

Working effectively with county government to protect and rehabilitate lakes & streams

2009 Stream Leaders Workshop

Who's who in county government?

County board

- Consists of elected officials who are elected for 2-year terms.
- Head official is county board chair unless the county has a county executive or county administrator.
- County board chair decides which county board members are on each of the county committees that oversee the departments. The county board chair also appoints people to the zoning board of adjustment. If the county has a county executive or county administrator, this person takes over the roles of committee assignments and appointments.
- Approves or rejects comprehensive plans, zoning and land division ordinances and amendments on recommendation from the planning and zoning committee.
- Approves budgets for all county departments, based on recommendations from the county finance (or executive) committee.

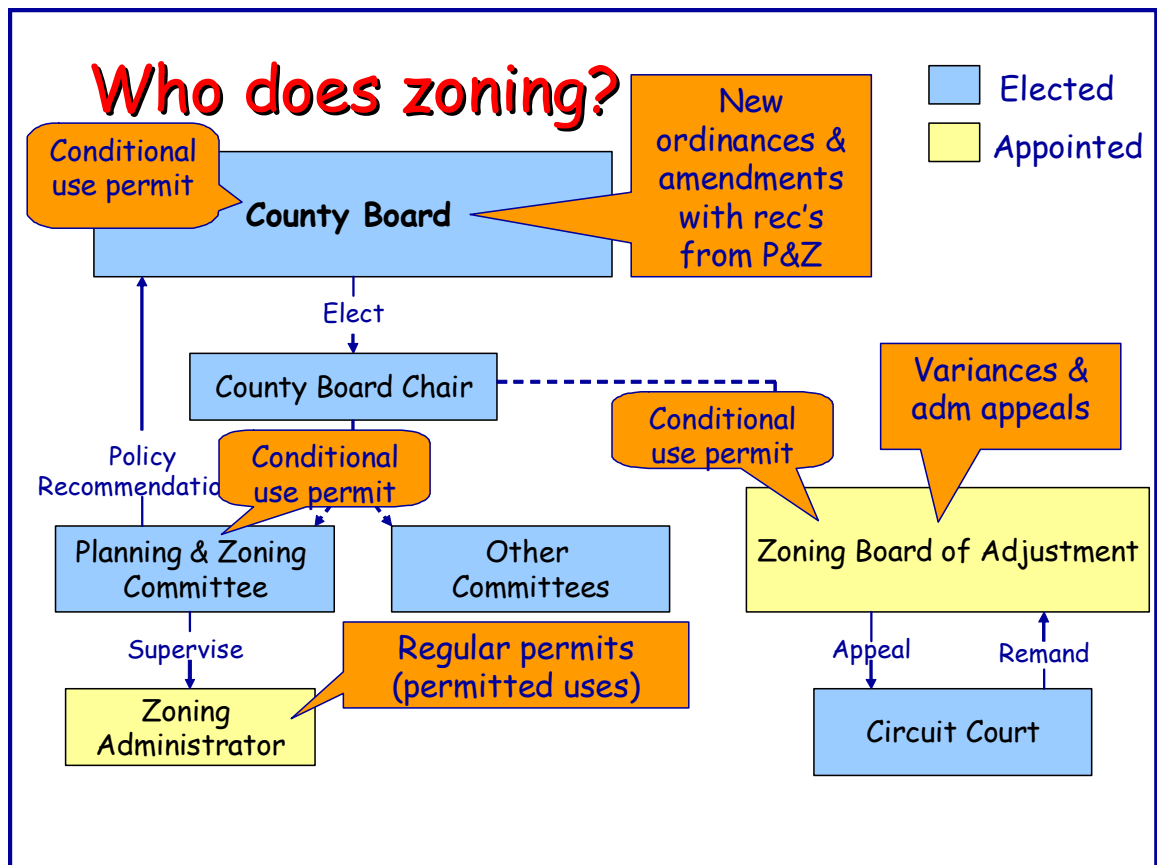
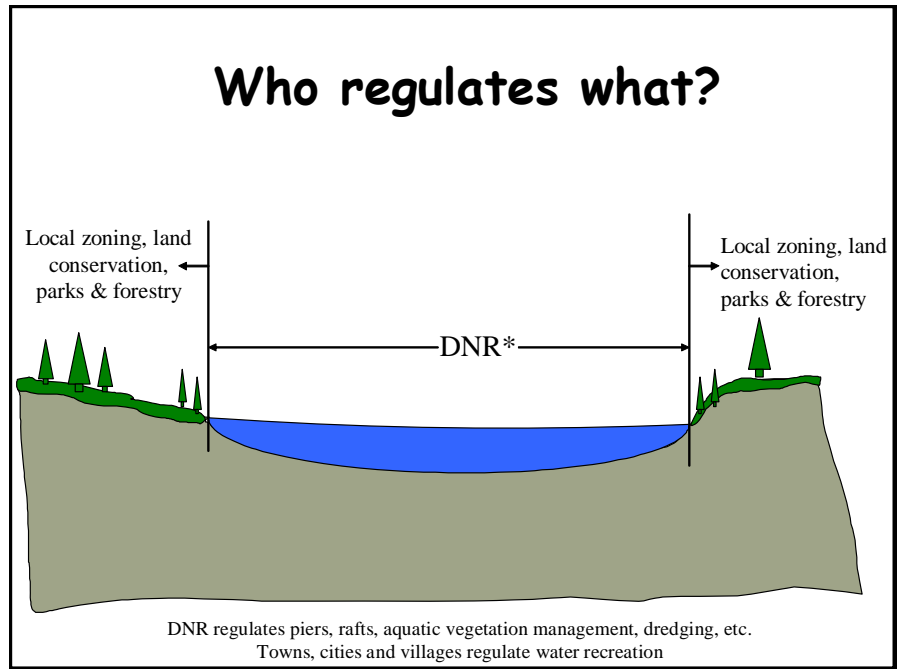


Each county board committee oversees one or more county departments that have hired staff. The committees set direction and oversee the county department staff. For instance, the land conservation committee of the county board oversees the land conservation department staff.

***Regulation sets the minimum standards.
Education encourages people to comply with standards and take the next step.***

Planning and zoning department

- Head staff person is planning director or zoning administrator.
- Takes the lead on developing comprehensive plans.
- Comprehensive plans guide zoning and land division ordinances.
- Administers shoreland zoning, shoreland-wetland zoning & floodplain zoning.
- Towns choose whether to have general zoning and it may be administered by the county OR the town.
- Land division (subdivision) ordinance(s) may be administered by the county and/or the town.
- May offer training for developers, builders, contractors and realtors regarding county and state laws.



Zoning board of adjustment

- Applies legal standards to decide whether to grant zoning variances or administrative appeals
- May decide whether to grant conditional uses/special exceptions if assigned by the zoning ordinance

Corporation counsel

- Serves as the county attorney.
- Represents county departments in court actions including prosecuting violations of county ordinances.

County judge

- Decides whether to overturn county decisions that are appealed to court.
- Assigns fines and remedies for ordinance violations.

Land and water conservation department

- Head staff person is county conservationist.
- May assist with shoreland restoration, rain gardens and erosion control and invasive species.
- Provides cost-sharing and technical assistance to help farmers fence animals out of lakes and streams; construct enclosed barnyards; adopt rotational grazing practices for livestock; minimize tillage and erosion; develop nutrient management plans to lessen excess fertilizer applications; enroll marginal farmlands in conservation programs such that they are not farmed.
- May purchase land or conservation easements.
- May organize Clean-Sweep programs to collect hazardous wastes from homes and businesses. Some communities now sponsor pharmaceutical take back programs to prevent unused drugs from being flushed into lakes and streams.

Parks and forestry department

- Manages county parks, many of which are adjacent to lakes and streams and provide a great opportunity for demonstration projects such as shoreline protection or restoration, stormwater management, etc.
- County forests may contain or abut lakes and streams. Issues of interest include timber harvests, logging roads and recreational trails.
- County parks and county forests may be created or expanded to protect lakes and streams.

UW-Extension department

- Assists with educational programs, meeting facilitation, strategic planning and conflict management.

What some county governments have done to benefit lakes...



Purchasing lakefront property

Chippewa County Land Conservation Department uses county sales tax matched with State Stewardship funds to purchase forested lakefront properties for conservation. To learn more see

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/forestplanning/pdfandpwerpoint%20files/CaseStudyCountyStewardshipFund.pdf

Cost sharing program for conservation practices

Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department has a cost-sharing program that covers 70% of the cost of many practices for residential and agricultural owners such as

- Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- Manure Storage Systems
- Livestock Fencing or Watering Facilities
- Water and Sediment Control Basins

www.co.vilas.wi.us/landconv/costshare.htm

Pharmaceutical take-back program

The City of Marshfield and the Wood County Land Conservation Department held a pharmaceutical take-back program and collected ~500 pounds of unused drugs, keeping them from being discharged to the nearby stream via the city wastewater treatment plant.

www.mainebenzo.org/documents/December06Newsletter-Pharmaceuticals.pdf



Resources

Shoreland Zoning. Chapter 21 of the Zoning Board Handbook, 2nd edition. 2006. Center for Land Use Education.

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/Publications/BOA2006/BOA2006.pdf

Zoning. by Brian Ohm and Kevin Struck from UW-Extension. 34 page document contains relevant details. www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/Publications/Zoning-KStruck.pdf

Land division (subdivision) ordinances. 8 page summary. 2007. Center for Land Use Education.

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/pdffiles/implementation/Land_Division_Ordinances.pdf

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