



RUSK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – Chapter 7

ADOPTED – December 15, 2009

7 Intergovernmental Cooperation

Overview

Intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communicating and sharing information informally, or it can involve entering into formal agreements to consolidate and/or share resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. Intergovernmental cooperation is an essential part of Rusk County's planning process, as it has been the heart of the comprehensive planning effort. The County, towns, villages, and city not only share common boundaries, but also school attendance areas, watersheds, transportation and recreation routes, fire and emergency protection services, lakes, rivers, recycling programs and rural based economies.

This chapter will provide an analysis of the relationship of Rusk County to the region, the state, school districts, and other governmental units and incorporate any plans or agreements to which Rusk County is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, and §66.0309. This chapter will also identify existing or potential conflicts between Rusk County and other governmental units and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

7.1 Relationships with other Entities

School Districts

Nine public school districts have territory in Rusk County. Three districts that serve the largest areas are Ladysmith School District, Flambeau School District and Bruce School District. The Utilities and Community Facilities chapter has additional information on each school districts serving Rusk County. In the past, Rusk County and area school districts have shared facilities and services when feasible and are projected to continue this relationship into the future.

Adjacent County and Overlapping Local Governments

Six counties surround Rusk County: Chippewa, Taylor, Price, Sawyer, Barron, and Washburn.

While no conflicts are known to exist, Rusk County and respective county departments have



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and continue to coordinate and share information and services where appropriate.

Within the boundary of Rusk County, a total of 24 townships, 8 villages, and 1 city make up the municipal and local governments. Each of the 33 governments is represented by elected officials and delegated responsibility by their constituents to manage the affairs of the local government following state legislation that provides direction and authority. Statutory law also requires Rusk County to implement and oversee certain rules and regulations that protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community and/or environment. The Rusk County Board of Supervisors (twenty-one districts) represents the people's voice on matters and issues pertinent to county affairs. While issues from time to time do occur, the County Board of Supervisors and County Departments have and continue to respond on the values and best judgments representing the county as a whole.

State

There are several state agencies that affect planning in Rusk County. The County is located within the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Northwest Region, with its regional office located in Eau Claire. WisDOT plays an important role in supporting all forms of transportation. The department is responsible for planning, building and maintaining Wisconsin's network of state highways and Interstate highway system. The department shares the costs of building and operating county and local transportation systems - from highways to public transit and other modes. WisDOT plans, promotes and financially supports statewide air, rail and water transportation, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Rusk County currently has a working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

The County is located in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Northern Region, with its regional office in Spooner. The Department of Natural Resources is dedicated to the preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Wisconsin's natural resources. It is responsible for implementing the laws of the state and, where applicable, the laws of the federal government that protect and enhance the natural resources of our state. It is the one agency charged with full responsibility for coordinating the many disciplines and programs necessary to provide a clean environment and a full range of outdoor recreational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens and visitors. The WDNR manages a number of State Wildlife areas in the County, as well as DNR boat landings and the Flambeau River State Forest. Rusk County currently has a working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



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Rusk County, WisDOT, WDNR and other State Departments continue to coordinate and discuss issues and potential joint projects in efforts to provide desirable and valuable service to residents and visitors of the county. Continued cooperation will ensure future dialog and accomplishments benefiting the county.

Federal

Active Federal agencies in Rusk County include the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). Primary interaction between these agencies occurs between the Rusk County Land Conservation office and the agencies. In addition the County Zoning office works with FEMA and the Flood Insurance Program.

Region

Rusk County is within the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's (NWRPC) area of representation. NWRPC is an economic development district and planning agency for the counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Rusk, and Washburn. This includes the tribal nations of Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac du Flambeau, Lac Courte Oreilles, and St. Croix. Planning services provided by the Commission include comprehensive and land use planning; community development; economic development, hazard mitigation planning, transportation planning, wildfire protection planning and recycling and cleansweep programs and services. Rusk County has worked with the NWRPC on various projects.

7.2 Planning and other Agreements

Rusk County has developed a number of internal planning and development documents that provide fundamental guidance to various departments. While many of these documents have been identified within respective chapters, a summary of such documents is listed below and is not an all-inclusive representing the entire county.

Rusk County Airport Zoning Ordinance
Rusk County Five-Year Road Improvement Plan
Rusk County Recycling "Responsible Unit"



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Rusk County Outdoor Recreation Plan

Rusk County Forest Management Plan

Rusk County Farmland Preservation Plan

Rusk County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance

Rusk County Subdivision Ordinance

Rusk County and external agencies and organizations have established agreements in which certain work elements are completed. Once such agreement is with the WisDOT for the county's work on state highway maintenance and snow plowing.

Others include

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Indianhead Community Action Agency – Indianhead Transit Service

Joint Management Agreement – City of Ladysmith

Library Agreement- Rusk County Community Library- City of Ladysmith

Ambulance Intercept Agreements

Indianhead Federated Library System

International Trade Business Economic Development Consortium – Wisconsin Counties Assoc.

Joint Visitor Center Agreement – City of Ladysmith

7.3 Existing and Potential Conflicts

The comprehensive planning legislation requires Rusk County to identify existing and potential problems between the County and other governmental units, and describe processes to resolve such conflicts. While the overall planning process was designed to avoid and minimize potential conflicts, existing and potential conflicts remain that may have an impact throughout the county.

It is important to note such conflicts to enable governments and others the ability to open dialog to address such issues. The following section addresses known or potential conflicts as well as a potential solution process.

Existing Conflicts



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Potential Conflicts

Process to Resolve Conflicts

What follows is a discussion of formal and informal techniques for resolving conflicts. Each dispute and/or conflict resolution technique has a purpose. When considering how to resolve a conflict, Rusk County will need to determine whether the conflict can be settled out of court and which resolution process is the most appropriate for the type of conflict.

Mediation is a cooperative process involving two or more parties and a mediator. The mediator, a neutral third party with special skills and training in dispute resolution, helps the parties voluntarily reach a mutually agreeable settlement of the issue in dispute.

Binding arbitration is a process where a neutral person is given the authority to make a legally binding decision and is used only with the consent of all of the parties. The parties present evidence and examine witnesses and the arbitrator makes a determination based on evidence.

Non-binding arbitration is a technique in which a neutral person is given the authority to render a non-binding decision as a basis for subsequent negotiations between the parties after the parties present evidence and examine the witnesses.

Early neutral evaluation is a process in which a neutral person evaluates brief written and oral presentations early in the litigation process. The neutral person provides an initial appraisal of the merits of the case with suggestions for conducting discovery and obtaining a legal ruling to resolve the case as efficiently as possible.

A focus group can be used to resolve disputes by using a panel of citizens selected in a manner agreed upon by all of the parties. The citizens hear presentations from the parties and after hearing the issues the focus group deliberates and renders an advisory opinion.

A mini-trial consists of presentations by the parties to a panel of selected and authorized by all the parties to negotiate a settlement of the dispute that, after the



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presentations, considers the legal and factual issues and attempts to negotiate a settlement.

A moderated settlement conference is a process in which conferences are conducted by a neutral person, who hears brief presentations from the parties, in order to facilitate negotiations. The neutral person renders an advisory opinion in aid of negotiation.

A summary jury trial is a technique where attorneys make abbreviated presentations to a small jury selected from the regular jury list. The jury renders an advisory decision to help the parties assess their position to aid future negotiation.

7.4 Programs and Implementation Tools

Implementation tools (programs) are the specific means by which Rusk County can accomplish its plan goals, objectives and actions. There are an infinite number of ways local units of government can cooperate and coordinate to implement their comprehensive plans. This section will describe four main avenues that Rusk County and its municipalities could utilize to help implement the intergovernmental cooperation element of this comprehensive plan.

- **Cooperating with Services**
Cooperating with services may be the easiest area that Rusk County and other jurisdictions can agree on. It can be a chance to build a base of success and positive feelings from which more challenging intergovernmental projects can be undertaken. Some ideas for how to cooperate with services include: voluntary assistance, trading services, renting equipment, contracting, routine county services, sharing municipal staff, consolidating services, joint use of a facility, special purpose districts, joint purchase and ownership of equipment, and cooperative purchasing.
- **Cooperating with Regulations**
Rusk County creates and administers ordinances, laws and regulations. These ordinances, laws and regulations are important because they play a key role in implementing this plan. How Rusk County's ordinances relate to those of neighboring communities and to the laws of other jurisdictions could influence whether or not this



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plan is implemented. Examples of the kinds of laws and ordinances that Rusk County could cooperate with neighboring communities include general zoning ordinances, official maps, agricultural zoning ordinances, and stormwater management ordinances.

- **Cooperating with Sharing Revenue**
Sharing revenue can improve relationships between communities and other area jurisdictions, enhance services for residents, and improve the area's functioning as a whole. An example of this could simply be two communities that apply jointly for a state or federal grant.
- **Cooperating within Boundaries**
Boundary agreements may be the most challenging of all intergovernmental issues. Cooperative boundary agreements, although more associated with incorporated municipalities, affect our lives, impacting land uses and development, services, revenue, transportation, agricultural systems, natural resources, and economic opportunities.
Municipal boundaries can be altered through annexation, detachment, incorporation, consolidation and intergovernmental agreements to name a few.

7.5 Summary – Goals & Objectives



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To maintain the current level of intergovernmental cooperation, an overall goal to proactively and cooperatively work with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions has been developed. It is important that Rusk County and other governmental bodies cooperate in an effort to strengthen their relationships and when ever possible to eliminate any unnecessary duplication in services.

Goal: Encourage and promote intergovernmental cooperation between the various governmental –tax payer supported entities internal and external of Rusk County.

Objectives:

1. Promote having active communication channels between governmental agencies.
2. Work to eliminate duplication of services by government entities internal and external of Rusk County
3. Encourage State and Federal agencies to eliminate unfunded mandates on local bodies.
4. Work with other governmental bodies to accurately inform the public of current policies and practices.

Actions:

- A. Work with other government entities to address the goals and objectives found in this plan.
- B. Encourage cooperation among municipalities to find efficiencies in service delivery and cost savings.
- C. Be proactive in resolving current and potential conflicts with other government entities.