Chapter Four: Draft.4

Utilities & Community Facilities

Background

This chapter reviews utilities and community facilities in the County, which include solid waste disposal, onsite wastewater recycling facilities, parks, telecommunications facilities, transmission lines, cemeteries, health care facilities, childcare facilities, and other public facilities, such as police, fire and rescue facilities, libraries, schools, and other government facilities. This chapter includes a discussion of utility and community facility issues, background, inventory, and trends, followed by this chapter's goals, objectives, and policies.

Previous Plans and Studies

Groundwater Coordinating Council 2023 Report

The residents of Oneida County rely on groundwater for drinking water and agricultural uses. This demand makes it especially important to implement policies to ensure the quality and quantity of water resources. Statewide, minimal changes to Wisconsin's groundwater laws have been allowed despite emerging pollutants like nitrates, pesticides, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and bacteria. This report recommends adjusting groundwater rules in response to changes to state standards, evaluating and monitoring geology and soils to develop management practices that prevent water from being contaminated, and educating the public about health and contamination concerns.

Regional Livability Plan (2015)

The Regional Livability Plan (RLP) is the most updated version of NCWRPC's comprehensive plan. The RLP discusses utility and community facility issues throughout the ten-county North Central Region. The RLP focuses on a range of trends in public facilities and makes general recommendations on how local governments throughout the ten-county region can manage them.

Oneida County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

This document is required for local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. The report looks at general conditions in Oneida County, including population, transportation, land use, and economics. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County might respond to a disaster. Risk assessment is at the heart of the All-Hazards Mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it's necessary to assess their relative importance. Examples of hazards include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents. The likelihood of any given hazard occurring is estimated based on historical data, and the impact of these hazards is evaluated. The plan seeks to recommend how County government should respond to such occurrences and suggests mitigation measures to reduce the risk caused by identified hazards.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 2019-2023

This plan classifies, measures, and provides for the preferences and needs of a statewide recreating public. An estimated 95 percent of Wisconsin residents participate in outdoor recreation, and as a result, it is an important part of the State's economy. Demand in the Northwoods portion of the state where Oneida County is located includes ATV/UTV riding, road bicycling, mountain biking, developed and primitive camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking, hunting, off-highway motorcycle riding, participating in nature-based education programs, and snowmobiling.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2003 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in providing all types of trails. The Plan identifies potential trail corridors linking existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in creating recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Segment 15—Ashland to Rhinelander

This potential trail would connect Ashland with Woodruff, Minocqua, Rhinelander, and finally to Crandon.

<u>Segment 19—Langlade Co to Michigan</u>

This corridor links the State of Michigan with the Mountain Bay Trail near Eland in Marathon County. This corridor also links to the proposed Three Lakes to Rhinelander and Crandon to Tomahawk corridors in Oneida County.

<u>Segment 68—Rhinelander to Three Lakes</u>

This corridor would link these two communities by an off-road connection. At Rhinelander, links to the Washburn to Fond du Lac corridor, and at Three Lakes, links to the Langlade County to Michigan corridor are possible.

<u>Segment 69—Tomahawk to Crandon</u>

This corridor would link these two communities by an offroad connector. This corridor intersects the Langlade County to Michigan corridor at Pelican Lake. It links the Argonne to Shawano corridor in the east with the Tomahawk to Wausau corridor in the west.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, 2018

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan analyzes bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout the North Central Region. The purpose of this Plan is to "recommend policies, programs, and facilities to improve the safety, viability, convenience, and attractiveness of bicycling and walking for transportation." This Plan also creates a regional network of safe walking and bicycling.

The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan contains the following four region-wide goals:

- **Mobility** – The Trail System must enhance bicyclists' ability to get around the Region including access to key destinations such as schools, parks, retail areas, and other public facilities.
- **Functionality** – New off-road routes, improved existing street routes, signage and marking, and route promotion must be combined to function as a system that is easy and desirable.
- **Safety** – Every bicyclist and pedestrian in the North Central Region deserves a system that is safe for travel.
- **Connectivity** – The Trail System must provide a seamless transportation system on multiple levels, including internal to all areas of a community, external to outlying

neighbors around the Region, and becoming a part of the bigger picture of a statewide trails network.

Oneida County Countywide Biking & Walking Routes & Trails Plan, 2002

In 2002, the Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council developed this bike route plan with assistance from NCWRPC. This Plan proposed a system of non-motorized transportation routes and trails throughout the County with connections to Rhinelander. The Plan was updated in 2010, but the County did not adopt the update. However, the main elements of the Plan have been integrated into the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

City of Rhinelander Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2019

The Plan builds upon the 2003 Rhinelander Area Pathways Project to develop strategies for improving bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout Rhinelander. Potential policies and infrastructure changes are identified, along with a potential improvement time frame and who will initiate the change for each project. This Plan includes engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation recommendations to provide a well-rounded and complete bicycle and pedestrian network.

Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2024-2028

The primary purpose of this Recreation Plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the County's current and future recreation needs. This direction takes the form of an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities followed by establishing recommendations to meet identified needs. Adopting this Plan and its subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) allows for continued eligibility for financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), the Stewardship Fund, and many other federal and state funding programs.

For individuals with disabilities, the focus remains on the development of assistive technologies that enable the more effective use of telecommunications infrastructure by improving access to computers, web pages, and internet connections.

American Transmission Company: 10-Year Transmission System Assessment, 2022-2031

The American Transmission Company manages transmission infrastructure in the state. New projects are planned in surrounding counties to improve flexibility, reliability, economic factors, connectivity, and performance.

Issues

Access to Broadband

Internet access is required for many businesses and education-related organizations. As federal funding programs continue to be released to expand broadband, especially in rural areas, Oneida County can more easily enhance its broadband infrastructure. This expansion can be promoted as an economic development tool, particularly for rural areas that haven't historically had reliable broadband access. Information about current broadband planning can be found on Oneida County's website.

Aging Population

Oneida County's increasing aging population burdens the County's infrastructure, especially the healthcare system. As noted in the Housing Chapter, special services can help seniors stay in their homes as they age and avoid more expensive institutional care. The quality and availability of hospitals, nursing homes, and EMS facilities are of particular concern to older residents. Accessibility of public facilities is a consideration not merely to people with disabilities, but to the entire aging population. For example, curb cuts and handicap-accessible ramps make it easier for everyone to get around. Social support networks and nutrition programs also provide seniors and disabled populations a more prosperous life.

Groundwater Protection

Groundwater is discussed extensively in Chapter 2 of this plan. Ultimately, the groundwater quality and quantity impact the type of public facilities needed, such as wells, treatment plants, and stormwater ponds. Privately-operated wells and septic facilities also impact groundwater, especially as existing systems age and new systems are constructed. Overall, the County must consider its groundwater resources when managing public and private facilities that serve its residents with drinking water and wastewater.

Inventory and Trends

Below is a summary of existing utilities and community facilities in Oneida County, along with related facts and descriptions.

County Government

Below is a list of County and County-related departments and their locations, all of which have a Rhinelander address:

- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), 100 Keenan St.
- Emergency Management, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Highway Department, 730 W. Kemp St.
- Oneida County Jail, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Public Health, 100 W. Keenan St.
- Sheriff's Office, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Solid Waste, 7450 CTH K
- U.W. Extension, Northwoods Center, Room 121 at Nicolet College (5364 College Dr.)

All other departments are located at the Oneida County Courthouse, 1 S. Oneida Ave. in Rhinelander:

- Buildings and Grounds
- Circuit Court Branches I and II
- Clerk of Courts
- Corporation Counsel Office
- County Clerk
- District Attorney
- Finance
- Forestry and Outdoor Recreation
- Information Technology Services
- Labor Relations and Employee Services
- Land and Water Conservation
- Land Information
- Medical Examiner
- Planning and Zoning
- Probate/Juvenile

- Register of Deeds
- Social Services

- Treasurer
- Veteran's Services

Water-related Facilities

Drinking Water

The City of Rhinelander, Lake Tomahawk, the Lakeland Sanitary District encompassing the parts of the Towns of Minocqua, Woodruff, and Arbor Vitae (Vilas County), and the Three Lakes Sanitary District #1 all provide water supplies for domestic and commercial use to the town centers. These systems depend on high-capacity wells drawing groundwater, water towers, and underground reservoirs for storage. The City of Rhinelander has a Wellhead Protection Ordinance which protects groundwater quality from runoff.

Wastewater

A municipal wastewater treatment facility serving the City of Rhinelander is located on the south side of the City along the Wisconsin River. Wastewater treatment facilities serve the Lakeland Sanitary District #1, the Lake Tomahawk Sanitary District, and the Three Lakes Sanitary Districts #1 and #2.

In Oneida County, a combination of County and state regulations control the installation and maintenance of privately owned wastewater disposal systems (POWTS). Traditionally, onsite disposal systems have relied on drain fields or mounds that spread effluent over a large area, allowing waste to be dispersed without adversely affecting groundwater quality. The success of these systems is dependent on the depth and permeability of the soils in which they are installed.

Stormwater

The majority of Rhinelander is currently served by the City's concrete pipe storm sewer system. Portions of Lake Tomahawk and Three Lakes have storm sewers, the built-up "island" area of Minocqua-Woodruff, and along major highways (51,47 & 70).

Dams

According to the 2023 Oneida County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 44 dams are used for agriculture, recreation, erosion control, flood control, and electric power generation. There are 20 large dams, defined as being over 20 feet in height. The Hat Rapids and Rhinelander Paper Mill Dams have the ability to produce electricity.

High-Capacity Wells

High-capacity wells are defined as wells with a capacity of at least 100,000 gallons per day. Most of these wells in the County are owned and operated privately, but municipalities also operate some to provide drinking water for municipal water systems. See the WDNR's Water Use Viewer map or high-capacity well search on the agency's website for up-to-date information about the number, location, and ownership of these wells and other details. As of November 2023, WDNR's website listed permits for high-capacity well withdrawal locations in Oneida County, including 188 groundwater and 33 surface water locations.

Solid Waste and Recycling Facilities

The Oneida County Solid Waste Department is located at 7450 CTH K, and the County Public Works Committee oversees the solid waste and recycling programs. Municipalities contract with private haulers throughout the County to provide solid waste and recycling pick-up, and several transfer sites are also located in Minocqua and Three Lakes. Waste and recycling are transported to the defunct Oneida County Landfill site and collected and transported ~~to the Lincoln County Landfill~~ via a contracted private hauler <u>to a landfill site outside the County with the location determined by the County's current contract, which is subject to change</u>.

Public Works

Town Halls and Garages

Each Town and the City of Rhinelander have a primary public building to house government functions and other public meetings. Several communities also have other buildings that are garages for the storage of road maintenance equipment as well as firefighting equipment. Many of the Town Halls are also where solid waste transfer sites are located.

Drainage Districts

There are currently no public drainage districts in Oneida County.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries serve as unique and tangible links to our past. There are 38 cemeteries located throughout the County depicted on Maps 4-1 and 4-2: Utilities & Community Facilities.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Oneida County Sheriff's Office, the Minocqua Police Department, the Rhinelander Police Department, the Three Lakes Police Department, and the Woodruff Police Department are the six law enforcement agencies within Oneida County. The State Patrol has statewide jurisdiction on all public roads but operates mainly on State and U.S.-numbered highways. The County Sheriff provides general law enforcement services throughout the County, and it operates the County Jail, along with the County's 911 Dispatch Center, Emergency Services, HAZMAT, and the Oneida County Ambulance Service. Other services that the Sheriff's Office provides are Dive Team, North Central Drug Enforcement Group (NORDEG), Drone Team, Project Lifesaver. The Minocqua, Rhinelander, Three Lakes Police, Woodruff Departments patrol their respective communities.

Fire

There are seventeen fire departments that serve the local units of government in Oneida County. The Rhinelander Fire Department is a paid full-time department, while the remainder of the departments: Cassian, Crescent, Hazelhurst, Lake Tomahawk, Little Rice, Minocqua, Monico, Newbold, Nokomis, Pine Lake, Pelican, Pelican Lake Fire District, Alpha, Sugar Camp, Stella, Three Lakes, and Woodruff rely on volunteers.

Prisons and Jails

Oneida County has two facilities: The McNaughton Correctional Center in Lake Tomahawk, a state prison, and the Oneida County Jail in Rhinelander.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS)

Oneida County contracts with Aspirus to provide a County Wide Ambulance service. Oneida County Ambulance Service provides emergency medical response to all unincorporated municipalities within Oneida County along with some outside areas of Vilas, Lincoln, Langlade, and Forest Counties.

Healthcare

The County is home to several medical facilities, and some residents near the edge of the county may have additional options in surrounding counties. Within Oneida County's boundaries, there is Aspirus Clinic, Howard Young Medical Center, and Marshfield Clinic Woodruff Center in the

Town of Woodruff; Marshfield Medical Center in the Town of Minocqua; and Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital, Aspirus Rhinelander Clinic, Marshfield Clinic Rhinelander Center, and Rhinelander VA Clinic in the City of Rhinelander.

Education, Recreation, and Culture

Libraries

There are three libraries in Oneida County:

- Minocqua Public Library, 415 Menominee St
- Rhinelander District Library, 106 Stevens St
- Demmer Memorial Library (Three Lakes Public Library), 6961 W School St
- Nicolet College Library, 5364 College Dr

Schools throughout the County may also have small libraries within them.

Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas

In addition to managing the County Forest, Oneida County manages Almon Park, Perch Lake Park, and Enterprise Campground. Remote camping is allowed in the County Forest. Information is available on the Oneida County Forestry and Outdoor Recreation website and Map 4-3 of this Plan. The proposed 2024-2028 Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, available on NCWRPC's website, contains a list of proposed improvements to County-managed properties.

Public lands not managed by Oneida County are described in detail in Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources. Trails are described in Chapter 5: Transportation. In summary, there are 18 state natural areas, two state wildlife areas, one state forest, one national forest, and 16 school district forests. There are also parks, playgrounds, and trails managed by school districts and municipalities throughout the County. See WDNR and USDA for more information.

Great Pinery Heritage Waterway

On August 26, 2023, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway officially opened to the public, featuring the Wisconsin River and its tributaries. This 108-mile-long trail begins at the Hat Rapids Dam in Oneida County and ends at the Lake DuBay Dam in Portage County, connecting to the Lower Big Rib River Trail and the Lower Eau Claire Waterway in Marathon County. New maps and signage help with navigation, and this State Trail is expected to receive National Trail status in 2024. Information is available on the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway website.

Schools

The following school districts are fully or partially located in Oneida County:

Unified School Districts:

- Northland Pines (one high school, one charter high school, one middle school, one charter middle school, four elementary schools, and one alternative school)
- Prentice (one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one virtual school)
- Tomahawk (one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school)
- Rhinelander (one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools)
- Elcho (PK-12 in one building)
- Three Lakes (one junior/senior high school and two elementary schools)

Other Schools:

- Minocqua Joint School District: (MHLT Elementary School and Lakeland STAR School)
- Woodruff Joint School District: Arbor Vitae – Woodruff Elementary School
- Lakeland Union High School (one high school that serves students from Minocqua and Arbor Vitae – Woodruff Joint School Districts)

Private schools include Zion Lutheran Grade School in Rhinelander, Trinity Lutheran School in Minocqua, Nativity of our Lord Catholic School in Rhinelander, and St. Mary's Grade School in Tomahawk.

Colleges

Nicolet College's main campus is in the City of Rhinelander, with an additional location in the Town of Minocqua and several other locations in Forest, Lincoln, and Vilas Counties. It is part of the Wisconsin Technical College System and offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates. Although no four-year colleges or universities are in Oneida County, Nicolet College has transfer programs where students can complete a four-year degree at another school when they finish their two-year program locally.

Museums

Museums in Oneida County include:

- Pioneer Park Historical Complex

- Rhinelander Historical Society
- Northwoods Petroleum Museum
- Dr. Kate Museum
- PPHC – Railroad Museum
- Three Lakes Historical Museum
- Minocqua Museum
- ArtStart Rhinelander
- Lake Tomahawk Museum, 7247 Kelly Dr

Cultural resources are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this Plan.

Childcare

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families maintains an up-to-date list of licensed daycare providers and a search tool. According to the search tool, there are approximately 16 licensed facilities in the County, with most clustered in or near the City of Rhinelander.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric

The Wisconsin Public Service Corporation supplies most of the County's electricity, with smaller areas on the western side of the County being served by Price Electric Cooperative and Northern States Power Company. The American Transmission Company (ATC) operates several high-voltage lines that traverse the County, all of which are 115 kV lines. Most of them are single-circuit lines, with one multiple-circuit line extending from the City of Rhinelander towards Lincoln County.

Natural Gas

Natural Gas Service is provided by the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, but not all areas in the County have gas service. Residents with no nearby gas connection often rely on liquid propane (LP) for heating, cooking, and other uses. There are no natural gas pipelines in Oneida County.

Telecommunications

Internet service continues to expand as an economic development necessity, and access to internet service varies greatly throughout the County. Landline and cellular phone service are

also essential for communications. Topographic features limit where lines can be buried or where cellular signals can reach. Broadband is currently being expanded throughout the County.

Onieda County is currently improving and developing Broadband options with various companies as part of a Countywide effort to expand service. Landline phone service providers in Oneida County include CenturyLink and Frontier. Cable TV lines provide digital signals known as wireline access, and other providers use satellite or wireless technology. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Oneida County are AirRunner Networks, Astrea, Brightspeed, Bug Tussel, Charter – Spectrum, ChoiceTEL, Frontier, HughesNet, King Street Wireless, SonicNet, and Viasat, Inc. Mobile internet and Cellular coverage is available from AT&T, Cellcom, Sprint, and Verizon. Other providers may get a signal in the County where roaming agreements exist.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Strive to provide the best quality public services to all the citizens of the County, including water related facilities, solid waste and recycling facilities, public works, public safety, health care, education, recreation, culture, energy, and telecommunication.

Objectives:

- Direct more intensive development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities and public services are available.
- Monitor the effects of Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) by inspecting them every three years. ~~and control the effects of high-volume wells, private onsite waste disposal systems, and solid waste disposal on the County's quality and quantity of groundwater.~~
- Provide law enforcement, ambulance, volunteer fire, and first responder services to residents, whether by the County or by local units of government.
- Support high-quality educational opportunities for all residents.
- Monitor and respond to PFAS as issues, information, and programs continue to emerge.

Policies:

- Ensure that schools, public safety, health care, and other community facilities are of the highest quality without placing undue financial burden on County taxpayers.
- Make more extensive use of the Wisconsin Fund to upgrade failing onsite disposal systems on qualifying properties.
- Assure public health and groundwater quality when permitting and monitoring private onsite wastewater and wells.
- Encourage the development of a comprehensive County-wide trail plan that includes facilities for hikers, bikers, ATVs, and disabled and elderly individuals and a system that ties together attractions and natural and cultural resources throughout the County.
- Encourage land acquisition and development strategies for parks, as outlined in the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Promote improved broadband internet service throughout the County.