

**Sioux River Watershed  
Action Plan  
July 2001**

**Purpose**

This document is the Action Plan of the Sioux River Watershed Council (Council). The Sioux River Watershed Council is voluntary, non-regulatory group that unites diverse interests to improve watershed health. The Action Plan takes a watershed-wide approach and strives to integrate existing plans and efforts. This Plan is working document that will be updated and reevaluated, as information becomes available.

The Council works closely with many local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Implementation of the Action Items described in this Action Plan would not be possible without the commitment, collaboration, and technical expertise of these groups. Separate technical reports and special area management plans will be developed to supplement the Action Plan, providing technical background information and implementation guidance.

The Sioux River Watershed Council has received initial planning support from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Inland Sea Society. The success and sustainable future of the Council will depend primarily on voluntary efforts. The Council is not a regulatory or enforcement agency, nor does the Council adopt plans or rules in a legal sense. Instead, the Council makes recommendations to decision-makers, landowners, and managers on ways to protect and restore Sioux River watershed resources. The Council provides a framework for communication, collaboration, and cooperation among participating individuals and organizations.

**Core Principles**

Set within the growing and thriving area of the Bayfield Peninsula, the Sioux River Watershed is at the center of a dynamically changing region of Wisconsin. Its uplands, historically and still prevalently forested are giving way to increased residential and fragmented development. As the population and economic base of the region has changed, stresses to the Sioux River Watershed have increased. In order to foster a biologically healthy and functional resource, while still supporting the economy of the region, active stewardship of the watershed is essential.

Characteristics of a healthy watershed ecosystem:

- Biologically diverse, providing abundant and sustainable beneficial plant and animal populations.
- Resilient enough to heal itself after catastrophic events, both natural and human-made, without large investments of outside resources.

- Minimizes input or output of undesirable products such as nonpoint and point sources of pollution.
- Maximizes the sustainable production of desirable commodities such as food, fiber, and manufactured goods.
- Efficiently uses scarce inputs, such as energy and water.
- Fulfills human values, including housing, economic, social, aesthetic, spiritual, recreational, health, and safety.

Watershed health is achieved through the active stewardship of the water, soil, plant, animal, air, and human resources of the watershed. Ignoring the health of the watershed will result in long-term degradation of the environment, local economy, public health and safety, and quality of life for which this region is known.

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### **Development of the Action Plan**

Development of the Action Plan began in the Fall of 2000 with the establishment of the Council's mission, goals, and objectives (attached). The Council's strategy is organized around four main functional areas:

- Enhance the watershed
- Provide a forum for watershed issues
- Provide education about watershed thinking
- Develop the Council organization

The Watershed Council identified the following five priority areas to be addressed in the Action Plan:

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Research and Monitoring
- Education and Stewardship

### **Land Ownership Parties to be included:**

- Chequamegon – Nicolet National Forest
- Bayfield County Forest
- Industrial Forest landowners
- Private landowners
- Bayview Township
- Washburn Township
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation

**Action #5:** Promote management practices that improve watershed functions and protect values.

- Work with management agencies to develop best management practices for conditions of the Sioux River and the Lake Superior Basin.
- Coordinate with staff at Chequamegon – Nicolet National Forest, Bayfield County Forest, and private landowners to promote watershed health.

**Action #6:** Incorporate the Onion River in watershed assessment and council organization.

- Delineate the Onion River watershed and highlight its impact on the coastal wetland complex formed with the Sioux River at the confluence with Lake Superior.
- Assess the groundwater conditions of the Onion River and develop protection strategy to be incorporated in all future plans.

**Action #7:** Develop a special area management plan for the Sioux/Onion River coastal wetland complex.

- Secure funding to support public process to develop plan.
- Work with Bayview Township to develop plan for Bayview Town that reflects the needs of private and public interests.
- Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to coordinate update the Sioux River Fishery Area Plan.
- Facilitate coordination of all land owners and interests in the protection and restoration of the coastal wetland.

**Action #8:** Work with partner agencies to develop and implement an integrated water resource management strategy.

**Action #9:** Develop a watershed-monitoring program to broaden citizen involvement and to create greater awareness of current conditions.

**Action #10:** Promote recreational experiences that foster watershed stewardship

- Incorporate Sioux River activities into the annual Inland Sea Kayak Symposium sponsored by the Inland Sea Society.
- Work with Bay Area Active Sports Alliance and other groups to sponsor Sioux River activities for families, tourists and the general public.

**Action # 1:** Assess watershed conditions to help prioritize restoration activities.

- Conduct an assessment of all roads within the watershed and facilitate an understanding of water / road interactions.
- Establish permanent citizen based monitoring system to include training and quality assurances.
- Work closely with all management units and agencies to coordinate all future assessments and research.

**Action #2:** Conserve and improve fish and wildlife habitat (focusing on native anadromous fish)

- Work with management agencies and sportsman groups to restore sustainable populations of all native fish species.
- Include information on coaster brook trout in educational materials and outreach efforts.
- Work with management agencies and sportsman groups to restore balanced and healthy deer populations.
- Educate watershed residents and the public about the values of biological diversity and conservation biology.

**Action #3:** Develop, support, and implement a broad-based education/outreach program focusing on reducing non-point source pollution and improving protection and restoration of riparian areas.

- Direct mail newsletters and funding solicitations to landowners within the watershed.
- Coordinate efforts with University of Wisconsin Extension, Northern Great Lakes Visitors Center, Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute of Northland College, and other outreach efforts to maximize opportunities.

**Action #4:** Develop demonstration projects to encourage restoration on private lands in cooperation with willing landowners.

- Develop a landowner contact strategy to assist with private land stewardship.
- Work ABDI Land Conservation Department and Superior Coastal Wetland initiative to promote and implement Stewardship Credit Initiative.