To the Waushara County Board of Supervisors:

2015 was another busy year in the Land Conservation & Zoning Office. We will outline the highlights below:

- General Building activity remained steady or increased slightly in 2015 compared to what it was in 201. Hopefully that trend will continue and Waushara County will show steady or show slow growth over the next few years and construction seasons.
- Our office issued 436 land use permits for 159 new homes or additions to homes, and 243 accessory structures.
- Safebuilt, our current contracted inspection agency, issued permits for 54 new homes, 34 commercial structures, 47 additions to homes, 124 electrical installations or upgrades, and 53 miscellaneous permits, for a total of 312 permits which resulted in over $117,000 in fees collected.
- In addition, our office issued 176 sanitary permits authorizing 58 new private onsite wastewater treatment systems, and 118 replacement systems or reconnections to existing systems.
• Mandatory septic system maintenance notices were sent to 3,804 Waushara County landowners, resulting in 27 citations, and an overall compliance rate of 99.3%. The Wisconsin Fund grant program benefited 2 property owners for a total of $8,952.00.
• Our department made over 1200 field visits to various properties around the county. These included 335 sanitary system inspections, 28 on-site soil verifications, about 500 code non-compliance investigations, 70 annual travel trailer inspections, 178 landowner requested information visits, and 86 address number assignments.
• There were 262 code non-compliance inquiries made to our office, 255 investigations that were brought into compliance, and 155 non-compliance situations are still pending.
• Staff worked with 17 non-metallic mining sites involving approximately 211 un-reclaimed or active acres. Annual inspection fees netted the department $4,000. Zero acres were certified as reclaimed in 2015, but 16 acres are pending certification as reclaimed for 2016.
• The Land Conservation Department was awarded a Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) Grant for farmers to write personalized Nutrient Management Plans for their operation. With the $13,160 that was awarded for administrative costs and stipend payments to farmers, over 1,300 acres were covered by nutrient management plans through the grant in 2015.
• Working with the Soil & Water Resource Management Program, $52,000 was secured for landowners for hard practices. An additional $15,000 was slated for nutrient management. With additional interest in nutrient management, $15,064 additional funds were transferred from Ashland County. These funds are separate from the NMFE Grant noted above. To date a total of 34,898 acres were enrolled.
• The Lakes Management Project, now in phase III (lake management planning), continues. The Department is hosting a series of four meetings for each lake group. Planning began in October 2013 and will continue through 2016. Lake Management Plans are being completed for all lakes in the project; by the end of 2016 all lakes in the project will have completed Lake Management Plans for DNR approval.
• The Water Quality Improvement Program supported and financed by Waushara County allows for $25,000/per year to be used for cost-sharing worthy conservation projects which may not qualify for state funding. This year some of the projects funded were; Windbreak/Town of Dakota, Wetland Restoration/Town of Mt. Morris and a Waste Storage Facility/Town of Rose.
• Waushara County still has oversight of the Farmland Preservation Program. Qualifying farmers in the program have an opportunity for tax relief.
• The 9th annual Conservation Field Days environmental learning event was held in May. Attending were 214 5th graders from all public schools in Waushara County. This year’s event is slated for May 5th and 6th at Camp Lucerne.
• Assistance for Construction Site Erosion Control was provided to 92 landowners. Twenty onsite visits were made to help landowners with standard and individual plans relative to erosion control, stormwater management, and re-vegetation. Eight re-vegetation and stormwater management plan reviews were the result of these onsite visits.
• The Land Conservation Department continues to contract with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to provide the Wildlife Damage Abatement & Claims Program. Deer damage payable losses in 2015 totaled $15,649.75, to seven participating landowners.
• Our goal remains to continue to provide a high level of service to landowners looking to acquire various land use, zoning, building, sanitary or manure storage permits, or looking to install a recommended conservation practice on their property. We also aim to continue to provide the best general information we can when landowners are looking to develop land, install agricultural practices, or enhance habitat. While providing advice we do everything possible to preserve our unique natural resources, safeguard public health and welfare, and secure state and federal dollars for Best Management Practices so that we remain environmentally responsible, yet fiscally conservative.