

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
TOWN OF ALMA, BUFFALO COUNTY



Ordinance No. 12-18

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE TOWN OF ALMA,  
BUFFALO COUNTY, WISCONSIN

The Town Board of the Town of Alma, Buffalo County, Wisconsin does ordain as follows:

SECTION 1. Pursuant to sections (59.69(3) Wis. Statutes, the Town of Alma is authorized to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan as defined in sections 66.1001(1)(a) and 66.1001(2) of Wis. Statutes.

SECTION 2. The Town Board of the Town of Alma, Buffalo 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 Wis. Statutes.

SECTION 3. The Planning Committee of the Town of Alma, Buffalo County, Wisconsin, by a majority vote of the entire committee recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to the Town Board the adoption of the document entitled, "TOWN OF ALMA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN", containing all the elements specified in section 66.1001(2) of Wis. Statutes.

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

SECTION 5. The Town Board of the Town of Alma, Buffalo County, Wisconsin, does, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopt the document entitled, "TOWN OF ALMA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN", pursuant to section 66.1001(4)(c) of the Wis. Statutes.

SECTION 6. This ordinance shall take effect upon passage by a majority of the members of the town board and as required by law.

ADOPTED this 18<sup>th</sup> day of September 2012

Town Chair

Handwritten signature of Thomas Huber in black ink.

Attest:

Town Clerk

Handwritten signature of Nancy Quaberg in black ink.

**Town  
Of**

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**Land Use Plan**

**Adopted : 12/18/2012**

**Prepared by Town of  
Alma Residents**

## Town of Alma Land Use Plan Buffalo County, Wisconsin

Town Board: Thomas Huber, Chair  
Alan Steinke, Supervisor  
Randy Rotering, Supervisor

Town Clerk: Nancy Quarberg

Town Treasurer: Arlene Ruff

Planning Committee: Dan Hanson  
Kathy Hanson  
Tom Huber  
Pat Lisowski  
Steve Ludwigson  
Nancy Quarberg  
Pat Timm  
Alan Steinke  
Randy Rotering

Plan prepared by: Carl A. Duley, Buffalo County Ag Agent  
UW-Cooperative Extension

**Town of Alma Land Use Plan  
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## Definitions:

**Bluff-** A steep headland, promontory (high ridge of land or rock jutting out to sea or other body of water), riverbank, or cliff.

**Dugway-** A section of roadway extending from the top of a bluff to the bottom of a bluff, generally through the wooded portion of the bluff with a steep grade, often with sharp curves and/or switchbacks. We assume the term originates from construction by digging into a hill.

**Prime Farmland-** Rural land with the best combination of physical & chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is available for these uses. Normally includes classes I, II, III land as defined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

## Works Cited

**“Bluff.”** The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

**“Dugway.”** Brevick, Dave. Buffalo County Highway Commissioner. Personal Interview. 4 Oct. 2001.

**“Prime Farmland.”** Official definition. National Resource Conservation Services.

## **Planning Process**

The land use planning process began with a presentation by the Buffalo County Extension Agriculture Agent to the Buffalo County Towns Association in December of 1997. The agent spoke on changes in agriculture and the effect of that change on land use. Alma Township was the first township to contact the Buffalo County Extension Office for help in developing a plan. Town of Alma officials then hosted a public meeting for other towns, and further discussion took place on reasons for planning.

Town of Alma officials then invited a number of people to serve on a planning committee. Efforts were made to invite a diverse group with both residents and non-residents. The planning committee provided needed views and input into issues that should be addressed and that are included in this document. Results from this effort are found later in this document.

Comprehensive Land Use legislation adopted in 2000 precipitated changes in the initial document developed by the planning committee. These changes have been incorporated to meet the 9 elements identified in Wisconsin Act 9 and Technical Revisions from AB 872 signed into law on May 10, 2000.

Land use plans are not static documents, but are designed to change and be revised to meet current needs of the people. This document will be used as a guide to future change and development in the Town of Alma.

**History:** It is important to understand a little about one's past before making decisions about the future. The following is a brief excerpt about the history of the Town of Alma. "The surface of the town is very much interrupted and consists of the Beef River Bottoms and the side valleys of Hutchinson Creek down to Mill Creek on the left bank, and the lower part of Trout Creek and all of Pine Creek Valley on the right bank of the Beef River. The slopes are generally quite steep toward the creeks but there are terraces between these steep slopes and the higher bluffs. On these terraces the best farms are situated. Some farms are also situated on the top of the bluffs. ... Part of the land in Hutchinson Valley is sandy, but where the declivities permit cultivation, the soil is excellent and produces abundant crops in all the other valleys.

... there was no exodus into the country from the village before 1855. In that year there were a number of new arrivals, among them Jacob Meter, Ulrich Wald, Peter Margreth, and Jacob Wald, all of whom settled in the Mill Creek Valley.

The population of Alma belongs almost exclusively to the German nationality either by immigration or decent. The main artery of travel and transportation is the Beef River Valley Road and on this there are at present two taverns situated, one at the entrance to Trout Creek Valley, kept by Andrew Joos, and the other about two miles Northeast of it, the Halfway House kept by Michael Meuli."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> History of Buffalo County, Wisconsin. L. Kessinger. Alma, Buffalo County, Wisconsin: 1888. pages 618 and 619.

## 9 ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

The Smart Growth legislation, signed into law as part of the 1999-2000 budget, is intended to provide local government units tools to create comprehensive plans, to promote more informed land-use decisions, and to encourage state agencies to create more balanced land-use rules and policies. Nine elements are required by the Smart Growth legislation. These elements ensure that all aspects of community life will be considered as part of the comprehensive plan. The nine elements are:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agriculture
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

### Development of Goals for the Town of Alma

Land use planning is more than a set of rules for building, etc. It is a declaration of the priorities and values of the people within the Town. These priorities and values should determine if and how property is developed and used.

The remainder of this document describes the priorities and values of the people of the Town of Alma. It lists a set of action plans to achieve these priorities and values.

### Issues and Opportunities:

#### Population and Population Projections:

Population of the Town has decreased some over time from 430 in 1990 to 297 in 2010. Projections from the Wisconsin Department of Administration – Demographic Services Center, indicate that population is expected to level off at about 375 people in the future. Residents felt that their population would stay at the level of the projections indicated.

**Town of Alma Population Statistics and Projections – U.S. Census Data**

Jurisdiction	Census 1960	Census 1970	Census 1980	Census 1990	Census 2000	Census 2010	Proj. 2015	Proj. 2020
Alma	385	371	397	430	377	297	378	375
Buffalo County	14202	13743	14309	13584	13804	13,577	14,554	14,794

**Population by Race:**

The Town of Alma is predominantly white. This has been constant since records have been kept. There is an increasing population of Hispanic people due to employment opportunities on farms and other business entry level positions.

**Town of Alma Population by Race – 2010 Census**

Race	Population %
Total	297
White	96.0
Hispanic	3.2
Black	0.0
Asian	0.0
Native American	0.3
Other	0.0

**Population by Education Level:**

The Town of Alma is similar to other neighboring municipalities except that they have a higher population of people with college graduate degrees than other municipalities in Buffalo County (highest percentage of any Town). This may be explained by the number of people employed in the education and health care fields.

**Town of Alma Population by Education – Am. Community Survey**

Education Level	Population %
Total (>25 years old)	215 (people)
No High School Diploma	8.9
High School Diploma Only	45.6
Some College	16.3
Associates Degree	6.0
Bachelor's Degree	15.8
Graduate Degree	7.4

**Population by Age:**

Population in the Town of Alma tends to be 3% older than in Buffalo County. The median age is 47.9, Buffalo County is 44.1.

**Town of Alma Population by Age – 2010 Census**

Age – years	Number	Percent
Under 5	9	3.0
5-9	15	5.1
10-14	14	4.7
15-19	24	8.1
20-24	17	5.7
25-34	18	6.0
35-44	37	12.5

45-54	67	22.6
55-59	32	10.8
60-64	21	7.1
65-74	23	7.8
75 and older	20	6.6

**Per Capita Income:**

Per capita income has increased in the Town of Alma slower than that of Buffalo County, but lags behind the State of Wisconsin.

**Town of Alma Per Capita Income – 2000 Census**

	<b>1990 per Capita Income</b>	<b>2000 Per Capita income</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Town of Alma	\$10,479	\$16,044	+53.1
Buffalo County	\$10,947	\$18,123	+65.6
State of Wisconsin	\$13,276	\$21,271	+60.2

A SWOT Analysis was conducted with the planning committee after analyzing data as collected in a community survey. This list provided a guideline throughout the planning process.

Land use planning is more than a set of rules for building, etc. It is a declaration of goals and values of the people within the township. These goals and values should determine if and how property is developed and used.

Members of the Town of Alma Planning Committee along with input at public meetings developed the following lists of issues and opportunities.

Benefits of living in the Town of Alma: (list is not ranked)

- ◆ No government corruption
- ◆ Natural beauty
- ◆ Good neighbors
- ◆ Different cultures
- ◆ Willingness to work together
- ◆ Know your neighbors
- ◆ Quiet
- ◆ People come together in time of need
- ◆ Excellent hunting
- ◆ Clean air
- ◆ Few people
- ◆ People work together to solve problems
- ◆ Positive interactions between people
- ◆ Can talk to local people
- ◆ Green grass

- ◆ Good odors
- ◆ Like to view wildlife – great variety

**Town of Alma Planning Committee: Concerns about Living in Town of Alma:**  
(this is not a ranked listing)

- ◆ Increased vandalism
- ◆ Non-residents purchasing land
  - Don't realize the benefits of living in township
  - Local people can't compete with high prices
  - Affect all aspects of the town i.e. MFL, loss of tax base, not really neighbors (not here very often), etc.
  - Looked at as "unfriendly imports"
- ◆ Farmers pay more than their fair share of taxes
- ◆ Low farm income, high input cost
- ◆ Managed Forest Law
- ◆ Somewhat slow emergency response
- ◆ Poor involvement with government (apathy by people)
- ◆ Decline of the "family deer hunting" tradition
- ◆ Reduced deer hunting pressure
- ◆ No economic growth
- ◆ Government change and regulation
- ◆ Lagging educational opportunities
- ◆ Loss of farms
- ◆ Little incentive for young people to stay

The committee also ranked the top five concerns they had in the Town of Alma.

1. **Loss of farm numbers and income.** Concern over the reduction of livestock and dairy farms and land being put into programs or converted to row crop production. Off farm income looks more appealing to many people thus resulting in the reduction of farm numbers. Current prices have increased the number of "last generation farms".
2. **Little incentive for young people to stay.** Young people see higher salaries and more opportunities outside the area, therefore leave and do not return to live. Education needs to be offered concerning cost of living and other values of living in a rural area.
3. **Educational opportunities.** Small schools have a difficult time offering many of the things that larger schools can offer. Schools should be encouraged to use community resource people to help bring new ideas to the classroom with limited budgets. Loss of tax base and uncertain state funding for schools may make this issue more important. (It was also mentioned that low violence problems is a very positive aspect of our schools.)

4. **Little economic growth.** Local landowners need to understand the importance of buying locally when possible. Also, small business development is lacking.
5. **Non-residents purchasing land**
  - Don't realize the benefits of living in township
  - Local people can't compete with high prices
  - Affect all aspects of the town i.e. MFL, loss of tax base, not really neighbors (not here very often), etc.
  - Looked at as "unfriendly imports"

## HOUSING ELEMENT:

Wisconsin's population density is 103 people per square mile, Buffalo County is well below that with only 20 people per square mile. Housing growth in Alma was the slightly less than Buffalo County.

### Housing Units in the Town of Alma and Buffalo County – Census Data

Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Town of Alma	107	137	157	157	171
Buffalo County	4,597	5,478	5,586	6,098	6,664

There are a total of 171 total housing units in the Town of Alma. The housing density was 3.99 homes per square mile, which is about the average for Buffalo County. 74% (126) of the homes were occupied during the 2010 census. 71% of the homes (88) were occupied by married couple families. 28% (35) had at least one individual 65 years or older living in the home. 8.7% (11) were renter occupied homes. Average household size was 2.31 persons. The average home value was \$123,500 and was built in 1971. 100% of all homes were single family dwellings (14% of those homes were mobile homes).

There has been a significant growth of seasonal homes, cabins and second homes in Alma over the last twenty years. Seasonally occupied homes made up 22% (37) of all of the homes in the Town of Alma. There has been some concern over trailers being placed without permits and being left in place year round and not having a fire number. Concern was also expressed about manufactured homes that may not meet safe living standards. It was determined that housing is available for purchase for those choosing to purchase a home. Land for building homes is readily available in the Town including many sites that are not designated as prime farmland.

### Goals and Actions:

- Encourage single family dwellings in the Town. All income levels are served, and no restrictions are recommended for minimum square footage, minimum value, etc.
- Homes and homesteads should be maintained to maintain the beauty of the Town and meet current ordinances in place by Buffalo County.
- Include road requirements in the Buffalo County Subdivision Ordinance. These requirements would state that all subdivision roads must meet state road standards for town roads (at a minimum) and must be blacktopped before the Town of Alma will take them over.
- All mobile homes that are relocated in or to the Town of Alma must be 15 years old or less.

## **TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT:**

Vehicular traffic is the major form of transportation in Alma due to limited other forms of transportation available. Recreational transportation is used including horses, snowmobiles, and bicycles.

No new road construction is anticipated in the timeframe of this plan. The major objective of the transportation plan is to improve current roads high quality.

Town of Alma has a total of 47.23 miles of road. 8.45 miles of state road, 20.53 miles of county roads and 18.24 miles of town roads. Functional road classification for rural roads include principal arterials, major and minor collectors, and local roads. Page 17.

Principal arterials serve interstate and interregional trips. These roads serve urban areas with populations greater than 5,000 and are classified as interstate highways. The Town has 8.45 miles of principal arterials.

Collector miles collect traffic from local roads and link them to nearby population centers. Major collectors are classified as state roads and minor collectors are classified as county roads. The Town has 17.98 miles of collector miles (County F, N, NN, S, T).

Local roads provide access for travel over relatively short distances. These roads are classified as town roads and county roads that don't meet the traffic numbers to be considered collector miles. The Town has 20.79 miles of local roads (County II, KK).

The Town of Alma also has 5 bridges over 20 feet and 2 bridges under 20 feet.

The Town Board of Alma has a 30 year plan for the maintenance and improvement of roads within the township. The following is a summary of the 2011 plan. Major storms in 2010 required major maintenance on many roads and required the use of future funds. Road projects beyond 2011 will be completed on an as needed basis.

### **State and Regional Transportation Plans:**

At [www.dot.state.wi.us](http://www.dot.state.wi.us) the Wisconsin Department of Transportation home page under "Plans and Project", then, "Planning Resources", then, "Modal and Multimodal Plans", the Town reviewed and considered the following State and Regional Transportation Plans that have potential affects or integration with the Town plan.

**Connections 2030** - the current multimodal plan being developed for all forms of Transportation through the year 2030

**Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020** – the current strategic plan for all facets of the 12,000 miles of the State's highways

**Wisconsin Six-Year Highway Improvement Program** – the more specific construction programs for the Wisconsin DOT through 2014

**Wisconsin Airport System Plan 2030** – the plan for determining airport facility needs

**Wisconsin Bicycle Plan 2020** – comprehensive bicycle plan

**Wisconsin Statewide Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020** – the plan outlines State and local measures to promote safe pedestrian travel

**Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030** – the rail plan being developed for integrated rail development through 2030

**Buffalo County Highway Plans** – Currently, there are no plans for major county road work, beyond general maintenance for any county roads within the borders of the Town of Alma.

Currently, the Town of Alma is not specifically identified for any recommendations or included in any projects with these plans.

**Bus Service:**

There is no bus service in the Town of Alma. The nearest commercial bus service is the Jefferson Bus Lines stopping in Winona, MN.

**Freight Rail Service:**

There are no rail lines running through the Town of Alma. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) runs along the entire western edge of Buffalo County. The closest currently used spur is in Cochrane, WI and Wabasha, MN.

**Passenger Rail Service:**

There is no passenger rail service to the Town of Alma. Daily passenger service (AMTRAK) is available in Winona, MN, with one train heading south in the a.m. and one train heading north in the p.m..

**Airports:**

There are no public or private airports in the Town of Alma. Winona, MN has a private airport but no passenger air service. La Crosse, WI has the closest passenger air service which is about 60 minutes from the Town. Many residents use services provided at the MSP airport which is about 2 hours travel by car.

**Water Transportation:**

The Town of Alma is not located on a commercial waterway. The Buffalo River runs through the Town, but is not deep enough to support commercial boat traffic. The Mississippi River runs on the entire west side of Buffalo County, with the Port of Winona being the closest terminal. Much of the grain produced in the Town will be transported by truck to Winona and sold to one of three grain buyers to be loaded onto barges.

Fertilizer, Chemicals, Liquid Propane, and other commodities are shipped to Winona and distributed throughout the region by truck.

**Trucking:**

Most commercial shipping in the Town is by truck, with State Highway 37 being a major transportation route in the Town of Alma. Road bans may be implemented each spring on County and Town roads.

**Pedestrian and Bike Trails:**

There are no designated biking trails in the Town of Alma.

**Snowmobile Trails:**

There is a very strong network of snowmobile trails in the Town of Alma and across Buffalo County. These trails are located on private property. Maintenance and property agreements are completed by local clubs. See map on page 18.

Because of flooding events and the amount of road repair that was completed in 2010 and 2011 due to flood damage, very little immediate maintenance is needed on town roads. Mcquistin Road needs blacktop on 0.3 miles of road, which is planned for 2013.

The following list is projects that the town would like to complete as money would become available.

Dream List (not in ranked order):

- Blacktop
  - Hollow Road
  - Rotering Road
  - Cesler Valley Road
- Mud Creek Road – replace bridge with culvert
- Upgrade truck to a truck with a wing

Other transportation that are significant in the town:

- Bicyclists
- Car tours
- Motorcycle tours
- RAGNAR
- Horse trail rides

Lists are suggestions only and can be changed as needs and highway finances change. Each year the Town Board will prioritize current year road and bridge work based on condition of road/bridge, safety, traffic count, slope, funds available, and other factors.

Alma has some problems with vandalism of Town road signs and has a goal to keep all road signs up to date and replaced as needed and as funds permit. Citizens are encouraged to report all suspicious activity on the roads and related to road signs.

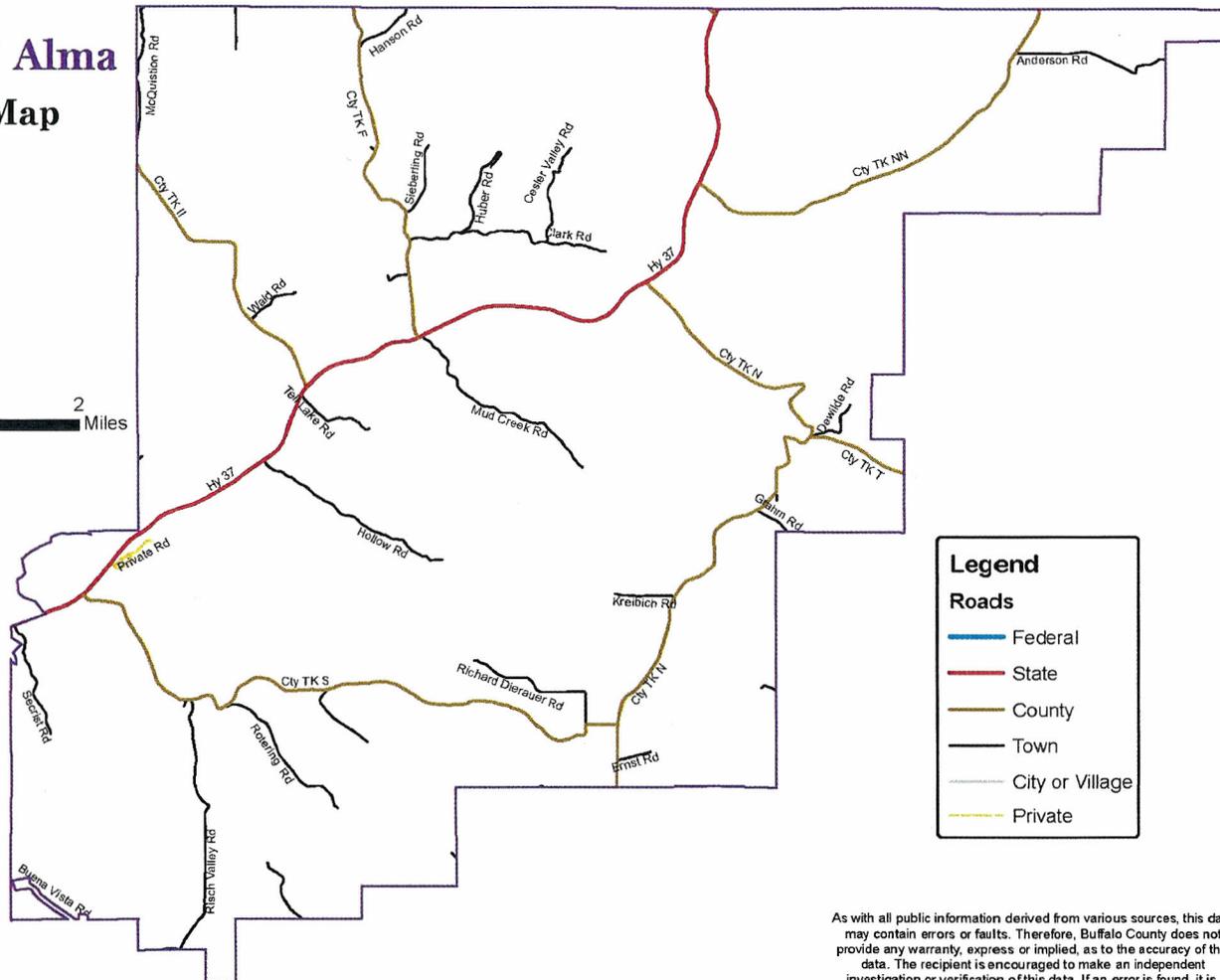
Bicycle usage in rural areas is on the increase. The planning committee expressed concerns about safety on Town and county roads due to the amount of motorized traffic, farm traffic, and bicycle traffic all sharing the same roads. Many visitors to the Town may not be aware of the amount and size of modern farm machinery.

Some elderly transportation is available through Buffalo County Health and Human Services, Meals on Wheels program. Transportation is also available for veterans through Veteran's services.

**Goals and Actions:**

- Road maintenance and improvements will be planned on a systematic, ongoing basis. The town board will prepare and regularly update a five year road improvement plan. County Highway officials will be consulted as needed for preparing the plan.
- Citizens are encouraged to report any suspicious activity around road signs.
- Support the development of a bicycle loop brochure for Buffalo County roads. The brochure (combined with a webpage) should highlight safety on rural roads, how to share roads with farm equipment, and how to be a good neighbor as you are passing through the Town.
- Recommend that the state/county DOT place no parking signs along Tell pond. Many people are stopping to take photos and there is not enough room for them to pull off the road – also a no-passing zone.
- Town of Alma may charge an annual road maintenance user fee, based on wear and tear of town roads caused by the frequency and travel of heavy equipment over town roads to go to and from a non-metallic mining operation. Fees will be based Buffalo County Highway Department repair estimates.
- Implement a driveway ordinance for driveways connecting with town roads.
- Have a serious discussion with neighboring towns and counties about reducing cost for roadwork through road maintenance and bidding agreements.

# Town of Alma Road Map

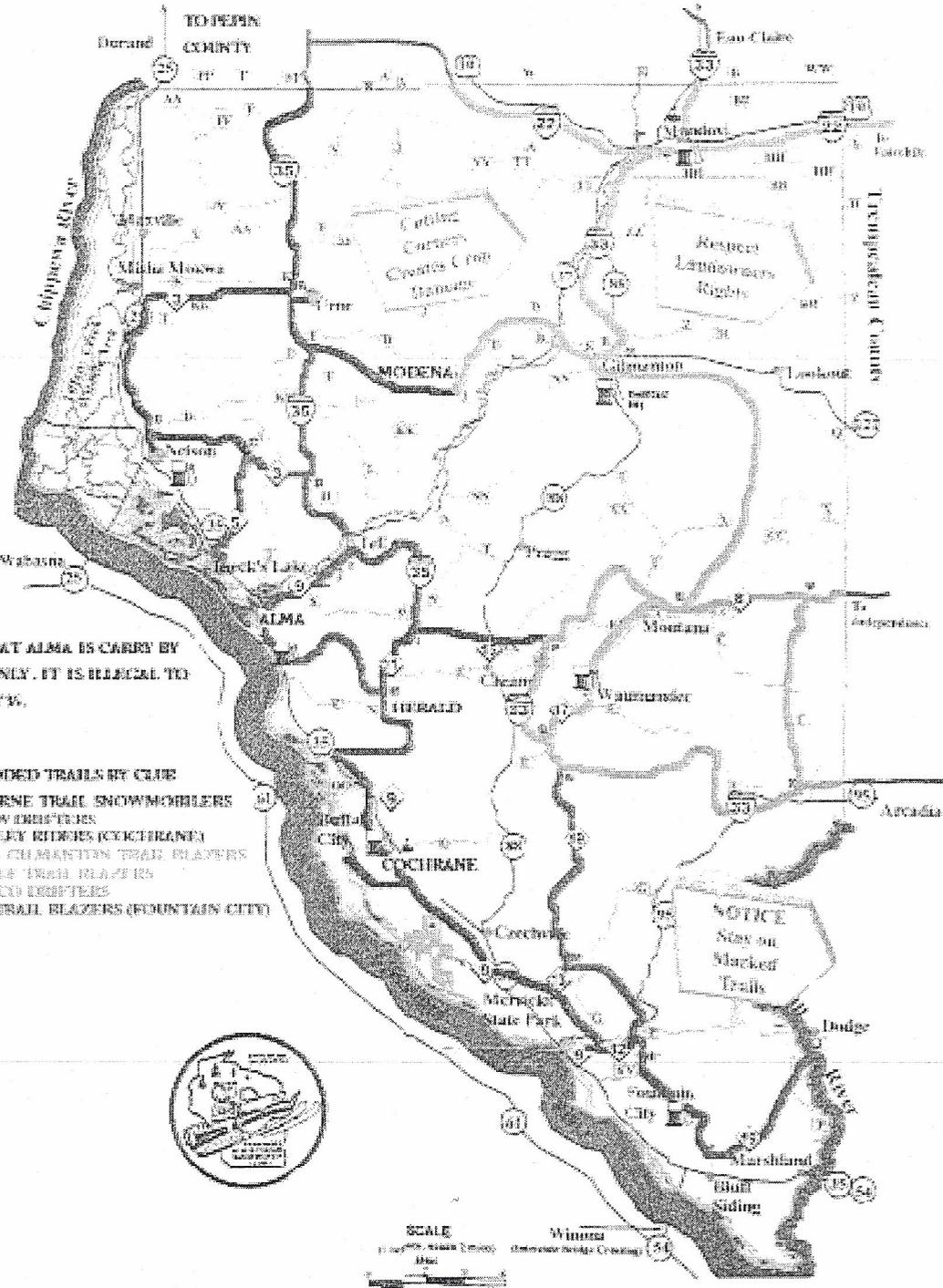


**Legend**

**Roads**

- Federal
- State
- County
- Town
- City or Village
- Private

As with all public information derived from various sources, this data may contain errors or faults. Therefore, Buffalo County does not provide any warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy of this data. The recipient is encouraged to make an independent investigation or verification of this data. If an error is found, it is requested that the Buffalo County Information Services Director be advised of the particulars so this data can be examined and corrected. This map is not a substitute for an accurate field survey.



## **UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT:**

This element looks at existing utility service and community facilities benefiting the citizens of the Town of Alma. Items include solid waste disposal, recycling services, parks, telecommunication services, emergency response services, schools, government facilities, and others.

### **Sanitary Waste and Water Supply:**

The Town of Alma has no concentration of residents, except one mobile home court with the capacity of 30 units. The mobile home court provides sewer and water to all units. All other citizens in Alma have private sewer and water service. There are currently no plans to develop public services at this time. Buffalo County Zoning issues all sanitary permits in the Town.

### **Solid Waste/Recycling:**

Garbage disposal and recycling is available in cooperation with Buffalo County. Garbage bags and recyclables can be brought to the Alma Town Hall on Saturdays between 9:00 am and Noon. Please contact a Town Board member or the Town Clerk about any changes in recycling locations and schedules.

### **Town Facilities:**

The Town Hall/Shop is the only public/governmental facility in Alma and was newly constructed in 1992. It is located at the intersection of State Road 37 and County Road F. The town hall is used for meetings and for voting.

Three cemeteries are located within the township. The Mill Creek Cemetery is operated by a cemetery board which is responsible for maintenance and records. The Mud Creek Cemetery is a family plot and is falling into disrepair. The Tell Church Cemetery is maintained by the Alma UCC Church.

### **Telephone/Electricity/Internet Services:**

Cell phone service, cable television, and internet services are poor in some areas of the Town, especially in the valley areas. Satellite television and internet are the only choices in many areas.

Riverland Energy Cooperative is the sole provider of electrical service in Alma. The citizenry find alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and methane acceptable in the Town.

### **Natural Gas:**

There are no natural gas services in the Town. Most people rely on Liquid Propane.

### **Libraries:**

There are no public libraries in the Town. Residents rely on the City of Alma public library. The County pays a fee for each transaction for Town residents using Wisconsin

Public Libraries outside of the county. Individuals must pay an annual membership to utilize the Wabasha, MN Public Library.

**Education:**

Students residing in the Town attend the Alma Public School and the Gilmanton Area Schools. Taxpayers also support the Chippewa Valley Technical College.

**Fire Protection, Police Protection and Emergency Management:**

The City of Alma Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Service provide fire protection and the Western Buffalo County Ambulance Service provides EMS service. Funding for ambulance services is currently set at \$12 per capita and fire protection services is funded at \$9,020 per year. Police protection is provided by the Buffalo County Sheriff's Department. Buffalo County Emergency Management Department provides training and planning for emergencies.

**Health Care and Long Term Care Services:**

There are no health care providers in the Town of Alma. Excellent Medical Services are provided by Wabasha Clinic and St. Elizabeth's Hospital both in Wabasha, Winona Health (Winona, MN), Gundersen Lutheran (Arcadia and La Crosse) and others. Most people choose health care services based on where they are employed. Long term care services are provided in Pepin, Fountain City, Wabasha, and Winona, MN.

**Public Parks:**

There are no parks or public trails in the Town.

**Goals and Actions:**

- To recognize the needs of fire protection and emergency medical services in site approval for housing and building development. Cooperate with the Alma and Mondovi fire departments to continue to improve on the already excellent services. Continue to work with other towns and Buffalo County in the development of recommendations on access to dwellings and other buildings for emergency response vehicles.
- Residents of the town realize the importance of access to the public library and support the current per capita funding for the Alma Public Library.
- Explore if there is an organization or group that would be willing to be caretakers for the Mud Creek Cemetery so the history could be maintained.
- Maintain the high quality fire and rescue services that are currently available. This requires regular contact and discussions with the other municipalities involved.
- Maintain recycling and solid waste services that the Town currently uses.
- Carefully consider new alternative energy resources as they become available as conditional use permits are considered by the Buffalo County Board of Adjustment.

**IV. AGRICULTURAL NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT:**

The Town of Alma was settled by farmers and agriculture continues to play a very important part of the economy of the Town. Very little valued added agriculture is currently being used or explored in the Town. Farmland constitutes 47.5% of all the land in the Town of Alma.

Dairy farms were the predominant farming enterprise for many years. In the last 15 years, the number of dairy farms has decreased and row crop farming has increased. Recently, there has been interest in valued added livestock and vegetable production.

**Soils:** The Buffalo River divides the township and therefore the soils are grouped accordingly. Along the Buffalo River are alluvial soils that generally are not very productive. The textures can range from very sandy to organic. These soils are very susceptible to flooding.

Terrace escarpments on either side of the Buffalo River are not farmable. Once on the terraces, soils are mainly Tell Silt Loam and Meridian Silt Loam. These are fairly productive soils, with gullies from concentrated water flow being the major concern. Richwood, Judson, and Jackson soils are productive soils that are also found in the Town in the lower site portions.

Moving to the steeper bluffsides, Norden Fine Sandy Loam and Fayette Silt Loam soils are predominant. On the slopes of 0-6%, Fayette is one of the most productive soils and requires the least amount of management.

The steep bluffsides are mapped predominantly Steep and Stoney Land. The recommendation for these lands are wildlife and timber production. Some areas are also suitable for pasturing, if managed correctly, to prevent overgrazing and erosion.

On the blufftops, Fayette Silt Loam and Dubuque Silt Loam are the most common soil types. When farmed and managed properly, these soils will be very productive for many generations. However, these soils must be managed intensely due to their susceptibility to erosion.<sup>2</sup>

Major soil types found in the Town of Alma are listed below.

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<sup>2</sup> Buffalo County Wisconsin Soil Survey. USDA, 1957. Interpreted by Todd Mau, USDA-NRCS.

Table 1 Major soil types found in the Town of Alma <sup>3</sup>			
Soil Name	Abbreviation	Yield Potential	
		Corn (bushels)	Hay (tons)
Loamy Alluvial	Lv	---	---
Sandy Alluvial	Sd	---	---
Steep, Stoney & Rocky	St	---	---
Fayette (B&C slopes)	Fa	145	5.5
Fayette (D&E slopes)	Fv	135	4.9
Tell	Te	105	4.3
Meridian	Mm	100	4.0
Jackson	Ja	145	5.5
Judson	Ju	150	5.5
Norden	Gf	---	---
Dubuque	De	100	3.9
Richwood	Rc	150	5.5

Prime soils map on page 26.

**Natural Resources:**

Town of Alma has a wide variety of wildlife species and excellent wildlife habitat. It is best known (as is all of Buffalo County) for high quality whitetail deer.

Recreational activities have been increasing in all of Buffalo County including Alma Township. The most common recreational uses involve some sort of hunting activity, but bicycle, snowmobile, bird watching, and sightseeing have all increased visitation to the Town of Alma. Many people throughout the state recognize Buffalo County either by its whitetail deer population or in association with the Mississippi River.

The Town of Alma land use survey contained many responses concerning the scenic beauty, quality air and water, and unique aspects of the area as reasons they live and/or own property in the township.

Part of the Town is located in the Lower Chippewa River Wildlife Natural Area that has been designated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources because of the number of rare plant and animal species and the potential for increase natural resource habitat, see page 27.

**Groundwater**

All drinking water in the Town of Alma is from groundwater sources (private wells). Buffalo County completed a groundwater study in 1998 indicated no contamination of wells within the Town of Alma. More recently, a smaller number of samples from the Buffalo County Health and Human Services continues to indicate good groundwater quality.

<sup>3</sup> Buffalo County Wisconsin Soil Survey. USDA, 1957.

### Surface Water

There are numerous small streams in the Town of Alma, many which are intermittent streams. Almost all streams in the Town flow into the Buffalo River, which flows into the Mississippi River at Alma. There are no lakes found in the Town of Alma. Tell Pond was a popular site for winter ice drag racing, and continues to be a popular spot to watch migratory birds, especially the tundra swans in fall. See hydrology map on page 28.

### Forests

Forest land makes up 54% of the land in the Town of Alma. Much of the high quality timber has been harvested, and most timber land is managed for both forest and wildlife. The forests are located on very steep slopes which are too steep to convert to farmland.

### Wetlands:

Wetlands make up a large portion of the Town along the Buffalo River. The wetlands are found along the Buffalo River bottoms and along some of the streams. Wetlands should be protected from development. Current zoning regulations will not allow building in designated wetlands. A current wetlands map can be found on page 29.

### Floodplains:

Development is not allowed by the Buffalo County Floodplain Zoning Ordinance. These are fragile areas necessary to avoid flooding of roads and other developed property. A map of the designated floodplains for the Town of Alma can be found on page 30.

### Non-Metallic Mining:

Non-metallic mining mainly consists of the excavation of sand, gravel, and stone. This has been traditionally rock quarries in the Town of Alma for road building and field limestone. There is concern about the increasing numbers of frac sand inquiries in the western Wisconsin area which also fall under the non-metallic mining category. There is currently one non-metallic mine in the Town. Page 31.

### **Cultural Resources:**

The Town of Alma is rich in history and cultural activities that reflect the heritage of the Town. Some examples of cultural resources in the Town include:

- Tell Church
- Tell Bar and Grill
- Old Cheese Factory

### Goals and Actions - Agriculture:

- To manage development in such a way that large blocks of farmland can be protected. (cluster development)
- To support the preservation of the family farm and cooperate with other units of government to assist farms when possible.
- Protect existing farm operations from restrictions on noise, odor, and keeping of animals associated with farm operations. This policy recognizes that often non-farm residents who are unfamiliar with farm operations may have unrealistic expectations of farming operations.
- Land owners within the township will be encouraged to follow soil conservation plans that meet T levels of erosion.
- The planning committee recognizes the value of agricultural land. At this time they have no plans to put measures into place to preserve agricultural land. They do support non-government efforts to preserve farmland without increasing regulations, i.e. Mississippi Valley Land Conservancy, West Wisconsin Land Conservancy, etc.
- Landowners are encouraged to use conservation practices as they farm their land. Long term productivity can only be maintained if land is conserved. Conservation also helps to maintain other resources such as streams and rivers.
- Promote state and county programs that support the preservation of farms and farmland.
- Promote state and county programs that encourage conservation of farmland.

**Goals and Actions – Natural Resources:**

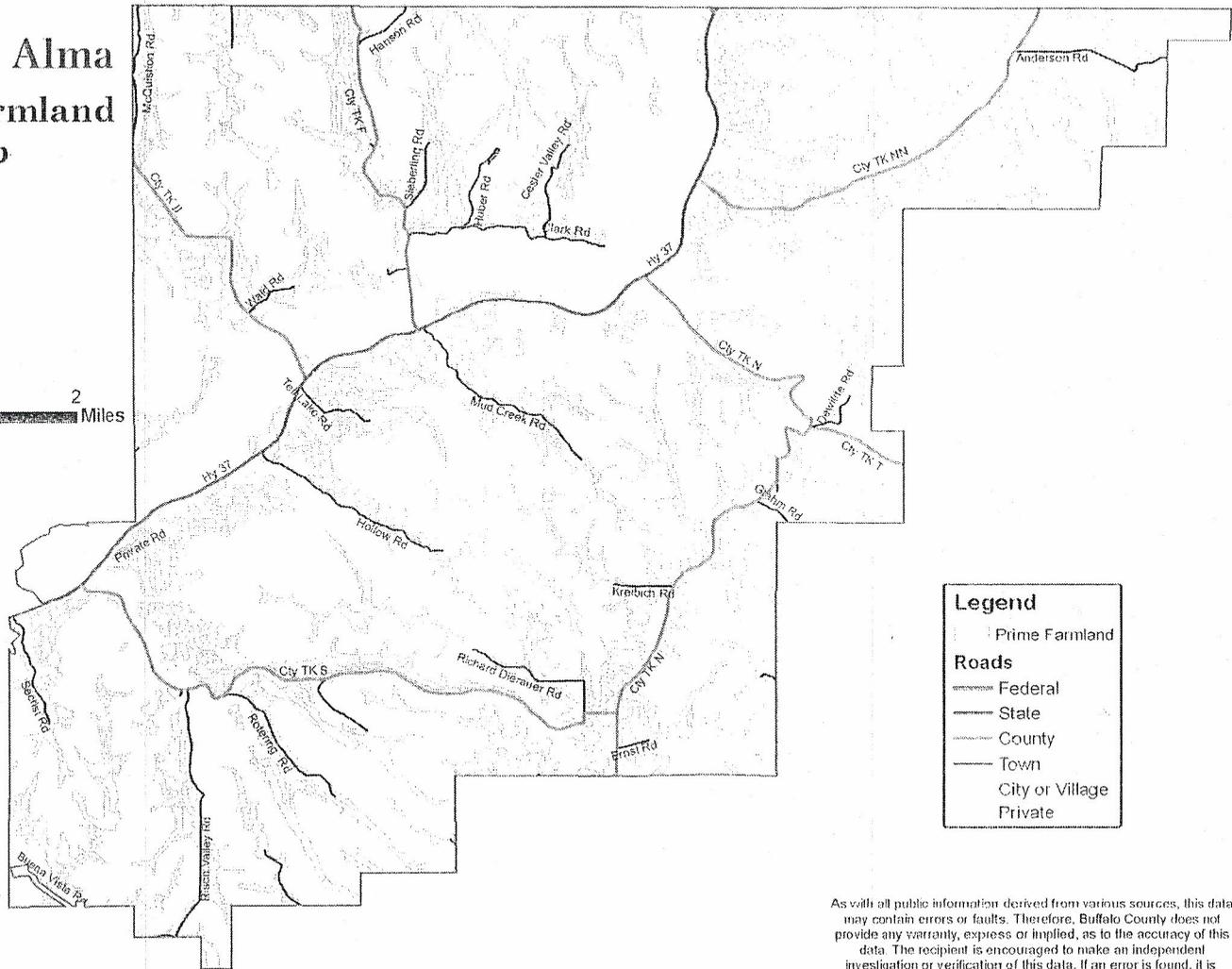
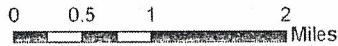
It is the objective of the residents of the Town of Alma to maintain natural resources located within the township. The Buffalo River Valley contains unique flora and fauna that should be preserved. Also, it is a haven for many species of birds including bald eagles, tundra swans, sand hill cranes, Canadian geese, water fowl, and numerous other species of birds and mammals. The following statements have been put in place to meet this objective:

- To consider the natural beauty of the township whenever development is considered.
- To protect and maintain habitat for the unique wildlife found in the township. Land use should protect as much of the native ecosystems as possible. Species of wildlife such as bald eagles, tundra swans, and sand hill cranes have recently returned to the township and it is the desire to maintain an environment in which they can continue to thrive.
- To protect the scenic vistas and views within the township.
- Support programs that encourages participation in meeting the goals of the Lower Chippewa River Natural Area.
- Citizens will learn to appreciate all wildlife, not just whitetail deer.
- Practice good conservation practices to maintain/improve habitat for all types of wildlife.
- Maintain current zoning regulations restricting development in floodplains and from building too close to normal high water levels.

**Goals and Action – Cultural Resources:**

- Tell Church is one of the most photographed churches in Western Wisconsin. It was also the subject for a very popular painting.
- Encourage citizens to support the Alma and Buffalo County Historical Societies.

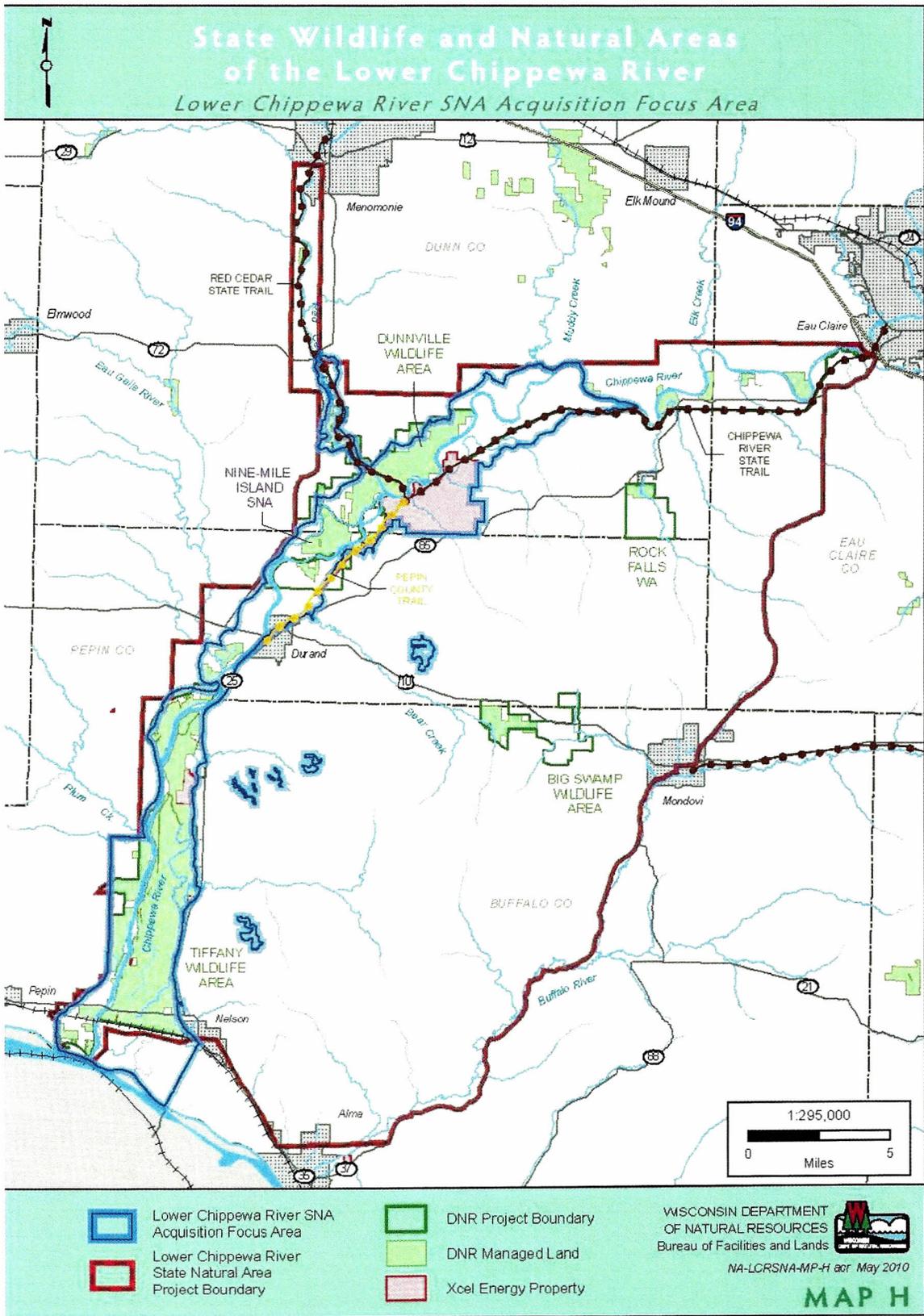
# Town of Alma Prime Farmland Map



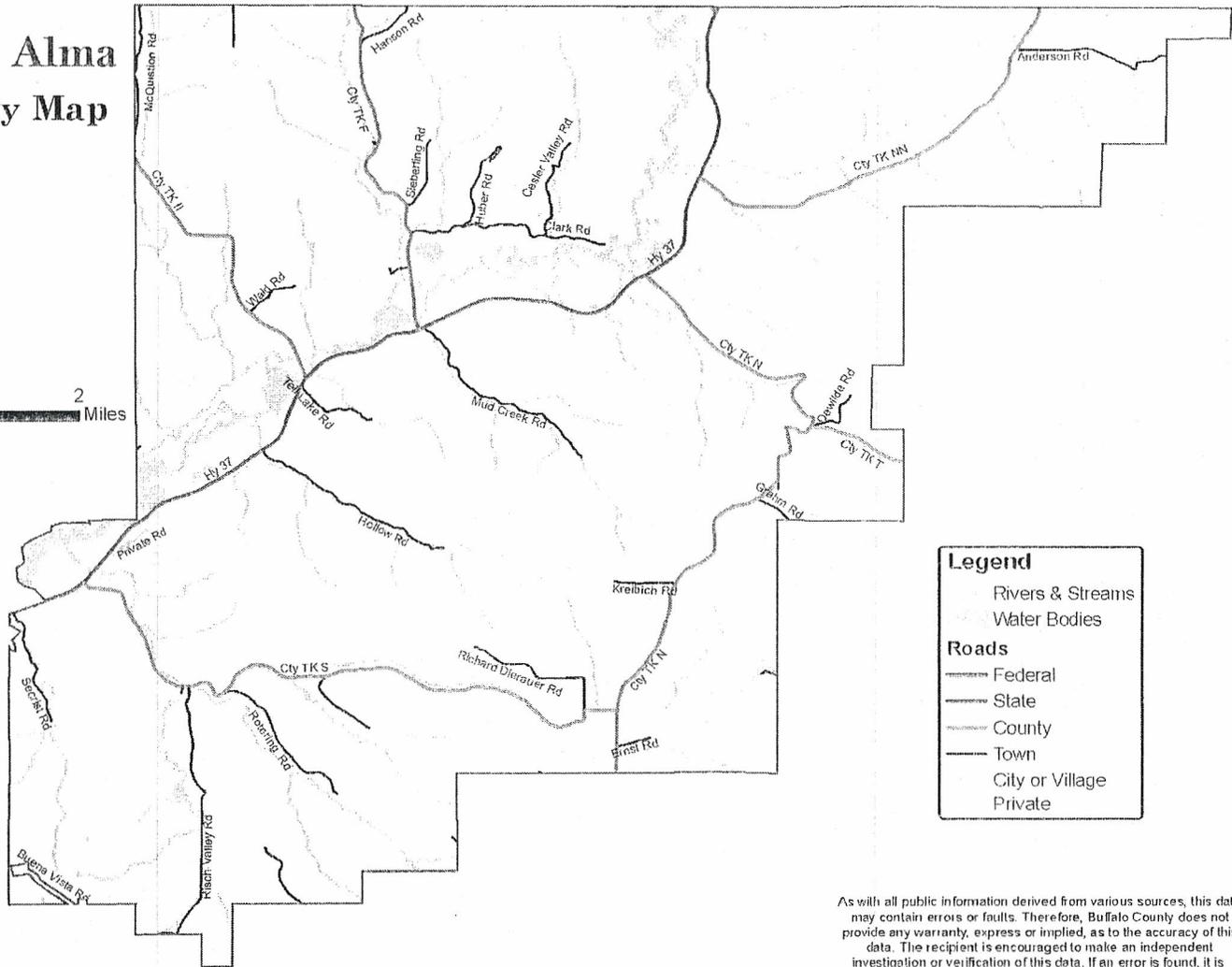
**Legend**

- ▨ Prime Farmland
- Roads**
- ▬ Federal
- ▬ State
- ▬ County
- ▬ Town
- ▬ City or Village
- ▬ Private

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# Town of Alma Hydrology Map



**Legend**

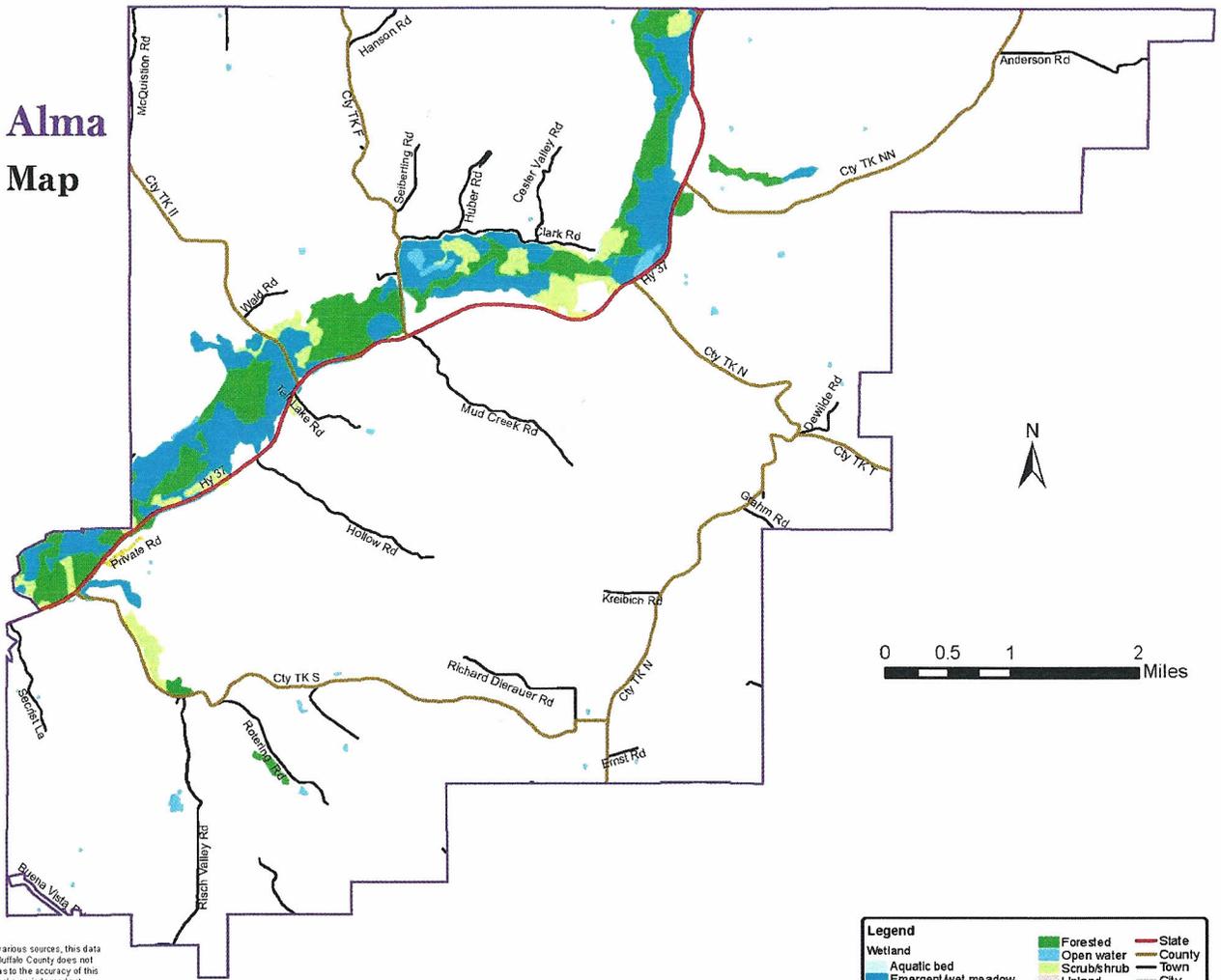
- Rivers & Streams
- Water Bodies

**Roads**

- Federal
- State
- County
- Town
- City or Village
- Private

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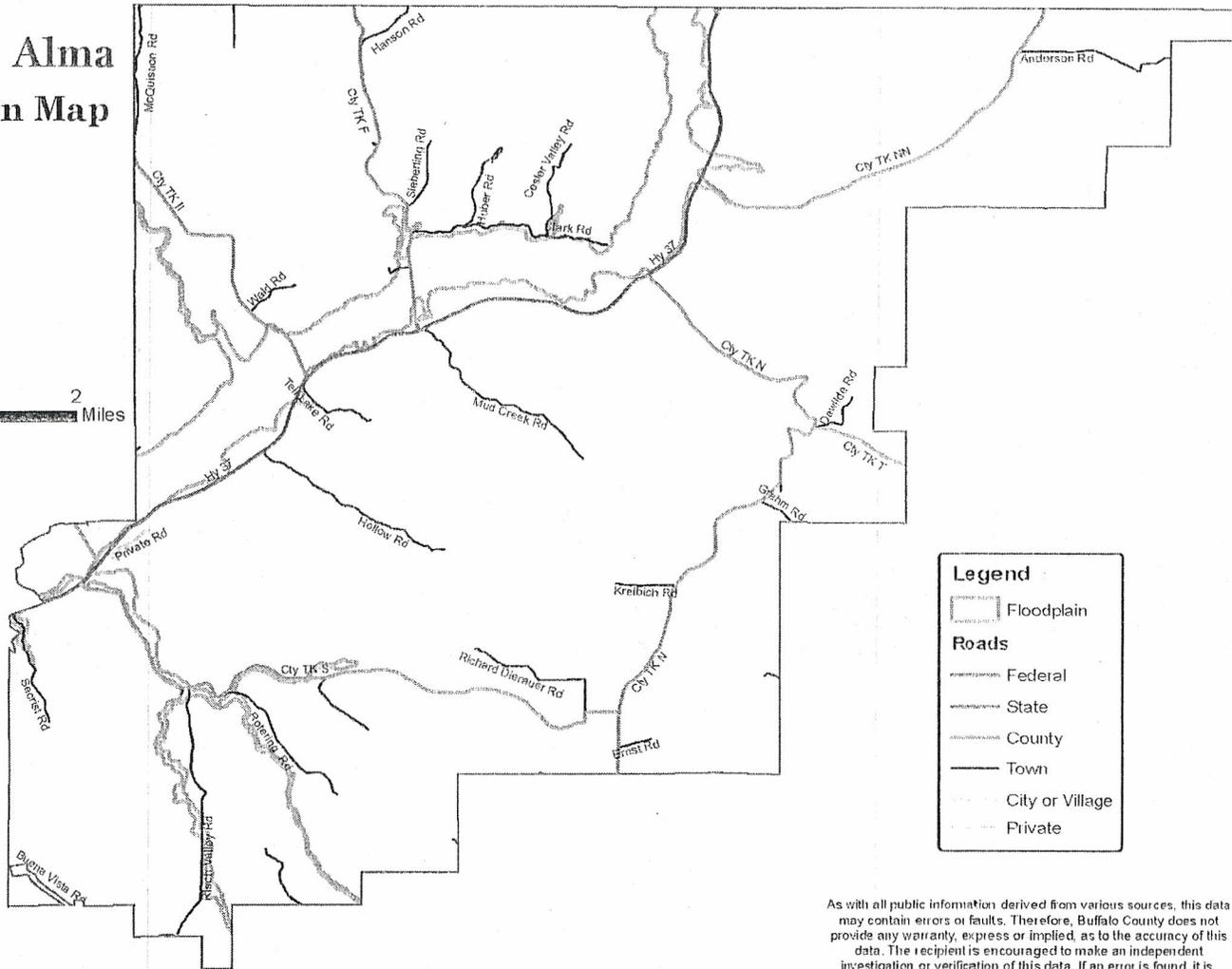
# Town of Alma Wetland Map



Legend		
Wetland	Forested	State
Aquatic bed	Open water	County
Emergent/wet meadow	Scrub/shrub	Town
Filled/drained wetland	Upland	City
Flats/unvegetated wet soil	Roads	Village
	Federal	Private

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# Town of Alma Floodplain Map

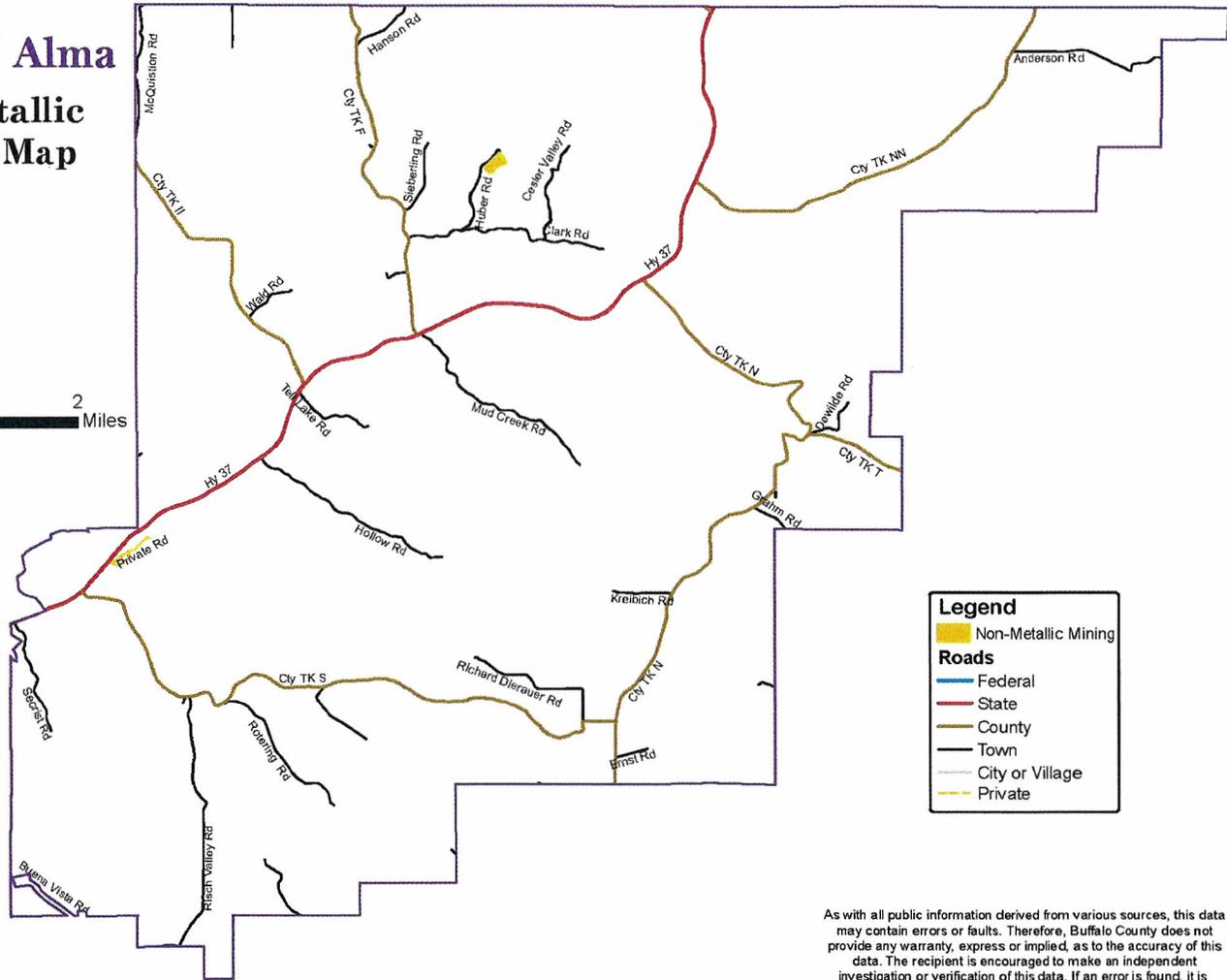


**Legend**

- Floodplain
- Roads**
- Federal
- State
- County
- Town
- City or Village
- Private

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# Town of Alma Non-Metallic Mining Map



**Legend**

- Non-Metallic Mining
- Roads**
- Federal
- State
- County
- Town
- City or Village
- Private

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT:

The majority of the data for this section came from the U.S. Census Bureau, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2005-2009 5-Year Estimates. Other sources of information was the Department of Workforce Development and citizens from the Town of Alma.

### Employment Information:

Manufacturing, agriculture, and the education/health/social occupations comprise a majority of people employed in Town of Alma. The Town is very rural with very productive soils. It is also within commuting distance to manufacturing, school and health care jobs in Alma, Arcadia, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Wabasha, Rochester and Winona MN. The Town of Alma and all of Buffalo County tends to have very low unemployment rates, due to the variety of jobs in the region and the growth of industry in Arcadia (Ashley Furniture and Gold'n Plumb Chicken).

### Town of Alma Employment Statistics – Census Data

Employment Status	Number	Percent
<b>Population 16 years and older</b>	251	100
In Labor Force	176	70
Civilian Labor Force	176	100
Employed	169	96
Unemployed	7	4
Armed Forces	0	0
Not in Labor Force	75	30
<b>Occupation</b>		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	28	16
Construction	8	4.5
Manufacturing	22	12.5
Professional, management, etc.	5	2.8
Education, health care	33	18.7
All others	73	41
<b>Class of Worker</b>		
Private wage and salary	114	65
Government workers	26	15
Self-employed	27	15
Unpaid family	2	1

### Commuting to Work:

Almost all employed residents of the Town of Alma, who do not work on their own farms, commute out of the Town to work. The most common commutes are to Wabasha, Winona, and Arcadia. Residents that commute to Winona, MN are concerned about the Interstate Bridge replacement or repair. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has indicated that the bridge at Winona will be replaced (the time frame has not been established). Depending on how the bridge replacement is engineered, this could add 40 minutes or more to the commute to Winona.

**Town of Alma, Commuting Habits – Census Data**

Means of Travel	Percent
Car, truck, van – drove alone	76.8
Car, truck, van – carpooled	10.3
Public transportation	0
Walked	2.4
Other means	0
Worked at home	6.7
	Minutes
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	23.4

**Buffalo County Industries:**

Buffalo County has a very small manufacturing base. Only one industry, La Crosse Milling (oat miller) is in the top ten employers in the County. Most all of the employment opportunities in the near future will be outside of the Town or Buffalo County.

**Buffalo County Top 10 Employers – WI DWD**

Company	Service	Size
Marten Transport	Trucking	1,000+
Mondovi Public Schools	Education	100-249
CFC Public Schools	Education	100-249
County of Buffalo	Government	100-249
American Lutheran Homes	Nursing Care Provider	100-249
Dairyland Power	Electrical Power Generation	100-249
School District of Alma	Education	50-99
Midwest Dental	Dental Care	50-99
US Army Corp of Eng.	Engineering Service	50-99
La Crosse Milling	Oat Miller	50-99

**Environmentally Contaminated Sites in the Town of Alma:**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) was utilized in identifying contaminated sites in the Town of Alma. There were no contaminated sites in the Town of Alma identified in the database.

The Wisconsin DNR Solid and Hazardous Waste Information System was reviewed for waste disposal sites in the Town of Alma. There were no waste disposal sites in the registry located in the Town of Alma.

## **County, Regional and State Economic Develop Programs:**

### County Programs:

- Revolving Loan Fund

### Regional Programs:

- Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission,; Economic Development Program, Revolving Loan Fund

### State Programs:

- Value Added Dairy Initiative
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection Milk Volume Program
- USDA – Rural Development

### List of current Town of Alma businesses:

- Farms
- Bar and Grill
- Hunting Outfitter
- Greenhouse
- Cabinet Maker
- Construction
- Venison Processing
- Furniture Repair
- Logging
- Trucking
- Photographer
- Tile and Stone Installation

### **Local Planning Effort:**

The planning committee identified some characteristics of businesses that would be desirable and likely to attract to the Town of Alma. The list of these business characteristics is listed below.

#### Desirable Characteristics

- Green Industry
- Good Jobs
- Agricultural Based
  - Dairy/Livestock businesses
  - Small Fruit production farms
  - Orchard(s)
- Hunting and Outfitting

- Nature Based Jobs; canoeing, birding, nature trips (native flora & fauna) , eagles watching - habitat (bald and golden)
- Home based/Cottage Industries

#### Reasons to start a business in Town of Alma

- Available land at relatively low cost
- Good water, cheap to reach with wells, in valleys
- Good highways and roads
- Good access to utilities
- Good neighbors
- Good EMS and police services
- Small school

#### Negatives for starting a businesses in Town of Alma

- Distance from interstate highway system
- Limited local services such as grocery and hardware stores
- Cell phone services vary in quality
- Internet access is getting better
- Small school

#### How to encourage economic development

- Work together with the City of Alma to find ways to retain our talented youth after high school and college graduation
- Continue to improve internet and cell phone services
- Develop positive attitude in current residents.
- Promote tourism as a way for people to become familiar with the Town
- Support the formation of a Buffalo County Economic Development Corporation as a non-profit group supporting environmentally friendly economic development in the Town and Buffalo County.

**Goals and Actions:**

- Agricultural businesses have been the mainstay of the economy in the Town as well as Buffalo County. Continue to support traditional agricultural business development in the Town of Alma. These businesses include dairy, beef, poultry, and traditional crops (hay, corn and soybeans).
- Support business ventures into agricultural enterprises that are not traditional in the Town of Alma. These businesses include small fruit production, vegetable production, energy production.
- Support home based businesses in the Town of Alma, including small office businesses, repair businesses, small value added agriculture businesses, etc. as regulated in the current zoning regulations.
- Support efforts to start a Buffalo County Economic Development Corporation and provide information resources to the organization to encourage small business development that meet the characteristics listed above.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION ELEMENT:**

### **State and Federal Agencies:**

Wisconsin Department of Transportation:

The Town of Alma participates, in cooperation with the Buffalo County Highway Department, in the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):

The Town of Alma has contact with FEMA following any natural disasters which affect the Town. The county works in cooperation with the Buffalo County Emergency Planning when working with FEMA.

### **Buffalo County:**

Cooperation between governmental units is a normal activity. Alma currently cooperates with several other units of government on issues that can be better addressed as a group. The Town of Alma maintains positive relationships with several Buffalo County Agencies. They consult with the Buffalo County Highway Department on road issues, and meet with the Highway Commissioner each year to assess Town roads and bridges. They work with Emergency Government to have emergency plans in place. The Town of Alma is also under County Zoning. Finally, they are working with Buffalo County and the Buffalo County Towns Association in developing their Town and comprehensive county plans.

Alma has been part of the Buffalo County Recycling program since the program began. The Town also cooperates and helps to fund Emergency Response and Fire Protection with the Towns of Nelson and Belvidere, City of Alma, and the Village of Nelson..

Alma is also an active member of the Buffalo County Towns Association and meets with them quarterly.

### **School Districts:**

The Town of Alma is served by the Alma School District and the Gilmanton School District. The residents of the Town of Alma are very supportive of their schools and have no conflicts with either district.

**Goals and Actions:**

- Buffalo County Recycling and Solid Waste agreement
- Road maintenance agreements with the Towns of Lincoln, Nelson, and Belvidere as well as Buffalo County
- School districts of Alma and Gilmanton
- Buffalo County Towns Association
- US Fish and Wildlife Service - 162 acres of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge (see map page 32 )
- Encourage coordination and cooperation among units of government. Remain active with the Towns Association and discuss issues that can better be addressed as a group of towns, i.e. managed Forest Land and its effect on town tax base.
- Have a candid discussion with Buffalo County Highway Department and Buffalo County Towns Association of areas of possible cooperation on road maintenance and repair.
- Maintain the strong relationship with the Alma Fire Department and Western Buffalo County EMS Services.
- Support County efforts at economic development to improve the local economy and increase tax base.

## LAND USE ELEMENT:

### Existing Land Use and Zoning:

The Town of Alma is a rural town. Agriculture is by far the predominant industry.

### Town of Alma Property Assessment – Buffalo County Treasurer (2011)

Property Classification	# of Parcels	Total Value	Total Acres
Residential	99	11,200,400	176
Commercial	9	760,600	33
Manufacturing	0	0	0
Agricultural	700	1,429,400	9,937
Undeveloped	281	1,047,100	2,085
Productive Forest Lands	192	6,460,400	2,394
Agricultural Forest Land	340	6,240,200	4,639
Other	91	9,200,600	183
Woodland Tax Lands	375	16,391,600	7,988
Exempt Lands	64	0	236
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2151</b>	<b>52,730,300</b>	<b>27,669</b>
Alma Area Schools	981	32,051,500	
Gilmanton Area Schools	211	4,287,200	
Chippewa Valley Tech College	1,192	36,338,700	

All towns within Buffalo County participate in county comprehensive zoning as described in Wisconsin Statute 59.97. Zoning decisions are made by the Buffalo County Zoning Committee and Buffalo County Zoning Department. This document is evolving and will change as deemed necessary by the taxpayers of the Town of Alma. It will contain a description of the goals and objectives of the people in the Town as to how they would like to see change and development.

### Existing Land Uses:

The Town of Alma is very rural. It is mainly agricultural and forest land. There is limited residential housing, with home owners mainly building on old farm sites. Most of the land is steep soils with very productive land in the valley and along the bluff tops. Currently, there are three locations that are zoned commercial with the remaining land being zoned agricultural. See map on page 43.

### Topography:

The Town of Alma can be described as bluffs and valleys. Land that is not currently in productive farmland is mainly too steep to farm, or is in the limited areas of wetland found in the town.

### Commercial/Industrial:

Only three properties in the Town are not currently zoned agricultural. See future land use map on page 44.

#### Population and Housing Densities:

Population Density 8.8 people per square mile. Housing density 3.99 houses per square mile.

#### Land Demand and Prices:

Land sales values in Buffalo County have increased in the past 10 years. Until the last few years, this was driven by recreational land sales mostly to whitetail deer hunters. High farm commodity prices (especially corn and soybeans) have increased the demand for farmland sales to equal prices to forestland. Agricultural land sales in 2010 for Buffalo County were \$3,508 dollars per acre, the highest in the NC District, (Wisconsin Department of Revenue Statistics). The Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service shows similar numbers with farmland sales at \$3,718 per acre (2009 data) and forest land sales at \$3,453 per acre (2009 data). Both of these values were the highest reported in the North Central District. New pressures from companies seeking to mine silica sand is again putting upward pressure on land prices.

#### Opportunities for Redevelopment:

The Town of Alma has had very limited development over history due to the Town's rural nature. No redevelopment opportunities were identified.

#### Land Use Projections:

The two major land uses in the Town of Alma are agriculture and recreation (hunting), both of these uses providing very little development pressure. There was no indication of commercial or industrial development due to the fact that the only state highway (State Highway 37) runs along the Buffalo River with most land in the river corridor being wetland. Housing has only increased by a few houses each year, with no sub-developments currently or planned. The City of Alma has few job opportunities and people that live here are willing to commute, but the long commute does not attract new residents.

If current home building trends continue (as assumed by the planning committee) about 3 houses would be built each year or about 60 in 20 years. Committee members agreed that the average housing lot would be about 2.5 acres or a total of 150 acres of land taken out of other uses. If current trends continue, 75% (112 acres) of these homes would be constructed on agricultural land, the remaining 25% (38 acres) on woodland or undeveloped lands.

#### Forest Land:

Forest land in the Town is generally land that is too steep for other uses. The committee sees very few, if any opportunities for land to be taken out of forest and put into row crop production. The exception is some areas that have been planted to trees through the Conservation Reserve program (NRCS).

Managed Forest Law (MFL) enrollment is a concern throughout Buffalo County. Currently, Alma has 7,988 acres of forest land enrolled in the MFL program this accounts

for over 53% of the woodland acres in the Town. MFL continues to be a major concern because of falling property tax base for the Town and County.

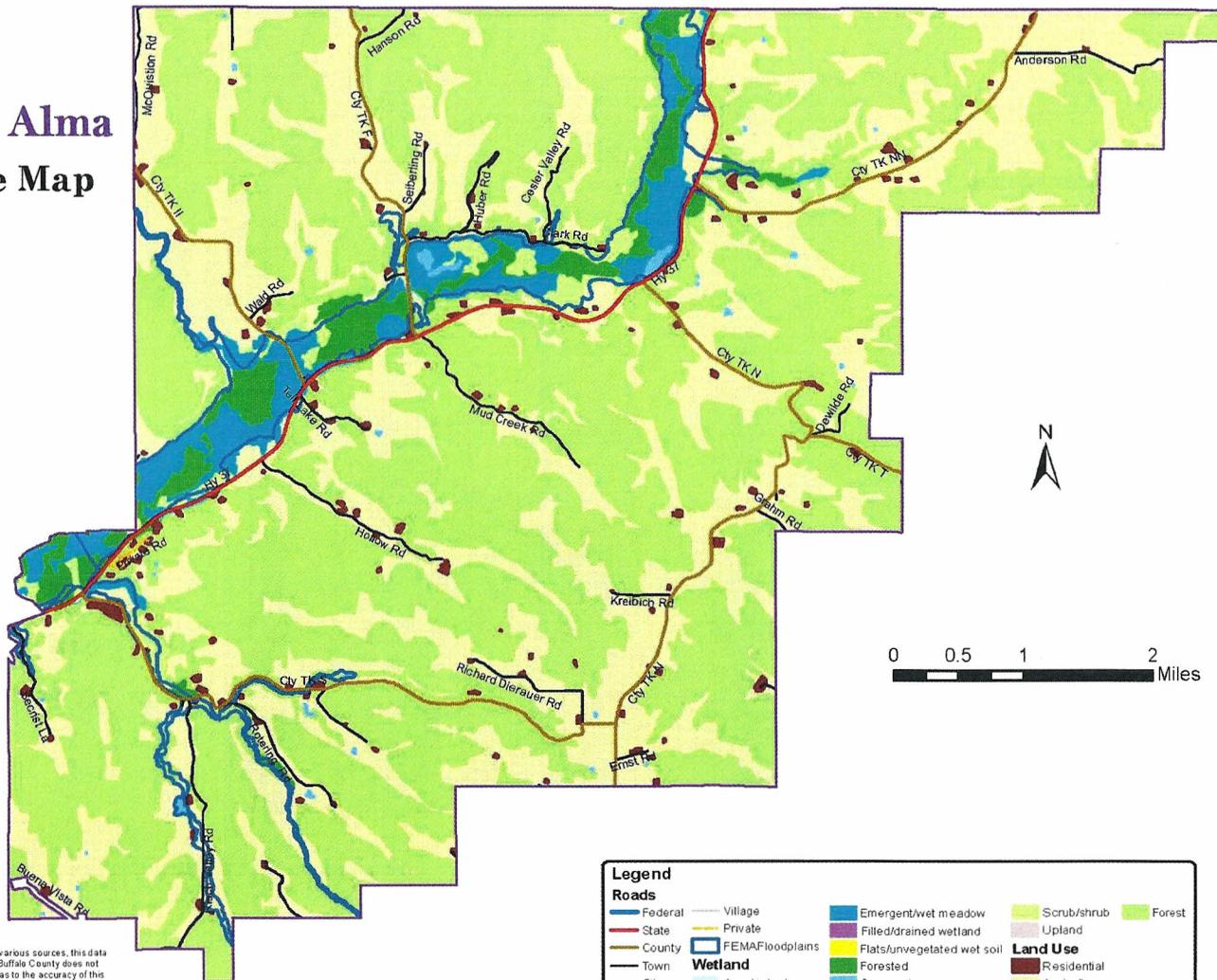
#### Current Zoning:

Currently, all Towns in Buffalo County are under the county zoning rules. Alma desires to maintain this relationship, but would like to have a say in rezone changes and in conditional use permits. At this time, Town residents do not want to implement any protections for farmland, natural areas or any other land use area. They would like to encourage landowners to voluntarily participate in programs to preserve farmland, such as a land conservancy organization, but they are in favor of farm residents entering into the Agricultural Enterprise Area.

#### Goals and Actions:

- Alma is currently not interested in putting any programs in place to protect farmland from housing or other kinds of development. They will revisit the possibility of Farmland Protection in 2016 at their annual Town meeting.
- Maintain current relationship with Buffalo County Zoning, but does not support more restrictive zoning laws for agriculture, housing, or business development.
- Alma would like the MFL program to be reevaluated. The Town board will work with the Buffalo County Board, the Towns Association, and their local legislators to have a change made in how woodland is taxed. The board will report annually to the Town residents at their annual meeting of steps taken and progress to date.
- The planning committee indicated that the Town had many building sites for individual family dwellings that would have very limited impact on agricultural production. These areas were on field borders, fence rows, etc. They also designated one area as having more potential for residential because of its location in the valley with light to sandy soils. See map on page 40.
- The Town of Alma supports any group(s) of farmers that are interested in participating in the Wisconsin Agriculture Enterprise Areas.
- Town of Alma may charge an annual road maintenance user fee, based on wear and tear of town roads caused by the frequency and travel of heavy equipment over town roads related to a non-metallic mining operation and metallic mining operations. Fee will be based Buffalo County Highway Department or other creditable resource repair estimates. An annual bond may be required by the town for these repair costs.
- Town of Alma Board will consider a licensing ordinance for non-metallic mines and other businesses that may alter the beauty and natural resources of the Town. The Town will decide before the application is brought to Buffalo County Zoning.
- Town of Alma Board will put in place ordinances to regulate businesses that may affect the health and safety of the people of the Town.
- Bluff protection will be put into place that preserves the natural scenic beauty and natural resources which are unique to the bluffs in the Town and Buffalo County.
- Existing landowner rights will always be considered when considering any business development.

# Town of Alma Land Use Map



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**IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT:**

- Review and Update of Buffalo County Zoning Ordinance in cooperation with Buffalo County Towns as part of the Buffalo County Land Use Plan.
- Update Flood Plain Zoning in Buffalo County
- Work with Buffalo County Land Conservation Department in securing cost share funds for the Lower Buffalo River Watershed.
- Work with Buffalo County Land Conservation Department and Buffalo County Natural Resources Conservation Service in encouraging Landowners to farm to T (tolerable soil loss levels)