

“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.

Kickapoo River, Wisconsin

Legend

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

