



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Aaron Brault

Planning & Conservation Director

WISCONSIN

March 1, 2025

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Alayne Krause,

The Sheboygan County Planning and Conservation Department continues to prioritize natural resource protection and improving residents' quality of life. In 2024, the Department successfully implemented several impactful projects, highlighted below.

The construction of the new dam at the Sheboygan Marsh was completed. On May 19th, members of Ducks Unlimited, Sheboygan County Conservation Association members, Department of Natural Resources staff, donors, and County officials gathered to celebrate the dedication of the finished \$3.3M dam. Over 100 people attended the event to mark the culmination of a project that was first envisioned nearly a decade ago. It will play a vital role in preserving the Sheboygan Marsh as a clean, healthy, and thriving waterbody for public enjoyment for many years to come.

Staff from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), staff from Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), and County staff held a site visit to celebrate the County's largest pollinator installation project to date. Among the attendees was the new Wisconsin State Conservationist. The site spans over 5 acres and was once conventionally tilled, but it is now in its second year of permanent pollinator habitat. This successful initiative was a collaboration between the County and NRCS under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Staff are thrilled with the project's success and hope it inspires more landowners to consider supporting pollinators, which are a critical aspect of our food production.

A soil health assessment field day was held in the Fisher Creek Basin, where basin farmers gathered to explore effective strategies for improving soil health/quality. Attendees learned the fundamentals of soil health and actionable steps they can take to enhance their fields. This event was a successful collaboration between UW-Extension, the NRCS, and Department staff.

As always, I would like to thank you for the continued support of the Department. To view an interactive version of this report, use the following link: <https://arcg.is/0Xb5aa>

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Brault
Planning & Conservation Director

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The Planning & Conservation Department is committed to providing sound information and knowledge on environmental issues that affect our community, protecting our county's natural resources, and, first and foremost, working with the public, which we serve, in a straightforward, honest approach.

The Department is responsible for the County's mapping information, many of its parks and open spaces, and helping protect the County's environment, primarily in regards to water quality issues.

Goals and Objectives achieved in 2024

- Completed the \$3.3M dam project at the Sheboygan Marsh.
- Finalized the required Stormwater Water Quality Management Plan update.
- Hosted a Soil Health Workshop in conjunction with UW-Extension to educate local producers on the importance of soil health within the Fisher Creek Sub-basin.
- Hosted twelve conservation education outreach events, four of which were focused around stormwater.
- During the United Way Day of Caring event, volunteers, in conjunction with members of the Sheboygan River Basin Partnership, helped clean-up and replant garden beds at the Erie Avenue Old Plank Trail Head.
- Either entirely funded or partially funded eight applications for the Sheboygan County Stewardship Grant Program. The total amount awarded was \$117,648.04.
- A total of 69,500 trees were sold during our annual tree sale, filling over 1,100 orders.
- Installed two underground outlets, one stream crossing, 134 acres of cover crops, and two wetland scrapes, and enrolled 400 acres into nutrient management planning.
- Issued 13 Stormwater Erosion Control Permits, issued 96 Shoreland Zoning Permits, issued 154 Sanitary Permits, and reviewed/approved 56 Certified Survey Maps.
- Three Conservation staff completed Grassland 2.0 training and now can write grazing plans within the County.
- Hosted an open house at the Sheboygan Marsh to showcase the Kohler Center for Marsh Education and other amenities the Marsh has to offer.
- Replaced shingles on one of the park shelters at the Sheboygan Marsh.

Budget

	2024 Budget	2024 Results	Variance
Revenues	2,393,717	2,904,124	510,407
Expenses	2,426,717	2,624,270	(197,553)
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	(33,000)	279,854	312,854

The Department was able to produce a positive variance when comparing budget to actuals. A majority of the variance posted in both the revenue and expense accounts is due to the USEPA Brownfield Assessment grant the County was awarded. This project is budget-neutral. A few unexpected expenses occurred in the Department's vehicle and lab analysis accounts. One of the Department's fleet vehicles (2020 truck) needed a new transmission and rear differential. Unfortunately, it was just out of warranty and cost well over \$10,000 to repair. The lab analysis account overage was due to the Department taking over the well testing program UW-Extension formerly ran.

The 2025 \$2,555,553 Department budget includes a total operating levy amount of \$1,335,613.

Issues and Challenges Ahead

Similar to years past, a challenge will be the continued cross-training of staff due to two more expected upcoming retirements. When these individuals retire in the next two years (expected), half of the Department's staff, many of whom had well over 30 years' experience, will have turned over in the last 5-7 years due to retirements.

Goals and Objectives for 2025

- Implement the multipurpose household hazardous waste/storage building project in Sheboygan Falls.
- Continue implementing the 9-Key Element Plan to install best management practices in the Fisher Creek and Pigeon River basins.
- Continue to work with MMSD and other partners to target water quality projects in the Milwaukee River Watershed through the RCPP.
- Continue fundraising for the Sheboygan Marsh boardwalk project.
- Complete the required 10-year update to the County's Land & Water Plan.
- Implement conservation practices within the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System area to reduce phosphorus and suspended solids, working towards required Total Maximum Daily Load goals.
- Start utilizing Multi-Discharge Variance dollars to help fund conservation practices.
- Update Sheboygan County Ordinance Chapter 71 Subdivision Ordinance.

- Implement two new flow trails on the Rocky Knoll Mountain Bike trail system using a State Stewardship grant and funding from the Sheboygan County Cycling organization.