

# Bayfield County

## Land Records Modernization Plan

### 2005 - 2010



City of Bayfield - 1886



City of Bayfield - 2002

*Good fortune is what happens when  
opportunity meets with planning. - Edison*

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## **I. Executive Summary**

Bayfield County is pleased to submit a Land Records Modernization Plan for the upcoming five year planning horizon. The plan that follows is intended to build on the significant progress that resulted from the implementation of Bayfield County's initial, and subsequent, Land Records Modernization Plans filed in 1992 and 1999. In order to further the goals of modernizing land records and availing those records to those who need them, Bayfield County intends to continue to develop, maintain, and grow a Geographic Information System (GIS) that will provide ready access to a wide array of spatially referenced digital data sets. This plan was prepared by the Bayfield County Land Records Department overseen by the Executive Committee of the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors. Designated contact person for information about this plan or the Bayfield County Land Records Modernization Program is:

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## **II. Land Information Modernization and Integration Plan**

### **A. Goals and Objectives**

#### Goals

Bayfield County is guided by two simply stated goals:

1. Modernize Bayfield County's land records.
2. Make this information accessible to those who need it.

This task can best be accomplished by the development, implementation, and maintenance of a geographic information system that provides useful, quality data to its citizens, agencies, and businesses in an equitable and efficient manner.

#### Objectives

To meet these goals, the following objectives are adopted:

- Promote cooperation and integration among all users of land records and seek to integrate land information and systems both vertically and horizontally to both internal and external stakeholders and customers.
- Continue to maintain and perpetuate Bayfield County's geodetic reference framework and Public Land Survey System.

- Maintain and improve the countywide compilation of accurate, digital maps depicting all real property in this county; and continue to support and establish mechanisms for the distribution and sharing of these maps.
- Improve data accuracy, accessibility, completeness, timeliness, and usability. Reduce data redundancy and duplication among all users.
- Continue the development of a parcel-based Geographic Information System. Document the resulting spatially referenced digital data sets through the development of FDGC-compliant metadata. Adhere to existing and emerging data development, design, and distribution standards.
- Refine policies of data distribution, privacy protection, and information sharing. Utilize emerging technologies like web mapping services and portals to achieve a dynamic and distributed GIS.
- Continue dialog and interaction with representative groups of land records stakeholders to recommend and refine policies, and to prioritize the implementation of land records modernization.
- Continue to commit the necessary resources, both human and pecuniary, to provide long term land records modernization support.

### Planning Horizon

Bayfield County is committed to an ambitious and long-termed effort to modernize our land records. Specific objectives continue to evolve in response to ever-changing priorities and technologies, but the overall goals of land records modernization and information sharing remain steadfast. Projected timelines for specific new and ongoing initiatives are discussed elsewhere in this document. The overall planning period for this Land Records Modernization Plan is the five-year period from May 1, 2005 to December 31, 2010.

## **B. Progress Report on Ongoing Activities**

Bayfield County has made significant progress in its land records modernization efforts. A review of noteworthy accomplishments and on-going activities is as follows:

- Completion of High Accuracy Reference Network (HARN) densification initiative. 1 and 2 PPM stations have been established throughout the county in a manner approved by Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT). All stations have been bluebooked with National Geodetic Survey (NGS). Preliminary planning is ongoing in support of WDOT's Height Modernization Project slated for Bayfield County in WDOT's 'Phase 7' of that program.
- Establishment of an ongoing project to document, assign coordinate values, maintain, perpetuate, and re-establish the monuments of our Public Land Survey System.
- Establishment of a web page ( [www.bayfieldcounty.org](http://www.bayfieldcounty.org) ) for the Land Records Office to permit better dissemination and sharing of data and information. A great deal of information can be accessed from this site, such as the ability to view any of our 2,000 property ownership maps, information on Lake Superior shoreline erosion, access to geodetic monument datasheets,

ability to view oblique aerial photographs of Bayfield County's entire Lake Superior shoreline, rural addressing information, a primer on GIS, and so on. The centerpiece of this site is a custom web mapping program called MapViewer. This program permits a client to interact with two dozen 'layers' of GIS data ranging from parcels to topography to zoning districts to aerial photos and to 'mine' data about individual parcels through the use of search tools that permits queries by name, Parcel Identification Number, or legal description. MapViewer has been very favorably received by a wide range of customers. It is our intent to continue to support MapViewer, and the many services provided by our web page, and to add further content and functionality in the future.

- Development of countywide rural address system. A comprehensive county address grid and road network map booklet has been compiled and published for use by emergency responders; a third edition of this booklet is slated for publication later this year. The development of the address system facilitated establishment of Enhanced-911 (E-911). Final address assignment and signage have been completed, and E-911 is 'on-line'. Bayfield County has also committed to support Wireless-911. A grant application has been filed with the Public Service Commission and Wireless-911 will be phased in over the next two to three year period.
- Acquisition of countywide digital orthophotography. Existing 1992 orthoimagery was updated when 1998-2000 National Aerial Photography Program (NAPP) aerial imagery was rectified to produce new county-wide orthophotography for this county. In conjunction with this project, a new 10-meter Digital Elevation Model was created for Bayfield County to replace the 30-meter USGS DEM. A contract has been signed to re-fly the county at the end of April, 2005 to produce twelve inch resolution, natural color orthophotography for the entire county. Deliverables are anticipated in August, 2005. Noteworthy to this project was remarkable cooperation in which Bayfield County was able to partner and cost-shared with US Park Service, US Forest Service, WDOT, WDNR, Bayfield Electric Cooperative, and Chequamegon Telephone Company resulting in reduction of redundancy, and significant cost savings realized by a collective versus individual project.
- Creation, adoption, and implementation of a strategic plan providing evaluation and needs analysis of county information processing facilities and services has resulted in the establishment and staffing of a county Information Services Department. The result includes the establishment of comprehensive intranet and internet capabilities, a county web site, and full technical support.
- Bayfield County Forestry Department has developed and implemented a GIS to assist in the management of the county's 170,000-acre forest. The strategic plan and prototype GIS recommended several years ago has grown to a robust forest management tool.
- Establishment in the Bayfield County Register of Deeds Office of an optical imaging system to digitally scan, record, and categorize all deeds and other recordable documents. Future plans also call for the retroactive scanning of instruments/documents that were recorded in the past.
- Parcel mapping is 100% complete. All unincorporated regions of the county are mapped, as well as the incorporated cities and village, and tribal lands.

Now the arduous work of property ownership map maintenance and on-going mapping improvements begins. A systematic maintenance schedule has been implemented to assure this important dataset is updated in perpetuity.

- In the past Bayfield County provided GIS and cartographic assistance to the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. We supported the creation and delivery to tribal government of over 120 GIS data sets with accompanying documentation/metadata. Red Cliff has now obtained the necessary hardware, software, and technical expertise to establish its own GIS. Bayfield County will continue to support this initiative and to share data and information.
- A benefit which directly flowed from our parcel mapping was the generation of data necessary to permit the publication of our own plat book. Now in its third edition, this 150 page plat book is current, accurate, and, uniquely, depicts all parcels in the unincorporated regions of Bayfield County. In addition to producing a better booklet, this project has served to generate program revenue.
- Establishment of a repository in the Land Records Department containing maps of survey, Public Land Survey System (PLSS) records, geodetic data, survey data, and cadastral information. This repository has now grown to approximately 3,000 maps of survey and 2,750 monument records. An innovative web program, entitled “SurveyViewer”, has been developed and is operational on the Bayfield County Land Records website that permits the viewer to interactively view these documents.
- Procurement of assorted hardware (e.g. computers, plotter, scanner, printers, engineering copier, digital camera, Compact Disk Recorder (CD-R), Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers, DVD Recorder, etc.) and software (e.g. AutoCad Map 3D, Pathfinder Office, Environment Systems Research Institute’s (ESRI’s) ArcInfo and ArcView, WISCON, MicroSoft Office Suite, etc.) necessary to fulfill land records modernization missions.
- Internet access; subscription to Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP) Internet Land Information Clearinghouse and Technical List Server Service.
- Cooperation, participation, and data sharing with local units of government. Particular involvement in town land use planning and county facilities management.

### **C. New Initiatives**

Bayfield County will embark on a number of new initiatives to modernize land records. Major proposals include:

- In an effort to move to a modern platform, to eliminate independent ‘data silos’, and to devised methods of data entry and retrieval that closely mimics established workflows, Bayfield County is comprehensively re-designing its Tax Assessment Database. This central database will contain more than traditional assessment data, (e.g. zoning districts or parcel centroid coordinates), and will, with proper safeguards, assign different parties custodial responsibility. It is anticipated that the functionality of this database will grow and mature over the duration of this plan.

- Public access to county-generated information made a quantum leap under the auspices of our previous modernization plan. We intend to build on this momentum and strive to continue to provide meaningful and timely information through an array of means from traditional hardcopy reports and maps to public kiosks to distribution of digital information on media such as CDs or DVDs to interactive web mapping services via internet. A dynamic and distributed GIS employing image and/or feature web mapping tools should be implemented to support both access to our county datasets by others and to allow our ability to access data housed on servers maintained by others.
- Akin to public access is public outreach. We will continue to share and transfer technology through training sessions to county departments, other governmental agencies, educational institutions, civic and non-profit groups, businesses, utilities, and the general public.
- Initial parcel mapping has been completed for all real property in this county. Emphasis has shifted from compilation to maintenance, updates, and improvements. To augment the aforementioned database, we will convert from a 12-digit to a 23-digit Parcel Identification Number; a task that entails modifying the PIN of some 35,000 parcels on some 2,000 property ownership maps. An additional future update will involve the calculation and assignment of more accurate acreage figures to all parcels. It is imperative we remain diligent in our commitment to maintain this significant investment and extremely important dataset. We intend, for the foreseeable future, to continue to augment in-house capabilities with contractual parcel maintenance.
- As discussed elsewhere in this document, Bayfield County has participated in aerial orthophotography projects using 1992 and 1998-2000 imagery. A new, higher resolution project is slated to be flown in 2005. Because of the immense value of this imagery to many applications and disciplines, we hope to institutionalize a policy of regularly capturing countywide orthophotography at a minimum interval of every five years.
- On a related note, in fall of 2002, oblique aerial images were taken of Bayfield County's Lake Superior shoreline in an effort to establish a baseline and document both natural and manmade coastal land use activities. In 2007, and at five-year increments thereafter, we would like to replicate the 2002 project.
- Since the inception of the Land Records Department, Bayfield County has developed significant GIS capabilities. Coincidental to this activity has been our development of an extensive intranet, as well as a growing internet, presence. We intend to use this means of communication to 'grow' our GIS enterprise and to distribute this information. In time, our goal is to have GIS become more transparent and ubiquitous in every day applications and decision making.
- Continue to hone licensing and data distribution policies. Foremost, promote strategies that allow data sharing and accessibility to all stakeholders while allowing for cost recovery, (where appropriate), safeguarding privacy, and minimizing liability.
- In 2001, 2002, and 2004 Bayfield County published its own plat book. This has proven a challenging task, but has rewarded us with a plat book that is detailed, accurate, and current. A new edition is projected for spring, 2006.

- Finally, we need to ‘stay the course’ and continue to build on a well established foundation. We have enjoyed good support from our County Board and other stakeholders; this trend needs to be continued. We need to support our many ongoing programs like maintaining the PLSS, rural addressing, cadastral mapping, map repository, forestry GIS, and optical imaging; as well as launch the creation of new datasets, implement Wireless 911, support comprehensive planning, assist and facilitate the projects of other county departments, and upgrade needed equipment.

#### **D. Custodial Responsibilities**

Bayfield County has custodial responsibilities for land information, records, and data consistent with that charged to Wisconsin counties. Custodial authority of land records is enabled by county ordinance and policy; and by State Statute, Administrative Code, and policy. Resources will continue to be allocated to improve data accuracy, completeness, timeliness, and usability. At this juncture, primary emphasis is on improving the quality and accessibility of existing land record datasets developed by Bayfield County, rather than on assuming custodial responsibility for additional land information data created by other entities/agencies.

#### **E. Foundational Elements and Statewide Standards**

##### **1. Communication, Education, Training and Facilitated Technical Assistance**

Bayfield County has Internet access and subscribes to WLIP’s Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance List Server. The development of the county intranet has permitted greater information access to county departments; the development of the county web site has permitted greater information access to other agencies and the general public.

##### **2. Geographic Reference Frameworks**

Bayfield County has completed densification of the HARN to the primary and secondary levels in a manner fulfilling WDOT and NGS standards. Additionally, Bayfield County has bluebooked with NGS all newly created stations. These geodetic Data Sheets are currently available on both the Bayfield County and NGS web sites. Bayfield County is presently cooperating with WDOT in their Height Modernization Project.

Bayfield County has established a Remonumentation Program to compensate surveyors for the perpetuation of PLSS corners. Additionally, an annual contract is let to target a specific project area for the recovery, documentation, and assignment of high order coordinate values to PLSS monuments within the project area. Standards for PLSS corner remonumentation, (e.g. SS 59.74, SS 60.84, & AE 7.08), are followed. A repository of surveys and survey monument records has been established and is housed in the Land Records Department. A web program entitled,

SurveyViewer, allows these documents to be interactively viewed via the internet. Appropriate statutes, administrative code and other applicable standards are followed.

Countywide digital orthophotographic images have been acquired. These orthophotos were created from the 1998-2000 NAPP photography. Their one-meter pixel resolution photography resides in the Bayfield County Coordinate System. A contract has been signed to re-fly the county at the end of April, 2005 to produce twelve inch resolution, natural color orthophotography for the entire county. The deliverables are anticipated in August, 2005.

Bayfield County has created a new 10-meter Digital Elevation Model. This DEM is intended to replace the 30-meter originally developed by USGS because the Level 1 30-meter DEM was developed based on a flawed technique resulting in a corrupt dataset.

Bayfield County has obtained USGS Digital Raster Graphics (DRGs) and has re-projected those raster images of the 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles into the Bayfield County Coordinate System.

Geographic reference framework data will be used to support our Wireless 911 initiative.

3. Parcel Mapping

Parcel maps, prepared to national mapping accuracy standards and WLIB's "Digital Parcel Mapping Standard", have been completed for 100% of the county. Maps are compiled using AutoCAD software. Using 'best available data' coordinate geometry is used to compile maps in the manner described in the "Bayfield County Parcel Ownership Mapping Project RFP", (on file with WLIB). All maps currently are compiled and maintained in the Bayfield County Coordinate System. Methodology has been established for creation of topologically correct maps to support a CAD to GIS conversion process. Maps are maintained in both CAD and GIS environments. Displayed on each parcel is a Parcel Identification Number (PIN) consistent with WLIB's "Parcel Identification Numbering System". In order to support the new Bayfield County Tax Assessment Database presently under development, and to add greater geographical significance to the PIN, we are presently converting from a 12-digit to a 23-digit PIN.

4. Parcel Administration

The CAD to GIS conversion of property ownership maps permits marriage of these maps to the County Tax Assessment Database facilitated by the Parcel Identification Number (PIN) residing both in the database and as a parcel label point. The assessment roll will link to the respective parcel

such data as name and address of owner, assessment information, legal description, and the WLIP-compliant PIN number. Future fields such as assigned rural addresses, zoning districts, land use codes, and parcel centroid coordinates are envisioned as parcel attributes grow.

5. Public Access

Bayfield County adheres to the Wisconsin Open Record Law and other applicable standards. It is our established policy to promote public access to all appropriate information while assuring required privacy and data security. Non-sensitive or non-proprietary records are available for nominal reproduction costs. Technologies, particularly the ability to disseminate information digitally, have greatly furthered public access.

6. Zoning Mapping

Digital Zoning District Maps have been compiled for all twenty-five Towns that comprise the unincorporated area of Bayfield County. These maps reside in a .pdf format on the county web site where they may be either viewed or downloaded. Through protocol established with the county Zoning Department, these maps are updated by the Land Records Department quarterly. Some additional maps used in zoning, such as the topographic Digital Raster Graphics (DRG's), FEMA's floodplains, and the WDNR's Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory, also exist digitally, and can be viewed on our web site via the MapViewer program.

Bayfield County has been engaged in major initiatives of town and county land use and comprehensive planning. Pdf documents of these plans are also available on the county web site. The preparation of these plans has triggered an effort to attain consistency among plans and regulatory mechanisms, like zoning codes. This process will likely result in significant code and map revisions. It is anticipated further zoning mapping modernization will follow the planning/codification effort and be implemented over the next two years.

In addition to new/revised zoning district maps and land use maps, other thematic datasets will be developed for land use planning applications such as Lake Superior shoreline recession maps, non-metallic mining sites, abandoned landfill sites, and burial sites.

7. Soils Mapping

At long last, Bayfield County is on the verge of receiving detailed soils mapping from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Reportedly, that agency has completed all field work, has digitized and mapped all soil units, has completed annotation and database design, and must now only 'certify' the data. The goal to achieve countywide soils mapping has been long anticipated and will prove invaluable for forestry

management, conservation, agricultural, and development applications. This dataset is earmarked for inclusion with the MapViewer web program.

8. Wetland Mapping

WDNR's Wisconsin Wetland Inventory mapping and data is used. Because of the enormity of the undertaking, and the nebulous nature of wetland boundaries which often necessitate field verification anyway, there is no plan to redelineate WWI wetland location and classification at this time. It is hoped that future refinement, and redelimitation on rectified aerial photography, can be addressed in a statewide initiative.

9. Institution Arrangement and Integration

Bayfield County has many data sharing agreements, (primarily informal arrangements), with a diverse group of local, state and federal agencies. Information has routinely been exchanged with US Forest Service, US Park Service, WDOT, NRCS, NWPRC, US Census Bureau, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, WDNR, BIA, local towns and cities, and regional counties. We also work routinely with local utilities, consultants, non-profits, schools and universities, and private entities. The concept of data sharing and integration is embraced.

10. Reconciled Election and Administrative Boundary System

Digital representations exist of minor civil divisions, city wards, school districts, census blocks, ambulance service areas, tribal lands, supervisory district boundaries, fire department districts, public lands, and some sanitary districts. In the future we anticipate redefinition of emergency service areas, the delineation of remaining sanitary districts, and depiction of other boundaries such as lake districts. There has been ongoing communication and cooperation with US Census. GIS played a major role in the county redistricting that resulted from the 2000 census, and will surely be an instrumental tool in future redistricting.

11. Street/Road Centerline and Addresses

In conjunction with the Rural Address/E-911 project, a county rural address grid was established, and all public roads assigned unique names. Signage and assignment of address has been completed and E-911 has been implemented. We are now committed to deploy Wireless 911. In support of existing services, like our CODY law enforcement software, and to support initiatives like Wireless 911, we have created a road centerline dataset of all roads in Bayfield County. This dataset has been attributed to include information like the road name, (in some cases, a road alias name), and the road type. Also assigned to each road segment is geocoded data providing the 'range of addresses' for that segment in a manner consistent with the rural addressing grid as defined in the

“Bayfield County Address System Ordinance”. The successful acceptance of our Wireless 911 Grant will allow increasing the horizontal positional accuracy of our road centerline data, as well development of ancillary data such as accurate road/driveway coordinates, structure documentation/coordinates, and road address sign verification & inventory.

12. Land Use Mapping

Bayfield County has completed a county land use plan. This project was completed under a contract with Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The land use mapping completed under the scope of this planning project proved to be in need of refinement to both clarify intent and to achieve consistency with the land use plans of other units of Town and City government. As discussed under “Item #6, Zoning Mapping”, this process will likely result in significant code and map revisions. Furthermore, as Bayfield County transitions from a land use plan to a comprehensive plan, additional mapping will be required. The Land Records Department will continue to serve as a county mapping resource. We also intend to continue to extend outreach and assistance to local towns and cities in the preparation of existing landuse and proposed landuse maps based on locally generated classification schemes. All planning documents and maps, as has been our established practice, will be converted to .pdf documents and shall be made available on the county web site.

13. Natural Resources

Bayfield County has acquired or developed several datasets to further natural resources related management decisions. Some examples include Wisconsin Initiative for Statewide Cooperation on Landscape Analysis and Data (WISCLAND) rural land cover, Digital Raster Graphics, Bayfield County Forest stands and compartments, original vegetation land cover, surficial deposits, 1:24,000 scale hydrography, partial 1:12,000 scale hydrography, watersheds, slope/contours/topography, floodplains, and wetlands. This type of spatial data has been assimilated into the county GIS. Future natural resource data, like soils, forest trails, and sixth level watershed delineations, will be incorporated in the future.

14. Data Base Design

Bayfield County has traditionally used a HP3000 platform for such databases as tax roll/assessment, general ledger, and accounting. The emergence of the ability to network increasingly powerful PCs and increasingly useful application software has led to the planned retirement of the soon to be obsolescent HP, and migration to a windows based server/client environment. To that end, Bayfield County has joined a five-county consortium to develop a new Tax Assessment Database,

programmed in Visual Basic and designed to mimic the workflow and needs of those who use it. Strict data entry protocol, assigned custodial responsibilities, designated access, security policies, and scrubbing of existing data will serve to produce, and promote, data with a high degree of quality control and assure. The ‘Real Property piece’ is currently being beta tested by member counties and is slated to go ‘on-line’ later this year; the ‘Treasurer’s piece’ will follow soon thereafter. This project will adhere to applicable database design standards and data exchange standards, and, of course, employ a Parcel Identification Number (PIN) consistent with WLIP’s “Parcel Identification Numbering System”. Future plans call for a web component to serve and distribute information extracted from this database, as well as the development of unique forms for easy extraction of desired information by internal users.

15. Infrastructure and Facility Management

Bayfield County currently uses digital maps of county buildings for facility management purposes. Specific facility management applications include office/space allocation, emergency evacuation routes, and WAN and LAN wiring schematics. Examples of infrastructure management include the mapping of all communication towers and the mapping and documentation of all culverts associated with county roads. Future projects include mapping all county highway information and regulatory signs, documenting mailboxes adjacent to county highways, capturing the location of recreational trails, and mapping other GASB components.

**F. Integration and Cooperation**

Bayfield County has a letter of agreement with WDNR and US Forest Service; and contribution agreements with NRCS, NWRPC, and Coastal Management. Typically, however, the county enters into less formal agreements to develop and exchange information and data. Bayfield County currently participates and partners with many agencies, public and private, and is committed to further integration and cooperation as the land records modernization effort matures.

**G. Administrative Standards Not Associated With Foundational Elements**

1. Bayfield County agrees to observe and follow the statutes relating to the Wisconsin Land Information Program and other relevant statutes.
2. Bayfield County agrees to permit the Wisconsin Land Information Board access to books, records, and projects for inspection and audit including unannounced audits by the Board.
3. Bayfield County agrees to complete the Annual WLIP Survey.
4. Bayfield County agrees to update the plan every five years and in the interim if the plan should change.

5. The Board agrees to facilitate technical assistance to the county including an on-line Technical Assistance Service.
6. The Board agrees to maintain and distribute an inventory of land information and land information systems for the state. This will be provided through an electronic Clearinghouse.
7. Development and implementation of an acceptable Plan confers certain benefits on local government within a county, including continued eligibility for Program funding. A voluntary peer review process will be used to assess Plan acceptability by the land information community.
8. The Board agrees to review funding requests and to provide guidance to local government with respect to the development of such requests.
9. The Board agrees to make available electronically an Annual Report regarding the status of the Wisconsin Land Information Program and the activities of the Board.