COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET SERIES

#2 – Taking Stock

TAKING STOCK is a questionnaire —in four parts — designed to help a community task force or plan commission review the status of local environmental resource protection and management. The questionnaire helps community planners to:

A. Summarize the status of environmental management

> ⟹ Part 1 (pages 3 - 7)

> Including *the Environmental Resource Planning Checklist* (pages 6 - 7)

B. Summarize citizen values and perceptions

> ⟹ Part 2 (pages 9 - 10)

C. Identify needs for more information or outside assistance

> ⟹ Part 3 (pages 11 - 14)

D. Consider a strategy to plan for environmental management

> ⟹ Part 4 (pages 15 - 17)

Who should use the questionnaire?

A community task force or plan commission is best equipped to integrate results from the questionnaire into planning efforts. The plan commission could appoint a task force of interested and knowledgeable citizens. Members might include: an elected municipal official, a planning commissioner, the community engineer, a local representative of the Department of Natural Resources or Natural Resources Conservation

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COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET SERIES

#1 – OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#2 – TAKING STOCK
A questionnaire to summarize information about the community and consider how to manage environmental resources.

#3 – INFORMATION IN LAND USE PLANNING
Describes how to integrate environmental information into community land use plans

#4 – THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES INVENTORY
A one page overview useful for explaining the inventory process to potential users.

#5 – INVENTORY WORKSHEETS
Inventory the community environment, open space lands, and land in consideration for changed uses. Worksheets identify what questions to ask, and are best completed with the assistance of a technical advisory. Fact sheets for some topics are included in #9, Support Resources.

#6 – DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS
What is it and how to use it?

#7 – POTENTIAL IMPACTS FROM DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES
Provides a worksheet to guide review of potential impacts from a proposed development along with an example, summarizing potential impacts from construction activity.

#8 – HOW TO SET UP THE IMPACT PROCESS
The Leopold Matrix and instructions.

 # 9 — SUPPORT RESOURCES
Provides background information about air quality, cultural features, floodplain protection, groundwater, shorelands and wetlands, the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA).

Service, a member of a local environmental or conservation organization, and interested citizens.

How to complete TAKING STOCK

There are several options for how this questionnaire may be useful for the community.

1. Task force members may wish to complete the questionnaire together, using the questionnaire as a guide for group discussion.
2. Task force members may choose to complete the questionnaire independently to provide more time for consideration of components, then compare responses in discussion.
3. Task force members may wish to complete the questionnaire with one or more groups of community members, then share results later.

To gather information directly from the public, the planning task force may wish to adapt PARTS #1 and #2 of this questionnaire.

Sample questions are provided to provoke thought. Task force members may wish to add or modify questions to ensure that significant local considerations are included. Responses to each section should be summarized in a way which will help direct future task force activities.

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PART 1: Evaluate your current land use planning effort

1. Environmental Resources Planning Checklist

   Referring to the checklist (pages 5 - 7): Which management options do you already address? Which might be incorporated into future planning?

Checklist to evaluate resource planning completed?	Yes	No
Citizens have **information** about management strategies?	Yes	No

2. Status of planning for environmental resources?

   In addition to items listed on the checklist, what else has your community already done to provide information for planning?

a) Land use planning refers to **a set of data** about local environmental resources?	Yes	No
i. Planning refers to an inventory of natural resources?	Yes	No
ii. Planning refers to an inventory of cultural/historical resources?	Yes	No
iii. Planning evaluates the quality of each resource and provides insight on best uses?	Yes	No
b) Planning considers community **design** and aesthetics?	Yes	No
i. Changes in the appearance of the community are monitored and noted?	Yes	No
c) Planning considers community **health** issues?	Yes	No
i. Changes in drinking water quality, air quality, and quality of life are monitored and noted?	Yes	No
d) Planning adequately addresses **environmental resources**?	Yes	No
i. Natural/cultural resource inventory results and quality assessment have been incorporated into land use map?	Yes	No
ii. Potential/preferred uses of resources addressed in planning?	Yes	No
e) Is your community plan in compliance with state, local, and federal regulations which apply to environmental resources?	Yes	No

3. Based on your evaluation, summarize your successes in planning for environmental resources.

ACTIVITY	SUCCESSES
Natural/cultural resources inventory	
Proposals to address quality of life needs and opportunities (recreation, health, aesthetics)	
Zoning and subdivision regulations consistent with planned environmental resource goals and objectives	

4. List any actions you would like to consider for future planning.

CONCERN	ACTION
Collect background data about selected resources	
Understand growth management strategies, development restrictions	
Investigate economic uses, quality of life proposals, recreation opportunities	
Identify natural areas for potential restoration	
Investigate compliance with regulations	
Communicate current environmental management plans to community	

Environmental Resource Planning Checklist

Directions:
Review actions which are addressed in your current land use plan or local records. Check the box that best applies to your situation. If the item does not apply, leave it blank.

Which management choices are satisfactory and which need further attention? "Community Aware" refers to community knowledge of this planning initiative.

> This checklist has been adapted from *Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities* by F. Sargent, P. Lusk, J. Rivera, and M. Varela. Island Press, 1992.

ACTION	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS ACTION	COMMUNITY AWARE
1. Environmental Resources Identified:			
a) Geographic setting and soils			
b) Natural areas - Land ecosystems			
i. Plant communities			
ii. Wildlife habitat			
c) Natural areas and water ecosystems			
i. Plant communities			
ii. Wildlife habitat			
d) Water supply			
e) Cultural resources			
f) Human health - air and water quality			
2. Environmental Resources with Economic Potential Identified:			
a) Agricultural land resources			
b) Mineral resources			
c) Recreation resources			
i. Aesthetic qualities/scenic resources			
ii. Cultural and archeological resources			
iii. Land and water recreation sites			
3. Growth Management Strategies in Place:			
a) Clustering of development			
b) Environmental corridors/natural areas easements			
c) Growth control plan			
d) Historic building reuse			
e) Purchase of development rights plan (PDR)			
4. Development Restrictions in Place For:			
a) Prime agricultural land			

ACTION	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS ACTION	COMMUNITY AWARE
b) Soil erosion			
c) Floodplains			
d) Groundwater recharge areas			
e) Stream banks			
f) Lakeshores			
g) Higher elevations			
h) Steep slopes			
i) Poor soils			
j) Wetlands			
k) Wildlife habitats			
5. Quality of Life Proposals For:			
a) Scenic overlooks and 'viewsheds'			
b) Beauty zones			
c) Town commons			
d) Tree plan - planting and preservation			
e) Rural byways			
f) Historical or architectural zones			
g) Archaeological site preservation			
h) Green space or environmental corridors			
6. Trail Systems/Park Areas Proposed For:			
a) Bicycles			
b) Cross-country skiing			
c) Hiking			
d) Walking			
e) Snowmobiling			
f) ATV ing			
g) Nature study			
h) Connecting environmental resource areas			
7. Public Access To Public Waters For:			
a) Fishing			
b) Swimming			
c) Canoeing			
d) Camping			
e) Multiple Use			
8. Restoration Possibilities Identified For:			
a) Prairie			
b) Woodland			
c) Wetlands			
d) Pre-settlement conditions			

ACTION	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS ACTION	COMMUNITY AWARE
9. Compliance with State/Federal Regulations and Standards:			
a) Abandoned wells			
b) Air quality			
c) Drinking water supply protection			
d) Groundwater protection			
e) Highway and Street Standards			
f) Soil erosion			
g) Surface water			
h) Shoreland zoning			
i) Sewage treatment			
j) Solid waste management			
k) Septic system sanitary codes			
l) Storm water run-off			
m) Underground storage tanks			
n) Waste reduction			
o) Wetland protection			

PART 2: Review community interests and concerns

a. Do community members have opinions about managing local environmental resources?

Citizen perceptions and values are an important component of planning for managing environmental resources in your community. Here are some sample questions to help the task force review current opinions. The task force may wish to use other strategies to provide additional information about community concerns. Consider: a community survey, focus group interviews, facilitated nominal group process, public information meetings.

CITIZENS HAVE VOICED CONCERNS ABOUT THE FOLLOWING

Development decisions have changed or damaged natural resources.	yes	no
Development decisions have affected local air or water quality.	yes	no
Development decisions have compromised the beauty of local scenic or historical places or views.	yes	no
Development decisions have had negative environmental impacts on surrounding property (e.g. increased water or soil runoff onto streets and residential property).	yes	no
Tourist use of local natural resources "bothers" neighbors (e.g. noise from snowmobiles, congested parking at popular sites, etc.).	yes	no
Access to outdoor recreation opportunities is inadequate (e.g. inadequate biking right of way, lake access, park space).	yes	no
The amount of open space and recreation land is inadequate.	yes	no
The quality of open space and recreation land is poor.	yes	no
Privately owned high quality resource areas are unprotected.	yes	no
Cultural/historical resources are at risk (i.e. affected by aging or development).	yes	no
Too much OR too little use of local natural resources for economic benefit. (e.g. local controversies over - hunting, agriculture, mining, forestry, commercial development uses.)	yes	no

Too many restrictions on land uses?   yes   no

Too few restrictions on how land is used and developed?   yes   no

Other concerns? List: yes   no

b. Have elected or appointed officials had concerns about how to manage various environmental resources?

PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE VOICED CONCERNS ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

Confusion about environmental regulations or ordinances.	yes	no
Disagreement about environmental regulations or ordinances.	yes	no
Management of local resources to avoid harm to the community (e.g. control of stormwater runoff, drinking water protection, flood plain protection, minimizing recreation conflicts).	yes	no
Impact of development decisions on environmental resource quality.	yes	no
Need to get control over the kind of development that is occurring and where it occurs.	yes	no
Accommodating growth and development without destroying quality of life and sense of place.	yes	no
Fear that uncontrolled development may be compromising other segments of the local economy (e.g. agriculture, tourism).	yes	no

c. Summarize the most important concerns about environmental resource management in your community.

Citizen concerns	Concerns of public officials

PART 3: Select *environmental resources* for investigation and discussion. Identify assistance needed.

Your community task force may want to select an environmental resource or geographic region for more intensive investigation and discussion. In this section, you can review your answers to previous sections and make some decisions about how you would like to proceed.

a. Information gathered to help you target your activities?

Environmental resource management topics requiring further information before decisions can be made, summarized from Part 1?   yes   no

Land resources?
Consider: geographic setting, ag. lands, plant associations, wildlife, wildlife habitat.   Action needed   Information adequate
Comments —

Water resources?
Consider: water supply, surface water features.   Action needed   Information adequate

Comments —

Human health issues?
Consider: air and drinking water quality, environmental hazards, quality of life.   Action needed   Information adequate
Comments —

Cultural resources?
Consider: architecture, historical features, cultural features, and aesthetic qualities.   Action needed   Information adequate
Comments —

| **Economic and recreation uses?** | Action needed | Information adequate |

Comments —

| **Growth management options?** | Action needed | Information adequate |

Comments —

| **Compliance with regulations?** | Action needed | Information adequate |

Comments —

| **Citizen and public official concerns** about the local environment, summarized from Part 2? | yes | no |

| **Task force groups for each investigation identified?** Consider including public officials, resource managers, impacted citizens, media. | yes | no |

b. Determine where outside assistance will be needed.

Determine what additional assistance you will need before you can consider how community environmental resources can be included in future planning efforts. Your community may be able to complete some of these activities without outside assistance.

WILL OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE BE NEEDED FOR?

| Developing a base map? | yes | no |

| Gathering preliminary information for base map? | yes | no |

| Further planning in any resource categories, such as developing appropriate and effective strategies and policies to complement and achieve local environmental resource objectives?
  If yes, which topics: | yes | no |

Further planning in land resources assessment? This might include natural resource or legal assistance.	yes	no
If yes, which areas or types of land, what kind of assistance:		

Further planning in water resource assessment?	yes	no
If yes, which categories:		

Further planning in human health or cultural resource assessment?	yes	no
If so, which categories:		

Further planning in economic or resource assessment?	yes	no
If so, which categories:		

Has community identified adequate outside resources or assistance where needed?	yes	no

c. Summarize actions needed before planning can proceed.

Your answers to PART 3 and any notes you made in PARTS 1 and 2 have helped to identify planning needs. Your task force will need to recommend which activities should receive immediate attention or get top priority for use of community resources. On the following chart, note which community perceptions, environmental resource(s), geographic region(s), or management strategies you want to investigate and discuss in more detail.

    Star your top priorities.

Environmental management topics of interest

Assistance needed? *	Yes	No
Action planned		

* Assistance is available from a variety of sources including regional offices of state and federal agencies, planning consultants, and University Extension faculty and staff.

PART 4: Consider environmental resources in future planning efforts

Incorporating strategies for managing environmental resources into local planning is a constant cycle of investigation of interests and needs, then determination of how to respond. In PARTS 1 and 2, your task force gathered and summarized information about current planning and community concerns. In PART 3, you considered priorities for focus of future investigations. PART 4 asks you to think about how you will integrate any new information into a plan.

The plan should represent the needs and interests of your community, provide an opportunity for resource conservation, and allow the community to evaluate the pros and cons of different management strategies.

a.   Does your community plan to consider environmental resources in future planning efforts?

Have community residents participated in describing a community vision for the future?	yes	no
If so, whose interests were considered?		
Rate how the following interests were considered:	**Low, Medium or High?**	
Current residents		
Local homeowners		
Future residents		
Landowners		
Residents of neighboring communities		
Visitors/tourists		
Business leaders/chamber of commerce		
Renters		
Older people/seniors		
Young people		
Middle aged people		
Do public officials refer to the community vision in planning decisions?	yes	no
Are environmental resources considered?	yes	no

Does the public understand how environmental resources are incorporated in the community vision?	yes	no
Do additional community perspectives need to be considered before environmental resource planning can take place?	yes	no
Have public officials successfully included public input into decisions about environmental resources?	yes	no

b. **Has your community located or created a map for comparing environmental resources with land use or growth management needs?**

What is the state of GIS and resource mapping capability?	Check which applies	
— advanced		
— moderate		
— begun, but not far along		
— nothing, no progress		
Do local officials have a map specific to the community?	yes	no
Does a community map include:		
parcel boundaries?	yes	no
urban service boundaries?	yes	no
parcel identification?	yes	no
location of residences?	yes	no
zoning classification/boundaries?	yes	no
natural features or conditions, such as topography, wetlands, water bodies, flood plains	yes	no

c. **Based on your answers to PART 4, summarize your strategy to consider environmental resources in planning.**

Community vision highlights and/or needs:

Community map, needs:

Action steps needed to move from preparation to planning: