
Blue Earth County Goals & Policies

The following goals and policies reflect the perceived needs of the County and its residents as of the writing of this plan. The timelines specified for each policy are a prioritization exercise. However, due to changing conditions, funding gaps, or staffing changes, priorities for accomplishing the tasks listed may also change.

Agricultural Goal & Policies

Goal: Large areas of Blue Earth County contain very productive agricultural land. It is in the best interest of the County to maintain these agricultural areas through limiting the intrusion of urban uses and, thereby, limiting the cost of public services. It is also in the County's best interest to adopt performance standards for certain agricultural uses to protect natural resources.

Policies:

1. The County will draft and adopt a "Right to Farm" ordinance and will implement an agricultural zone disclosure statement form to be signed by non-farm developers. The disclosure form will become a part of each parcel's official file.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
2. The County will continue to enforce its dwelling density performance standard of one (1) dwelling unit per quarter quarter in its Agricultural District.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
3. The Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) within the Agricultural District will continue to be allowed, however, the transferee must own the entire quarter quarter out of which the dwelling unit allowance will be transferred, the quarter quarter into which the dwelling unit allowance is to be transferred must share a common boundary, and a maximum dwelling unit allowance per quarter quarter in the agricultural district is four (4).
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.

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4. Bonus lot allowances within the zoning ordinance's Agricultural District will be eliminated.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
 5. Rural residential subdivisions creating more than four (4) lots will not be permitted in the rural portion of the County unless they are to be served by city utilities and meet all other performance standards applicable to such a use.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
 6. The County will review the Zoning Ordinance provisions for uses in its Agricultural District and will eliminate urban uses or uses that are not compatible with agricultural uses.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
 7. The County will draft new definitions of "agricultural land" and "urban use" and will include these new definitions with amendments to the County's Zoning Ordinance based upon the timeline listed below. Development restrictions will apply to any land meeting the agricultural definition or the urban use definition.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
 8. New housing standards to be adopted in the County's zoning amendments will include the following:
 - a. all manufactured housing will meet the design standards for this type of housing as established by the Housing and Urban Development Agency;
 - b. a single accessory dwelling unit, either attached or detached, with the granting of a conditional use permit, will be allowed with a farming operation provided the unit's residents are family members or are non-family persons who are employed in the farming operation; and
 - c. a minimum of three hundred feet (300') will be the required setback for any new dwelling unit in the agricultural district from any existing agricultural field.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

9. Setback standards for agricultural feedlots will be taken out of the definition section of the zoning ordinance and will be brought into the agricultural district performance standards section. In addition, setback standards will be established for this use from any Rural Townsite District and any County park boundary.

◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and

◆ timeline: July 1999.

10. New manure storage structures must be either at or below grade covered concrete structures or at or above grade glass lined steel structures. These structures will require an application for a conditional use permit, go through plan review, and be subject to an inspection program. No new earth basins for use as manure storage will be allowed in the County, however, existing nonconforming earth basins used for manure storage can have improvements made to them to correct pollutant problems.

◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and

◆ timeline: July 1999.

Urban Development Goal & Policies

Goal: Urban growth pressure is being applied in many areas of Blue Earth County. It is in the best interest of the County to limit the development of uses that may eventually require the extension of urban utilities. The County supports orderly growth out from urban areas with urban utility services.

Policies:

1. The County will adopt an urban service overlay district which requires any development contained within the district to be connected to urban utilities. The district's boundaries in the City of Mankato area will be established following consultation with the City's representatives indicating its growth needs and proposed utility service area. Growth boundaries around the other municipalities will be determined through negotiation.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, Blue Earth County Board, and the City of Mankato;
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
2. The County will promote the establishment of annexation agreements between its municipalities and their surrounding townships for the purpose of encouraging urban development to occur in urban areas with urban services.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
3. The County will adopt performance standards for those types of developments that have higher than average impacts upon existing County infrastructure. In these cases, developers of such uses shall be required to pay impact fees for the purpose of improving the infrastructure so impacted.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 1999.
4. Rural residential subdivisions creating more than four (4) lots will not be permitted in the rural portion of the County unless they are to be served by city utilities and meet all other performance standards applicable to such a use.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

Natural Environment Protection Goal & Policies

Goal: Blue Earth County contains large areas of environmentally sensitive land. It is in the County's best interest to adopt performance standards to protect natural resources such as bluff areas, rivers, wetlands, and wooded areas, from development pressures.

Policies:

1. Blue Earth County supports the goals and objectives stated in its Comprehensive Water Plan and will implement the action steps specified in the plan for the purpose of protecting water resources of the County.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: adopt March 1998 and ongoing enforcement.
2. The County will continue to foster cooperative efforts with federal, state, and county agencies regarding lake water levels and regulating impacts from land uses as they relate to the quality of water entering area lakes and streams.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
3. The County will add to and improve its soils information database for purposes of aiding in the soil erosion reduction educational efforts of private landowners by other county departments and state agencies. In addition, the County will assess the need for drafting and enacting a soil loss ordinance, a riparian vegetative buffer ordinance, and requiring livestock fencing from surface water features.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, Blue Earth County Board, and Soil & Water Conservation District; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 2001.
4. To minimize negative impacts from storm water runoff, the County will enact development standards for storm water management to insure no net increase in runoff. In addition, the County will evaluate land use setback standards from erosion prone areas to determine their protective effectiveness.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

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5. The County will protect wetlands from development impacts by assessing its land use standards and, if needed, will amend regulatory standards for additional protection through increased setback standards and revised storm water runoff standards.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

 6. The County will assess its floodplain ordinance standards to determine if the protective measures prohibit the development of new structures in the floodplain and, if it does not, revise the ordinance so that it meets this standard. In addition, if the floodplain regulations do not prevent land uses in the floodplain that increase flood potential, the ordinance should be amended to regulate such uses or practices.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 1999 (based upon FEMA & Mn DNR mandates).

 7. The County will protect shoreland areas through land use ordinance regulations. The County will determine whether the current definition of "shoreland" is adequate to meet the protective measures it believes is needed to protect shoreland from development impacts. In addition, the County needs to assess the effectiveness of its land use regulations in the shoreland area as they relate to bluffs, shoreland vegetation, and wetlands. The County will amend its regulatory standards if the assessment indicates problems with the current protective measures. Finally, the County will assess the development potential of unplatted land in shoreland areas and determine whether the current controls or proposed amendments to the controls will protect these areas.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 2000.

 8. The County will assess whether its land use ordinance standards adequately protect current or future County park and recreational areas, as identified in the Blue Earth County Park & Natural Resources Plan, any Wildlife Management Areas, and historic or archaeologically significant areas from development, impacts from development, or land alteration. The County will amend its regulatory standards if the assessment indicates problems with the current protective measures.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Engineer;
and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

Transportation Goal and Policies

Goal: Land use planning and transportation planning need to be closely tied. Land use proposals, as they relate to road construction, access points, and service road requirements will be tied to the County's transportation planning efforts and will be reviewed by the County Engineer's office.

1. The County will limit the number of access points to Highway #90.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
2. For development proposals located along major arterials, service roads will be required to be built in order to service the use.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
3. New access road construction to service proposed subdivisions will be built to standards determined by the County Engineer for the purpose of limiting the Township's liability in making road improvements if and when the road is publically dedicated.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
4. A maximum 12% grade requirement will apply to the construction of all access roads.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & the Blue Earth County Engineer ; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
5. The Environmental Services department, along with the County Engineer, will identify access pressure points along new Highway #14, Highway #90, and Highway #22 (north of Mankato). Once these pressure points have been identified, analysis will be made regarding future land use designation at and adjacent to these points.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 2000.

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6. The transportation corridor between Mankato and Eagle Lake along old Highway #14 needs to be assessed as does the corridor along Highway #22 north of Mankato. The County needs to support planning activities for these corridors which should probably include a complete orderly annexation agreement between all interested jurisdictions and city utility service requirements for all development within the two corridors.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, Blue Earth Planning Commission, City of Mankato, City of Eagle Lake, Mankato Township, and Lime Township; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 2000.

 7. The County needs to assess its policy regarding the number of field approaches that are permitted along different classes of roads. Some determination needs to be made regarding the standard that should be applied to this type of access point and the appropriate ordinances should be amended.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 1999.

 8. The standards for the permitting of offsite advertising structures needs to be assessed. Do the current standards provide adequate review provisions and enough control for this use along the transportation routes? Amendments to the land use ordinance regulating this use may need to be incorporated in future County actions.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Blue Earth County Engineer, & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

Housing Goal and Policies

Goal: The County will encourage housing to locate in areas that can be serviced by city utilities and, for housing developments located in rural areas, to ensure adequate separation exists between residential uses and non-residential uses.

1. The County will eliminate the language in its ordinances that makes a distinction between stick built homes and code complying manufactured homes.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
2. The County will require that any newly developed manufactured home parks in the County be serviced by city utilities.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
3. Rural residential subdivisions creating more than four (4) lots will not be permitted in the rural portion of the County unless they are to be served by city utilities and meet all other performance standards applicable to such a use.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

Land Use Regulation Goal and Policies

Goal: The County has determined through its planning process that changes to its existing land use policies need to be made. Assessments of existing regulations are ongoing and amendments will be made. The adoption of additional regulatory tools would help the County attain the desired end expressed in the previous goals.

1. The County will adopt State Building Code.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 2000.
2. The County will assess all permitted and conditional uses in all zoning districts and will determine whether the uses can be accommodated in rural areas with on-site utilities. A determination will also be made as to whether the listed uses are appropriate to the zoning district. If the answer to these questions is "no," the uses will be eliminated from the zoning districts.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
3. The County will make an assessment of zoning district performance standards and will make changes to reflect the protectionist policies adopted herein.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
4. The County will create a definition of "Lot of Record" and will establish an amortization period for owners of existing lots of record not meeting the new definition to develop the lot, if development is permitted considering all the other applicable County standards. The amortization period will be five (5) years. Following the five year amortization period, lots not meeting the new definition will not be recognized as legal lots of record.
 - ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
5. The conversion of existing resorts or similar types of developments will be required to go through the conditional use process as a Planned Unit Development. Lots created through this process will be required to meet lot size standards as established by the County, maximum building square footage standards may be established, limits may be established to existing use only, and a timetable may be established for the development area to resolve problems with non-conforming waste water treatment systems.

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- ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.
6. The County will upgrade its subdivision ordinance to include the requirement that developers submit adequate infrastructure plans and cost estimates along with their subdivision applications so that the County can review and establish a financial assurances agreement between the County and developer prior to the approval and recording of the Plat. The agreement will specify the amount of development costs to be borne by the developer.
- ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 1999.
7. The County will amend its individual sewage treatment system ordinance as needed. Some of the County priorities will be to ensure individual property owners comply with state rules and county ordinances as they relate to the repair or replacement of existing, nonconforming or illegal septic systems.
- ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: January 1999.
8. Other sewage treatment concerns exist in the smaller rural communities where additional space to accommodate septic upgrades is not available. The County will work with these communities to plan for a comprehensive sewage treatment solution and to search for possible funding mechanisms.
- ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff & Planning Commission; and
 - ◆ timeline: ongoing.
9. The development of commercial uses in the rural area need to be assessed not only in terms of their wastewater treatment needs but in their water supply needs and fire protection needs. High water usage needs or fire protection needs that require internal sprinklers should be developed in a municipality with city services.
- ◆ responsibility: Blue Earth County Environmental Services Staff, Planning Commission, and the Blue Earth County Board; and
 - ◆ timeline: July 1999.

Implementation:

The need for strengthening the County's development controls initiated this planning project. As can be seen in the policies section, most are anticipated to be completed in less than five years. This is a short term planning project that was intended to support immediate changes. It is likely that within the next five years the County will need to undertake a long range comprehensive planning project, one geared towards establishing a long range land use philosophy and a more thorough consideration of factors, both natural and manmade, impacting land use.

For this planning effort, the primary concerns lie with the need for preserving agricultural land, reducing farm and non-farm conflicts in the rural areas, protecting the urban fringe areas in the County, and protecting identified transportation corridors. Most of the policies specified in this document can be implemented through the refinement of provisions in existing ordinances. The County proposes to undertake a variety of ordinance amendments to its:

- ◆ Zoning Ordinance: which might include re-evaluation of the uses permitted in the agricultural district and the removal of identified "urban type" uses from this district, elimination of bonus lot provisions, changing performance standards to reduce the number of locations for the development of non-farm uses and to bring increased protection to existing non-farm uses from the negative impacts from some farming practices. In addition, the adoption of the Urban Fringe overlay district brings additional protection to each City in the County by requiring that development in these areas be done in an orderly manner with City utilities;
- ◆ Subdivision Ordinance: will include tighter performance standards and broader controls that will apply to the platting of lots in the rural area. In addition, rural subdivision will be required to be connected to urban utility systems;
- ◆ Individual Sewage Treatment Ordinance: changes will be made, if needed, to bring additional protection to groundwater and surface water features;
- ◆ Shoreland and Floodplain Ordinances: changes will be made as mandated by State or Federal rules, or if identified as being needed locally, changes initiated by County leaders or staff, and, if needed its;
- ◆ Feedlot Ordinance: at some time, the County will evaluate the need for revision of its feedlot ordinance standards.

In addition, the County has identified the need for adopting or supporting the following development control mechanisms:

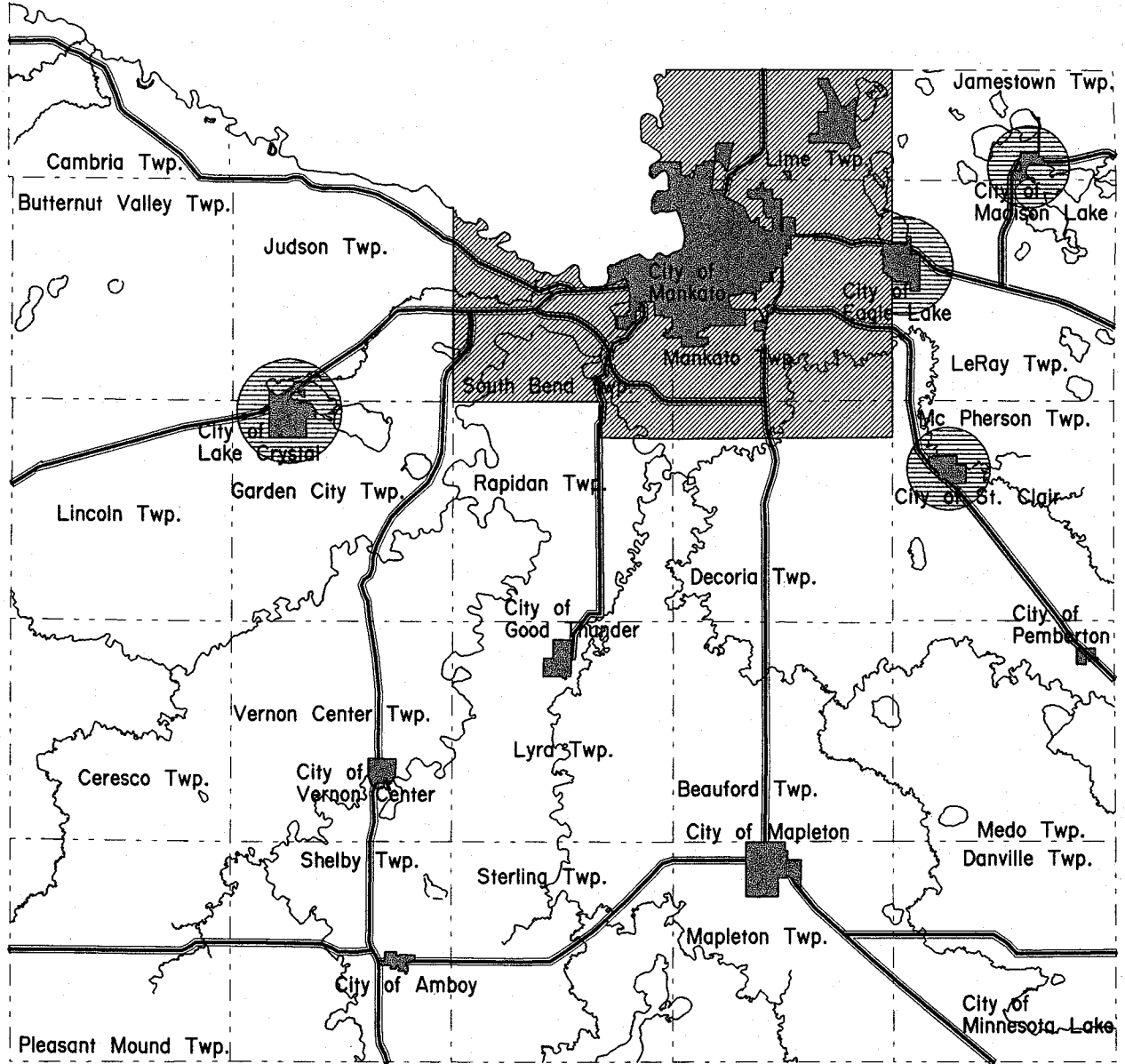
- ◆ Uniform Building Code: needed for County control over potentially shoddy construction practices that have occurred in the rural areas in past years.
- ◆ Annexation Agreements or Joint Planning Agreements between the County, Cities, and Townships: certain areas of the County were identified as being in need of joint planning efforts. Among these were the transportation corridors of

Highway #90, old Highway #14, and the new Highway #22 connection proposed to be constructed north of Mankato.

- ◆ Right to Farm Ordinance and the implementation of agricultural zone disclosure forms for non-farm developments.







The County's Plan Map is located on the following page.

BLUE EARTH COUNTY PLAN MAP



Cartography by the Blue Earth County Mapping & Planning Depts 1998



-  Agricultural Use Area
-  Urban Type Uses Area - Mankato Sphere
-  Urban Type Use Areas - Yet to be determined
-  Cities
-  Major Highways
-  Lakes & Streams

