



A Report from the North Fork Pheasant Branch Watershed Committee

Information and recommendations for:

- Watershed Residents
- Town, City and County Officials
- Municipal and County Planning Staff
- Development Permitting Personnel
- Developers, Contractors, and Bankers
- Any Other Interested Citizens

March 1999

Coming Together For The Future

Land use planning issues often polarize community groups, pitting farmers, developers, businesses, local units of government, taxpayers, enforcement agencies and environmentalists against one another to the point where civil communication seems impossible. Such conflicts usually result in battles where one side wins and others lose. This report describes a decision-making process in which many of these interest groups worked together to develop a land use plan where almost everyone won.

The fifty people who participated in this process are proud of their accomplishment and eager to share their results with others. Although their disparate interests are the fuel on which conflict thrives, these individuals committed themselves to a series of meetings. Over the course of several months, they developed respect for other views, gained new perspectives on old problems and, to their credit, became friends who wanted to share a common vision.



Pheasant Branch Marsh, just below the springs

The focus of their efforts is the Pheasant Branch Watershed, a 23-square-mile area which drains into Lake Mendota. Prior to settlement, precipitation falling on the North and South Forks of this watershed drained into a large wetland that formed on what was once Glacial Lake Middleton. This area is now a flood plain along Airport Road in the Town and City of Middleton, Wisconsin.

Early settlers drained the wetland depression and channelized Pheasant Branch in the 1800s in order to harvest peat and farm the old lake bed. These activities greatly diminished the flood plain's ability to stabilize downstream flows, protect water quality and recharge groundwater.* Modern development in the flood plain and greater demand for municipal water threatens further to reduce groundwater supplies and increase streambank erosion.

What happens in the watershed today will have a significant impact on the volume of groundwater flowing from the Pheasant Branch springs, the ecological health of Pheasant Branch Marsh and the quality of water in our wells and Lake Mendota.

[To see a full copy of this report click on this link.](#)