

8. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

Agriculture

Agriculture is still a prevalent land use in the Town of Medary. Increased housing development has caused a decrease in farmland over the last several decades. The Town has also went through several annexations during it's history but still maintains areas of undeveloped land that are being farmed.

Historically, agriculture played a key role in the Town of Medary and La Crosse County. The Town has many steep coulees and slopes making farming and development difficult in some areas.



The following excerpt from the *La Crosse County, Farmland Preservation Plan, 1980* describes the agricultural history of La Crosse County.

“The county’s economic base began with fur trading, but that moved west with the Indians. Lumbering was a significant industry until the 1900’s. Agriculture in the valleys was always important. A farm report furnished by the County Clerk in 1881 shows a tabular statement of the acreage devoted to wheat, corn, oats, barley, rye, potatoes, apples, hops, tobacco, grass, and timber. Also included were the number of milk cows. It goes on to explain that ... a larger acreage has been sown to all types of grains except wheat, which has given place to corn, oats and barley. The fact that 10,000 acres less of wheat have been sowed, shows that a proper attention is being given to other crops mentioned and that stock raising is becoming a more profitable pursuit. The number of acres in grains, hops, cultivated grasses, potatoes, roots, apples and tobacco in 1880 was 90,591. At the present time there are about 112,683 acres in cropland including acreage for corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa, hay fruits and vegetables, and tobacco.”

Agricultural crops commonly grown in La Crosse County today include corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. More recent statistics from the 1997 and 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture show the following agricultural trends in La Crosse County:

- The number of farms in La Crosse County decreased from 933 in 1997 to 868 in 2002
- The size of farms decreased from 203 acres in 1997 to 201 acres in 2002
- The total cropland harvested increased from 76,468 acres in 1997 to 77,831 acres in 2002
- The number of cattle and calves in the county decreased from 36,769 in 1997 to 31,550 in 2002
- The 2002 USDA Census valued agricultural land at \$1,937 dollars per acre in La Crosse County.

Natural Resources

Soils. The northern portion of the Town is comprised of soils associated with valleys and benches. This area is made up of Richwood, Toddville, and Port Byron soils. The central portion of the town adjacent to the La Crosse River consists of soils typical of the Mississippi River Valley, mostly Plainfield and Sparta soils. The southern portion of the Town consists of silty soils on dolomite uplands. Fayette and Dubuque soils are on the rounded ridges that are separated by rock escarpments from the steep side hills.



The La Crosse County Soil Survey designated approximately 20% of the soils in La Crosse County as “prime” soils. Prime soils were defined as being either Class I, Class II or Class III soils. These soils are typically on or near the Valley floors or on or near ridge tops.

Groundwater. Western Wisconsin is fortunate to have a large supply of quality groundwater. Within the Town of Medary most geological formations contain water. On ridge tops water can be obtained from dolomite while on the valley bottoms water can be obtained from the sandstone bedrock. Groundwater reservoirs are recharged by direct

Town of Medary Comprehensive Plan 2008-2028, 8. Agricultural, Cultural and Natural Resources

precipitation mainly in the form of heavy rainfall and melting snow. Generally, all ground water is free of bacteria and safe to drink. Soft water is often found in the valley alluvium while hard water is often found in the upland bedrock.

Surface Water. There are several small streams and creeks within the Town of Medary. Most notable is Smith Valley Creek a class three trout stream that flows north into the La Crosse River. The La Crosse River serves as the northern boundary of the Town. There are no natural lakes with the Town.

Topography and Watersheds. A large portion of Medary's landscape can be characterized as ridges and valleys. Numerous streams and creeks that flow into the La Crosse River drain the Town's rugged landscape.

Woodlands. Farmed ridges and valleys and woodlands on the valley walls and ridge tops characterize the Town of Medary's landscape. Woodlands make up 57% or 4,075 acres of the entire Town.



Floodplains/Wetlands. Special Flood Hazard Areas inundated by a 100-year flood are located within the Town of Medary within the La Crosse River Corridor. This area is designated Zone A-4 in which no base flood elevations have been determined. The flood plain map for the Town of Medary is dated March 15, 1984 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Open Space. Open spaces are one of the Town of Medary's greatest attributes. Over 75% of the town's landscape is made up of forested, agricultural, undeveloped or public lands. The Town of Medary has a lot of steep coulees making and slopes, that are difficult to farm. These steep slopes also require larger lot size restrictions for residential development. Several new subdivisions have been platted in the last several years.

Non-Metallic Mineral Resources. There was a non-metallic quarry located in the Town of Medary between the City of La Crosse's Hixon Forest and County Highway B. In late 2005 this quarry property was acquired by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy for its La Crosse Blufflands Preservation Program.

Wildlife Resources. The agricultural fields, scattered forestlands, and streams provide excellent habitat for wildlife. White-tailed deer and eastern wild turkeys are found in the town. Squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, ruffed grouse, raccoons and a wide variety of songbirds also make their home in the Town of Medary. Smith Valley Creek is a class three trout stream.



Air Quality. The Town of Medary has a total population of around 1,500 people and limited industrial businesses. Therefore, air quality in the Town is excellent. Potential threats to air quality in the future that will have to be evaluated include unregulated outdoor burning and the neighboring urban municipalities of La Crosse and Onalaska.

Stream / Environmental Corridors. Natural stream environmental corridors in the Town would include the La Crosse River and Smith Valley Creek and their surrounding wetlands. The wooded uplands shown on Map 2.1 that cover the higher elevations of the valley walls in the town are examples of natural occurring environmental corridors that provide important wildlife habitat.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Wisconsin in accordance with the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) has developed the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Working Lists. The Wisconsin Natural Heritage Working Lists contains species known or suspected to be rare in the state. They include species legally designated as "Endangered" (*in danger of being extirpated from all or a portion of its range*) and "Threatened" (*the Wisconsin portion of the species population is either on the verge of extirpation or is a relic population*). Within La Crosse County there are 22 species listed as "Endangered" and 29 that are listed as "Threatened."

Examples of the “Endangered” species present in La Crosse County are the Snowy Egret, Crystal Darter, Ebony Shell Mussel and the Carolina Anemone (plant).

Cultural Resources

Archeological and Historic Resources

A search of the Wisconsin National Register of Historic Places revealed 52 registered buildings or sites in La Crosse County. The register included historic houses, churches, mounds, historic camps and burial sites. The Medary Town Hall is housed in the Smith Valley Schoolhouse and is on listed the National Register of Historic Places. The other listing in the Town of Medary is the Valley View Site.

Wisconsin’s Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) was searched and 3 structures/objects in the Town of Medary were in the inventory. The AHI contains data on buildings, structures and objects that illustrate Wisconsin’s history. The AHI documents a wide range of historic properties such as the round barns, log houses, metal truss bridges, small town commercial buildings, and Queen Anne houses. It is a permanent record maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society. One structure identified in the Town of Medary was the Town Hall (constructed in 1887). The other two are houses located in Smith Valley. One with an unknown construction date is brick and vernacular in design and the other is a brick gabled ell house constructed in 1864.



Recreational Resources

Numerous recreational resources are available in the Town of Medary. The Town maintains the two-acre Town Hall Park that has a ball field as well as playground apparatus. There are several open space areas located in the Town (Wolf Ridge, Green Hills and Meadowood) also. Smith Valley Creek is also designated class three trout stream.

The La Crosse River State Bicycle Trail goes through the Town of Medary and connects to the Great River State Trail and the Sparta-Elroy State Trail. Trailhead parking is found near the Town of Medary on CTH B off highway 16.



Bluebird Springs Recreation area, a 209-acre camping and recreation area, is located in the Town. This recreation area is privately owned and provides camping amenities as well as cross-county skiing, hiking, playground apparatus, basketball court, volleyball court, recreation hall, store, snack bar, two fishing ponds, spring fed swimming pond, and a picnic shelter.

The Town is also home to the La Crosse Country Club, a private 18 hole , 7180 yard, golf course with a par 72.

County Parks

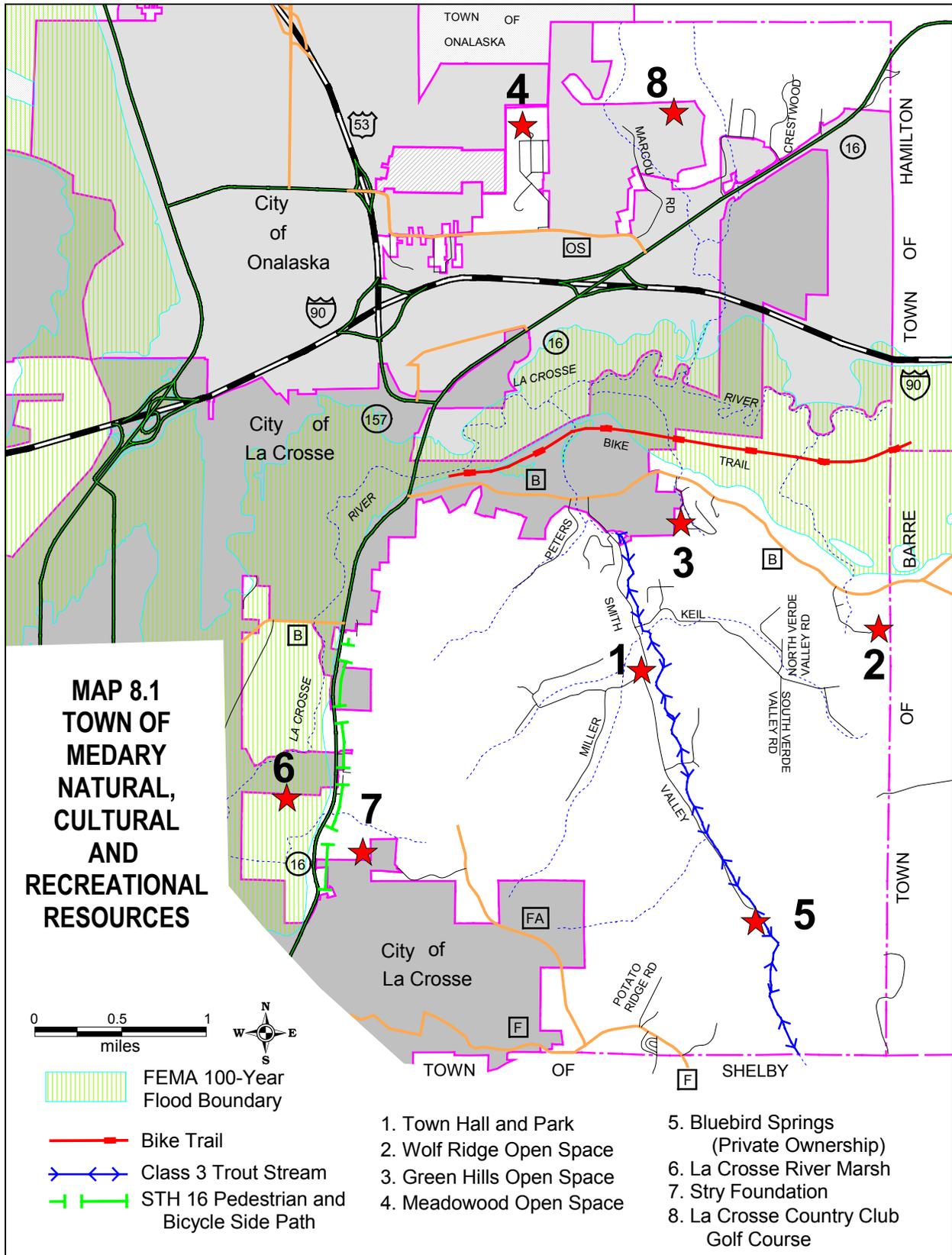
There are no county operated public parks in the Town.

Table 8.1 and Map 8.1 on the following pages inventories and shows the location of the Town’s natural, cultural and recreation resources.



Table 8.1 Town of Medary Natural, Cultural and Recreation Resources

Name of Site or Facility	Type of Site or Facility	Size in Acres	Features or Facilities on Site	Other Characteristics or Planning Issues
Stry Foundation Bluff	Scenic overlook	5	Provides scenic view of Mississippi River Valley	Privately owned by Foundation
La Crosse River Marsh	Wetland and open space	1,280-1,920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area west of STH 16 is scheduled for numerous recreational amenities as part of "Land Use Plan 6" Walking trails, and bike trails are present within or near it Hunting, fishing, and trapping allowed in some locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two marsh areas in the Town, one is west of STH 16 and the other is between CTH B and South Kinney Road. Most of the marsh area within the Town is in private ownership. Marsh is part of much larger La Crosse River ecosystem and serves as flood water holding area and critical wildlife area
Wolfridge	Open space	13	Wooded open space	Land dedicated to Town as part of Wolfridge Subdivision process
Green Hills	Open space	1	Wooded open space	Land dedicated to Town as part of Green Hills Subdivision process
Meadowood	Open space	8	Wooded open space	Land dedicated to Town as part of Meadowood Subdivision process
Town Hall and Park	Neighborhood park	2	Playground apparatus and ball field	The Town Hall is located here. A portion of this building is a one room school museum. The Town Hall is on the National Register of Historic Places.
La Crosse River Trail	Biking, hiking, and snowmobile trail	NA	State DNR bike trail passes through a portion of the Town	The La Crosse River Trail connects with the State's Great River Trail a few miles to the north and west and connects with the Sparta-Elroy trail 20 miles to the east.
STH 16 Side-path	Walking and biking lane	NA	A concrete walkway passes through the Town on the east side of STH 16. The walkway is approximately 3 miles in length and connects the Valley View Mall area with La Crosse Street.	Popular among long distance walkers, bikers and runners. Bus stop is also located along this route.
La Crosse Country Club	Private country club		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 hole links type golf course Clubhouse Swimming pool Tennis courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privately owned Golf course is within the Town. Surrounding residential development is in the City of Onalaska.
Bluebird Springs Recreation Area	Private recreation area	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X-country skiing Hiking Playground apparatus Basketball court Volleyball court Recreation hall Store Snack bar Drink bar 120 campsites ranging from full hook-up to primitive sites. Showers, toilets, laundry, dump station, spring fed swimming pond, two fishing ponds, picnic shelter 	Privately owned
Smith Valley Creek	Creek	Over 3 1/2 miles in length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creek originates from spring in Valley Class III Trout stream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private lands abut creek Creek is susceptible to erosion and sediment and build-up due to projected growth and development.



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