

MRRPC

*Providing Planning and Economic Development
Services to Improve the Region's Environment,
Economy and Quality of Life*

*Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission
1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: 607-785-9396
Fax: 608-785-9394
E-mail: plan@mrrpc.com
Website: mrrpc.com*

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
LA CROSSE, WI
PERMIT NO. 111

MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CONTACT INFORMATION

Address

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission
1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601

Telephone 608.785.9396

Fax 608.785.9394

Email plan@mrrpc.com

Web Site www.mrrpc.com

Staff

Director Greg Flogstad

greg@mrrpc.com

Administrative Assistant Barbara Buros

barb@mrrpc.com

Community Planner and GIS Specialist David Bonifas

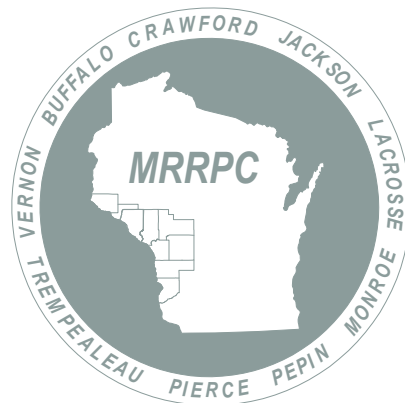
dave@mrrpc.com

Transportation Planner Peter Fletcher

peter@mrrpc.com

Economic Development Planner Bryan Law

bryan@mrrpc.com



Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

2008 - 2009 Annual Report

*Providing Planning and Economic Development Services to Improve the Region's
Environment, Economy and Quality of Life*

Public Human Service Transportation Plans Updated for all Nine Counties.

This past year MRRPC staff updated the County Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans for all nine counties in the region. Counties are required to undertake this planning process in order to remain eligible for: New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), and Elderly and Disabled Transportation (5310) Program funding. The Federal law called Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that projects selected for funding under various programs be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, and that the plan be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation service providers and participation by members of the public. MRRPC staff coordinated the necessary public meetings and wrote the 2008-2013 action plans for each county that are designed to improve coordination and service delivery of public transportation services. Service needs and gaps identified at the public meetings included the growing homeless population, a need for more wheel chair spaces on mini-buses, spatial mismatches in transportation, literacy, growing needs of individuals on Social Security Income, continued funding, a need for ride scheduling software and training, a need for overall coordination, and vehicle replacement.

Food Resource and Agribusiness Network (FRAN) Industry Cluster Being Developed

The development of an agriculture and food processing industry cluster network referred to as the Food Resource and Agribusiness Network or FRAN is underway. The purpose of forming this industry cluster network is to try to provide greater private and public resources to this key economic driver industry in the region. During the past year MRRPC staff provided support to FRAN in coordinating several organizational meetings among companies and regional economic development organizations. During these meetings several

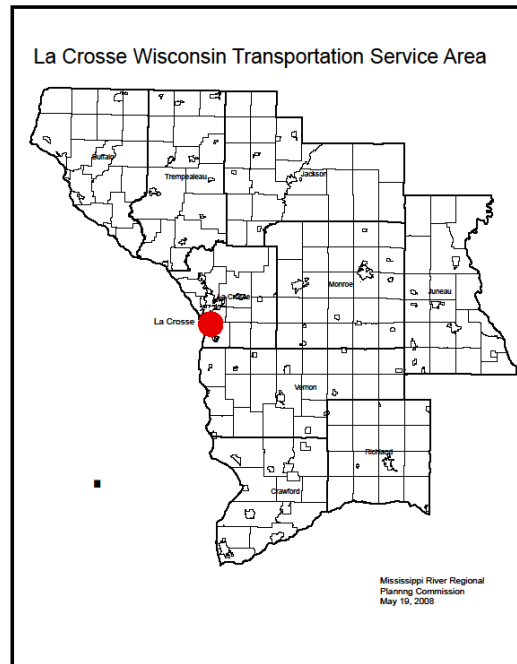
viable joint ventures were defined. These included investigating a recycling route among companies to get higher volume pricing and do away with having to pay to recycle or dispose of some waste materials. A shrink wrap recycling route is presently being researched and research on a corrugate recycling route may follow. Another joint venture that was successfully pursued was a federal training grant. Through survey work and grant writing conducted by Western Wisconsin Technical College (WTC) a grant was awarded to WTC to provide training to this industries' employees. Training that was investigated or where the curriculums and schedules are being developed included: Ammonia System Training, Food Safety, OSHA 10 Hour, Arc Flash, Electrical, Fall Protection-Ladder Safety, Plant Safety, HVAC Systems, Pneumatics-Hydraulics, Lean Manufacturing Principles, and Six Sigma. Workforce Connections also secured a State capacity building grant for the food processing industry through this initiative.

Staff also organized a teleconference where FRAN industries discussed joint trucking-transportation and warehousing opportunities. Truck route surveys have been prepared and information will soon be collected from the various companies on where their excess capacity routes are and their times. Once this information is collected it will be shared to identify joint hauling opportunities that will reduce transportation and energy costs and further maximize vehicle and warehouse space. MRRPC staff is also providing assistance to FRAN in the development of a website that will be used to report on FRAN projects, provide contact information and resource opportunities within this key regional economic driver industry.

MRRPC Awarded Grant to Form La Crosse Area Regional Transportation Action Plan and Advisory Committee

In 2008, The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission was awarded a multi-jurisdictional Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program Grant (STRAP) from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The grant is being used to explore and evaluate transportation service delivery from a regional perspective through the La Crosse Area Regional Transportation Coordinating

Committee (LARTC). The planning activities cover eight counties (Buffalo, Crawford, Vernon, Juneau, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Monroe and Jackson Counties.) There are over 60 members in LARTC consisting of transportation providers, consumers, elected officials, county agencies, non-profit organizations, and private carriers.



Working in cooperation with members MRRPC staff prepared a Regional Transportation Coordination Action Plan. The Plan included developing population, transportation, poverty and disability trends that were used to help identify future transportation service delivery needs. The Plan has identified eight regional service delivery action items. These are: 1) sharing volunteer drivers across county lines; 2) coordinating existing transportation services that are providing duplicative services in and around the La Crosse area; 3) sharing Internet access via email, web links and/or a common regional website; 4) sharing local technology and locally developed programs to realize efficiencies in all counties; 5) establish regional carpooling/ridesharing initiatives; 6) participate in regional transportation activism to remove transportation barriers established at the state and federal level that limit transportation coordination; 7) coordinate driver training through the region; and 8) establish regional transportation route scheduling while utilizing the services of all transportation providers. The implementation of these action items will help counties provide transportation services in a more reliable and affordable manner.

Wisconsin Department of Administration Final Population Projections for Wisconsin Counties by Age: 2000-2030 project that persons age 60 and over are expected to increase by 31% from 2010-2020 in the MRRPC nine county region.

Equipment and Metal Manufacturing Association (EMMA) Grows in Membership

EMMA is a industry cluster organization that incorporated in 2007 as a 501 (c) 6 private-non profit corporation to help increase joint ventures among its members through more creative use of private and public resources. Since its inception it has sponsored or played a crucial role in a welder sharing program between companies, coordinated opportunities for increased use of manufacturing equipment among companies and provided \$800 grants to two schools to start Lego League participation.

During the spring of 2009 EMMA partnered with Workforce Connections to secure a \$ 44,139 LEAN training grant from the State that will be matched by EMMA and companies in this industry cluster to train their employees in LEAN principles and practices.

EMMA holds 3-4 general meetings per year on topics of mutual interest and to increase networking and joint venture opportunities. EMMA's Board of Directors meet monthly often by teleconference to discuss issues that focus on building networks and partnering relationships among members and economic development organizations to improve the competitive advantage of member companies and its industry. The MRRPC continues to serve as a communication and meeting coordinator contact for EMMA. For more information about EMMA please visit their website at: www.emmatristate.org.

Western Wisconsin Technology Zone Tax Credits Awarded to D&S Manufacturing in Black River Falls and Cashton Farm Supply in Cashton

As administrator of the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone program MRRPC staff assisted two businesses with Technology Zone Tax Credit Applications this past year. In September 2008, D&S Manufacturing was awarded \$250,000 in tax credits to assist with an \$8 million expansion project. D&S manufactures large scale components, assemblies and complete weldments made from carbon steel plate, aluminum and stainless steel. Their expansion project should create 15 new jobs.

Cashton Farm Supply, Ltd. was awarded \$150,000 in Technology Zone tax credits for a \$1.7 million construction project that includes a new feed mill and office facility in Cashton. A fire destroyed the existing mill and offices in July 2008. This project will retain 22 jobs that would have been lost. Cashton Farm Supply is a state industry leader in the milling of organic feed. The new facility will be equipped with state-of-the-art computerized grain measuring, grinding,

2008 MRRPC AUDIT

Mr. Michael Temp, CPA, Tostrud and Temp, S.C. reported the findings of the 2008 Audit at the April 8, 2009 Commission meeting. Mr. Temp stated that the MRRPC was given an unqualified audit opinion meaning they found that the MRRPC followed generally accepted accounting principles in the preparation of its financial statements and that the financial statements can be relied upon to provide an accurate picture of the Commission's finances. The audit showed 2008 operating revenues of \$394,528 and operating expenses of \$386,195. The audit also reported total assets of \$254,356 (not including business revolving loan funds) and total liabilities of \$65,941 resulting in the MRRPC having a net asset value of \$188,415. The audit included reports on the four business revolving loan funds the Commission administers. These reports indicated that since the four revolving loan funds' inception dates, \$4,288,303 has been loaned to businesses and \$1,125,597 is owed to the respective revolving loan funds from businesses.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION PROFILE

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission was created in 1964 under Wisconsin Statute 66.0309 to provide cost shared planning and economic development services to the Western Wisconsin county governments of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau and Vernon and the communities and businesses within these counties.

The Region covers over 6,000 square miles and in 2008 had an estimated population of over 315,160. The Region makes up 11% of Wisconsin's land area, 5.5% of the State's population and 4% of the State's real estate equalized value.

The MRRPC meetings are held bimonthly on the second Wednesday of even numbered months. The meetings are usually held in La Crosse due to its central location within the Region.

The MRRPC provides planning and economic development services that are cost shared with nine Western Wisconsin Counties.

Each of the nine counties is represented by three commissioners. One commissioner from each county is appointed by the county board, another commissioner from each county is appointed by the Governor and a third commissioner from each county is appointed by the Governor selected from a list of two or more persons nominated by the county board. The commissioners serve six year terms and make all policy, staffing and budgetary decisions of the MRRPC. The following is a list of current MRRPC commissioners.

COMMISSIONERS

Buffalo County
Bergie Ritscher, James Scholmeier, Kathleen Vinehout
Crawford County
Virgil Butteris, Gerald Krachey, Ron Leys
Jackson County
Ron Carney, James Christenson, Eugene Savage
La Crosse County
Vicki Burke, James Ehram, Tara Johnson
Monroe County
George Baker, James Kuhn, Cedric Schnitzler
Pepin County
George Dupre, David Smith, Mike Murray
Pierce County
William Schroeder, Richard Purdy
Trempealeau County
Barbara Semb, Margaret Baecker, Jerold Nysven
Vernon County
Dean Warren, Gail Frie, Jo Ann Nickelatti

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission would like to thank the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Wisconsin Department of Administration, Wisconsin Department of Commerce, The Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration, Wisconsin Emergency Management, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and most of all the County Boards' of Supervisors of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau and Vernon for their cooperation and involvement. The combined resources of these local, state and federal government partners provide the funding that make the activities of the MRRPC possible.

This Annual Report is Dedicated to the Memory of Randall Larson, MRRPC's Economic Development Planner from January 15, 1990 to March 14, 2009

Randall Larson died March 14, 2009, at St. Joseph Rehabilitation Center following a year-long battle with cancer. Randy served as Economic Development Planner for the MRRPC since January 1990. Randy was actively involved in politics. He served two terms as a La Crosse City Alderman. He also served on the original La Crosse Center Board and was instrumental in obtaining funding for the Hmong Community Center. In February 2009, Mr. Larson received an award from the U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration for his excellence, dedication and personal initiative in development and helping implement economic strategies for economically distressed communities in the Region. He was a joyful friend to all and will be sorely missed.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) REPORT UPDATE

At their April 2009 meeting the Commission approved the update to its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that outlines economic development strategies and projects and maintains the local governments and institutions in the Region eligible for federal funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration. Some of the current regional trends included in this report are summarized below.

Pierce, Monroe, Pepin and Vernon Counties' population increases are greater than the State

Population Change (2000-2008)					
County Name	2000 Census	2006 Estimate	2007 Estimate	2008 Estimate	Pct. Chge 2000-2008
Buffalo	13,804	14,142	14,183	14,200	2.9
Crawford	17,243	17,461	17,553	17,629	2.2
Jackson	19,100	19,969	20,080	20,140	5.4
La Crosse	107,120	110,743	111,791	112,758	5.3
Monroe	40,896	43,555	43,838	44,170	8.0
Pepin	7,213	7,634	7,714	7,743	7.3
Pierce	36,804	39,805	40,235	40,523	10.1
Trempealeau	27,010	28,126	28,119	28,278	4.7
Vernon	28,056	29,400	29,530	29,719	5.9
Region	297,246	310,835	313,043	315,160	6.0
State	5,363,715	5,617,744	5,648,124	5,675,156	5.8
Nation	281,421,906	299,398,484	301,621,157	304,059,724	8.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; Population Div. U.S. Census Bureau; WI Dept. Administration Population Estimates

Since 2000, Income Levels in the Region Grew Faster than the State with Buffalo and Monroe Counties Leading the Way

Per Capita Income 2000-2006

	2000	2004	2005	2006	% Change 2000-2006	Rank in State 2006
Buffalo	27258	31935	33020	34255	25.7	13th
Crawford	20724	23667	24279	25073	21.0	65th
Jackson	22878	26139	26186	27623	20.7	45th
La Crosse	26008	28880	30070	31640	21.7	26th
Monroe	21675	25267	25870	26883	24.0	53rd
Pepin	23086	26308	27373	28151	21.9	41st
Pierce	25758	28506	29243	30068	16.7	35th
Trempealeau	23273	26717	27254	27993	20.3	43rd
Vernon	19237	22358	22732	23510	22.2	70th
Region	23322	26642	27336	28355	21.6	N/A
Wisconsin	28570	31697	32829	34405	20.4	24th⁽¹⁾
U.S.	29845	33123	34757	36714	23.0	NA

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Econ. Statistics Admin., U.S. Dept. of Commerce

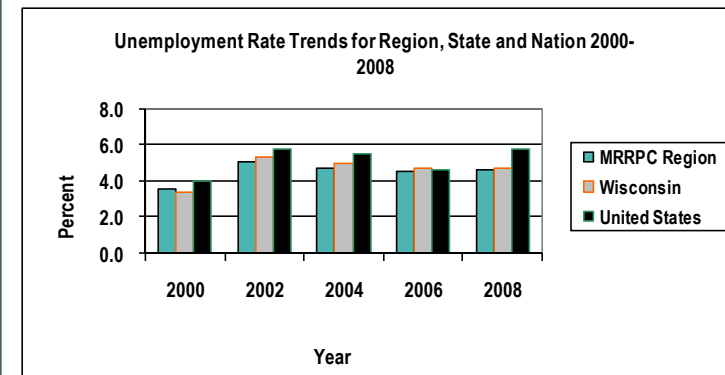
(1) Wis. Ranks 24th in the Nation

The Region's Manufacturing Employment Grew by 9% from 2002 through 2006

Manufacturing Employment MRRPC Region, State and Nation 2001-2006						
	2002	2004	2006	Pct Chge 2002-2004	Pct Chge 2004-2006	Pct Chge 2002-2006
Buffalo	364	382	425	4.9	11.3	16.8
Crawford	1692	1781	2022	5.3	13.5	19.5
Jackson	875	963	950	10.1	-1.3	8.6
La Crosse	9081	9149	9291	0.7	1.6	2.3
Monroe	3511	3911	4356	11.4	11.4	24.1
Pepin	191	167	162	-12.6	-3.0	-15.2
Pierce	974	1010	1099	3.7	8.8	12.8
Trempealeau	5283	5052	5655	-4.4	11.9	7.0
Vernon	989	980	1066	-0.9	8.8	7.8
MRRPC Region	22960	23395	25026	1.9	7.0	9.0
Wisconsin	540713	520590	524928	-3.7	0.8	-2.9
United States	15819700	14873900	14760400	-6.0	-0.8	-6.7

Source: Reg. Econ. Info. System (REIS), Bureau of Econ. Analysis, US Dept. of Commerce

The Regions Unemployment Rates are Typically Lower Than State and Nation



Pierce, Monroe and Vernon Counties had the highest Real Estate Equalized Value Percent Increases From 2001—2008

Real Estate Equalized Values 1980-2008 (millions of \$'s)

	1980	1990	2000	2001	2005	2008	% Chg 80-90	% Chg 90-00	% Chg 01-08
Buffalo	334	304	582	649	808	987	-9.0	91.5	52.1
Crawford	334	337	637	697	864	1080	1.0	88.8	55.1
Jackson	334	351	744	836	1022	1336	5.3	111.8	59.8
La Crosse	1747	2178	4332	4650	6326	7497	24.6	98.9	61.2
Monroe	630	746	1368	1499	1992	2531	18.4	83.4	68.9
Pepin	152	149	304	342	464	548	-1.5	103.7	60.3
Pierce	655	783	1713	1930	2791	3276	19.6	118.7	69.7
Trempealeau	496	502	982	1066	1335	1698	1.4	95.5	59.3
Vernon	568	522	927	1029	1334	1719	-8.1	77.5	67.1
Region	5250	5874	11590	12697	16934	20672	11.9	97.3	62.8
Wisconsin	100955	134138	277214	302796	417999	502446	32.9	106.7	65.9

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

mixing and blending equipment. These two tax credit projects will help maintain the strong presence of the region's two leading industry clusters, the Equipment and Metal Manufacturing Cluster; and the Agriculture and Food Processing Cluster.

State Tax Credit Programs Being Consolidated

In February 2009, Gov. Doyle signed a budget repair bill that consolidated the Technology Zone, Airport Development Zone, Agricultural Development Zone, Community Development Zone, and Enterprise Development Zone programs into one new tax credit program. The consolidation was crafted by the Department of Commerce and the Wisconsin Economic Development Association. The consolidation will result in continuance of businesses tax credits for job creation and also have the ability to award tax credits based on capital expenditures by businesses investing in new equipment needed to remain competitive in today's global marketplace. Tax credits will also be available to help offset the cost of training employees and to encourage businesses to keep their corporate headquarters here in Wisconsin. Over the years, the consolidated programs provided incentives for more than \$3.67 billion in private investment and the creation of more than 36,000 jobs for Wisconsin residents.

Comprehensive Planning Activities Identify Key Planning Issues in the Region

This past year, MRRPC staff continued work on several comprehensive plans in the region. Pursuant to State Statute the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to guide and accomplish a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development that will in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development. A Comprehensive Plan is to include a compilation of trends, projections, objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide future development relating to housing; transportation; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural and cultural resources; economic development; intergovernmental cooperation; land-use; issues and opportunities and plan implementation. The following is a summary of the comprehensive plans the MRRPC staff was involved in writing this past year.

Crawford County Comprehensive Plan. Staff is assisting Crawford County prepare their Comprehensive Plan and in November 2008 participated in the County's first public information meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to explain the purpose and role of the County Comprehensive Plan, the planning process that will take place over the coming

year, receive public comments on the various elements of the plan and to answer any questions. Through the assistance of the County's UW Extension—Community Development Educator, Laura Brown a county wide survey was conducted. Over 5,650 surveys were mailed out to residents. Results showed that 58% of survey respondents felt that preservation of the existing rural landscape with a small amount of new residential development would be most beneficial and another third of respondents felt that preservation with a moderate amount of development would be most beneficial. Over 60% of respondents indicated they were residing in Crawford County because of its natural beauty. The majority of respondents also felt new housing, and business and industry should be encouraged either in communities where sewer and water is available or in or next to communities where sewer and water can be extended. The greatest housing need indicated by survey responses was elderly housing. The majority of respondents also felt county ordinances should be developed. Based on comments stated at the first public information meeting and the County survey the County Planning Committee and MRRPC staff are developing goals, policies and objectives for each of the nine planning elements to guide the County over the next 20 years. Another public information meeting is scheduled on the draft plan this summer.

Town of Clayton (Crawford County). Staff is assisting the Town of Clayton with the Land Use Element of their Comprehensive Plan. Major issues that came out of the planning process are the preservation of farmland and open space, landowners rights, improved management of abandoned orchards, and preserving natural resources.

Town of Haney (Crawford County). Staff assisted the Town of Haney with the Land Use Element of their Comprehensive Plan as well. Key planning issues identified were preserving the Town's rural atmosphere, preservation of family farms and preserving and improving water quality.

City of Blair (Trempealeau County). Comprehensive planning is also underway in the City of Blair. A City wide survey showed strong support for more business and industrial growth to create quality jobs. There was also strong support for improvements to the City's Business District, extension of a sidewalk to the high school and recreational trail development along the Trempealeau River. Wetlands and Lake Henry on the North side of the City and small creeks and lowlands on the South side of the City hinder opportunities for development, but the City Planning Commission is forging ahead with recommendations for a new industrial park and downtown improvement plan.

Towns of Albany and Lima (Pepin County). Existing conditions reports were prepared by staff for the Towns of Albany and Lima

to help set the stage for planning these two towns. These reports provide an overview of the current social, economic, and environmental conditions in the Town. Staff also participated in several public meetings to explain the purpose of a comprehensive plan, the process that will be followed to develop it and to answer questions. These meetings were also used to identify key issues and opportunities and develop planning goals. There is strong support in both Towns to maintain their rural character. Albany is unique in the fact that it only served by County and Town roads.

Town of Bangor (La Crosse County). The Town of Bangor held a public hearing on their Plan in April 2009 and adopted it in May 2009. Some of the goals are: To preserve agricultural land and manage residential growth, encourage low density development patterns and limit high density and multi-family housing developments, encourage the development of assisted living centers, support and promote agriculture as a viable economic industry, and to maintain the existing level of public services.

Town of Barre (La Crosse County) The Town of Barre's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in March 2009. Some of their planning goals included: Preserve agriculture, the environment and the rural landscape to the extent possible and protect landowners' rights. The plan encourages single family housing development in efficient patterns, promoting cluster development, and providing opportunities for elderly housing. The Town wants to maintain its identity and continue to guide higher density developments to the Town Center. The Town Center is a location where a concentration of bar-restaurants, convenience store, an 18 hole golf course and new residential developments have developed. It is also a popular place not only for residents but also the residents in the nearby La Crosse urban area who make the scenic drive there to recreate and dine out. The State's Coulee Region Experimental Forest is another recreational attraction in the Town. The Town Plan also calls for continued improvements to its Town Park.

Town of Farmington (La Crosse County) The Town of Farmington had their Public Hearing on their Comprehensive Plan in June 2009. Some of the goals in their plan include: preserving farmland and maintaining existing agricultural areas while at the same time encouraging organized and planned development in non-agricultural areas. The development of a senior citizen and assisted living center is encouraged for the unincorporated community of Mindoro with its sanitary district. The Town also wants to grow existing agri-businesses and encourage direct to consumer agriculture, farmers markets and value added agriculture production.

Town of Washington (La Crosse County). The Town of Washington's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December 2008. A major goal in the Plan is preservation of agricultural land and maintaining agriculture and farming as the predominant land use. The Town wants to maintain its rural landscape by promoting low density housing development patterns and encouraging high density single family development/multi-family development to areas served by public sewer and water. Another goal is to encourage small business, home-based businesses and tourism/recreation businesses. The Town also defined as one of its economic development goals to explore alternative sources of energy as a form of industry in the Town.

Town of Medary (La Crosse County). The Town of Medary's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in January 2009. Key issues confronting the Town are the loss of tax base from annexation to the Cities of La Crosse and Onalaska, and acquisition or control over large tracts of land by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy. A goal included in the Plan is to conduct a cost benefit analysis on the long-term viability of the Town due to annexation and loss of its tax base. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes maintaining the Town's rural character and low density developments in settings such as Peters Valley, Smith Valley, Miller Valley, Kiel Coulee and along State Highway 16. Plan action items included: Ensure that stormwater from existing and future development is handled in a natural manner, work with La Crosse County in updating County ordinances, develop a new walking and bike path from the Town Hall-Smith Valley School to Northwoods Elementary school, and reduce trespassing on private property by better marking Conservancy land areas.

Town of Hamilton (La Crosse County). A public hearing was held on the Town of Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan in March 2009. A key issue in the Town is planning for appropriate land uses along State Highway 16 between the Village of West Salem and City of Onalaska. This highway serves commuters and businesses in the cities of Sparta, Bangor, Rockland, West Salem, Onalaska and La Crosse. The Town would like to maintain its identity and rural appearance by allowing no additional commercial or industrial development along the Highway 16 corridor from the West Salem West boundary to the West Town line. The Plan also calls for residential growth to occur in designated planning areas. The fact that the Town completely surrounds the Village of West Salem and is part of the La Crosse Metropolitan Service Area, and in the middle of annexation litigation makes planning here a challenge.

Town of Greenfield (La Crosse County). Staff just started the comprehensive planning process in the Town of Greenfield. The existing conditions inventory work has been completed and analysis of this data is underway.

Village of Gays Mills (Crawford County) Flood Relocation Assistance

The culmination of two 100 year floods in two years has led the Village of Gays Mills (population 611) to start the process of providing residents with sites to relocate to that are out of the Kickapoo River floodplain. After a five month planning process led by a FEMA planning team, the Village has identified land areas they are planning to acquire to relocate homes and businesses to. To assist in this effort MRRPC staff recently prepared a U.S. Department of Agriculture—Rural Business Enterprise Grant to acquire one of the sites. Staff also prepared a Federal Economic Development Administration grant for the Village that was intended to fund a Flood Recovery Coordinator position for three years to coordinate and administer the labyrinth of programs and activities involved with relocation and economic development. Unfortunately this position was not funded by EDA. Options are being pursued where hopefully another State or Federal Agency will see the glaring need for this position and fund it because of its strategic role of ensuring long term economic recovery.

Village of La Farge (Vernon County) \$1 Million Infrastructure Grant Prepared to Serve Organic Valley Expansion

Recently staff assisted the Village of La Farge apply for a \$1 million infrastructure grant to the U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration. The grant will be used to fund road, water, and sewer to Organic Valley's new research and development building that will be constructed on an adjoining site next to their corporate headquarters. Improvements to the Village's water reservoir and wastewater treatment plant are also expected to be funded by the grant. This grant will hopefully help continue Organic Valley's exceptional growth even during the present recession. An additional 65 more jobs created in La Farge and Vernon County area by Organic Valley over the next 5-6 years is likely based on this company's history. In 2000 their total employment was 150 and now in 2009 they have 500 employees. If the economy continues to improve the total number of new jobs could grow to 200. Evidence for their continued growth can be seen in their recent sales. Their \$528 million in sales in 2008 was 22% higher than 2007 sales and their 2009 sales projection is \$549 million.

State Stewardship Land Acquisition Grants Awarded to the Villages of Viola and Chaseburg in Vernon County

In last year's Annual Report we reported that we assisted the Villages of Viola and Chaseburg in Vernon County prepare State Stewardship Grant applications. We are thankful to report now that both applications were awarded. The Village of Chaseburg was awarded \$38,532 to extend the Village's multi-use trail, add handicapped fishing bump-outs, and landscaping. The Village of Viola received a \$30,000 grant for improvements to Banker Park

that include a RV dump station, two fishing piers and walkways, ADA renovation of restroom-shower facilities, riverbank stabilization and landscaping.

Updates to Pierce and Monroe County Outdoor Recreation Plans Underway

Outdoor recreation plans are in the process of being updated for Monroe and Pierce Counties. All background data has been gathered for the Pierce County Plan and is being reviewed by the County. Upon completion of this review staff will work with the County to establish a list of prioritized recreation projects to meet future park and recreation needs. Staff has also begun working on the Monroe County Outdoor recreation plan by inventorying and mapping all the recreation facilities. Identifying future recreation needs and projects will be the next step. By updating and adopting an outdoor recreation plan a county maintains its eligibility to apply for grants under the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) and the Wisconsin Stewardship Funds. Quality recreation resources play an important part in helping attract and retain business and industry. They also help retain a high quality workforce.

Crawford and Vernon County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans Being Updated.

Staff is assisting Crawford and Vernon counties update their multi-hazard mitigation plans. Risk analysis and the critical facility inventory analysis is presently underway. Risk and vulnerability surveys have been conducted in each county and the results are presently being tabulated. A new requirement calls for a pandemic section in these plans. The updated plans will rank a county's vulnerability to various hazards and develop strategies and projects to reduce losses from natural and manmade hazards or disasters. The updated plans will meet new federal requirements and maintain each counties' eligibility for federal and state hazard mitigation funding.

Business Loans

The MRRPC administers several revolving loan funds. The Business Capital Fund made five loans this past year totaling \$400,000. They were made to three manufacturers and two commercial businesses. These five loans leveraged an additional \$6 million in other financing and helped retain and create 24 jobs in the region. In La Crosse County, The La Crosse County Economic Development Fund made two Loans totaling \$150,000. One of the loans was to a information technology company that is involved with data hygiene and append solutions for the automotive industry. The other was to a local restaurant. These loans leveraged \$358,000 in private financing and are expected to create 25 new jobs. The Monroe County Loan Fund also made a \$30,000 loan this past year to a restaurant that leveraged \$50,000 in private financing and is expected to create 7 jobs.