

# BROWN COUNTY Environmental Corridors



## Elements of Environmental Corridors:

**Wetlands with 50-Foot Buffer**  
(two acres or greater in size)

**Floodplains**

**Areas of Steep Slope** (12 percent or greater)

**Surface Water with 75-Foot Setback**

**Waterways**  
(Lakes, Rivers, Flowages)



## What are Environmental Corridors?

Environmental corridors (also know as “green infrastructure”) refer to an interconnected green space network of natural areas and features, public lands, and other open spaces that provide natural resource value.

Environmental corridor planning is a process that promotes a systematic and strategic approach to land conservation and encourages land-use planning and practices that are good for both nature and people. It provides a framework to guide future growth, land development, and land conservation decisions that accommodate population growth and protect community and natural resources assets.

For more information about environmental corridors, download *Bay-Lake Regional Environmental Corridors* (BLRPC, 2005) from the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission website at [www.baylakerpc.org/env\\_corridors.html](http://www.baylakerpc.org/env_corridors.html).



For its environmental corridor planning efforts, the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission has been recognized as a *Regional Center of Excellence* by the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) in Washington, D.C.

## Benefits of Protecting Environmental Corridors

### ECOLOGICAL

- Protects and enhances the quality of waterways and riparian areas
- Recharges groundwater aquifers
- Filters pollutants from air, water, and soil
- Provides connections to maintain biodiversity
- Maintains cool water streams through shading
- Reduces greenhouse emissions and concentrations through carbon storage and sequestration, thereby limiting the effects of climate change
- Buffers developed areas from floodwaters, saving lives and property

### ECONOMIC

- Provides improved quality of life, which encourages corporate relocation to an area
- Increases tourism and new business generation, such as bed and breakfasts, rental facilities, restaurants, and art galleries
- Increases property values and overall community revenue because properties near and adjacent to environmental corridors often increase in value
- Attracts environmentally sensitive development, and businesses, which has great appeal for many homeowners

### SOCIAL

- Expands recreational opportunities
- Improves human health and helps ease mental fatigue
- Enhances local residents' sense of connection with nature and to each other
- Provides access to large green spaces for urban residents and visitors

Thank you to NARC for assistance in funding this brochure, to the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program for helping to fund environmental corridor planning in the Bay-Lake Region, and to Kristine Gay (BLRPC) for brochure design.



Environmental corridors encompass a wide variety of natural and restored native ecosystems and landscape features, including wetlands, floodplains, waterways, woodlands, wildlife habitats, public lands (such as federal, state, county, and local parks, and natural and scientific areas), and other open spaces (such as viewsheds and greenways).

With the many benefits that environmental corridors afford people and communities, implementing environmental corridor protection is recommended to facilitate their preservation. Environmental corridors can be protected through community planning, ordinances, and zoning; conservation easements; and public acquisition.

# Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission



## ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

[www.baylakerpc.org/env\\_corridors.html](http://www.baylakerpc.org/env_corridors.html)



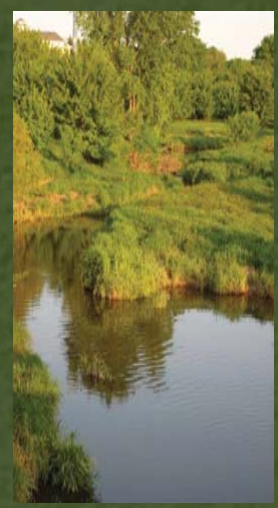
### AREAS OF STEEP SLOPE:



Areas of steep slope are defined as highly erodible areas of land with a slope of 12 percent or greater. Keeping vegetation intact in areas of steep slope will help improve water quality by reducing sediment runoff into waterways. Areas of steep slope are mapped by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### WATERWAYS:

Waterways are defined as navigable bodies of water, including lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and flowages. Waterways provide many diverse benefits including fish and wildlife habitat, municipal drinking water supply, water purification, soil regeneration, and groundwater recharge. Waterways are mapped by U.S. Geological Survey.



### WATERWAY SETBACK:

A 75-foot setback from navigable waterways. Waterway setbacks protect riparian vegetation and improve water quality by providing a transition zone between the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to filter pollutants and reduce sediment in runoff. Setbacks also dissipate the energy of flowing runoff water, thereby reducing erosion potential.

### WETLANDS:

Wetlands include areas of land two acres or greater in size where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions. Wetlands include swamps, marshes, fens, and bogs. Wetlands filter pollutants, facilitate infiltration and groundwater recharge, and are considered the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems. Wetland inventories have been developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

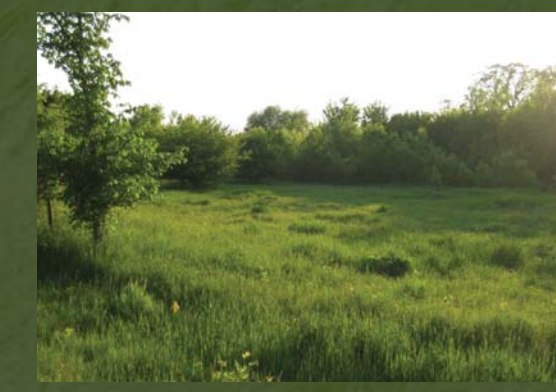


### WETLAND BUFFER:

A 50-foot buffer around all mapped wetlands. Buffer areas surrounding wetlands supplement the wetland's ability to filter runoff pollutants, which is especially vital for wetlands with a direct groundwater connection. Wetland buffers also increase the flood control benefits of wetlands by offering additional storage capacity after the wetland has filled with water. All of these functions become increasingly important as the landscape becomes developed and runoff volumes increase.

### FLOODPLAINS:

Floodplains include flat or nearly flat land adjacent to a waterway that experiences occasional or periodic flooding. It includes the floodway (comprised of the stream channel and adjacent areas that carry flood flows) and the floodfringe (comprised of the areas that would be covered by the "100-year flood"). Floodplains provide areas for flood storage and conveyance of water during flood events, prevent streambank erosion by reducing flood velocities and peaks, filter pollutants, and reduce sediment in runoff. Floodplains are inventoried on Flood Insurance Rate Maps by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



### SECONDARY ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS:

Secondary environmental corridors include county-identified features for which inventory data is not consistently available across the whole region. Some secondary environmental corridor features include:

- State-identified scientific and natural areas
- Important habitat areas or corridors
- Wetlands smaller than two acres in size
- State and Federal wildlife areas
- Groundwater recharge areas
- Wetland mitigation sites
- Woodlands
- Public lands
- Unique geologic features, such as the Niagara Escarpment (pictured)

