

Town of

# River Falls

*Agricultural, Natural and  
Cultural Resource Element*



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## **Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element Town of River Falls**



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# **s. 66.1001(2)(e) Wis Stats**

**Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element**  
**Town of River Falls**

## **s. 66.1001(2)(e) Wis Stats**

The **Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Element** is intended to be a compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation and promotion of the effective management of natural resources such as groundwater, forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources, parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources.

# Introduction

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

Town of River Falls



## Introduction

This element provides an inventory of the Town’s agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Specific topics include information about the ecological landscape, groundwater, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, mineral resources, parks and open space, and historical and cultural resources. The purpose of identifying these resources is to help the Town recognize areas that need to be protected, or characteristics that would limit development potential. By incorporating this information into its land use decisions the Town is better prepared to make sound choices for the future.

- 
- “This element provides an inventory of the Town’s agricultural, natural, and cultural resources.”
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# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls



## Agricultural Resources

### Productive Agricultural Areas

Predominantly focused in the upper Midwest, America's prime farmland regions coincide with our traditional notions of America's farm belt. While not containing as much prime farmland area as some other upper Midwest states, Wisconsin is still home to many acres of prime land. According to 1996 findings by the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wisconsin is home to over 13 million acres of prime farmland. This area represents approximately 38 percent of the state's entire area. Most of this land area can be found in the southern and eastern portion of the state.

Much of the land in Pierce County is considered potentially productive farmland. Based on soil characteristics, 85 percent of the county is potentially productive (including 34 percent "prime" farmland, 32 percent of "statewide importance" and 19 percent of local importance.).

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- "...much of this prime soil is located in the northern part of the county, including the Town of River Falls.."
- 

According to the Pierce County Land Management Plan, much of this prime soil is located in the northern part of the county, including the Town of River Falls (see Prime Farmland Map). These figures may be somewhat misleading because they do not consider that much of this productive farmland has already been developed or has other physical constraints or steep topography. The Town considers soils classed I, II, or III by the NRCS maps to be prime farmland.

Encompassing what was once virgin prairie, the Town of River Falls has some exceptionally good soils for an area this far to the north. Today, the landscape is characterized by extensive, gently-rolling uplands, with well-drained and easy-to-till soil.

Farming is a major land use activity here, with over 15,000 acres (60 percent of total Town land area) that are classified by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue<sup>1</sup> as agricultural. As in Pierce County, the average size of farms has decreased while the actual number of farms has increased. This is consistent with statewide and national trends.

In Pierce County, the 2002 Census of Agriculture<sup>2</sup> revealed a number of interesting findings related to the growth and development of its urbanized areas.

- *Land in Farms – decreased 7 percent from 388,878 acres in 1997 to 267,311 acres in 2002.*

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of Assessments – 2002. Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

<sup>2</sup> 2002 Census of Agriculture. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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- *Average size of Farms – decreased 7 percent from 190 acres in 1997 to 177 acres in 2002.*
- *Number of Farms – decreased 1 percent from 1,523 in 1997 to 1,510 in 2002.*

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Land-use pressure continues the trend toward a decrease in productive agricultural land across the state and nationally. According to information obtained from Pierce County, the best soils for farming are also in the same towns that have the highest density of housing units. The towns that have the highest percentage of acres prime for agriculture (based on soil types) are in the northern tier of townships—Clifton, River Falls, Martell, Gilman, and also Trimbelle. Of these, the Town of River Falls has the highest number of housing units per square mile, 17.5. Half of the residential development in the town is located in the ETZ, which makes up about 1/3 of the town's area.

### **Farmland Preservation**

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program was enacted in 1977 in order to preserve good agricultural land from development and to provide income tax credits to farmers. As of May 1982, 189 River Falls farms had been enrolled in the program, covering 3,830 acres, which represents 12% of the land area of the township. This and other programs dedicated to preserving prime agricultural land are always at the forefront of primary concerns within the Town. The Town board encourages residents to participate in all reviews and decisions regarding these matters. Because the town has exclusive agriculture zoning, discussed below, farmers enrolled in Farmland Preservation who have land that is zoned exclusive agriculture are eligible for 100%, rather than just 80%, of tax credits from the state.

Pierce County prepared a farmland preservation plan in 1982. This plan considered soil erosion to be the greatest problem, along with fragmentation and loss of farmland, and conflicts between farmers and non-farming neighbors. This plan divides county land into areas that should be preserved, and non-preservation areas. Landowners in preservation areas are eligible for income tax credits in exchange for entering into a temporary agreement restricting development.

Twelve Town farms have farm plans and are enrolled in the program as of November, 2004, totaling 2,579 acres. Because the town has exclusive agricultural zoning in place, landowners of parcels in exclusive agriculture zoning who are not enrolled in the program may also receive up to 100% of the credits available. About 10,900 acres of the town are zoned exclusive agriculture, representing about 38% of the total land area.

### **Exclusive Agricultural Zoning Ordinances**

One of the tools of the Farmland Preservation Program is Exclusive Agricultural Zoning. An exclusive agricultural zoning ordinance may be adopted by a county, municipality, or town and the ordinance must be consistent with the county agricultural preservation plan. State statutes specify the standards to be contained within every exclusive agricultural zoning ordinance. Lot sizes are required to be a minimum of 35 acres, and permitted uses must be agricultural. All conditional uses are required to be consistent with agricultural

# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element Town of River Falls



uses, as defined by state statute. These requirements are intended to provide a district where agriculture is the primary acceptable use, and prevent non-agricultural land uses.

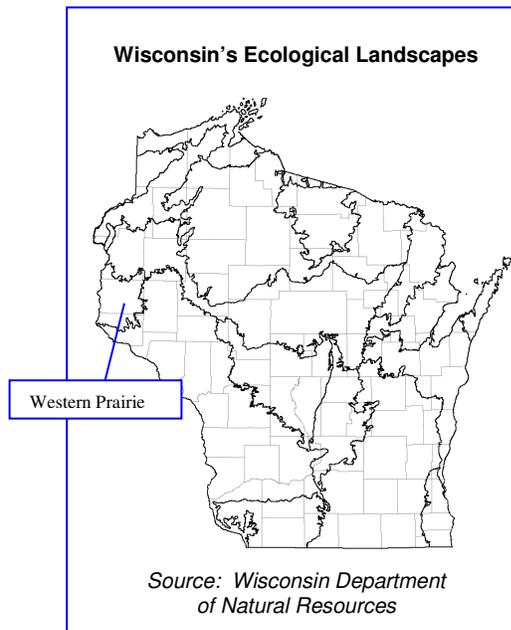
### Natural Resources

#### General Setting

The Town is located within the Western Prairie Ecological Landscape as defined by the Department of Natural Resources<sup>3</sup>(see exhibit). It is also located within both the Kinnickinnic River Watershed, and the Trimble River and Isabelle Creek Watershed.

#### Attributes and Characteristics of the Western Prairie

This ecological landscape is located on the far western edge of the state just below the "tension zone" and contains some of the best prairie potholes in the state. This is the easternmost extent of the vast prairie pothole region that stretches across Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, and south central Canada.



The area is characterized by generally open, gently to moderately rolling hills with pothole lakes, ponds, and wet depressions. A ribbon of forest occurs along the St. Croix River. Soils consist of a mosaic of silty, shallow and stony alluvial sands and peats, with a red clay subsoil.

Pre-settlement vegetation was comprised of dry to mesic prairies in the broad rolling areas and wet prairies in the wide depressions. Open oak savannas were found on the hilly topography with small inclusions of sugar maple-basswood forest in the steeper sites protected from fire. Prairie pothole-type wetlands were most prominent in St. Croix County. Barrens were found along the river terraces of the St. Croix River. Floodplain forests, marshes, and wet prairies occurred within the floodplain of the St. Croix.

Almost one-half of this landscape is now in agriculture with another one-third in grasslands. Forest pockets are mostly comprised of maple-basswood and oak-hickory, with smaller amounts of lowland hardwoods and conifers. Although dairy farming and

<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Land Legacy Report: An inventory of places critical in meeting Wisconsin's future conservation and recreation needs. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2002.

# Natural Resources

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row crops remain the predominant agricultural uses, this area is experiencing rapid urbanization along its western fringe due to its proximity to the Twin Cities.

### **Groundwater**

Wisconsin is a state with an overall ample quantity of groundwater. There have not been any concerns about the availability of good quality groundwater in or near the Town.

Groundwater pollution has the potential for becoming a serious problem due to high nitrate levels, which affect health. There are several reasons for the reduction in water quality including agricultural practices, failing septic systems, erosion, changing land uses, and probably some unknown causes. Since groundwater travels for miles underground, it is difficult to isolate specific sources.

A Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey map delineates groundwater susceptibility to contamination based on five physical resource characteristics. These characteristics are the type of bedrock, depth to bedrock, depth to water table, soil characteristics, and surficial deposits. Based on these characteristics, the area near the Town is moderately to highly susceptible to contamination. According to the State of the Basin reports, the Kinnickinnic River watershed has the highest contamination potential in the St. Croix Basin, with numerous wells having pesticides detected, and high levels of nitrates. The Trimble River and Isabelle Creek watershed also had a high level of nitrate and pesticide contamination.

Atrazine is a popular corn herbicide that has been used in Wisconsin, and has been detected in groundwater in some areas of the state. Groundwater monitoring has determined that the concentrations of this chemical components already exist at high enough levels within the groundwater table in certain areas to issue a ban on the use of atrazine. The Town is not located in an atrazine prohibition area as delineated by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection<sup>4</sup>.

The town will consider a wellhead protection ordinance. With increasing residential development, the town will work to educate residents about pollution due to run-off from lawn fertilizers.

### **Forests**

The Department of Natural Resources identifies 16 million acres of forestland (46 percent of Wisconsin's total land area) and millions of urban trees that significantly contribute to the quality of life in Wisconsin. These forests are important for their beauty, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, air quality enhancement, water protection, biodiversity,

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<sup>4</sup> Atrazine Prohibition Areas and Groundwater Contamination. Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. Accessed from <http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/arm/agriculture/pest-fert/pesticides/atrazine/> June 2003.

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products and a variety of other values. However, 70 percent of the forestland is in private ownership, making sustainable forest management more complex. The DNR defines forest land as: Land area that is presently at least 16.7 percent covered by forest trees or was in the past, and is not currently developed for nonforest use.

According to the Pierce County Land Management Plan, at the time of settlement, trees covered 78 percent of Pierce County, but now only about 28 percent of the land is forested. This compares to 44 percent of the state that is covered with trees. Much of this tree cover is concentrated near the river valleys and hillsides. In the Town, much of the wooded acreage is concentrated primarily along the Kinnickinnic River valley in the northwest and also in scattered groves throughout the town<sup>5</sup> (see Resource Protection Areas Map). The majority of these woods areas are classified for tax purposes as agricultural land, with only 2% actually being classified for taxes as forest and swampland.

There are two forest tax laws in Wisconsin, the Managed Forest Law and the Forest Crop Law. These programs provide private property owners with tax reductions in exchange for entering into long-term contracts with the Department of Natural Resources to ensure proper forest management. The public also benefits from the additional opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat, and watershed protection that proper forest management provides. According to the Wisconsin DNR<sup>6</sup> there are over 1,600 acres within the Town that are enrolled in these programs.

In addition, the Town's urban forest is an important resource. The DNR defines an urban forest as all of the trees and other vegetation in and around a town, village, or city. This includes not only publicly owned trees such as those lining streets, in parks and utility rights-of-way, and riverbanks, but also includes privately owned trees in home and business landscapes, and any other trees within the community. Shrubs, vines, grass, groundcover, wildlife, pets, and people are all integral parts of the urban forest ecosystem.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

The Town is located in an area of the state that is characterized by wetlands, habitat for threatened or endangered species, surface water, and floodplains. Areas of these types are sensitive to development activity, and may be damaged by development that is too close or inappropriate for the individual location. The ecological services provided by these areas are important and may be difficult or costly to replicate.

Less than 15% of the land surface in the Town of River Falls is considered "steep topography", with a natural slope in excess of 12.5%. As with woodlands, these areas are

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<sup>5</sup> As identified on U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps

<sup>6</sup> Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Inventory. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Comprehensive Planning Webmapping Site.

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primarily concentrated along the Kinnickinnic and Trimbelle Rivers (see Resource Protection Areas Map). Potential erosion hazards are affected not only by the slope of the land, but also by the underlying soils, type of land use, and land use management.

This area of the state is characterized by Karst topography, which contains sinkholes and fractured bedrock. These features increase the potential for groundwater contamination by providing direct conduits from surface pollution to groundwater.

### Threatened or Endangered Species

Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI)<sup>7</sup> is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin NHI program is part of an international network of inventory programs that collect, process, and manage data on the occurrences of natural biological diversity using standard methodology. This network was established, and is still coordinated by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), an international non-profit organization. The network now includes natural heritage inventory programs in all 50 states, most provinces in Canada, and many countries in Central and South America.

Based on data contained in Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory there are 31 known rare or endangered plant species, and 48 known rare or endangered animal species in Pierce County. Some of these species or communities are known to exist in or adjacent to the Town. However, one should not assume that lack of documented sightings of rare or endangered species is evidence that endangered resources are not present.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species; Pierce County	
Common Name	Wisconsin Status
Red-Shouldered Hawk	Threatened
Bald Eagle	Special Concern
Olive Hairstreak	Special Concern
Lake Sturgeon	Special Concern
Skipjack Herring	Endangered
American Eel	Special Concern
Redside Dace	Special Concern
Crystal Darter	Endangered
Blue Sucker	Threatened
Mud Darter	Special Concern
Western Sand Darter	Special Concern
Banded Killifish	Special Concern
Goldeye	Endangered

<sup>7</sup> Natural Heritage Inventory, established in 1985 by the Wisconsin Legislature. Maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Endangered Resources.

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Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species; Pierce County	
Common Name	Wisconsin Status
Black Buffalo	Threatened
Speckled Chub	Threatened
Silver Chub	Special Concern
River Redhorse	Threatened
Pallid Shiner	Endangered
Weed Shiner	Special Concern
Pugnose Minnow	Special Concern
Elktoe	Special Concern
Rock Pocketbook	Threatened
Spectacle Case	Endangered
Purple Wartyback	Endangered
Butterfly	Endangered
Elephant Ear	Endangered
Snuffbox	Endangered
Ebony Shell	Endangered
Plains Clubtail	Special Concern
Skillet Clubtail	Special Concern
Higgins' Eye	Endangered
Slough Sandshell	Endangered
Washboard	Special Concern
Smoky Shadowfly	Special Concern
Stygian Shadowfly	Special Concern
Bullhead	Endangered
Round Pigtoe	Special Concern
Winged Mapleleaf	Endangered
Monkeyface	Threatened
Russet-Tipped Clubtail	Special Concern
Buckhorn	Threatened
Net-Veined Leafhopper	Threatened
Eastern Pipistrelle	Special Concern
Bat Hibernaculum	Special Concern
Wing Snaggletooth	Threatened
Smooth Coil	Special Concern
Timber Rattlesnake	Special Concern
Wood Turtle	Threatened
Musk-Root	Threatened
Roundstem Foxglove	Threatened
Carolina Anemone	Endangered
Dragon Wormwood	Special Concern

# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

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Prairie Sagebrush	Special Concern
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Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species; Pierce County	
Common Name	Wisconsin Status
Ground-Plum	Endangered
Kitten Tails	Threatened
Great Indian-Plantain	Special Concern
Sand Reed-Grass	Threatened
Yellow Evening Primrose	Special Concern
Carey's Sedge	Threatened
Hill's Thistle	Threatened
Arrow-Headed Rattle-Box	Special Concern
Silky Prairie-Clover	Special Concern
Glade Fern	Special Concern
Prairie Bush-Clover	Endangered
Silver Bladderpod	Threatened
Dotted Blazing Star	Endangered
American Gromwell	Special Concern
Prairie False-Dandelion	Special Concern
Marbleseed	Special Concern
Louisiana Broomrape	Endangered
Pomme-De-Prairie	Special Concern
Small Skullcap	Endangered
Prairie Ragwort	Special Concern
Snowy Campion	Threatened
Prairie Fame-Flower	Special Concern
Snow Trillium	Threatened
Showy Lady's-Slipper	Special Concern
Tufted Hairgrass	Special Concern
Wild Licorice	Special Concern
Glade Mallow	Special Concern
Marsh Ragwort	Special Concern
<i>Source: <a href="http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/nhi/NHI_ims/onlinedb.htm">http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/nhi/NHI_ims/onlinedb.htm</a></i>	

# Natural Resources

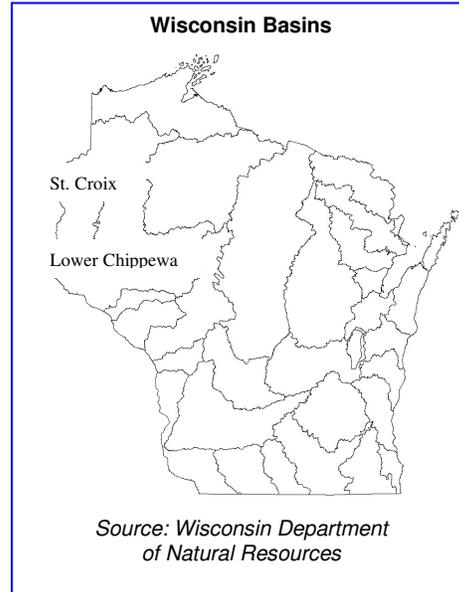
## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element Town of River Falls

### Surface Water

The Town is located partially in the Kinnickinnick River Watershed (of the St. Croix River basin), and partially in the Trimbelle River and Isabelle Creek (of the Lower Chippewa River basin) see exhibit.

Three streams within the Kinnickinnick River Watershed are classified as exceptional resource waters, one outstanding resource water, and six of nine streams are cold water class II or higher. The Kinnickinnick River Watershed was also designated as a priority watershed project. The primary impacts are agricultural runoff, flashy stream flows, and sedimentation.

Within the Trimbelle River and Isabelle Creek Watershed, the Trimbelle River has been designated as an exceptional resource water. There are no lakes within the Town.



### Town of River Falls Water Quality Plan

In 2001 the town adopted, with the City of River Falls, towns of Troy, Kinnickinnic, and Clifton, the counties of Pierce and St. Croix, and the state of Wisconsin, the Sewer Service Area Water Quality Management Plan. This plan includes an action plan that includes expanding data collection and analysis, and use of policies and ordinances to develop a consistent approach to watershed management.

### Floodplains

The floodplain is land that has been, or may be, covered by floodwater during the 100-year flood, also described as the flood level that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year. Development in the floodplain reduces the floodplain's storage capacity, causing the next flood of equal intensity to crest even higher than the last. 100-year floodplains have been delineated around many of the rivers and streams throughout the Town (see Resource Protection Areas Map).

The Town of River Falls adopted the revised Pierce County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of 1972 but chose to opt out of county zoning in 1998. Since then, the town has administered its own zoning. It is still, however, subject to county zoning in shoreland and floodplain districts. Approximately 11 percent of the Town's land area is classified as being within the Floodplain Zoning District. The floodplains are zoned to restrict development and thus protect these developments from flooding damage.

# Natural Resources

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#### **Wetlands**

Wisconsin's wetlands support aquatic plants and wet soils. They also support a variety of critical functions. Wetlands provide habitat for wildlife, store water to prevent flooding, and protect water quality. However, the wetlands have continued to be destroyed and degraded as they are drained and filled for agriculture, development, and roads, and impacted by pollutants.

According to the Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory, Pierce County contains 7,397 acres of wetland, comprising 2 percent of the county's total land area, and 0.1 percent of the state's wetlands. This data is based on aerial photography and includes only wetlands larger than 5 acres for this county. As a result, the wetland acreage numbers are likely to undercount the existing wetland area.

Wetlands within the Town are limited to a major concentration in Sections 14 and 26 (in Range 18) and several minor areas along the Kinnickinnic and Trimble Rivers<sup>8</sup> (see Resource Protection Areas Map).

#### **Wildlife Habitat**

Many areas in southern and western Wisconsin, prior to European settlement, were characterized by grassland ecosystems. These areas are important habitat for grassland birds, which according to the UW Extension Service and DNR have been declining significantly in recent decades.

Wetlands are also important habitat for a number of amphibian and bird species, they provide habitat for more species of plants and animals than any other type of landscape.

As Wisconsin's land ownership becomes increasingly fragmented, the Department of Natural Resources believes that its habitat also tends to become more fragmented. This is particularly relevant to species that require a large range or contiguous habitat. Fragmented ownership negatively impacts species by causing inconsistencies in habitat management, and making it more difficult and expensive for the DNR or private organizations to acquire land for preservation.

There are two parcels of WDNR owned land in the Town. More than 250 acres adjacent to the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River, just east of the City of River Falls, is protected under the Stream Bank Protection Program for fish management. Another 65 acres in the eastern portion of the Town, along the Trimble River, is managed for wildlife.

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<sup>8</sup> As identified on U.S. Geological Survey maps

# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

Large tracts of high-quality natural areas in Pierce County include six State Natural Areas. State Natural Areas are designated by the Department of Natural Resources to protect outstanding examples of native natural communities, significant geological formations, and archaeological sites. State Natural Areas also provide the last refuges in Wisconsin for rare plants and animals. The closest SNA is located within Kinnickinnick State Park, just west of the Town.

### Soil

The soil suitability for conventional on-site septic systems is very limited in River Falls. Only 11% of the land area of the township has soils that are suitable for the installation of private septic systems as determined by **Pierce County Land Management**. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the township soils are classified as having severe or very severe limitations for septic systems. The remaining 13% of the soils have a moderate limitation, which means that septic systems can be installed with sufficient design modifications.

The majority of land in the Town of River Falls is considered Class II type soils by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and is concentrated in the central and southern sections of the Town. Class I, II, and III type soils, considered to be prime agricultural land, comprise 74% of the land in the Town with only 3% being Class I. The area immediately south of, and along State Highway 29, contains the highest proportion of other soils not suited for farming. Depending on slope and the amount of wooded acreage, these areas are primarily used as grazing or pasture land, woodlands, or wildlife cover.

### Metallic/Nonmetallic Mineral Resources

Presently there are no metallic mines operating in Wisconsin. Although some of the bedrock, particularly in the northern part of the state, contains metal-bearing minerals, there are no known metallic mineral deposits of economic value found in or near the Town.

Nonmetallic mining is a widespread activity in Wisconsin. The variety of geologic environments provides for a diverse industry. The most common nonmetallic mining activities are rock quarries and gravel pits. Statewide, an estimated 2,000 mines provide aggregate for construction, sand, gravel and crushed stone.

Chapter NR 135 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code establishes a statewide program regulating nonmetallic mine reclamation. As of September 2001, nonmetallic mines may not operate without a reclamation permit. The permit program is administered at the local level, and mines are required by law to develop a reclamation plan that will designate an approved land use once mining operations have ceased.

# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

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Nonmetallic mining is regulated by Chapter 12.08, Town of River Falls General Code, and also by Section 22 of the Pierce County Code. There are over 100 gravel pits in the county.

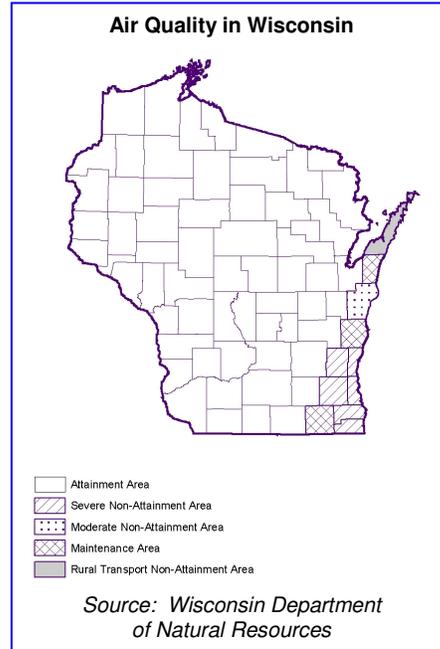
# Natural Resources

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

#### Air Quality

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) have been established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency<sup>9</sup> to protect public health and the environment. The pollutants regulated by these NAAQS include suspended particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, oxides of nitrogen, oxides of sulfur, and lead. Some counties in southeastern Wisconsin have been designated as non-attainment areas for one or more NAAQS. Pierce County is considered an attainment area for all pollutants.



<sup>9</sup> Section 109 of the Clean Air Act

# Cultural Resources

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## Cultural Resources

### Historical/Cultural Resources

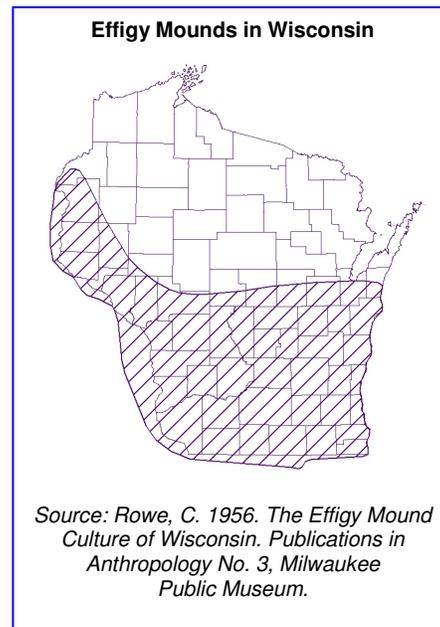
Old buildings have a special relevance to our lives today, bringing a “sense of place” to our lives and our communities. They also tell the social, cultural, economic, and political history of people in a way that no printed word or photograph can. Thus, telling the story of Wisconsin’s historic architecture is a way of documenting the diverse experiences of Wisconsin people and places.

The National and State Register of Historic Places gives honorary recognition to places that retain their historic character and are important to understanding local, state, or national history. These are official listings of properties that are worthy of preservation or significant to Wisconsin’s heritage. There are seven sites in Pierce County that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places; none of these are located in the Town of River Falls.

The Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory is a collection of information on historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and historic districts that illustrate Wisconsin’s unique history. The database is maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society, and is comprised of written text and photographs of each property, which document the property’s architecture and history. Most properties become part of the Inventory as a result of a systematic architectural and historical survey, and inclusion in this inventory conveys no special status, rights or benefits to owners of these properties. The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory also indicates records of 16 locations of historical significance within the Town (see Historic Sites Map).

### Archeological Sites

Archaeological evidence indicates that people have lived in what is now Wisconsin for over 12,000 years. It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of the archaeological sites that once existed in the state have been destroyed or severely damaged, primarily by modern land practices such as development and farming. Some of the remaining evidence includes Native American effigy mounds, often constructed in the shapes of turtles, birds, bears, and other animals. The Town is located in a part of the state where effigy mounds are most common.



# Laws and Statues – Archaeological Sites

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## Laws and Statutes – Archaeological Sites

**Federal Projects:** Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, requires federal agencies to insure that their actions (grants, funding, permits, activities such as highway building, etc.) do not adversely affect archaeological sites on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Local development efforts that are in any way making use of federal funding or that require federal permits, must evaluate project activities on known historic or archaeological sites, and may be required to investigate the potential for such resources prior to the approval of federal funding or permits.

**State Projects:** Archaeological sites can be protected during the course of state agency activities (funding, permits, ground-disturbing projects) if the sites have been recorded with the Office of the State Archaeologist. See Section 44.40 Wisconsin Statutes.

**Political Subdivision Projects:** Archaeological sites may be protected during the course of village, city, county and other political subdivision projects (e.g. building, road construction, etc.) but only if the site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. See Section 44.43 Wisconsin Statutes.

**Burial Sites:** All human burial sites, including cemeteries and Indian mounds, are protected under State law Section 157.70 Wisconsin Statutes. The law applies to both public and private lands. Owners of burial sites may receive property tax exemptions. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin Burial Sites Program administers the law.

**Rock Art Sites:** Destruction and vandalism of ancient rock art sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places without landowner permission is a felony under Section 943.01 Wisconsin Statutes.

**State Lands:** It is illegal to remove artifacts or otherwise disturb archaeological sites on state or political subdivision (village, city, county) lands without a permit under the Field Archaeology Act - Section 44.47 Wisconsin Statutes. The law applies to both archaeological sites on public lands and submerged sites such as shipwrecks on publicly owned bottomlands under lakes and rivers. The Office of the State Archaeologist administers permits, which typically are only given to professional archaeologists.

# Laws and Statues – Archaeological Sites

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

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**Tax Incentives:** Most types of archaeological sites are **NOT** protected from destruction by private landowner activity on privately owned lands. Exceptions are covered above. As an incentive for private landowners to protect archaeological sites on their lands, the state offers a property tax exemption if the landowner formally agrees to protect the site.

**Native American Tribal Preservation Programs:** The eleven Wisconsin Indian tribes are very active in the preservation of archaeological sites and sacred areas. Most have historic preservation programs or contacts.

**Archaeological Consultants:** The Office of the State Archaeologist maintains a list of archaeological consultants qualified to conduct archaeological studies to identify and evaluate sites under various federal and state historic preservation laws and statutes.

As is the case with natural resource protection, historical and cultural resource protection will require the Town to enhance its efforts to promote an understanding for the area's historic and cultural landscape and discourage development that is incompatible. The Town should coordinate to the extent possible with adjacent jurisdictions and Sovereign Nations to ensure protection of important cultural resources as well as collaborate with local, county and state agencies working to protect historic and cultural resources and enhance opportunities for cultural awareness.



## **Public Involvement**

### **S.W.O.T. Analysis**

On July 24, 2003 a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis was conducted with the Town's Smart Growth Advisory Committee. Strengths identified with respect to agricultural, cultural, and natural resources included:

- 1) Rural atmosphere and character
- 2) Topography
- 3) Beauty of natural landscapes
- 4) Streams & rivers
- 5) Small community
- 6) Scenery – open spaces & bluffs
- 7) Diverse geography – land, waterways, forests, etc.

Weaknesses identified included:

- 1) Farmland protection & preservation
- 2) Loss of small family farms
- 3) Not enough community togetherness
- 4) Hard to hold onto small Town feeling
- 5) Lack of public record facilities
- 6) Loss of historic buildings
- 7) Not enough parkland that is maintained

### **Community Survey**

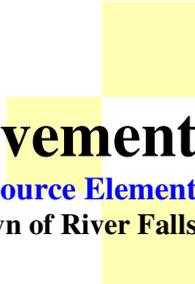
A community survey was completed on June 4, 2003. Seventeen hundred surveys were mailed out to Town residents, and 35 percent (601 surveys) were returned. Questions pertaining to housing found the following:

Should the Town continue to preserve productive farmland?

- 68% Yes
- 17% No
- 11% Not sure
- 4% No response

If you answered yes to the last question how should the Town do it?

- 52% Zoning restrictions (exclusive ag zoning, etc.)
- 10% Purchase development rights with tax money
- 12% Purchase or transfer development rights between land owners



# Public Involvement

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element  
Town of River Falls

# Public Involvement

**Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element**  
**Town of River Falls**

Currently the Town has, but does not maintain its 5 parks. Should there be more Town parks and should the current parks be improved?

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
a. have more parks	16%	58%	22%	4%
b. improve the parks	39%	28%	28%	5%

If you answered yes to the previous question, would you be willing to pay more taxes to:

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
a. have more parks?	12%	41%	7%	40%
b. improve the parks?	26%	28%	10%	36%

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

Town of River Falls



## Goals and Objectives

### Objectives

- Promote, as well as maintain, conservation, environmental and ecological programs.
- Recognize and support those organizations, facilities, and events that contribute to community life and bring town residents together. Examples of these would be 4-H and other youth organizations, area clubs and churches, the town recycling center, the town picnic, and the town annual meeting.
- Promote agriculture and agricultural activities.
- Preserve and promote the natural, scenic, and conservation areas.
- Effectively use lands dedicated for parks, recreation, and open space.
- The nomination of historic buildings to the national list of historic sites.
- Provide buffering between all conflicting land uses.

**Goal:** Preservation of Prime Agricultural Lands

### Objectives

- Direct non-farm land uses to less productive lands.
- Support best management practices for soil and water conservation on all lands.
- Encourage the continuation of farming by controlling the use of special assessments that increase costs to large landowners.
- Continue support of Exclusive Ag Zoning.
- Encourage farm developments to be built on poorer soils if feasible for the farming operation.
- Soils classed I, II, and III, according to NRCS, that are not being presently cropped should also be preserved for agricultural use if feasible. Prime agricultural land should be preserved from all types of development (including driveways) and/or non-farm uses.
- Encourage preservation of the family farm through discouraging incompatible adjacent land uses and requiring buffering.

**Goal:** Protect and Enhance Surface and Groundwater Resources.

### Objectives

- The Town should establish a wellhead protection ordinance.
- Educate town residents about non-point pollution, including the impact of run-off from residential lawns.
- Consider how salvage yards are regulated, and their potential impact on environmentally sensitive areas. Work with WDNR and landowner to see that appropriate testing is done to guard and maintain the quality of water in the Town of River Falls.

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

- Eliminate or minimize degradation of all wetlands, surface, and groundwater systems.
- Minimize the impact of hazardous spills on all water resources.
- Educate the general public on the protection of public and private wellheads.
- Develop and refine water protection ordinances based on a watershed model utilizing the Town of River Falls Water Quality Management Plan, and the 205J Water Quality Management Plan developed by the City of River Falls as a foundation.
- Consideration of all new site plans and construction permits will include assessment of the potential impact of such on all water resources, including erosion control, storm water runoff, and sediment and pollutant reduction.
- All development of Town ordinances for protection of water resources will be based upon not only a local, but also a regional perspective, especially in regard to the Kinnickinnic and Trimble watersheds.

**Goal:** Insure Orderly, Economical, and Diverse Development in Harmony with the Natural Environment.

#### Objectives

- Provide planned, guided, and compatible development.
- Provide for limited commercial development of goods and services appropriate to the community.
- Encourage development adjacent to public services.
- Preserve the natural environment as much as possible.
- Discourage urban sprawl by managing development.
- Encourage the wise management of woodlands for the production of wood products, energy utilization and erosion control.
- Maintain private ownership rights so the development controls do not remove the incentive to buy, sell and own land.
- Cluster development with smaller lot sizes will be considered to help maintain the efficiency of farming operations and to maintain wildlife habitat.
- Habitats of wildlife will be considered in all land-use planning including edge habitats and avoiding the dividing of large areas of habitat.
- Recognize the contributions and consult area sporting, rod & gun, and conservation clubs (such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited) when planning for habitat preservation.

**Goal:** Recognize and support the cultural resources that make the Town a unique place to live.

#### Objectives

- Recognize the organizations, facilities, and events that contribute to community life and bring town residents together.
- Expand Town sponsored community events such as the Town meeting, Town picnic, and other events.

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

- Seek grant funding to preserve older sites and historic resources.

## Policies

**Agricultural Areas:** This area includes land that has agriculture as its primary, long-term function. It will provide for the preservation of productive agricultural lands and for the discouragement of non-farm land uses. This designation intends to encourage continued, long-term investment in agriculture.

- A. Non-farm development in agricultural areas should be discouraged. Certain agricultural-related uses that need a rural location may be permitted when in accordance with Town ordinances, county codes and state laws.
- B. The Town will maintain agricultural zoning for smaller-scale agricultural enterprises such as small-scale fruit and vegetable stands and truck gardens that can be applied in the agricultural area on a limited basis to smaller parcels and marginal farmlands.
- C. Non-farm residential development should be restricted to areas with soils classed IV through VIII (as described in the Pierce County Soil Survey).

**Agricultural – Residential Area:** This designation provides for a mixing of farm and non-farm residential uses. This area is characterized by low-density residential development and represents the most appropriate location for such development in the future.

- A. Low-density rural residential development shall be allowed in this area along with the existing large and small scale agriculture.
- B. Rural residential lot sizes shall not be less than two acres and shall not exceed four per quarter-quarter section.
- C. All farm practices shall be allowed within this area in accordance with provisions of the Town's zoning ordinances.
- D. Non-farm residential development should be restricted to areas with soils classed IV through VIII (as described in the Pierce County Soil Survey).

**Conservancy Area:** Conservancy areas are established to protect, promote and conserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains, wetlands, shorelands, slopes, bluffs, woodlands and areas of aesthetic value which, because of their unique physical and ecological features, are deemed desirable to be retained for the benefit of this and future generations. Protection and conservation of these areas not only manages their

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

Town of River Falls

environmental values, but also protects the Town and County from the costs and consequences that may be incurred when unsuitable development occurs in such areas.

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

- A. Conservancy areas should be included in appropriate zoning districts under Town, County and extraterritorial zoning.
- B. The Town should work with the County and adjoining municipalities to prepare more detailed inventories of environmental features to be designated as conservancy.
- C. Where lands designated as conservancy are faced with use conversion, the Town should explore all possible avenues and policies for maintaining and protecting affected environmental features.

**Extraterritorial (ETZ) Area:** When established in 1987 this area of the Town included that portion within 1½ miles from the city limits. This area represents only about 1/3 of Town land area, but more than half of the Town's development is in the ETZ. This consists of residential and commercial development.

The Town and the City control the zoning through the ETZ Committee, which consists of three members from the Town and three members from the City. The residents in this area have experienced problems with the development and encroachment of the City of River Falls as properties within the ETZ become annexed to the City.

Cooperative planning with the City is continuously ongoing. This is required to provide the necessary course to protect the Town residential areas. In so doing the Town needs to establish policies to meet these goals.

- A.
  - 1) Control soil erosion and minimize stormwater runoff increases from city development.
  - 2) Preserve natural resources such as wetlands, streams, rivers, and natural wildlife.
  - 3) Preserve, as much as possible, the rural character.
  - 4) Control flooding by preserving existing dams and reservoirs.
- B. Establish a land use plan within the ETZ
  - 1) Work toward a Cooperative Boundary Agreement with the City of River Falls
  - 2) Work toward establishment of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for areas within the ETZ.
  - 3) Support the existing parcels in preserving existing Town rural development.
  - 4) Protect and stabilize property values that could be undermined by the development of incompatible uses of adjacent or nearby property.
  - 5) Limit congestion on Town roads and preserve rustic road character.
  - 6) Preserve open space within and around development.
  - 7) Consider cluster development as part of planning process.

# Goals, Objectives and Policies

## Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource Element

### Town of River Falls

***Cluster Development:*** The Town recognizes the potential of clustering development to provide more efficient and environmentally sensitive development. The Town will consider cluster development where these objectives can be met.

- A. The Town should develop appropriate policies and standards for cluster development in applicable land-use ordinances.
- B. Cluster developments should be subject to periodic, staged reviews.
- C. Cluster developments should meet applicable density and road standards.
- D. Cluster development proposals should include adequate organizational structure, bylaws and covenants to ensure long-term compliance.

# Town of River Falls

Prime Farmland

## Legend

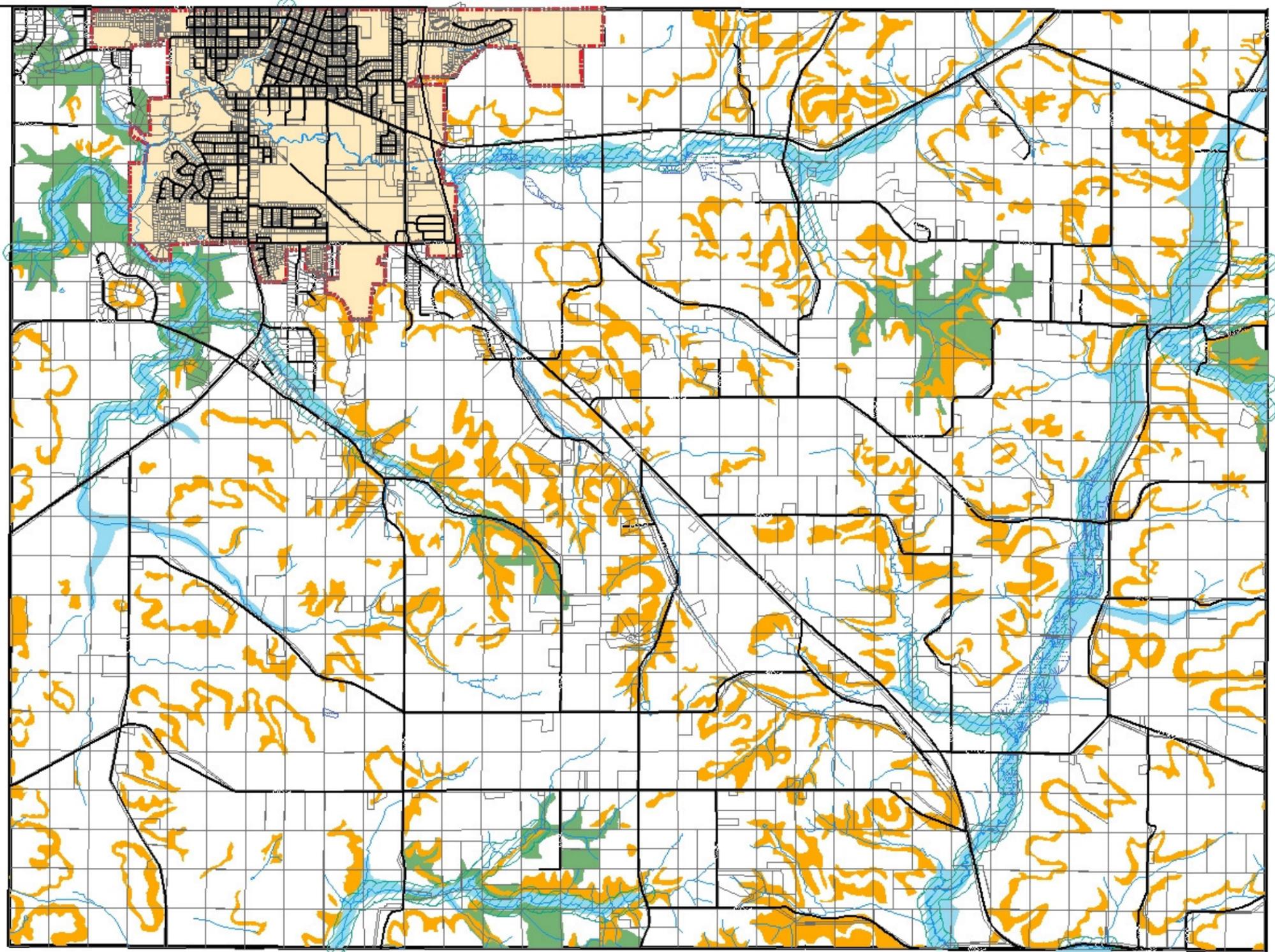
 Prime Farmland



Source: Pierce County Department of Land Management & FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)

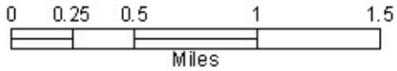
# Town of River Falls

## Resource Protection Areas



### Legend

- 100yr Floodplain
- Wetland
- Shoreland Zoning (300' Buffer)
- Woodlands
- Steep Slopes



Source: Pierce County Department of Land Management and Washington Department of Natural Resources

