

Changes to Land Use Plans

Plans constitute the backbone of local land use decision-making by setting out long term goals and a vision for how a community will grow. They can be comprehensive in scope or focus on particular community issues or resources such as economic development or open space protection. Regardless of the type, community land use plans act as a guide to a community's priorities and objectives. NEMO programs are working with communities to help ensure that their plans reflect their interest in protecting natural resources.



Falls at the headwaters of the Eightmile River in Devil's Hopyard State Park, Connecticut.

► **Colorado:** AWARE Colorado (the CO NEMO effort) participated in the Fountain Creek Vision Task Force. This multi-stakeholder effort resulted in a **comprehensive watershed plan** for the 930-square-mile watershed that addresses water resource impacts of land use and development.

► **Connecticut:** The towns of Killingworth and Killingly and the city of Torrington all made changes to their **comprehensive plans** to include strategies to protect water quality. The towns of Morris, Killingworth and North Stonington created new **open space plans**. The towns of East Haddam, Salem and Lyme jointly adopted the Eightmile River **Watershed Management Plan** to help protect the quality of the watershed.

► **Georgia:** Towns County is including several of the model principles from the Tennessee Growth Readiness (the TN NEMO effort) workshop series in their **comprehensive plan**. Towns County is implementing an innovative new **Appalachian Conservation Development Incentive Program for conservation-based subdivision development**. The Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition worked with the Towns County conservation board to design the program's required practices, based on

the Tennessee Growth Readiness workshop recommendations. The County also produced a DVD that highlights a local developer's experience with clustering building lots and green space to save mountainous areas/provide visual protection.

► **Indiana:** Through Planning with POWER (the IN NEMO effort) Porter County adopted **traditional neighborhood design guidelines** developed at a two-day design charrette facilitated by U.S. EPA and Planning with POWER. The guidelines encourage compact, walkable, mixed use design that protects open space and natural resources within the development tract.

► **Indiana:** Planning with POWER facilitated the establishment of a special Land Use Planning Committee in Jasper County that looked at updating



IN NEMO is helping communities form local committees to address natural resource issues in land use planning. (Photo courtesy of Planning with POWER.)

the comprehensive land use plan and zoning ordinances to address rural residential housing, large agricultural operations and water/septic issues in the county. Based on recommendations from that process, Jasper County is **updating their**



comprehensive land use plan including ordinance revisions that address agricultural land, natural resources, water quality, septic issues, economic development, and other priorities.

- ▶ **Kansas:** KS NEMO was instrumental in the development of a **watershed management plan** for the city of Olathe to protect Lake Olathe. The plan was adopted by the city council for inclusion in the city’s master plan. The plan includes recommendations for protection of important natural resources, requiring either limits on the amount of impervious surface or best management practices that reduce alteration of hydrologic impacts, riparian buffer preservation/creation to protect streams from impacts from urban runoff.
- ▶ **Maine:** A ME NEMO presentation on open space planning in Raymond catalyzed the community to develop an **open space plan** that was based on the presentations recommendations. According to the city, “Our approach drew significantly on your presentation and helped spring us into action!”
- ▶ **Minnesota:** After working with Northland NEMO educators, the city of Duluth completed a **natural resource inventory** as part of their **comprehensive plan** revision, and designated protection areas in their future land use map based on mitigating forest fragmentation, trout stream impacts, steep

slopes, and other criteria. Duluth is now working on developing **form-based codes** based on their comprehensive plan.

- ▶ **Minnesota:** Northland NEMO hosted a planning charrette that produced a **plan of development** for a 100 acre site alongside a trout stream within the city of Duluth. The plan included several areas



Northland NEMO hosted a planning charrette to create a plan of development for a 100 acre site. (Photo courtesy of Jesse Schomberg.)

that had been targeted for preservation in the city’s new comprehensive plan. Existing zoning permits 36 units, with an estimated 10.4 acres of impervious surface, but the final charrette plan allows for 42 units clustered on 30 acres, with only 4.7 acres of impervious surface. All

units are adjacent to an existing neighborhood with transit lines and neighborhood commercial services. The proposed preservation areas were protected by this design as well.

- ▶ **Minnesota:** After a Northland NEMO presentation about natural resource-based planning, the city of Medina formed an **open space task force** to develop the **open space plan** component of their comprehensive land use plan, and enacted a 6-month

moratorium on new development. The task force recommended adoption of the plan by the comprehensive plan committee and portions were included in the current draft version of the comprehensive plan. The open space plan called for the development or updates of the following ordinances: **natural resource design standards; conservation development ordinance; establishment of a local purchase of development rights program;** and minor adjustments of the **Park and Trail Dedication Ordinance**. Currently, they are working on these ordinance provisions.

- **Nevada:** After participating in NV NEMO workshops, Washoe County’s **comprehensive plan** was revised to incorporate low impact development and stormwater protection into the conservation element.



The city of Reno, Nevada is encouraging LID practices, such as this grass swale, to be used in all new development.

- **Nevada:** The North Valley of Reno’s **specific area plan**, which is used to guide development in different areas of the city, requires consideration of infiltration best management practices and low impact development practices for all new development.

- **New Hampshire:** One of the communities NROC (the NH NEMO effort) worked with, Wakefield, commissioned and participated in the development of a **water resources chapter for their master plan**. They are currently working on an implementation plan for that chapter.

- **Oregon:** OR NEMO provided assistance to the cities of Wheeler and Sutherlin to help them create **stormwater master plans**.
- **South Carolina:** The town of Surfside Beach is incorporating pond management strategies learned in SC NEMO stormwater education workshops, including vegetated buffers and maintenance activities, into its **stormwater management plan**.



A stakeholder survey at Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership Meeting. (Photo courtesy of Susan Benner.)

- **Texas:** Inspired by TX NEMO, stakeholders within the Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership have put together a **watershed protection plan**. The plan will serve as a road map in the present

and future protection of the watershed. This plan identifies the present state of the watershed, pollutants found in the watershed and possible sources, as well as suggestions for actions to mitigate these water quality issues.

- **Texas:** The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership completed their **watershed protection plan** with assistance from TX NEMO. Incorporation of wetlands into the treatment train of local wastewater treatment plants was one new critical practice introduced through the plan. The plan is final and implementation is well underway with several new funded grant projects.

Spotlight on South Carolina

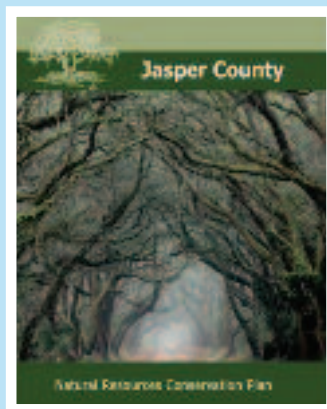
Jasper County's Natural Resources Conservation Plan

Under the NEMO mantra of natural resource-based planning, communities are encouraged to (1) conduct an inventory of natural and community resources, (2) use the inventory in developing both open space and economic development plans, and then (3) integrate all of that into a community's comprehensive plan. SC NEMO's work with Jasper County epitomizes this approach.

Jasper County is a predominantly rural county of 24,000 people just outside of Savannah, Georgia with abundant natural and cultural resources. In the face of tremendous projected growth, local officials and residents were concerned that the county's planning policies and zoning ordinances were ill-equipped to adequately balance the expected growth with protection of the area's natural resources.

SC NEMO, in collaboration with numerous partners, helped convene a county-wide conservation planning effort. The effort included more than 100 stakeholders representing local and regional government officials and staff, state and federal resource agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, local businesses, private landowners and concerned citizens. The effort was timely in that it was undertaken just as the county began revising the county-wide comprehensive plan.

The first step in this conservation effort was to conduct a **natural resource inventory** to assess the natural resource and conservation assets and needs of the county. The inventory was then used to set community conservation goals in the **Jasper County**



Jasper County, South Carolina created a natural resources inventory which serves as a guidebook for community resource protection, development planning and the preservation of quality of life.

Natural Resources Conservation Plan. The plan identifies fragile ecosystems and other priority areas for protection; provides innovative solutions for protecting them; assists with directing future growth to appropriate areas; and in general, serves as a guidebook for residents, developers and local officials on how to preserve the rich heritage and quality of life in the county.

The stakeholder involvement helped provide strong support for the conservation plan. In fact, the entire natural resources conservation plan was included as an appendix to the county's revised comprehensive plan and many of the goals, objectives and strategies were integrated into the natural resources element of the comprehensive plan.