

Chapter Six: Current and Emerging Issues

A key element to a comprehensive plan is being able to address the current and emerging issues of the County. The issues facing Meeker County now, and in the future, will largely dictate the development that will occur and the planning that will need to take place.

The goal of Chapter Six is to take an inventory of the current and emerging issues in Meeker County. This inventory of issues is not intended to remain constant for the next 20 years. Some of these issues may become lower in priority as planning measures are taken by the County to address them. Also, additional issues will likely become apparent and should be added to the list as growth and development occur.

Although many of the following issues emerged throughout the Comprehensive Planning process, a public meeting was held in an effort to gather a list of current and emerging issues and concerns from local officials and citizens. The issues discussed at the public meeting have been grouped into the following categories: Agriculture, Economic Development, Environmental Protection, Parks and Recreation, Rural Housing, Transportation, Urban Growth, and Other Issues. These issues provide the framework for the goals, objectives, and policies found in Chapter Seven.

Agriculture Issues

- ***Protection of agricultural activities and land*** - Agricultural activities are an important part of Meeker County's economy. The loss of small family farms and the increase in "corporate" farming activities has greatly impacted the landscape and economy of the County. Also, as urban and residential growth occurs, the demand to develop agricultural land will increase.
- ***Feedlot ordinance enforcement*** - The regulation of animal feedlots is done in an effort to protect natural resources and to prevent non-compatible land uses from occurring opposite of each other (i.e. feedlot located near a housing subdivision). The size and location of animal feedlots will greatly impact future growth and development in Meeker County.
- ***Expanding existing agricultural operations*** - The ability to expand current agricultural activities is regulated by land use controls such as zoning and feedlot ordinances. In addition to urban growth and rural housing development, future planning efforts need to allow for increased agricultural activities as well.
- ***Water quality*** - The polluting of ground and surface water is a concern associated with manure, fertilizer, and pesticide applications in agricultural activities.
- ***Housing densities*** - The increased density of housing in agriculture areas presents a problem to farmers as it takes land out of production and reduces the potential amount of crops that can be raised.

- ***Animal waste storage and application*** - The storage and application of animal waste is an important issue due to the potential for water pollution and odor nuisances. Monitoring of waste storage facilities and application practices and regulating land uses near feedlots can help prevent these problems.
- ***Transportation of agricultural equipment and products*** - Roadways need to be constructed and/or maintained to handle heavy loads produced from agricultural activities.
- ***“Coming to the nuisance”*** – “Coming to the nuisance” is a result of one land use developing near a non-compatible land use (i.e. rural housing being built next to a feedlot). Land use planning measures need to be implemented to prevent urban and residential land uses and agricultural activities from occurring too close to one another.
- ***Wetlands and drainage*** - Strict compliance and enforcement of wetland laws needs to occur in an effort to preserve these environmentally sensitive areas.
- ***Maintenance of ditches*** - Water ditches greatly impact the productivity of agricultural land by moving excess water from these areas. The maintenance and dredging of these ditches requires a cooperative effort between the County and all ditch users.

Economic Development Issues

- ***Location of industrial and commercial zones*** - The location of industrial and commercial businesses is regulated through zoning. In order to provide infrastructure to these businesses and prevent prime farmland and other resource areas from being developed, industrial and commercial zones need to be located near cities, adjacent to railroads and/or highways.
- ***Focus business growth in municipalities*** - Municipalities often have areas designated for industrial and commercial growth. These areas should be used for business development prior to developing new areas.
- ***Assist cities in developing infrastructure to attract industry*** - The costs of providing new infrastructure often limit communities in attracting new business. Economic development assistance from the County in helping cities plan for business development would help increase the tax base of the entire County.
- ***Preferred businesses*** - When attempting to attract new businesses to the County, the size, type, wages, jobs, and utility demand of the prospective companies should be taken into consideration. It is important that new businesses are compatible with current and future land use plans and that they create a positive impact on the economy.
- ***Promote agriculture as an industry*** - Agricultural activities make up an important part of the County’s economy as it provides a significant number of jobs and accounts for a large portion of the tax base.

- **Promote tourism/agriculture tourism** - The County's many lakes provide tourism opportunities in Meeker County. Tourism is an important part of the economy as it produces jobs and results in additional money being spent in businesses throughout the County. Agriculture tourism provides an alternative source of income for those individuals involved in agriculture activities.
- **Business retention** - Although attracting new business to the County is beneficial, it is important to retain the jobs and tax base created by existing businesses. For the County's economy to grow, existing businesses must be financially healthy as new businesses start.

Environmental Issues

- **Feedlot size and location** - The size, quantity, and location of feedlots needs to be closely regulated through the County's Zoning Ordinance.
- **Waste Disposal** - The location and monitoring of landfills is important because of the potential for water and soil pollution and odor nuisances for County residents.
- **Shoreline management** - The County has numerous lake and river shorelines. Development of these environmentally sensitive areas needs to be closely monitored and regulated to preserve their natural character. Countywide shoreland management needs to be a cooperative effort between the County, townships, cities, and the DNR.
- **Coordination of conservation programs** - The Countywide promotion of conservation programs (Conservation Reserve Program, Reinvest In Minnesota, etc.) would help ensure the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.
- **Chemical application** - The application of agricultural and lawn chemicals poses a potential threat to groundwater and surface waters. Chemical application standards and alternatives to chemical use would help reduce the potential for this pollution.
- **Industrial/commercial pollution** - Strict enforcement of clean air and water regulations by industrial and commercial businesses can help reduce pollution concerns in the County. Through land use controls, noise pollution in these areas can be controlled by not allowing residential development near commercial and industrial areas.
- **Maintain aesthetics and natural areas** - The County's many lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wooded areas provide many benefits to the County's residents. Land use controls need to preserve these areas for all to enjoy.
- **Wetlands** - Wetlands provide numerous benefits including improved water quality, flood water holding areas, and wildlife habitat. Land use decisions need to account for the importance of wetlands and must follow the regulations that protect these areas. The DNR should be consulted on any wetland issue.

- ***Strong septic system controls*** - In order to protect ground and surface water resources, strong septic system controls need to be implemented and enforced.
- ***Drinking water protection*** - The creation and implementation of wellhead protection plans under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996 should be encouraged throughout the County. The long-term impact of Countywide wellhead protection planning will support the protection of both public and private water sources.
- ***Gravel pits*** - Gravel pits provide a valuable mineral resource in Meeker County. However, issues such as dust, noise, truck hauling, and the alteration of the landscape are concerns associated with gravel pits. Residential setback standards from gravel mining are being implemented to help minimize the conflicts between these land uses. Reclamation standards and controls can be used to restore gravel pits back to a natural state.
- ***Redevelopment of shoreland*** - Shoreland, and the waterbodies they surround, are environmentally sensitive resources that provide aesthetically appealing locations for housing. As a result, many small cabins are now being replaced by year-round homes and undeveloped shoreland is being developed with houses. Land use and septic regulations in Meeker County need to address the growing demand to develop shoreland. Keeping the natural landscape next to shoreland and waterbodies is a priority.

Parks and Recreation Issues

- ***Need for additional camping opportunities*** - Increased camping opportunities can attract tourists and provide recreational opportunities for the County's residents. Through proper land use regulations, camping can occur in wooded and other natural areas without destroying that area's natural qualities.
- ***Protect the environment*** - Land use regulations can allow for the use of natural resources without negatively impacting their natural character. Environmentally sensitive areas can lose their natural and recreational qualities when incompatible or intensive land uses occur on or near them.
- ***Create more open spaces*** - The creation and preservation of open spaces helps to maintain and enhance the aesthetics of the landscape, provides habitat for wildlife, and creates recreational opportunities for people. As development pressures increase, it will become increasingly important to preserve and create new open spaces in an effort to protect the benefits these areas provide.
- ***Recreation trails and paths*** - Trails and paths provide recreational opportunities during all seasons of the year. Bicycling, walking, running, snowmobiling, skiing, and nature observation are some of the recreational benefits associated with trails and paths.
- ***Historic preservation*** - Historic preservation provides a unique identity for the County, can be used as an educational tool, and is beneficial in promoting tourism.

- **Promote tourism** - Meeker County's lakes and other natural amenities provide tourism opportunities in the County. The creation of additional parks and recreation areas can help promote tourism, improve the economy, and create jobs.
- **Public lakeshore and river accesses** - The creation of beaches and boat landings on lakeshores and rivers can provide recreational opportunities for people. Lakeshore and river development and alteration requires working in cooperation with the DNR.
- **Number, size, and quality of County parks** - County parks provide recreational opportunities and protection for natural resources. The number, size, and quality of County parks should be sufficient to provide recreational opportunities for all residents.
- **Opportunities for private parks** - Private parks provide increased tourism opportunities in the County. Land use controls need to allow for the development of privately owned parks, while limiting the alteration of the natural areas they are located on.
- **Shooting ranges** - Shooting ranges offer a recreational opportunity to people. It is important that these ranges are located in an area that will not pose safety concerns and a noise nuisance to nearby citizens.

Rural Housing Issues

- **Septic systems** - The use of septic systems is a growing concern due to the pollution potential from failing systems. Close monitoring of septic systems and the promotion of rural housing clusters that use one central septic system are increasingly important issues.
- **Location of rural housing** - The location of rural housing is an important land use issue that must take into account the preservation of agricultural land, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and the avoidance of non-compatible neighboring land uses. The rights of property owners versus the protection of natural resources must be considered in determining housing density regulations. In an effort to preserve farmland and natural areas and still allow increased rural housing, concepts such as conservation subdivision development should be encouraged.
- **Defining prime residential land** - Defining prime residential land is a difficult process, as each stakeholder tends to have a different definition. The use of zoning criteria can help determine what land should be developed for housing.
- **Building code enforcement** - The use and enforcement of a building code is a tool that can assist in providing safe and quality housing for residents in the County.
- **Natural resource protection** - Meeker County's many lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wooded areas provide attractive locations for rural housing. An important issue in Meeker County will be to determine the density and lot size of housing that is allowed in, or near, these environmentally sensitive areas.

- ***Flood zones*** - The building of housing in flood zones presents water problems for the homeowner when it floods and increases the chances for pollutants to enter rivers and streams.
- ***Impact of housing on lakes*** - Lakes are attractive places to build homes. However, if not done properly, septic systems and shoreline alterations can adversely impact a lake.

Transportation Issues

- ***Communication with MnDOT on projects*** - The maintenance and upgrades to the State maintained highways is vital to the growth and development of Meeker County. MnDOT's future plans for these highways should be consistent with the future transportation and land use plans of the County.
- ***Network with neighboring counties*** - The transportation systems of neighboring counties provide accessibility to and from Meeker County. Also, projects involving State highways are often a regional issue that requires cooperation between counties and MnDOT.
- ***Identify high traffic areas*** - High traffic areas present safety concerns and high maintenance costs for the County.
- ***Future roads need to follow infrastructure*** - Municipalities place water and sewer infrastructure in areas they plan to develop. Future construction of County roads in and near municipalities should be consistent with the development plans of the cities.
- ***Maintenance*** - The maintenance of roads is an expensive, but necessary, component of the County's transportation system. Road restrictions and preventive maintenance work helps to prolong the life of roads. Capital improvements planning for roadway maintenance needs to account for increased traffic as Meeker County grows.
- ***Safety concerns*** - Growth in Meeker County will result in increased traffic. Proper traffic controls such as signing, traffic lights, and access management regulations can help create safer roadways.
- ***Transit connection to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area*** - As urban sprawl continues west from the Twin Cities, more Meeker County residents will seek employment opportunities there. Commuter ride sharing programs and other public transit possibilities would help reduce traffic congestion, thus making roads safer to travel and creating less maintenance costs.
- ***Inventory of the current transportation system and analysis of future needs*** - An inventory and analysis of the current transportation system in the County would help to determine what kind of roads need to be built or reconstructed and where that should take place.

- ***Community development issues*** - County and State highways run through or near every municipality in the County. These highways are vital to the economies and growth potential of these cities. Any future upgrades or construction of new highways in or near municipalities should be discussed with the city.
- ***Access management*** - The number of access points onto roads can greatly impact the flow of traffic and cause safety concerns. Access management principles can be implemented to help reduce traffic congestion and reduce the potential for accidents.
- ***Construct roads to handle emergency service vehicles*** - The construction and reconstruction of roads in the County should be done in a way that makes them easily accessible for emergency service vehicles.

Urban Growth Issues

- ***Urban growth areas*** - The land surrounding a city where the municipality anticipates growth to occur is an urban growth area. As these areas develop, the need for annexation sometimes occurs. Cooperation between cities and townships on identifying urban growth areas and discussing the need for orderly annexation is and will be an important issue as the County experiences growth.
- ***Population projections*** - Determining the projected population of the County will help determine what future land uses are going to occur. Population projections by city and township help determine where growth and land use changes will likely take place.
- ***Housing needs*** - The need to provide housing to accommodate the needs of all age and income groups is and will be an issue cities and the County will face as growth occurs.
- ***Urban sprawl from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area*** - Urban sprawl from the Twin Cities has already greatly impacted neighboring Wright County and, to some extent, McLeod County. Also, Stearns County to the north has experienced considerable growth in the St. Cloud Area. Meeker County is already experiencing development pressure due to the growth occurring in these areas.
- ***Extra-territorial areas*** - Municipalities have the authority to extend subdivision regulations to areas beyond their corporate limits. Communication and cooperation between cities, townships, and the County is important in determining the proper use of land in these areas.
- ***Infrastructure needs*** - As urban growth continues, the demand to extend infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) will increase. Demand for infrastructure can place financial pressures on cities when proper planning has not occurred.
- ***Redevelopment*** - By redeveloping land currently in cities, there is less of a demand to develop beyond municipal boundaries. As a result, agricultural land and natural resources remain undeveloped.

- ***Fringe development*** - Development often occurs on land just beyond a city's boundary. As this occurs, the extension of infrastructure and the need for annexation of land are issues that often arise.
- ***Orderly development of streets*** - When urban growth occurs, additional streets are needed. These streets need to be laid out in an orderly manner to make the most efficient use of available land and to reduce traffic problems.
- ***Community development issues*** - Urban growth in cities creates many issues. The need for schools, streets, highways, expanding water and sewer treatment facilities, and police and fire protection are only a few of the issues that cities are faced with when urban growth occurs.
- ***Building code enforcement*** - As in rural areas, building code enforcement is needed in municipalities in order to provide safe and quality housing.
- ***Development along rail lines*** - Railroads offer a means of moving manufactured and agricultural goods. Municipal zoning needs to locate industrial parks and agricultural processing facilities near rail lines in order to make use of this mode of transportation.

Other Issues

- ***Bituminous/gravel crushing*** - The crushing of bituminous and gravel is a necessary part of road construction and gravel mining. Efforts should be made to minimize noise and dust nuisances from these areas.
- ***Communication and wind towers*** - Land use controls regulating the location of communication and wind towers can prevent them from being aesthetic nuisances and from creating problems for airports and surrounding land uses.
- ***Conflict resolution*** - Intergovernmental cooperation and communication between units of government can often eliminate conflicts.
- ***Technology advances*** - Improved technology can help business activities and provide added services and educational opportunities to residents in the County.
- ***Ordinances easily understood and consistently applied*** - Ordinances should be written in a clear and concise way that creates no doubt on the actions that are allowed or required. Ordinances also need to be consistently applied in all cases in an effort to avoid conflicts and legal disputes.
- ***Salvage yards*** - Through enforcement of zoning and nuisance ordinances, salvage yards can be located in the County without negatively impacting neighboring land uses.

Chapter Seven: Goals, Objectives, Policy Guidelines

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes Meeker County’s goals, objectives, and policy guidelines. They will be used to help make land use and planning decisions by everyone responsible for the County’s future. The goals have been organized into seven topic areas. The seven goals are used as a framework for the objectives and policy guidelines that, in turn, provide specific information on how decisions will be made by County officials on a day-to-day basis (i.e., “findings of fact” in zoning decisions). If a policy guideline identifies that the County should proactively be doing something, rather than a pure policy statement, the policy guideline should also be considered an action step. Most action steps identify who is responsible for implementing the activity.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, goals, objectives, and policy guidelines are defined in the following way:

Goal: This is an idealistic statement with the intent of being achieved at some undetermined future date. Goals are purposely general in nature.

Objective: Objectives are action-oriented and can be measurable (i.e., if a date, dollar amount, etc. is included). Objective statements always begin with an action verb. There may be more than one objective for each goal.

Policy Guideline: These statements support the action of the objective. The statements are recommendations qualified by the word “should.” Policy guidelines can also be converted into action work plans.

Action Steps Acronyms & Definitions

CB	= County Board	PC	= Planning Commission
CA	= County Administration	P&Z	= Planning & Zoning Office
TWNS	= Meeker County Townships	Cities	= Meeker County’s Cities
EDA	= Economic Development Authority/MCDC	CE	= County Engineer
SWCD	= Soil and Water Conservation District	WD	= Watershed District

Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

To promote cooperation among citizens, governmental units, and agencies to work toward the most efficient, cost-effective, and successful delivery of services.

Objective A: Keep the public advised of important planning issues and events.

- Guideline 1: The nature and consequences of important planning issues should be explained to the public and the media (P&Z).
- Guideline 2: Use the Internet and other multi-media, when feasible, to keep the public informed on key County activities and issues (P&Z).
- Guideline 3: The County should hold public meetings periodically to identify issues and to discuss the nature of important planning issues (CB, PC).
- Guideline 4: The County Board should appoint Task Forces to properly address key issues (CB).
- Guideline 5: Residents should have ample time to provide input into important community decisions (CB, PC).

Objective B: Use the Planning Commission to advise the County on issues of growth and development.

- Guideline 1: Members should have a wide variety of experiences and should represent a geographical, demographic, and cultural balance of the County (CB).
- Guideline 2: The Planning Commission should meet with the County Board at least annually to discuss important planning and zoning issues (PC, CB).

Objective C: Proactively work with governmental agencies to equitably administer various statutes, regulations, and County Ordinances.

- Guideline 1: The County should periodically update and adopt a Comprehensive Plan to establish a framework within which governmental, public, and private interests can effectively follow established policies (CB, P&Z).
- Guideline 2: The Comprehensive Plan should identify issues, goals, objectives, policy guidelines, and action steps.
- Guideline 3: Government programs and ordinances should be coordinated among units of government so they are efficiently provided to the public (P&Z).

Objective D: Meet on a regular basis as needed with local units of government, including cities, townships, and various governmental agencies.

Guideline 1: Meetings should be held as needed to discuss important planning issues and to determine what opportunities exist to solve any conflict. These meetings should occur with Meeker County's municipalities and townships at least once every year (CB, P&Z, PC).

Guideline 2: Cities and townships should be consulted on major land use issues and decisions, especially ones that affect land in designated Urban Growth Areas or land that is adjacent to the cities (P&Z).

Guideline 3: Assistance should be provided to municipalities and townships, where necessary, in implementing planning goals and sustainable development activities (P&Z).

Goal Two: Economic Development

To create sustainable economic development strategies that retain, enhance, and create economic opportunities.

Objective A: Encourage the expansion, continuation, and development of business, technology, housing, and tourism.

Guideline 1: An inventory of existing business and housing needs and trends should be made periodically (EDA).

Guideline 2: Encourage business and residential developments that are environmentally friendly (P&Z).

Guideline 3: Businesses should be given planning assistance to expand or improve their operations, including the awareness of existing financing tools (EDA).

Guideline 4: Redevelopment and reclamation of existing commercial and industrial areas should take priority over creating new developments, when feasible (EDA, Cities).

Guideline 5: Marketing strategies should be encouraged that promote the use of goods and services produced or provided in the County (EDA).

Guideline 6: Marketing strategies should be developed that promote the County as a place to work and live, focusing on available commercial and residential lots (EDA).

- Guideline 7: Encourage local government units to develop and plan for infrastructure necessary to retain and expand businesses (EDA).
- Guideline 8: Groundwater supply limitations should be recognized and evaluated prior to major development (EDA).
- Guideline 9: Businesses should be encouraged to implement sustainable business practices (EDA).
- Guideline 10: Agricultural activities should be considered an existing industry and plans should be implemented to promote agricultural related business (PC, CB, EDA, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 11: Assistance in retaining or expanding existing businesses should be emphasized (EDA).
- Guideline 12: Business and industrial expansion should be encouraged in existing municipal areas in an effort to preserve agricultural land and natural resources (PC, CB, P&Z, Cities).

Objective B: Encourage a diversified type and number of businesses.

- Guideline 1: A diversified tax base offering a large number and wide variety of employment opportunities at different education and skill levels should be promoted (EDA).
- Guideline 2: Recruitment of new business and industry should take into consideration its size, type, wage, jobs, utility demand, and compatibility with existing land uses and natural resources (EDA).
- Guideline 3: Encouragement and preference should be given to industrial and commercial interests with long-range commitment to the County (EDA).
- Guideline 4: Farmers should be encouraged to diversify and add value to commodities (i.e., bio-fuels, specialty products, etc.).

Objective C: Promote tourism as an existing and growing industry.

- Guideline 1: Programs, activities, and events that draw visitors to Meeker County should be encouraged (EDA, Cities).
- Guideline 3: Promotion of tourism should include provisions for protecting the County's natural resources.
- Guideline 4: Tourism should be coordinated with existing entities, such as State parks and trails (EDA).

Guideline 5: Residential development near Wildlife Management Areas should be discouraged by establishing buffer zones for gun safety and habitat purposes (PC, CB, P&Z).

Guideline 6: The County's primary entrance corridors should portray a positive image of Meeker County with proper signage, a County theme, etc. (EDA).

Objective D: Assist in providing recreational and outdoor opportunities.

Guideline 1: The County should create a parks and recreation study (including trails) that examines both existing and potential recreational opportunities. Potential improvements and/or projects should be identified (CA, CB).

Guideline 2: Both active and passive recreation areas should be encouraged.

Guideline 3: State and Federal programs should be used to help protect wildlife and fish habitat (CA, SWCD).

Objective E: Help develop and improve the human and natural resources of the County.

Guideline 1: Efforts should be made to prevent the out-migration of area youth and to best utilize the older citizens of the community.

Guideline 2: The County and private enterprise should work together to achieve and retain a skilled and highly trained labor force.

Guideline 3: "Quality of life" indicators should be recognized as measures of the County's economic success.

Guideline 4: The County should actively seek funds for a variety of business, people, and natural resource needs (EDA).

Guideline 5: Planning should occur to protect agricultural lands as a natural and economic resource (PC, CB, P&Z).

Goal Three: Natural Resources

To protect, preserve, and enhance the area's natural resources, including tillable agricultural land, wooded areas, water (both surface and groundwater), native vegetation, and scenic areas.

Objective A: Create reasonable standards for environmental protection.

- Guideline 1: Land use activities should not greatly impact the area’s natural resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 2: Land use plans and ordinances should minimize the impacts on tillable agricultural land, wetlands, wooded areas, aggregate resources, and other unique natural resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 3: The County should make land use decisions that help to protect and utilize aggregate resources with an emphasis on minimizing residential and environmental conflicts (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 4: The disturbance or removal of natural resources, such as mining, should be performed in a manner that will minimize the impact on the environment and efforts should be made to return any disturbed area back to an environmentally beneficial state that is compatible with the surrounding landscape (PC, CB, P&Z).
 - Guideline 5: All gravel pits should have closure requirements and reclamation plans that are closely monitored and enforced by the County (P&Z, PC, CB).
 - Guideline 6: The County’s Aggregate Resource Map should be incorporated into making land use decisions with an emphasis on protecting the resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 7: The County should work with all watershed management-like organizations in developing and implementing water management activities, which are consistent with the County’s Water Plan (P&Z, CE, SWCD).
- Objective B: Reduce priority pollutants to acceptable levels (i.e., soil erosion, storm water, wastewater, etc.).
- Guideline 1: Point and non-point pollution sources should be identified and abated, especially in wellhead protection areas (P&Z, SWCD).
 - Guideline 2: The County should support the proper location, design, installation, and maintenance of septic systems, along with proper upgrading, as needed (P&Z).
 - Guideline 3: Managed/cooperative wastewater treatment systems should be encouraged in rural areas with high-density housing (P&Z).
 - Guideline 4: Erosion and stormwater management provisions should be enforced (P&Z, CE, SWCD, Cities).

- Guideline 5: Recycling programs and proper solid waste disposal should be encouraged and supported (CA, Cities).
- Guideline 6: Individual Sewage Treatment Systems inspections should be conducted to determine imminent health threats (P&Z).
- Guideline 7: The County should help promote programs that can minimize soil erosion (SWCD).
- Guideline 8: Construction sites should be protected with temporary and permanent erosion control measures (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 9: Erosive areas should be protected with appropriate conservation measures (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 10: All projects should be held accountable for minimizing water runoff and soil erosion (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 11: Land use practices should be implemented that minimize runoff (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 12: The County should provide incentives to landowners to plant trees and shrubs that will provide protection from blowing and drifting snow (SWCD).
- Guideline 13: Residents should be given incentives to plant buffer strips (SWCD).
- Guideline 14: State cost-share programs should be used to assist in the installation of conservation practices (SWCD, annually).
- Guideline 15: The County should apply for grant dollars and utilize the Agriculture Best Management Practices (BMP) Loan Program to assist in BMP implementation (SWCD).
- Guideline 16: The County should proactively participate in getting waters off the MPCA's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) listing of impaired waters.
- Guideline 17: The County should cooperate to inventory and prioritize potential contaminant sources, such as conducting a Level II Feedlot Inventory, ISTS inspections, etc. (CB).

Objective C: Enhance the quantity and quality of surface water resources.

- Guideline 1: Ordinances should be implemented that regulate land use near surface water, wellhead protection areas, wetlands, and in flood plains (P&Z, PC, CB).

- Guideline 2: The need for flood reduction measures should be planned for, evaluated, and implemented (P&Z, SWCD, PC, CB).
 - Guideline 3: The County should pursue the development of an accurate floodplain map in both digital and paper formats (CB).
 - Guideline 4: Conservation programs, such as buffer strips and wetland restorations, should be promoted near surface water and on suitable lands (SWCD).
 - Guideline 5: The County should work closely with watershed districts and Clean Water Partnerships in an effort to protect water resources (P&Z, SWCD).
 - Guideline 6: The County should work with willing landowners on restoring natural water management resources, where practical (SWCD).
 - Guideline 7: Wetland preservation activities should be encouraged in response to a demonstrated need and as a part of a complete natural resource management effort which considers water conservation, recreation, and preservation of wildlife habitat (SWCD).
 - Guideline 8: Increased emphasis should be placed upon shoreland management in an effort to minimize the impacts on these environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Guideline 9: Encourage temporary and permanent retention and settling basins to enhance surface water quality (SWCD, P&Z).
 - Guideline 10: Encourage the restoration of drained wetlands by willing landowners (SWCD).
 - Guideline 11: The entire County should be designated as a high priority wetland area for the consideration of grants and the implementation of various programs.
 - Guideline 12: The County should provide engineering recommendations for the placement and replacement of culverts on roads, driveways, and public ditches (CE, TWNS).
 - Guideline 13: Stormwater retention basins for runoff retention and water quality treatment should be encouraged rather than using natural wetlands.
- Objective D: Enhance the quantity and quality of groundwater resources.
- Guideline 1: The County should work with the surrounding Counties to have the DNR conduct a regional hydrogeologic atlas for the region.
 - Guideline 2: Groundwater quality and quantity should be closely monitored (SWCD).

- Guideline 3: The County should continue to assist with the development and implementation of wellhead protection plans (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 4: Water testing should be promoted and problems should be analyzed (CA, P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 5: Sensitive groundwater recharge areas should be identified and proactively protected (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 6: The County should encourage the proper abandonment of storage tanks and direct landowners to the appropriate agencies for removal and cleanup assistance (CB).

Objective E: Raise public awareness on a number of key natural resource issues.

Please refer to “Goal Seven: Public Awareness” at the end of this Chapter

Goal Four: Transportation
 To provide and preserve a balanced mix of transportation options that safely and efficiently move people and goods.

Objective A: Support a public and private balanced transportation system that encompasses air, highway, rail, public transit, and pipeline systems which economically move people and products.

- Guideline 1: The planning for the transportation system should focus on helping meet the County’s economic and social needs (CE, TWNS).
- Guideline 2: The consideration of both direct and indirect impacts should be evaluated for each major transportation project (CE).
- Guideline 3: Public transportation and ride sharing should be given a high priority (CB).
- Guideline 4: Consideration should be given to the aging and disabled populations when designing transportation programs (CB, Cities).
- Guideline 5: Encouragement should be given towards the development of pedestrian and bicycle friendly facilities to help provide balance to the transportation system (CB, CE, TWNS, Cities)
- Guideline 6: Long range planning should address a variety of transportation issues, with special consideration given to issues associated with inter-regional corridors (PC, CE).

- Guideline 7: Planning and design standards should address both the aesthetic and functional needs of the County (CE).
 - Guideline 8: Flood control benefits should be incorporated into future road and bridge enhancements, when feasible (CE, TWNS, SWCD).
 - Guideline 9: The County should promote the designation of State Highway 15 as an Inter-regional Corridor (CE, CB).
 - Guideline 10: Safety improvements should be supported at railroad crossings where the improvements are warranted.
 - Guideline 11: Setback distances from the rail line should be considered to help facilitate future rail use (PC).
- Objective B: Encourage the maintenance, reconstruction, and construction of a highway and street system capable of providing for the safe, convenient, and economical movement of persons and commodities.
- Guideline 1: Highway and street improvements should include consideration for sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and beautification (CE, Cities).
 - Guideline 2: Safety improvements, including signing or traffic lights at intersections with high traffic volume, should be made in anticipation of problems rather than in reaction to them (CE).
 - Guideline 3: The County should continue to seek funds to assist with bridge replacements (CE).
 - Guideline 4: Programs or projects with the potential for reducing damage to highways caused by frequent heavy loads should be encouraged and supported (CE).
 - Guideline 5: Programs or projects designed to improve highway safety should be supported, including ones to lessen highway congestion.
 - Guideline 6: The County should coordinate the placement of signs in an effort to keep Meeker County safe and attractive (P&Z).
 - Guideline 7: The County should evaluate the County's roadway system to possibly better serve the residents of Meeker County by transferring jurisdictional responsibilities of certain roadways in response to changing population densities throughout the County. This is referred to as a jurisdictional study and one should be completed every five years or as needed (CB, CE, TWNS, Cities).
- Objective C: Invest strategically in transportation infrastructure to enhance the vitality of the County.

- Guideline 1: Priority should be given to the preservation and maintenance of the existing transportation system.
- Guideline 2: Current and planned right-of-ways for transportation system improvements should be identified and preserved (CE).
- Guideline 3: Transportation services should be developed that are consistent with local land use plans as well as with other development plans (CE, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 4: Public and private partnerships in all forms of transportation investments should be encouraged (CE).
- Guideline 5: Recreational trails should be an important part of the overall transportation plan and should be developed and/or enhanced where needed (CE).
- Guideline 6: Cul-de-sac development should be discouraged to help maintain a system of interconnected roads unless they are the only feasible option.
- Guideline 7: Consideration should be given to classify appropriate segments of County Roads and Trunk Highways as scenic with planted areas to buffer developed land.
- Guideline 8: The County should work with Mn/DOT to develop and implement sound access management guidelines to protect the integrity of the designed roadway system.
- Guideline 9: All new developments should mitigate impacts directly related to new access points (P&Z).
- Guideline 10: New, private, direct access to the County's major highways should be strongly discouraged. Adjacent roadways should be used whenever applicable (CE, CB).

Objective E: Develop a safe and financially responsible transportation plan (CE).

- Guideline 1: Safety should always be the top priority in transportation planning.
- Guideline 2: Create a roadway management system with a consistently updated comprehensive inventory of roadways and bridges to assist in the prioritization of projects (CE).
- Guideline 3: A multi-year road improvement program should be continued as part of a capital improvement program to include maintenance, safety upgrading, paving, and reconstruction work prioritized by year, along with costs and methods of financing (CE).

- Guideline 4: Transportation impacts should be examined before land use decisions are made, including the decision if existing roadways are suitable for the proposed land use or if improvements will be needed (P&Z, CE).
- Guideline 5: Efficiency in transportation services should be encouraged or promoted.
- Guideline 6: The location of commercial, industrial, and residential developments should be planned to minimize traffic conflicts.
- Guideline 7: Rural development should be encouraged to locate near appropriate transportation corridors (PC, CE, P&Z).

Goal Five: Land Use Planning

To establish a community-based land use process that recognizes that we have the responsibility and tools to shape good land use decisions, while setting clear guidelines and treating people fairly.

Objective A: Encourage a balanced and harmonious use of land consistent with natural features and surrounding land use plans.

- Guideline 1: The County's Zoning Ordinances should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed (P&Z, PC, CB, ongoing).
- Guideline 2: Local units of government and State agencies should be consulted on important land use issues (P&Z).
- Guideline 3: Urban growth boundaries should be identified and joint planning should occur to account for growth in those boundaries (Cities, TWNS, P&Z, PC).
- Guideline 4: Land use decisions should not interfere with the City of Litchfield's Airport Master Plan (PC, CB).
- Guideline 5: Orderly annexation agreements should be encouraged and required, where appropriate (Cities, TWNS, PC, CB).
- Guideline 6: Residential, commercial, and industrial growth should have adequate sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure (Cities, TWNS, PC).
- Guideline 7: The impact of land uses upon sensitive environmental and unique scenic areas when making land use and zoning decisions should be considered (PC, CB).

- Guideline 8: Open space planning should be encouraged for rural and non-farm housing (PC).
 - Guideline 9: Advertising signs should be regulated to maximize public safety (PC, P&Z).
 - Guideline 10: Zoning regulations should minimize the impacts on tillable agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, and unique areas from urban and non-agricultural growth (PC).
 - Guideline 11: Regulations for nuisances and pollutants should be closely monitored and enforced in an effort to provide for a safe and healthy living environment for all residents (P&Z, PC).
 - Guideline 12: The placement and impacts of wind turbines should be regulated (PC).
 - Guideline 13: Existing ground water data should be analyzed to assist in making land use decisions (SWCD, PC).
 - Guideline 14: Variances should be granted only when a true hardship exists (BOA).
 - Guideline 15: The County should actively identify land with scenic, historic, and unique value and should develop a plan to successfully protect these areas (P&Z, PC).
 - Guideline 16: The Historical Society should be consulted on important planning issues to ensure that areas with historical significance are preserved (P&Z, PC).
 - Guideline 17: Whenever possible, the County's land use decisions should be consistent with municipal comprehensive plans (Cities, TWNS, P&Z, PC).
- Objective B: Help assure an adequate and affordable housing supply that provides a convenient, safe, and aesthetically appealing living environment.
- Guideline 1: The County should consult and cooperate with appropriate agencies on important housing-related issues (EDA).
 - Guideline 2: The County should conduct and/or participate in various housing studies periodically to assess the quality, quantity, type, and need for housing (EDA).
 - Guideline 3: The County should enforce clear development standards for new residential subdivisions (P&Z, PC, CB).

- Guideline 4: The Subdivision Ordinance should require stormwater management (including the use of infiltration basins, swales, waterways, constructed wetlands, etc.).
- Guideline 5: Existing public and private institutions should be involved in housing efforts as much as possible.
- Guideline 6: Conventional (non open-space) residential subdivisions should be encouraged in areas that are or will soon be supplied with municipal services (PC, CB, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 7: Conservation subdivisions with open space should be allowed, where appropriate (P&Z, PC, TWNS).

Objective C: Create a comprehensive and accurate Geographic Information System (GIS) database for the County to assist in land use decisions.

- Guideline 1: A GIS needs assessment should be periodically conducted (CB).
- Guideline 2: The County should support future and expanded uses in GIS, including the development of a Countywide parcel map (CB).
- Guideline 3: GIS data (i.e., biological surveys, wellhead protection areas, floodplains, etc.) should be used to assist in making land use decisions (P&Z, PC, CB, CE).
- Guideline 4: Current Urban Growth Areas should be kept on file in the GIS database and displayed on the County's Zoning Map (Cities, P&Z).
- Guideline 5: The County's current land use and zoning maps should be regularly updated (Cities, TWNS, P&Z).

Goal Six: Public Investments

To account for the full environmental, social, and economic costs of public investments while making the best use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs.

Objective A: Facilitate the development of basic infrastructure and services to as many of the residents of the County as possible without creating any substantial economic or environmental problems.

- Guideline 1: The County should assist in providing quality and efficient law enforcement and emergency management to all residents (CB).

Guideline 2: Sanitation and landfill management and development should be done to account for increased waste produced from new development and growth (CA).

Guideline 3: The County should support good telecommunication services.

Guideline 4: The County should work with State and Federal agencies to maximize compatible use of publicly owned lands (P&Z).

Objective B: Conduct capital improvements programming and budgeting to achieve desired types and levels of public facilities and services.

Guideline 1: A periodic inspection and maintenance schedule should be developed and implemented for all County property and facilities (CA).

Guideline 2: Plans for proposed new, upgraded, or expanded services and facilities should be coordinated with applicable units of government and agencies.

Guideline 3: Public facilities and services should not be duplicated.

Objective C: Continue and support the maintenance of a Countywide ditch system.

Guideline 1: The ditch system should be maintained so that it effectively manages the movement of water using best management practices to minimize pollution and sediment (CE, SWCD).

Guideline 2: The installation of filter strips should be enforced where appropriate and encouraged elsewhere (SWCD).

Guideline 3: A countywide drainage management plan, identifying potential improvements and upland storage opportunities (along with corresponding funding mechanisms) should be explored (CB).

Goal Seven: Public Awareness

To support research and provide information on the County's important fiscal, environmental, and social issues.

Objective A: Provide residents access to educational materials on the County's key planning issues.

Guideline 1: The County should assist with providing information on rural issues (P&Z).

- Guideline 2: The many benefits of wetland protection and restoration should be promoted through available programs (SWCD).
- Guideline 3: Proper septic system design, operation, and benefits to the environment should be promoted (P&Z).
- Guideline 4: The importance of recycling should be promoted (CA).
- Guideline 5: Education efforts should be supported regarding manure management, nutrient management, and residue management plans, along with the application of other potential pollutants (SWCD).
- Guideline 6: Educational programs that promote soil conservation should be offered (SWCD).
- Guideline 7: The preservation and restoration of upland storage areas should be promoted (wetlands, low-lying areas, basins).
- Guideline 8: Educational efforts to control or reduce the effects of accelerated storm water runoff should be promoted.
- Guideline 9: The County should promote the proper sealing of abandoned wells.
- Guideline 10: The County should promote wellhead protection on all private wells and assist with implementation for those who are interested (SWCD).
- Guideline 11: A fact sheet should be developed on each of the County's major planning and zoning documents (i.e., Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, etc.).

Chapter Eight: Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan is an official planning and policy document for the County. Its primary purpose is to help guide land use decisions over the “life” of the Plan. However, without proper implementation, the goals, objectives, and policy guidelines will have little impact on growth and development in Meeker County. Several implementation steps will need to be taken by the County. To assist the County in the identification of these activities, Chapter Eight establishes a temporary work plan for the County to follow. The identified implementation steps are organized under the County’s seven goal areas found in Chapter Seven.

Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

1. Annually review the County’s Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Comprehensive Plan to identify potential changes and update as needed. This should be placed on the agenda of the Planning Commission and County Board (Objective C, Guideline 1, Pg. 2).
2. Meetings should be held as needed to discuss important planning issues and to determine what opportunities exist to solve any conflict. These meetings should occur with Meeker County’s municipalities and townships at least once every year (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 3).

Goal Two: Economic Development

3. The County should create a parks and recreation study (including trails) that examines both existing and potential recreational opportunities. Potential improvements and/or projects should be identified (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 5).

Goal Three: Natural Resources

4. The County’s aggregate resource map should be incorporated into the County’s decision-making process (Objective A, Guideline 3, Pg. 6).
5. All gravel pits should have closure requirements and reclamation plans that are closely monitored and enforced by the County (Objective A, Guideline 5, Pg. 6).
6. The County should proactively participate in getting waters off the MPCA’s Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) listing of impaired waters (Objective B, Guideline 16, Pg. 7).

**Table 8A: MCPA 303d List of Impaired Waters:
Meeker County, 2008**

Reach	Pollutant	Project Goal Start/End
<i>Big Swan Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	2002/2015
<i>Clear Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Hope Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
<i>Lake Arvilla</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	2002/2015
<i>Lake Betsy</i>	Excess Nutrients	2008/2012
<i>Lake Francis</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Lake Jennie</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Long Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Long Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
<i>Spring Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Washington Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Dunns Lake</i>	Excess nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Dunns Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Richardson Lake</i>	Excess nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Richardson Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Lake Minnie-Belle</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>North Fork Crow River</i>	Biota, Mercury	Unknown
<i>South Fork Crow River</i>	Biota, Mercury, Turbidity	Unknown
<i>Grove Creek</i>	Biota, Low Oxygen	Unknown
<i>Jewitts Creek</i>	Ammonia, Biota, Low Oxygen	Unknown
<i>Unnamed Creek</i>	Biota (near Jewitts Creek)	Unknown
<i>Clearwater River</i>	Fecal Coliform, Low Oxygen	Unknown

7. The County should cooperate to inventory and prioritize potential contaminant sources (Objective B, Guideline 17, Pg. 7). *This could be accomplished proactively through the use of Federal and State grants and programs.*
8. The County should pursue the development of an accurate floodplain map in both paper and digital formats (Objective C, Guideline 3, Pg. 8).
9. The County should work with the surrounding counties to have the DNR conduct a regional hydrogeologic atlas for the region (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 9).
10. The County should continue to assist with the development of wellhead protection plans (Objective D, Guideline 3, Pg. 9).

Goal Four: Transportation

11. The County should evaluate the County's roadway system to possibly better serve the residents of Meeker County by transferring jurisdictional responsibilities of certain roadways in response to changing population densities throughout the County. This is referred to as a jurisdictional study and one should be completed every five years or as needed (Objective B, Guideline 7, Pg. 11).
12. The County should work with Mn/DOT to develop and implement sound access management guidelines to protect the integrity of the designed roadway system (Objective C, Guideline 8, Pg. 11).

Goal Five: Land Use Planning

13. The County should actively help to facilitate orderly annexations by discussing the need for them with the affected townships and municipalities, where appropriate. Orderly annexation agreements should be discussed as a condition in all Urban Growth Areas (Objective A, Guideline 5, Pg. 13).
14. The County should support future and expanded uses in GIS, including the development of a Countywide parcel map (Objective C, Guideline 2, Pg. 14).
15. The County's current land use and zoning maps should be regularly updated (Objective C, Guideline 5, Pg. 14).

Goal Six: Public Investments

16. A countywide drainage management plan, identifying potential improvements and upland storage opportunities (along with corresponding funding mechanisms), should be explored (Objective C, Guideline 3, Pg. 15).

Goal Seven: Public Awareness

17. A fact sheet should be developed on each of the County's major planning and zoning documents (Objective A, Guideline 11, Pg. 16).

Miscellaneous Implementation Steps (not goal specific)

18. The **Meeker County Soil Survey** was completed in 1999. The County should consult this document before making important land use decisions.
19. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is currently conducting a **Biological Survey for Meeker County**. The goal of the survey is to identify significant natural areas and to collect and interpret data on the distribution and ecology of rare plants, rare animals, and native plant communities. Once completed, the information provided in the report should be used to help guide future land use decisions.
20. **Amendment Process** – The plan can be amended by the recommendation of the Planning Commission to the County Board of Commissioners, or the County Board can propose an amendment to the Plan by resolution to the Planning Commission. Either way, a public hearing shall be held annually to review any and all recommendations for amendment and said public hearing will occur at the first Planning Commission meeting in December of the year. After the public hearing the Planning Commission shall review the plan with the input of the public, township supervisors, and municipalities. After review, the Planning Commission shall make a recommendation for amendments, if any, to the County Board for approval.

Chapter Nine: Future Land Use Plan

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes Meeker County's Future Land Use Plan. It accomplishes this in three ways. First, the County's approach to zoning is outlined. Second, the County's other official documents and planning efforts are highlighted. Finally, a Future Land Use Map is provided and described.

SECTION ONE: ZONING

Due to increased rural residential development pressures, the Planning Commission and County Board examined Meeker County's long-term zoning needs in Fall and Winter of 2006. The overwhelming conclusion was that Meeker County's Zoning Ordinance was not effectively achieving the goals, objectives, and policy guidelines outlined in Chapter Seven. Not only was development occurring haphazardly, the County's agricultural community was slowly losing prime farming locations. To make matters worse, the new rural residential development was often found to be incompatible with the well established farming way-of-life, especially near feedlots. As a result, a number of key revisions were needed to the Ordinance.

Rural Residential Zoning

The new zoning ordinance will focus on having one single family dwelling per quarter-quarter section, with four additional options. First, up to three additional dwellings may be transferred onto a quarter-quarter section by following the County's Transfer of Development Rights provisions found in Article 12A of the County's Zoning Ordinance. Second, up to two additional dwellings may be built per quarter-quarter section if each parcel gets a conditional use permit, only uses a maximum of one acre of tillable land, and each parcel has a five-acre minimum permanent easement. Third, owners of at least twenty acres of land within a quarter-quarter section may sell one additional building lot if the parcel was purchased as a separate parcel after October 19, 2001. Finally, all further subdivisions must be re-zoned and platted according to the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances.

Shoreland Zoning

Increased development pressure around lakes have raised concerns about water quality and impacts on lake use. The State's existing shoreland standards do not adequately address these concerns based on local resource conditions and needs. Meeker County recognized this five years ago and proactively adopted a fourth lake classification, called Natural Sensitive, to help protect the County's most fragile lake areas. Statewide efforts are currently being made to have all counties adopt similar shoreland standards. After reviewing the DNR's "Alternative Shoreland Management Standards", the Planning Commission and County Board proposed to again take the lead on adopting tougher lakeshore development standards. The two main changes are focused around larger riparian lot sizes and increased shoreland setbacks. This received widespread support at a recent countywide public hearing on the proposal.

SECTION TWO: OTHER OFFICIAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND EFFORTS

Meeker County Comprehensive Water Plan

The County's current Comprehensive Local Water Plan was adopted in January 2003 and will continue to guide the County in water resource management through 2012. While the creation of the document was entirely voluntary, various State grants require an approved Plan, including the Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG). In accordance with M.S. Chapter 103B, the Plan inventories ground and surface water resource data, as well contains an implementation plan to address current and emerging issues. The County's Water Planning Taskforce oversees the implementation of the Plan. The Taskforce meets annually in January to discuss water planning activities, as well as prioritize the County's NRBG requests. The formal recommendations of the Taskforce are then forwarded to the County Board of Commissions for approval.

Watershed District Management Plans

There are four watershed districts within the County. These district, which are primarily found in the northern half of the County, were formed to address water resource related issues in the following watersheds: Clearwater River, Middle Fork Crow River, North Fork Crow River, and Sauk River Watershed District. Each of these districts is considered to be a separate local unit of government and has the statutory authority to levy taxes and adopt regulations. In accordance with M.S. Chapter 103D, each District has adopted a Watershed Management Plan. Like the aforementioned County Water Plans, these plans inventory pertinent water resource data and contain steps for implementation.

Meeker County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The County currently has a draft All-Hazard Mitigation Plan ready to adopt. The purpose of the Plan is to identify all natural and man-made disasters that could occur in Meeker County, and adequately address concerns before they occur. Once adopted, the County will need to take a look at ways to incorporate the various mitigation measures into the County's Comprehensive Plan. For example, the County may need to develop a strategy to best protect the County's flood prone areas.

State Highway 15 Corridor Study

With increased population growth over the last couple of decades, and with future trends showing further growth, Trunk Highway 15 is not meeting the increased demands placed on it. As a result, a Highway 15 Coalition was formed in 2004 to advocate for improvements on the highway for safe and efficient travel. The Coalition's Action Plan is seeking \$1 million in federal dollars to conduct a corridor study. The study will determine community priorities for the corridor, identify safety and access needs and recommend steps to preserve the corridor through wise land use

decisions and access management. Those who conduct the study will also work with local planning and zoning authorities to identify necessary setbacks and preservation areas. In addition, there is the need to work with Mn/DOT on the possible purchase of right-of-way and “officially map” segments to accommodate future construction. As a result, Meeker County will be taking a look at establishing 200-foot setbacks on all new developments along the corridor.

Access Management Ordinance

Over the past couple of years, the Minnesota Department of Transportation has been working with various counties on establishing reasonable assess management provisions, to be adopted by local governmental units. These provisions adequately space out the number of assess points along the County’s major roadways. For example, along U.S. Highway 12, a one-mile spacing of assess points will be encouraged. The use of frontage and backage roads, along with directing access points to the side roadways, are the primary tools used to implement these ordinances. The overall intent is to minimize traffic accidents and congestion. Meeker County currently has a draft Assess Management Ordinance it is proposing to adopt.

Greenleaf, Cedar, and Sioux Lakes Area Conservation District

There has been interest expressed by landowners a multiple partners in protecting the undeveloped land around Greenleaf, Cedar, and Sioux lakes. The conversation has ranged from creating a new State Park to simply establishing a conservation area. There is currently a bill in the State Legislature to appropriate funds to create a study of the area, with a strong emphasis on citizen participation. The purpose of the plan would be to identify conservation opportunities for the area and to address any concerns expressed by the public.

SECTION THREE: OFFICIAL FUTURE LAND USE MAP

One of the primary justifications for revising the November 2005 Comprehensive Plan was to create a Future Land Use Map. The previous plan relied on the maps provided in Chapters Four and Five, the community profiles for each of the cities and townships. The maps display how each township is zoned and identifies the cities’ urban growth areas. The problem, however, was that a countywide map was not created and no where was any map referred to as a “Future Land Use Map.” As a result, Meeker County’s new Future Land Use Map was created as part of this planning process (the map is found following the text of this Chapter). The key changes and/or additions are highlighted below:

Zoning Districts

The County’s current zoning districts are displayed on the map. Some of the individual township maps found in Chapter Five needed to be updated due to a few rezonings that had taken place since November 2005.

Shoreland Districts

The County's updated lake classifications are displayed on the map, including the following types:

1. General Development (least restrictive)
2. Recreational Development
3. Natural Environment
4. Natural Sensitive (most restrictive)

Railroad Industrial Zoning

The County's Industrial district was expanded with a 600-foot buffer around the County's existing railroad lines. This was done in the recognition of how valuable this land is to railroad-intensive industries. The County's Zoning Ordinance will need to be examined to protect against any unforeseen disadvantages due to these changes.

Urban Growth Areas

Each of the cities in Meeker County was given the opportunity to re-identify their Urban Growth Boundaries. These areas need to be established through municipal comprehensive plans and simply identify where each city most likely will grow in the future. Extraordinary planning measures and cooperative efforts between the cities, townships, and the County need to be made in these areas. For example, the County does not want to make a bad land use decision that will negatively affect how a city can expand. An increasing number of cooperative arrangements between local jurisdictions have been made throughout the State. Meeker County is committed to exploring all options in order to ensure that intergovernmental cooperation remains a high priority.

Land Use Plan Summary

Collectively, the information presented in this Chapter shall serve as the County's roadmap to making future land use decisions. As problems and opportunities arise with land use issues, it is anticipated that this Chapter will be revised in the future to reflect prevailing future land use philosophies.

