

TOWN OF BERN
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
2006

Town of Bern Town Board

Marathon County Conservation, Planning & Zoning
Department

URS, Inc.
MSA

Town of Bern Conditions and Issues

2005

Town of Bern Conditions and Issues

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List of Acronyms

303 (d) list—waters designated as “impaired” under section 303 (d) of the U.S. Clean Water Act.

AADT—Annual Average Daily Traffic

AHI—Architecture & History Inventory (a database of the Wisconsin Historical Society).

ATC—American Transmission Company

BMPs—Best Management Practices

CCR&R—Child Care Resource and Referral Network

CDBG—Community Development Block Grant

CES—Cropland Evaluation System (Marathon County)

CIP—Capital Improvement Program

Comm 83—Chapter 83 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code under the Department of Commerce, setting standards for regulation of private sewage systems.

CRP—Conservation Reserve Program

CTH—County Trunk Highway

CWA—Central Wisconsin Airport

DCPZ—Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (Marathon County)

DWD—Department of Workforce Development

EMS—Emergency Medical Services

ERW—Exceptional Resource Waters, a designation by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

FCL—Forest Crop Law

FEMA—Federal Emergency Management Agency

FIRM—Flood Insurance Rate Maps

HOME—Home Investment Partnerships Program

HUD—U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

LHOG—Local Housing Organization Grant

LWRMP—Land and Water Resource Management Plan (Marathon County)

MFL—Managed Forest Law

MPO—Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

NCHC—North Central Health Care

NCWRPC—North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

NRHP—National Register of Historic Places

NTC—Northcentral Technical College

ORW—Outstanding Resource Waters, a designation under the U.S. Clean Water Act.

PASER—Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating

PMP—Pavement Management Plan

PSCW—Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

SHPO—State Historic Preservation Office

STF Data—Summary Tape File, referring to data files of the 2000 U.S. Census.

STH—State Trunk Highway

TIP—Transportation Improvement Program (Marathon County)

USDA—United States Department of Agriculture

UW-MC—University of Wisconsin—Marathon County

WDA—Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

WDNR—Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

WDOA—Wisconsin Department of Administration

WDOT—Wisconsin Department of Transportation

WHEDA—Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

WISLR—Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads

1. Introduction and Summary

The Town of Bern's Conditions and Issues Report documents existing conditions in the Town and identifies primary issues or concerns the Town may need to address in the future. It includes information on the Town's demographics, natural resources, land use, transportation, utilities, housing, cultural resources, community facilities, parks, economic development, and intergovernmental cooperation. This report provides a backdrop for the development of the final plan, which will outline policies and actions the Town can take to address identified issues and guide future growth in Bern. Some key findings include:

- The Town of Bern is located in the northwest corner of Marathon County, Wisconsin. It has seen slow population growth over the past 30 years, and this is predicted to continue in the future.
- The character of the landscape is very rural, and residents would like to see this maintained. Bern does not currently have zoning regulations and residents in the Town would like to minimize governmental controls over land use.
- Town roads are generally in good repair. However, identifying funding for road improvements is an increasing concern as more residents clamor for paved road surfaces.
- Residents within the Town own and operate septic systems for on-site wastewater treatment. The nearest wastewater treatment system is located in the Village of Athens, in the southeast corner of the Town.
- Housing within the Town consists primarily of single family, detached residences. These homes are scattered throughout the Town.
- The Town's economy relies primarily upon agriculture. In the coming years, it is predicted that the agricultural economy will continue to decline in the Town, as well as the State as a whole.
- The Town's primary intergovernmental concern is working with the Village of Athens. The Village's desire to expand to accommodate residential, commercial, and industrial growth could have a direct impact on the Town's land use base.

2. Demographics

This analysis is intended to describe the existing demographics of the Town of Bern and identify the major demographic trends impacting Bern over the next few decades. Both Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin are also listed for comparison.

Population and Households

Historical Trends

The Town of Bern has seen a slow increase in its population over time. Table 2-1 shows an overview of the population for the Town, County, and State from 1970 – 2000. While the Town has increased in population, the County and State have grown at faster rates over this same time period.

The Town, as well as the State and the County increased in the number of households over time as well. However, over this same time period, the average household size for all three entities decreased. The Town had the largest decrease in average household size (-12.9%).

Table 2-1: Demographic Change, 1970-2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% 1970 to 2000	% Change 1990 to 2000
Total Population						
Bern	497	487	550	562	+13%	+2%
County	97,457	111,270	115,400	125,834	+29%	+9%
State	44,178,21	47,057,67	48,917,69	53,636,75	+21%	+10%
Total Households						
Bern	126	128	147	170	+34%	+15%
County	29,771	37,865	41,534	47,402	+59%	+14%
State	13,288,04	16,522,61	18,221,18	20,845,44	+57%	+14%
Average Household Size						
Bern	3.94	3.80	3.74	3.31	-19%	-12.9%
County	3.27	2.9	2.75	2.6	-20%	-5%
State	3.22	2.35	2.68	2.50	-22%	-7%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

The population of Marathon County grew from 115,400 in 1990 to 125,834 in 2000, an increase of 9% compared to a 10% increase in the State and 8.7% in the U.S. The most recent estimates (Wisconsin Department of Administration [WDOA], Demographic Services, 2002) show an annual growth rate of 0.7% in all three jurisdictions. Population growth in Marathon County has been concentrated in the urbanized area surrounding Wausau.

The Town of Bern has a slightly younger population than Marathon County, or the State. This is shown in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Population by Age Group, 2000

Age Group	Percent of Population		
	Bern	County	State
Under 5 years	6.2	6.4	6.4
5 to 9 years	8.0	7.5	7.1
10 to 14 years	9.8	8.0	7.5
15 to 19 years	11.4	7.7	7.6
20 to 24 years	5.9	5.4	6.7
25 to 34 years	11.9	13.0	13.2
35 to 44 years	13.7	16.5	16.3
45 to 54 years	13.2	13.9	13.7
55 to 59 years	5.2	4.8	4.7
60 to 64 years	2.3	3.8	3.8
65 to 74 years	7.3	6.4	6.6
75 to 84 years	4.3	4.8	4.7
85 years and over	0.9	1.7	1.8
Median Age	32.8	36.3	36.0

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

Population Forecasts

The following projections for population were determined by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) in 2003. The projections are based upon the percentage change (growth) in total population between 1980-2000 for each planning sub-area (Highway 51, Eastern Municipalities, North-Western, South-Central, and South-Western). Table 2-3 below illustrates population projections for the Town and the County using a moderate growth rate.

Population projections are made on an assumed moderate growth rate of -1%. The northwest area of Marathon County has seen population decline over time, and will most likely continue to see decline. The County's population is projected to grow by 13% over the next 30 years.

Table 2-3: Population Projections – 2000-2030

	Total Population by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% change
Bern	562	561	560	559	558	557	556	-1%
County	125,834	128,632	131,430	134,217	137,022	139,820	142,618	+13%

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/03

Table 2-3b: Population Projections – 2000-2030

	Total Population by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% change
Bern	562	577	592	607	622	638	652	+16%
County	125,834	130,242	134,504	138,836	143,308	147,112	150,225	+19%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration
2030 numbers projected from 2025 DOA estimates based on countywide growth rate rates

Table 2-3b shows population projections completed by the WDOA, Demographic Services Center. The WDOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin's official population projections in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 16.96. These projections are based on the same historical time period as those developed by NCWRPC, however more recent years carry a greater weight in the WDOA's projected populations. Additionally, the WDOA projections are based on the historical population trends of individual communities, whereas the NCWRPC projections are based on trends in the planning sub-areas.

The NCWRPC projections provide a baseline to determine trends in the sub-area. They are useful in identifying future population beyond the borders of individual communities. The

WDOA projections are more useful at the local municipality level.

Household Forecasts

Like population, household projections were completed in 5-year increments between 2000 and 2030. The number of households was calculated by dividing the average persons per household into the total population for each 5-year increment.

The Town of Bern had an average household size of 3.31 in 2000. This was used to develop the projected number of households. Due to the slow rate of decrease in the population, the Town of Bern will most likely see a the total number of households hold steady over time, as household size decreases. Table 2-4 shows the household projections.

Table 2-4: Household Projections – 2000-2030

	Total Households by Year							% change
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	
Bern	170	169	169	169	168	168	168	-1
County	48,585	49,665	50,745	51,821	52,904	53,985	55,065	+13%

Source: Derived from data in Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/10/03

Table 2-4b: Household Projections – 2000-2030

	Total Households by Year							% change
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	
Bern	170	177	186	195	203	210	216	+27%
County	47,702	60,109	52,902	55,589	58,181	60,283	62,035	+30%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration 2030 numbers projected from 2025 DOA estimates based on countywide growth rate rates

Like the population projection, the WDOA household projections are recognized as Wisconsin’s official household projections in accordance with Wisconsin Statue 16.96. and are based on the historical population trends of individual communities. Table 2-4b includes household projections completed by the WDOA.

Education and Income Levels

According to 2000 Census data, 71.3 percent of Town residents have a high school education or higher. This compares to 83.8 percent for the County, and 85.1 percent for the State. In the Town, 7.8 percent of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is slightly lower than the number of persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher in the County and State with 18.3 percent and 22.4 percent respectively.

Table 2-5: Educational Attainment (population age 25 and over)

Educational Attainment	Bern		County	State
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than 9th Grade	56	18.2	8.2	5.4
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	32	10.4	8.0	9.6
High School Graduate	133	43.3	38.0	34.6
Some College, No Degree	47	15.3	18.3	20.6
Associates Degree	15	4.9	9.2	7.5
Bachelor's Degree	20	6.5	12.6	15.3
Graduate or Professional Degree	4	1.3	5.7	7.2
Percent high school graduate or higher		71.3	83.8	85.1
Percent bachelor's degree or higher		7.8	18.3	22.4

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

Median household income for Town residents was \$50,000 in 2000. This compares slightly higher than Marathon County with a median of \$45,165, and higher than the State overall at \$43,791. Income distribution among all income levels is approximately proportionate to levels observed county- and statewide.

Table 2-6: Household Income Levels, 2000

Income Level	Bern		County	State
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than \$10,000	6	3.8	5.9	7.1
\$10,000 - \$14,999	17	10.8	5.4	5.8
\$15,000 - \$24,999	9	5.7	12.3	12.7
\$25,000 - \$34,999	23	14.6	13.1	13.2
\$35,000 - \$49,999	24	15.2	19.4	18.1
\$50,000 - \$74,999	63	39.9	25.2	22.7
\$75,000 - \$99,999	5	3.2	10.5	10.9
\$100,000 - \$149,000	4	2.5	5.4	6.4
\$150,000 - \$199,999	4	2.5	1.3	1.5
\$200,000 or More	3	1.9	1.6	1.5
Total Households	158		100.0	100.0
Median Household Income	50,000		45,165	43,791

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

Employment Characteristics

Table 2-7 illustrates the breakdown of the employed population of the Town in 2000 by occupation. The “employed population” is defined as people living in the Town who are 16 years and older and had a job at the time of the Census. In 2000, the Town had an employed population of 278. Most

residents were employed in management, professional and related with almost 29 percent. Production, transportation, and material moving was second, and sales and office third.

Table 2-7: Occupation by Sector, 2000

Sector	Number	Percent
Management, professional, and related occupations	80	28.8
Service occupations	23	8.3
Sales and office occupations	50	18.0
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	28	10.1
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	32	11.5
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	65	23.4
Total Employed*	278	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

* “Total Employed” represents employed civilian population 16 years and over

Demographic Trends

- Bern has a number of residents who are Mennonite or Amish and lead a more secluded lifestyle, with separate housing trends, schools and alternative transportation. Their needs may require additional planning or services in the Town.
- The Town of Bern has seen a moderate overall growth rate from 1970 through 2000, and a slow growth rate from 1990 – 2000.
- The Town has seen a larger increase in the number of households over the past 30 years.

Town of Bern

- The Town of Bern has a relatively high percentage of its population that is below the age of 19. This, coupled with a low median age (32.8 years old) indicates a large number of young families are moving to this area.

Issues

None identified.

3. Natural Resources

Because natural resource features do not follow geo-political boundaries, it is important to consider their patterns and inter-relationships on a broader scale. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administered at the County, State or Federal level. Thus, an overview of recent countywide natural resource planning efforts is described below, followed by a description of local natural resource conditions. Of particular interest are geographic areas of the landscape encompassing valued natural resources features grouped below by resource type, including water, soil and biological resources.

Maps for the Natural Resources element include Figures: 3-1, Rivers and Floodplains; 3-2, Wetland Types; 3-3, Soil Associations; 3-4, Prime Farm Soils; 3-5, Slopes. All figures are located at the end of this section.

Recent Planning Efforts Related to Natural Resources

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by the County specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision-making regarding resource management and protection. In addition to the plans listed below, Marathon County and several local communities have adopted park and outdoor recreation plans that discuss natural resource based recreational facilities and protection strategies. These are described in more detail in the Parks section.

- **Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP)** - In 2001, Marathon County adopted a LWRMP in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of this plan is to identify a vision for natural resource management in Marathon County and outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources. Marathon County encompasses portions of 22 watersheds. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has ranked these watersheds according to water pollution impacts and designated five as “priority” watersheds to receive special planning and funding through the voluntary, State-funded Priority Watershed Program. The County’s Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (DCPZ) works with the WDNR to implement the program. Program funding is used to hire staff to assist in developing management plans for each watershed and to provide cost sharing to landowners for implementation of “best management practices” (BMPs) to achieve the program objectives.
- **Marathon County 2001 Groundwater Protection Guide** – This guide is an extension of the efforts established with adoption of the Marathon County Groundwater Plan in 1988. It is intended to guide local and County officials in setting policy. It also serves as a resource of information about groundwater and other natural resources and recommends strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection.

- **Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 1996-2005** – This plan includes recommendations to guide management of forest land in Marathon County in accordance with the County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department’s mission to manage and protect the County forest on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. It provides substantial information on existing forest resources and as well as information regarding the roles of the various agencies and regulatory framework related to forest management.

Water Resources

Marathon County contains abundant water resources. Many have remained in a fairly pristine state and others are in need of focused efforts to improve water quality. Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) designations are derived from an amendment to the U.S. Clean Water Act, which directed states to identify waters that were largely unaffected by pollution and should remain that way. States were required to develop “anti-degradation” policies to protect these waters from pollution. As a result, wastewater entering an ORW must be as clean as the water in the “outstanding” water body. The anti-degradation policies only apply to point sources of pollution, such as an industrial discharge pipe. However, Wisconsin has other programs in place to control non-point source pollution, such as animal waste and pesticides in farm runoff, urban runoff, and failing septic systems.

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board also wanted to extend higher levels of protection to top trout waters. As such, the WDNR established a second category of waterways to be protected under the anti-degradation policy; these are the ERW. Wastewater entering ERW must meet minimum clean water standards, although higher standards are encouraged where feasible.

There are no ORWs in the Town of Bern.

ERWs in the Town of Bern include:

- Several tributaries to Black Creek

Water resources that have been significantly degraded are identified as “impaired waters”. Four of the 22 watersheds in Marathon County have been identified as “impaired waters” on the “303 (d) list” of the U.S. Clean Water Act. The list identifies waters that do not meet current water quality standards and merit water quality improvement and protection. The Town of Bern does not have any impaired waters.

Resource management plans for these watersheds, plus the Lower Big Rib River watershed are currently being done as part of the Priority Watershed Program, a State-funded, voluntary program administered by the County. The County’s resource management planning efforts are described in more detail in the *Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan* (2001).

Streams/Rivers – Black Creek and its tributaries are the primary water resources in the Town of Bern. Several of these tributaries are considered ERW.

Floodplains - Floodplains consist of land likely to be covered by floodwater during the regional (100-year) flood. Floodplain areas are based on information compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The floodplain includes the floodway and the flood fringe. Floodplain typically follows Black Creek and several of its tributaries. Figure 3-1 shows floodplains in the Town of Bern.

Wetlands – Wetlands in Wisconsin were defined by the State Legislature in 1978 as: *"an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophilic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions."*

Programs in three levels of government - local, State and Federal - regulate activities in wetlands. There are dozens of wetland types in Wisconsin, characterized by vegetation, soil type and degree of saturation or water cover. Some of the more prominent wetland types are:

- **Aquatic Bed** wetlands contain plants growing entirely on or in a water body no deeper than 6'. Plants may include pondweed, duckweed, lotus and water-lilies.
- **Marshes** are characterized by standing water and dominated by cattails, bulrushes, pickerel-weed, lake sedges and/or giant bur-reed

- **Sedge or "Wet" Meadows** wetlands may have saturated soils, rather than standing water, more often than not. Sedges, grasses and reeds are dominant, but look also for blue flag iris, marsh milkweed, sneeze-weed, mint and several species of goldenrod and aster.
- **Scrub/Shrub** wetlands include bogs and alder thickets and are characterized by woody shrubs and small trees such as tag alder, bog birch, willow and dogwood.
- **Forested** wetlands include bogs and forested floodplain complexes. They are characterized by trees 20 feet or more in height such as tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, green ash and silver maple.

Figure 3-2 depicts the wetlands in the Town of Bern.

Soil Resources

Soils Types – The Town of Bern is primarily covered by Magnor-Cable and Loyal-Withee-Marshfield soils. Susceptibility for soil erosion is similar to the average soil loss experienced by Marathon County as a whole and is not a major concern. See figure 3-3.

Prime Farm Soils – Figure 3-4 illustrates soils that have been identified as prime farm soils according to the Marathon County Cropland Evaluation System (CES). This system establishes a basis from which one parcel of land can be compared to another. It rates soils on their ability to produce food, feed, forage, and fiber crops. It is based upon the knowledge that soil properties affect yields. The system is

non-biased, defensible, and can be consistently applied. Additional information on Marathon County CES can be obtained from Marathon County DCPZ.

The Town of Bern is covered in large part by Class 1 Prime Farm Soils. These class designations refer to the quality of soils for growing crops and are based on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifications. Class 1 soils are the best soils in Marathon County for growing all crops. Class 2 soils are also very good agricultural soils, however, they may be prone to wetness and are therefore less desirable than Class 1 soils. It should be noted that not all prime farm soils are used for farming; some have been developed with residential or other uses. The “prime farm soils” designation simply indicates that these soils are good productive farmland.

Farmland preservation contracts are located primarily at the intersection of CTHs F and M, south of CTH M, and around STH 97. Farmland preservation contracts provide certain tax incentives to encourage land to be kept in active farming. This is discussed in greater detail in the Land Use section.

Steep Slopes – Steep slopes are defined as slopes with gradients over 12 percent. Map 3-5 illustrates where steep slopes exist and separates them into two categories. Category D includes areas with slopes between 12 and 20 percent. Category E includes areas where slopes are all greater than 15%.

Biological Resources

Vegetation – The Town of Bern is covered primarily by agricultural vegetation, such as crops, forests, and pastures.

Wildlife Resources and Habitat – Wildlife resources include a variety of game and non-game species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians that typically live in Marathon County. Common types of wildlife include deer, wild turkeys, raccoon, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl, bear, badger, wolf and raptors. Wildlife resources are abundant in the many undisturbed sanctuaries, refuges, reserves, and scattered habitats located throughout the County. Numerous other species of migrating birds use habitat in Marathon County for food, shelter, and resting stops during seasonal migration.

There is a significant amount of wildlife habitat in Marathon County. In addition to County parks and forest units, major wildlife habitat areas include: the George W. Mead Wildlife Area, the McMillan Marsh State Wildlife Management Area, and Rib Mountain State Park.

Threatened and Endangered Species - Both aquatic and terrestrial endangered, threatened, or special concern species are present within the Town. These include:

Communities:

- Northern Mesic Forest Community - This forest complex covered the largest acreage of any Wisconsin vegetation type prior to European settlement. Sugar maple (*Acer*

saccharum) is dominant or co-dominant in most stands, while hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) was the second most important species, sometimes occurring in nearly pure stands with white pine (*Pinus strobus*). Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) can be a co-dominant with sugar maple in the counties near Lake Michigan. Other important tree species were yellow birch (*Betula allegheniensis*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), and white ash (*Fraxinus americana*). The groundlayer varies from sparse and species poor (especially in hemlock stands) with woodferns (especially *Dryopteris intermedia*), bluebead lily (*Clintonia borealis*), clubmosses (*Lycopodium* spp.), and Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) prevalent, to lush and species-rich with fine spring ephemeral displays. After old-growth stands were cut, trees such as quaking and bigtoothed aspens (*Populus tremuloides* and *P. grandidentata*), white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) became and still are important in many second-growth Northern Mesic Forests. Several distinct associations within this complex warrant recognition as communities, and draft abstracts of these are currently undergoing review.

Flora:

None

Fauna:

The WDNR lists the following animal as threatened or endangered. The Town feels this finding is in error:

- *Lepus townsendii* White-tailed Jackrabbit

Issues

- **Land Use Regulation** - The Town would like to minimize government involvement in natural resource issues.
- **Farm Economy** - The farming economy is no longer as vital in this area as it once was. Town residents want the ability to sell their farmland when they retire and their children no longer wish to maintain the family farm operations. While there are concerns about the loss of active farming and farmland, Town residents want minimal government interference in private property dealings.
- **Water Quality Map** - Note: The Town residents expressed concern over the “water quality management areas” map produced. The County is working to correct the errors. Manure pits and irrigation ditches will be removed from the maps. The map is an approximate representation of the areas where shoreland zoning may apply (1000’ of lakes, 300’ of streams). This map is only an **estimate** of these areas, as the determination cannot be made as to the navigability of a stream, etc.

4. Land Use

The Town of Bern is located in far northwest Marathon County and bordered on the north and west by Taylor County. It lies west of Halsey and directly north of Johnson. Main roads in the community include CTHs M and F, and STH 97.

Maps for the Land Use element include Figures: 4-1, Existing Land use/Land cover; 4-2, Farm Preservation Contracts and Exclusive Agricultural Zoning. All figures are located at the end of this section.

Current Pattern of Land Use

The Town of Bern is primarily made up of woodlands and croplands. Almost 2,000 acres are held by private owners as forest cropland, while the County has approximately 270 acres of forest. The largest areas of cropland are in the southeastern quadrant of Bern. Maps of prime farmland show a relatively high level in the Town, particularly in the southeast cropland area. However, prime soils are also throughout the northern half of Bern, where woodland is predominant. There are over 1,400 acres held in Farmland Preservation Contracts, in scattered blocks.

The Village of Athens, with a population of 1,095, is located in the southeast corner of Bern. Residential development is most concentrated in the southern and eastern sections of Bern, specifically lining major roads in 10 to 40-acre parcels. Few

residential parcels appear in much of the northern half of Bern, where woodlands predominate.

Commercial and industrial activities appear to be limited to forest products and several quarries or gravel pits scattered around the Town.

Existing Land Use – For purposes of this report, existing land cover was used as a proxy for existing land use. This was done to achieve consistency in describing existing land uses in the various municipalities participating in the comprehensive planning effort. Table 4-1 describes the various land use cover categories and Figure 4-1 illustrates the existing land cover. Note, the acreage and percentage of land shown on Table 4-1 were determined from aerial photos and are not intended to be accurate to the parcel level.

Table 4-1: Land Use Cover Classification, 2000

Land Cover Category	Description	Acres	% of Total Land Area
Single Family Residential	One family structures, farm residences, mobile homes	360	2
Multi-Family Residential	Multiple family structures with three or more households, condos, duplexes, apartments	0	0
Commercial Services	Retail stores, taverns, restaurants, truck stops, gas stations, farm coops, farm implement dealerships, automobile dealerships, business offices, motels/hotels, offices, telephone/gas company	2	0
Industrial	Saw/paper/lumber mills, dairies, industrial parks, trucking operations, distribution centers	9	0
Quarries/Gravel Pits	Mining operations	64	0
Cropland	Tilled agriculture, prime farmland	7,164	33
Specialty Crops	Ginseng, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, groves, cranberries, etc.	14	0
Other	Fallow, pasture and undetermined	987	5

Agriculture	agriculture, power lines & towers, water towers, municipal wells		
Public/Quasi-Public	Schools, churches, cemeteries, town halls, fire departments, National Guard	4	0
Recreation	Ball fields, golf courses, playgrounds, parks, trails, camp grounds, shooting ranges	0	0
Woodlands	Forested land	9,232	42
Water and Wetlands	Open waters, such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, creeks, reservoirs,	235	1
Transportation	Airports, highways, road right-of-ways, railroads, logging roads	435	2
Barren Land	Unused open land in wooded areas, along streams, along roadsides	375	2
Total Land Area		21,772	100%

Source: Marathon County Land Use Cover Database

Current Land Use Plans and Regulations

Land Use Plan(s) – The Town of Bern does not currently have a land use plan in place.

Zoning – There are no zoning regulations in the Town of Bern.

Shoreland Zoning – Shoreland, shoreland wetlands, and floodplain regulations are applicable in all geographic areas of the County. Wisconsin law mandates Counties to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates land use in shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas for the entire area of the County outside of villages and cities. This ordinance supersedes any Town ordinance, unless a Town ordinance is more restrictive. The shoreland/wetland and floodplain area covered under this zoning is the area that lies within 1,000 feet

of a lake and within 300 feet of a navigable stream or to the landward side of a floodplain, whichever distance is greater.

Farmland Preservation Program— The State of Wisconsin has a Farmland Preservation Tax Credit Program. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners keeping land in agricultural use can claim a credit on their State income tax by obtaining a zoning certificate, if the land is exclusive agriculture zoned (8 towns in Marathon County), or sign contract with the State. The program requires that a landowner be a Wisconsin resident, own a minimum of 35 or more acres of contiguous land, and produce gross farm receipts of \$6,000 or more in the last year, or \$18,000 in the last three years. The income requirement can be satisfied with having 35 acres or more enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Landowners must also comply with County soil and water conservation standards. Contracts can range from 10 to 25 years, and remain in effect regardless of change in ownership. There are several blocks of land under Farmland Preservation Contracts, which provide certain tax incentives to encourage land to be kept in active farming. See figure 4-2.

Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL)

In the State, over 2.6 million acres are enrolled under the FCL and the MFL. Because high taxes had encouraged the cutting of timber for revenue, the laws were developed to encourage better forest management and provide tax relief to the woodland owners. Land set aside under the FCL (which was combined into the MFL in 1986) required at least 40 acres in one quarter-quarter section, set aside under a 25- or 50-year

contract, and public access for hunting and fishing activities. Current contracts will continue until their expiration dates. This land is typically shown in plat books to identify locations. Land set aside under the FCL in Marathon County is often owned by forest products companies, although many individuals also own large enough parcels to participate.

The MFL was enacted in 1985 and requires at least 10 acres of contiguous forest land. Because of the smaller acreage requirement, many individual landowners take advantage of the MFL. Landowners may close to the public up to 80 acres of their forest lands set aside under MFL. The remaining program acres must be open to public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, sightseeing and cross-country skiing. Landowners must choose a 25- or 50-year contract. The landowner pays an Acreage Share Amount as part of their tax bill in lieu of taxes. Current rates through 2007 are \$0.83 per acre for land open to the public and \$1.95 per acre for closed land.

Table 4-2 shows current estimates of land set aside under the FCL and MFL programs. It is noted that information on MFL land is not readily available since landowners select various acreage amounts and may have both closed or open land. These acreages do not correspond with the parcel boundaries, and thus are not mapped.

As shown in Table 4-2, there are 2,253 acres of land estimated to be currently enrolled in the FCL program and about 1326 acres enrolled in MFL programs in the Town.

Table 4-2: Land in Forest Preservation Programs (in acres), 1998 – 2002

Year	Forest Crop Law (FCL)	Managed Forest Law (MFL) open	Managed Forest Law (MFL) closed
1998	2,408.5	833	312
2002	1,984.5	1,326	544.2
Change	-424	+493	+232.2
% Change	-15.8	+59.2	+74.4

Source: Data compiled by local assessors with Municipal Board of Review

Development Trends

Land Supply – Development is somewhat limited by the enrollment of properties into tax incentive programs to maintain existing use/cover under the managed forest law, the forest crop law, and farmland preservation.

The Town of Bern has 17,772 acres of land available and 4,000 acres of land unavailable. This was calculated using North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) data. Available land was considered to be cropland, special cropland, woodlands, and barren / vacant lands. All other types were considered “unavailable”. It is noted that some of this “available” land may be in public ownership, as shown in Table 4-3, thus making it essentially “unavailable” for development.

Development is somewhat limited by the enrollment of properties into tax incentive programs to maintain existing use/cover under the managed forest law, the forest crop law, and farmland preservation.

Table 4-3: Public Owned Land (in acres), 1998-2002

Year	County Owned	State Owned	Federal Owned
1998	269	0	0
2002	269	0	0
Change	0	0	0
% Change	0	0	0

Source: Data compiled by local assessors with Municipal Board of Review

Land Demand – An estimate of land needed for future residential development was based on projected new dwelling units between 2000 and 2030 derived from WDOA household projections and the average density of dwelling units per acre in the community. The average density was calculated using the total acres of residential land on the 2000 land use/cover map divided by the number of households according to the 2000 Census. It was assumed that the density would remain constant between 2000 and 2030. Future acres needed for residential development were then estimated by multiplying the projected number of households in 2030 by the average density. In the Town of Bern, it is estimated that 98 acres of land will be needed to accommodate new residential development through 2030.

The NCWRPC estimated land demand for future non-residential development based on projected changes in local employment and estimated current average density of employees per acre. In the Town of Bern, it is estimated that only 4 acres will be needed to accommodate new non-residential development through 2030.

Land Values – Table 4-4 indicates the change in assessed land values between 1998 and 2002 for various types of land use in

the Town of Bern. It also indicates percent change in acreage and land value for the Town compared to Marathon County. Between 1998 and 2002 the number of acres in residential land use increased by almost 44. At the same time, the amount of land in Agriculture increased by 73 acres and the amount of land classified as Swamp & Waste Land increased by almost 139 acres. This likely reflects the conversion of some farmland to rural residential uses and changes made in the classification of land from Agriculture to Swamp & Waste. Similarly, the acreage of land classified as Forest decreased by 577, land value for Forest land also increased by \$78. In Marathon County, land classified as Swamp & Waste Land had the highest percent increase in acreage of all categories (74.8%) and land classified as Forest had the highest percent increase in value per acre (almost 92%).

Table 4-4: Per Acre Assessed Land Values (in dollars), 1998 – 2002

Year	Residential		Commercial		Manufacturing		Agriculture		Swamp & Waste Land		Forest	
	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only
1998	426	\$965	13	\$660	16	\$863	8,274	\$290	1,987	\$174	7,331	\$366
2002	470	\$1,133	13	\$815	16	\$1,356	8,347	\$139	2,126	\$319	6,754	\$444
Chg.	+44	\$168	0	\$155	0	\$493	+73	-\$151	+139	\$145	-577	\$78
Percent Change Comparison												
	Acres	Land (\$)	Imprv. Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Imprv. Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Imprv. Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres
Bern	+10.3	+17.4	+11.8	0	+23.5	+0.7	0	+57.1	+10.2	+0.9	-52.1	+7.0
County	+21.2	+5.6	+6.4	+38.4	-4.0	-7.8	-0.5	+34.4	+31.4	-11.2	-47.6	+74.8

Source: Data compiled by local assessors with Municipal Board of Review

Major Opportunities and Constraints

- Some scattered business development would be acceptable to the Town.
- The Town submits a bill to the local “mega-farm” for road damages, which is always paid in full.

- **Limited Development Review** - The Town would like to review development on a case-by-case basis, however, the Town wants to minimize governmental intervention.
- **Industrial Development** - The Town would like to limit the smoke and noise from any potential industrial developments in the Town.

Issues

- **Annexation** – The Town is vulnerable to annexation by the Village of Athens, which annexed land from the Town as part of a “Village Forest” park setting.

5. Transportation

Background

The Town of Bern's transportation is in generally good condition. CTHs F and M run through the Town, as does STH 97.

Maps for the Transportation element include figures: 5-1, Functional Classification; 5-2, Trails and Regional Transportation. All figures are located at the end of this section.

Existing Transportation Planning Efforts

Recent Transportation Plans - Transportation planning in Marathon County is coordinated between Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (DCPZ) staff and the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); the body designated by the Federal Department of Transportation to be responsible for transportation planning in the metropolitan area. The County provides staff for the Wausau Area MPO. The County also does transportation planning for areas outside the Wausau metropolitan area.

County transportation planning efforts are presented in various plans and studies. Findings and recommendations presented in these plans should be integrated into local community planning efforts when relevant and appropriate. Recent transportation plans prepared by Marathon County include:

- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** – The TIP includes all programmed transportation projects receiving Federal and/or State funds. The TIP was adopted in October 2001 and is updated every two years.
- **State Trunk Highway 29 Corridor Land Use Review (1997)** – This plan was prepared by a multi-departmental team working with communities along the STH 29 corridor in the western part of Marathon County. The primary goal was to identify recommendations to allow local communities to protect STH 29 from impacts related to unplanned growth.
- **Marathon County Functional / Jurisdictional Highway Classification Study (1998)** – This plan identifies and groups classes of roadways that provide similar levels of service. The plan recommended that the unit of government having the greatest basic interest in the roadway's function would carry out the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the classified roadways.

Road Network

Functional Classification of Roads/Jurisdiction

(Source: WDOT Facilities Development Manual)

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those

facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access. See Figure 5-1.

The functional classifications are generally defined as:

Principal Arterials serve corridor movements having trips length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas with a population greater than 5,000 or connect major centers of activity, the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip desires.

Minor Arterials, in conjunction with principal arterials, serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators providing intra-community continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.

Collectors provide both land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the arterials through the area to the local streets. The collectors also collect traffic from the local streets and channel it onto the arterial system.

Local Streets comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to the higher order systems. Local streets offer the lowest level of mobility, and serve the through-traffic movement on this system is usually discouraged.

Jurisdiction - Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as describe above, identifies the road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “Federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.¹

Ownership is divided among the Federal, State, and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The Federal Government has responsibility for about 5 percent, primarily in national parks, forests, and Indian reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled.

In some cases, local municipalities are responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on State and Federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the State generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Conditions and Performance Report.

Major Road Facilities

Functional classification, jurisdiction, and Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), when available, are summarized for all major roads.

- **STH 97** is a minor arterial, which had a 2001 AADT volume of 1,500 just north of Athens. The 1998 AADT at this location was also 1,500.
- **CTH F** is an east and west running major collector and had AADT's ranging from 600 to 1,200 in 2001.
- **CTH M** is a minor collector and had an AADT of 950 in 2001 and 1,900 in 1998 near the western boundary of Athens.

Road Maintenance

Town representatives reported that the Town generally has good roads. However, the Town's ability to maintain these roads over the next 20 years will want to be addressed.

While the Town does provide snowplowing service, the lack of snow plowing in the Town was identified as an issue suggesting that current level of service may be inadequate.

Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) – The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) requires all incorporated communities to prepare a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) using a pavement rating system for their local roads. These plans were to be submitted for review by December 2001. The data from these plans is intended to provide the foundation for the Wisconsin Information System

for Local Roads (WISLR), which is a computer resource that will enable communities and the State to begin to assess Wisconsin's local roadway system.

The PASER system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the rating system used most by Wisconsin communities. PASER rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10. This scale is broken down as follows:

- "1" and "2" = very poor condition
- "3" = poor condition
- "4" and "5" = fair condition
- "6" and "7" = good condition
- "8" = very good condition
- "9" and "10" = excellent condition

In addition to its use in the new WISLR, the rating system gives communities a detailed assessment of the appropriate maintenance method for each road segment under their jurisdiction. This assessment is then incorporated into the community's PMP.

The Town maintains a PASER inventory. This is used in an informal Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process. The Town rebuilds 5-6 miles of road per year.

Table 5-3: Summary of Pavement Conditions

Surface Type Code (miles)						
Unimproved Road	Graded Earth Road	Gravel Road	Wearing Surface	Cold Mix Asphalt on Concrete	Cold Mix Resurfacing with < 7" Base	Cold Mix Resurfacing with > 7" Base
0.15	0.68	35.10				
Cold Mix Asphalt Base < 7"	Cold Mix Asphalt Base > 7"	Hot Mix Asphalt on Concrete	Hot Mix Resurfacing	Hot Mix Asphalt Pavement	Concrete Pavement	Brick or Block Pavement
0.06	9.92					
Surface Condition Rating (miles)						
No Data	Failed	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
		1.18	26.08	5.15	5.07	8.43

Unimproved and graded earth roads provide some safety concerns and should be examined to determine whether improvements are warranted. The amount of roads classified as Fair or Poor within the WISLR surface ratings also provides some concern as these roads will need improvements relatively soon to ensure safe travel along these routes. The roughly 18 miles of roadway classified with a Good or better rating require yearly maintenance to ensure the safe travel of residents along these routes, however, they do not provide an immediate safety concern.

Land Use and Transportation

Access Management – Wisconsin was one of the first states to recognize the relationship between highway operations and

the use of abutting lands. Under Chapter 233, the WDOT was given the authority to establish rules to review subdivision plats abutting or adjoining State trunk highways or connecting highways. Regulations enacted by WDOT establish the principles of subdivision review. They require new subdivisions to: (1) have internal street systems; (2) limit direct vehicular access to the highways from individual lots; (3) establish building setbacks; and (4) establish access patterns for remaining unplatted land.

Marathon County issues driveway permits and implements access restrictions on all properties fronting a lettered County road. The *County Trunk Highway Access-Driveway Policy* addresses the requirements regarding culverts, access width, slope, visibility and spacing. The policy is available through the Marathon County Highway Department.

Other Transportation Modes

Pedestrian – There are no areas with sidewalks in the Town. All pedestrian traffic must use Town and County roads.

Bicycle -- CTH F and M and STH 97 were identified as recommended bike routes in the *Marathon County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*. The *Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Non-Urbanized Area of Marathon County, Wisconsin, 1996* identified **recommended** bicycle routes in Marathon County. These recommended routes were based on traffic counts and condition of pavement. Formal action has not occurred to adopt these as **designated** bicycle routes.

Transit -- Elderly, needy, and disabled transit service is provided throughout the County through North Central Health Care (NCHC). The services include semi-fixed routes that are scheduled, and demand services available with a 48-hour notice. Information and services are available by calling 848-4555.

Rail -- There are no rail lines in the Town of Bern.

Airports – The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. It is the only airport within Marathon County or neighboring counties that provides scheduled air passenger services. The CWA is located east of Mosinee and accessible via I-39. The terminal has been modernized and highway access reconstructed to be more convenient. Since 1982 more than \$24,000,000 has been spent to keep the airport ready to serve the needs of the region. Service is provided through Mesaba/Northwest, United/United Feeder Service and Skyway/Midwest Express, offering 24 flights per day that connect through Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. There are also nine air freight and express flights daily.

Issues

- **Road Maintenance** - Determining, prioritizing and funding road maintenance and road improvements (e.g. blacktopping) is a continual challenge for the Town.
- **Snow Plowing** - The Town would like the County to improve snowplowing on the County Highway system.
- **Bike Routes** – The Town would like to determine opportunities for bicycle routes.

6. Utilities

This section describes the existing conditions and issues relative to utilities available to the Town of Bern, including sewage disposal, water supply, power supply, and telecommunication facilities and services. It also describes existing conditions with regard to surface water management.

Maps for the Utilities element include Figures: 6-1, Depth to Bedrock; 6-2; Suitable Soils for Septic Tank Absorption; 6-3, Depth to Groundwater; 6-4, Watersheds; 6-5, Proposed Weston-Arrowhead Powerline. All figures are located at the end of this section.

Private Utilities

Most unincorporated areas of Marathon County use private on-site waste disposal systems for sewage disposal and obtain potable water from private wells.

On-Site Waste Disposal Systems

Chapter 15 of the *General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County* requires private sewage systems on all premises intended for human habitation or occupancy that are not served by public sewer. The County Code incorporates by reference rules, regulations, and laws in the Wisconsin Statutes and Wisconsin Administrative Code governing private sewage systems, including:

- **Comm 83** – This refers to Chapter 83 in the Wisconsin Administrative Code under the Department of Commerce. It sets standards for regulation of private sewage systems. This code was updated in 2000 now allows the use of new concepts and technologies through a system of individual component approval. Standards for effluent are based on a drinking water standard, although nitrates are generally exempted.

Types of Systems – Under the revised Comm 83 standards, property owners have a wider array of system options than previously available. Septic tanks can be steel, concrete, fiberglass or plastic, but they all must now be equipped with a filter to prevent the movement of solids out into the soil absorption component. In addition, rock in drainfields may now be substituted with specifically engineered foam peanuts bound in mesh or plastic chambers.

On-site waste disposal systems generally fall into four categories:

- **Conventional Systems** – these systems include an absorption field that is buried under the natural ground level. These systems cannot be built in areas where soils do not allow percolation due to high clay content or bedrock where groundwater is too near the surface, or where soils percolate too rapidly and thus pose problems for groundwater contamination.
- **Mound Systems** – these systems include an absorption field that is constructed above ground, creating a “mound”. This type of system is generally used where clay soils,

groundwater, rapid permeability or bedrock prevent construction of conventional systems. See Figures 6-1, 6-2.

- **Mechanical Treatment Components** – these generally replace or augment the septic tank component and may include aerobic treatment tanks and/or self-contained artificial media or sand filters to clean the effluent prior to its discharge into the soil absorption component.
- **Holding Tanks** - Holding tanks are considered the system of last resort and are only allowed if other types of septic systems cannot be used. Temporary holding tanks (e.g., less than 2 years) are sometimes allowed in areas where public sewer is approved for installation in the near future.

Permit Requirements – The Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (DCPZ) reviews and issues permits for private sewage systems. Soil and site evaluations are required to determine if the proposed septic system is suitable for the specific property and location before a permit will be issued. If deemed necessary, floodplain and/or wetland delineation may also be required prior to permit issuance. In addition, a maintenance agreement must be submitted prior to permit issuance. All septic tanks installed on or after July 1, 1980, are required to be pumped at least once every three years.

Water Supply

All development in Bern receives water from private wells. See Figure 6-3.

Surface Water Management

The Town of Bern does not have any surface water management regulations in place.

In 2001, Marathon County adopted a Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of this plan is to identify a vision for natural resource management in Marathon County and outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources.

The County is particularly concerned about nonpoint sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, urban runoff, and issues often identified with rural areas such as soil erosion, animal waste and pesticides. Nonpoint pollution is best addressed by watershed. Marathon County encompasses portions of 22 watersheds as shown in Figure 6-4. See Figure 6-4. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has ranked these watersheds according to water pollution impacts and designated five as “priority” watersheds to receive special planning and funding through the voluntary, State-funded Priority Watershed Program. Preparation of resource management plans for the following watersheds is currently underway:

- Springbrook in the Town of Harrison
- Upper Yellow River in the Town of Spencer
- Upper Big Eau Pleine in western Marathon County
- Lower Big Eau Pleine in the south-central part of the County
- Lower Big Rib River

Electrical and Gas Utilities

The Town of Bern receives electric power from Taylor Electric and Excel Energy.

Gas service to residents is provided through LP tanks on an individual basis.

Figure 6-5 shows the potential route of the proposed Arrowhead-Weston Transmission Line. This line, proposed by American Transmission Company (ATC), would run 220-miles from Duluth, MN to Weston, WI. This is a controversial project. Supporters claim the line is necessary to prevent energy shortages that could have significant negative impacts on the area economy. Those opposed have concerns about electro-magnetic impacts on animals and humans, loss of rural and visual character, and the imposition of major structures on private land. The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) must approve this line. To date, Marathon County has opposed granting easements through county-wide land for the transmission line. However, if approved by the PSCW, the ATC can use eminent domain to place the line on private property.

Telecommunication Facilities and Services

- Television/Cable providers
- Telephone/Fiber Optics
- Cell towers – There are no cell towers in the Town of Bern.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The Town of Bern does not provide solid waste pickup service. However, the Town does operate a transfer station two Saturdays per month.

The Marathon County Solid Waste Management Department is in charge of waste management for non-hazardous solid waste. It consists of the 575-acre landfill, recycling programs, composting, and waste-to-energy. The Department opened a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility in May 1997, where County residents can drop off hazardous waste free of charge.

Issues

None identified.

7. Housing

Housing is a significant aspect of any comprehensive planning effort. This section is an inventory and analysis of housing conditions in the Town of Bern. Housing in Bern is predominantly single family, with over 94% owner-occupied. Almost 10% of housing units were constructed over the last decade, and housing values are lower than median values for Marathon County as a whole.

Data contained in this section reflect two methodologies of data collection employed by the U.S. Census. Tables labeled as “1990, 2000 Census: STF-[Summary Tape File]-1 Data” are collected through a household-by-household census and represents responses from every household within the country. To get more detailed information, the U.S. Census also randomly distributes a long-form questionnaire to 1 in 6 households throughout the nation. Tables utilizing this sample data are identified in the footnote below each table and are labeled “STF-3 Data”. Tables are labeled as either STF-1 or STF-3 data because numbers may differ for similar statistics between each method, due to survey limitations, non-response, or other attributes unique to each form of data collection.

Housing Inventory

The following information provides a summary overview of the type, character and conditions of the housing stock in the Town of Bern.

Housing Type and Tenure

The 2000 Census shows the Town of Bern has 170 occupied housing units, as shown in Table 7-1. 161 (or 95%) of these units are owner occupied. The Town has an average household size of 3.31 persons. 8.2% of all households are classified as being “1 person households”. Nearly 25% of Town households have a householder 65 years or older.

Table 7-1: Number of Housing Units by Type and Tenure

Area	Bern	Marathon County	Wisconsin
Total Occupied Housing Units	170	47,702	2,084,544
Owner Occupied Units	161	36,091	1,426,361
Renter Occupied Units	9	11,611	658,183
Average Household Size	3.31	2.6	2.50
% Owner Occupied	94.7	75.7	68.4
% 1 Person Households	8.2	23.6	26.8
% With Householder 65 years or older	24.7	21.7	21.5

2000 Census: STF-1 Data

Changes in Housing Stock

Table 7-2 notes changes in the housing stock between 1990 and 2000 according to U.S. Census Data. Total housing units and occupied housing units increased by 8. Vacancy decreased from 7% to 6% between decades. The number of owner-occupied housing units grew by 8 or 6%. The census reports increases in the number of single-family units.

Table 7-2: Changes in Housing Stock

	1990	2000	# Change	% Change
Total Housing Units	165	173	8	5%
Occupied Housing Units (Households)	154	162	8	5%
Vacancy %	7%	6%	--	--
Owner Occupied Housing Units	139	147	8	6%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	15	15	0	0%
Owner Occupied Housing Units as percent of Total	90%	91%	--	--
Number of Homes for Seasonal/Rec Use	6	9	3	50%
Number of Single Family Homes	138	154	16	12%
Detached*	138	154	16	12%
Attached**	0	0	0	--
Number of Duplexes	5	2	-3	-60%
Multi Family Units 3-9 units	0	0	0	--
Multi Family Units 10+	0	0	0	--

1990, 2000 Census: STF-3 Data

* This is a 1-unit structure detached from any other house

**In row houses (sometimes called townhouses), double houses, or houses attached to nonresidential structures, each house is a separate, attached structure if the dividing or common wall goes from ground to roof.

Housing Age

The age of a community’s housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940s, for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. For example, average homes constructed in the 1980s and 1990s are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades.

This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Marathon County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Table 7-3 shows housing age for the community. In the Town of Bern, data shows that a significant portion of the local housing stock was built before 1939. Recent housing growth from the 1990s makes up approximately 10% of the total housing stock. That is lower than overall figures for the County. The Census reports that homes built in the 1990s make up 13% of the County’s overall housing stock.

Table 7-3: Age of Community Housing Stock

Total Units	Year Built								
	1999 to March 2000	1995 to 1998	1990 to 1994	1980 to 1989	1970 to 1979	1960 to 1969	1950 to 1959	1940 to 1949	1939 or earlier
173	0	8	8	23	30	10	9	9	76
100%	0%	5%	5%	13%	17%	6%	5%	5%	44%

2000 Census: STF-3 Data

Physical Housing Stock

Table 7-4 looks at several select measures of physical condition and compares them to figures for the County and State. The median home size in the Town of Bern is slightly larger than that of the State and County, when measured by number of rooms. 89% of the community’s housing stock is classified as being single family home, higher than figures for the County or State. No housing units are found in structures with over 10 units. Census data also indicates that nearly 7%

of homes lack complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. These figures are higher than statistics for the County or State.

Table 7-4: Physical Housing Stock

Community	Median Rooms	Characteristic (%)			
		1 unit, detached or attached	In buildings with 10 or more Units	Lacking complete plumbing facilities	Lacking complete kitchen facilities
Bern	6.5	89.02%	0.00%	6.94%	6.94%
Marathon County	5.8	76.10%	4.50%	0.90%	0.90%
Wisconsin	5.4	69.30%	9.40%	1.40%	1.50%

2000 Census: STF-3 Data

Housing Values

Median Value

Table 7-5 shows home value statistics for the community, County and State. Specifically, the column to the right shows the median (or middle value) of select owner-occupied homes for each specified area. This value includes only single-family houses that are located on less than 10 acres. Additionally, this statistic only considers homes without a business or medical office on the property. Census data indicates that the Town of Bern has a median home value similar to that of Marathon County.

Table 7-5: Median Housing Value

	Median Value (dollars)
Bern	\$91,300
Marathon County	\$95,800
Wisconsin	\$112,200

2000 Census: STF-3 Data

The following table shows the range of housing values that exist in the community. Figures for the Town are similar to that of the County.

Table 7-6: Range of Housing Values

Number of Houses per Housing Value Category	Bern	Marathon County
< \$49,999	2	1,459
%	5%	5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	26	13,405
%	62%	49%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10	8,220
%	24%	30%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2	2,368
%	5%	9%
\$200,000 or more	2	1,714
%	5%	6%

2000 Census: STF-3 Data

Housing Affordability

Several factors impact the varied levels of housing affordability in Marathon County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the home. Household size and income are also key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

Statistically speaking, those spending in excess of 35% of their total household income on housing costs may be facing affordability difficulties. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that rental-housing costs not exceed 30% of the monthly income. HUD also indicates that mortgage lenders are more willing to make loans

if the scheduled mortgage payment is less than 29% of the monthly household income. The percentage of households in the Town of Bern that pay more than 35% of their household income on housing costs is less than that of the County and State.

Additionally, the following table shows that select Town median owner-occupied costs, both with and without a mortgage, are similar to median figures for Marathon County. The same holds true for select renter costs. Technical documentation from the Census states that contract rent is the monthly rent agreed to or contracted for, regardless of any furnishings, utilities, fees, meals, or services that may be included. For vacant units, it is the monthly rent asked for the rental unit at the time of enumeration. Gross rent is the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these are paid by or for the renter. (*U.S. Census STF 3 Technical Documentation Guide*)

Table 7-7: Housing Affordability

	Owner Occupied			Renter Occupied		
	Median selected monthly owner costs ¹			Median Selected monthly renter costs ¹		
	With Mortgage	No Mortgage	% ²	Median Contract rent	Median Gross rent	% ²
Bern	\$943	\$277	5%	\$375	\$475	0%
Marathon County	\$916	\$295	10%	\$423	\$484	20%
Wisconsin	\$1,024	\$333	9%	\$473	\$540	25%

1In dollars

2Percent paying over 35% of household income on housing

2000 Census: STF-3 Data

Special Housing

Senior Housing

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Marathon County Aging and Disability Resource Center, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout the County. As the number of elderly persons increases in the coming years, there will most likely be an increased need for these types of housing options. This trend will be seen throughout Marathon County, the State of Wisconsin, and the Nation.

Northwest Marathon County is served by senior housing options in several communities. The Village of Athens is home to the Plisch Apartments and the Rietbrock Apartments. Both of these facilities currently have waiting lists, possibly indicating that there is a need to add additional facilities to serve this region.

Other communities with facilities that serve this area are: the Abbottsford / Colby area, the Village of Edgar, and the Wausau region.

Assistance Programs

There are a variety of State and Federal housing programs geared at addressing housing issues. Grants and low interest loans are available for counties, communities, or individual homeowners. The following housing resources are available to participants as specified by program.

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-Small Cities Housing**
- **Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)**
 - Rental Rehabilitation Program
 - Home Owner and Accessibility Rehabilitation Program
 - Home Ownership Program
 - Wisconsin Fresh Start Initiative provides at-risk young people with education, skills, and career direction leading to economic self-sufficiency.

- **Homeless Programs (Wisconsin Department of Administration [WDOA])**
 - HUD Emergency Shelter Grants
 - State Shelter Subsidy Grants
 - Transitional Housing
- **Local Housing Organization Grant (LHOG)**

State grants are available to enable community-based organizations, tribes and housing authorities to increase their capacity to provide affordable housing opportunities and services.
- **HOME Loans and Home Improvement Loans (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority [WHEDA])**
- **Housing-Related Consumer Protection Services (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture [WDA])**

The Trade and Consumer Protection Division is responsible for the investigation of unfair and deceptive business practices and handles individual consumer complaints involving landlord/tenant complaints, and home improvement transactions.

Trends

- The Town of Bern has 170 occupied housing units. 161 (or 95%) of these units are owner occupied.
- Total housing units and occupied housing units increased by 8 units between 1990-2000.
- Recent housing growth from the 1990s makes up approximately 10% of the total housing stock.

Town of Bern

- 89% of the community's housing stock is classified as being single family home, higher than figures for the County or State.
- The Town of Bern has a median home value similar to that of Marathon County.

Issues

- **Residential Pressure** - There may be some residential pressure on the Town of Bern in the future.
- **Prime Farmland** - The Town is concerned over the continued loss of prime farmland due to development of scattered new housing.

8. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of our heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to American Indians or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those elements around us that signify our heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources include buildings, sites and landscapes that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society.

Brief History of the Town of Bern

The development of the area around the Village of Athens, including the Town of Bern, was led by Milwaukee attorney Frederick Rietbrock. While handling a lawsuit in Wausau in the 1870s, Rietbrock took a side trip to the northwest section of the County and began purchasing land. He ultimately owned much of the land in several townships and controlled some 50,000 acres of timberland, which he ruled from his Milwaukee home.

Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

There are no properties in Bern listed on the NRHP. The Town does not have a local historic preservation commission.

The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains the Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory (AHI) that identifies any properties that may have been surveyed in the past; the Inventory does not convey special status and may not be current. The inventory may be reviewed at www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi/index.html. There are three historic properties in Bern that have been previously surveyed and included in the AHI.

Cemeteries, Burial Mounds, Other Burials – Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. There are currently 133 cemeteries and burial areas identified in Marathon County, and it is likely that other cemeteries and burials may be present. Suspected burial mounds or unmarked burials must be reported to the State Burial Sites Preservation Office. If human remains are uncovered during excavation, all work must cease pending review of the Burial Sites Preservation Office. All cemeteries and burials in Marathon County should be catalogued under Wis. Stat. 157.70 to provide maximum protection of these sites. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has identified no archaeological sites or historic cemeteries in Bern.

Major Cultural Resources Issues

Lack of Current Information -- Although a brief countywide historic properties survey was carried out in 1975-77, there has been no update. Many properties identified at that time may be gone, while other properties not previously surveyed may now be evaluated in a new context. It is

necessary for the community to have current information about cultural resources in order to maximize planning and make the best use of historic properties.

No Recognition Process -- Outside the City of Wausau, there is no process to recognize historic buildings or begin to plan for their protection. Once historic properties are identified, towns and villages do not have an established mechanism for recognizing them or integrating them into ongoing planning processes.

Rural Character and Historic Resources --In Marathon County, residents have expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the County and raised concerns about increasing ex-urban development and the decline of working farms. An important part of rural character is the rural landscape and the buildings that convey that sense of place. While it is important to address the location and type of new development, there is also a need to preserve some visible reminders of rural character, including working farms. Without preserving some of the existing resources, including farmsteads and farmlands, the very characteristics that attracted residents will increasingly be lost.

Protection of Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries – Cultural resources planning includes identification and protection of archaeological sites and historic cemeteries. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a list of reported sites and cemeteries, representing a fraction of sites that are actually present. This information is often overlooked and should be incorporated into the planning process for local communities.

Issues

- **Cemeteries** - The Town of Bern has concerns with the Mennonite and German Dutch Baptists developing cemeteries and not keeping accurate, written records. These are vital to the Town, because if these residents leave, there may be no demarcation of the cemetery sites.
 - Wisconsin Statutes 157.065 addresses the location and ownership of cemeteries
 - Wisconsin Statutes 157.115 addresses the abandonment of cemeteries and cemetery lots.

9. Community Facilities

This section describes the schools, libraries, and other community facilities for the Town of Bern.

Maps for the Community Facilities element include Figures: 9-1, School Facilities; 9-2 Police; 9-3 Fire; 9-4, Hospitals and Clinics. All Figures are located at the end of this section.

Schools

The Town of Bern is served by two public school districts: the Medford School District and School District of Athens. The Medford district has two elementary schools, a middle school and high school, with all of the facilities located in Taylor County. The Athens district has an elementary, middle, and high school all located in the Village of Athens. There are three parochial schools serving the Town, two located in Athens, and the third located in the Town of Bern on Iron Bridge Road.

Table 9-1: Medford School District Enrollment

Year	Enrollment PreK-12
1996-1997	2,565
1997-1998	2,522
1998-1999	2,497
1999-2000	2,445
2000-2001	2,427
2001-2002	2,378

Table 9-2: Athens School District Enrollment

Year	Enrollment PreK-12
1996-1997	574
1997-1998	581
1998-1999	576
1999-2000	586
2000-2001	564
2001-2002	557

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction

Table 9-3: Private Schools

Name	Address	Level
Trinity Lutheran School-Mo	Athens	
Athens Menonite School	Athens	
St. Anthony's School	Athens	

Post-Secondary Educational Facilities

University of Wisconsin – Marathon County (UW-MC) - UW-MC, located in Wausau, offers lower level (freshman/sophomore) college classes, leading to a baccalaureate degree. Associate Degrees are offered in Arts & Sciences, and Bachelor's Degrees (through collaborative degree programs with UW Oshkosh and UW Stevens Point) offered in Business Administration, General Studies, and Nursing. Enrollment in 2002-2003 was approximately 1,300 students.

Northcentral Technical College (NTC) - NTC, located in Wausau, offers 40 one- and two-year programs and certificates in business, technical, health and industrial fields. Approximately 2,300 full- and part-time students attend classes, although more than 16,000 people take at least one class annually.

Libraries

The Town of Bern is served by the Marathon County Public Library system. The new Athens Branch Library, located on Caroline Street in the Village of Athens, has 2,750 square feet of space and approximately 18,800 volumes, including books, magazines, and other materials. The Wausau Headquarters Library, located on First Street in downtown Wausau, completed an expansion to 82,000 square feet in 1995. The new main Wausau Library is open seven days a week and offers over 555,800 volumes, as well as facilities including Internet access.

Police

Police protection is provided by the Marathon County Sheriff's office.

Fire and Emergency Response

Bern has a cooperative agreement with the Village of Athens. Three entities own the Athens Fire Department. Athens Fire and Emergency services also provide service to the Towns of Rietbrock, Johnson, Halsey, and Frankfort. There are mutual aid agreements with the Towns of Goodrich and Deer Creek.

E-911 Dispatch Service

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies in Marathon County. The Communications Division services 85 user agencies and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, District Attorney, and Medical Examiners Office.

The users are served by a microwave linked voted repeater radio system, consisting of a control center at the Sheriff's Department, and nine remote radio tower sites spread throughout the County. The system is also utilized by the Marathon County Highway Department and the Wausau Fire Department to support their radio communications. The 37 base radio transmitters and 479 mobile radios that make up the integrated system are maintained and serviced by the Sheriff Department's radio technician.

Hospitals

The major hospital in Marathon County is Wausau Hospital at 425 Pine Ridge Boulevard in Wausau. Wausau Hospital was created in the 1970s from a merger of St. Mary's Hospital and Memorial Hospital. A new building was completed in 1979 and expansions followed in 1982 and 1992. The 321-bed facility is a multi-specialty regional health center serving a 12-county region in north central Wisconsin. Annual admissions in 2001 totaled 13,631.

Wausau Hospital and its parent corporation, Community Health Care, and other nearby hospitals are part of the Wisconsin Valley Health Network. Hospitals nearby that are part of the network and may serve Marathon County residents include:

- Good Samaritan Health Center Merrill, WI
- Memorial Health Center Medford, WI

St. Joseph’s Hospital in Marshfield and St. Michael’s Hospital in Stevens Point are both operated by Ministry Health Care. St. Joseph’s Hospital is located at 611 Saint Joseph Avenue in Marshfield and offers a full array of services, specialty services and a complete rehabilitation unit. St. Michael’s is a fully accredited acute care facility with 181 beds and nearly 200 doctors on staff. It is located at 900 Illinois Avenue in Stevens Point.

Working in conjunction with St. Joseph’s Hospital is the Marshfield Clinic. Marshfield Clinic began in 1916 when six physicians decided to join their efforts. The Marshfield Clinic has grown to over 700 physicians with 41 Regional Centers in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Marshfield Clinic first established satellite locations in 1976. Offices in Marathon County are located in Athens, Colby/Abbotsford, Marathon, Mosinee, Schofield (Everest Center), Stratford, and Wausau (4 locations).

Child Care

The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of 17

community-based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential child care providers, and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs.

Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages.

The community-based CCR&R agencies that provide services to Marathon and adjacent counties are:

Table 9-4: Child Care Agencies

Counties	Agency	Contact Information
Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Taylor	Child Care Connection	http://www.childcareconnectionrr.org/ (800) 848-5229

Issues

None identified.

10. Parks

Existing Parks, Trails and Open Space

Maps for the Parks element include Figure: 10-1, Recreation Facilities. All Figures are located at the end of this section.

Local Parks, Trails and Open Space

The Town of Bern does not own or operate any public parks. Residents feel that there is no need to own or operate any public parks.

County or State Parks, Forest and Trails

Bern Wetland Forest - Marathon County owns and maintains the Bern Wetland Forest Unit in the Town of Bern. The County forest is located east of Lekie Drive and north of Frahm Road and is approximately 269 acres in size. The Bern Wetland is over 50 percent wetland with the remainder aspen. A parking lot is located off Frahm Road. Two woods trail segments are maintained. Camping is allowed with a permit obtained by the Forestry Department. Public hunting is allowed when legally permitted.

Rib Mountain State Park is located within the Town of Rib Mountain. The park's main feature is Rib Mountain, which at 1924 feet above sea level is one of the highest elevations in the State of Wisconsin. The park surrounds the mountain and has the following facilities: a picnic area with 65 tables, a camping

area with 31 developed sites, 3 hiking trails, a nature trail, and a downhill skiing area with 12 runs.

Park System Needs

The Town of Bern does not have any current park system needs.

Issues

None identified.

11. Economic Development

The condition of the local economy directly influences local growth and development, and therefore must be considered when planning for a community's future. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Oftentimes residents of one community work in another. Similarly changes in a major industry can impact jobs and growth far beyond the community where the business is physically located.

It is therefore important to understand a local community's economy in light of its regional context. The following section provides a brief overview of the economy in Marathon County, in terms of key economic sectors and the regional labor force. Also included is a more specific description of employment trends, major local employers or industries, and where most residents of the Town of Bern work. Potential economic development opportunities and/or issues regarding the local economy are also identified.

County Economic Environment

Originally, the Marathon County economy was based on forest resources and diversified agriculture. Increased population and infrastructure – railroads, roads and dams for power enabled the area to evolve beyond simple agricultural and logging operations. Resources that once left the area unprocessed were now transformed into finished products in the County, providing employment opportunities and adding value in forest

products and agricultural processing. A number of related manufacturing operations grew up in the area, some based on forest products and agricultural products, others supplying the existing industries with fabricated metal products. As these industries progressed, so did industries such as transportation, communications, public utilities, government, trade, finance, insurance and real estate. The County now enjoys a well-diversified economy.

Agricultural Economy

Located in the agricultural area of western Marathon County, the economic health and vitality of Bern is affected by the economic health of the agricultural economy. However, the agricultural economy is subject to national and international pressures, creating challenges for rural areas seeking to adapt to the changing economic environment and preserve their rural agricultural heritage.

The Marathon County agricultural economy is in a depressed state due to a downturn in prices for agricultural goods such as milk and ginseng. At the same time that prices for farm commodities are low, cash rents for Wisconsin farmland has increased, and the percentage of farm equity associated with real estate values have increased significantly. The average cost for agricultural land being converted to non-farm uses has increased from \$544 per acre in 1990 to nearly \$1,200 per acre in 2000; this compares with the average cost for agricultural land continuing in agricultural use, which has increased from \$612 per acre in 1990 to nearly \$1,000 per acre in 2000. When farms are not profitable, and the value of land rises farmers have a harder time competing for the land base.

Other forces that create an environment of change in the rural area:

- Net farm profits are increasingly a function of Federal United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) support payments.
- The average age of the current agricultural owner/operator is nearly 55; a large number are nearing retirement.
- The low entry rate into agriculture reflects the high capital investment and low profit margins.
- The number of dairy herds decreased by 10% (1565 to 951 farms) in the past 13 years, and the total number of cows decreased from 77,000 in 1990 to 64,000 in 2000, a decrease of 17%.
- Dairy production is now more concentrated; the average size of dairy herds increased from 42 cows in 1990 to 62 cows in 2001. Nearly 50 dairies have over 300 animal units (200 cows), and 12 dairies have more than 1,000 animal units (more than 700 cows.)
- Local milk production is not sufficient to reliably meet the demand of local dairy processors.
- The immigrant work force associated with industrial farms, impacts public services such as schools, social services and law enforcement.
- Crop land and open space are being broken up into smaller fields by rural residences.
- Crop land production is being concentrated into fewer, larger operations.
- Soil erosion is increasing and soil organic matter content is decreasing.
- Environmental regulation of farms by the State and Federal government continues to increase. Agriculture is identified as a major non-point source of water pollution (sediment and nutrients) in the U.S.
- Larger farm equipment damages local roads and farm traffic is increasing.
- Conflicts between various land uses in rural areas are increasing.

** Source: Marathon County Task Force on the Rural Economy, Agricultural Issues in Marathon County, January 10, 2003 and Report of the Marathon County Task Force on the Rural Economy, April 2003.*

Key Economic Sectors

Key sectors of a regional economy can be identified by size; by growth or decline in employment; by a concentration of the industry in the local area exceeding the national concentration. An industry that shows a higher concentration of employment than the national average is considered a “basic industry” and is identified by a technique called “Location Quotient” analysis. Basic industries are those sectors that export a

product or service from the local community into the national or international economy. They are a critical part of the “economic engine” for a region, affecting the growth and health of many dependent sectors such as retail, transportation, construction, and local services.

Table 11-1: Top 10 Industry Groups Based on Number of Employees, Marathon County (March 2001)

Industry Group	Employers	Employees	Numeric change	
			1-year	5-year
Health Services	139	4,646	251	-276
Lumber & Wood Products	41	4,438	-30	253
Educational Services	22	3,792	108	243
Eating and Drinking Places	192	3,554	219	335
Fabricated Metal Products	32	3,458	-184	168
Insurance Carriers	24	3,339	-171	*
Miscellaneous Retail	120	3,142	206	1,206
Paper and Allied Products	11	2,649	4	*
Industrial Machinery & Eqmt	37	2,642	41	697
Wholesale Trade – Durable	164	2,521	-89	63

*data suppressed to maintain confidentiality

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, ES-202, December 2001

Local Economic Environment

Residents of the Town of Bern work in many areas throughout the region, including Wausau, Athens, Medford and Marshfield. Table 11-2 provides a breakdown of employment located in the Town. As shown, most employment in the Town of Bern consist of jobs in the Self-Employed / Farm sector.

Manufacturing is the second largest employment industry with 25 workers.

Table 11-2: Population and Employment by Sector, 2000

POPULATION	562
EMPLOYMENT:	
Commercial	--
Manufacturing	25
Service	2
Other	5
Self-Employed/Farm	186
TOTAL	218

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/10/03

Employment Projections

Information on employment in Marathon County is gathered separately for non-farm and farm employment. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) collects data on non-farm employment. The DWD estimated non-farm employment in Marathon County to be 49,407 in 1990 and 65,630 in 2000. This represents about a 33 percent increase over ten years. Data on farm employment is collected by the Census of Agriculture and consists of hired farm labor and operators. In 1987, farm employment in Marathon County was estimated to be 11,643 and in 1997 it was estimated to be 8,298. This represents a decrease of almost 29 percent.

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) computed employment projections, based on the assumption that the historical growth rates described above

would continue through 2030. These projections are shown in Table 11-3.

Table 11-3: Employment Projections in 5-Year Increments

	Total Employment by Year						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Bern	218	213	209	205	200	196	191
County	72,508	75,625	78,742	81,859	84,976	88,093	91,210

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/03

The employment forecast in Table 11-3 indicates decreased employment for the Town of Bern. By the year 2030, it is estimated that the Town will provide employment to 191 workers. This represents an employment decrease of approximately 14% and assumes a moderate decline based on the rate of change in employment between 1990-2000. The estimates suggest an overall decrease in employment by 2030 between -15% if a lower than expected growth rate occurs and +10% if a higher growth rate occurs.

Table 11-4: Percent Change in Employment, 2000-2030

	Percent Change in Employment by Growth Rate		
	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
Bern	-15%	-14%	+10%
Marathon County	+21	+26	+34

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/03

Major Local Employers

The Town of Bern is primarily a farming community with a few local taverns and other local commercial uses.

Issues

No economic development issues have been identified.

12. Intergovernmental Cooperation

This analysis presents an inventory of existing mechanisms that the Town of Bern uses to coordinate with other units of government, including: Marathon County, adjacent towns, the school district, the State of Wisconsin and the Federal government. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the existing cooperative mechanisms and summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and regional planning, including

- Opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services;
- Incompatible goals, policies and development;
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution;
- Opportunities for joint planning and decision-making.

Mechanisms for cooperation and coordination primarily take the form of intergovernmental agreements, leases and contracts, and regulatory authority. These can occur between the Town of Bern and other local, regional, State or Federal entities. Following is a brief description of the various functional areas and services that require intergovernmental coordination at various levels.

Local and Regional Level Cooperation

Shared Services

Fire and Emergency Response- Bern has a cooperative agreement with the Village of Athens. Three entities own the Athens Fire Department. Athens Fire and Emergency services also provide service to the Towns of Rietbrock, Johnson, Halsey, and Frankfort. There are mutual aid agreements with the Towns of Goodrich and Deer Creek.

Utilities- The Town of Bern does not operate any joint utilities.

Cooperative Practices

Surrounding Towns-

- **Town of Deer Creek-** The Town of Bern would like to coordinate plan development with surrounding Towns. Deer Creek is located in Taylor County.
- **Town of Halsey-** The Town of Bern would like to coordinate plan development with surrounding Towns.
- **Town of Johnson-** The Town of Bern would like to coordinate plan development with surrounding Towns.
- **Town of Goodrich-** The Town of Bern would like to coordinate plan development with surrounding Towns. Goodrich is in Taylor County.

School District- The Town of Bern lies within the Medford and Athens School Districts.

Marathon County- The County provides several services to the Town including: law enforcement through the Sheriff's Department, 911 dispatch service, access permits, maintenance and improvement of County Highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, private sewage system regulation, and animal waste and manure management. The County also provides oversight on compliance with County soil and water conservation policy for the Farmland Preservation Program.

Village of Athens- The Town of Bern would like improved communications with the Village of Athens, and they would like the chance to view the Village's plan, prior to adoption.

Regional Agencies:

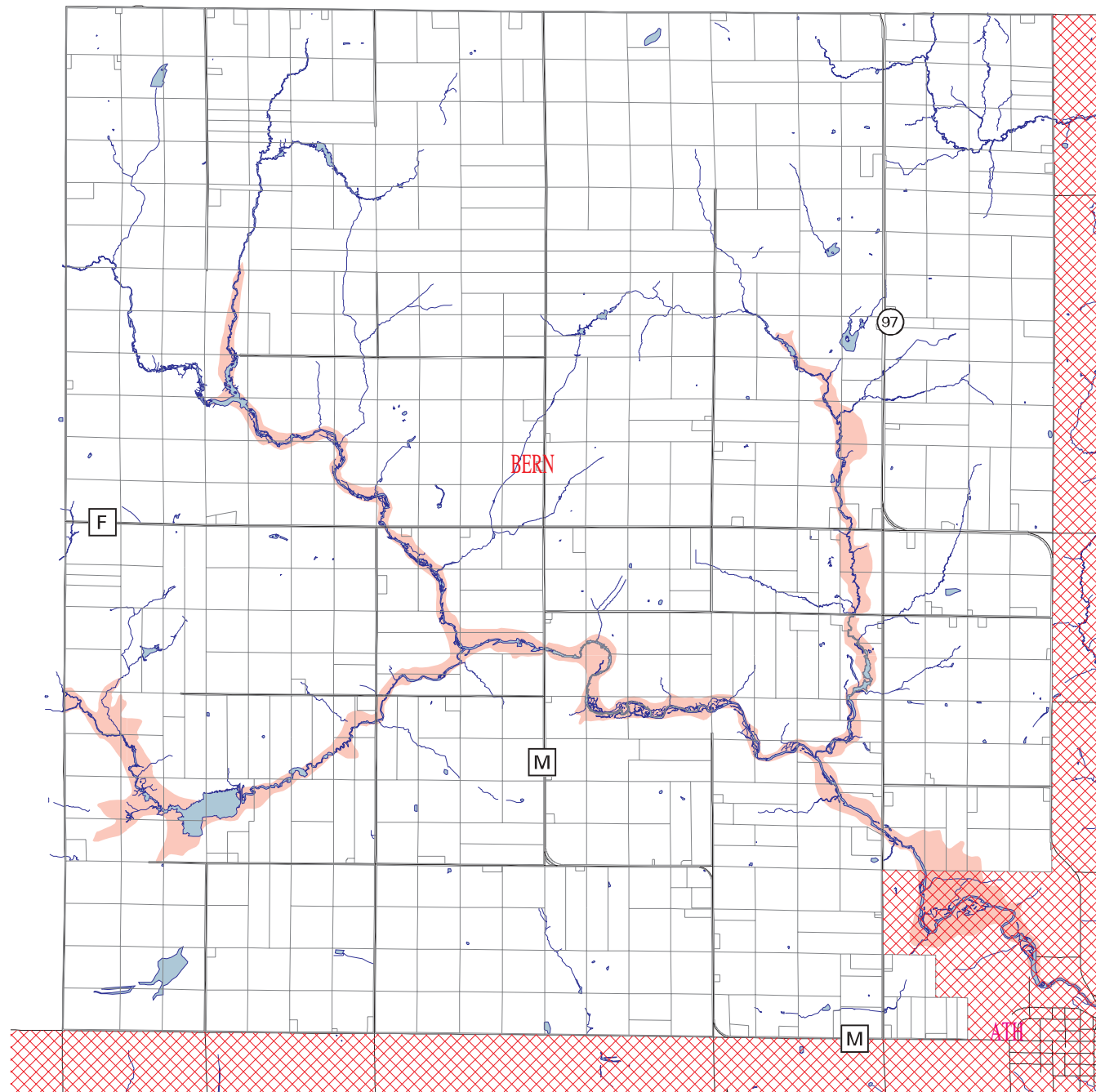
State and Federal Level Cooperation

State and Federal Agencies- The Town has little direct contact with State or Federal agencies. However State agencies regulate certain activities such as access onto State roads, shoreland, floodplain and wetland zoning oversight, navigable waters protection, compliance with water quality standards, farmland preservation tax credits and managed forest tax credit programs.

State Agencies: Some Town properties are enrolled in State tax incentive programs to maintain existing character (woodlands and farmlands).

Existing or Potential Conflicts

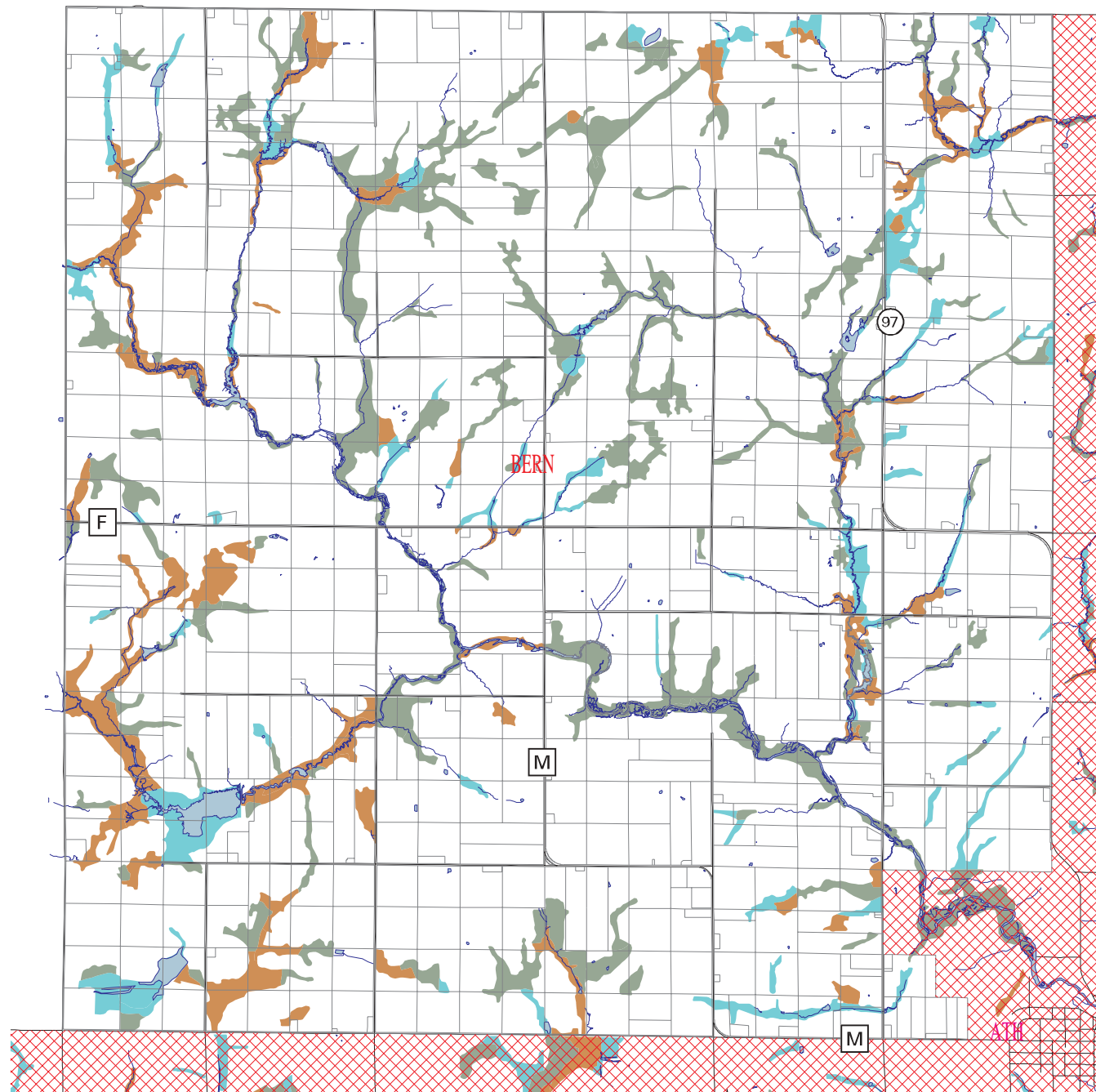
- **Annexation.** The Town of Bern is concerned about annexation from the Village of Athens. In Wisconsin, neither incorporated municipalities nor towns can initiate annexation. The process is driven by individual property owners (or developers) who petition for annexation into a city to receive sewer and water service. While towns often view annexation as a means to take their territory, cities and villages view annexations as a means to provide a more logical pattern of development and efficient provision of services.



■ FEMA Floodplain

▨ Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

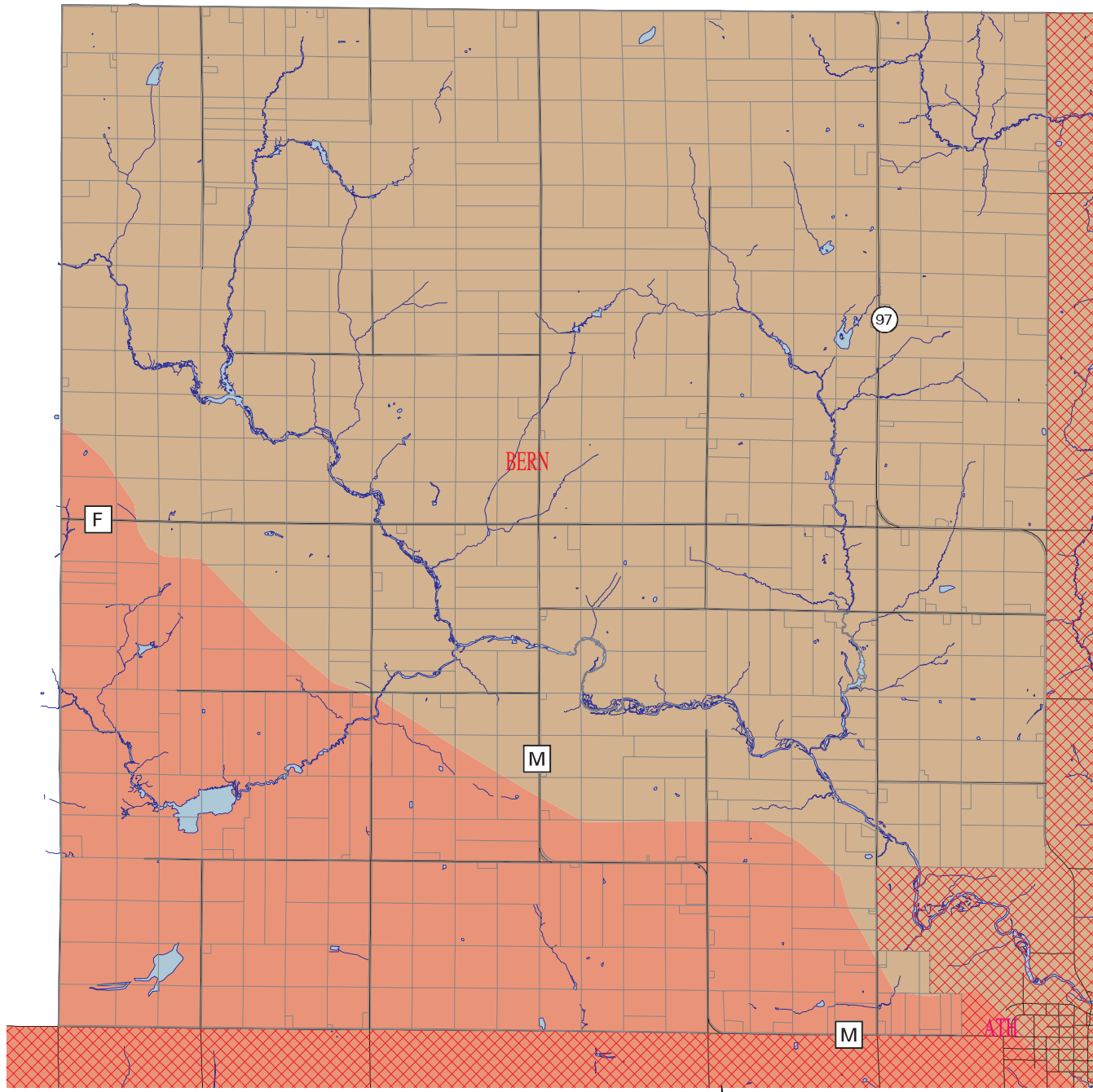
Figure 3-1
 100 Year Floodplain
 BERN



- Aquatic beds
- Emergent/wet meadow
- Filled/draind wetland
- Flats/unvegetated wet soil
- Forested
- Scrub/shrub

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

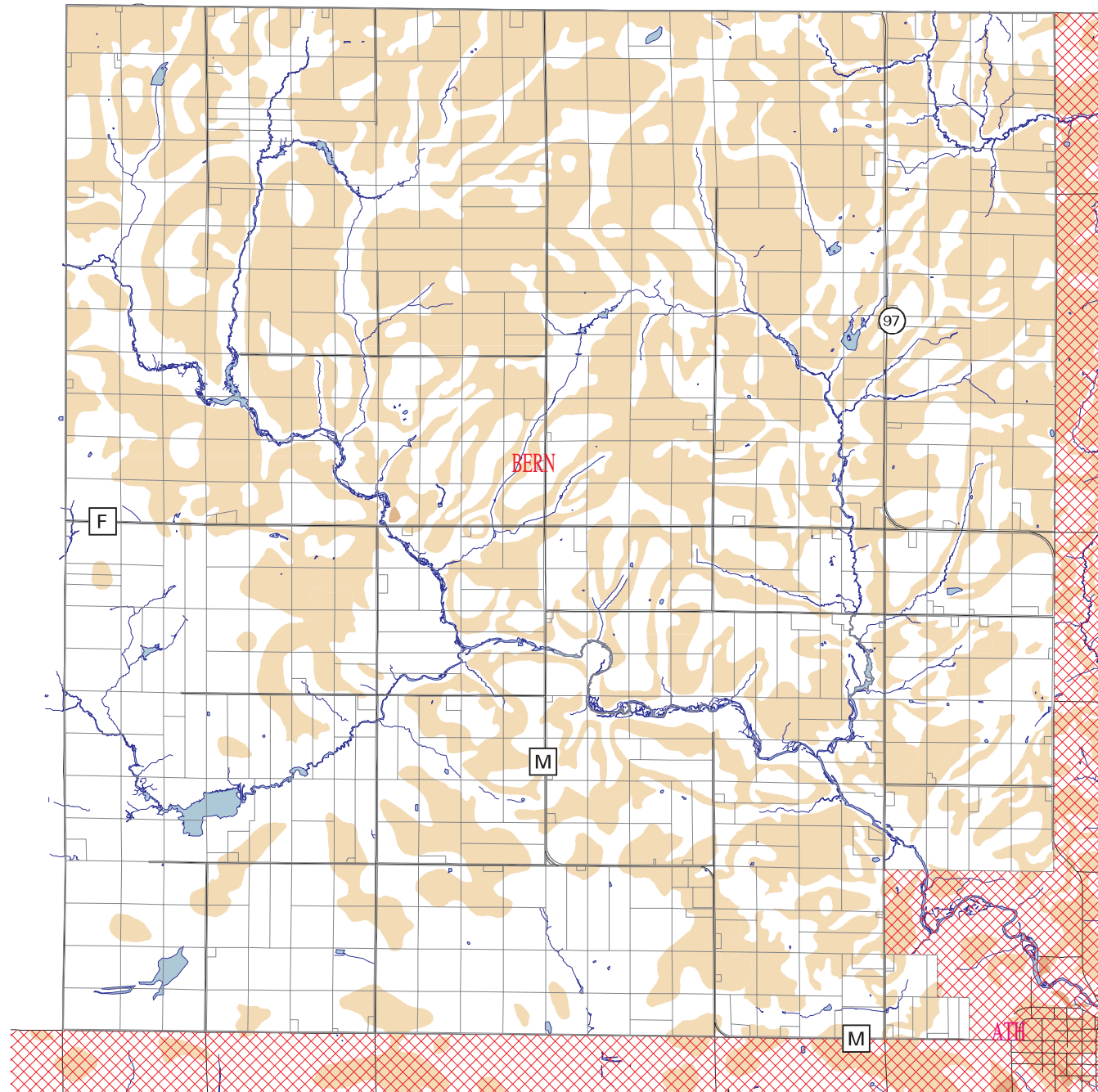
Figure 3-2
 Wetland Types
 BERN



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Magnor-Cable | Marathon-Mylrea-Moberg | Mahtomedi-Fordum-Sturgeon | Cathro-Seelyeville |
| Loyal-Withee-Marshfield | Fenwood-Rietbrock-Rozellville | Chetek-Rosholt-Oesterle | |
| Kennan-Hatley | Mosinee-Meadland-Dancy | Mahtomedi-Graycalm-Meehan | |

Indicates other Municipality
Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 3-3
Soil Associations
BERN

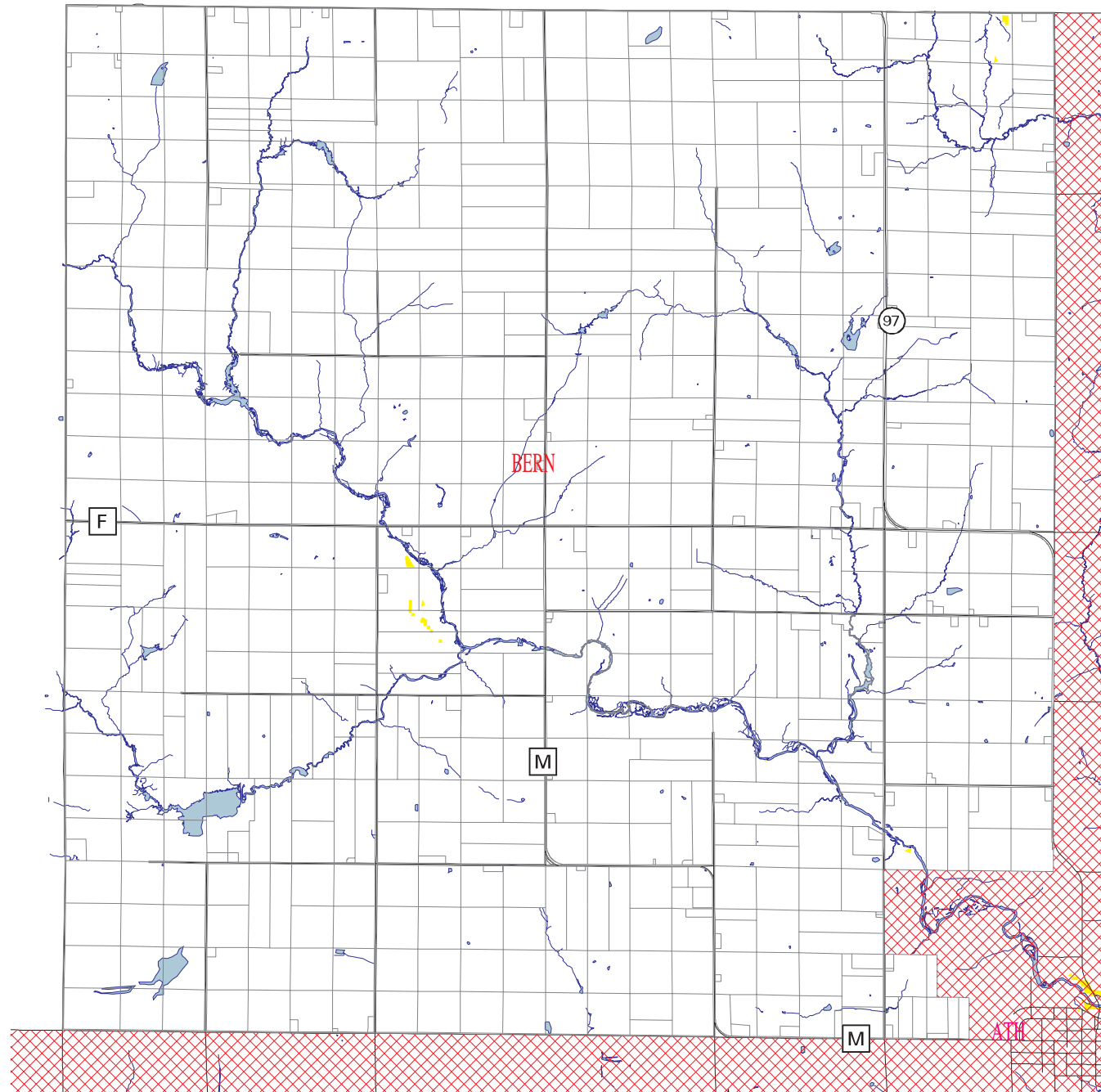


Group 1: The soils in this group are the very best in Marathon County. The USDA classification for these soils are prime farmland Class 2 due to climate and growing season length. They are well suited for growing all crops.

Group 2: The soils in this group are very good agricultural soils. They also are designated as prime farmland Class 2. These soils differ from the preceding group by having restricted drainage. In wet years they are more difficult to work and crops needing well drained condition (alfalfa, ginseng) do very poorly.

Indicates other Municipality
Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

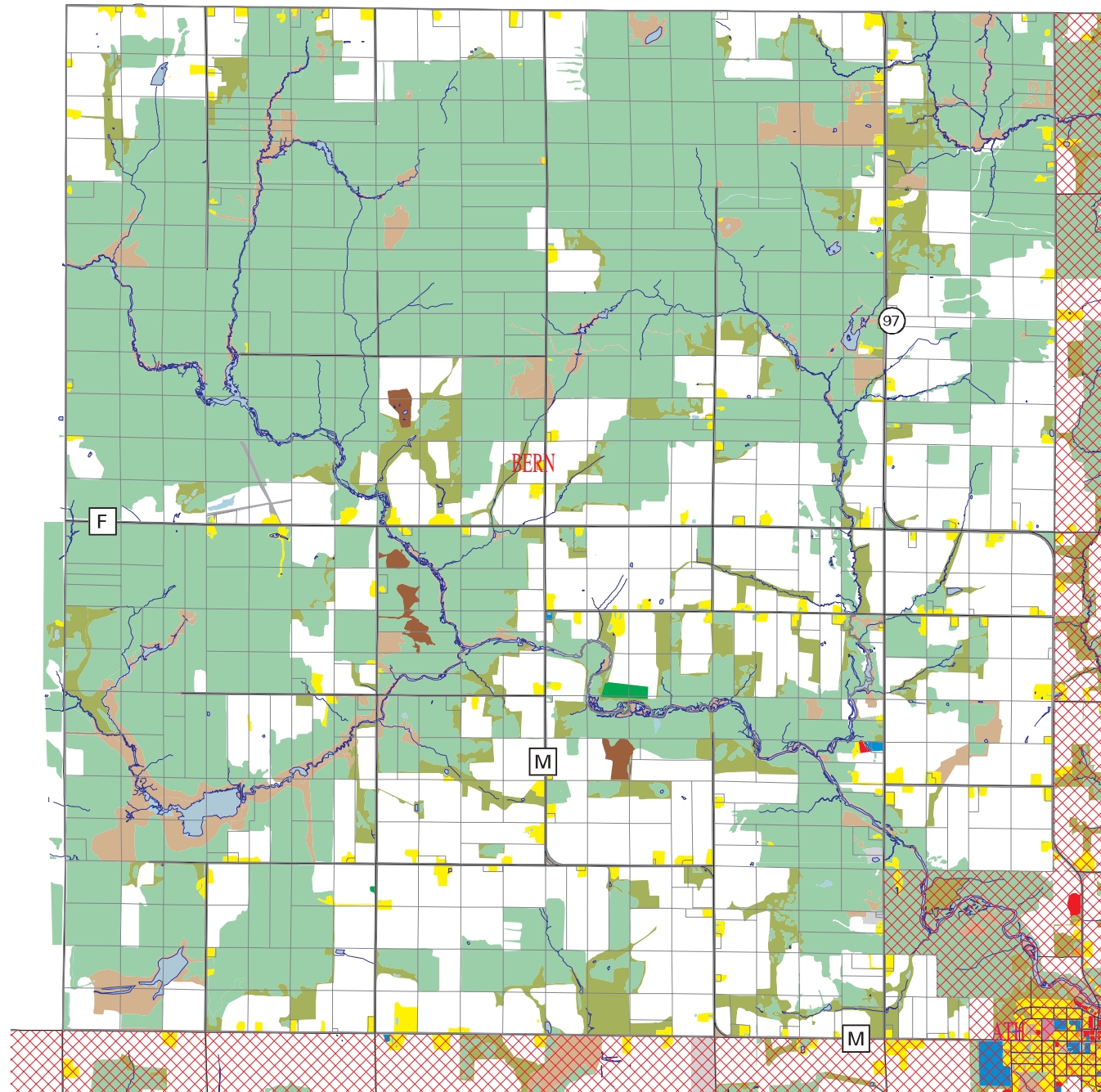
Figure 3-4
Prime Farm Land
BERN



- D - generally 12-20% slopes
- E - generally greater than 15% slopes.

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

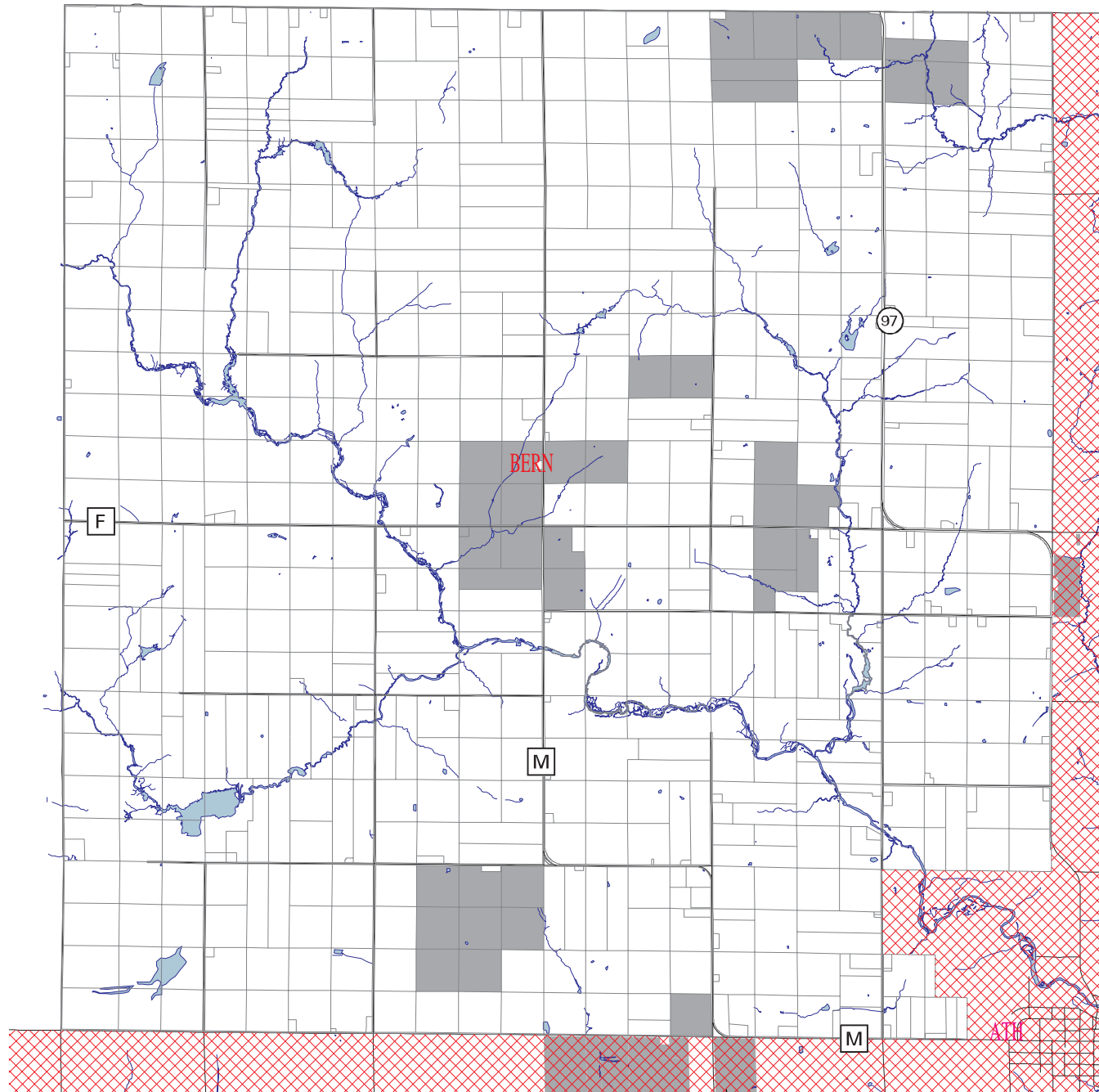
Figure 3-5
Slopes
BERN



- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Single Family Residential | Industrial | Specialty Crops | Recreation | Transportation |
| Multi-Family Residential | Quarries/Gravel Pits | Other Agriculture | Woodlands | Vacant/Barren Land |
| Commercial Services | Crop Land | Public/Quasi-Public | Water | |

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 4-1
 2000 Landuse/Landcover
 BERN



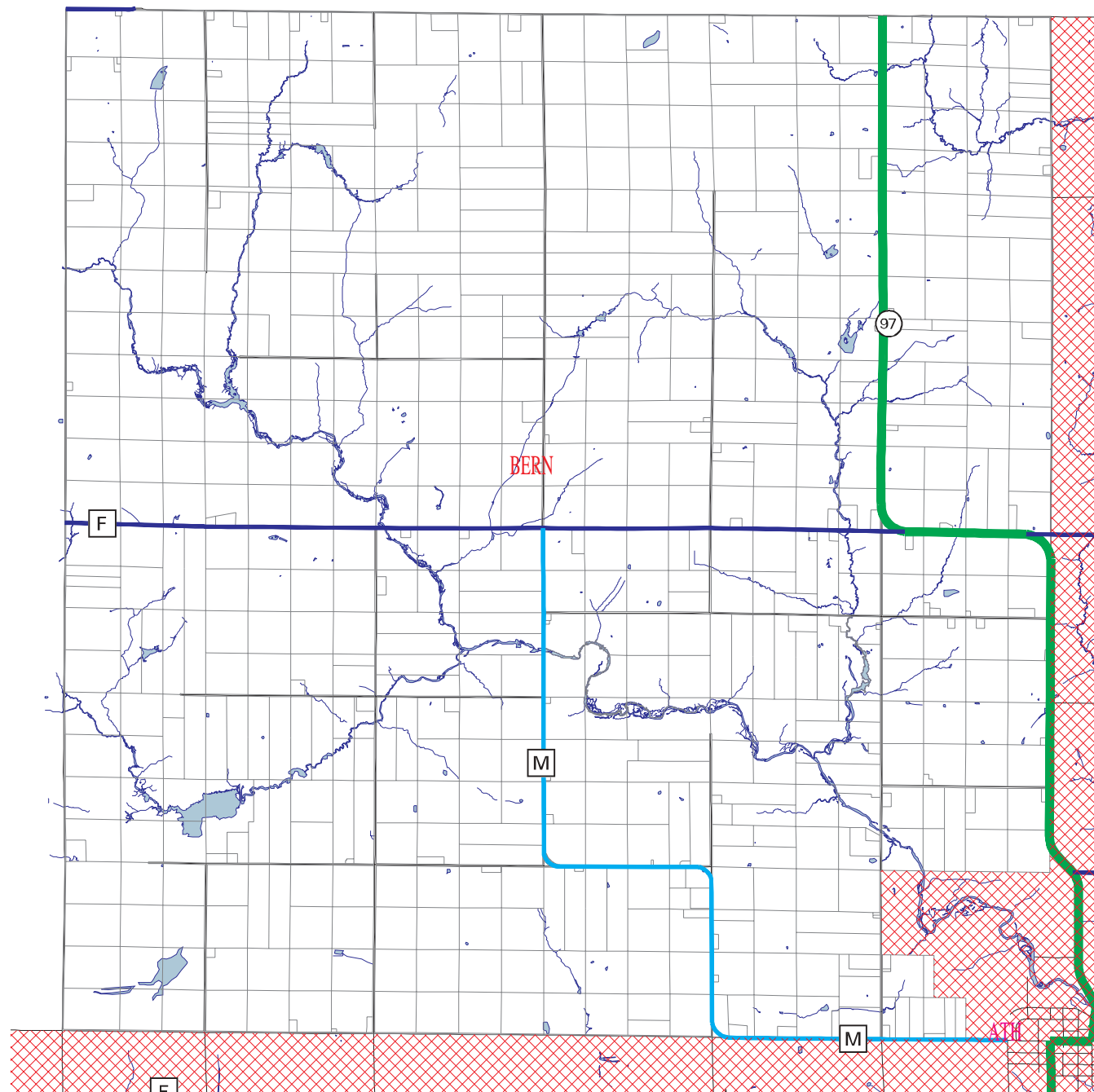
- Exclusive ag zoning
- Farmland pres contracts

 Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Exclusive Ag & Farmland Preservation

BERN

Figure 4-2



- █ Principal Arterial
- █ Minor Arterial
- █ Major Collector
- █ Minor Collector

- F County Highways
- 52 State Highways
- 51 US Highways
- 39 Interstate

 Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 5-1
Functional Classification of Roads
BERN

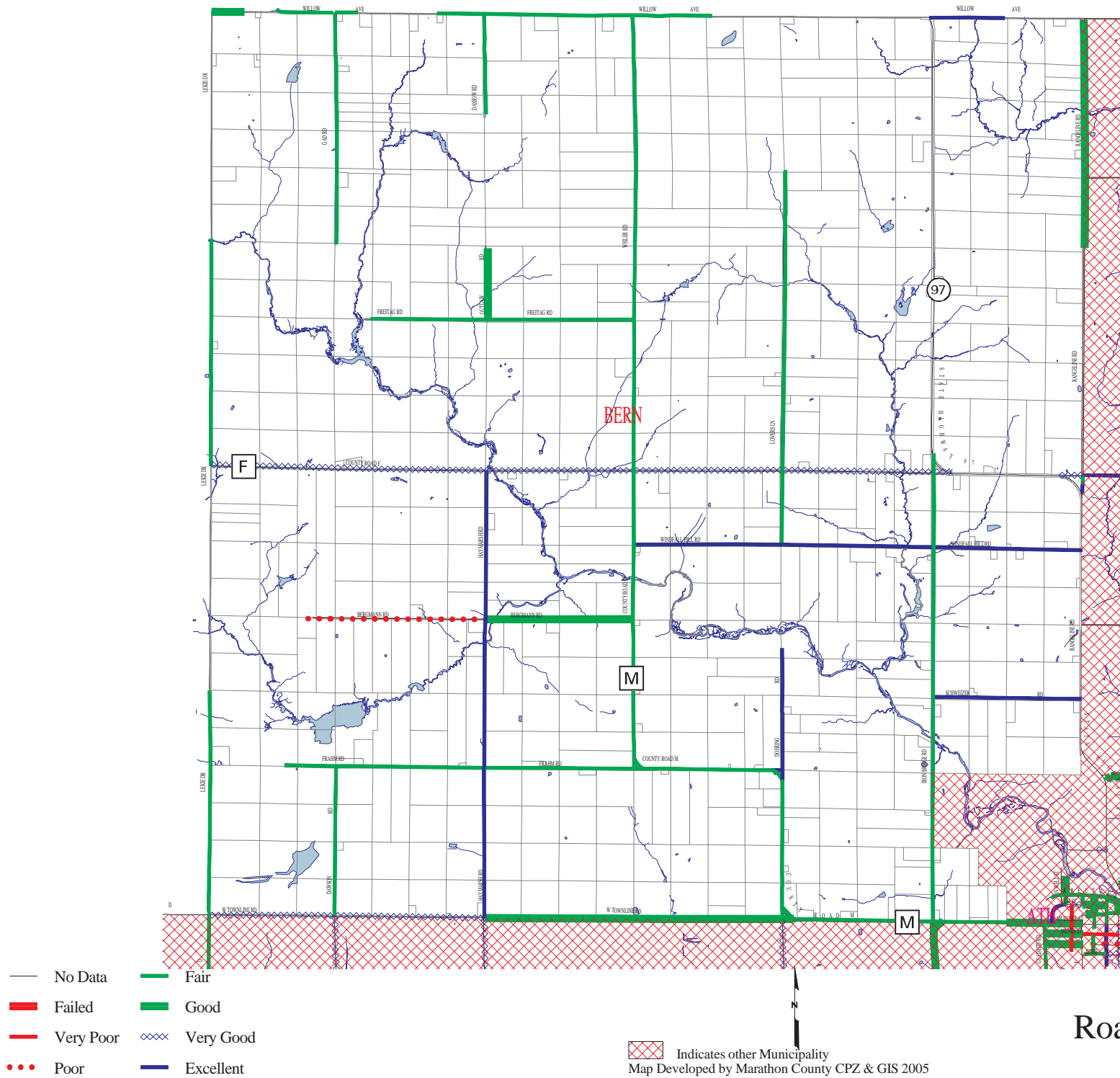
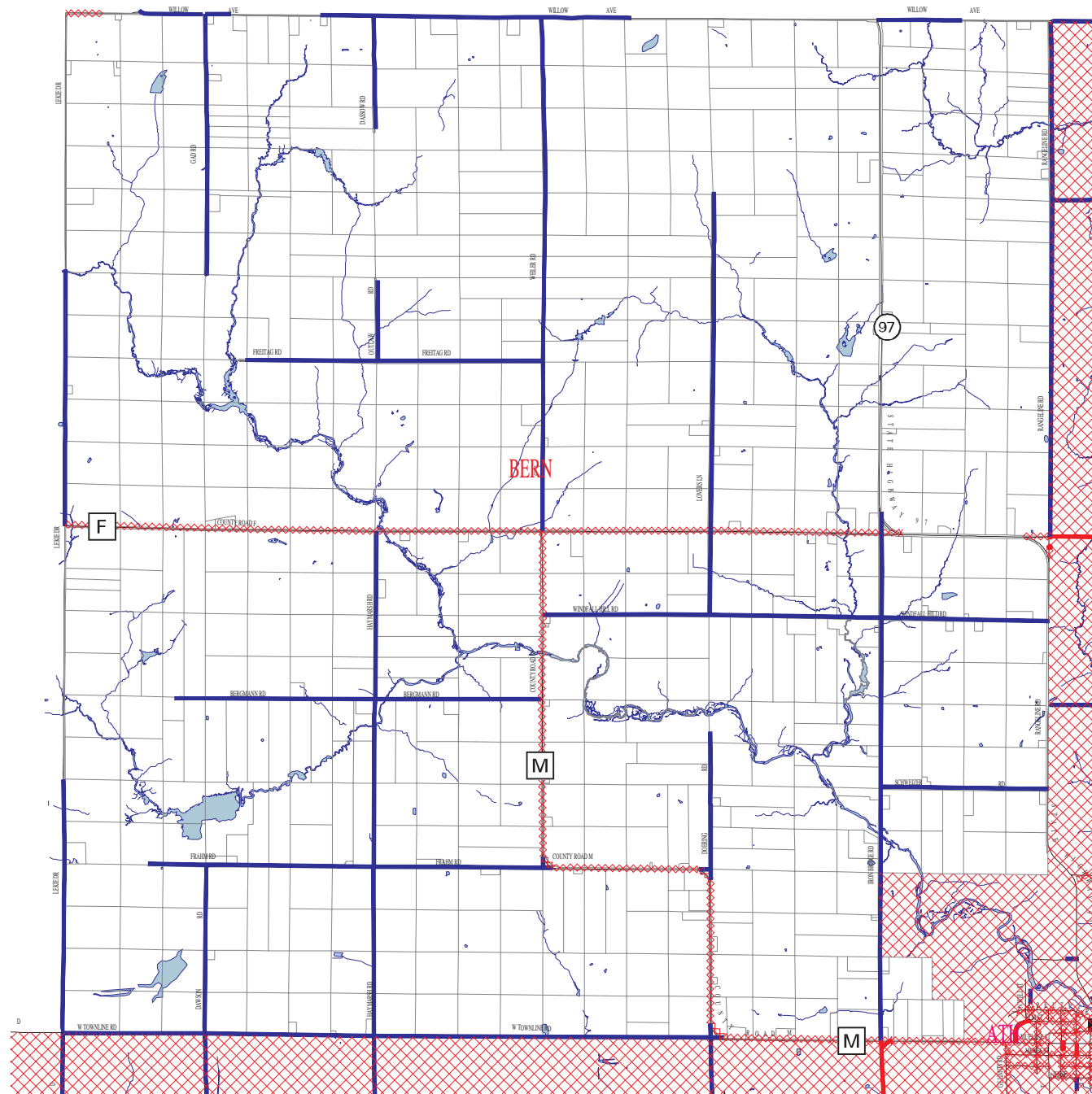


Figure 5-2
 Road Surface Rating
 BERN

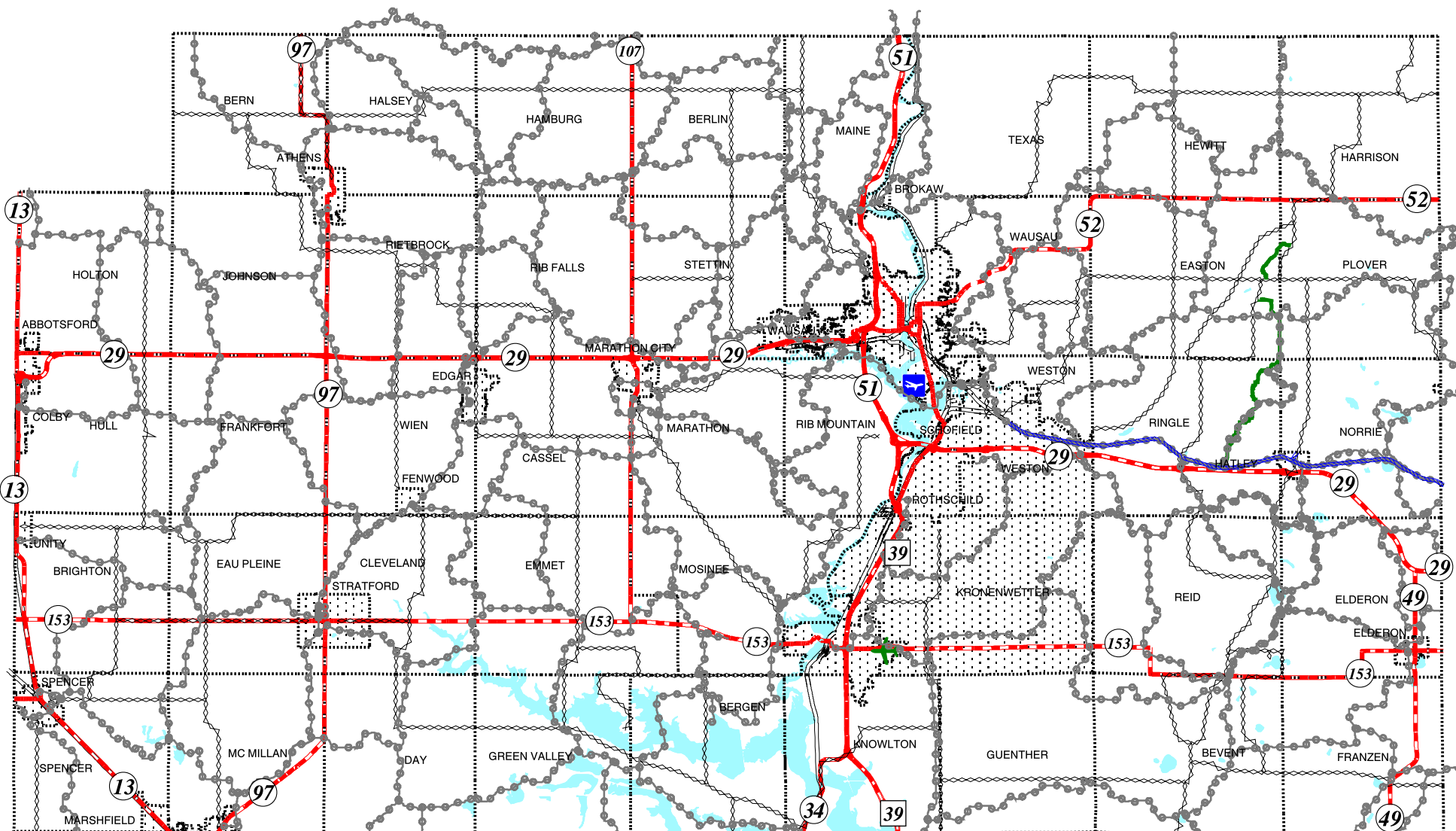


- No Data
- Concrete Pavement
- <1" Wearing Surface
- Asphalt Pavement
- Asphalt Pavement on Concrete
- Asphalt Pavement with Base >7"
- Asphalt Pavement With Base <7"
- Unimproved Road
- Brick or Block Pavement

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 5-3
 Road Surface Types
 BERN

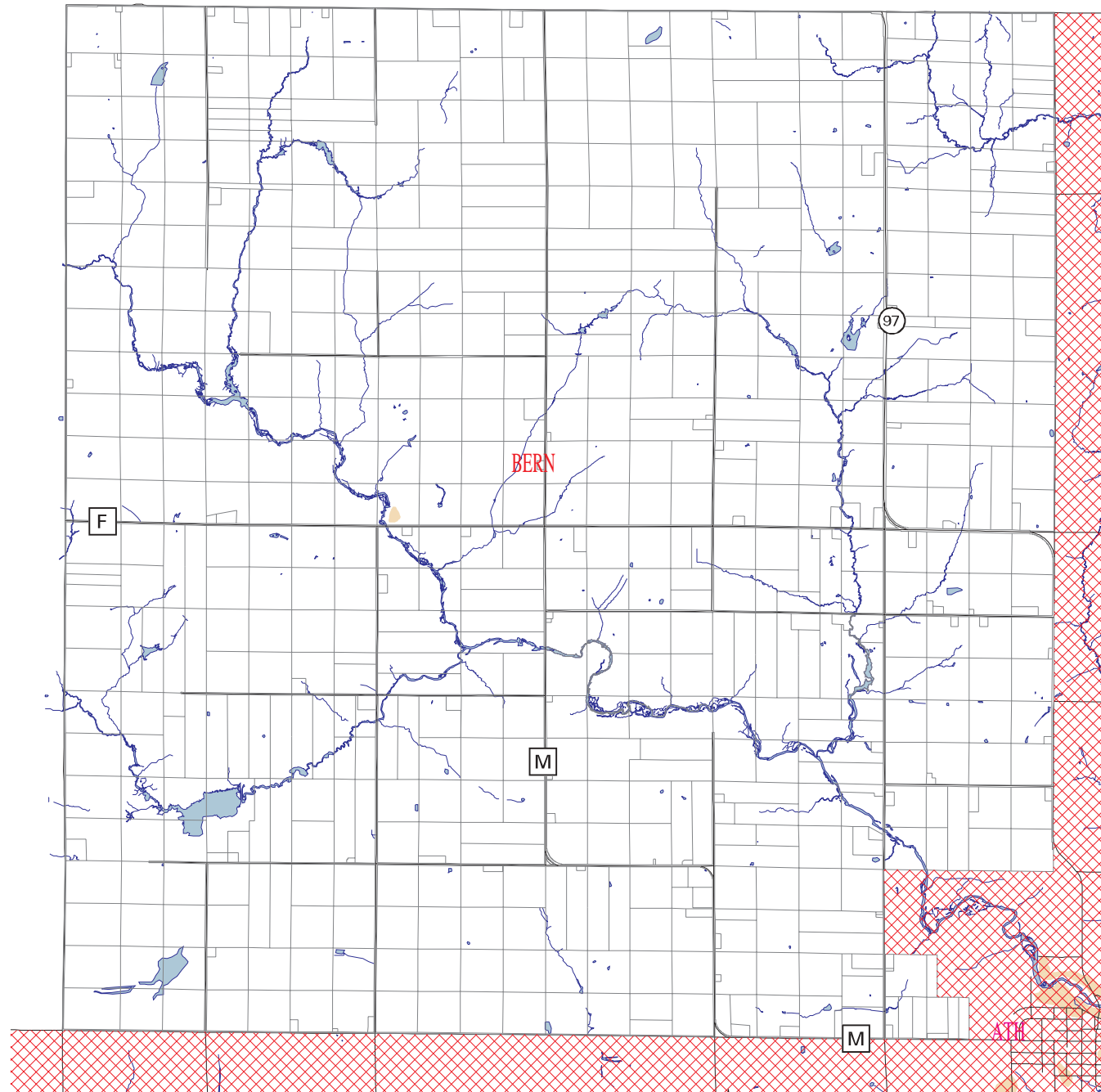
MARATHON COUNTY REGIONAL TRAILS & TRANSPORTATION



- Mountain Bay Trail
- 2001 Snowmobile Trails
- Ice Age Trail
- Suggested Bike Routes
- Wausau City Airport
- Central Wisconsin Airport (Mosinee)

- State & Us Highways
- Railroads (Active)
- Municipal Boundary
- Water Features
- Incorporated Municipality

Figure 5-4

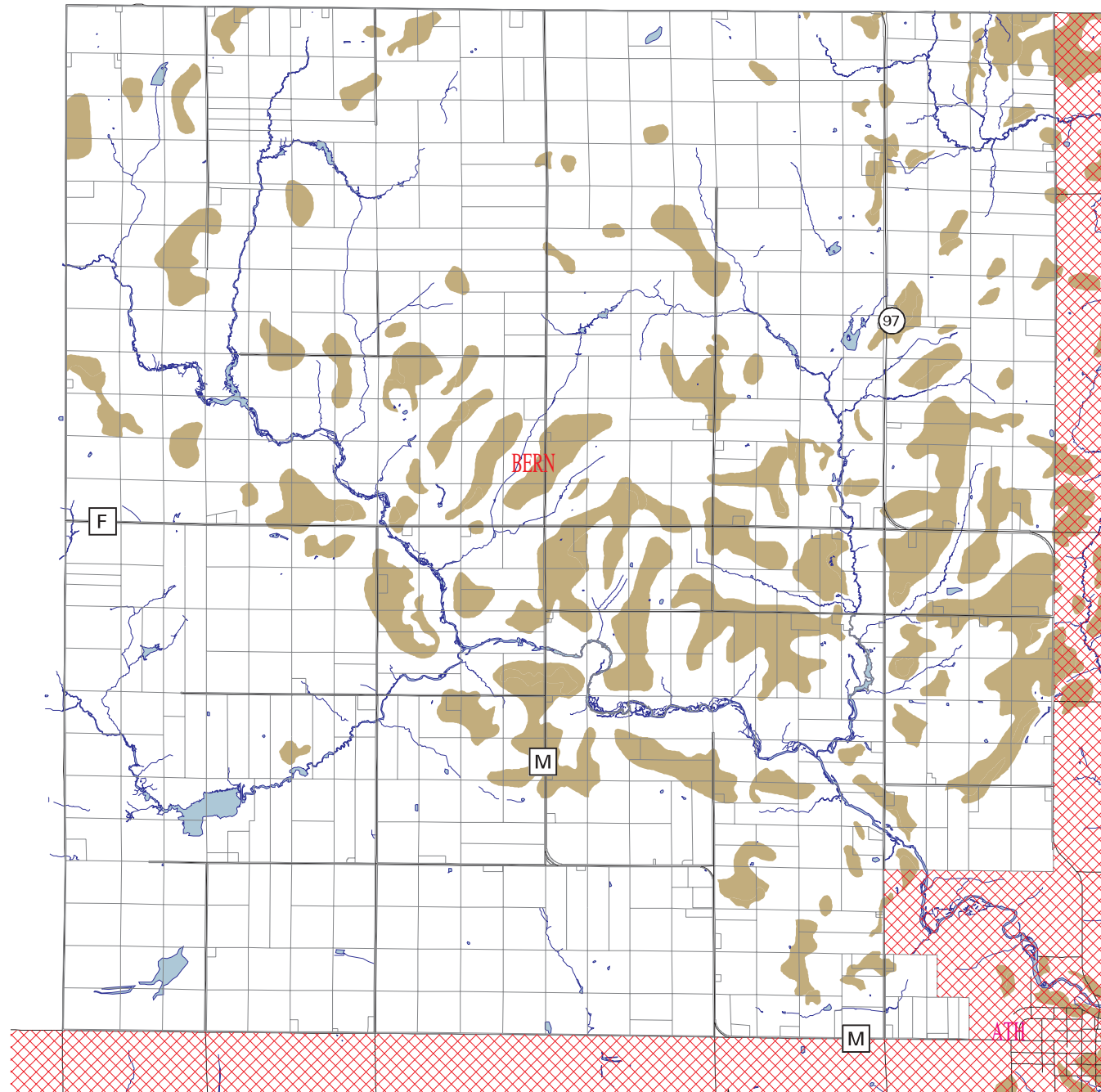


- 0 - 20" (Quarries)
- 20 - 40 "
- 40-60"
- >60"

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005



Figure 6-1
Depth To Bedrock
BERN



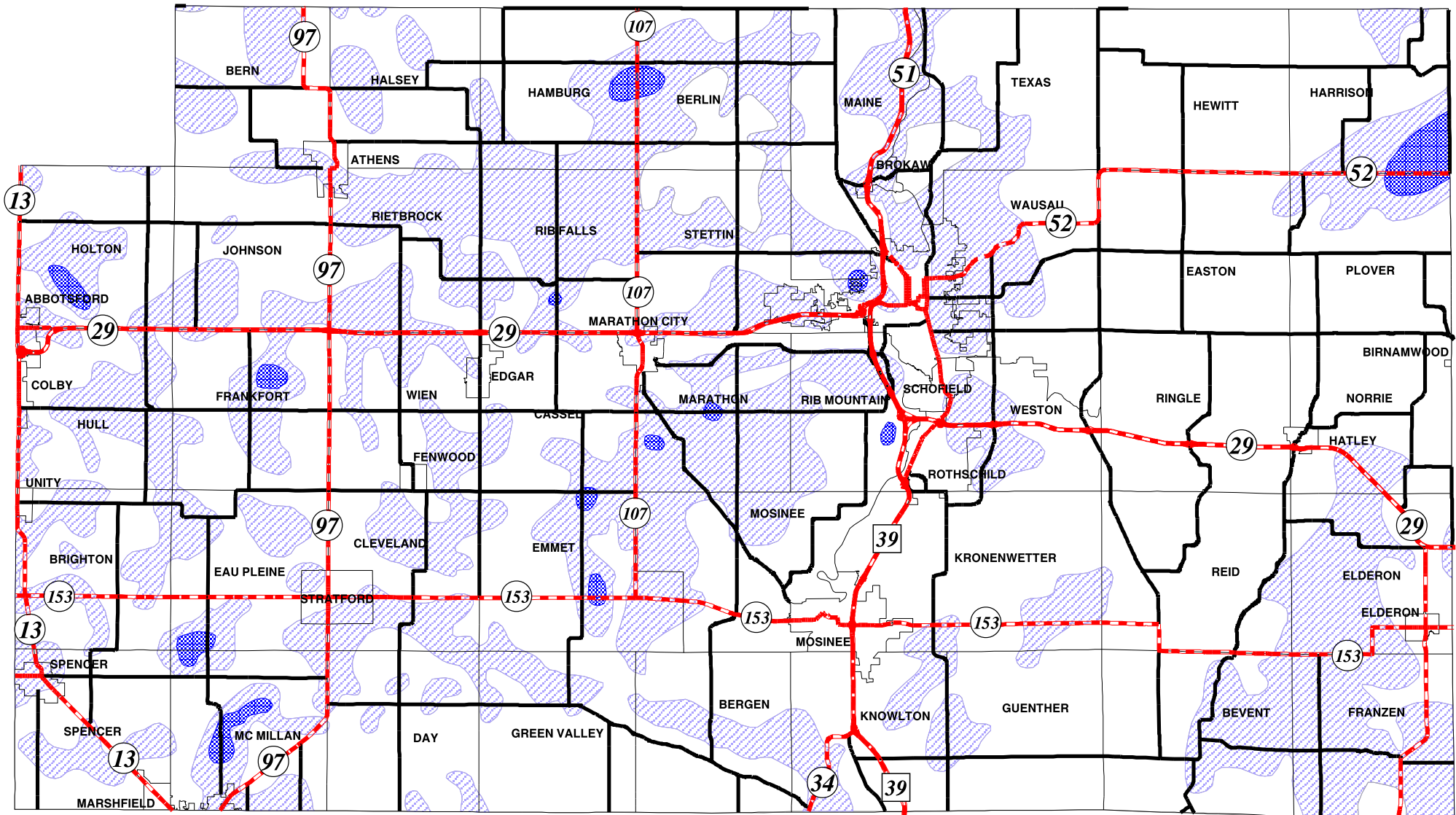
■ Soils suitable for septic systems w/soil absorption component



▨ Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Suitable Soils-Septic Tank Absorption
 BERN

Figure 6-2

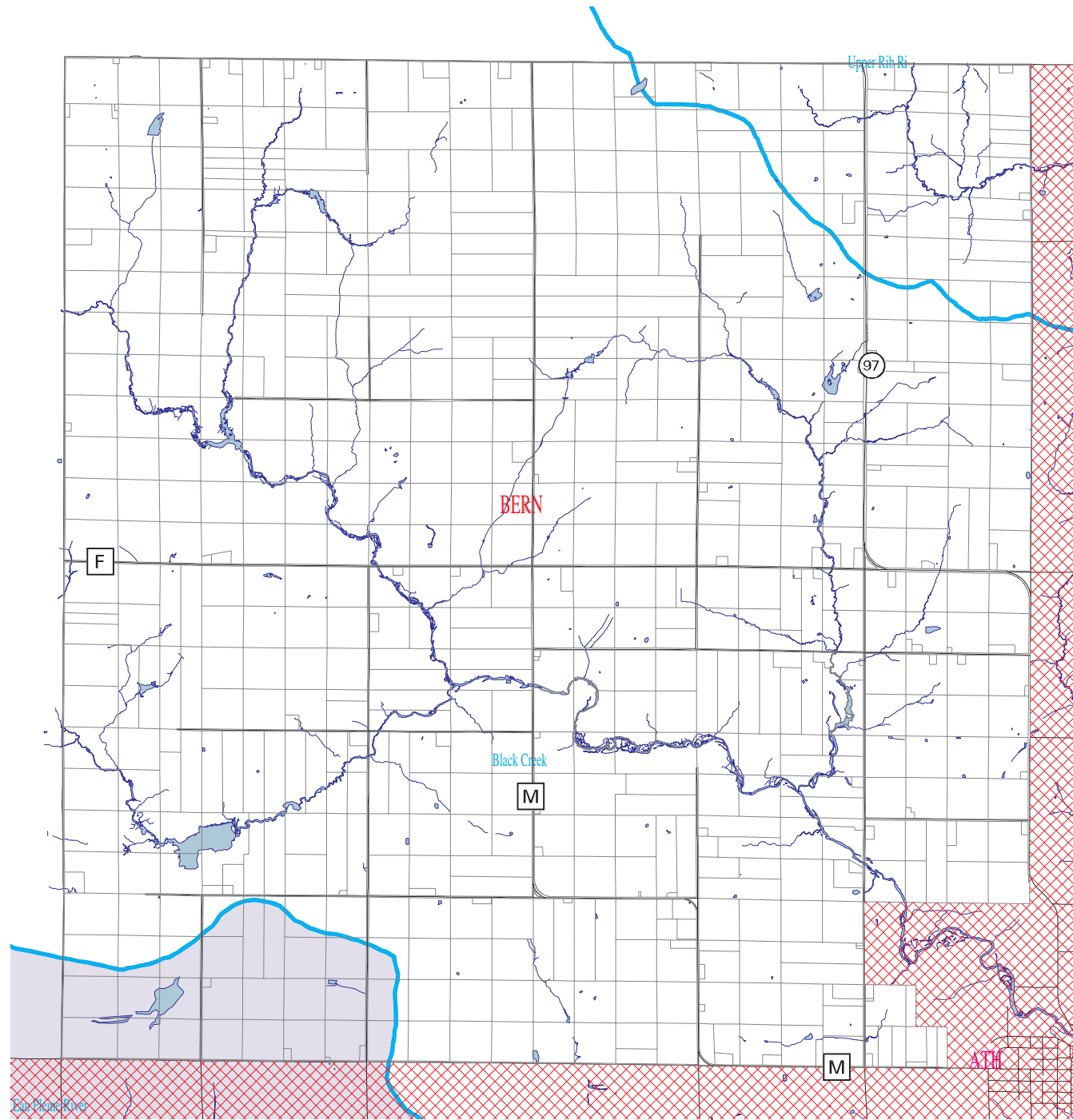
MARATHON COUNTY DEPTH TO GROUND WATER



-  State & Us Highways
-  County Roads
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Ground Water Depth
-  0-20 feet
-  20-50 feet
-  >50 feet



Source: "Irrigable Lands Inventory --- phase 1
Groundwater and Related Information", I.D. Lippett
and R.G. Hennings, MP -81-1, WGNHS 1981.



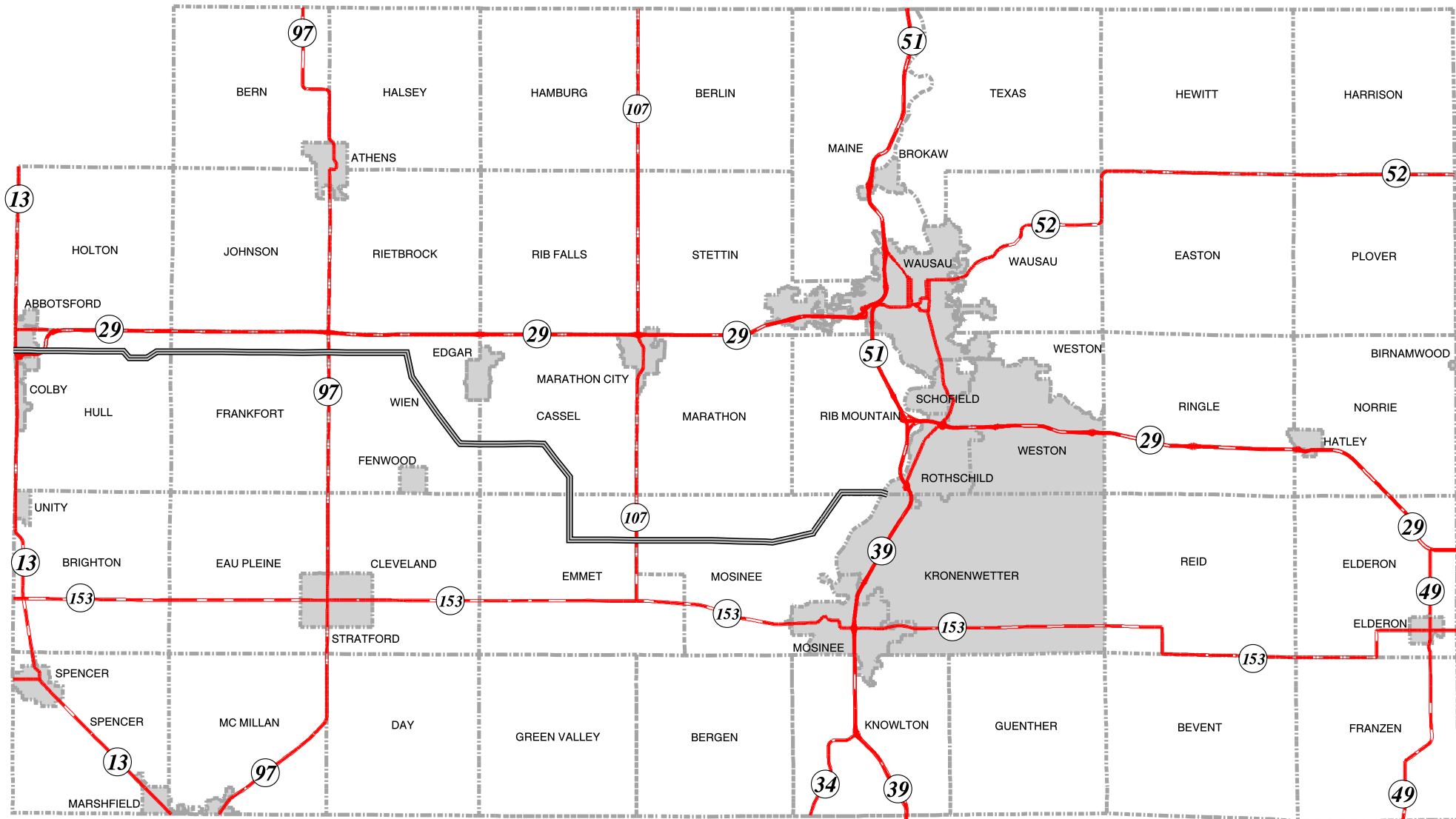
Priority Watersheds as identified in the Marathon County Land & Water Resource Management Plan

Watershed boundaries

Indicates other Municipality
Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 6-4
Major Watersheds
BERN

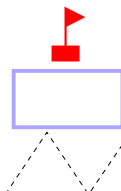
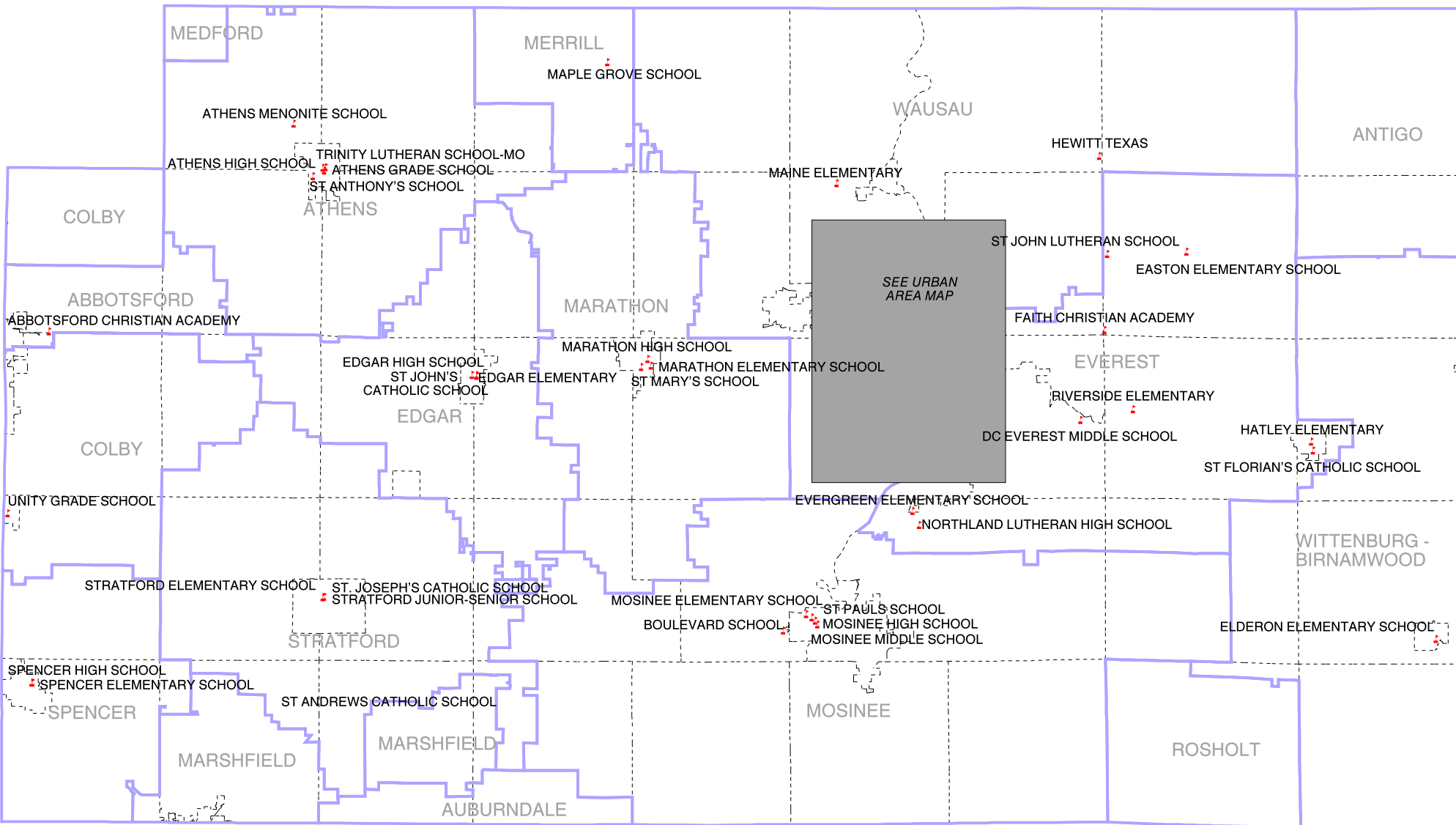
MARATHON COUNTY PROPOSED WESTON - ARROWHEAD LINE



Proposed Power Line
State & Us Highways
Municipal Boundary
Incorporated Municipality

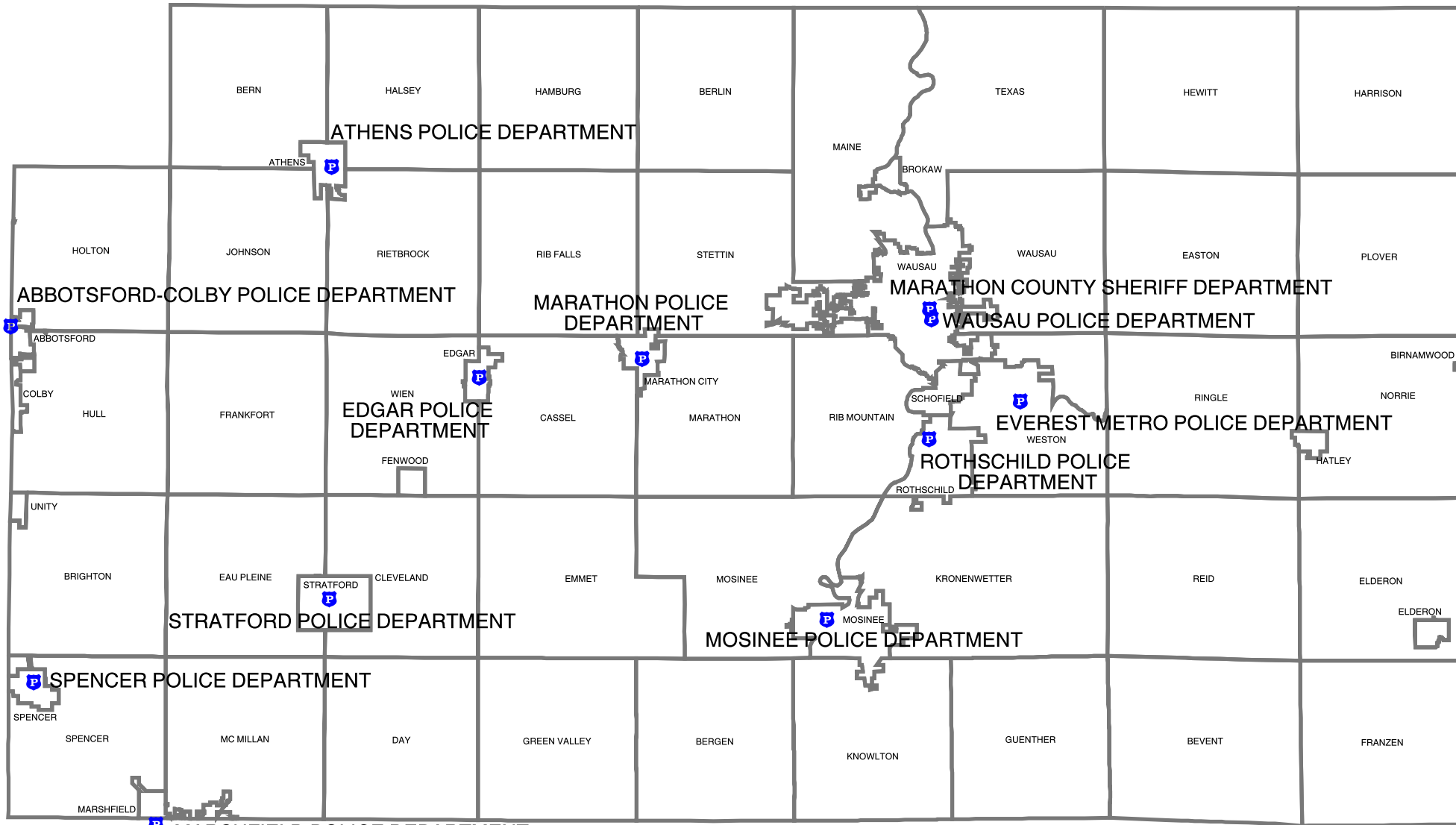
Figure 6-5

MARATHON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS RURAL AREA MAP



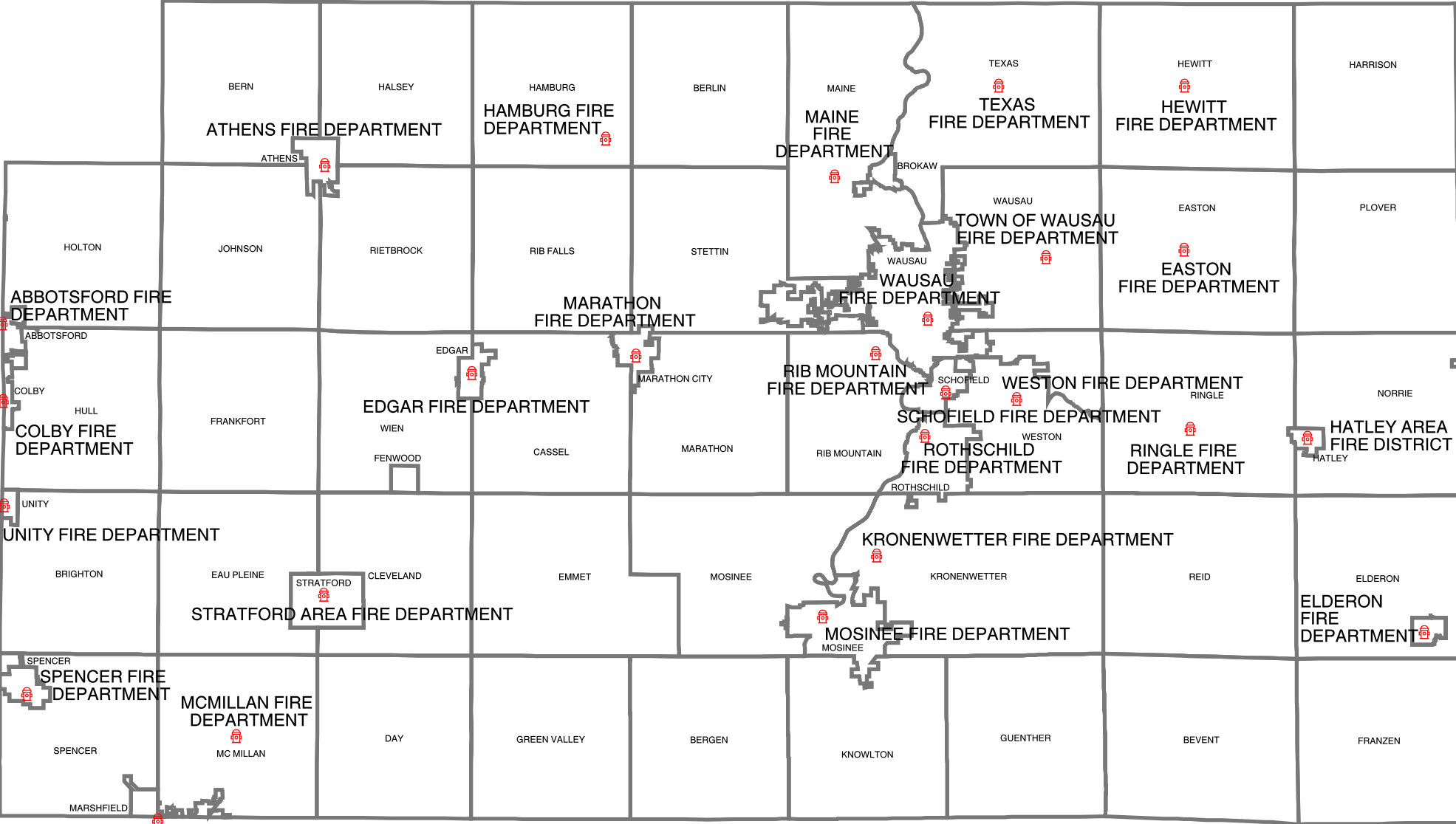
School Locations
School District Boundary
Municipal Boundary

MARATHON COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT



 Police Department
 Municipal Boundary

MARATHON COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENTS



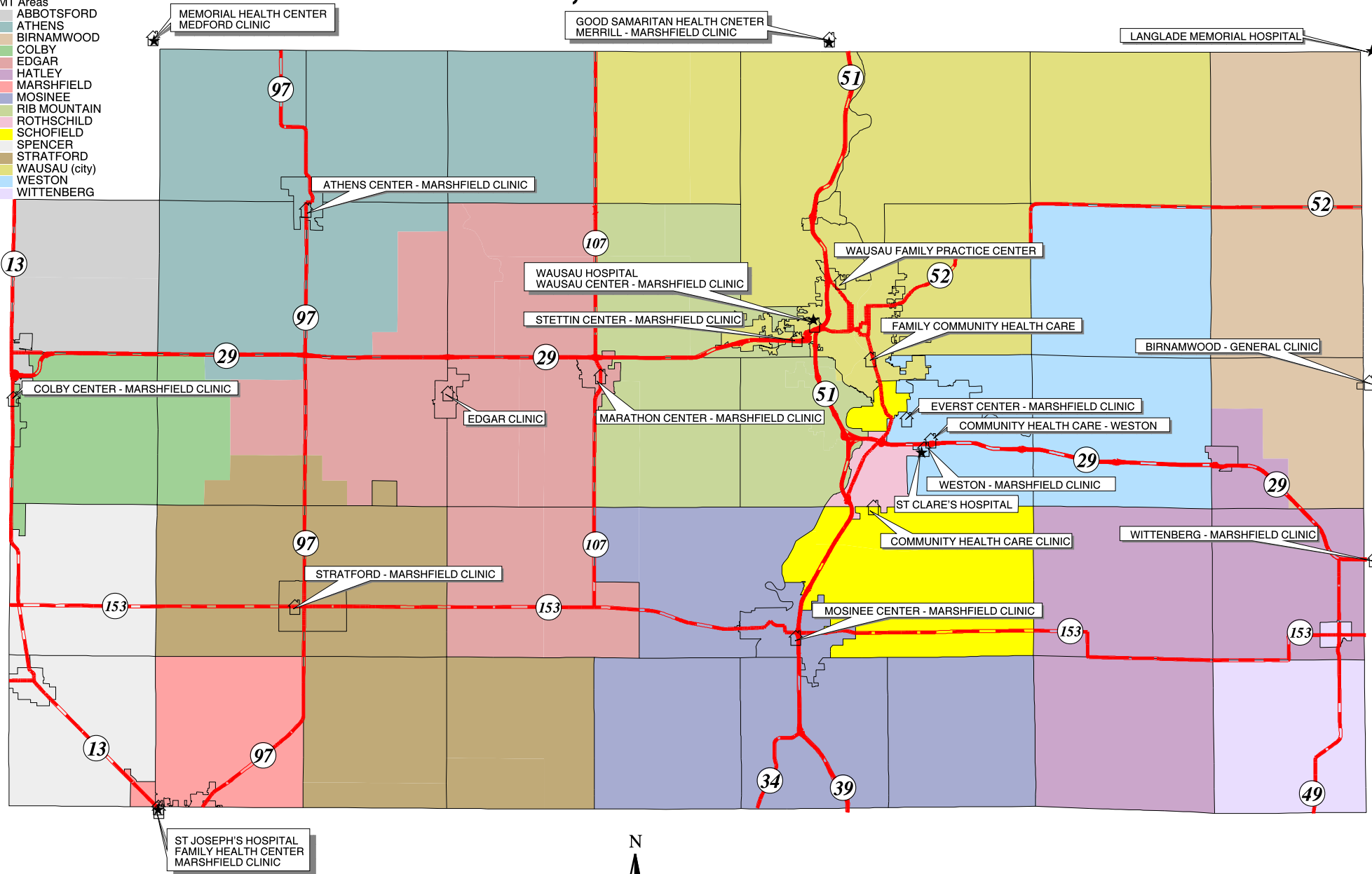
Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

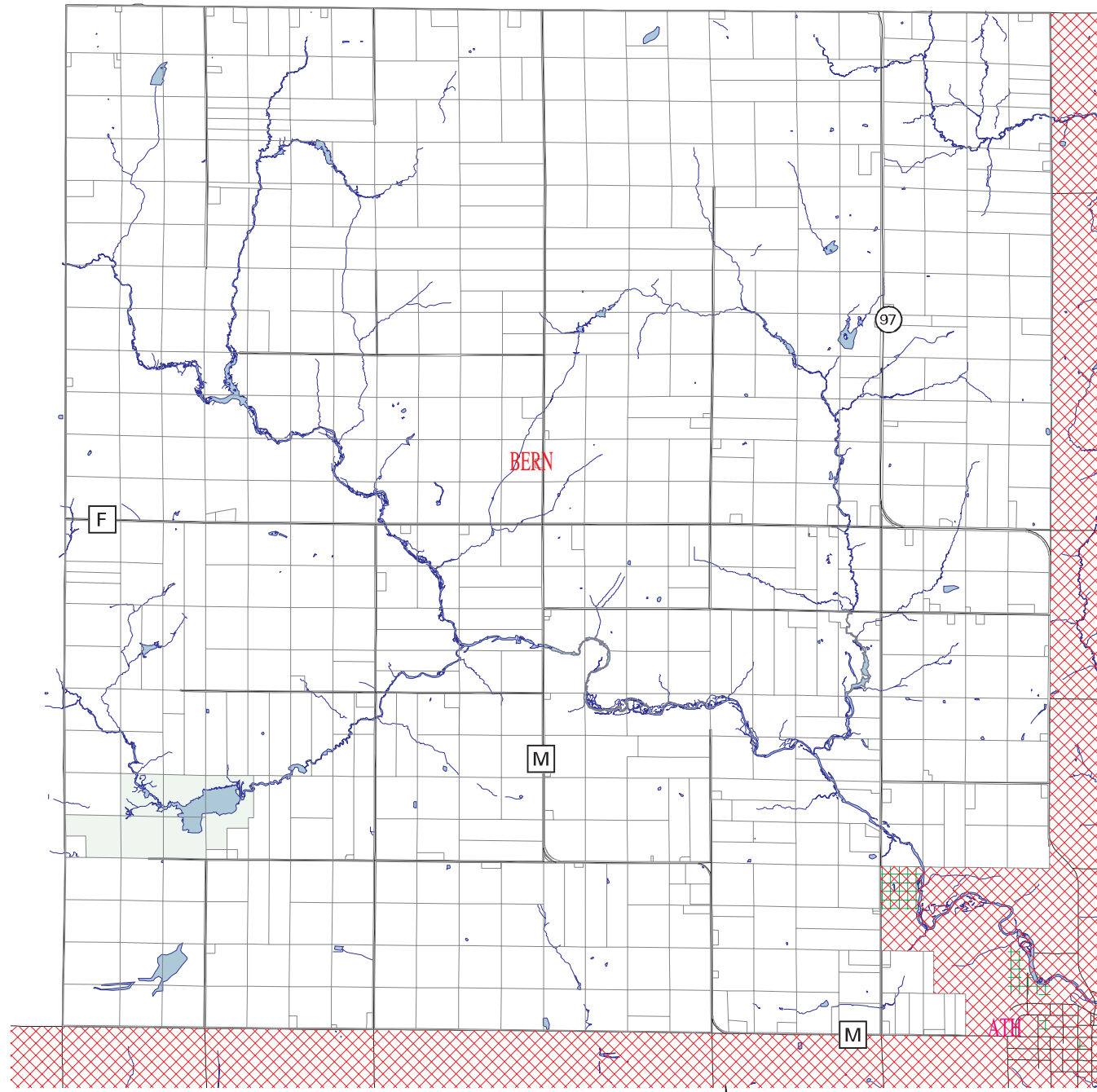
 **Fire Department**
 **Municipal Boundary**

Figure 9-3

MARATHON COUNTY AREA HOSPITALS, CLINICS & EMS ZONES

- Healthcare Facilities
- CLINIC
 - HOSPITAL
 - State & US Highways
 - Municipal Boundary
- EMT Areas
- ABBOTSFORD
 - ATHENS
 - BIRNAMWOOD
 - COLBY
 - EDGAR
 - HATLEY
 - MARSHFIELD
 - MOSINEE
 - RIB MOUNTAIN
 - ROTHSCHILD
 - SCHOFIELD
 - SPENCER
 - STRATFORD
 - WAUSAU (city)
 - WESTON
 - WITTENBERG





- Municipal Parks
- County Forest Units
- County Parks
- State Parks

Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 10-1
Recreation Facilities
BERN

Town of Bern

Comprehensive Plan

Goals, Objectives, Policies & Implementation

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- B. Marathon County Guiding Principles
- C. Ordinances and Resolutions for Adoption
- D. Public Participation Plan
- E. Bibliography of Related Studies and Plans
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- Figure 3-3: Development Constraints
- Figure 4-1: Functional Classification
- Figure 4-2: WISLR Ratings
- Figure 4-3: WISLR Road Surface Type

List of Acronyms

303 (d) list—waters designated as “impaired” under section 303 (d) of the U.S. Clean Water Act.

AADT—Annual Average Daily Traffic

AHI—Architecture & History Inventory (a database of the Wisconsin Historical Society).

BMPs—Best Management Practices

CCR&R—Child Care Resource and Referral Network

CDBG—Community Development Block Grant

CES—Cropland Evaluation System (Marathon County)

CIP—Capital Improvement Program

Comm 83—Chapter 83 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code under the Department of Commerce, setting standards for regulation of private sewage systems.

CRP—Conservation Reserve Program

CTH—County Trunk Highway

CWA—Central Wisconsin Airport

DWD—Department of Workforce Development

EMS—Emergency Medical Services

EMT—Emergency Medical Technician

ERW—Exceptional Resource Waters, a designation by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

FEMA—Federal Emergency Management Agency

FIRM—Flood Insurance Rate Maps

HOME—Home Investment Partnerships Program

HUD—U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

LHOG—Local Housing Organization Grant

LRTP—Long Range Transportation Plan (Prepared by the Wausau Metro Planning Organization for the Metro area).

LWRMP—Land and Water Resource Management Plan (Marathon County)

MPO—Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

NCHC—North Central Health Care

NCWRPC—North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

NRHP—National Register of Historic Places

NTC—Northcentral Technical College

ORW—Outstanding Resource Waters, a designation under the U.S. Clean Water Act.

Town of Bern

PASER—Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating

PMP—Pavement Management Plan

SHPO—State Historic Preservation Office

STF Data—Summary Tape File, referring to data files of the 2000 U.S. Census.

STH—State Trunk Highway

TDP—Transit Development Plan (Wausau Area Transit System)

TIP—Transportation Improvement Program (Marathon County)

USDA—United States Department of Agriculture

USH—U.S. Highway

UW-MC—University of Wisconsin—Marathon County

WATS—Wausau Area Transit System

WDA—Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

WDNR—Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

WDOA—Wisconsin Department of Administration

WDOT—Wisconsin Department of Transportation

WHEDA—Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

WISLR—Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads

WPD—Wetland Protection District

WPS—Wisconsin Public Service Corporation

1. Introduction

This document represents the core of the Bern Comprehensive Plan. It outlines the community's goals and objectives to address the issues and opportunities identified in the *Conditions and Issues Report* and guide future growth. Goals and objectives have been developed relative to each of the required plan elements. For each of the goals and objectives, specific policies, strategies and/or actions are recommended to enable the community to achieve them. The Implementation Element at the end of this document compiles and prioritizes all the recommended action steps and identifies who is responsible for implementation.

Coordinating planning efforts with other jurisdictions was integral to the local comprehensive planning process. By working in sub-area groups, participating in county-wide planning workshops, and directly communicating with neighboring communities, all participating local municipalities have taken steps to foster intergovernmental cooperation and land use coordination. To achieve a level of broad consistency, all participating municipalities worked together to identify common likes, dislikes and concerns impacting their respective sub-areas. These were distilled into ten countywide guiding principles that describe a broad, shared vision of the future of Marathon County.

Local plans must also address the State's fourteen planning goals outlined in Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001, to the extent applicable. The sub-area concerns are summarized below and the State planning goals and countywide guiding principles are summarized in Appendix A and B, respectively.

Sub-Area Concerns

Following is a list of concerns shared by the four rural planning sub-areas outside of the Wausau metropolitan area. These were developed through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise to identify aspects of the sub-areas that participants liked, disliked, or had concerns about. Because many of the concerns were shared by all the rural sub-areas, they were consolidated into one list as follows:

General Concerns:

Local Development Control

- Maintain local control of development regulation
- Private property rights

Degree of Regulation

- Prefer minimal development regulation, but open to some regulation to protect prime farmland, rural character, natural resources and water quality
- Managed development preferred

Land Use and Development:

Preserve Rural Character

- Rural settings (small farms dotting landscape)
- Low population density (1, 2 and 5 acre lots)
- Ample open space, woodlands, natural areas, etc.
- Small town living – familiar, friendly, safe
- Concentrate commercial and industrial development in cities or villages

Farm/Non-farm Conflicts

- Increased demand (from new residents) for higher level of service, paved roads, etc.
- Traffic conflicts between passenger vehicles and farm equipment
- Road paving and dust control – Costs? Benefits?
- Road damage from heavy farm equipment
- Increased complaints about farm smells, dust, noise

Urban Fringe Development

- Annexation - lack of control over where, when and what might develop
- Some support for cooperative boundary agreements to manage growth at urban edge
- Planned development preferred - but wary of over regulation

Identity and Appearance

- Lack of design/aesthetics control for commercial and industrial development (buildings, landscaping, signs)
- Cluttered appearance of major road corridors (signs, power lines, no landscaping)
- Improve housing maintenance in some neighborhoods
- Land use conflicts – i.e. old industrial adjacent to residential

Preservation and Protection of Resources:

Preserve/Protect Natural Resources

- Preserve woodlands (highest ratings in survey responses), wetlands, rivers
- Protect/maintain natural character and scenic quality
- Maintain access to natural areas

Fiscal/Economic:

Strong and Diverse Tax Base

- Loss of land, jobs and population due to annexation
- Loss of taxable land due to public purchase (e.g. County Forests)
- Redevelop under-utilized land, particularly along Wisconsin River
- Maintain/foster diverse mix of land uses
- Competition for industrial development – particularly between urban and fringe areas

Farmland Preservation (primarily economic issue)

- Loss of small/family farms to development or larger farms
- Mega farms [also concerns about environmental impacts]
- Decreasing number of active farms
- Conversion of farms to non-farm development
- Land value inflation (high taxes)

Infrastructure:

Traffic and Transportation System

- Too many driveway openings on busy road corridors
- Lack of future street planning
- Limited river crossings
- New interchange locations and loss of highway access
- Highway frontage roads – access limitations

Protect Water Supply

- Depletion or degradation due to high volume users (mega farms, new high school, industry)
- Limited access to water for wells in some areas (bedrock, etc.)

Sewer and Septic System Availability

- Poor soil drainage limits suitability for on-site waste treatment systems in some areas
- “Comm83” opens more areas for on-site treatment systems
- Interest in looking at alternatives to centralized wastewater treatment

Cost Efficient Community Services

- Shared services generally good – fragmentation an issue in some areas
- Maintain and improve services w/o increasing taxes
- How/who will pay for increased services
- Lack of transit access in rural and fringe areas

20-Year Community Vision Statement

The Town of Bern will protect the rural character and natural resources of the town while recognizing the economic needs and ownership rights of property owners.

Goals, Objectives, Policies, Strategies & Actions

This document describes a variety of goals, objectives, policies, strategies and actions the Town has identified to help it respond to issues and opportunities identified in the *Issues and Conditions* report. Definitions are provided below to clarify the purpose and intent of each category.

Definitions:

- **Goal:** A goal is a statement that describes a desired future condition. The statement is broad in scope and describes general concepts or things the community hopes to accomplish.
- **Objective:** An objective is a statement that describes a specific course of action to achieve a goal or address an issue.
- **Policy:** A policy is a general course of action or rule of conduct to be followed to achieve community goals and objectives.
- **Strategies:** As the name implies, strategies are strategic approaches that may involve a series of individual actions to achieve a specific goal or objective.
- **Actions:** An action describes a specific effort that will be undertaken to achieve a specific goal or objective.

2. Natural Resources Element

Goal 1: Effectively balance private property rights with governmental controls.

- **Objective: To work with Town property owners to provide guidance regarding options to protect natural land while ensuring that property rights are maintained.**
- **Objective: Minimize Town oversight on natural resource issues.**

POLICIES

- The Town encourages the preservation of natural resources, along with balancing private property rights.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- The Town will consider impacts on natural resources when reviewing new development proposals.
- Balance the preservation of property rights with the preservation of natural resources.
- The Town will keep private property owners informed about current regulations or changes regarding natural resource protection through local mailings, newsletter, etc.

3. Land Use Element

Goal 1: Effectively balance private property rights with Town governmental controls.

- **Objective: Develop a Town level review process for new developments, while continuing to acknowledge and respect private property rights.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will balance private property rights with Town controls on land use.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Develop a simple Town level review process to allow officials to view plans for land use changes, prior to them being implemented.
- Encourage large residential developments to locate close to existing urbanized or incorporated locales.

Goal 2: Limit the negative impact of large industrial development on the Town.

- **Objective: To direct industrial development to areas contiguous with other industrial development, such as the Village of Athens.**

- **Objective: To develop criteria to analyze industrial developments based on traffic, noise, smoke, and other impacts.**
- **Objective: To develop a review process to apply to industrial developments within the Town.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will direct industrial development to locations close to existing facilities, utilities, and other industrial uses.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Develop a process to review industrial development proposals.
- Develop criteria to analyze industrial development.

Future Land Use – The Town of Bern Future Land Use map, shown in Figure 3-1 illustrates the anticipated future pattern of land uses. In this case, the map includes the same land use categories used in the existing land use map. The map does not identify locations for future land uses, because development is allowed without a land use change. Descriptions of each existing land use category and the number of acres within each category are provided in Table 3-1. Figure 3-3 shows areas with development constraints due to environmental conditions such as wetlands and floodplains, or policy constraints such as restrictive zoning or other programs (i.e., Exclusive Agriculture, Forest Crop

Town of Bern

Law). Areas where existing development precludes additional development are also shown.

Table 3-1: Future Land Use, 2005

Land Cover Category	Description	Acres	% of Total Land Area
Single Family Residential	One family structures, farm residences, mobile homes	360	2%
Commercial Services	Retail stores, taverns, restaurants, truck stops, gas stations, farm coops, farm implement dealerships, automobile dealerships, business offices, motels/hotels, offices, telephone/gas company	2	<1%
Industrial	Saw/paper/lumber mills, dairies, industrial parks, trucking operations, distribution centers, mining	73	<1%
Cropland	Tilled agriculture, prime farmland	7164	33%
Specialty Crops	Ginseng, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, groves, cranberries, etc.	14	<1%
Other Agriculture	Fallow, pasture and undetermined agriculture, power lines and towers, water towers, municipal wells	987	5%
Public/ Quasi-Public	Schools, churches, cemeteries, libraries, government buildings, National Guard, utility facilities.	4	<1%
Park and Recreation	Public and private parks, trails, ball fields, golf courses, playgrounds, camp grounds, shooting ranges, etc.	0	-
Woodlands	Privately-owned forested land, including nurseries, paper mill forests, etc.	9232	42%
Water and Wetlands	Open waters, such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, creeks, reservoirs, etc.	235	1%
Transportation	Airports, highways, road right-of-ways, railroads, logging roads	435	2%
Barren Land	Unused open land in wooded areas, along streams, along roadsides	375	2%
Total Land Area		21772	100%

Source: Marathon County Land Use Cover Database

The Future Land Use Map is the same map as the Existing Land Use Map. This is due to the fact that a “land use change” is not required for a residential development. The Town does not have zoning, and for this reason, the existing capacity for growth on the Future Land Use Map is considerable, but difficult to indicate on a map because the use does not change.

Land Needs – Projections of future population and employment growth in Bern are provided in the *Issues and Conditions* report. These were used to estimate the amount of land needed to accommodate future residential and non-residential development over the next 20 years. Acreage projections were based on assumptions about density of houses per acre and employees per acre.

It is estimated over the next 20 years, 98 acres will be needed to accommodate future residential development and 4 acres are needed for future non-residential development. Potential locations for these land uses are identified on the Future Land Use Map.

Table 3-2: Acreage Projections, 2000-2030

	Estimated Total Acreage Needed by Year						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Agricultural	17772	17756	17740	17722	17706	17690	17670
Residential	360	376	292	408	424	440	458
Industrial	73	73	73	75	75	75	76
Commercial	2	2	2	2	2	2	3

Source: determined from NCWRPC and Marathon County projections

Consistency between Land Use and Zoning – Land use and zoning designations are related, but not necessarily identical. Land use categories tend to be fairly general whereas zoning districts regulate specific land uses and development requirements. Because the land use categories are general it is

common for more than one zoning district to correspond to each land use category. It is also possible that some zoning districts might be consistent with more than one land use designation.

Achieving consistency between land use and zoning is required by State Statutes. This generally occurs when a community is considering a proposed zoning change. The decision to approve a zoning change must be based on the adopted comprehensive plan, and specifically, the future land use map. Generally, if the requested zoning is consistent with the land use designation on the property it should be approved, unless unique circumstances indicated the rezoning would negatively impact surrounding properties or the community. If a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation, the community should consider denying the rezoning request.

In situations where a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation - but the community believes the requested zoning is appropriate in the specific location and would benefit the community - the zoning change can be approved, however, the land use map should be amended accordingly to establish land use and zoning consistency. The process for amending the land use map is discussed in greater detail in the Implementation Element.

4. Transportation Element

Goal 1: Maintain Town transportation system.

- **Objective: To continue to plan and budget for maintenance and new construction.**
- **Objective: Continue to utilize the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) process for analyzing and planning for Town roadway improvements.**
- **Objective: Maintain the ongoing cooperation with surrounding Towns regarding road maintenance.**
- **Objective: Work with the Marathon County Highway Department to improve snowplowing on the County Highway system through the Town of Bern.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern supports the equitable maintenance and repair of the existing transportation network.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Continue to plan and budget for maintenance and new construction in the Pavement Management Plan.

- Maintain the ongoing cooperation with surrounding Towns regarding road maintenance.

Road Improvements

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) requires all incorporated communities to prepare a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) using a pavement rating system for their local roads. These plans were to be submitted for review by December 2001. The data from these plans is intended to provide the foundation for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), which is a computer resource that will enable communities and the State to begin to assess Wisconsin's local roadway system.

The PASER system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the rating system used most by Wisconsin communities. PASER rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10. This scale is broken down as follows:

- "1" and "2" = very poor condition
- "3" = poor condition
- "4" and "5" = fair condition
- "6" and "7" = good condition
- "8" = very good condition
- "9" and "10" = excellent condition

In addition to its use in the new WISLR, the rating system gives communities a detailed assessment of the appropriate maintenance method for each road segment under their jurisdiction. This assessment is then incorporated into the community's PMP.

Town of Bern

The Town maintains a PASER inventory. This is used in an informal Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process. The Town rebuilds 5-6 miles of road per year.

Table 4-1: Summary of Pavement Conditions

Surface Type Code (miles)						
Unimproved Road	Graded Earth Road	Gravel Road	Wearing Surface	Cold Mix Asphalt on Concrete	Cold Mix Resurfacing with < 7" Base	Cold Mix Resurfacing with > 7" Base
0.15	0.68	35.10				
Cold Mix Asphalt Base < 7"	Cold Mix Asphalt Base > 7"	Hot Mix Asphalt on Concrete	Hot Mix Resurfacing	Hot Mix Asphalt Pavement	Concrete Pavement	Brick or Block Pavement
0.06	9.92					
Surface Condition Rating (miles)						
No Data	Failed	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
		1.18	26.08	5.15	5.07	8.43

Unimproved and graded earth roads provide some safety concerns and should be examined to determine whether improvements are warranted. The amount of roads classified as Fair or Poor within the WISLR surface ratings also provides some concern as these roads will need improvements relatively soon to ensure safe travel along these routes. The roughly 18 miles of roadway classified with a Good or better rating require yearly maintenance to ensure the safe travel of residents along these routes, however, they do not provide an immediate safety concern.

5. Utilities Element

Goal 1: Protect the Town's water resources, including potable water.

- **Objective: Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to identify critical zones, such as groundwater recharge areas, and update applicable Town ordinances.**
- **Objective: Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to monitor the impact of high volume wells on the water table.**

POLICIES

- The Town will review all proposals for high volume wells within its borders, to analyze the potential impacts that they may have on existing users and the Town's overall supply of potable water.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Identify critical groundwater zones, such as recharge areas.
- Update applicable Town ordinances to protect these vital groundwater areas.

6. Housing Element

Goal 1: Continue to allow housing development throughout the Town.

- **Objective: To make the residential development process as easy as possible.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will continue to allow housing development throughout the Town.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Minimize Town involvement in residential review processes.

7. Cultural Resources Element

Goal 1: Identify historically significant buildings and sites.

- **Objective: To work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources so they may be considered in future planning.**
- **Objective: To ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials or archaeological sites are protected from encroachment by roads or any development activities.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern encourages the preservation of historically significant buildings and sites.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Review and revise Town ordinances to ensure they limit encroachment on cultural resources.
- Work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources.
- Plan for the location of future cemeteries in the Town, to ensure they can be adequately maintained.

8. Community Facilities Element

Goal 1: Provide effective public safety services.

- **Objective: Work with the Marathon County Sheriffs Department and the Village of Athens to continue to provide effective police and EMS services.**
- **Objective: Work with the Athens Area Fire and Ambulance Service to continue to provide cost effective fire and ambulance protection to the region.**
- **Objective: Actively encourage new volunteers to join the Fire and Ambulance service.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will continue to support the Athens Area Fire and Ambulance Service.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Begin discussions with the Athens Police Dept. and the Marathon Co. Sheriff's Dept. to enhance police protection in the Town.
- Encourage new volunteers to join the Fire and Ambulance services.

Goal 2: Support and maintain existing community facilities.

- **Objective: To maintain the Town Hall as a seat of local government and community meeting hall.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will continue to support the use of the Town Hall as a center of local government and a meeting area.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Maintain the Town Hall through ongoing budget allocations.

9. Parks Element

Goal 1: Support Marathon County park system.

- **Objective: To encourage proper funding for maintenance of local Marathon County parks.**
- **Objective: To encourage Marathon County to install picnic tables, a shelter, restrooms, and horse riding trails at local parks.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern supports the ongoing funding and development of the Marathon County Parks system.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Work with Marathon County to identify and secure funding for enhancing existing County parks in the Town.

Goal 2: Actively pursue the development of multi-use trails.

- **Objective: Work with appropriate agencies, such as the WDNR, WDOT, Marathon County, surrounding Towns, and others, to identify possible trail routes in the Town of Bern.**

- **Objective: Coordinate with other agencies to identify and acquire funds to complete and maintain multi-use trails.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern supports the development of multi-use trails through the Town.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Work with the County, WDNR, WDOT, and other communities to identify and develop multi-use trails in and around the Town of Bern.
- Develop a Town policy regarding the use of ATV's on Town roads.

10. Economic Development Element

Goal 1: Strengthen the viability of the local agricultural economy.

- **Objective: To explore the development of niche markets for agricultural products (e.g. organic/hydroponic).**
- **Objective: To encourage secondary business development, such as outdoor markets or canneries, around the agricultural economy.**
- **Objective: To work with Marathon County and other agencies such as the UW-Extension, to explore regional approaches to aiding the agricultural economy, such as regional manure digesters and farm preservation contracts.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern will continue to support a viable local agricultural economy.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Take an active role in regionally based agricultural forums and programs.

- Encourage agricultural operators in the Town to participate in regional programs aimed at improving the agricultural economy.
- Review Town ordinances to ensure that they encourage appropriate types of secondary agricultural businesses to locate in the Town.

Marathon County Strengths and Weaknesses for Economic Development

Strengths

- Many acres of land zone Exclusive Agriculture, which strengthens the retention of the agricultural industry.
- Ample open space, woodlands, and natural areas, which adds to the small town living environment sought after by existing/future businesses and their employees.
- A strong base economy made up of a variety of businesses including leaders in papermaking, lumber, insurance, and dairy products.
- Strong support for economic development from the community and economic development organizations

Weaknesses

- The agricultural economy is declining, and exclusive agricultural zoning prevents other industry development in the community.

- Access limitations along highways and frontage roads.
- Lack of design/aesthetics control for commercial and industrial development.
- Competition for industrial development – particularly between urban and fringe areas.

11. Intergovernmental Cooperation Element

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance intergovernmental relationships.

- **Objective: To explore holding meetings to discuss issues of regional interest.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern supports maintaining and enhancing intergovernmental cooperation efforts.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Actively communicate with surrounding Towns and the Village of Athens to enhance cooperation and communication.

- Work with other regional governments to develop a regular meeting to discuss issues of regional concern (i.e.; Quarterly meetings held in a Council of Governments (COG) format).

Goal 2: Limit large-scale annexations from the Town of Bern.

- **Objective: Work with the Village of Athens to prevent large annexations that would negatively affect the tax base of the township.**
- **Objective: Develop a boundary agreement with the Village of Athens to determine the extent of future growth into the township.**

POLICIES

- The Town of Bern discourages large scale, unplanned annexations from municipalities.

STRATEGIES / ACTIONS

- Work with the Village of Athens to develop a boundary agreement.
- Identify areas that would be appropriate for future annexation to the Village of Athens, as well as areas that should remain in the Town.

12. Implementation Element

The primary reason a community prepares a comprehensive plan is to establish a framework to influence decisions regarding management of growth and regulation of development to maintain the desired community character, and to set priorities for public expenditures. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

- The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals and objectives identified in this plan.
- The development of programs and support systems that further the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.
- The implementation of specific community improvements as identified in the comprehensive plan.
- The establishment and support of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this plan and other land use control measures.

Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. The most common implementation tools are the Town official controls or regulatory codes. In particular, the zoning ordinance and subdivision (or land division) regulations comprise the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development as identified in this comprehensive plan. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the comprehensive plan; these generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements and staffing.

The State planning law requires that by January 1, 2010 certain programs and/or actions that affect land use must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. To meet this deadline, Bern should update related ordinances on or before the year 2010. The Town Board officially adopts these regulatory and land use control measures as ordinances (or as revisions to the existing ordinances).

- **Zoning Ordinance and Map:** Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. Zoning ordinances typically establish detailed regulations concerning how land may be developed, including setbacks, the density or intensity of development, and the height and bulk of building and other structures. The general purpose of zoning is to minimize undesirable side effects resulting from development by segregating and/or buffering incompatible uses and by maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's character or environment.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide indicating how the property should eventually be zoned. Therefore, indiscriminate zoning changes may result in weakening of the comprehensive plan. In fact, changes to zoning district boundaries should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted land use map.

However, there may be situations where changing the zoning district boundary makes sense and is in the best interest of the

community. If changing the zoning would result in a conflict with the future land use map, the land use map should also be changed. However, the future land use map should only be changed if it does not accurately reflect the community's desired land use pattern. Achieving consistency between zoning and land use designation is also discussed in the Land Use Element.

As discussed below, the comprehensive plan (and future land use map) should be periodically reviewed and updated to adjust for unforeseen changes or events that were not considered at the time the initial plan and land use map were developed.

The Town Board makes the final decisions regarding changes to the content of the zoning ordinance and the district map. These decisions are preceded by public hearings and recommendations of the plan commission.

- **Subdivision (Land Division) Ordinance:** Subdivision regulations serve as an important function by ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations may set forth reasonable regulations for lot sizes, road access, street design, public utilities, storm water drainage, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development will be an asset. The Board makes the final decisions on the content of the subdivision ordinance. These decisions are preceded by public hearings and recommendations of the plan commission.
- **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):** This is an ongoing financial planning program that allows local communities to plan ahead for capital expenditures and minimize unplanned

expenses. A capital improvement plan consists of a list of proposed projects according to a schedule of priorities over a four-to-six year period. It identifies needed public improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies financing methods and sources. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include:

- Public buildings (i.e., fire and police stations)
- Park and trail acquisition and development
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)
- Utility system construction/expansion, treatment plants, water towers, wells, etc.
- Joint school and other community development projects
- Fire and police protection equipment

A CIP is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds. Each year the CIP should be reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet the community's changing needs.

The preparation of a CIP is normally a joint responsibility between the town board, plan commission, staff, and citizen commissions. The preparation of a capital improvement program may vary from community to community depending on local preferences, the local form of government and available staff. The proposed capital improvement plan should be reviewed in light of the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Plan Adoption, Monitoring, and Amendments

While this comprehensive plan is intended to provide a long-term framework to guide development and public spending decisions, it must also respond to the continuous stream of changes that occur in the community and/or region that may not have been foreseen when the plan was initially adopted. It is appropriate that some elements of the plan are rarely amended while others are subject to updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. In general, key maps, such as the future land use map, should be reviewed annually to make sure they are still current.

Plan Adoption: The first step in implementing this plan involves adoption of the plan by local officials. The formal review and adoption process involves plan review by the Plan Commission (or other planning committee) who must adopt the plan by resolution of majority vote. The Plan Commission recommendation is forwarded to the Town Board who must adopt the plan by ordinance (of majority vote). A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance prior to Board final action to adopt the plan. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the community's land use policy and goals and objectives regarding coordination of growth and development.

Plan Use, Monitoring and Evaluation: The adopted plan should be used as a tool by Bern when making land use and development decisions. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations,

incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in this plan.

Although this plan describes policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition of Bern. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.

This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years, and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate. The evaluation should also include an updated timetable of actions to clarify priorities.

Plan Amendments: The Bern Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the Town Board following the same process described above for initial Plan adoption, regardless of how minor the proposed amendment or change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity. A list of criteria to determine the merits of proposed amendments is included in Table 12-1.

As noted above, proposed amendments must be reviewed by the Plan Commission prior to final action and adoption by the Town Board. The public should be notified of proposed Plan changes and allowed an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the Town might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings prior to the official public hearing.

Plan Updates: According to the State comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates often involve re-writing of whole sections of the plan document and significant changes to supporting maps. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the community's goals and objectives based on an analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

Table 12-1: Criteria to Consider When Reviewing Plan Changes

- 1.** The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Bern Comprehensive Plan.
- 2.** The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- 3.** Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve its viability.
- 4.** The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- 5.** The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater, or the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- 6.** There is a change in Town actions or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- 7.** The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- 8.** There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- 9.** The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration or dedication.

Consistency Among Plan Elements

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Element describe how each of the required elements will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the plan. Since Bern completed all planning elements simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine plan elements. Where deemed appropriate, goals, objectives, and actions have been repeated under all applicable elements to ensure they do not get “lost”.

This Comprehensive Plan also references previous and concurrent related planning efforts (e.g. LRTP, Groundwater Study) to ensure they are considered in planning decisions in conjunction with the recommendations of this Plan. Summary descriptions of recent and concurrent planning efforts are provided in the *Conditions and Issues Report*. Recommendations from other plans have been summarized and incorporated in this plan as deemed appropriate, to foster coordination and consistency between plans. Some related plans, such as the *Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan*, are incorporated by reference in this plan and are essentially considered appendices of this plan even though they are separate documents. Appendix E provides a bibliography of other plans and studies relevant to comprehensive planning.

Action Plan

The table below provides a detailed list of major actions to complete in order to implement this comprehensive plan. It compiles the major short, mid, and long-term priorities described in each of the nine plan elements. It also identifies the parties that will play key roles in implementing the actions.

Table 12-2 is intended to be used by local officials in setting priorities for capital budgeting and project assignment. It is expected that this table will be reviewed annually and revised, as necessary, to respond to changing priorities, financial limitations, and other unforeseen events. It should be noted that many of the actions require considerable cooperation with others, including the citizens of Bern, committees, and other local/county/state agencies.

Priority ranking is defined as follows:

- Immediate = ASAP
- Short-term = 1-4 years
- Mid-term = 5-9 years
- Long-term = 10+ years
- On-going = Current activities that should continue indefinitely

Town of Bern

Table 12-2: Implementation Plan Actions

Action	Who is responsible?	Priority
Natural Resources		
The Town will consider impacts on natural resources when reviewing new development proposals	Plan Commission Town Board	Immediate
Balance the preservation of property rights with the preservation of natural resources	Town Board	Ongoing
Keep private property owners informed about current regulations or changes regarding natural resource protection	Plan Commission	Short-Term
Land Use		
Develop a simple Town level review process	Plan Commission	Immediate
Encourage large residential developments to locate close to existing urbanized or incorporated locales	Plan Commission	Immediate
Develop a process to review industrial development proposals	Plan Commission	Mid-Term
Transportation		
Continue the Pavement Management Plan	Town Board	Ongoing
Maintain cooperation with surrounding Towns regarding road maintenance	Town Board	Ongoing
Utilities		
Identify critical groundwater zones, such as recharge areas	Plan Commission	Short-Term
Update applicable Town ordinances to protect these vital groundwater areas	Plan Commission	Short-Term

Action	Who is responsible?	Priority
Housing		
Minimize Town involvement in residential review processes	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Develop a simple Town level review process	Plan Commission	Immediate
Cultural Resources		
Review and revise Town ordinances to ensure they limit encroachment on cultural resources	Plan Commission	Short-Term
Work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources	Town Board	Mid-Term
Plan for the location of future cemeteries in the Town	Plan Commission	Short-Term
Community Facilities		
Enhance police protection in the Town	Town Board	Short-Term
Encourage new volunteers to join the Fire and Ambulance services	Town Board	Ongoing
Maintain the Town Hall through ongoing budget allocations	Town Board	Ongoing
Parks and Recreation		
Work with Marathon County to identify and secure funding for enhancing existing County parks in the Town	Town Board	Short-Term
Work with others to identify and develop multi-use trails	Plan Commission Town Board	Mid-Term
Develop a Town policy regarding the use of ATV's on Town roads.	Town Board	Short-Term

Town of Bern

Action	Who is responsible?	Priority
Economic Development		
Take an active role in regionally based agricultural forums and programs	Town Board	Immediate
Review Town ordinances to ensure that they encourage secondary agricultural businesses	Plan Commission	Immediate
Intergovernmental Cooperation		
Actively communicate with surrounding Towns and the Village of Athens	Town Board	Immediate
Work with other regional governments to develop a regular meeting to discuss issues of regional concern	Town Board	Short-Term
Work with the Village of Athens to develop a boundary agreement	Plan Commission Town Board	Short-Term
Identify areas that would be appropriate for future annexation to the Village of Athens, as well as areas that should remain in the Town	Plan Commission	Short-Term

Appendix A

State Comprehensive Planning Goals

Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001 requires that the goals, objectives, policies, and programs of local governmental units be consistent with the fourteen planning goals in the State planning legislation, which include:

1. Promote the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
2. Encourage neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes and woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources.
4. Protect economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encourage land uses, densities, and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state government, and utility costs.
6. Preserve cultural, historic, and archaeological sites.
7. Encourage coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Build community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for all income levels throughout each community.
10. Provide adequate infrastructure and public services and a supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
11. Promote the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels.
12. Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Plan and develop land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Provide an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that provides mobility, convenience, and safety, which meets the needs of all citizens including transit-dependent and disabled.

Appendix B

Marathon County Guiding Principles

Participants in the Marathon County comprehensive planning process worked cooperatively, through several meetings with sub-area groups, to develop a set of guiding principles that describe broad characteristics of a desired future for their communities and Marathon County. The guiding principles consist of a series of statements that reflect shared values and priorities regarding future growth and development. These principles were used to provide a general frame of reference for developing local goals and objectives. The ten guiding principles include:

- 1. Respect Local Governance** - Planning in Marathon County should build on local town, village and city government as a system that is unique, has served residents well, and is a strong component of local identity.
- 2. Preserve Working Agriculture** - Agriculture has been central to the culture and economy of Marathon County for over 100 years. Farming has been a way of life for generations of county residents and is fundamental to both community and individual identity. Efforts such as protecting prime farmland from development, exploring niche markets, and supporting cooperative practices can be implemented at the local level to help maintain and preserve working agriculture.
- 3. Maintain a Sense of Place** - As Marathon County's population grows and changes, communities will need to ensure that important physical features, buildings, and landscapes that exemplify their local identity are retained. These features provide a sense of heritage and continuity that contribute to a community's identity and sense of place.
- 4. Preserve Rural Character** - Shifts in the farm economy and urban expansion are altering the County's rural landscape characterized by working farms, woodlands, rolling hills, marsh areas, and plentiful water bodies. As open spaces, farms, and woodlands are being lost or fragmented by development, Marathon County communities will need to make some important choices in order to preserve the qualities and character of the rural landscape.
- 5. Safeguard Natural Resources** - Marathon County is graced with abundant natural resources including numerous rivers, wetlands, forests, and wildlife. Careful stewardship of natural resources is essential to protect against fragmentation and degradation and ensure these resources continue to contribute to the ecology, character, quality of life, and economy of Marathon County into the future.
- 6. Foster Managed Growth and Coordinated Development** - Managing growth is important to ensure that no area is overwhelmed by development, land use conflicts are minimized, and development occurs in a quality manner that minimizes impacts on natural resources. Managing growth requires coordination of land uses and infrastructure, within and between communities, and recognizes that high quality growth in any one community will benefit surrounding communities as well.
- 7. Cost-Effective and Efficient Provision of Public Services** - Marathon County residents are clear in their desire to keep local taxes reasonable. One of the most effective

means to keep taxes under control is to ensure that public services are efficiently organized to provide the best service possible for the taxpayer dollar. Communities have a responsibility to provide the highest level of services possible given limited resources. To ensure cost-effective public services, local communities may want to consider options such as greater coordination, cost-sharing and consolidation if such efforts improve access to services and service delivery.

concern for many communities, often as a result of annexation, increases in public land ownership, and shifting economic markets. Efforts to attract additional revenue generators and coordinate with adjacent municipalities can help communities protect and preserve their local tax base.

8. Build Social and Civic Capacity - Marathon County residents take pride in their long tradition of local government. Ideally, participation in community affairs embraces and builds upon the diversity of cultures and values present in the community. Providing opportunities to share ideas and participate in community decision-making is essential to building and maintaining a strong sense of local community.

9. Support Rural Service Centers - Rural centers are part of a web of services that support residents, give local identity and are part of the rural way of life that residents want to preserve. Most villages in the County grew as centers to provide goods and services for nearby farmers, but have evolved as rural activity centers including the local school, churches, and some goods and services. Just as city neighborhoods are stronger with nearby commercial services, rural areas are stronger with nearby villages that provide a central meeting place to connect with other rural residents. As more people move to rural areas, it makes sense to concentrate new development in areas that can efficiently provide utilities and other services.

10. Preserve and Enhance Local Tax Base - A strong tax base allows a community to deliver needed services to residents while helping to keep taxes low. Erosion of local tax base is a

Ordinance No. 01

An Ordinance to Adopt the Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Bern, Marathon County, Wisconsin.

The Town Board of the Town of Bern, Marathon County Wisconsin, do ordain as follows:

Section 1. Pursuant to section [59.69(2) and (3)(for counties)/62.23(2) and (3)(for cities, and towns exercising City powers under 60.22(3))] of the Wisconsin Statutes, the Town of Bern is authorized to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan as defined in section 66.1001(1)(a) and 66.1001(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 2. The Town Board of the Town of Bern, Marathon County Wisconsin, has adopted written procedures designed to foster public participation in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan as required by section 66.1001(4)(a) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 3. The plan commission of the Town of Bern, by a majority vote of the entire commission recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to Town Board the adoption of the document entitled "Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Bern," containing all of the elements specified in section 66.1001(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 4. The Town has held at least one public hearing on this ordinance, in compliance with the requirements of section 66.1001(4)(d) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 5. The Town Board of the Town of Bern, Marathon County Wisconsin, does, by enactment of this ordinance, formally adopt the document entitled, "Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Bern," pursuant to section 66.1001(4)(c) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 6. This ordinance shall take effect on January 1, 2010 and upon passage by a majority vote of the members-elect of the Town Board and [publication/posting] as required by law.

Adopted this 20 day of Aug, 2007

Town Board President Joseph D. Hepn

(Published/Posted):

(Approved) Vetoed): 8-20-07

Attest: Debra Auner

Town Clerk

Town of Bern Comprehensive Plan Public Participation Plan

Introduction

Public participation is the process which people who will be affected by or interested in a decision by a governmental body have an opportunity to influence its content before the decision is made.

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning statute recognizes the necessity of effective public participation and requires the adoption of a written public participation plan as stated in Chapter 66.1001(4)(a).

“The governing body of a local government unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments”.

In preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Bern, the Town Board and Planning Commission are committed to providing on-going opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process. The Town of Bern is therefore committed to completing the following tasks in order to provide opportunities for public participation.

Posting/Notification of all planning commission meetings.

Public notification for Plan Commission meetings will be posted at the following locations:

- Bern Town Hall

Town Board and Plan Commission members will regularly check these sites to see that posted notifications are replaced if removed. These notifications will be posted during the entire Comprehensive Planning process until the adoption of a comprehensive plan by the Town of Bern.

Town Meetings

The Town of Bern Planning Commission will hold periodic public informational hearings/input sessions during the course of the planning process.

In addition, the Planning Commission will hold two public hearings as required by Chapter 66.1001(4)(d). These meetings will be held upon the completion of the Bern Comprehensive Plan and prior to Board voting to accept or deny the Comprehensive Plan. A notice of the hearing must be published at least 30 days before the hearing in a newspaper likely to give notice in the area. The notice

will meet the requirements for proper notification regarding date, time, location, etc.

Sub-Area / Consultant Meetings

All meetings conducted Marathon County or the Consultant will be open to the public and posted similar to planning commission meetings.

Town Newsletters

The Town Board along with the Planning Commission will prepare a newsletter for property owners and residents in the Town of Bern. This newsletter will be sent with property tax bills. The newsletter will include important news and updates about the comprehensive planning process.

Newspaper Notices

The Town of Bern Planning Commission will prepare notices of meetings in the local paper. Notices will be published in the Star News (Medford).

Public Comments

The Town Board and the Planning Commission will always welcome written comments regarding issues presented. Direct written responses will be made where a response is appropriate. Comments will always be addressed and discussed at meetings.

Other

Planning is a continuous process that does not end with the adoption of the plan. Unforeseen issues at the time this document was prepared, or as future issues arise, the planning commission may organize additional public participation activities or as it considers specific planning issues and amendments to the comprehensive plan. The topics of the meetings or open houses will depend on these issues and will be designed to feature opportunities for public education, input, and interaction.

RESOLUTION

RE: ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS PREPARED BY THE TOWN OF BERN PLANNING COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Bern established a Plan Commission for the purposes of preparing a recommended Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Bern; and

WHEREAS, numerous persons involved in local planning provided information at regular and special meetings called by the Town of Bern Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, members of the public were invited to make comments at said meetings, wherein the Comprehensive Plan herein adopted was reviewed and commented upon by members of the public; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bern Planning Commission has reviewed the recommended Comprehensive Plan at a regular monthly meeting; and

WHEREAS, members of the public, adjacent and nearby local governmental units, and Marathon County will be given a 30-day review and comment period prior to the public hearing, which will be conducted by the Town Board for the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, after said public hearing, the Town Board will decide whether to adopt by ordinance the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan may be used as the basis for, among other things, updating the zoning ordinance, accomplishing extra-territorial zoning, and as a guide for approving or disapproving actions affecting growth and development within the jurisdiction of the Town of Bern; and

WHEREAS, this Comprehensive Plan may from time to time be amended, extended, or added to in greater detail.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Town of Bern Planning Commission that the recommended Comprehensive Plan is hereby adopted as a part of the Town of Bern's Comprehensive Plan pursuant to s.62.23 and s.66.0295, Wis. Stats. and that the Planning Commission recommends said Comprehensive Plan to the Town of Bern for adoption by ordinance, after a 30-day public review and comment period and public hearing.

APPROVED:


3-11-06
Chairperson
Planning Commission

ATTEST:



Appendix E – Bibliography of Planning Related Studies, Regulations and Resources

Natural Resources

- **Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP)** - In 2005, Marathon County adopted the LWRMP in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of this plan is to identify a vision for natural resource management in Marathon County, to outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources and to ensure compliance of state agricultural performance standards and local ordinances.
- **Marathon County 2001 Groundwater Protection Guide** – This guide is an extension of the efforts established with adoption of the *Marathon County Groundwater Plan* in 1988. It is intended to guide local and County officials in setting policy to safeguard groundwater resources. It also serves as a resource of information about groundwater and other natural resources and recommends strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection.
- **Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2006 - 2015**
This plan includes recommendations to manage and protect the county forest on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. It provides substantial information on existing forest resources and information regarding the roles of the various agencies and regulatory framework related to forest management. The Marathon County Board of Supervisors will consider approval of the plan in September 2005 and the DNR will do so in December 2005.
- **Soil Survey for Marathon County**, published in 1990 by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service and updated in 2003.
- **Marathon County Cropland Evaluation System (CES)** - This system rates soils on their ability to produce food, feed, forage, and fiber crops. The system is non-biased, defensible, and can be consistently applied.
- **Farm Preservation Program** is an income tax credit program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture (WDA), Trade & Consumer Protection. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners keeping land in agricultural use can claim a credit on their state income tax by obtaining a zoning certificate (if the land is zoned “exclusive agriculture”) or by signing a contract with the State.
- **Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan**, adopted in 1982, eight towns have adopted Exclusive Agriculture Zoning. These include: Stettin, Marathon, Mosinee, Hull, Brighton, Eau Pleine, McMillan, and Day. The intent of this zoning classification is to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing a minimum lot size of 35 acres. In order to adopt Exclusive Agriculture zoning, a municipality must be enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program.

- **Marathon County Non-metallic Mining Ordinance**, adopted in 1989 requires reclamation of these sites to a purposeful and acceptable landscape appearance and use. The program is administered by the County DCPZ and includes incentives to reclaim abandoned excavations.
- **Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) maps** provided by the State of Wisconsin include general information on endangered resources are appropriate for general planning and assessment purposes only. The locations of endangered resources that are not considered vulnerable to collection are identified at the town level in Marathon County. Locations of more vulnerable species are generalized to minimize the potential for collection or disruption.

Land Use

- **General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County** includes several sections that specifically address land use and various development activities. Some of these include:
 - **Chapter 11 (Animal Waste and Manure Management)** includes regulations to prevent animal waste material from entering water bodies through issuance of construction permits for new and modified manure storage facilities. The ordinance also regulates the closure of abandoned manure storage facilities, mismanaged manure storage facilities and the application of manure onto cropland.
 - **Chapter 17 (Zoning Code)** includes development restrictions in shoreland and wetland areas and a wellhead protection overlay district that encompasses recharge areas for municipal water supply wells. Local communities in Marathon County may adopt their own zoning code, adopt the County zoning code, or choose to have no zoning.
 - **Chapter 16 (County Forests)** prescribes rules and regulations for the administration of County forests in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources. Provides for the establishment, protection, development and management of County forests to provide sustained yield of forest products for commercial use and the associated benefits of soil and water conservation, scenic and recreational values, fish and game resources, multiple-use purposes and related uses.
 - **Chapter 18 (Land Division)** The County's land division regulations apply in all unincorporated areas of the County. However, where a town has land division regulations that are more restrictive than the County's, the local regulations apply. Chapter 18 includes regulations for minimum lot sizes, street design and access requirements, land dedication, surface drainage and erosion control.
 - **Chapter 19 (Parks and Recreation)** includes regulations regarding use and management of all lands and water previously and subsequently acquired by the County for park or recreational purposes or placed under the jurisdiction of the Park Commission and including without limitation, parks, beaches, swimming pools and privately owned lands, the use of which has been granted or leased to the County for park, recreational or like public purposes.
 - **Chapter 21 (Non-metallic Mining)** includes requirements for reclamation that minimize impacts on groundwater quantity and quality.

- ***Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2005)*** – This plan, prepared in accordance with Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) directives of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, outlines strategies for pre-disaster planning and hazard mitigation. The intent is to minimize the effects of potential disasters and help streamline the administration of disaster relief.
- ***Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL)*** - the FCL and the MFL programs were developed to encourage better forest management and provide tax relief to woodland owners. Land set aside under the FCL (which was combined into the MFL in 1986) required at least 40 acres in one quarter-quarter section, set aside under a 25- or 50-year contract, and public access for hunting and fishing activities. The MFL was enacted in 1985 and requires at least 10 acres of contiguous forest land. Landowners may close to the public up to 80 acres of their forest lands set aside under MFL. The remaining program acres must be open to public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing and cross-country skiing. Landowners must choose a 25- or 50-year contract. The landowner pays an Acreage Share Amount as part of their tax bill in lieu of taxes.

Transportation

Studies related to transportation are listed below under the jurisdiction who prepared the plan.

1. Marathon County (Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department (CPZ) and/or Highway Department) is responsible for completing/updating/assisting with several plans/policies/studies relating to transportation including:

- ***State Trunk Highway 29 Corridor Land Use Review (1997)***
 - Recommends actions or measures local communities can make to protect areas within the STH 29 corridor from the negative impacts related to unplanned growth.
- ***Marathon County Functional / Jurisdictional Highway Classification Study (1988)***
 - Identifies and groups classes of roadways that provide similar levels of service. The plan recommended that the unit of government having the greatest basic interest in the roadway's function would carry out the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the classified roadways.
- ***Marathon County Program Evaluation Team (P.E.T.) Transportation Services Recommendations (2002)***
 - These recommendations, under direction of the Marathon County Human Services Committee, are intended to address issues related to specialized transportation services provided by various Marathon County Departments, including issues related to overlapping services.
- ***Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Non-Urbanized Area of Marathon County, Wisconsin (1996)***
 - Identifies suggested bicycle routes in Marathon County outside the Wausau area. Routes were based on traffic counts and condition of pavement. Formal action has not occurred to adopt these as officially designated bicycle routes.
- ***Marathon County Paratransit Study (2001)***
 - Studied paratransit services within the Wausau area provided primarily by Wausau Area Transit System Plus (WATS+). Identified issues with regard to

providing demand responsive services for persons in the Greater Wausau Area and Marathon County. Provides a plan for enhancing paratransit services over a five-year period primarily geared toward controlling costs and increasing efficiency and trip sharing on the WATS+ system.

- **County Trunk Highway Access-Driveway Policy**
 - Available through the Marathon County Highway Department, addresses the requirements regarding culverts, access width, slope, visibility and spacing. Marathon County issues driveway permits and implements access restrictions on all properties fronting a lettered county road.

2. Wausau Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MPO) - The MPO is responsible for completing/updating/assisting with several plans relating to transportation in the metropolitan area including:

- **Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area (1996)**
 - The LRTP addresses needed improvements to the transportation system serving the Wausau urbanized area. LRTP recommendations are based on the relationship between land use policy and transportation facilities and services, including roadways, transit, bikeways, pedestrian ways, air, inter-city bus, and the movement of goods by air, rail, and truck. The 1996 plan was reaffirmed in 2001 and will be updated by 2005.
- **Local Arterial Circulation Plan (2000)**
 - The purpose of this plan was to guide public and private sector decisions concerning the infrastructure, right-of-way, Level of Service (LOS), land use compatibility, and safety needs of the local arterial transportation system over the next 20 to 30 years.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
 - The TIP includes all programmed transportation projects receiving federal and/or state funds. The TIP for 2005 – 2007 was adopted in 2005 and is updated every two years.
- **Wausau Area Transit System (WATS) Transit Development Plan (TDP) (1999)**
 - The TDP is updated every five years and provides a five-year capital improvement program and service recommendation plan. This plan is being updated in 2005.

3. Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) – WDOT has completed several statewide plans relating to most modes of transportation, including:

- **Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020**
 - Considers the highway system's current condition, analyzes future uses, assesses financial constraints and outlines strategies to address Wisconsin's preservation, traffic movement, and safety needs. The plan is updated every six years to reflect changing transportation technologies, travel demand and economic conditions in Wisconsin.
- **Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020**
 - Outlines statewide and local measures to increase walking and promote pedestrian safety. The plan also clarifies the WDOT role in addressing

pedestrian issues and meeting pedestrian needs by establishing policies for better integrating pedestrian travel into the transportation system.

- **Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020**
 - Presents a blueprint for improving bicycling conditions and encouraging bicycling in the state and calls for the implementation of metropolitan area bicycle plans that have been prepared by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).
- **Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020**
 - Developed by WDOT, identifies information related to the state's aviation system. The plan is used by WDOT's Bureau of Aeronautics to pre-qualify airport improvement projects submitted by airport sponsors for funding consideration.
- **Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report (2004)**
 - Developed by WDOT, summarizes critical rail transportation issues, suggests opportunities for public sector involvement, and points out areas where additional research is needed. This report reflects input and guidance from a variety of sources including a State Rail Advisory Committee and a Rail Industry and Shippers' Advisory Group. The information in this report was originally intended for a State Rail Plan 2020. WDOT decided to incorporate the rail planning efforts into *Connections 2030*, WDOT's long-range all-mode transportation plan, and release the Issues and Opportunities Report in the interim. *Connections 2030* is currently being developed by WDOT, and is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2006.

4. Federal Highway Administration:

- **Federal Highway Administration's Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures**
 - Outlines Federal regulations that States must follow to classify roadways.

Utilities

- **Sewer Service Area "208" Plans** - Section 208 of the Clean Water Act passed in 1972 required the preparation of area-wide water quality management plans. This was translated at the State level through NR 121 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code, which requires that water quality management plans also address sanitary sewer service needs for 20 years into the future. These requirements form the basis of Sewer Service Area "208" Plans. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has review and approval authority over Sewer Service Area plans; however, the technical work to prepare the plan is typically done by local government staff.
 - Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan for the Year 2000 (1981) – initial "208" Plan
 - Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary completed in 1992 (City of Wausau) and 1998 (Towns of Kronenwetter and Rib Mountain, Villages of Weston and Rothschild).
 - Current amendment in progress; with all communities in the sewer service area participating. It is anticipated that the plan will be approved by the DNR in December, 2005.

- **Chapter 15 - General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County** incorporates by reference rules, regulations, and laws in the Wisconsin Statutes and Wisconsin Administrative Code governing private sewage systems.
- **Wellhead Protection Plans** - The State of Wisconsin mandates that **wellhead protection plans** be developed for any municipal well proposed after May 1, 1992. These plans must be approved by the WDNR before a community can use the new well. Section NR 811.16(5) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code defines specific requirements for required wellhead protection plans.

Parks and Recreation

- **Marathon County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 1999-2004**, completed in May 1999, this plan identifies several needs related to parks and recreation and outlines several actions to address those needs.
 - The plan has received a one-year extension from the State of Wisconsin, and is in the process of being updated with a completion date in spring of 2006.
- **The Rivers Edge Master Plan**, adopted in June 1995, outlines a long-range (20-30 year) framework for improving access to the riverfront and enhancing the riverfront environment and provides a master plan to establish a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the banks of the Wisconsin River through the City of Wausau.

Economic Development

- **Marathon County Workforce Profile**, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), annually in October.
- **Final Report**, Marathon County Task Force on the Rural Economy, April 2003.
- **Agricultural Impacts in Marathon County**, University of Wisconsin – Extension (UWEX), Ken Barnett and Steve Deller, February 2003.
- **Status of Wisconsin Agriculture**, 2003, UWEX, Mike Wildeck and Ed Jesse, April 2003.
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2002-2003**, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), June 2002.

Appendix F: Guidelines for Paving Gravel Roads¹

When a local government considers paving a road, it is usually with a view toward reducing road maintenance costs and providing a smooth riding surface. But paving may not be the right answer. After all, paving is expensive. Municipalities should consider the following factors to help them make the most cost-effective decision. Taken together, these factors provide a framework for careful decision-making.

Traffic Demand

The number and weight of vehicles affects a road's lifespan. Generally speaking, the more vehicles using a road, the faster it will deteriorate. The average daily traffic volumes (ADT) used to justify paving generally range from a low of 50 vehicles per day (vpd) to 400 or 500 vpd. When traffic volumes reach this range, serious consideration should be given to some kind of paving. However, traffic volumes alone are merely guides.

Types of traffic should also be considered. Different types of traffic (and drivers) make different demands on roads. Will the road be used primarily by standard passenger cars or will it be a connecting road with considerable truck traffic or heavy farm equipment? Overloaded trucks are most damaging to paved roads. The functional importance of the road should also be considered. Generally speaking, a major road should probably be paved before residential or side roads are paved. On the other hand, a residential street may be economically sealed or paved while a road with heavy truck or farm equipment usage may best be surfaced with gravel and left unpaved until sufficient funds are available to place a thick load-bearing pavement on the road.

Maintenance Considerations

The following questions should be considered when assessing costs associated with maintaining existing gravel roads:

- How often must new gravel be applied to the gravel road? (Some roads require more than others do.)
- How many times per year must the gravel road be graded?
- How often and in what locations should calcium chloride or other road stabilizers be applied?
- What is the plan for ditching and shouldering?

Base and Drainage Needs

"Build up the road base and improve drainage before paving." This cardinal rule cannot be stressed enough. If the foundation fails, the pavement fails. If water is not drained away from the road, the pavement fails. Paving a road with a poor base or inadequate drainage is a waste of money. It is far more important to ask, "Does this road need strengthening and drainage work?" than it is to ask, "Should we pave this gravel road?"

¹ "When to Pave a Gravel Road" Gravel Roads Maintenance and Design Manual (2001); Kentucky Transportation Center, University of Kentucky at Lexington, KY, adapted from an article from the Vermont Local Roads Program, Saint Michael's College; posted by Local Technical Assistance Program and the National Local Technical Assistance Program Association and sponsored by the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

Safety and Design Considerations

Paving a road tempts drivers to drive faster. As speed increases, the road must be straighter, wider, and as free as possible from obstructions for it to be safe. Paving low volume roads before correcting safety and design inadequacies encourages speeds that are unsafe, especially when the inadequacies "surprise" the driver. In areas with a large number of miles of low volume roads, it is difficult to reduce speeds by enforcement.

Poorly designed and hazardous roads – Roads must be designed to provide safe travel for the expected traffic volume at the design speed. To do this a number of physical features must be considered:

- Sight Distance
- Design Speed
- Alignment and Curves
- Surface Friction
- Lane Width
- Superelevation

Some engineers insist that no road should be paved that is less than 22 feet wide. If this standard is accepted, gravel roads may need to be widened prior to paving. Likewise, bridges along these roads may need widening. It may also be necessary to remove trees or other obstructions such as boulders from the road edge. Considering these and other safety and design factors in the early stages of decision-making can help to achieve the most cost-effective road design that meets desired transportation needs.

Geometric Guidelines for Very Low-Volume Local Roads (< 400 ADT): The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) publishes road design guidelines, including Geometric Guidelines for Very Low-Volume Local Roads (those with <400 ADT). Less stringent design criteria are generally acceptable on these low volume roads because:

- Lower traffic volumes present substantially reduced opportunities for multiple vehicle collisions, and
- Most drivers are familiar with the roadway design characteristics.

The guidelines offer more flexibility for road designers to maintain existing geometric features, which have not been shown to be a safety problem. Allowing less stringent design standards for very low volume roads provides an opportunity to reduce improvement costs, which may be better utilized elsewhere.

Costs

The decision to pave a gravel road involves determining when it becomes economical to pave; and ultimately when the benefits of paving exceed the costs.

Road Preparation Costs – Road preparation costs related to road bed construction activities that occur before paving actually takes place. Costs will vary greatly from project to project depending on topography, types of soils, and availability of good crushed stone or gravel, traffic demands and other factors. Road design should comply with standards in the municipality's road policy; which is one reason to carefully consider, and routinely update, what is contained in the road policy. For larger projects it may be desirable to hire an engineering consulting firm (another cost) to design the road and make cost estimations. For smaller projects construction costs can be fairly closely calculated by adding the estimated costs of materials, equipment and labor required to complete the job.

Maintenance Costs – Another financial consideration is to compare maintenance costs of a paved road to maintenance costs of a gravel road. To make a realistic comparison, estimate the years of pavement life (how long the pavement will be of service before it requires treatment or overlay) and the actual cost of paving. Then compare those costs with those associated with gravel roads as noted above.

User Costs – Not all road costs are directly reflected in a road budget. There is a significant difference in the cost to the user between driving on a gravel surface and on a paved surface. It costs more to operate vehicles on gravel surfaces than on paved surfaces, often 2 or 3 times greater than for bituminous or concrete roads in the same locations. There is greater rolling resistance and less traction, which increase fuel consumption. The roughness of the surface contributes to additional tire wear and influences maintenance and repair expenses. Dust causes extra engine wear, oil consumption and maintenance costs.

By including vehicle-operating costs with construction and maintenance costs, a more comprehensive total cost can be derived.

Public Opinion

Public opinion as to whether to pave a road can be revealing, but it should not be relied upon to the exclusion of any one of the factors already discussed. If a decision to pave is not based on facts, it can be very costly. Public opinion should not be ignored, of course, but there is an obligation by government leaders to inform the public about other important factors before making the decision to pave.

Staged Construction

Local government may consider using "stage construction design" as an approach to improving roads. This is how it works: A design is prepared for the completed road, from base and drainage to completed paving. Rather than accomplishing all the work in one season, the construction is spread out over three to five years. Paving occurs only after the base and drainage have been proven sufficient over approximately one year. Crushed gravel treated with calcium chloride serves as the wearing course for the interim period. Once all weak spots have been repaired, the road can be shaped for paving.

Following are some advantages to keeping a road open to traffic for one or more seasons before paving:

1. Weak spots that show up in the sub-grade or base can be corrected before the hard surface is applied, eliminating later expensive repair;
2. Risky late season paving is eliminated;
3. More mileage is improved sooner;
4. The cost of construction is spread over several years.

Note: Advantages may disappear if timely maintenance is not performed. In addition, the surface may deteriorate more rapidly because it is thinner than a designed pavement.

Summary

Some existing local roads are not engineered to accommodate the traffic they receive. Larger volumes of heavy trucks and other vehicles are weakening these roads at a fast rate. Paving roads as a sole means of improving them without considering other factors can be a costly mistake. Careful consideration of the factors described above will help to assure local government officials that they are making the right decision before paving a gravel road.

Appendix G: Economic Development Programs

The following list provides a summary of the major programs and resources available to assist with economic development efforts. This is not an exhaustive list and local officials are encouraged to contact Marathon County and MCDEVCO for more complete and current information.

Federal Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural, Development: Provides a wide range of programs aimed at farming and rural areas, including:

- **Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program:** Provides financial backing for rural businesses to create and maintain employment. Assistance includes loans for working capital, machinery and equipment, buildings and real estate, and certain types of debt refinancing.
- **Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program:** Provides grants to public entities, private nonprofit corporations, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribal groups to finance and facilitate small and emerging private businesses located outside a city or urbanizing area.
- **Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) Program:** Provides grants to promote sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs.

Economic Development Administration (EDA): Provides a variety of assistance programs focusing on long-term economic growth targeted to areas with demonstrated need or economic distress, including:

- **Public Works Program:** Investments aimed at revitalization, expansion, and upgrades to physical infrastructure specifically to attract new businesses and generate private sector jobs. Examples: water and sewer facilities, rail spurs, port improvements, access improvements.
- **Economic Adjustment Program:** Assistance to mitigate local economic changes resulting from corporate restructuring, natural disasters, depletion of natural resources, or new federal laws or requirements.
- **Technical Assistance Program (Local):** Assistance to help fill knowledge and information gaps to help local leaders in distressed areas make informed decisions regarding economic development.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): The SBA provides financial, technical, and management assistance generally aimed at business startup and growth. Some programs include:

- **Certified Development Company (504 non-profit corporation) Loan Program:** Long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and building improvements.

Wisconsin State Programs

Most State programs are provided through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, although other departments also offer limited programs. Primary State programs include:

- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG):** There are several CDBG programs focusing on different aspects of economic development.
 - **Economic Development Program** – grants to establish loans for business start-up, retention, and expansion.
 - **Public Facilities for Economic Development Program:** Helps underwrite the costs of necessary public infrastructure to retain or create employment opportunities.
 - **Public Facilities Program:** Helps finance infrastructure and facilities to serve low and moderate income persons.
 - **Emergency Grant Program:** Helps restore or replace critical infrastructure damaged or destroyed as a result of natural or manmade catastrophes.

- **Community Based Economic Development Program (CBED):** Provides funding assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning, development, and technical assistance projects supporting business development.

- **Main Street Program:** Supports efforts to help communities organize to revitalize their downtowns.

- **Wisconsin Technology Zone Program:** Offers tax-credits to high-tech firms that meet certain criteria.

- **Wisconsin Development Zone Program:** Tax benefit initiative to encourage private investment and improve both the quality and quantity of employment opportunities.

- **Enterprise Zone Program:** Provides tax incentives to new or expanding businesses whose projects will enhance distressed areas.

- **Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program:** Allocation of Federal tax-exempt status on bonds that will be issued by a business to finance an expansion project. Program is limited to small and mid-size manufacturers with strong financial statements.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD): This department offers several programs aimed at investing in the workforce, including programs in apprenticeship, vocational rehabilitation, employee training, child care, etc.

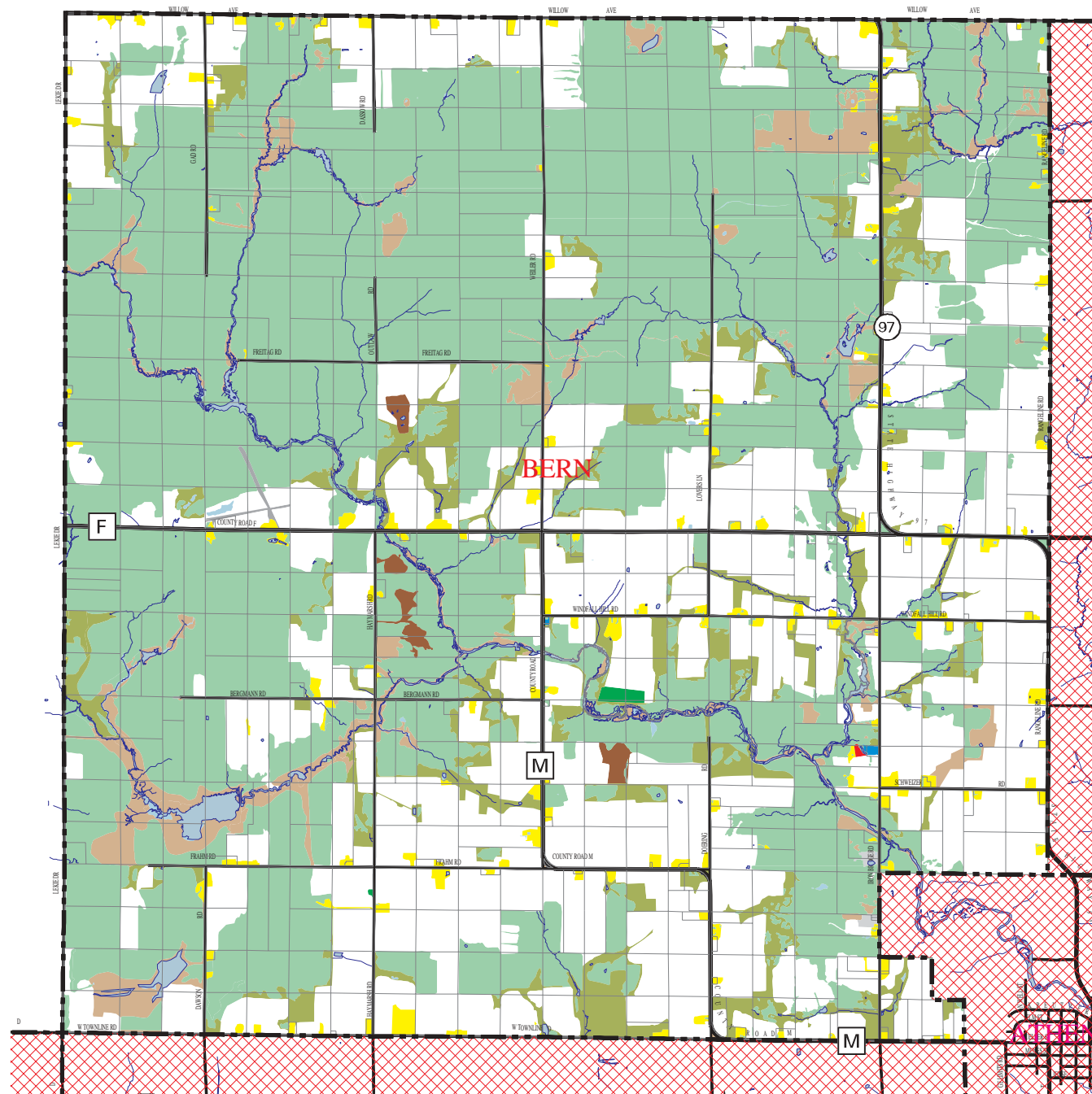
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR): The Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment consolidates state and federal clean up programs and provides assistance to help businesses clean up and re-use existing brownfield sites.

Forward Wisconsin, Inc.: This is a State public-private marketing and business recruitment organization that focuses on marketing outside Wisconsin to attract new economic development to the State.

County, Regional, and Local Programs

The primary financial assistance available at the County and local level are revolving loan funds. The primary entities in Marathon County that participate in economic development related efforts include:

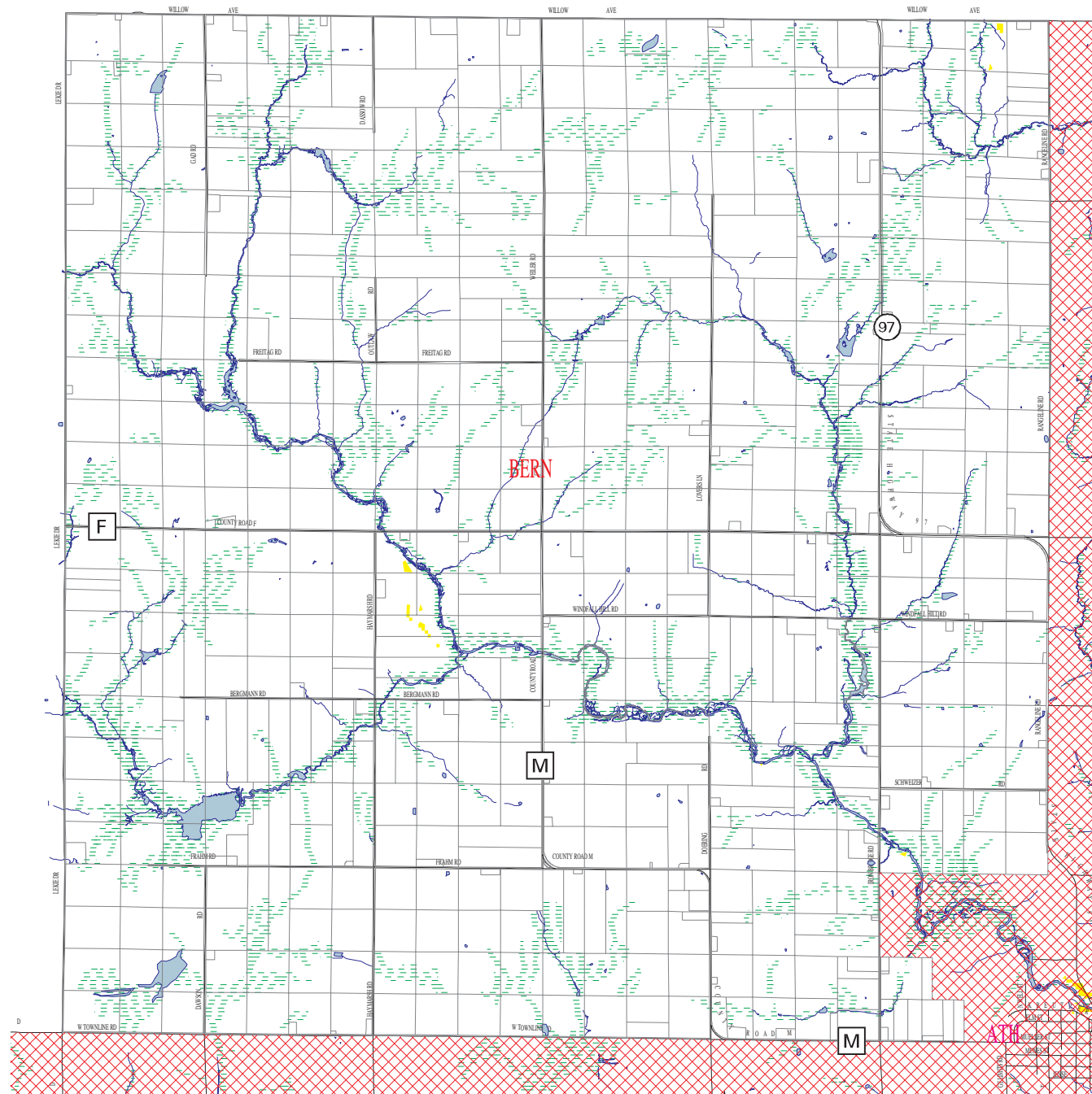
- **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC):** The NCWRPC is a designated Economic Development District and provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity. The NCWRPC also works with local units of government to maintain eligibility for certain grants.
- **North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC):** A regional organization created for the purpose of managing a regional revolving loan fund. The NCWDC is staffed by the NCWRPC.
- **Wausau Region/Marathon County Chamber of Commerce:** The Chamber provides leadership and support for economic development efforts in the region, including a variety of networking programs, mentoring services, workshops and business counseling services.
- **Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO):** This is the economic development arm of the Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce. MCDEVCO serves all businesses and communities in Marathon County. MCDEVCO works with individual business, municipalities, and the banking community to facilitate investment in the region. Specific programs administered by MCDEVCO include a revolving loan fund, a small business incubator, and job training funds.
- **Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB):** The CVB promotes the area to the business and leisure traveler and provides information on the area to visitors and residents.






- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Single Family Residential | Barren | Forest Land |
| Commercial | Crop Land | Public/Quasi-Public |
| Industrial | Specialty Crop | Transportation |
| Quarry | Other Agriculture | Water |

Indicates other Municipality
Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

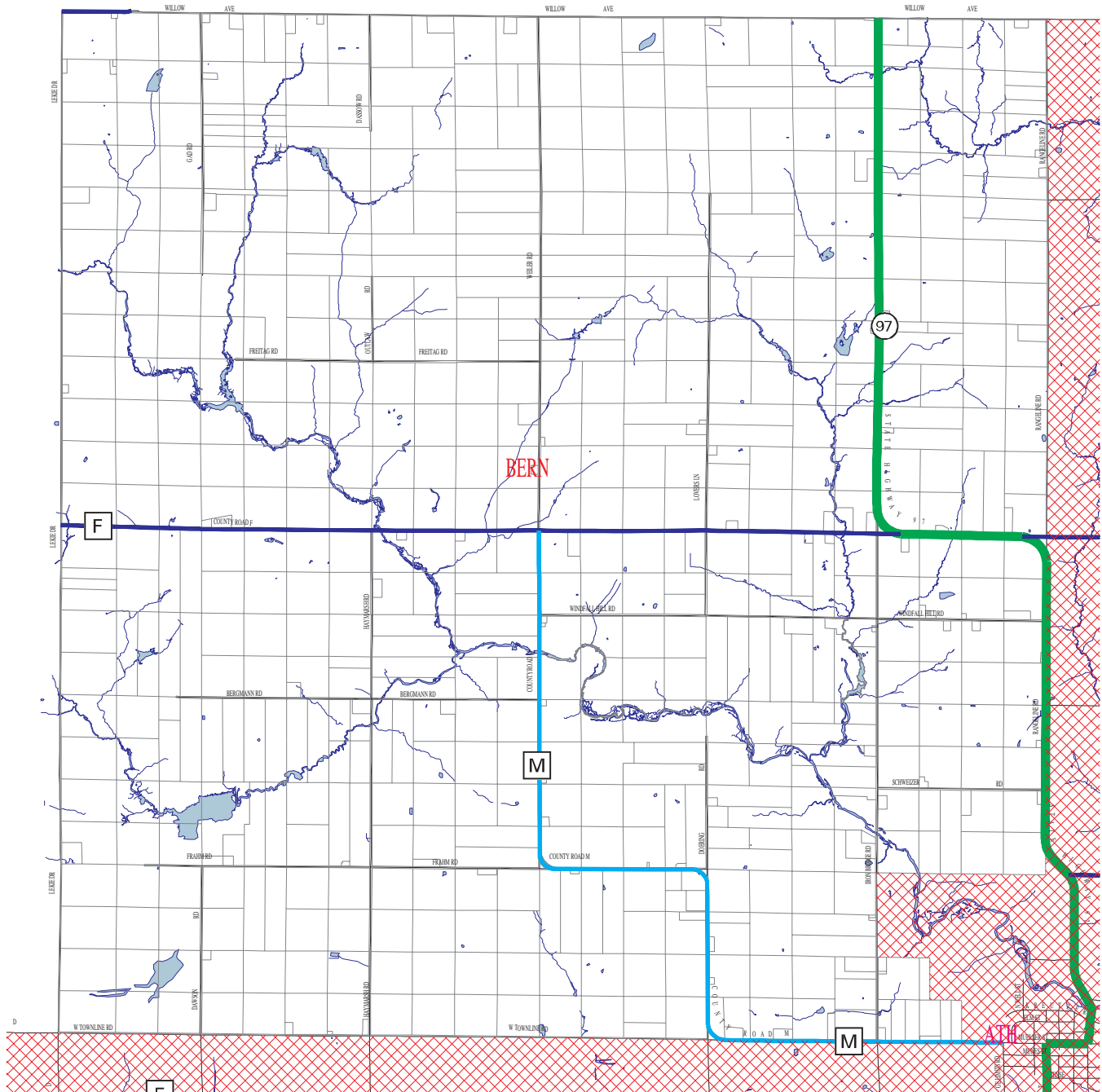
Figure 3-1
Future Land Use
BERN



-  Environmental Constraints
-  Slopes Generally 12-20%
-  Slopes generally greater than 20%

 Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 3-2
Development Constraints
BERN



- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector

- F County Highways
- 52 State Highways
- 51 US Highways
- 39 Interstate

X Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 4-1
Functional Classification of Roads
BERN

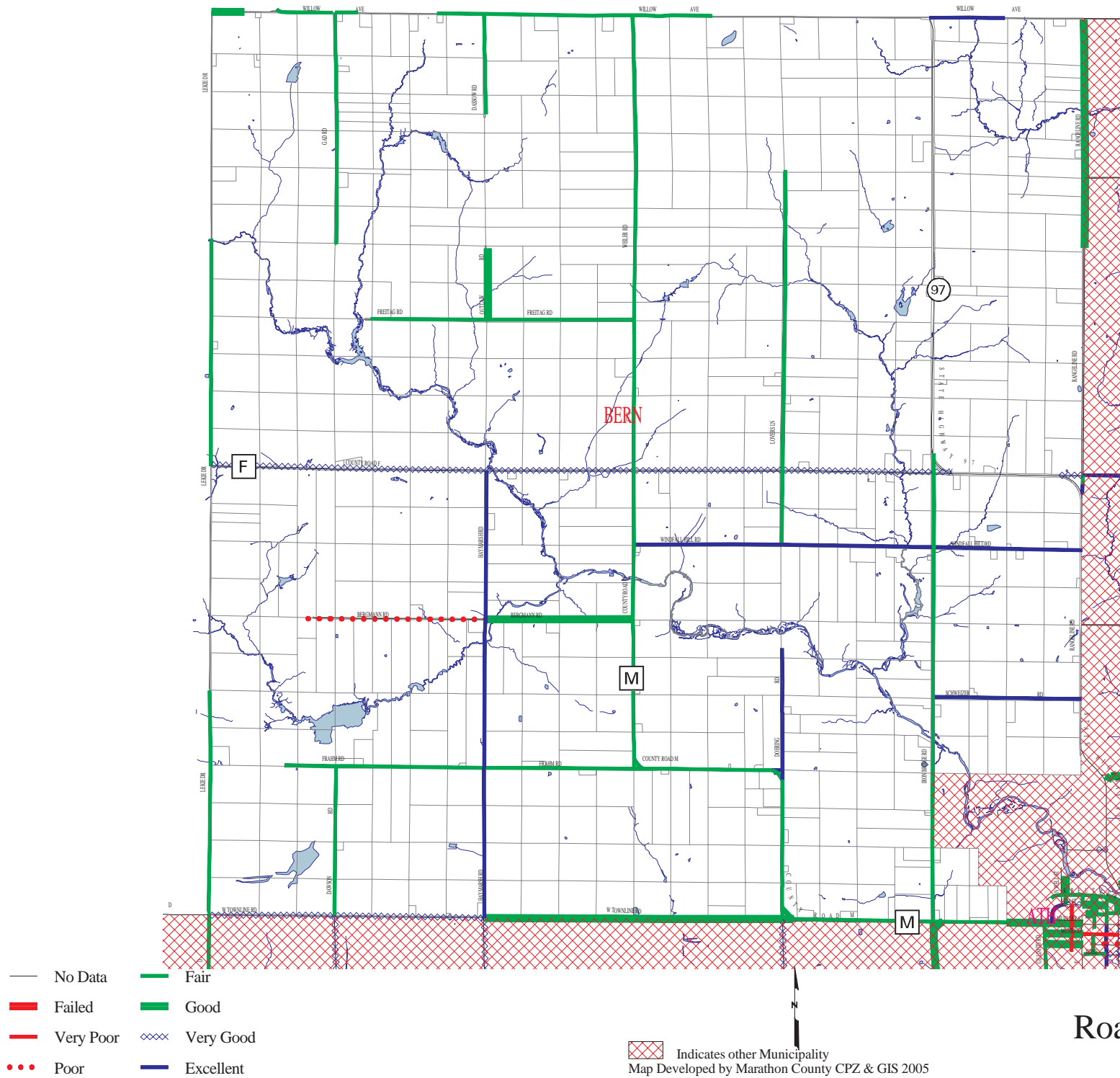
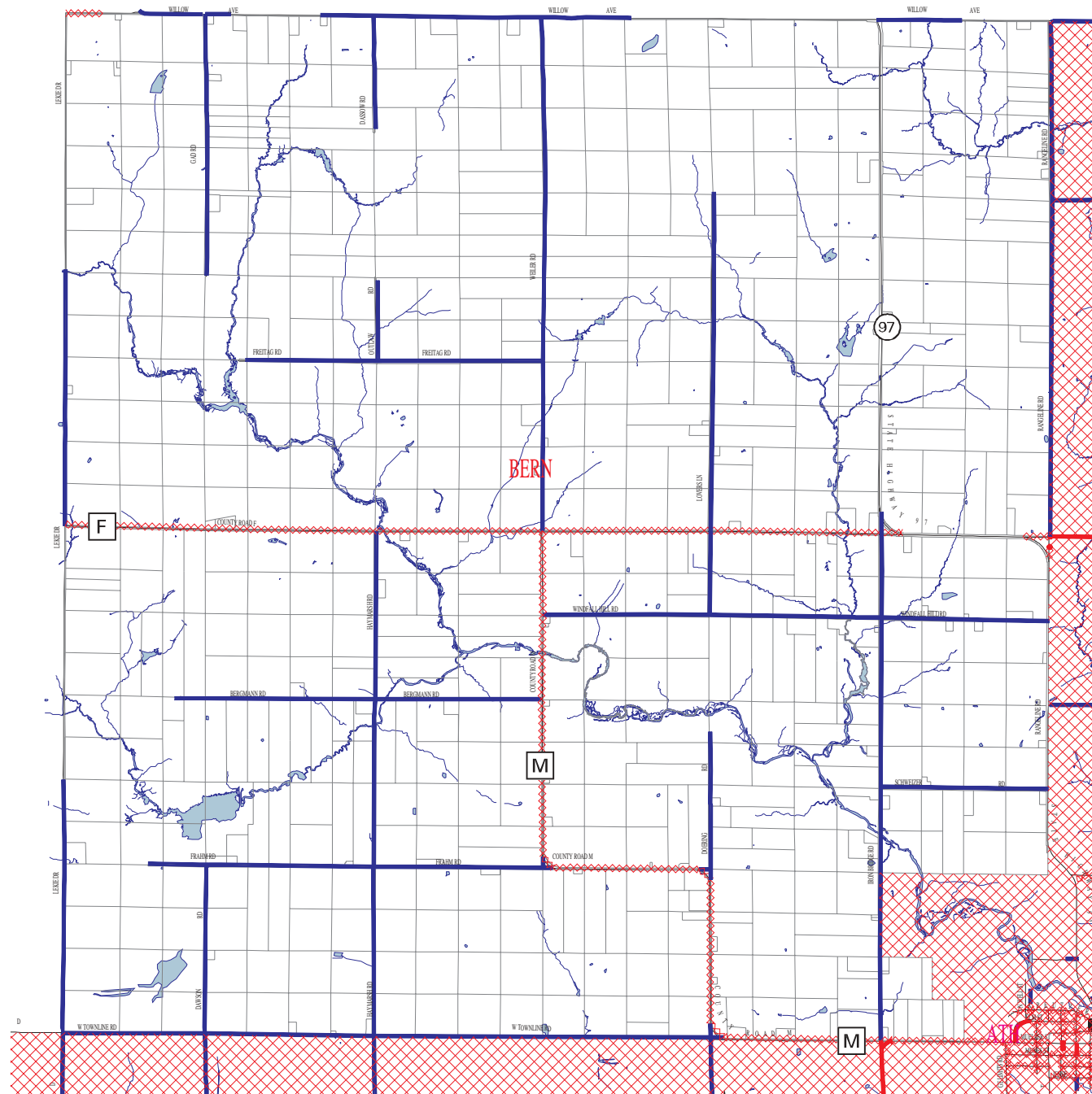


Figure 4-2
 Road Surface Rating
 BERN



- No Data
- Concrete Pavement
- <1" Wearing Surface
- Asphalt Pavement
- Asphalt Pavement on Concrete
- Asphalt Pavement with Base >7"
- Asphalt Pavement With Base <7"
- Unimproved Road
- Brick or Block Pavement

 Indicates other Municipality
 Map Developed by Marathon County CPZ & GIS 2005

Figure 4-3
 Road Surface Types
 BERN