

CASS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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CASS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY

Cass County is pleased to present this update of our Comprehensive Plan. We recognize that our greatest assets are our immense and varied natural resource base and our citizens. We also recognize that these high quality natural and human resources provide unique opportunities to wisely plan future development and growth. We must place the highest priority on maintaining and preserving the unique environment of the County for our residents and visitors.

This plan is authorized under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 394.23 & 103B, and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 9300.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This plan has been developed for citizens of Cass County to provide a comprehensive policy guide for Cass County in carrying out our responsibilities to our landowners, visitors, and other government units. It includes both short and long-term strategies to achieve its goals. It will be reviewed and updated on a five-year basis.

PLAN PROCESS

This plan updates the 2002 Comprehensive Plan which was developed using the process outlined in the Initiative Foundation's Healthy Communities Program. Fourteen citizen committees, with Cass County Staff support, used public input, existing plans, and other data in plan development.

This update process tapped members of the original subcommittees to review the 2002 plan, assess the effectiveness of the plan in achieving stated goals, and propose changes and updates. County staff then drafted amendments for consideration by the Cass County Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners.

The County Board thanks all the citizens and staff members who participated in this plan update. Special thanks also go to the Initiative Foundation for their continued support of our planning process.

COUNTY WATER PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This document is an excerpt of the complete County Local Water Management Plan and is an analysis of Cass County's ground and surface waters and related land resources with a five-year action strategy designed to achieve County water resource and management goals. The complete Cass County Local Water Management Plan can be obtained by contacting Cass County Environmental Services at (218) 547-7241 or on the Cass County website at www.co.cass.mn.us.


1. Identify existing and potential problems and opportunities for the protection, management, and development of water and related land resources
2. Preserve the pristine quality of the county's ground and surface waters and, where degradation has occurred, provide for water quality restoration
3. Monitor water quality, use, and availability
4. Develop objectives and carry out a plan of action to promote sound hydrologic management, effective environmental protection
5. Provide coordinated and efficient delivery of environmental services to assure the long term protection of water resources and watersheds

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES AND ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 301B and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 9300 require that fifty-five key resource data items be reviewed in the water management planning process. In addition, 18 resource assessments are required to evaluate resource condition and the impact that various land uses may have on those resources. This background information is included in the supporting material section.

C. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS AND GOALS

1. **GROUND-WATER QUALITY GOAL:** Preserve the quality of the County's ground-water and where degradation has occurred, provide for restoration of ground-water quality.
2. **GROUND-WATER QUANTITY GOAL:** Monitor water use to assure adequate ground-water resources.
3. **SURFACE WATER QUALITY GOAL:** Preserve the quality of Cass County's surface water, and where degradation has occurred, work to restore the surface water quality.
4. **SURFACE WATER QUANTITY GOAL:** Monitor water use to assure adequate surface water resources.
5. **WETLAND PROTECTION GOAL:** Preserve the functions, values, and extent of the County's wetland resources and support programs that protect wetlands from development impacts.

- 6. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION GOAL:** Work cooperatively with other departments and agencies to provide accurate, useful environmental information.
 - 7. WATERSHED MANAGEMENT GOAL:** To work cooperatively with other agencies in implementing plans and projects based on watershed-wide priorities.
 - 8. DATA MANAGEMENT GOAL:** Assemble and manage historical and current surface and groundwater data in efficient, useable formats that afford easy access and analysis.
 - 9. REGULATORY GOAL:** Enact and enforce policies, rules, and ordinances that are administered equitably and that protect the County's natural resources.
 - 10. PLAN ADMINISTRATION GOAL:** Provide coordinated and efficient delivery of environmental services to assure the long-term protection of water resources.
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GROUND-WATER QUALITY GOAL

Preserve the quality of the County's groundwater and where degradation has occurred, provide for restoration of groundwater quality.

Objective A: Determine the Quality of Cass County's Ground-water Resources

1. Create a County groundwater-monitoring program. The purpose of this program is to utilize the UMD regional groundwater flow model, well testing results for nitrates and coliform bacteria, and other monitoring data to discover the quality, extent, and flow direction of our ground-water and learn more about the impacts of human activity on our ground-water.

2. Evaluate the results of studies of contaminants to groundwater.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: MPCA, USGS, MDH, UMD

Priority 2

Objective B: Prevent Contamination of Cass County's Groundwater Resources

1. Continue enforcement of county subsurface sewage treatment system ordinance provision requiring individual sanitary treatment system evaluation and/or update at the time of property transfers.

2. Develop and implement a systematic program of compliance inspections of SSTS not currently in compliance on a lake-by-lake or area-by-area basis, prioritized on the basis of housing density, soil suitability, and pollution potential. The purpose of this program is to inspect and inventory all of the existing SSTS in Cass County.

3. Use the regional groundwater flow model to implement a wellhead protection program.

4. Promote the implementation of water well abandonment and closure programs.

5. Utilize the regional groundwater flow model to identify possible negative recharge area impacts for new proposed developments or plats.

6. Promote the development and implementation of wellhead protection plans for all public water supplies.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: UMD, MDH, MPCA, RWA

Priority 1

GROUND-WATER QUANTITY GOAL

Monitor water use to assure adequate ground-water resources.

Objective A: Determine the Extent of Surficial Aquifers

1. Utilize the regional groundwater flow model to estimate volumes of groundwater

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: UMD, MDH, MPCA

Priority 3

SURFACE WATER QUALITY GOAL

Preserve the quality of Cass County's surface water, and where degradation has occurred, work to restore the surface water quality

Objective A: Provide for Protection of All Surface Waters

1. Work with agencies, developers, and individuals to create and implement stormwater management plans.
2. Work with agencies, developers, lake associations, and individuals to create and implement shoreline revegetation plans.
3. Assist lake associations in their efforts to develop and implement management plans for individual lakes or watersheds.
4. Assess the Itasca County Lake Vulnerability Index for use in Cass County.
5. Work with other agencies to develop lake sustainability and carrying capacity criterion.
6. Develop a sensitive resource protection list for use in determining priorities for conservation easements, acquisitions, and other protection programs as well as land use decisions and establishing development standards. Promote conservation easements, prevention of forest and habitat fragmentation, and other forms of protecting sensitive areas.
7. Set up lakeshore revegetation demonstration sites on all general development lakes.
8. Continue agricultural programs for stream protection.
9. Use major watershed management strategies for water quality protection.
10. Develop a priority list of areas needing collective septic drainfields and implement an installation program.
11. Assist Agencies, Lake Associations, and other local units of government with the response to any identified impaired waters.
12. Assess trends in water quality in lakes over 1,000 acres.
13. Promote and assist with other research projects that will further enable Cass County to provide for better protection of our surface water resources.
14. Develop and promote conservation development design standards.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, MES, DNR, MPCA, LLB, USACE, USFS
MHB, NRCS, ACCL, BWSR, TCLLWP, PRWPF

Priority 1

Objective B: Monitor and Manage Recreational Uses to Protect Water Resources

1. Assist in monitoring of lakes for exotic species such as Eurasian water milfoil, spiny waterfleas, zebra mussels, and rusty crayfish and also for fish diseases such as VHS..
2. Support the implementation of fishery habitat management plans.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: DNR, SWCD, TCLLWP, PRWPF, ACCL, individual lake associations

Priority 2

SURFACE WATER QUANTITY GOAL

Monitor water use to assure adequate surface water resources.

Objective A: Monitor the Existing Volume and Flow of Surface Water

1. Use current studies to help develop water budget modeling for watersheds.
2. Evaluate possible impacts of droughts on natural and economic resources.
3. Support maintaining current water levels and lobby against unnecessary drawdowns of reservoirs and exportation of all surface waters.
4. Establish a committee or task force of hydrology or related professionals in the region to make recommendations to any regional issues related to water quantity.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups agency: DNR, MPCA, MHB, LLB, USACE

Priority 3

WETLAND PROTECTION GOAL

Preserve the functions, values and extent of the County's wetland resources and support programs that protect wetlands from development impacts.

Objective A: Determine the Extent and Condition of our Wetland Resources

1. Use the wetland and groundwater models to identify wetlands that may be the most significant for groundwater recharge.
2. Develop a high priority wetland inventory

Objective B: Protect our Wetland Resources from Degradation

1. Enforce existing regulations affecting wetland conversions.
2. Develop and implement management plans for High Priority wetlands.
3. Work cooperatively with departments, agencies, watershed organizations, foundations, developers, and individuals to place wetlands in conservation easements or similar protective mechanisms.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, DNR, LLB, USACE, BWSR

Priority 1

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION GOAL

Work cooperatively with other departments and agencies to provide accurate, useful environmental information.

Objective A: Strive to provide information and education to residents, businesses, State Agencies, and other local units of government about how Cass County is working to accomplish the goals laid out in this plan.

1. Promote the implementation of water well abandonment and closure programs.
2. Continue to work with producers on agricultural conservation plans
3. Promote soil testing to help determine spreading rates for septage, animal waste, and chemical fertilizers
4. Conduct non-point source pollution source training.
5. Continue to support the efforts of lake associations and to assist in organizing new lake associations.
6. Promote the Citizen Lake Monitoring Program for all lakes in the county.
7. Provide lakeshore revegetation technical assistance and train shoreland volunteers to assist in designing and installing lakeshore plantings.
8. Promote the implementation of a program to educate residents and visitors about harmful exotic species and fish diseases.

9. Continue to promote the use of the Cass County website to disseminate educational information.
10. Promote the creation of local comprehensive plans for townships or other local units of government.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, MES, DNR, MPCA, LLB, MHB, NRCS,
ACCL, BWSR, TCLLWP, PRWPF

Priority 1

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT GOAL

To work cooperatively with other agencies in implementing plans and projects based on watershed-wide priorities.

Objective A: Assess Cass County's groundwater aquifers

1. Work with the regional groundwater flow model and the MPCA Basin Planning Program to estimate aquifer boundaries and interaction with surface waters.

Objective B: Assess Cass County's surface water watersheds

1. Assess watershed impacts caused by individual developments and the cumulative effects of development on receiving waters.
2. Conduct research projects and analysis on a watershed basis starting with the lakes that are over 1,000 acres in size.
3. Support the efforts of watershed organizations.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: DNR, MPCA, MHB, NRCS, ACCL, BWSR, PRWPF, TCLLWP

Priority 1

DATA MANAGEMENT GOAL

Manage surface and groundwater data in efficient, useable formats that afford easy access and analysis.

Objective A: Assemble and manage Cass County's groundwater data

1. Continue working with local water well drillers and septic system installers to record GPS locations for all new wells and septic systems
2. Continue to update and refine the regional groundwater flow model to provide better predictive groundwater data.

Objective B: Assemble and manage Cass County's surface water data

1. Acquire and maintain surface water quality data for future trend analysis.

2. Support and assist lake association's water quality testing program(s).

Objective C: Assemble and manage Cass County's statistical and demographic data

1. Create a county atlas. Maps, tables, and descriptions of all county data such as: watersheds, ecology, geomorphology, population density, roads, etc
2. Develop and institute policies and procedures for the acquisition, maintenance, use, and security of data.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, MES, DNR, MPCA, LLB, USACE, USFS, MHB, NRCS, ACCL, BWSR, TCLLWP, PRWPF

Priority 1

Objective D: Assemble and manage Cass County's existing and new permit information.

1. Create and utilize an interactive web-based permit program and database.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, BWSR, DNR, MPCA

REGULATORY GOAL

Enact and enforce policies, rules and ordinances that are administered equitably and that protect the County's natural resources.

Objective A: Ordinance Enforcement

1. Continue to administer and enforce the Cass County Wetland ordinance and Wetland Conservation Act.
2. Continue to administer and enforce the Cass County Land Use Ordinance
3. Develop a new Cass County Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance.
4. Continue to administer and enforce the Cass County Subdivision and Platting Ordinance
5. Continue to administer and enforce the Mississippi Headwaters Management Plan
6. Develop and implement a Stormwater Ordinance.
7. Develop and implement conservation design standards.

Objective B: Establish and Assess Review Criteria

1. Adopt the regional groundwater flow, wetland functional analysis, and upland functional analysis models as official County review criterion for permits, conditional uses, variances, developments, and plats.
2. Assess and reclassify shoreland zoning districts to protect critical areas and sensitive resources.
3. Review ordinances from townships and municipalities for compatibility and provide technical assistance to improve implementation.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting groups: SWCD, DNR, MPCA, LLB, MHB, ACCL, BWSR,
TCLLWP, PRWPF
Priority 1

PLAN ADMINISTRATION GOAL

Provide coordinated and efficient delivery of environmental services to assure the long term protection of water resources.

Objective A: Establish an Effective Structure for the Administration of the Plan

1. Adopt the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan Update as part of the Cass County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
2. Conduct annual meetings in five communities to gain public input on environmental issues and problems, and evaluate plan implementation. Incorporate findings into Comprehensive Plan and ordinance updates.
3. Convene an intergovernmental meeting to explore funding options for Water Plan related projects including special taxing districts and user fees.
4. Maintain cooperative intergovernmental agreements that assist other local, state, federal, and tribal agencies in achieving their natural resource goals, and enlists their support in achieving ours.
5. Coordinate research and project planning with other local government units such as townships, cities, and adjoining counties.

Lead agency: ESD

Supporting agency: SWCD, BWSR, MPCA, MDH, DNR, LLB, NRCS, USFS,
TCLLWP, PRWPF

Priority 1

E. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

This Water Plan will be evaluated in several different ways. Public meetings will be held to solicit citizen input on general effectiveness of plan implementation and needs for changes. The ESD Advisory Committee will review progress on projects, as well as assisting in the development of the annual budget and workplan. Cooperating departments, agencies, and organizations will be consulted on a project or program basis.

The review intervals will be as follows:

Public review meetings	Annually
Budget and workplan	Annually
Agency project review	As needed
Plan revision	5 years

F. ACRONYMS

ACCL	Association of Cass County Lakes
BWSR	Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
ESD	Cass County Environmental Services Department
DNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
LGU	Local Governmental Unit
LLB	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
MES	Minnesota Cooperative Extension Service
MHB	Mississippi Headwaters Board.
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PRWPF	Pine River Watershed Protection Foundation
RWA	Rural Water Association
SWCD	Cass Soil and Water Conservation District
TCLLWP	Tri-County Leech Lake Watershed Project
UMD	University of Minnesota-Duluth
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USFS	US Forest Service

PRIVATE LAND USE PLAN

LAND USE PLANNING

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

It is the purpose of these policies to:

1. Provide a rational basis to make difficult land and resource use decisions wisely
2. Eliminate the conflicts caused by unplanned development
3. Improve coordination and communication between the county, local governments, and citizens in land use planning
4. Protect the County's natural resources from degradation

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. 2002 Land Use Plan
2. Cass County ordinances
3. Municipal plans and ordinances
4. Highway 371 & Highway 210 Corridor Plans
5. Cass County Wetland Model

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Demand continues moderate for first and second tier lakeshore development and other recreational property.
2. Demand continues moderate for commercial and residential development necessary for normal (local) growth that places more pressure on rural areas, small lakes, wetlands, and agricultural lands
3. As the makeup and density of land ownership increases, so do the expectations for services.
4. Physical limitations on remaining undeveloped property create environmental and logistical challenges
5. The current land use related ordinances need to be periodically revised.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Development of lakeshore property with minimal natural resource impacts.
2. Provision of necessary infrastructure to accommodate the conversion of seasonal cabins into year-round residences
3. Preservation of critical habitats
4. Lake access that does not degrade water quality
5. Location of higher density residential areas where sewer and water infrastructure is available
6. Concentration of commercial businesses at or near major transportation intersections.
7. Adequate affordable housing available for all age and income levels
8. Preservation of agricultural lands for agricultural use (rating system).
9. An active forest management and timber harvesting program that supports a variety of uses including recreation

E. POLICY NEEDS

1. **Natural Resources Policy:** To incorporate the goals and strategies of the Cass County Comprehensive Local Water Plan in promoting land and water uses that result in the sustainable use of natural resources, balancing development and environmental commitment to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and resources of the County for this and future generations.
 - a. Verify and preserve the quality of the County's ground water and where impacts have occurred, provide for restoration of ground-water quality.
 - b. Monitor water use to assure adequate ground-water resources.
 - c. Verify and preserve the quality of Cass County's surface water, and where impacts have occurred, work to restore the surface water quality.
 - d. Monitor water use to assure adequate surface water resources.
 - e. Preserve the functions, values, and extent of the County's wetland resources and support programs that protect wetlands from development impacts.
 - f. Work cooperatively with other departments and agencies to provide accurate, useful environmental information.
 - g. To work cooperatively with other agencies in implementing plans and projects based on watershed-wide priorities.

- h. Assemble and manage historical and current surface and groundwater data in efficient, useable formats that afford easy access and analysis.
 - i. Enact and enforce policies, rules, and ordinances that are administered equitably and that protect the County's natural resources.
 - j. Provide coordinated and efficient delivery of environmental services to assure the long-term protection of water resources.

- 2. **Housing Policy:** To encourage diversified housing development that maximizes the use of infrastructure including roads, sewer, water and other public services.
 - a. Encourage high density residential development to be located in or near municipalities
 - b. Encourage joint planning between local governments on infrastructure expansion
 - c. Limit rural development density
 - d. Encourage cluster development as an alternative in environmentally sensitive areas
 - e. Provide affordable and multi-family housing
 - f. Encourage single family lakeshore development
 - g. Provide buffers between developments and existing uses such as extractive uses and shooting ranges.

- 3. **Agriculture Policy:** Encourage agriculture as the primary use in historically farmed areas as part of a diverse economy and respect the settlement characteristics of agricultural areas.
 - a. Discourage reclassification of agriculture land to other uses, and keep the 40-acre parcel limit.
 - b. Recognize the importance of agricultural land to the economy.
 - c. Encourage specialized agricultural operations i.e. – truck farms, community supported agriculture (CSA)
 - d. Recognize economic contribution of hobby farms, but consider issues such as animal unit per acre and animal waste disposal.
 - e. Provide buffers between developments and agricultural land.

- 4. **Commercial/Industrial Policy:** Encourage a sound and diverse economy that meets the needs of Cass County residents and visitors for employment and services.
 - a. Encourage location of commercial businesses at or near major transportation intersections.
 - b. Continue to regulate new extractive uses and require existing extractive use operations to file a reclamation plan and financial assurance for reclamation.
 - c. Refer industrial use issues to municipalities and economic development authorities.

- 5. **Recreation Policy:** Develop an integrated green space and recreation system within Cass County that provides diverse, developed and undeveloped, recreational

opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas.

- a. Maintain a diversity of recreational opportunities
- b. Enhance existing recreation facilities
- c. Identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas

6. Transportation Policy: Maintain and enhance a transportation system that meets the local and regional access needs of Cass County residents, businesses, and visitors.

- a. Coordinate efforts with county, state, tribal, and federal transportation planning
- b. Establish road use and design standards
- c. Provide strict guidelines for private roads connecting to public roads.
- d. Require buffers where possible between developments & public roads.

7. Governmental Cooperation Policy: Coordinate efforts between the County, municipalities, townships, state and federal agencies, and tribal government to assure wise land use, economic development, and the protection of natural resources.

- a. Develop and implement planned growth strategies for residential and commercial development
- b. Coordinate with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe on land use regulation and natural resource protection efforts
- c. Encourage joint planning between local governments.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

Adopt Comprehensive Plan and Land Use ordinance revisions—January, 2010

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

- 1. Planning Commission and SWCD Board of Supervisors will review policies and ordinance annually
- 2. Update policies every 5 years

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

- 1. Minnesota Agricultural Statistics 2001
- 2. United States Department of Agriculture
- 3. Department of Trade and Economic Development
- 4. Census Bureau
- 5. Minnesota Statutes, Session Laws, and Rules
- 6. Property Tax Analysis – Cass County Assessor’s Office

SOLID WASTE PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

It is the purpose of these policies to:

1. To define the County's role related to solid waste collection and disposal
2. To set proper solid waste collection and disposal standards
3. To promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Pine River Transfer Station
2. Slagle Landfill and Demolition
3. Walker Hackensack Transfer Site
4. May Township Transfer site
5. Crooked Lake Transfer Site
6. Cass County Solid Waste Ordinance
7. Cass County Land Use Ordinances
8. Household Hazardous Waste Program
9. Materials Exchange Program
10. Co-operation with Leech Lake Tribal Solid Waste Program.

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Slagle Site--No current problems--well managed.
2. Walker Hackensack Transfer Site--No current problems
3. May Township Transfer Site--No current problems
4. Pine River Transfer Station--No current problems

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Efficient management, recycling, and disposal of waste materials
2. Well equipped remote transfer sites with good physical access
3. Expanded household hazardous waste collection program


E. POLICY NEEDS

1. Encourage the Association of Minnesota Counties to seek legislative changes to equalize the state tax charged to commercial haulers versus that charged to private individuals who haul their own.
2. Continue to operate a central site in Pine River for electronics collection coordinated with the other transfer sites.
 3. Make contractors responsible for cleaning up construction sites.
 4. Enforce illegal dumping and burn barrel regulations
 5. Provide disposal sites for stumps and brush
 6. Develop a standardized county-wide waste disposal fee schedule and an enforcement and cleanup fund
 7. Institute administrative penalty orders
 8. Maintain access to a private grinder for brush and certain construction and demolition materials.
 9. Establish areas for short term storage of construction materials for reuse
 10. Monitor cleanliness standards at recycling facilities.
 11. Update Solid Ordinance and appendices in 2009.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

Adopt revised ordinance--2010

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Solid Waste Administrator will review policies and ordinance annually
 2. Update policies every 5 years
- 

SUBDIVISION PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

1. To develop policies to ensure that new divisions of land and the infrastructure necessary thereto contribute to orderly, stable, and safe overall development.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Survey Records, Plats and other recorded divisions, parcel maps
2. 2002 Comprehensive Land Use Plan
3. Subdivision Ordinance (existing Cass County, municipal, township, and adjoining counties)
4. Highway 371 & Highway 210 Corridor Plans
5. County Transportation Plan

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. There is moderate demand for first and second tier lakeshore development and other recreational property.
2. There is moderate demand for commercial and residential development necessary for normal (local) growth.
3. As the makeup and density of land ownership changes, so do the expectations for services.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. To protect and promote the public health, safety, and general welfare
2. To provide for the orderly, timely, economic and safe development of land
3. To preserve agricultural lands
4. To maintain the availability of housing affordable to persons and families of all income levels
5. To facilitate adequate provisions for transportation, water, sewage, storm drainage, schools, parks, playgrounds, and other public services and facilities
6. To adopt concise regulations establishing standards, requirements, and procedures for the division of land

E. POLICY NEEDS

1. Plat review policy: To provide oversight for review of plats, conservation developments, condominiums, and townhouses
2. Registered land survey policy: To provide oversight for review of subdivisions of lots by registered land survey
3. Stormwater, erosion control, and site grading plan policy: To continue to require stormwater, erosion control, and site grading plans whenever negative onsite or offsite impacts may result from development.
4. Utility corridor policy: To provide adequate utility access to all lots and subdivisions.
5. Administration policy: To promote cooperation between the County Attorney's Office, the Planning Commission, and the Environmental Services Department in setting enforcement policies.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

Amend Subdivision Ordinance as necessary

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Review policies and ordinance annually
2. Update policies every 5 years



WASTEWATER PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Assure effective wastewater treatment to protect public health and enhance the environment

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. EPA
2. State of Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080
3. Cass County subsurface sewage treatment ordinance
4. Northeast Wastewater Technical Committee
5. University of Minnesota Extension Services

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Increasing pressures to treat wastewater
2. Minimal requirements for operation and maintenance of onsite wastewater systems.
3. New State rules and ordinance requirements

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

Protection of public health and the environment.

E. POLICY CHANGE NEEDS

1. Adoption and implementation new State SSTS rules.
2. Require operating permits for the following systems:
 - a. Commercial systems
 - b. Alternative systems
 - c. Cluster systems
 - d. Holding Tanks
 - e. Conservation Developments
3. The implementation of a computer tracking system for operation and maintenance on systems requiring an operating permit and septage disposal sites.
4. The implementation of a systematic program of compliance inspections and with system upgrades. Program shall be based on watersheds and prioritized by population density.
5. Continue to contract with private contractors for new system inspections.
6. Set policy for operating plans for new residential systems

7. Require that when systems are installed for plats of record, the permit and installation meets the conditions of the original plat--Computerized flagging
8. ESD should aggressively sponsor training for residents, installers, designers: examples could be "system maintenance for homeowners," "filter workshop for designers and installers," "lakeshore association training in system inspection."


F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. County to update SSTS Ordinance-2010
2. Upgrade operating permits with computer tracking-2010
3. Compliance inspection program-2010-2013
4. Sponsor annual contractor and landowner training workshops

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

Annual evaluation and report by wastewater planning committee.

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Minnesota Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems Rules, Chapters 7080-7083
 2. Internet Based Maintenance Reporting for Onsite Treatment Systems
 3. EPA onsite wastewater management guidelines
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PUBLIC LAND USE PLAN

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Public Lands Asset Management Plan is to (1) enhance the value of the county administered public lands asset base; (2) through “Best Management Practices” to sustain and build on the economic and natural resource values of those lands. To do this, we will look at:

1. The current inventory of our resources.
2. The conditions that now exist.
3. What future conditions would best suit the needs of the people who utilize the resources of Cass County.
4. What policy changes need to be made to make ultimate use of and to protect our public lands.
5. What programs need to be established and managed.
6. What Evaluation Tracking System needs to be in place to monitor and track success.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. LAND

a. Public land now owned

19.4% of Cass County acreage is county administered tax-forfeited land. 40.8% is private land.

b. Private Lands Ownership Classification

**37% of parcels are “Seasonal Recreational”
which shows the high importance of the “tourism” economy.**

Source: Cass County Property Tax System – 2007 Analysis

<u>Parcel Class</u>	<u>Parcel Count</u>
Homestead	14,410 (Improved – 10,689, Unimproved – 3,721)
Seasonal Recreational Residential	18,155 (Improved – 11,533, Unimproved – 6,622)
Other	<u>18,956</u>
Total	48,521

2. RECREATIONAL SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Recreation systems under management of the Cass County Land Department

Source: Cass County Land Department			
Snowmobile Trails	433.6 miles	Hunter Walking Trails	20.0 miles
Cross-Country Ski Trails	25.6 miles	Boat Accesses	5.0 miles

3. PEOPLE

a. Citizens of Cass County

WITHIN THE CITIZENRY OF CASS COUNTY THERE IS A LARGE PROACTIVE GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS THAT BENEFIT THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE. A MAJOR IMPETUS FOR THAT COMES FROM THE GROWING BASE OF RETIREES, I.E. THE 18% OF POPULATION OVER 65.

POPULATION GROWTH OF CASS COUNTY FROM 1980 TO 2000

Source: MN Planning-Census 2000

	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1980-2000	% Change 1990-2000
Total Population	21,050	21,791	27,150	29.0	24.6
Race:					
White	N/A	19,309 (88.6%)	23,490 (86.5%)		
American Indian	N/A	2,373 (10.9%)	3,110 (11.5%)		
Other	N/A	109 (0.5%)	550 (2.0%)		
Age:					
Under 18	N/A	5,929 (27.2%)	6,788 (25.0%)		
18-64	N/A	11,679 (53.6%)	15,475 (57.0%)		
65 and Over	N/A	4,183 (19.2%)	4,887 (18.0%)		

b. Tourism and sportsmen

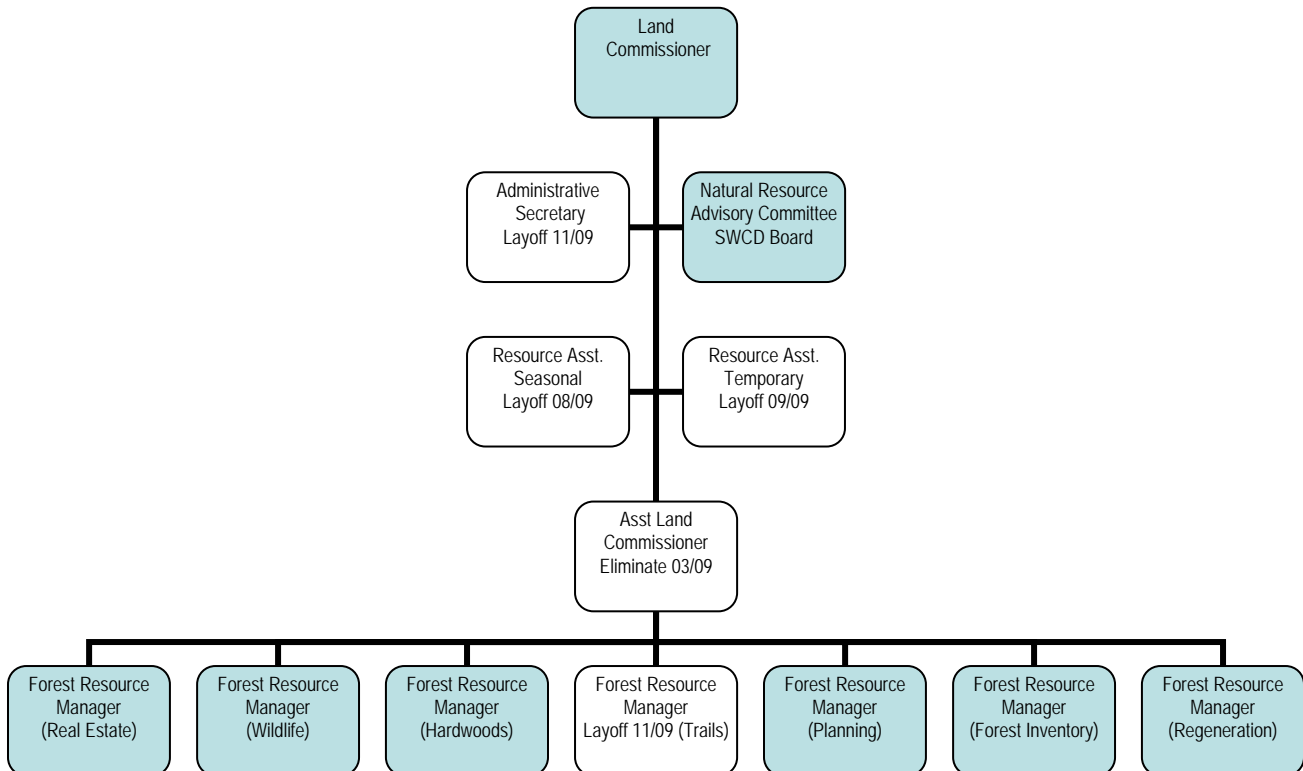
CASUAL OBSERVATION AND INTUITION TELL US THAT TOURISM IS A MAJOR FACTOR OF THE ECONOMY OF CASS COUNTY. HARD DATA TO PRECISELY QUANTIFY THE IMPACT IS NOT AVAILABLE BUT MUCH SUGGESTIVE DATA HAS BEEN PUBLISHED.

**Minnesota Office of Tourism
1998 Survey on Overnight Leisure Travel
North Central / West Region**

- ◆ Share – 20% of states total overnight travel
- ◆ From – 64% from Minnesota, 36% from out of state
- ◆ Stay Where – 37% in private homes
- ◆ Stay Duration – 4.7 days (average)
- ◆ Activity – 25% Hunting/Fishing, 25% Beach/Waterfront, 17% Boating/Sailing

c. County Commissioners and Land Department

Governed by five elected county commissioners functioning as the County Board, the Cass County Land Department is currently headed by the Land Commissioner with a full-time staff of six forest resource managers.



4. SYSTEMS

Cass County has been a preeminent leader among rural Minnesota counties in “leading edge” application of technology to management of public lands. The development of a comprehensive county Geographic Information System (GIS) beginning in the late 1980’s has evolved into an integrated Land Records Information System (LRIS) that continues to be enhanced. The Forest Management System in use at the Cass County Land Department uses a variety of the latest technological tools including the in-house GIS/LRIS network, GPS technology (Global Positioning Satellite), and specialized computer programs.

5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES: Public lands are a very important source of net revenues for the county.

Combined Public Lands Payments to Local Units of Government 2002-2007						
	2002 (\$)	2003 (\$)	2004 (\$)	2005 (\$)	2006 (\$)	2007 (\$)
Forfeited Tax Apportionment	1,572,518	1,005,087	1,412,730	1,568,674	2,474,227	1,346,639
State PILT*	568,451	574,472	585,517	607,653	1,026,858	1,053,860
Federal PILT* & 25% Fund	487,377	711,799	746,785	660,568	671,754	205,869
Total Public Lands Payments	2,628,346	2,291,358	2,745,032	2,836,895	4,172,839	2,606,368

a. FORFEITED TAX SALE FUND

Minnesota law charges counties with the duties of administering lands forfeited to the state for non-payment of property taxes. If those lands are classed by the County Board pursuant to statutory definition as conservation lands, those lands are held in trust and managed for the benefit of local taxing districts.

To account for transactions resulting from the management of county administered tax forfeited lands, Chapter 282 of Minnesota Statutes establishes the Forfeited Tax Sale Fund. This trust fund is used to account for all revenues and disbursements resulting from the management of those lands. **In Cass County, the primary source of revenues collected are from sale of timber**

from tax forfeited land, and to a lesser degree, the sale of tax forfeited land not being held for conservation purposes, as well as other minor revenue sources.

The law requires an annual “apportionment” of any balance remaining of revenues over costs. That formula first allows the county to direct up to 30% of the balance into timber development on tax-forfeited land and dedicated memorial forests. Next, the county board may direct up to 20% of the remaining balance to county parks and recreation areas. After that, any balance remaining must be apportioned as follows: county, 40%; town or city, 20%; and school district, 40%.

The current policy of the Cass County Board of Commissioners is to direct 25% of the initial balance to timber development, or “reforestation” activities, and 5% to recreation areas, specifically recreational trails. A history of balance apportionments, often referred to as “settlements” from 1993 to 2001 appears in the table below.

FORFEITED TAX FUND APPORTIONMENT 2002 - 2007						
	2002 (\$)	2003 (\$)	2004 (\$)	2005 (\$)	2006 (\$)	2007 (\$)
County General Fund	398,352	284,915	395,564	439,229	494,846	377,059
County Timber Development/Trails	576,736	300,072	423,820	470,603	1,237,113	403,992
Towns & Cities	199,143	140,033	197,782	219,614	247,423	188,529
School Districts	398,287	280,067	395,564	439,228	494,845	377,059
Total Apportionment	1,572,518	1,005,087	1,412,730	1,568,674	2,474,227	1,346,639

b. ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

In the late 1990’s through a series of session laws, the state of Minnesota made the decision to get out of the business of leasing state owned lakeshore to private individuals for “cabin” uses. Through an exchange and special sale program, the state traded these leases for other lands in each county where those leases were located. Each county then is charged with the duty of selling those leases either to the present lease holder, or if declined, at public auction. The proceeds of the lease sales are then to be held in a dedicated “environmental trust fund” within the county treasury. Interest earnings from the fund can then be used by the county only for “improvement of natural resources”.

c. PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAX – State of Minnesota “PILT”

In 1979, the Minnesota Legislature enacted Payment In Lieu of Tax Legislation (Minnesota Statute 477A) to encourage retention of tax-forfeited land and to provide compensation to local taxing districts for loss in tax base as a result of this retention. Payments began in 1980 and were based, in each county, on the number of acres in public ownership. Tax relief is a primary objective; however, a

portion of the payment is dedicated to intensifying the management and improvement of all the resources on tax-forfeited lands.

The state of Minnesota also compensates local governments for state lands held for the purpose of “public hunting grounds” which includes game refuges and designated wildlife areas.

A history of state payments in lieu of taxes, including public hunting grounds payments, appears in the table below.

Payments in Lieu of Tax (PILT) - State of Minnesota 2002 - 2007 (Includes Public Hunting Grounds Payments)						
	2002 (\$)	2003 (\$)	2004 (\$)	2005 (\$)	2006 (\$)	2007 (\$)
Paid to Townships	83,022	85,888	88,365	72,620	69,417	69,703
County Natural Resources Fund	117,185	118,053	122,130	126,654	135,010	143,848
County General Fund	351,603	355,283	363,810	391,043	793,498	815,755
School Districts	16,641	15,248	11,212	17,336	28,933	24,554
Total State PILT	568,451	574,472	585,517	607,653	1,026,858	1,053,860

d. PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAX – Federal “PILT”

Payments in lieu of taxes on national forest lands originate from a 1908 act of Congress that requires 25 percent of the revenues derived from national forest lands be paid to states for use by the counties in which the lands are situated for the benefit of public schools and roads, and a per acre payment for general tax relief. A history of federal PILT appears in the table below.

Federal Payments in Lieu of Tax (PILT)*2002-2007						
	2002 (\$)	2003 (\$)	2004 (\$)	2005 (\$)	2006 (\$)	2007 (\$)
Townships	56,856	79,494	88,246	59,262	61,226	61,762
County General Fund	132,662	185,487	205,912	138,269	142,860	144,107
School Districts	148,930	223,409	226,314	231,519	233,354	TBA
County Highway Fund	148,929	223,409	226,313	231,518	233,354	TBA
Total Federal PILT	487,377	711,799	746,785	660,568	672,577	205,869

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Cass County Ownership

Go to Cass County Website for more details and maps.

2. Current Land Department Mission, Objectives, Issues, Strategies

Within the context of Cass County's broader mission, the Land Department has defined its mission "to professionally manage the county's forest land base within the confines of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 282, and to improve the quality and value of the county's forest land resources".

a. Stated general objectives are:

- improve the productivity of the land asset base
- insure all county lands are accessible, and
- require that projects have a "tax base neutral impact"

b. Objectives of the current land asset management program are:

- **Financial (direct)**
 - increase value of asset base
 - increase forest management revenue
 - decrease department costs as percent of revenue
- **Financial (indirect)**
 - build tourism economy
 - build on Conservation Trust Revolving Account (CTRA) for purchase of critical habitat
 - Provide enhanced recreational opportunity

c. Issues identified by the Land Department are:

- forest productivity
- recreational opportunity
- reducing management costs
- gaining access to all county administered land under management

d. The strategies that have been employed to achieve objectives are:

- land acquisition – direct, exchange, easement
- projects and programs will have a "tax base neutral impact"
- work proactively with citizen groups on conservation and critical habitat protection through the CTRA Program

3. Current Land Asset Management Policy

The Cass County Land Department has been working to improve the County Managed Forest Land base for decades through the use of land exchanges. This is a process where county lands that have been identified as being suitable for exchange are traded for selected parcels of private lands of equal value.

In 1998 the County Board authorized the Land Department to utilize a new tool for the Land Asset Management Program. The new option is acquisition-exchange-sale. Under

this program when critical habitat parcels are identified, the county may purchase the parcel of private land, then exchange the purchased parcel with a county owned parcel that subsequently will be offered for sale at a future land sale.

Standard land exchanges and the acquisition-exchange-sale program does not affect the tax base since equal real estate value is exchanged for equal real estate value, but there are definite advantages to the taxing districts in that the lands that transfer into the public trust are lands that would be costly to provide public services and the public lands transferred to private ownership are usually serviced by existing roads and other services. There is also the opportunity to save on management costs since the acquired public lands are usually adjacent to other county managed lands which reduces management costs.

4. Current Exchange/Acquisition/Sale Program, Initiatives; History/Analysis; Property Desired Through Exchange

a. Situation statement: The Cass County Land Department manages 256,000 acres of tax forfeited land. Adjustment to the present ownership is desirable for the following reasons:

- Several thousand acres are surrounded by private land, thereby inaccessible to the public.
- Corridors of public land are essential for recreational trails development and wildlife travel corridors.
- Critical and unique habitats need to be transferred into public ownership to permanently protect rare, threatened or endangered plants, animals or watersheds.
- Increase timber values and/or productivity.
 - i. Analysis:** The Land Department has been pursuing land exchanges to improve the public resources (See Section 2, Page 12) relating to public waters exchanges. The Land Department has also facilitated exchanges to acquire critical habitat, one example being the expansion of the prairie chicken management area west of Backus. The Land Department is presently pursuing selected private land purchases. Once purchased, the county will exchange the trust status of a less desirable tax forfeited parcel to the acquired private land and offer the former tax forfeited parcel for sale at a public auction. This process will result in no change to the county's tax base.
 - ii. Result:** The quality and accessibility of the County Administered Forest Land Base can be continually improved and critical lands and/or habitats can be transferred into the public trust.
 - iii. Initiatives:** The Land Department has made application for revolving fund dollars to accelerate the current acquisition-exchange-sale program through various sources including the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

The Land Department has worked proactively with the Tri-County Leech Lake Watershed Project/Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation since 1997 to plan and implement conservation projects that match the Land Department mission. Together they have initiated the establishment of a Conservation Trust Revolving Account (CTRA) for the purpose of acquiring critical habitat and recreational corridor parcels in pursuant of their joint mission.

b. Land exchange summary - 1995 to 2007

- Net gain in Acres = 856.91
- Net gain in Lakeshore and River Frontage = 23,997 feet
- The net result has been a gain in the tax base.

c. Property desired through exchange.

This is the result of dynamic analysis of the current land base, discussions with land owners, and citizen conservation groups such as Tri County Leech Lake Watershed Project/Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and others.

5. Forest Management (See Forest Management Plan details.)

6. “CAL” Real Estate Management – A number of administrative and statutory activities related to the management of county administered lands (CAL) pose challenges to the Land Department beyond the more visible functions of forestry and natural resource management. “Real estate management” functions of the Land Department include administration of easements through and leasing of CAL; risk management activities; security, situation assessment and statutory civil eviction process for inhabited tax forfeited (non-conservation) parcels; legislative initiative; and, data, technology and survey control maintenance and enhancement.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. General:

It is a broadly expressed desire of the people of Cass County, that the County retain its northwoods, clean lakes and its pristine rural environment. This attitude is the reason people come here to recreate and retire; that should be preserved. (Cass County survey, Fall 2000; and five community visioning meetings held in 2001 for Comprehensive Planning process.)

The generally expressed goal, is to minimally maintain what we have. The challenge to those in public administration is to both maintain what we have and to enhance the county's northwoods, clean lakes and pristine environment.

2. Specific Objectives:

- a. Consolidate the land base for the best management of conservation lands (i.e., by acquisition and exchange-keeping tax base neutral while maintaining or increasing acreage)
- b. Classify all public lands for "best use" (i.e. forestry, recreation, access, habitat protection, non-conservation - disposal, etc.)
- c. Acquire and maintain access to all county administered lands (i.e., recreational corridors, utility corridors, and traditional forest and wildlife management practices)
- d. Sustain the forestry and tourism economy while providing public lands for hunting, fishing and other recreational uses.
- e. Educate the public on the value and preservation of public lands, the county's role in sustaining public lands and the positive impact on the economy from our public lands.
- f. Preserve our natural resources as much as possible while still making them accessible to the public.
- g. Protect critical habitat through proactive work with citizen conservation groups who develop and contribute to a "Conservation Trust Revolving Account" (CTRA).

- h. Encourage the expansion of county managed public lands to enhance and expand our forestry economy and hunting heritage. A recently published study from the University of Minnesota states that the number of acres closed to public hunting (500 foot radius from a home) is growing as a result of residential sprawl/forest fragmentation in the north country.
- i. Identify and manage designated "Lines of Business" within the Land Department to gain focus. (i.e., forestry, recreation, critical habitat protection, conservation development real estate, non-conservation forfeited lands real estate)
- j. Return non-conservation* public lands to their appropriate use via the statutory sale mechanisms (i.e., appropriate use might be residential development, economic development, etc.) * See definition – Page 2 and Appendix A.

- k. Evaluate Land Department organization to ensure that the structure and staffing matches the future strategies and programs needed to successfully achieve the stated objectives.

E. POLICY CHANGES NEEDED

1. Establish a formal, periodic, interagency Lands Management Planning Process that proactively engages, through “Memoranda of Understanding” (MOU’s), the USFS, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the State of Minnesota DNR.
2. Establish the Land Asset Management Subcommittee as a part of the Natural Resources Committee for citizen input -(See flow chart – Appendix C)
3. Encourage and seek legislation of tax policy that encourages: (a) conservation easements in undeveloped lands and wild shoreline buffers, and (b) other “View Shed” or Visual Management Practices (VMP) that preserve and/or enhance the northwoods aesthetics.
4. Establish a Conservation Trust Revolving Account (CTRA) in conjunction with citizen conservation groups.
5. Classification of Tax Forfeited Lands will be taken to the Board of Commissioners for formal designation as required by statute.
6. Establish a policy to promote the use of existing corridors when sensitive areas on public lands are requested to be used for additions to public utility infrastructure.
7. Establish a “no net loss” policy in regards to land exchanges and land sale which requires no loss of County Administered Land in terms of total acres.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

(See worksheet – Appendix D)

1. Plan monitoring and update
2. Consolidation Program
3. Land Classification Program
4. Land Access Acquisition Program
5. Forestry Management Program
6. Hunting Lands Management Program
7. Critical Habitat Program – Conservation Trust Revolving Account (CTRA)
8. Lines of Business Management Program
9. Non-conservation Lands Disposal Program
10. Land Department Strategy – Structure – Staffing Program
11. Public Education Program
12. Administration of the Environmental Trust Fund
13. Public Infrastructure Plan – Utilities on existing corridors and sensitive public lands
14. “No Net Loss” Policy for County Administered Lands in acres.

E. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

Continuation of the Land Asset Management Committee into the future to semi-annually review progress towards our goals and objectives, and to monitor progress on action plans for each of the enacted programs in section VI above. Provide an annual report to the Board of Commissioners with the status of land exchanges.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

The mission of the Cass County Land Department is to professionally manage the County's forest land base within the confines of Minnesota Statutes 282 and to improve the quality and value of the County's forest land resources. Cass County adopts the approach that its responsibility is to manage the resource. It recognizes that its challenge is to "assure the continuity of the forests and human institutions that appreciate and depend upon them."¹ It recognizes the inherent tension in seeking to balance social desires, economic needs, and ecological imperatives. Yet, the County will hold its focus on long-term, not short-term, goals and objectives.

The County understands that the landscape it inherited resulted from a century of activity little of which, at least not until the past thirty years, was intentionally directed at sustaining the resource. Within the limits of this context, the County intends to create a future forest that is "natural" in character and context. Finally, the County recognizes the complexity of the forested landscape and the limits of human knowledge about it. Even as the County presents this strategic plan with its 100-year outlook, there is awareness "of the very tentative state of our current knowledge and the iterative nature of learning. We begin, finally, to appreciate that each management prescription is a working hypothesis whose outcome is not entirely predictable."² This is a plan which will be implemented stand by stand, one year at a time, with the lessons learned used to revise and improve subsequent versions of the plan.

In 2001 Cass County's forests were certified under the SmartWood© program of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The County sought this certification to assure the public and consumers of products from the forest that the lands are being managed in environmentally, economically, and socially sound manner. Certification may also offer an economic advantage in the form of a financial premium for wood products. The County intends to manage its forests in a manner that will allow it to retain this certification.

The Forest Management Plan is available on the Cass County website:

http://www.co.cass.mn.us/land/frm_plan.html

RECREATION PLAN

A. PUBLIC LAKE ACCESS

1. Scope and purpose

To define the County's role as it relates to public lake access

2. Inventory of resources

Existing improved public water access by jurisdiction:

a. MN Department of Natural Resources	89
b. United States Forest Service	28
c. Cass County	07
d. City	07
e. Township	04
f. United State Corp. of Engineers	04
g. MN Power Company	01
h. MN Department of Transportation	<u>04</u>
Total	144

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. Maintenance practices range from excellent (federal) to poor (county)
- b. Concurrent jurisdiction of access use enforcement does not exist
- c. No uniform public process is used to consider new or improvements.

4. Desired future conditions

- a. Concurrent jurisdiction of access use enforcement
- b. A uniform public process is used to consider new or improvements

5. Policy changes necessary

- a. County should not develop additional public water accesses
- b. Logging access near riparian areas should be obliterated after use
- c. County should transfer ownership of existing sites to federal or state
- d. Units of government agree to a common notice/comment system
- e. Signage at access includes a telephone contact number

6. Action plan with timeline

Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (January, 2009)

7. Evaluation method and interval

- a.** Annual lake association survey by county of enforcement and maintenance issues
- b.** Annual report by Land Department on status of county sites and unit of government cooperation in notice/comment system
- c.** Annual report by Sheriff's Office on calls for service related to public water access

8. List of supporting materials

- a.** List of lake associations
- b.** List of unit of government public water access contact person
- c.** Map of present improved public water accesses

B. PERMANENT TREE STANDS AND SHOOTING LANES

1. Scope and purpose

To establish Cass County's position on permanent tree stands and shooting lanes.

2. Inventory of resources

- a.** Permanent tree stands are scattered throughout the forest with densities greatest near timber access trails.
- b.** Land Department estimates thousands of permanent tree stands exist today on County-administered land.

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a.** No local ordinances exist prohibiting permanent tree stands.
- b.** Existing state law allows timber trespass charges if trees are cut down (larger than 4")
- c.** Existing state law allows damage to public property charges if nails are placed in trees.
 - d.** Many valuable trees are currently being damaged by clearing for shooting lanes.
 - e.** Permanent stands denigrate the forest by establishing "territorial rights", timber volume loss, litter, and visual effects.
 - f.** State wildlife areas do not allow any stands for more the 24 hours.
 - g.** USFS does not allow permanent stands.

4. Desired future conditions

- a.** Prevent additional permanent stands that are fastened to trees on CAL.
- b.** Remove existing permanent stands fastened to trees on CAL.
- c.** Prevention of damage to marketable tree species (including regeneration) as it relates to shooting lanes.

5. Policy changes necessary

- a.** County should seek enactment of state legislation as a preferred alternative to local ordinance and determine which policy initiatives are already covered by state statute.
 - b.** County should remove damaging permanent tree stands.

- c. County should develop a uniform enforcement plan with state, federal, and tribal input to minimize confusion and cost.
- d. Educate the hunting public about the county policies on damaging tree stands and shooting lanes.
 - State hunting regulations.
 - Firearm safety training.
 - Township newsletters.
 - Cass county newsletters.
 - Local papers.

6. Action plan with timeline

- a. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (January, 2008)

7. Evaluation method and interval

- a. Annual report by land department of estimated permanent tree stands and timber damage.
- b. Annual report by interagency enforcement team on recreation enforcement.

8. List of supporting materials

- a. State statute on timber damage and trespass.
- b. Permanent tree stand regulations presently in effect by jurisdiction.
- c. Forest Resource Management Plan.

**C. MOTORIZED/NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS--CROSS COUNTRY
MOTORIZED TRAVEL**

1. Scope and purpose

To establish policy on which trails on County Administered Lands are open for motorized use and to prohibit cross country motorized travel.

2. Inventory of resources

- a. Approximately 11% of CAL (28,000 acres) is restricted to non-motorized recreation only.
- b. The other 89% (227,000 acres) is open to motorized use.

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. No local ordinances exist restricting motorized use, except in riparian areas
- b. No ordinances exist prohibiting cross-country travel.
- c. Many cross-country motorized paths lead to permanent deer stands on County Administered Lands.
 - d. Timber trespass may be charged for any merchantable trees removed by construction of cross-country motorized paths.

- e. Erosion and environmental degradation is occurring due to cross-country motorized travel on County Administered Land.
- 4. Desired future conditions**
 - a. Trails are closed to motorized use unless posted open.
 - b. Trail maintenance coincides with use.
 - c. Develop a uniform enforcement plan with state, federal, and tribal input to minimize confusion and cost.
 - d. A variety of different types of motorized travel will be considered during trail designations.
- 5. Policy changes necessary**
 - a. Determine which policy initiatives on cross-country motorized travel and operation of motorized vehicles on trails posted closed are already covered by state statute.
 - b. Seek enactment of new state legislation as a preferred alternative to local ordinance
- 6. Action plan with timeline**

Request county board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption on comprehensive plan (January, 2009)
- 7. Evaluation method and interval**
 - a. Evaluate all trails by Land Department staff biannually.
 - b. The Natural Resource Committee will evaluate policies annually for effectiveness.
- 8. List of supporting materials**
 - a. USFS Policy on classification of trails.
 - b. State statute on trespass

D. HANDICAPPED RECREATION ACCESS

- 1. Scope and purpose**

To determine Cass County's role in providing recreation access to handicapped
- 2. Inventory of resources**
 - a. DNR presently issues permits allowing shooting from motorized vehicles
 - b. No public land is presently set-aside exclusively for handicapped use
 - c. Deep Portage provides wheel chair and blind environmental education trails, signs and instruction (limited to portions of the reserve)
- 3. Assessment of existing conditions**
 - a. Deep Portage would provide an excellent site for a sponsor to provide expanded handicapped services including hunting with dorm access
 - b. The state program should not be expanded locally
 - c. The state program promotes conflicts between user groups

4. Desired future conditions & examples

- a. Handicapped recreation enthusiasts and Deep Portage benefit from expanded services
- b. Carlos Avery (state) & Camp Ripley (federal) are among the sites that offer handicapped access and "hunts" in cooperation with advocacy groups

5. Policy changes necessary

None

6. Action plan with timeline

Recommend Deep Portage conduct a market survey/seek sponsors if they determine appropriate

7. Evaluation method and interval

Market, sponsors, and Deep Portage will determine success

8. List of supporting materials

- a. DNR handicapped permit application
- b. Cass County legal memorandum discussing handicapped access
- c. Deep Portage educational program description

E. ATV TRAILS

1. Scope and purpose

To establish a network of destination ATV trails.

2 inventory of resources

Currently there are designated ATV trails in the Foothills State Forest. The majority of the CAL is open to ATV use.

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. No local ordinance exists restricting motorized use, except in riparian zones of wetlands and state laws are not enforced.
- b. Heavy use damages trails and wetlands.
- c. ATV license funds can be used to establish and maintain trails in a similar fashion to snowmobile trails.
- d. ATV clubs and users are willing to assist in developing and maintaining trails.

4. Desired future conditions

- a. Provide destination trails for ATVs, which can be a tourism-marketing tool for the county and its businesses.
- b. Establish maintenance policies and practices on ATV trails to reduce damage on existing, non-maintained, county trails.

- c. After establishment of ATV trail system, go to trails closed unless posted open policy.

5. Policy changes necessary

None until trail system is established then adopt, after review, closed unless posted open trail policy.

6. Action plan with timeline

- a. Work with ATV clubs, users, Cass County Land Recreation Advisory Committee to define and establish trail network.
- b. Educate county residents of the trail and its importance to county tourism.
- c. Review motorized/non-motorized trail policy and recommend changes based on evaluation.

7. Evaluation method and interval

Maintain CAL recreation advisory volunteer committee to work with the Land Department and ATV clubs and users to evaluate yearly progress.

8. List of supporting materials

Forest Resource Management Plan.

F. WATER SURFACE USE MANAGEMENT

1. Scope and purpose

Cass County supports the current management of surface waters by the townships or cities they are located in.

2. Inventory of resources

- a. The sheriff's department is in charge of navigational hazard permits and water safety
- b. DNR licenses watercraft
- c. The townships control and enforce all ordinances pertaining to surface waters except Leech and Gull Lake county ordinances
- d. DNR must approve ordinances prior to adoption.

3. Assessment of existing conditions

The public is requesting additional water surface regulation.

4. Desired future conditions

- a. Water surface use is determined and enforced by jurisdiction it is located in.
- b. Preserve existing road easements ending in lakes by County, Township, and State for public use.

5. Policy changes necessary

None

6. Action plan with timeline

- a. Notify adjacent counties of Cass County policy (common water boundary).
- b. Existing Road Easements – Ongoing.

7. Evaluation method and interval

None

8. List of supporting materials

DNR water surface information.

G. DISPERSED CAMPING AND RESTRICTING STRUCTURES

1. Scope and purpose

To allow Dispersed Camping and restrict structures on County Administered Land (CAL)

2. Inventory of resources

- a. At present, camping is allowed anywhere on CAL, and structures can be put up on a temporary basis.
- b. There is a 14 day time limit on how long a person may camp in one location.

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. No ordinance exists prohibiting camping for extended periods of time.
 - b. No ordinance exists prohibiting temporary structures for extended periods of time.
 - c. Camping and structures are a problem mostly during the fall, specifically at deer season.
 - d. Minnesota Statute 90.311 deals with squatters on CAL and MS 90.321 deals with prosecution for trespass.

4. Desired future conditions

None

5. Policy changes necessary

None

6. Action plan with timeline

None

7. Evaluation method and interval

Same as trails.

8. List of supporting materials

Forest Resource Management Plan.

H. TRAIL CLOSURES

1. Scope and purpose

To give the Land Commissioner permission to close Timber Access trails at his discretion for any justifiable reason.

2. Inventory of resources

- a. Approximately fifty miles of Timber Access Trails (TAT's) are closed to motorized traffic.
- b. There are 800-1000 miles of TAT's on Cass County lands (1,939 acres).

3 Assessment of existing conditions

- a. No county ordinances exist banning motorized recreation on closed trails.
- b. Can enforce state trespass laws if trails is properly signed.
- c. Non-motorized trails are used frequently by motorized users.
- d. Before a trail can be gated, county commissioners must approve the gating.

4. Desired future conditions

- a. Enforcement of trail closure violations.
- b. Land Commissioner has discretion to close trails as needed.

5. Policy changes necessary

- a. County Board gives Land Commissioner ability to use discretion.
- b. Seek enactment of state legislation as a preferred alternative to local ordinance. Determine which policy initiatives are already covered by state statute.

6. Action plan with timeline

Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of Comprehensive Plan.

7. Evaluation method and interval

8. List of supporting materials

Forest Resource Management Plan.

I. RECREATION DESTINATION CORRIDORS

1. Scope and purpose

To establish corridors on public land used exclusively for recreation destination travel year round.

2. Inventory of resources

- a. Total destination trail miles:
- b. Trails limited by season (over water):
- c. Trails limited by easement use:
- d. Destinations served:
- e. Uses allowed:

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. The absence of year round destination routes creates additional use conflicts on roads and road rights-of-way.
- b. Trails by easement are becoming more difficult to obtain and keep.
- c. Gaps in public ownership cause repetitive reroutes.
- d. Timber access roads are not designed to feed the destination system.
- e. USFS process for trail designation is difficult.

4. Desired future conditions

- a. Permanent public corridors linking destinations.
- b. Reduce conflicts on road rights-of-way by encouraging corridor use.
- c. Wherever feasible, encourage multiple use.
- d. Survey grade global positioning documentation of trail location.
- e. Marketing program to encourage local and tourist trail use.

5. Policy changes necessary

- a. Use timber access roads to "feed" destination trails
- b. Apply for USFS "permanent" classification
- c. Provide program specific staff and financial resources

6. Action plan with timeline

Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (January, 2009)

7. Evaluation method and interval

- a. Natural resource committee establishes timetable and goals
- b. Annual report by land department

8. List of supporting materials

Existing trail map

J. RECREATION ENFORCEMENT

1. Scope and purpose

To implement a county strategy for enforcement of non-game recreation laws.

2. Inventory of resources

- a. Boat and water program: Officers and volunteers for major lakes, funding by the County
- b. ATV program:
- c. Snowmobile program:
- d. Other programs

3. Assessment of existing conditions

- a. Calls for service for non-game recreation law violations are increasing
- b. Ownership of the land dictating the responding agency
- c. Boat and water assisted by volunteers.
- d. Local recreation education provided annually
- e. County and Tribe presently have an agreement to enforce each other's non-game (civil) laws.
- f. DNR and USFS have been active only on fish and game issues
- g. Lack of uniform standards complicate public compliance and enforcement
- h. Primary complaints are water surface use

4. Desired future conditions

- a. DNR, County, Tribe, and USFS have common standards and enforce each others rules/laws
- b. Local education programs continue
- c. Volunteer program initiated beyond water patrol
- d. Citations and prosecutions increase

5. Policy changes necessary

- a. Expand county/tribe agreement to DNR and USFS
- b. Develop a uniform enforcement plan with state, federal, and tribal input to minimize confusion and cost.

6. Action plan with timeline

Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (January, 2009)

7. Evaluation method and interval

Annual report by interagency enforcement team on recreation enforcement.

8. List of supporting materials

- a. County calls for service, non-game recreation
- b. Present prosecution statistics by type and jurisdiction

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

COUNTY FACILITIES PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To provide facilities that promote the county's mission.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Courthouse
2. Annex
3. LEC
4. Highway and six maintenance shops
5. Land and Public meeting rooms (new in 2007)
6. Health and Human Services
7. Pine River Satellite Offices (Health, Human and Veteran Services, Environmental Services, Sheriffs Dept.)
8. Former AhGwahChing site
10. Web based services

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Perception in southern and eastern area's of low service level
2. Web based services are well established
3. Existing central site (Walker) has reached its physical limits
4. County growth based on in-migration trends vary with the economy

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Consistent Service delivery throughout the county
2. Communication as to the services provided, where and by whom needs to be improved.
3. Continue to improve the county website: integrate into local access by using city/township/family center clerks; promote website as option for doing county business
4. Provide remote service centers in communities based on need/demand
5. Insure that future remote sites have connectivity to central County computer systems.

E. POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY

1. Policy to require that with each future county expansion the county will evaluate whether the expansion should occur in the county seat or outside of the county seat (remote service center)
2. Adopt a policy that would establish guidelines and incentives whereby local government or family centers who have full-time employees coverage could act as service representatives for county government to provide information and access to county website, county department documents/information.
3. Monitor usage and availability of the county web site by constituents.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (June, 2002)

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Customer satisfaction surveys
2. Annual budget review of off-site service delivery
3. Monitor usage of website

H. LISTING OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. County facility map
2. Service delivery schedule hard copy & website.



EMERGENCY SERVICES PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To provide an appropriate level of advanced planning for disaster response

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. County emergency operations plan
2. Disaster response training program
3. NOAA weather system support for all facilities
4. Central control of warning siren system
5. Community level plans
6. Cell phone coverage
7. Recreational trail mile markers
8. Enhanced 911 street name and address system
9. Past experience in FEMA financial recovery programs

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Public health disaster responses are routinely updated.
2. Townships do not have emergency operations plans
3. NOAA is online
4. Emergency operations need to be exercised more often.
5. The central portion of the county (Hackensack and Longville) are too far from emergency medical attention, such as hospital or urgent care

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Expansion of NOAA coverage at Bemidji, Grand Rapids, & Leader
2. Additional siren locations.
3. Townships over a certain population should be encouraged to have a disaster operation plan
4. All recreation trails need mileage or location markers
5. Centrally located emergency medical facility operating 24 hours 7 days per week

E. POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY

1. County Emergency Response personnel should provide an annual training to cities and townships over 800 population at least once per year to review disaster plans and to inform them regarding County role
2. NOAA should be promoted aggressively for use by schools, public buildings, and daycare providers
3. The county should use all possible resources to make residents aware of the emergency planning that exists through an Emergency Services Director


F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (June, 2002)

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

Annual report by emergency service director

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Present county disaster plan
 2. Public health annex
 3. NOAA weather system coverage map
 4. Cell phone coverage map
- 

HEALTH CARE PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To enhance the promotion of wellness in the county.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

- 1. Hospitals** - In county: Indian Health Services, Cass Lake Hospitals Out of county: Grand Rapids, Deer River, Park Rapids, Brainerd, Bemidji, Crosby, Staples, Wadena.
- 2. Physician Clinics** - In county: Pine River, Walker (2), Longville, Cass Lake (2), Remer Out of county: in same cities as listed above & Pequot Lakes
- 3. Nursing Homes** - In county: Pine River, Walker, Hackensack. Out of county: in same cities as listed in #1
- 4. Assisted Living:** Hackensack, Pine River, Walker (2), and Remer - also available out of county.
- 5. Adult Foster Care Homes:** Pine River (4), Cass Lake (1), Pillager (2), Walker (3) for Developmentally Disabled: Backus (4), Hackensack (1), Staples/Motley (3)
- 6. Board & Lodge:** Pine River
- 7. Ambulance Services - In county:** Remer, Longville, Pine River, Walker, Leech Lake Out of county: Staples, Brainerd, Deer River, Crosby, Blackduck, Grand Rapids, Park Rapids, Bemidji, Wadena
- 8. First Response Teams:** Cass Lake, Backus, Hackensack, Outing, East Gull Lake, Pine River, Pillager
- 9. Home Health Care** - In county: Leech Lake, Cass County Public Health Out of county: Golden Heart (Brainerd), North Country (Bemidji) Staples, Grand Rapids, St. Joseph's (Brainerd), St. Joseph's (Park Rapids), Crosby, Deer River
- 10. Public Health:** Cass County and Leech Lake Reservation
- 11. Mental Health Clinics** - In county: Walker, Hackensack, Leech Lake Reservation Out of county: in same cities as # 1 above
- 12. Detox & Chemical Dependency** - In county: Detox: Leech Lake Reservation Out of county: CD: Brainerd & Fergus Falls Detox: Nevis, Grand Rapids, Brainerd
- 13. School Nurses:** Walker, Pine River, Cass Lake (LPN's), Bug School (LPN), Pillager?
- 14. Parish Nurses/Interfaith Support Services and other nonprofits, and fraternal organizations**
- 15. Jail Health Nurse:** Public Health provides
- 16. Family Centers:** (provide space community health service)

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. EMS - response to county in primary service area/mutual aid agreements
2. Hospitals - access outside the county for most residents
3. Health Care Workers - shortage of staff; high personal cost for training, low wages
4. 1st Responders group - need for additional volunteers
5. EMS - shortage of volunteers; high cost for training EMT's; large time commitment
6. Emergency care facility - lacking
7. Population is becoming more aged
8. Population growth is seasonal and varies with the economy
9. Jail Health program will grow
10. Air ambulance available
11. The absence of regional retail centers in the County complicates delivery systems

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Additional paramedics and EMT's in ambulance services system
2. Coordination of First Response Teams with ambulance service providers
3. Coordinated volunteer "soft care services" (transportation, cleaning, meal preparation, etc.) i.e., Interfaith Support Services
4. Certified School Nurse (RN) health coverage in all schools
5. Additional long-term care options/alternative settings in communities for the Elderly (board & care, foster care, assisted living, etc.)
6. Increased jail health services to meet the rising needs of inmates with mental illness, chemical dependency issues and chronic illness.
7. Analysis of response times and availability of emergency medical services
8. Assist communities to acquire funding for Rural Health Clinics
9. Adult day care services

E. POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY

1. Policy to use all possible resources available i.e., county websites, newsletters, senior citizen meetings, to inform county residents about the health services available to county residents.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan

G. EVALUATION METHOD INTERVAL

1. Reviews gaps analysis annually
2. Health & Human Services Annual Report

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. PSA (Primary Service Area) Map
2. Gaps analysis (one page summary)
3. Cass County Health Profile

4. MN Department of Health public interest review of North Central Cass Hospital needs

HOUSING PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To provide a plan to satisfy the unmet housing needs in Cass County.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Cass County Housing Authority
2. 3 city HRA's - Cass Lake, Pine River, Walker
3. Bi County CAP
4. Central Minnesota Housing
5. Leech Lake Housing & Urban Development
6. Habitat for Humanity

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. There is a need for affordable housing
2. County Housing Authority is ineffective due to the lack of funding, staffing and visionary structure.
3. Cass County has been active in making available non- conservation tax-forfeited land to private owners through the city's governments at fair market value.
4. There is no public finance policy in place.
5. Housing agency's services are fragmented.
6. No county wide building code.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Revitalize the existing county HRA looking at existing models (i.e., Itasca County, City of Brainerd) to become more effective.
2. Non- conservation tax forfeited land should be available to townships and HRA's.
3. The county should adopt a public financing policy.
4. Partnering efforts among the existing housing agencies to give unified approach.
5. Additional affordable housing to enhance the economic development potential.

E. POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY

1. Expand the current positive activity of making non-conservation tax forfeited land available at fair market value to cities by also making it available to townships that have a current land use plan and/or HRA's for purposes of housing.
2. Form a task force to study the best method to revitalize the County Housing Authority.
3. Adopt a public financing policy and tax abatement policy to be used in partnership with local government to enhance housing opportunities in Cass County.

4. Adopt a policy that would make housing resources available on the county web site.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan.

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Annual Report by the County Board regarding the policies adopted by the Board.

H. LISTING OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Latest Cass County Housing Study.

SCHOOL PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To partner with the five school districts of Cass County and neighboring districts to work cooperatively towards common program goals

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Health and Human Services
2. Sheriffs Department
3. County Attorney's Office
4. Extension
5. Environmental Services
6. MIS Department
7. Probation Department
8. County Administrator
9. Auditor/Treasurer's Office

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS/PROGRAMS

1. Cass County/Leech Lake Reservation Children's Initiative Programs (Youth & Family Workers, Day Treatment, ENABL, Abstinence Education etc.)
2. Youth Tobacco Prevention
3. Youth Risk Behavior - alcohol
4. HIV/STD Education
5. Early Childhood Screening
6. Consultation to school health personnel
7. Provision of school immunizations
8. Child Abuse Prevention & Reporting
9. Truancy Circles
10. Children's Mental Health
11. Members of the Interagency Team for special needs children (PI-IN & SW)
12. Environmental Programming (school forests, Youth as a Resource, River Watch)

13. Family Centers - bridge from community to school

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Increased availability of law enforcement within the school
2. Birth record information for school census
3. Increased enforcement of truancy and educational neglect laws (i.e., CHIPS Petition available)
4. Expand programs to all communities/schools
5. Cooperative effort to seek funding for countywide programming
6. Cooperative programming with Leech Lake Health Division and other departments.

7. Facilitate improved coordination of fragmented health education programs presently being done by schools, county, LLR
8. Coordination of all county departments services to school through Health, Human, and Veterans Services

E. POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY

1. Establish provision of birth records to schools through Health, Human, and Veterans Services.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (June, 2002)

G. EVALUATION METHOD INTERVAL

1. Annual Children's Initiative Report and evaluation of services
2. Ongoing tracking of truancy rates - annual
3. Health & Human Services Annual Report
4. Evaluation of this School Plan on an annual basis by Collaborative Board
5. School input through the Collaborative on an annual basis

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Map of school district borders

FINANCE PLAN – CAPITAL PLANNING

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To maintain a capital improvement plan that is affordable and meets county needs.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. State law allows counties to adopt multi-year plans after state review
2. Present plan adopted September 8, 1999 and covers years 2000-2008
3. Plan is updated annually after notice to the public

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Annual tax effort has historically varied from \$0 to \$1,062,000
2. Present annual capital plan property tax effort is \$264,000
3. Present plan projects costs for improvements with a useful life of at least ten years for all County buildings, facilities, roads, trails, equipment and communications systems.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. A local process that requires a clear documented need for a project
2. Minimum variation in annual property tax effort to fund capital programs.
3. Maintenance of appropriate fund balance(s) for unforeseen replacement costs and a preference to save annual effort to avoid borrowing

E. POLICY CHANGE NEEDS

1. None

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Resubmit for state review prior to present plan expiration

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Annually by Board of Commissioners

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Current Capital Improvement Plan Fiscal

BUSINESS SUBSIDIES

FINANCE PLAN – BUSINESS SUBSIDIES

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To establish policy regarding the use of business subsidies in unincorporated areas

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Three direct business subsidies are available: tax increment financing, tax abatement, and JOBZ.
 2. Each subsidy must meet initial and subsequent reporting criteria
 3. Each subsidy effectively redirects public property tax dollars back into the qualifying project
- 40 projects have been authorized over the last 16 years (see attachment)

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. The use of business subsidies can be controversial in the sense of providing public funds to the private sector and the "but for" test
2. Recent shifts from local to state based property tax effectively limits the incentives to developers

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Businesses requiring subsidies should be located in areas that provide the appropriate public infrastructure
2. Discourage intra-county competition for business subsidies

E. POLICY CHANGE NEEDS

1. The County expand technical assistance to any jurisdiction considering subsidies
2. Business subsidies are not available from the County in any unincorporated area (outside of a city)

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes for implementation upon adoption of comprehensive plan (June, 2002)

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Annually by Board of Commissioners

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. List of projects receiving business subsidies
2. Related joint powers agreements
3. The adopted County Business Subsidy Plan

FINANCE PLAN – PUBLIC LAND

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To monitor the property tax base balance between public and private land.

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. The private land base (40%) paid \$43.3 million in locally levied property taxes in 2008
2. The public land base (60%) generated \$2.8 million in combined public lands payment in 2008

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Service cost analysis is not presently available by ownership
2. Public land economic multiplier is difficult to document
3. Present policy includes no net loss of public land on a value and acreage basis

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. To analyze changes on the basis of tax base and economic impact (tax benefit vs. tax burden)
2. Payments in lieu of tax (PILT) should equal the service cost of the related public land parcel
3. The process for private to public land transactions should include an opportunity for all affected parties to comment and have a meaningful impact on the transaction outcome
4. To actively engage Cities and Townships in the management of public land.

E. POLICY CHANGE NEEDS

1. Communicate county's desire to comment on public acquisitions

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Annually document changes in private vs. public ownership patterns

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Annual review

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Parcel map by ownership
2. PILT payments by jurisdiction (see public land plan)

FINANCE PLAN – CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To maximize public participation in financial planning and policy development

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

1. Citizen Budget Committee
2. Required annual publications
3. Private media
4. School districts
5. Cities
6. Townships
7. Federal Government
8. Comprehensive Plan Review Committee

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Limited attempts to plan or share information intergovernmental
2. Public hearing notices generally limited to annual budget process

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. Web based financial information and feedback
2. Maintain quality and timely information to private media

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The transportation systems in Cass County can be a major contributing determinant of the economic health and quality of life for the County.

In response to the nationwide goal of a transportation system that promotes economic growth and efficient movement of goods and services, it is extremely important that rural counties, such as Cass, be involved in transportation planning locally, regionally, and cooperatively on a statewide basis.

B. TRANSPORTATION GOALS

To facilitate the coordination of transportation planning for Cass County, with that of the region and the State, the following goals are identified for Cass County's Transportation Plan.

1. To provide a balanced, multi-model transportation system for the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services.
2. To maximize public involvement in the transportation planning process.

3. To foster cooperation and reduce institutional barriers between all entities involved in providing transportation to the County.
4. To coordinate this plan with the transportation plan of the State and Region.
5. To ensure adequate maintenance and the functional integrity of the existing transportation system.
6. To identify existing and projected deficiencies in the transportation system, including right-of-way, and to establish methods to improve these deficiencies.
7. To establish a rational methodology for prioritizing projects.
8. To identify and efficiently utilize all potential sources of funds for transportation projects.
9. To recognize the interrelationship of transportation and existing and future land use concerns and to integrate transportation and land use planning.
10. To be sensitive to the transportation needs of industry and those of economic development, while protecting and improving the high quality of life in the County.
11. To encourage Cities and Townships to coordinate their transportation planning with the County.
12. To anticipate and provide sufficient right of way width, in planning new projects or works of improvement, to accommodate all legal uses that may take place within rights of way.

C. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN CASS COUNTY

The following is a listing and current inventory of the existing transportation systems serving Cass County.

1. Road Systems

a. State Trunk Highways - There is presently 264.3 miles of State Trunk Highway serving-Cass County. These highways have functional classifications of Major Collector, Minor Arterial, or Principal Arterial. Presently these highways are performing adequately in delivering their required service. To assure future performance of this system MnDOT is presently developing planning objectives for the major highways in this system by developing corridor studies which address access management as well as appropriate land use issues. These corridor studies are presently being prepared for Trunk Highways 210, 371 and 34.

b. County State Aid Highways - There is presently 531.70 miles of County State Aid Highways that service Cass County. These highways have a functional classification of Major or Minor Collector. Presently of these 531.70miles of highway, 390.77 miles are bituminous surfaced and 140.93 miles are gravel surfaced.

The funding for improvements to the County State Highways primarily comes from State of Minnesota gas tax revenues as well as Federal gas tax revenues.

The County State Aid Highway System in Cass County is presently providing adequate service to the County; though there are signs that future demands for increased miles of hard surfaced road to provide for the traffic growth and associated heavier truck traffic are evident.

Present and future system needs are addressed through the development and maintenance of the Cass County Highway Departments 5-year Capital Improvement-Construction Plan. In this plan, future projects are prioritized and appropriate funding sources are identified.

To augment the County's State Aid Highway Construction Plan in providing a desired level of service on the gravel surfaced highways on the County State Aid System, Cass County has implemented a gravel road stabilization program. The goal of this program is to provide for a generally higher level of service on gravel highways that carry perceived higher traffic volumes. This is accomplished by stabilizing the gravel surface on these highways by applying various industry accepted, as well as experimental, methods and applications.

c. County Roads - There are presently 275.53 miles of County Roads on this system. These roads are functionally classified as Collector or local roads. Of the 275.53 miles of road on this system, 57.81 miles are bituminous surfaced and 217.72 miles are gravel surfaced.

Improvement projects on the County Road System are prioritized by the Cass County Board of Commissioners and are funded primarily by Property Tax Levy Revenues.

Presently this system is performing adequately. There are indications, as with the County State Aid System, that the needs associated with County growth are increasing faster than funding.

There is a gravel road stabilization program in place for the gravel County Road System also. The criteria for road selection is the same as for the County State Aid Highway System.

d. Town Roads - There are presently 869.34 miles of roads on the Town Road System. These are functionally classified as local roads.

The majority of these roads are gravel, or soil surfaced and primarily serve the purpose of local access to residents, resorts and some industry.

Fifty five Town Boards (and the County Board for unorganized Townships) administer this road system in the County. Funding is derived from local property tax levy revenues along with some State of Minnesota Gas Tax revenues

The Town Road System currently is performing adequately, but is seeing the same issues associated with growth, as the other highway systems.

e. Other Highway Systems - Other highway systems serving Cass County are City Streets and Roads, Leech Lake Reservation Tribal Roads, Private Roads and Cartways, and Forest Access Roads.

These roads primarily serve local or recreation transportation needs. They provide a very important role in maintaining access to personal and public recreational property, thus add to the overall quality of life for residents and visitors of Cass County.

2. Rail Systems

Cass County is presently served by two freight rail lines, both of which are owned by Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad.

One rail line runs parallel with T.H. 210, in the southern end of the County, and the other runs generally parallel with T.H. 2 in the northern end of the County.

The present needs of the County are being met by these two rail lines.

3. Airports

Cass County is presently served by 6 local airports located within the County and 2 regional airports located within close proximity of Cass County

The local airports along with their State and Federal classification are:

East Gull Lake (Landing Strip, Basic Utility)

Longville (Intermediate System, Basic Utility)

Pine River (Intermediate System, Basic Utility)

Walker (Intermediate System, Basic Utility)

Remer (Landing Strip, Basic Utility)

Backus (Landing Strip, Basic Utility)

Landing Strip - State Functional Classification of airports with turf runways, capable of accommodating single-engine and light twin engine aircraft.

Intermediate System - State Functional Classification of airports which can be used by single-engine and light to medium sized multi-engine aircraft. These airports have paved and lighted runways less than 5,000 feet in length.

Basic Utility - Federal Aviation Administration classification of airports which can accommodate 95 percent of the general aviation fleet operating under 12,500 pound gross weight.

Regional Airports serving Cass County are Bemidji and Brainerd. Though not located within Cass County, they do serve to provide commercial air service to people and businesses in Cass County.

The present aviation needs of Cass County are being met by the local and regional airports serving the area. Expansion of some of the local airports, as well as the Brainerd Regional Airport, is presently being considered to address future growth needs.

4. Transit

Present Transit Services operating in Cass County are Commercial Bus Service, Charter Bus Services, Ride-to-Work sponsored by the Tribal Casinos, and Dial-a-Ride services provided by the Cass County Council on Aging and Veterans Service Office.

Transit needs are presently being met on a County and Regional basis. Local transit means to provide transportation for senior citizens and disabled residents are not in existence.

Future needs should be addressed cooperatively between State, County and Local (City and Township) agencies.

5. Recreational Trails

Cass County is presently served by Recreational Trails under Federal, State and County jurisdiction.

These trails serve to provide transportation and recreational uses and add - to the economic and quality of life to the County.

The State Trails serving Cass County are the Paul Bunyan and Heartland Trails. The Paul Bunyan Trail is a 100 mile long multi-use trail which connects Brainerd and Bemidji. This trail passes through the towns of Pine Rivet Backus, Hackensack and Walker in Cass County.

The Heartland Trail is a 50 mile long multi-use trail which connects Park Rapids, Walker and Cass Lake. It also intersects with the Paul Bunyan Trail, near Walker, which allows for connectivity and access to the towns served by the Paul Bunyan Trail.

The major federal trails serving Cass County is the Mi-Gi-Zi trail, which is a 17.8 mile long multi-use trail which begins at the Knutson Dam Campground on the Mississippi River and ends at the intersection with the Heartland Trail, near Cass Lake,

The County Recreation Trail System consists of 433.6 miles of snowmobile trails, 25.6 miles of cross-country ski trails and 20.0 miles of hunter walking trails.

Recreational trail usage continues to rise with the growth in the County. Presently there are improvement and expansion projects planned and under construction.

D. ACTION PLAN

Continued coordination with the various Federal, State, Tribal, and Local government agencies should be pursued to assure for the necessary maintenance and growth of the Transportation Systems identified in this Plan and to meet the goals identified at the onset of this Plan. The ongoing promotion of resources dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of local transportation systems.

E. EVALUATION METHOD

For transportation in Cass County, evaluation must be ongoing because the demands on the transportation system will continue to change due to the anticipated continued growth of the area and County.

Proposed future projects and programs should be evaluated to assess whether the goals of the Transportation Plan are being met.

F. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. County road minimum criteria
2. Unorganized road minimum criteria

UTILITY PLAN

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To report on the state and condition of utilities that serve constituents in Cass County. To determine what involvement Cass County can and should have with the utilities to better the quality of living for the people of Cass County

B. INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

- 1. Telephone Companies** (see list of supporting materials)
- 2. Broadband Companies** (see list of supporting materials)
- 3. Power Companies** (see list of supporting materials)
- 4. Natural Gas Companies** (see list of supporting materials)
- 5. Petroleum Companies** (see list of supporting materials)
- 6. Municipal Water** (see list of supporting materials)
- 7. Municipal Sewer** (see list of supporting materials)
8. Cell Towers and Carriers (see list of supporting materials)

C. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Telecommunications access is adequate and available County-wide in all but a very small area in northern Cass County
2. Power is available throughout Cass County
3. Natural gas (residential and commercial) is available in parts of southern Cass County and in the City of Cass Lake and parts of Pike Bay Township
4. Municipal Water is at least partially available in 7 of 15 communities
5. Municipal Sewer is at least partially available in 12 of 15 communities
6. Cass County recognizes that the county constituents benefit from Utility services and that Utilities need reasonable access to lands for placement of facilities to serve County Constituents. Cass County has been historically supportive of Utility ROW within County Road ROW.
7. Cass County recognizes wireless communications benefits constituents of Cass County.
8. Cass County recognizes the need for effective and affordable wastewater treatment to protect the County's surface water and groundwater.
9. All utilities provide alternative rates, community development assistance, Gopher State One Call underground locating, energy conservation incentives and customer service assistance.
10. Power growth and reliability are addressed through planning and forecasting by individual utility work plans, regional interconnection organizations and federal reliability councils.
11. The Minnesota Legislature does not currently have plans to deregulate the electric industry.
12. All Cass County electric providers currently include water and wind sources in their electricity source mix.

13. Utilities wish to continue working and communicating with the Cass County Board and its residents toward solutions that benefit Cass County.

D. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

1. The county will continue to support Utility Right-of Way (ROW) adjacent to publicly maintained road rights-of-way. The County will require the use of existing road and utility right of way for new or expanded utility projects whenever possible. The County also supports the location of additional utilities in established existing utility rights-of-way.
2. The County will allow construction of communication towers on County land with reasonable accommodation for preserving the esthetics of the area.
3. The County supports extending municipal sewer service, where feasible, to high-density areas where individual septic treatment systems negatively impact the environment.
4. The County will assist municipalities in identifying high-density areas in need of central sewer systems.
5. The County will also assist municipalities with writing sewer and water grant/loan applications to State and Federal funding agencies, conducting public meetings and general planning efforts.
6. As new technologies, standards and legislation are developed, the Cass County Board will be asked to make policy, ordinance and permit approval decisions to accommodate these new technologies.

E. POLICY CHANGE NEEDS

1. Cass County will require utility easements within all Planned Unit Developments, subdivisions, and plats, as part of the design standard.
2. Cass County will provide reasonable notice (minimum 7 days) to Utilities when planned maintenance or construction activity occurs on Road ROW
3. The County has adopted a Tower ordinance that protects the interest of the constituents of Cass County, which will also allow reasonable placement of Towers to adequately service the geographic area. Radio propagation will have a direct influence on the reasonableness of permit approval such that a tower ordinance will not exclude wireless services from Cass County constituents.
4. Cass County through the Environmental Services Department will meet annually with municipal sewer and water system providers to discuss plans and promote cooperation.

F. ACTION PLAN WITH TIMELINE

1. Request County Board to accept policy changes and to enact Ordinance changes as needed upon adoption of Comprehensive Plan.
2. Cass County will work with Utilities through membership in local utility organizations like Lakes Utility Coordinating Committee (LUCC) to maintain contact and coordination with the Utility community.

G. EVALUATION METHOD AND INTERVAL

1. Review impact of changes through annual survey of Utilities.
2. Review of appropriate Land Use Ordinances to ensure consistency.

H. LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Inventory of Utilities
2. Telephone Exchange Map
3. Municipal Sewer Systems Map and Spreadsheet
4. Municipal Water Systems Map and Spreadsheet
5. Pipelines Map
6. Natural Gas Service Areas Map
7. Survey of Municipal Sewer and Water Systems
8. Power Companies Service Area Map
9. Cell/Wireless Providers Maps
10. Statement of Current Conditions and Needs
11. Electric Utilities Services Statement
12. Cable TV Service Map

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE (2010 – 2014)

Citizen Review: Board of Commissioners

Staff Coordination: Robert Yochum, County Administrator

ACTION	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Facilities					
Annual County service delivery plan	X	X	X	X	X
Utilize community facilities for service delivery	X	X	X	X	X
Monitor use of county website	X	X	X	X	X
Emergency Services					
Maintain NOAH weather alert coverage	X	X	X	X	X
Encourage community disaster plans	X	X	X	X	X
County-sponsored disaster training	X	X	X	X	X
Conclude assessment for central medical facility	X	X			
Health Care					
Increase numbers of emergency service personnel	X	X	X	X	X
Coordinate volunteer services	X	X	X	X	X
Assess long term care options for seniors		X	X	X	X
Housing					
Coordinate with County Housing Authorities		X	X	X	X
Maintain tax abatement policy	X	X	X	X	X
Assessed the need for state building code	X				
School					
Increase law enforcement availability to schools			X	X	X
Provide birth records for school census	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperative health programs-schools, LLR	X	X	X	X	X
Coordination of County/school services	X	X	X	X	X

ACTION	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Finance Policy					
Maintain a current capital improvement plan	X	X	X	X	X
Complete business subsidy plan	X				
Provide web based services free of charge	X	X	X	X	X
Establish a regular receivables review schedule	X				
Increased effort in OHP cost recovery from parents	X				
Maintain no net loss of Public Land	X	X	X	X	X
Citizen Participation					
Provide for web-based information and feedback	X	X	X	X	X
Actively seek diversity in citizen appointments	X	X	X	X	X
Local review of acquisitions and trades	X	X	X	X	X
Land use designation input from Local Unit of Government	X	X	X	X	X
Utilities					
Require utility rights-of-way along roads	X	X			
Require notice to utilities before road maintenance	X				
Adopt a communication tower ordinance	X				
Amend ordinances to accommodate new technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Assist municipalities with service extensions	X	X	X	X	X