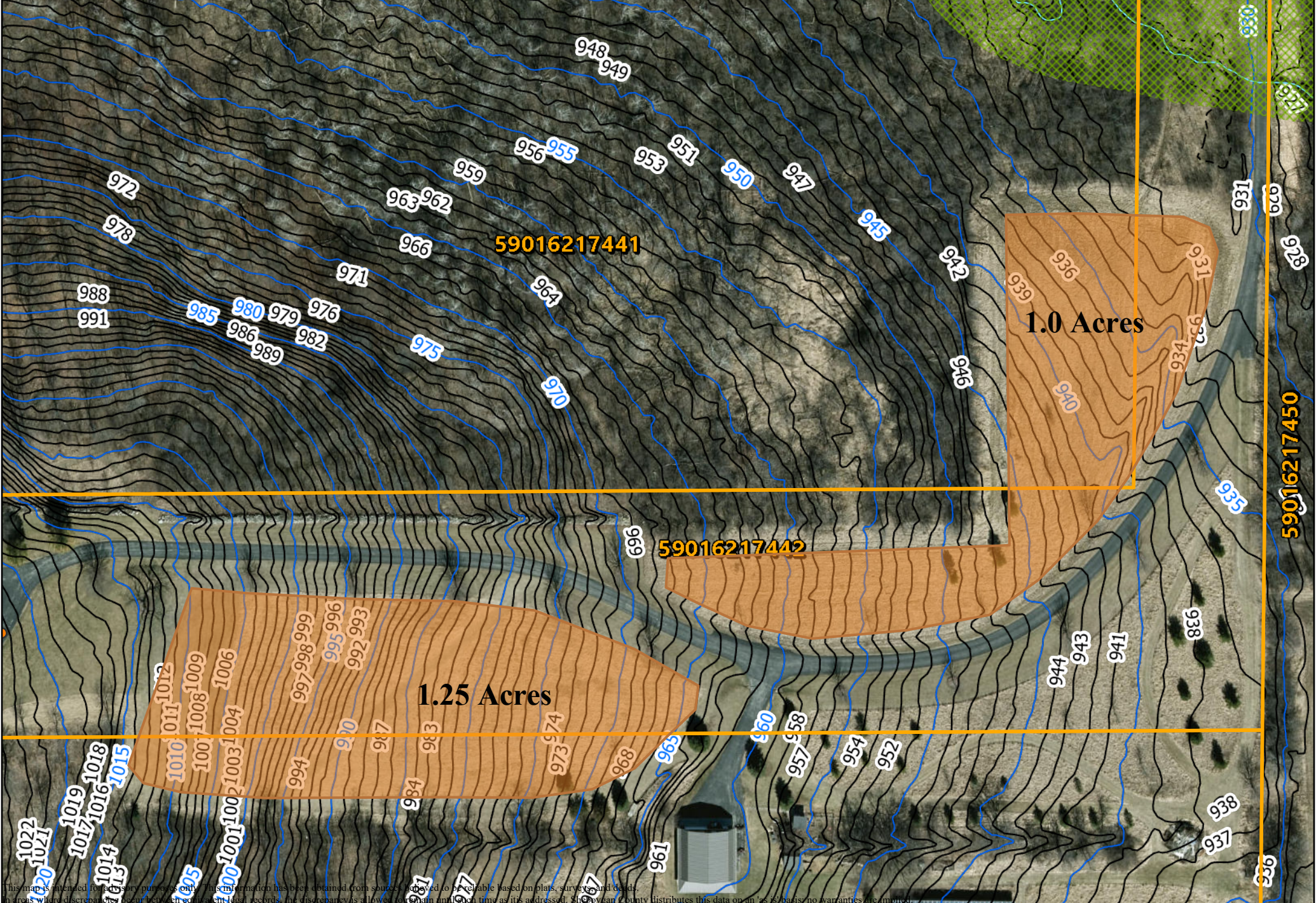
None

Conservation Benefits, Significance, and/or Uniqueness:

Pollinator projects offer some of the best conservation related benefits. Based on typical STEPL model pollutant loading estimates, conversion of 2.25 acres of conventionally farmed cropland to permanent pollinator habitat is expected to reduce annual sediment loading by approximately 5–8 tons, phosphorus by 10–15 pounds, and nitrogen by 50 pounds through reduced erosion and improved nutrient retention.

Does This Project Fit Within an Existing Conservation Initiative?

Yes, the property is also located in the Northeast Lakeshore TMDL which the main objective of this TMDL is to reduce nutrients from the landscape to improve the water quality throughout the area.

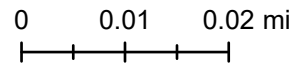


This map is intended for advisory purposes only. This information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable based on plats, surveys, and deeds. In areas where discrepancies occur between equivalent legal records, the discrepancy is a lower priority until such time as it is addressed. Sheboygan County distributes this data on an "as is" basis; no warranties are imposed.



Date Printed: 5/21/2026

Gentine Pollinator



CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUNDING REQUEST

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Owner(s) Name:	John Hand	Project Type:	Well abandonment
Property Address:	N4510 Hwy 32 Sheboygan Falls WI	Project Acreage:	4.67
Parcel Number(s):	59008091351	Timeline:	Early summer 2026
Funding Request:	Up to \$1,000.00 or 70% of the project		

Project Description:

Properly abandon an old well on the property. Properly abandoning a well involves permanently sealing it to prevent contaminants from entering groundwater. A licensed well contractor it from the bottom up with approved sealing materials such as bentonite. This creates a watertight barrier that prevents surface water, pollutants, and bacteria from traveling down the well casing into underground aquifers.

Why Funding is Needed:

Typically we use Soil & Water Resource Management (SWRM) funds that are annually allocated to us from DATCP for well abandonment projects, but those funds are already spent for this year.

Partners Involved:

Working with Hyink Well Drilling to meet the requirements set by the WI DNR Project has not yet been completed as of 5-18-26. Final cost will be determined at completion.

Conservation Benefits, Significance, and/or Uniqueness:

Unused wells can act as direct pathways for contaminants to enter underground aquifers that supply drinking water. Properly abandoning a well by sealing it helps prevent pollution, protects drinking water, and the aquifer.

Does This Project Fit Within an Existing Conservation Initiative?

Yes, well abandonment projects are a long-standing cost-share program that our Department has offered for many years. The funds typically used for projects like this have already been allocated for 2026. We were hoping this would provide a quicker funding option so the well could be properly sealed sooner rather than waiting for the release of 2027 SWRM funds.

CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FUNDING REQUEST

In 2023, Sheboygan County received a settlement from Monsanto, a major agricultural biotechnology corporation. Between 1930 and 1977, Monsanto manufactured a class of PCBs that contributed to environmental contamination. On January 16, 2024, the County Board adopted Resolution No. 20 (2023/24), authorizing the settlement funds to be placed into an endowment. Interest generated from the endowment can then be designated to support conservation projects that protect the landscape and improve water quality within the County. To date, the endowment has generated \$116,729.53 in interest, which is available for allocation pending Committee approval. Below is a recent funding request for your consideration.

Owner(s) Name:	Joe & Lynette Mierejewski	Project Type:	Well Closing
Property Address:	N9534 Sexton Rd	Project Acreage:	1.35
Parcel Number(s):	59020280861	Timeline:	Spring 2026
Funding Request:	Up to \$1000.00 or 70% of the project		

Project Description:

Properly abandon an old well on the property. Properly abandoning a well involves permanently sealing it to prevent contaminants from entering groundwater. A licensed well contractor it from the bottom up with approved sealing materials such as bentonite. This creates a watertight barrier that prevents surface water, pollutants, and bacteria from traveling down the well casing into underground aquifers.

Why Funding is Needed:

Typically we use Soil & Water Resource Management (SWRM) funds that are annually allocated to us from DATCP for well abandonment projects, but those funds are already spent for this year.

Partners Involved:

Working with Weber Well Drilling INC. to meet the requirements set by the WI DNR

Conservation Benefits, Significance, and/or Uniqueness:

Unused wells can act as direct pathways for contaminants to enter underground aquifers that supply drinking water. Properly abandoning a well by sealing it helps prevent pollution, protects drinking water, and the aquifer.

Does This Project Fit Within an Existing Conservation Initiative?

Yes, well abandonment projects are a long-standing cost-share program that our Department has offered for many years. The funds typically used for projects like this have already been allocated for 2026. We were hoping this would provide a quicker funding option so the well could be properly sealed sooner rather than waiting for the release of 2027 SWRM funds.

Asset Number	Unit Number	Description	Date Acquired	Serial Number	License Number	Asset Cost
1017773	1017773	2018 Ford F-150 Pickup	6/21/2018	1FTMF1E51JKE25338		\$ 30,088.50
1017774	1017774	2018 Ford F-150 Pickup	6/21/2018	1FTEX1E58JKE25340		\$ 31,641.50
1017966	1017966	2020 Ford F-150 Pickup	3/12/2020	1FTFX1E55LFA99450		\$ 36,026.50
1018226	1018226	2022 Ford F-150 Pickup	12/31/2022	1FTFX1E5XNKD43605		\$ 35,603.50
1018342	1018342	2023 Ford F-150 Pickup	1/3/2024	1FTFW1E85PKF57739		\$ 47,802.50
		2023 John Deere Gator	1/30/2023	1M0865MDPPM060150		\$ 30,450.00
1018718	1018718	2025 Ford Bronco Sport	3/21/2025	3FMCR9BN9SRE34724		\$ 28,728.50

**VARIANCE REPORT FOR DEPARTMENT -- UW EXTENSION
FOR THE QUARTER ENDING 12/31/2025**

TIMING	G/L CATEGORY	VARIANCE FROM BUDGET	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
	Revenues		
	Public Charges for Services	35,956.64	4H fees & donations were not included in budget; new this year
	Interest and Other Revenue	(12,937.36)	Postage reimbursement was budgeted but not requested as plenty was still available from the prior year; Intern reimbursement budgeted but AmeriCorps paid instead
	Expenses		
	Wages & Benefits	6,631.99	Intern budgeted but AmeriCorps paid instead of flowing through the county; changes in staffing
	Operating Expenses	36,628.52	Teacher expenses were less than budgeted due to vacant positions; 4H fees were not included in the budget and were new this year.
	Interdepartmental Charges	16,106.85	Changes in staffing
	Variances Less Than Justification Threshold	-	
	TOTAL	82,386.64 Positive	



Positive Youth Development: Youth Empowerment

April 2026



Extension Youth Development Educator Diana Hammer centers the voice of young people so they can contribute meaningfully to decisions, civic life, and volunteering in Sheboygan County.

As a result of Diana's educational efforts:	
30 students from Central and South High toured County facilities, learning about career opportunities and local government.	April 2026
8 teens in juvenile detention participated in social emotional learning activities designed to reduce reoffending	Dec - April
About 15 homeschooled elementary students identified components of a community, named their own, and created unique community designs.	Nov. 2025

Needs Assessment

- There are **many** resources for young people in the county. School districts, organizations, and individuals are working hard **for** youth. There are fewer examples of activities happening **for and with** youth.

Completed Projects

- County Government Day Field Trip for 30 students at Central and South High Schools.
- 4 social emotional learning classes for 8 students in Sheboygan County Juvenile Detention
- 1 civics workshop for about 15 home schooled students at Lakeview Community Library, Random Lake.

Current Projects

- Organizing a County Government Day with Sheboygan County's Deputy Administrator for Kohler High School in May.
- Developing a workshop on Entrepreneurship for high school students attending the 4-H Summer Academy in June.
- Supporting the Town of Wilson's efforts to engage young people in their comprehensive planning process.
- Collaborating with Sheboygan County Youth Justice to provide leadership and social emotional learning to teens on supervision.



Human Development and Relationships Programming: April 2026



Human Development and Relationships Educator

Truong Tran

Supports older adults, families, and communities by providing research-based education on Lifespan and Family Engagement. Enhances decision-making and resilience through programming in areas such

as family caregiving, social connectedness, healthy aging, and future planning.

Continuous Needs Assessment

Ongoing community-based environmental scans highlight key needs and priorities among individuals, families, and communities. Common challenges include caregiver stress, financial insecurity, and limited access to mental health resources, while opportunities exist to strengthen support networks, expand financial literacy, and increase research-based programming. These insights guide targeted outreach to promote resilience and improve overall quality of life.

Completed Projects

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

A six-session class designed to provide family caregivers with the skills they need to take care of themselves.

Digital Literacy Workshops

Workshops to help older adults and community members build confidence in navigating the digital world. Participants learned how to identify credible information, practice safe internet habits, and use technology for everyday tasks.

StrongBodies

Classes were offered to help older adults improve strength, balance, and overall physical health through safe, research-based exercise. Participants engaged in regular strength training while learning techniques to reduce the risk of falls and maintain independence.

Read and Connect

A family literacy workshop was offered to support elementary-aged children and their parents in building strong reading habits at home. Parents learned simple, practical strategies to engage in shared reading, including how to support learning even without strong English skills.

Focus on Fathers

Monthly series was offered to support fathers and father figures in strengthening their parenting skills and building positive relationships with their children. Participants engaged in discussions and activities focused on communication, social and emotional development, and positive parenting practices while connecting with other fathers.

Upcoming Projects

CARE U

One-day workshops for CNAs, PCWs, CHWs, and other direct care staff, providing interactive, practical training on topics such as dementia care, mobility, nutrition, pain management, and person-centered care to support quality care for older adults.

Caregiver Compass

A series of workshops designed to support caregivers in navigating the emotional and practical challenges of caregiving. Participants explored topics such as self-advocacy, savoring positive moments, adapting to change, and practicing self-compassion.

WeCope

Workshops offered to help individuals build practical skills for managing stress and improving emotional well-being. Participants learned strategies such as mindfulness, positive thinking, and healthy coping techniques to navigate life's challenges.

Testimonies from completed projects:

"When going to events, I can walk for 3 to 5 hours now. I don't have to sit down every half hour. – StrongBodies participant

"I loved interacting with other caregivers, realizing we're not alone on this journey" – PTC participant.



Community Development Programming: March-May 2026



Extension Community Development Educator Kirtis Orendorff responds to requests for assistance from local municipalities, communities and organizations who want to enhance local decision making and respond to new challenges and opportunities. Programs are designed and delivered to meet these locally identified needs.

Continuous Needs Assessment in Sheboygan County

- Attended WTA Unit meeting for Sheboygan County
- Attended Sheboygan County Clerks meeting for March to determine initial educational needs.
- Attended 11 Planning Commission Meetings from March 2nd to May 8th, 2026, to introduce myself, assess needs for education and programming, and be available to answer technical questions.
- Met with Sheboygan County Planning staff
- Met with fellow CDI educators across Wisconsin to better understand what programming is being offered elsewhere and to better understand where best to leverage my role.

Identified Areas of Need

- Data Collection for Comprehensive Planning
- Comprehensive Plan Update Checklist
- Zoning Board of Appeals education
- Youth engagement in public participation

Outcomes

- Responded to 5 questions regarding land use and planning topics.
- Met directly with 3 municipal clerks to answer questions and understand further educational needs.
- Assisted a town planning commission to educate on the regulations and statutes regarding zoning in and out of Farmland Preservation Zoning (collaboration with Sheboygan County Planning staff).
- Assisting 2 municipalities with their upcoming comprehensive plan updates with technical assistance and educational materials such as public engagement material preparation and input for best practices.

Future Projects

- Community Needs Forum for Sheboygan County to be hosted on June 17 and 18. This Forum will help facilitate conversations between representatives of many municipalities to best understand immediate needs for education, programming, and research for local governments. Anticipating ~30 attendees each night, with representatives from all 28 municipalities and Sheboygan County. Registration can be found here: [2026 UW-Extension Sheboygan Community Needs Forum - Extension Sheboygan County](#)
- Will be presenting on different comprehensive plan data collection methods and resources to the Sheboygan County Municipal Clerks meeting on May 21.
- Continue to work with local municipalities to provide resources, education, and materials related to their needs.
- Develop monthly newsletter for municipal officials to communicate news regarding new learning materials, upcoming programming, and news that will affect local governments.



Agriculture: Dairy Programming Update



Extension Dairy Educator Manuel Peña
Contributes to the structure and processes of dairy producers, conservation and financial groups and other dairy professionals, enhancing their ability to function effectively. Supports informed decision making by providing research-based information

to achieve their objectives.

Continuous Needs Assessment in Sheboygan County

Discussions with dairy farmers, managers, workforce, and interns at different farms or events to build a holistic view of the current state of the county, while identifying common challenges, strengths, and opportunities for improvement within the local dairy industry.

Areas of Need Determined by Assessments:

- Safety/good practices
- Communication/language
- Calving and Nutrition Management
- Public Perception

New connections and cultivation of existing relationships took place at agricultural events and farm visits. Besides in person activities, the educator has been involved in the creation of bilingual educational materials such as articles, newsletters, and webinars.

- Basics of Nutrition. Article Series
 - o Dry Matter Explained
 - o Fiber Explained
 - o Protein Explained
 - o Body Condition Score Explained
- Articles – Collaborations (among others)
 - o Best Practices for Roasting Soybeans
 - o Beyond BMR: Securing the Future of High-Quality Corn Silage
 - o Dairy Feed Inventory Management
 - o Feeding for Milk Protein
 - o Navigating Low Colostrum Yields
 - o Troubleshoot Milk Fat Depression

- Presentations and others
 - o Clean Farm Families
 - o Hosting the BDI
 - o Article for the agriculturist
 - o FDL Forage council

Regional impacts in Sheboygan

- Bovi-News. Bilingual statewide newsletter, focused on educating the dairy farm workers.
 - o Partnered on design, topics and content
 - o Translation of information available on the UW Extension website.
 - o Addressing current local issues and events
- Wisconsin Bilingual Dairy Podcast Project
 - o A document with the idea and the plan of execution of this project was elaborated as well as the first episode (pilot) of it.
- “ProHand” Bilingual Dairy Project
 - o Research project with the USDA about proper animal handling. Material is ready. We are running pilots to finalize details.
- Heifer survey
 - o Trying to figure out how much it is to raise a heifer. Last time it was done was 10 years ago. We provide reports by farm for participants.
- Forward Safety toolbox
 - o We ran a pilot test on Skid Steer and Animal Handling (Dairy cows) and now we are building other modules.
- Milk Quality from the Udder World
 - o Program developed by Carolina Pinzon. All the Dairy Farms from Sheboygan County were invited to participate.
- Designing an Agroecological Transformation in East-Central Wisconsin using Collaborative Landscape Design.
- Calving Management and Rumen development program.
- Representative Dairy Meeting

Positive Youth Development Programming: April 2026



Extension 4-H Program Educator, Sarah Feider, connects with and develops youth and engagement in 4-H to enhance youth development in Sheboygan County.

Needs Assessment:

- Youth leadership and engagement in an Ambassador Program to increase youth leadership and civic engagement.
- Connections with libraries and schools in the county to bring outreach to youth who otherwise couldn't attend community clubs.
- Support of 129 adult volunteers for the county.

Completed Projects:

- Livestock Reality Store
 - Youth traveled to booths at Farm WI in March, learning how to raise healthy livestock incurring challenges along the way.
- Project Day
 - Youth participated at the UWGB-Sheboygan Campus to ignite sparks and practice projects they haven't tried before.
- YQCA Trainer
 - Youth for the Quality Care of Animals certification so youth in Sheboygan County could attend an in-person training to gain educational requirements.

- Spring Break Day Camp
 - A full day program for youth in grades K-5 at the Sheboygan County YMCA promoting all things 4-H has to offer.
- Chick Quest
 - Bringing the life cycle of a chick into the classroom of 7th graders at Random Lake Middle School. Youth gained hands-on experiences of how to incubate chicks over a 22 day period.
- Camp Staff Trainings
 - Youth in grades 8-12 participate in 5 two and a half hour sessions to plan, prepare, and make connections in order to guide younger youth at base and outpost camp taking place in the summer of 2026.
- All Leader Meeting
 - An opportunity for all project and club leaders to come together to discuss ways to improve our clubs and projects and make connections with one another.

Upcoming Efforts:

- Summer Programming
 - County libraries, Sheboygan Recreation Department and the YMCA have plans to bring 4-H to their sites to show what 4-H has to offer.
- Bookworm Garden Partnership
 - 4-H was chosen to be the community garden this year. Based upon the book Harvey Potter's Balloon Farm, youth helped plan, plant, and prepare since January, with ribbon cutting on May 16.