

“Kickapoo Community Sanctuary”: Keeping Our Rural Past While Stepping Into the Future

Creating an International Model

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“Sustainable development must mimic the process of living, biological systems... The purpose of sustainable development is permanence – to create and maintain a social, economic and natural environment for a desirable quality of life, over time, indefinitely, forever. Non-human communities are designed by nature for permanence. They are naturally productive and regenerative.... The principles for permanence are ecological, social and economic integrity.”
John Ikerd; “Principle-based planning for a sustainable community”

Summary -Vision of a Community Sanctuary

While most of us, living in the Kickapoo Valley, appreciate its beauty, we may not know that its biodiversity ranks with that of many protected areas. Essentially we are living in a culturally and environmentally unique “park” where we want to continue to live. As contemporary pressures such as industrialized farming, loss of family farms, sprawl, and fragmentation threaten the agrarian nature of the community as well as the integrity of our natural areas, we must protect this valuable region where we live. Coordination of current local stewardship organizations with local governance will provide a cohesive group to function as a watershed-wide support group for voluntary protection of the land and people. A number of voluntary tools, many of which are being tried already on a limited basis, are proposed to enhance protection of the Kickapoo watershed. The Natural Step training along with land use planning will support and encourage new models of sustainable farming, economic development, alternative energy systems and waste management practices. Using voluntary conservation easements and private land use plans will encourage landowner participation in saving our natural areas. Community monitoring and research will measure the progress of protection of the Kickapoo watershed to maintain its beauty, its biological integrity while maintaining our rural lifestyle. A community sanctuary would promote family farms, sustainable farming,

preservation of natural areas, and economic development through land use planning.

Methods

Natural Step for Towns/Townships – The Natural Step method trains people to look at planning that encourages sustainable and low impact development and the preservation of natural areas. Local governments can use it for visioning and land use planning to encourages sustainable farming, watershed protection and strengthening the economy from the grass-roots up.

Private Land Use Plans as Buffer Zones – Private lands can be used as buffers surrounding natural areas to discourage environmentally destructive development and agriculture. Landowners can be educated in sustainable systems and the local natural heritage. An initial project in the lower watershed will catalog biodiversity and create land use plans for private lands. Future surveys will measure the effectiveness of the conservation practices. Landowners and farmers will be brought together to develop sustainable farming and other conservation practices. If successful, this model will be duplicated in other parts of the watershed.

Education and Encouraging Sustainable Systems – Various governmental and environmental organizations already have education programs in place which can help educate the community on alternative and sustainable farming methods with low-impact on the natural resources.

Land Use Plans and Regional Planning – Comprehensive land use planning developed by watershed townships can be coordinated for regional and private land use planning.

Economic Development – Development of eco-tourism, ag-tourism and low-impact industry, that is already beginning, would be encouraged.

Conservation Easements – Voluntary easements which limit some kinds of development would be encouraged.

Monitoring Research – Community and other resource monitoring, including land, water, biodiversity, soil and farmland would be expanded for maintaining conservation management.

Waste management - The guiding principles for waste management can be summarized as *replace, recycle, reduce* and *remove*. Individuals and local governments will encouraged to follow these guidelines to manage waste.

Alternative Energy – Energy systems that do not impact the local natural resources would be encouraged.

Transportation - Support of local food, fuel and goods production wherever possible would reduce our reliance and vulnerability to changes in oil prices and availability.

Establish working relationships with partner organizations – All valley-wide organizations are invited to join this proposal.

I. Introduction

As the world's population steadily increases and as the global climate changes, our natural resources become more threatened and valuable. Here, in Wisconsin, we still have an abundance of resources, but other areas of the world are seeing their resources fast depleting. The same can happen to us. Without proper care of the resources necessary to sustain life, future generations will not enjoy the quality of life we have today. Just as clear—our government cannot protect our resources without our help, and indeed, sometimes may need our leadership.

This understanding has come to Community Conservation (CC) over the past 25 years as we developed a flexible formula for catalyzing communities to protect their natural areas. We began in Belize, where now over a dozen communities co-manage protected areas with the government of Belize, which has incorporated policies of community co-management. CC then carried this work to Assam, India to effect similar regional change despite a complex political situation of militants, illegal log smuggling, and ethnic violence. The entire region is now being protected by seven community organizations. In Wisconsin, CC has helped to catalyze five community conservation projects with resulting community managing groups. This flexible formula is now being proposed to pursue regional change within the Kickapoo Valley. The Kickapoo Valley is now facing three major challenges to its natural resources: 1) large scale, industrialized agriculture that threatens to pollute the surface and ground waters of the Kickapoo Valley and destroy the community fabric of the townships and villages, 2) reduced land parcel size resulting in fragmentation and reduction of the natural and farming communities, 3) global climate change that is likely to result in severe economic, social, and biological changes (as evidenced by the floods of August 2007).

Positive conservation changes have been occurring within the Kickapoo Valley over the past 20 years as individual projects or institutions have been created. While successful, these have failed to realize the full potential for regional change. In the late 1970s, Kickapoo Valley Association's (KVA) River, History, and Energy projects, based in Viola, brought people together valley-wide with a focus on the Kickapoo as the connecting thread to all our lives. Yet that momentum was not maintained. However, due to the synergy created by these local institutions, the time is now right to consider uniting them to initiate regional change to protect our Kickapoo River Valley.

As the valley villages, townships and residents consider their land use plans a general consensus indicates that residents want to retain the traditional values of the area while pursuing development that will retain its natural quality (for interesting evidence of this, see the "[Kickapoo Conversations](#)" conducted by Valley Stewardship Network in 2003). The sprouting of local institutions concerned with such pursuits strengthens this consensus. These include the Valley Stewardship Network, the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool, the Driftless Stewardship Initiative, the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, the Prairie Enthusiasts, the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative, the West Fork Sportsman's Club, Crawford Stewardship Project and the resurgence of the Kickapoo Valley Association, as well as others. Their common goals indicate that the time is right to effect regional change at a grass roots level. This will require bringing together committed residents to preserve the natural areas and quality of life in the Kickapoo Valley while pursuing changes that will maintain this natural quality.

II. Vision of a Community Sanctuary

If we listen to the survey results of landowners in the Kickapoo townships the visions are very similar. Landowners within the Kickapoo Valley want the area to "remain the same": they

want to preserve the rural lifestyle and the area's natural beauty. Yet most landowners and residents agree that they want some development that will enhance a vibrant local economy. At the same time area residents want a greater sense of local control and the ability (in a general political atmosphere that is continually imposing outside forces on small rural communities without their input) to determine their own directions.

The Kickapoo Valley is widely known for its natural beauty, and many residents already feel they live in a great natural park (which, like all great parks, needs much care). This proposal for the "Kickapoo Community Sanctuary" is an attempt to create a voluntary plan to preserve our rural and natural lifestyle while restoring local control: a plan that will unite communities within the Kickapoo Valley to determine their own destiny and to protect their natural resources against current pressures.

The vision of the Kickapoo Sanctuary will be realized when:

- Proper land use has stemmed the loss of family farms through farmers adopting sustainable and organic practices.
- Resident and absentee landowners are linked with farmers who wish to farm in a sustainable manner.
- Economic development is responsible and sustainable.
- Buffer zones of responsible land use extend throughout the Kickapoo watershed.
- Natural step precepts are incorporated into all planning.

III. Kickapoo River Valley Focal Protected Areas

In the past 20 years, the state government and outside agencies have been interested in purchasing lands within the Valley as protected areas, often with recreational functions. While there has been some local resentment of these purchases, local people have, nevertheless, sold their lands to the state and other agencies. Thus at the same time land has increased in value, family farms have been disappearing. And there has been no effort to maintain some of the important fertile areas as farm lands. Indeed, with increased land prices there has been a reduction in parcel sizes. Reduced parcel sizes have serious consequences: it fragments the forests, makes it difficult for small farms to survive, and opens the area to large scale agriculture. These trends threaten both the quality of our land and natural resources and the fabric of our rural communities.

At the same time, ecotourism has become a growing industry within the valley. Such an interest is a potential ally in stopping negative trends and protecting natural resources.

Essentially there are three focal areas that need to be considered in any overall land use plan for the Kickapoo Valley:

- 1) the Northern Region, which includes Wildcat Mountain and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve,
- 2) the Central Region, which includes the Kickapoo Wildlife Area - Bell Center and the Hogsback and Nature Conservancy properties, and
- 3) the Southern Region, which includes the Wauzeka Wetlands.

IV. Methods

A. Natural Step for Towns/Townships

A well-developed, widely proven approach for local government units to become responsible to both the environment and to citizens is basing decisions on the four "Natural Step" principles:

- using as few minerals as possible extracted from the ground;
- minimizing the use of man-made chemicals;
- preserving and enhancing the wild spaces within their jurisdiction
- insisting that any jobs and/or firms that they allow into their jurisdiction pay a living wage.

To follow such an approach, local governments need to have a written vision for how they want to see their area look in twenty years. With such a written vision, day-to-day decisions become easier to make. However, progress in reaching those goals needs to be constantly assessed; and every four years, the vision statement needs to be re-examined and, possibly, re-written. For the health of the environment and for a sustainable economy, three elements should be common to all vision statements:

- maintaining a rural atmosphere with farms that pasture their animals,
- maintaining hedge rows between fields to minimize wind erosion and provide bird habitat,
- protecting the streams that feed the Kickapoo River.

To become adept in following the Natural Step approach, interested villages and participants will form Natural Step study circles to

- study Natural Step methods and history
- evaluate current practices and
- suggest changes which will make their environments and economies more sustainable.

Outcomes from these study circles will be wide-ranging but specific to each study circle. When carried out well, citizens will realize that they are the “local government”: that decisions (on spraying roadsides, for example) will be driven from the bottom up, not the top down; that recycling and reuse is an area-wide concern, not a township-by-township concern; that land use plans make sense to protect the environment and quality of life in the Kickapoo Valley.

B. Private Land Use Plans as Buffer Zones

Since most land is privately owned (about half of it owned by absentee landowners), we propose to target private lands which can serve as buffer zones to natural areas. (“Buffer zones” are areas of human use which minimally impact the adjacent natural area.) Adjacent landowners will be educated about sustainable farming, logging, and conservation practices. Such an approach will maintain the rural atmosphere that valley residents desire and resurrect family farming within the Kickapoo Valley while not detracting from its natural beauty and clean environment.

One such project has been started recently, focused on the Nature Conservancy lands surrounding the Hog back prairie and adjacent lands, looking at the conservation of forests, grasslands and farmlands. The first step will be to assess these lands taking baseline data on specific flora and fauna biodiversity. As data accumulates and practices are refined, the four adjacent private properties will be used as a model for conservation land use for the Kickapoo Valley watershed. When possible, additional biodiversity and land use data will also be gathered on nearby lands.

Knowledgeable interns (both university students and area residents) will gather flora and fauna data on the four properties whose landowners have agreed to follow conservation

guidelines laid out by the project. These interns will also bring together similar data that is currently being gathered by the Nature Conservancy, by the Department of Natural Resources, and by private landowners within the lower Kickapoo Valley, below the Village of Gays Mills. This baseline data will be used for comparison of the lands in later years to evaluate the conservation efforts.

A second project is a survey of the landowners to determine their interest in and commitment to sustaining small farms and natural areas as ways to preserve the character and economic value of the area. One of the goals of this survey is to determine the feasibility of developing voluntary land trust agreements which will protect Kickapoo Valley lands from being developed into Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (which, according to evidence collected in areas where CAFOs are concentrated, will destroy the natural character of this pristine valley).

A regional land use plan will result from these studies and be incorporated into the project. If successful, this model will be duplicated elsewhere in the valley with the initial focus around protected areas.

Plan Elements for a pilot program in the middle and lower valley (see separate mission and vision statement/ Kickapoo Initiative)

- (a) **Land trust** voluntary easement purchase for Farms
- (b) **Farm-Link** program for rental lands-sustainable farmer to landowner
- (c) **Absentee Owners enlisted** in land use planning
- (d) **Land Use Plans** that detail management
- (e) **Management structure** created to oversee.
- (f) **Education Encouraging Sustainable Systems of Agriculture**
 - **Organic** – dairy, beef, pigs and livestock, vegetables, fruits, etc,
 - **Sustainable methods** - rotational grazing, prairie grazing, encouraging young farmer programs
 - **Environmentally sound farming practices** – livestock fencing, manure management, etc.
 - **Non traditional crops** – herbs, flowers, honey, goats, sheep
- (g) **Sustainable Environmental practices** (e.g., sustainable logging, selective logging, encouraging wildlife such as grassland bird breeding, etc.)

C. Education and Encouraging Sustainable Systems Working with non-profit groups and state organizations, we will connect area farms with information on methods of agriculture and marketing to help them broaden their knowledge about farming options available beyond what has become the traditional area farming options. These would include organic or sustainable methods for raising crops and livestock, rotational or prairie grazing, alternatives to row cropping, permaculture, and raising non traditional crops such as flowers, herbs, honey, goats, and sheep (some of which are already flourishing in the valley). Environmentally responsible practices for livestock fencing and manure management, sustainable logging, grassland bird breeding, etc. would also be encouraged, the project facilitating education on these processes. We would encourage working with active groups already working in the valley in grazing and permaculture as well as University Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and CROPP.

D. Land Use Plans and Regional Planning – Regional planning will be facilitated by gathering the existing township and village land use plans and making them available as both a regional guide and as a specific guide for specific townships. Other planning materials and information, such as those developed by Valley Stewardship Network and by individual landowners, will also be collected and made available.

Individual landowners will also be encouraged to create plans for their own lands, planning with neighbors who may be receptive to conservation issues. Neighborhood planning projects will be encouraged and facilitated, perhaps evolving into a major part of this project (although it will probably start slow and will develop with other sections of the project).

More sophisticated methods such as gap analysis using GIS could be employed if the State, Federal, County and other agencies were interested in working with landowners using data collected to compare geographical areas within the valley as to assess important areas for protection or restoration.

E. Economic Development - “Ecotourism” needs to be understood in the broader context of *tourism*: a term that is often misunderstood. Whenever any of us travel and/or shop somewhere not in our home town, we are tourists. Someone from La Farge (*eastern* Vernon County) fishing on the Mississippi River near Genoa (*western* Vernon County) is engaged in tourism as much as person from England visiting the Kickapoo Valley. Three types of tourism seem to be particularly appropriate for the Kickapoo valley: ecotourism, agri-tourism, and low impact tourism. Eco-tourism refers to the practice of visitors coming to appreciate the natural resources of an area: an increasingly popular form of tourism, as more and more people take an interest in the beauty of the natural world. Agri-tourism is a specific kind of eco-tourism in which tourists come for experiences directly related to agriculture, such as visiting an orchard or a U-pick berry operation, photographing livestock grazing in an open pasture, shopping at a local farmers’ market, etc. Both eco-tourism and agri-tourism depend on the wise use of the natural resources of a region, and both promote the use of the natural environment as part of the attraction for visiting a region or area.

Low-impact tourism shares many features with eco-tourism, attracting people who seek activities and businesses that strive to leave the smallest possible imprint on the environment. The project will find ways to educate local businesses to this potential. Thus, businesses can be educated to use low-volume plumbing fixtures, energy-efficient lighting, and native plantings for landscaping and to purchase regionally manufactured/produced products (thus reducing carbon emissions caused by long-distance transportation of goods). Campgrounds and parks can feature native plants and use energy efficient lighting, low-volume plumbing, and walkways and parking areas that have porous surfaces which allow rain and snowmelt to be absorbed rather than create run-off. Such campgrounds and parks would emphasize hiking, bird watching, bicycling, canoeing, snow shoeing, and encourage visitors to patronize restaurants with menus that feature locally produced foods or roadside markets with seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Since access is a key component of any type of tourism, the project will seek ways to encourage and support a vital and energy-efficient transportation infrastructure as people come to experience the Kickapoo River (known as “the crookedest river”) and the winding roads that criss-cross the watershed in the renowned “Driftless” area.

The motels and hostels to shelter the visitors should remain small and locally owned and should be encouraged to operate according to the principles of “green tourism”. Restaurants should emphasize locally grown food. Municipalities should maintain parks and trails that

encourage the use of human powered transportation. Parks should have wild areas within them to encourage the ground nesting birds and, where appropriate, maintain (or re-create) the oak savannas and prairies that were here in the 19th century.

Since the tourism industry has the initial and, often, the primary contacts with tourists, they should act as educators about the natural areas and about the community sanctuary concept. The better educated tourists become, the more they will encourage like-minded tourists to travel to the Kickapoo Valley and to spread the information about sustainable communities and ecosystems.

F. Conservation Easements – The project will look for ways to work with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy or other land trusts to persuade landowners to provide voluntary conservation easements—which are permanent and so may require time for some people to accept. Such voluntary conservation easements can be structured to address each landowner’s wants and needs for their land while providing long-term protection at the same time. Basically they limit certain kinds of development and dictate long-term conservation or farming ideals and the actions to maintain them. Voluntary conservation easements are a way that a landowner can create a permanent impact on the land they have come to appreciate. They are a legacy to leave behind that honors both the natural resources and beauty of the area and honors what are residents stated they want, to leave the area as it is and as we found it. One goal is to create as much contiguous Kickapoo Valley land under conservation management as possible so that we can preserve some of the more sensitive flora and fauna that depend on larger natural areas. Data collected in monitoring or in gap analyst could be used to inform landowners who may be willing to create voluntary conservation easements to protect important resources found on their land. Landowners may be more interested in such voluntary conservation easements when they learn how their land fits into the historical land cover and current conservation management of the Kickapoo Valley.

G. Monitoring Research – Monitoring the environment is extremely important if threats to the environment are to be acted on in a timely manner. One type of monitoring that has been going on for a long time is [Valley Stewardship Network’s \(VSN\) water quality monitoring program](#) on the Kickapoo and its branches. Such monitoring allows area residents to discover as quickly as possible when and how streams are being polluted and the data collected is also valuable to other areas in the state. Monitoring for pollution from known sources when necessary, may include water, air, groundwater and soil monitoring. Encouraging state and federal governments to expand their programs could strengthen volunteer programs. Involving school classes in environmental monitoring with volunteers would be encouraged as well. In addition, local experts and University workers could also work with NGOs to set up databases.

Other natural elements to monitor as the project develops will include forests and prairies, song bird breeding (on both public and private lands), brook trout breeding, reptile and amphibian hibernation, and individual species like eagles and cranes which have began breeding in the area in the last 20 years. Many of these projects will be enhanced by participating in larger monitoring projects, such as those done by the [International Crane Foundation](#) and the DNR bird and amphibian counts. Monitoring on farmlands native species could be done in conjunction with local farmers.

H. Waste management

The guiding principles for waste management can be summarized as *replace*, *recycle*, *reduce* and *remove*. These are valid in towns, in the country, on the farms and in a bio-sphere. Without intelligent management of wastes, sustainability is not possible. We can not foul the lands and water that grow our food and provide us with recreation and shelter without harming ourselves and generations to come.

Replacing means finding alternate items to replace objects that pollute the environment either during or after their use with non-polluting objects. This includes, on a personal level, using cloth or paper bags instead of plastic bags; using organic products or mechanical eradication rather than petroleum-based herbicides and pesticides; using metal or glass rather than plastic to carry our drinks; using rotational cropping and manures to build soil fertility rather than chemical fertilizers; using sisal twine rather than plastic. For government, the same holds true. If “noxious weeds” are a problem, cutting them just after they flower will remove them just as effectively as spraying them with herbicides. Similarly, using sand and ash on the road can be as effective as salt.

Recycling means putting items with economic value back to use. Glass bottles, for example, can be sent to “remelters” who will turn them back into useful products without having to mine more material from the ground. County and municipal governments must play an important role, provide trash bins and recycle bins in parks and natural areas as well as the regular sites. County government can also protect streams and lakes by mandating that animal containment, where most of the manure is generated, be limited to the volume of manure that can be used on that farm in a single year when applied within the norms of accepted farm practices.

Reducing waste means lowering the use of raw materials. Reusable bags taken to the store reduce our waste; buying milk in glass bottles in lieu of plastic jugs. Government can choose to mow roadsides once a year to keep down brush which would also allow the wild flowers to grow, flower and reseed. Parks can be mowed every two weeks. Landowners might be encouraged to mow and reseed right-of-ways to maintain prairies under power lines.

Removing means that items that no longer have any economic value are removed to a safe, secure site—NOT in the ditches and gullies that, too often, are repositories for old batteries, refrigerators, tires, and farm implements. Counties must provide landfills that encourage the separation of waste streams into glass, cans, batteries, waste oil, newsprint, and metals—all of which have economic value in after-markets. Electronics, refrigerators, air conditioners, fluorescent bulbs all need to be assessed a fee and sent to qualified recyclers to remove the hazardous materials from them. Cardboard boxes should be baled and sold. Compostable materials should be segregated and recycled. What’s left—items such as plastics, soiled paper, furniture, and construction debris—should be sent to the Xcel power plant in La Crosse (which will take everything except furniture and construction debris which are not generated in large amounts in rural communities).

The municipalities and townships can educate their citizens about recycling through flyers enclosed with yearly tax assessments and other regular mailers. ([The Federal EPA website](#) has many different ideas and resources for local governments.) Visitors need to be reminded that everything they take in, they need to bring back out.

I. Alternative Energy - to move beyond the exploitation of resources that negatively impact eco-systems and social systems, we must begin to think in a more holistic and integrated way. Rather than thinking of some energy sources as “alternative” and others as “mainstream” or

“normal,” we need to think of energy sources as *sustainable* or *non-sustainable*. Historically, energy production has been based upon consumption and profit, with little regard for resource or waste management. Conservation has been disregarded, because it places wise resource use above profit. And local governments have felt they had little role to play since energy production seems to be beyond their scope. But if energy is thought of holistically and in terms of sustainability, it becomes apparent that energy use can and must be decided locally. It is primarily fossil fuels that are difficult to control locally, and it is fossil fuels that are non-sustainable and a primary source of pollution.

Energy is one component in a system of many overlapping systems that make up our natural and social systems. To change the impact of traditional production and use patterns, it will be necessary to look at energy producing technologies, distribution systems, and energy use patterns in their entirety, considering their impacts on both the social and the natural worlds . . . and not just for the present time but for generations to come.

If we collectively explore the relationships within systems, we can find ways to use our economic, social, and political resources to create meaningful change. Personal consideration of how our actions impact the systems they interact with is the key to a successful beginning.

A recent episode of the PBS *e²* series, “[Harvest the Wind](#),” shows how the Buffalo Ridge area of Minnesota has made rapid growth in alternative energy production—not because of government programs but because of change beginning at the local level. That kind of “home-grown” re-direction of energy systems can and must be done in the Kickapoo Valley.

J. Transportation - The roadways of the Kickapoo Valley make our rural properties not only accessible but *vulnerable*. In the past fifty years, increasing vehicle weights and increased usage has exceeded the design load, making our roads in constant need of expansion and repair. That, coupled with the increasing expense of the key ingredient—oil—and its questionable future places our entire transportation infrastructure in jeopardy. Encouraging resurgence of limited mass transit and support of local businesses to acquire goods would reduce energy consumption.

However, today’s rural economies are dependent upon our transportation systems to provide our supplies and deliver our goods to markets. Traditionally, the natural topography and resources determined business development. But today, business philosophy ignores community responsibility and technology gives people an apparent ability to dominate natural and social economic “progress” proceeds without respect for natural systems. Except in a very few quarters, economic thought does not consider the real costs of our domination. Food is a good example. Our average meal travels 1500 miles before it rests on our plates, but the real cost on our communities is not calculated into our bills at a grocery store or restaurant. Nothing of what we pay for our food is channeled back into paying for the effects of all this transportation on our roadways and communities or on our water and our air.

Despite the undeniable benefits and satisfaction cheap transportation has brought, the time has come when we can no longer ignore its true costs and the enormous implications of infrastructure built on rapidly diminishing resources. (How much have we squandered in military actions to support our enormous addition to oil?) Nor can we ignore transportation’s impact on our health and quality of life.

We must rethink our transportation habits if we are to lessen our impact on our ecosystems and create sustainable lifestyles. The [Vernon County Transportation Project Planning Report](#) (August 2007) indicates that the majority of county residents surveyed are interested in alternative transportation options: regular bus routes, car and van pools, better bike trails, and better coordination of alternatives to single-occupancy car transportation. The currently forming

“Driftless CarShare” project is still another indication of citizen interest. In short, the time has come for more responsible and more energy-efficient transportation systems in the Kickapoo Valley. And this project would seek to put all the interested parties in contact with each other

K. Establish working relationships with partner organizations – We would like to invite all valley organizations to participate in this proposal and especially the three organizations that are already working valley wide: the Valley Stewardship Network, the Kickapoo Valley Association, and the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative. These and other organizations could begin to see how their mission would fit in best with the proposal and begin to all work together in a common goal to make the Kickapoo Community Sanctuary a reality.

V. Management Structure for the Community Sanctuary




The Kickapoo Valley watershed forms a natural unit within the center of the driftless area, an area of rugged beauty never covered by the glaciers that wore down the hills and filled the valleys of the rest of Wisconsin. While seen by some valley residents and by some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as an ecological and social unit, it has not been viewed as such by many who, when their gaze rises about their private land ownership, see only towns and villages, or, at best, northern or southern parts of the valley. However, similarities within the watershed far outweigh differences, and the threats are similar throughout. Valley-wide thinking is very important because how the river is treated in its upper reaches affects the residents, lands, and water at its lower areas. Similarly, threats and social changes initiated in one area of the watershed will spread throughout. Thus, an important part of this proposal is to make residents aware of these similarities and aware of the necessity of working together to create a healthy socio-economic/natural unit.

This awareness will initially be spread gradually through word of mouth and through dissemination of this proposal to residents and landowners throughout the Valley. Additionally, we will gradually incorporate interested local NGOs, helping them to carry out their missions while helping to strengthen the unity, especially those such as Valley Stewardship Network, the Sustainable Wood Cooperative and the Kickapoo Valley Association that already function as valley-wide organizations: this project will help to encourage this focus. As early aspects of the project are carried out with success, they will influence the possibility of spreading the concept as well. Finally, as momentum begins after the project has been going, we will start a series of valley-wide awareness celebrations with the support of other organizations, to let people see and experience the unity of the valley.

Once the project has wide interest and acceptance, and until its actions are eventually coordinated by a local NGO(s), some way of gathering stakeholders into a governing board should be instituted to maintain the project as a valley-wide project. Such a board or committee should be composed of approximately 70 – 80% community members and 20 – 30% of NGO, county, and state representatives. Some area representation to include towns and counties should be included as well, either within the board or in an advisory capacity. One suggestion is for a board of thirteen: two members from NGOs which are involved in area planning, ten from Communities within the planning area (four from Crawford County, four from Vernon County, two from Monroe County), and one from the DNR.

Kickapoo River, Wisconsin

Legend

-  Wildcat Mountain State Park
-  Kickapoo Watershed
-  US Hwy 14

