



Town of
Pine River
Wisconsin

Comprehensive Plan
2019

DRAFT COPY
6/3/2019

prepared by:
Loretta Baughan
(715) 539-0863

TOWN OF PINE RIVER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Town Board

William Zeitz, Chair
Chair

David Breunig, Supervisor
Steve Uttech, Supervisor

Planning & Zoning Committee

Loretta Baughan, Chair
Merrilee DuPlayee
Kathy Gruetzmacher
Roselin Hagedorn
Darlene Herdt

Town Attorney

Randy Frokjer

Town Clerk

Amanda Herdt

Town Treasurer

Donna Opper

Roads Maintenance Supervisor

Brian Opper

Town Zoning Administrator

Loretta Baughan

Pine River Fire Chief

John Uttech

These individuals, along with the participation of many other community residents, contributed to the creation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Each member of the Town Board and the Planning and Zoning Committee wish to express their gratitude and appreciation for everyone who attended meetings and all of those who expressed their views during the process.

A special recognition is due to Town Chair, William Zeitz, for his faithful leadership, loyalty to the residents, devotion to public service, integrity, passion, and fidelity to the Constitution.

Bill departed this life on May 23, 2019. He will be missed.

Adopted [--month--year--]



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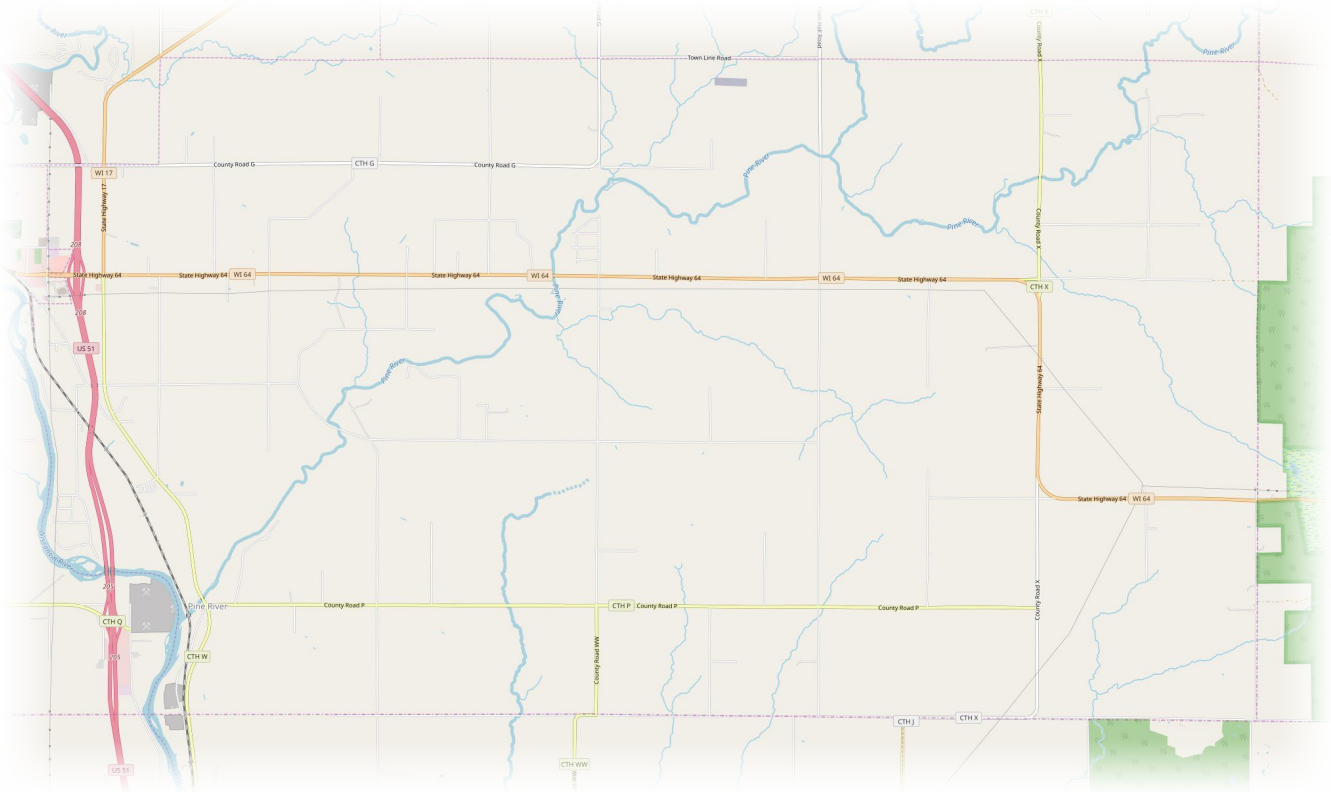
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1876, the Town of Pine River is located in the southeast corner of Lincoln County, Wisconsin, and encompasses an area of approximately 64.3 square miles.

The City of Merrill is directly west of the Town, which is situated 15 miles north of the City of Wausau. Other bordering municipalities which are also located in Lincoln County include the Towns of Schley, Merrill, and Scott on the north and west. To the south lie the Towns of Texas and Hewitt in Marathon County, and to the east is the Town of Ackley in Langlade County.



Town of Pine River
source: OpenStreetMap

PREVIOUS PLAN

Town of Pine River Land Use Plan

On May 1, 2001, the Town Board approved the Town's first land use plan in order to comply with the the State's *1999 Comprehensive Planning Law*. At that time, the Town's plan was expected to prelude full participation in County zoning.

However, in 2003 with a newly elected Town Board and Chair, the decision was made to withdraw from County zoning and to become Town zoned, instead. This meant the Town was prepared to accept the responsibility for enforcement, as well. A new Planning and Zoning Committee was appointed and the process began which utilized resident involvement and input as the Town created it's own independent zoning ordinances. The resulting framework has served the Town and its residents extremely well.

POPULATION

Over a span of the past thirty years, the Town of Pine River's population steadily increased, that is, up until the 2009 Recession which hit this area hard. Since then, the Town's population has not recouped the loss it suffered, however it has demonstrated stability all be it with a general lack of significant growth.

30-year Population Data

	1987	1990*	1997	2000*	2002	2007	2009	2010*	2018
all residents	1,328	1,552	1,711	1,877	1,932	1,964	1,982	1,869	1,874
children 0-17		467		506				387	370
adults 18-64		936		1,200				1,208	1,116**
seniors 65+		149		171				274	388**
all adults 18+		1,085		1,371				1,482	1,504
median age		31.8*		37.0*				46.0*	

sources: Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center; *US Census Bureau; **American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-year average overview of age distribution percentage applied to 2018 WI DOA data

According to the *North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Regional Livability Plan (2015)*, between the years of 2000-2010 Lincoln County sustained an outbound migration amounting to a loss of 42% of its population of young people who were between 20-29 years of age. As these young families relocated to other cities and states seeking employment



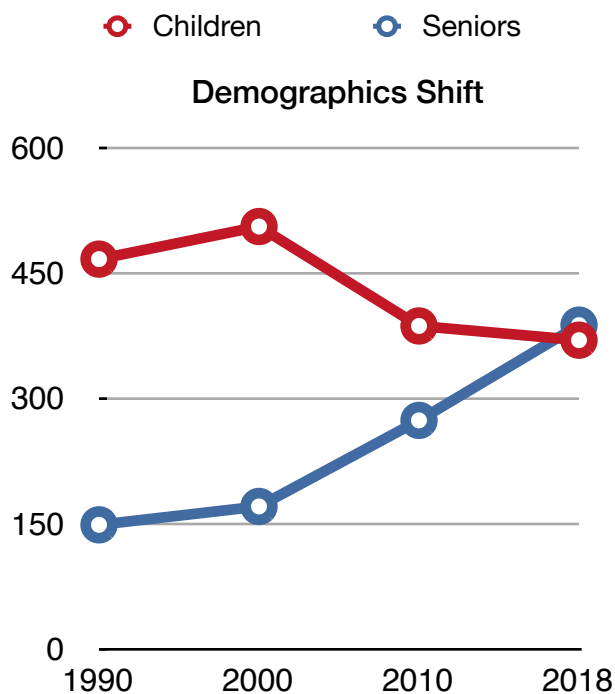
opportunities, the impact was felt by the local public schools, resulting in an alarming level of declining enrollment. The impact amounted to an approximate a one-third loss of K-12 students physically in attendance in district classrooms since their peak enrollment in 1998. Due to the slow economic recovery, over time these young families became well established in their careers, schools, and new communities with very few returning to this region.

As a direct result of the 2009 Recession, the Town of Pine River experienced a sudden drop of 113 persons, which effectively erased a decade of population gains.

Meanwhile, the number of children, which in 1990 outnumbered seniors by more than a three to one margin, has shifted. (With the assistance of the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) statistician, 2018 age bracket calculations were completed.)

An occurrence of a demographics flip is evidenced as the 2010 Census identified a child to senior ratio of 387:274 while the most current data set this ratio at 370:388, demonstrating the population shift and supporting the phenomena of an aging population.

For the first time, the Town has *more* senior citizens than children. The trend has become a new reality.



source: Wisconsin DOA; US Census Bureau; and American Community Survey

Over time, previously published US Census Bureau data median age projections bears out the shift in age groups. In the 1990 Census, the median age was 31.8, rising to 37 years by 2000, while the most current census figures available (2010) set that number at 46 years. Comparably, the 2010 average state-wide was 38.5 years of age.

The good news is the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population projections demonstrate an expectation for the Town of Pine River to fully regain its Recession losses by 2025 and the state estimates by the year 2030 the Town's population will grow to more than 2,000 residents. However the state's projected demographic make up

for the Town is expected to remain on an aging trajectory.

Similar to the majority of Wisconsin's northern counties, the State predicts a greater portion of Lincoln County residents, perhaps as high as 33.7%, will fall into the age category of 65 or older by the year 2040, significantly up and nearly doubled from the 18.3% figure in 2010.

How will aging demographics impact the Town?

The aging demographic issue has already affected the Town in that there are less people involved in traditional dairy farming so there has been a transition to a more diversified array of crops raised and land uses.

In addition to the native aging population, retirees and soon-to-be retirees from other areas are purchasing properties and retirement homes within the Town. It is an attractive location due to its natural beauty, excellent quality of life, and favorable proximity to the nearby cities of Wausau and Merrill for convenient shopping, a wide array of medical services, cultural activities, and various entertainment venues. The Town of Pine River is an ideal place for active retirees to enjoy their golden years.

This influx of adults who are age 55+ with disposable income can provide an attractive opportunity for savvy business investment within the Town to cater to this expanding demographic.

Perhaps the most significant concern of many older residents is their access to health care. Fortunately, the Town of Pine River's location is particularly beneficial to an aging population because residents have easy access to a variety of choices in health care ranging from traditional medical professionals to chiropractic care as well as various alternative options. Available options include: private practice physicians, several chiropractic clinics, dentists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthopedic, massage, speech, and physical therapy services which are available at Merrill with many additional providers located within the nearby region.

Aspirus and Marshfield each operate well-staffed satellite health care clinics at Merrill while augmenting patients' needs with a full spectrum of specialists and hospital facilities located nearby in the greater Wausau area. Merrill's Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital also serves the community.



A majority of senior citizens within the Town choose to remain in their own homes living independently. Some may manage to do so with their family's assistance, if necessary. Elderly community members without the benefit of other family members residing nearby may find it more challenging to age in place.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin (ADRC) operates a branch office at Merrill serving all Lincoln County residents. The ADRC is the local agency which oversees Meals for Seniors, provides reliable information on the availability of a variety of community resources, individual benefits, healthy living classes, medical equipment lending, as well as offering excellent caregiver support and education services for community members.

Home medical equipment and supplies are available for purchase at various locations in Merrill. These items can also be ordered over the internet for home delivery. Currently, the availability of businesses or individuals providing in-home assistance or private nursing care are very limited and difficult to find, if at all.

There are several assisted living or nursing care facilities located at Merrill and within the surrounding communities, including the newly expanded Pine Crest Nursing Home, which specializes in long-term dementia care and also offers short-term physical rehabilitation

services for adults. This facility is operated by Lincoln County and is subsidized by local tax revenues.

As the Town of Pine River's aging population increases, there will undoubtedly be an even greater need for these and other ancillary services. Perhaps the silver lining is that new businesses to meet these growing needs will also provide employment opportunities, which in turn, will naturally attract younger people and their families into the area.

HOUSING

According to American Community Survey data collected by the US Census Bureau, there are 851 housing units located within the Town, 802 of which are occupied. Of the total housing units, 718 are single family units, 93 are mobile homes, and 40 are duplex or apartment type units.

There are 697 homes which are owner-occupied while 105 are reported as renter-occupied. The average household size is 2.36 people for owner-occupied homes and 2.35 residing in rentals. Owner inhabited single family housing is predominant throughout the Town.

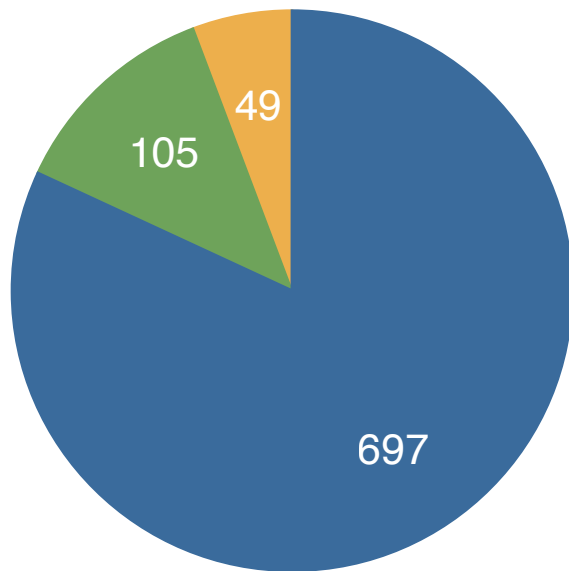
The median value of an owner-occupied home in the Town was \$163,200 with owners paying mortgages on 376 properties while 321 homes were owned free and clear. The average rental cost in the Town of Pine River is \$753 per month.

Several housing subdivisions are located within the Town's western sector. North of State Highway 64 with easy access to this major thoroughfare are found the following

housing subdivisions: Zastrowland at Short Avenue; the Renken Addition which is visible from State Highway 64 and is accessed from Range Line Road; plus Breckenridge on Monterey Drive. Refer to *Town of Pine River Existing Land Use map* (pg 27).

- owner occupied ● renter occupied
- unoccupied

Housing in the Town of Pine River



source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimate per US Census Bureau

There are two residential subdivisions which are southeast of the US Highway 51 / State Highway 64 interchange.

Approximately four miles to the east is Whispering Woods on the Pine which is nestled along the thickly wooded southern bank of the peaceful Pine River between Hillview and Center Roads. This development is found a short distance north from Center Road with all-season paved access provided by Pine River Road.

The second of these subdivisions is located just southeast of the intersection of County W and Center Road. Homes in the Briarwood development are tucked into the woods on generously sized lots along a picturesque winding road.

Clusters of housing developments are found west of US Highway 51 and south of State Road 64 within the Town of Pine River's western most region.

The northernmost development is the Birch Acres Addition which abuts the west side of Big Eddy Road. Along the far western section of Center Road are River Meadows Estates, Sun Ridge Acres, plus E. L. Sunset Acres on the riverfront of the Wisconsin River Road. Further south from these subdivisions lies G. H. Majestic Pines and another sizable unnamed development also fronting along the Wisconsin River.

There are a limited number of duplex style housing units which are mostly scattered within the far western region of the Town. Although some manufactured or mobile homes are found throughout rural areas, only one trailer park is located and operating within the Town of Pine River. It is known as Deer Run Estates, which is on County W at the intersection of Deer Run Avenue.

Due to the rural vacancy rate, the Town has no plans to sponsor or support any low income housing.

POVERTY

The poverty rate for residents within the Town is set at 8.7% according to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey. For families with children, 5.7% are estimated to be below the poverty level. Among residents who are 65 or older, 8% are living below the poverty line.

EDUCATION

Children residing within the Town of Pine River generally attend public, online charter, or private parochial schools in nearby Merrill or Wausau. Homeschooling is another alternative chosen by some families.

The former Pine River Elementary school is located on the western section of State Highway 64, just east of the Highways 51 / 64 interchange. This small, neighborhood rural elementary school had previously been operated by the Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) but was closed in 2011, at which time the

facility was converted to house the district's Head Start preschool program.

2017 Educational Attainment Data

25 yrs or older	total	males	females
less than 9th grade	32	27	5
9-12 no diploma	81	51	30
high school grad	567	315	252
college, no degree	251	132	119
associate's degree	167	78	89
bachelor's degree	178	75	103
graduate or professional degree	110	47	63

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

The Town of Pine River is within an easy commuting distance to several options in higher education: Northcentral Technical College, Rasmussen College, State College of Beauty, and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at Wausau are all conveniently located at Wausau. Also in the nearby region are Globe University at Rothschild along with Nicolet Area Technical College at Rhinelander.

Adults who are 25 or older and are residents of the Town tend to be well educated with 91.8% having earned a high school diploma or college degree.

EMPLOYMENT

Residents are employed in a wide variety of industry sectors and unemployment in the Town of Pine River is generally low.

Due to the Town's close proximity to the Cities of Wausau and Merrill, its residents are fortunate to enjoy convenient access to the area's major employment markets. In addition, community

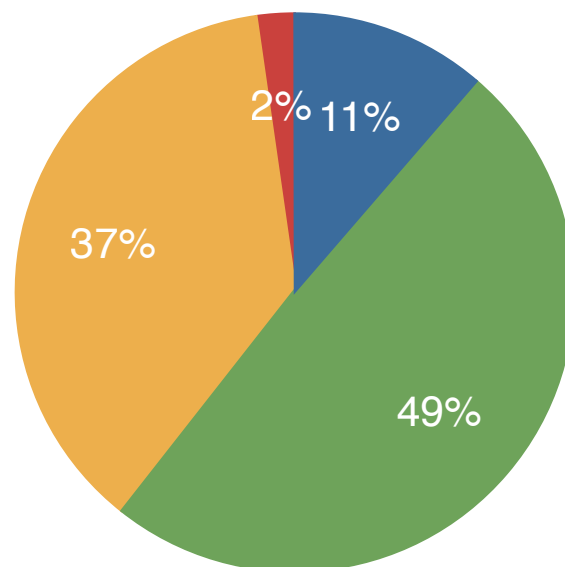
members benefit by job opportunities at businesses located within the Town or in smaller neighboring municipalities. The creative spirit of entrepreneurship is alive and active with self-employment serving as another means of livelihood for residents.

All things considered, the Town's unemployment rate of 3.7%, for those who are age 16 or older, closely mirrors the national rate. (per October 2018 data).

Data indicates 11.3% of employed residents worked within the Town of Pine River and 49.3% worked elsewhere in Lincoln County, while 37.1% commuted to work in another county. In addition to these locations, 2.2% of residents' workplaces were outside of the state of Wisconsin.



Where Residents Are Employed



source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

Drilling down into the data reveals Town of Pine River residents procure employment within a broad scope of classifications. Careers in (1) management, (2) office or administration support, (3) production, (4) sales, and (5) transportation rounding out the top five categories employing 494 people combined. This is nearly half the total amount employed at 998 people.

2017 Employment Sector Data

employment category	number of residents
management	123
office & administration support	123
production	99
sales	90
transportation	59
construction	55
installation, maintenance & repair	51
material moving	49
business & financial	47
education, training & library	40
food preparation & serving	34
health practitioners	33
healthcare support	32
personal care services	32
buildings & grounds maintenance	30
farming, fishing & forestry	19
architecture & engineering	16
community & social services	16
health technologists & technicians	16
computer & mathematical	14
arts, entertainment, sports & media	9
protective services, fire fighters & law	7
life, physical & social science	4
Civilian employed population:	998

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

INCOME

The 2013-2017 American Community Survey, identified the average annual earnings for adult residents in the Town of Pine River, who were at least 25 years or older, at \$33,182. This source of data further estimates Town residents' median household annual income at \$56,875 (2017).

2017 Median Earnings Data

25 yrs or older	total	males	females
median earnings	\$33,182	\$42,264	\$30,196
high school grad	\$30,000	\$40,667	\$23,750
some college or associate's degree	\$35,474	\$42,500	\$31,509
bachelor's degree	\$31,750	\$79,583	\$30,662
graduate or professional degree	\$77,614	\$73,929	\$78,295

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

VETERANS

Patriotism and a strong sense of pride in fulfilling a duty to serve in the military is evident among Town of Pine River residents.

The American Community Survey indicates there are 122 veterans who live in the Town, accounting for 8.2% of the total population.

Nearly 40% of resident veterans served during the Vietnam era and 19% participated in the Korean War. The remaining are Gulf War veterans with 9.8% who served between 8/1990-8/2001 and another 9.8% with military service since 9/2001.

CEMETERIES

There are four cemeteries located within the Town. Springbrook is on the south side of State Highway 64. St Paul's and Calvary are both located on Center Road, and St James is found on High Ridge Road, just north of the intersection with Center Road. Refer to *Town of Pine River Existing Land Use map* (pg 27).

CHAPTER TWO NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND USE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Geography

The geography of the Town of Pine River consists of 64 square miles of land and 0.3 square miles of water for a total area of 64.3 square miles per US Census Bureau data.



Topography

The Town of Pine River is located within the Northern Highland region of Wisconsin and is at an elevation of 1,510 feet above sea level.

A patchwork of forestry, grasslands, and farms tied together with sparkling rivers and meandering streams blanket the rolling hills, creating a beautiful and peaceful landscape of rural vistas.

Soils

Soils vary across the Town but are primarily various types of silt loam. Lesser amounts of soils are classified by the USDA as having the

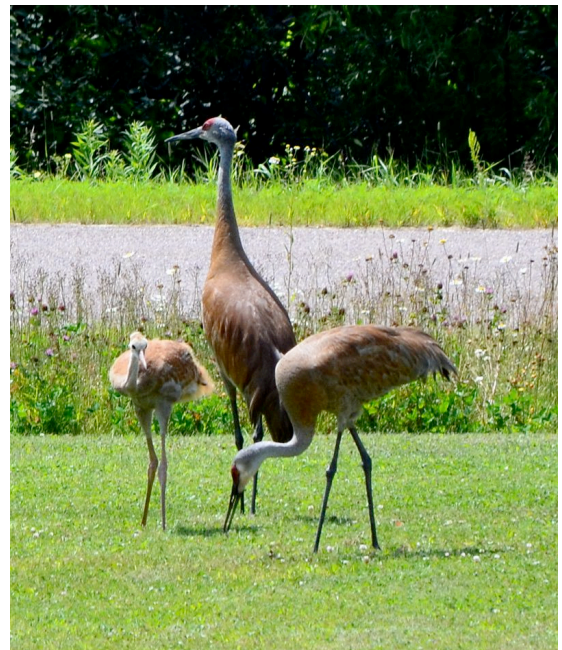
composition of muck, sandy loam, very stony, loam, gravel, peat, or sand. The National Commodity Crop Productivity Index ranks most of the Town's soils as having "moderate inherent productivity". For specifics, see the *T-Pine River Soils* map (pg 26).

Climate

The Town's four seasons climate is continental consisting of long, frigid winters and pleasantly warm summers with refreshing cool nights.

Winter snow retreats as days become longer heralding spring sunshine and warm rains which dress fields and woodlands in blossoms and greenery. Summer is savored with a tasty array of seasonal fresh produce, an abundance of bird and wildlife watching, and starry skies which sparkle like diamonds overhead. As the harvest is gathered, Autumn paints the countryside with a brilliant kaleidoscope of jewel tones, from mid-September continuing until mid-October. Invariably, when the last leaf falls, cold winds warn of the approach of winter.

Quite often, temperatures will sharply plummet before the ground has received much, if any, insulating snow cover. Consequently, winter frost can penetrate as deep as 70" per the US Department of Commerce's Wisconsin Extreme Frost Line Penetration map.



The Town's USDA Plant Hardiness rating is Zone 4a, with the average extreme winter lows reaching -30 to -25 (F). Typically, snow and ice cover begins in December, persisting until April. The growing season spans 124 days from late May through the end of September. The average annual precipitation measurements within the Town of Pine River includes 32.31" of rain and 49.38" of snow.

Average winter high temperature is 26 degrees and the average low is 8 degrees above zero (Dec / Jan / Feb). During the Spring months (Mar / Apr / May) highs, on average, are 53 degrees and the low temperature average is 31 degrees. Summer (Jun / Jul / Aug) brings usual highs of 77 degrees and lows averaging at 55 degrees. Autumns (Sep / Oct / Nov) are crisp with highs averaging 56 while the low average is 36 degrees.

Water Resources

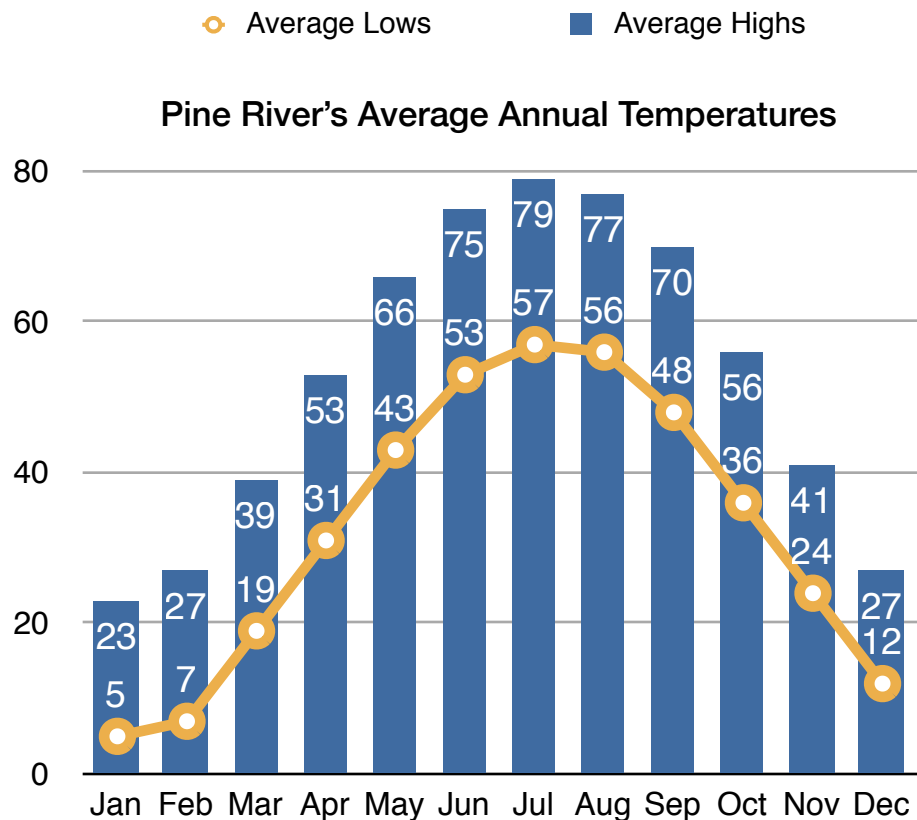
Clean and abundant describes the water resources within the Town of Pine River.

As there are no named lakes, the Pine River, North Branch

Pine River, and Little Trappe River, along with their tributaries and some wetlands, compose most of the small percentage of surface water within the Town. Refer to the *Town of Pine River Existing Land Use* map (pg 27) for rivers, creeks, and wetlands.



Named tributaries of the Pine River are as follows: Rajek Creek, North Branch Pine River, Oxbo Creek, Little Oxbo Creek, and Pat Smith Creek. Barnes Creek winds through the northwest sector eventually exiting the Town to empty into the Prairie River. Across the southern portion of the Town are the Little Trappe River, Little Cain Creek, Big Cain Creek, Prospect Creek, Skunk Creek, unnamed creeks, and the headwaters of Camp Creek all of



source: Weather Trends

which flow south into Marathon County.

The Town proudly hosts 36.6 miles of Class I, 20.92 miles of Class II, and 11.21 miles of Class III trout waters. Big Cain Creek (6.45 miles), Little Cain Creek (5.31 miles), Little Oxbo Creek (3.77 miles), Little Trappe River (8.46 miles), Oxbo Creek (2.03 miles), Prospect Creek (4.72 miles), and Rajek Creek (5.86 miles) are recognized as Class I trout waters. The North Branch Pine River (16.53 miles) and Pat Smith Creek (4.39 miles) are Class II trout waters. In addition, a portion of the Pine River (11.21 miles) is rated as a Class III trout water. Likewise, many unnamed creeks are also ranked by the DNR among the trout waters of the Town.

Oxbo, Little Oxbo, and Rajek Creeks have been identified as an Exceptional Resource Water (ERW) by the DNR.

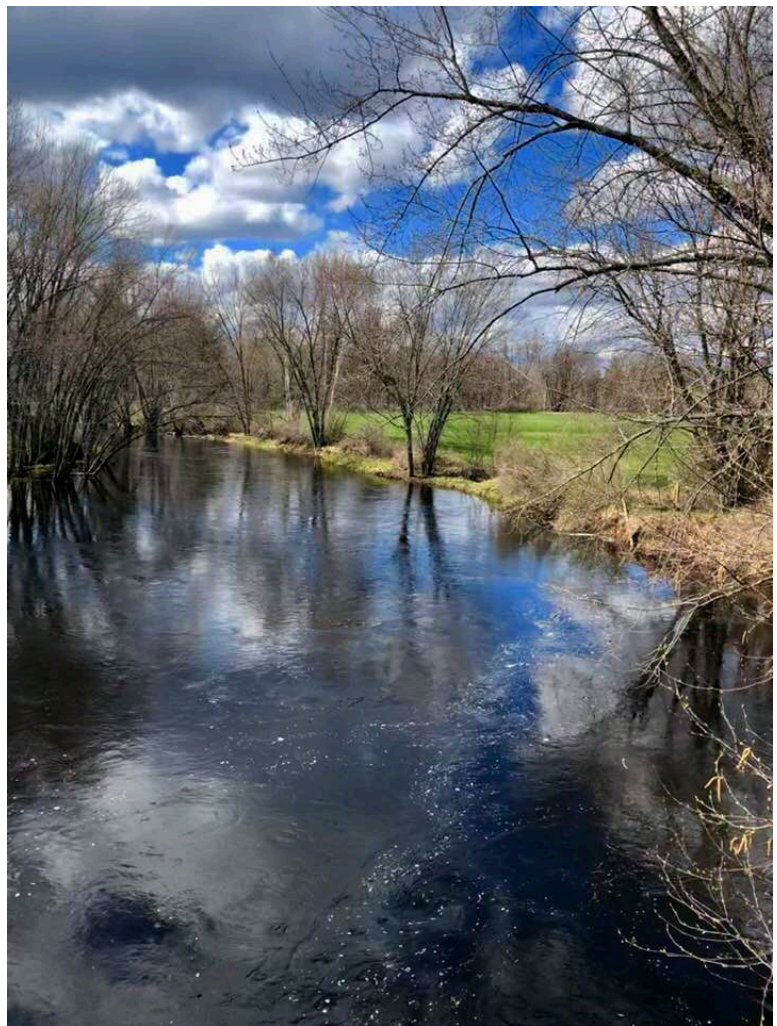
A small section of the southwestern border fronts on the Wisconsin River which is the only body of water in the Town which the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has identified as an impaired waterbody. The DNR has ascertained it to be tainted with mercury, PCBs, and an unknown pollutant causing contaminated fish tissue and chronic aquatic toxicity. It has been on the 303(d) list for these contaminants since 1998.

Most areas along the Pine River are FEMA rated Zone A with an estimated 1% annual chance of flood hazard. The 2019 spring melt was particularly difficult for some areas of the Town, causing flash flooding for residents along the Wisconsin River. The issues involved undersized culverts and a poorly designed system to divert spring melt. Plans are currently underway by the Town's Public Works department to upgrade culverts, redirect drainage, and improve ditches in certain areas to help alleviate the problem of seasonal flooding for these residents.

Some sections of the Wisconsin River with low banks fall within the 100 year flood plain. See *T-Pine River Flood Plain* map (pg 29).

Currently, no sites within the Town exist where metallic or non-metallic mining is actively taking place. Two small non-metallic mining operations located on both sides of Center Road just east of where it crosses the Pine River are no longer in production and have completed the process of reclamation.

Recognizing the vital importance and necessity of protecting water resources while preserving the rural nature of the Town, a review and update of Town Zoning Ordinances is planned to begin this year, part of which will address metallic and non-metallic mining.



In 2011, the Wisconsin DNR's *Pine River Watershed Water Quality Management Plan Update* noted concerns involving water quality problems on the Pine River due to "high nutrient levels and high bacteria counts" caused by runoff and animal waste. Sand and gravel mining operations were also called into question for their possible contribution to these water quality findings. With the sharp reduction in dairy farming, improved animal waste management practices on the part of land owners with large animals, and the closure of non-metallic mining operations, a positive effect upon the Pine River's water quality is expected.

The only known aquatic invasive specie in the Pine River is the rusty crayfish. Although the Pine River Watershed includes a number of plant species which the state has identified with the potential for concern, none are federally classified as either "endangered" or "threatened". Among birds and animals, Wisconsin believes only two species are candidates for *possible* federal listing. These are the northern goshawk, identified as a "special concern" and the pygmy snaketail dragonfly, which could potentially be considered by the federal government for "threatened" classification. To be clear, neither are currently federally listed.

There are no known cultural resources found within the Town of Pine River. No plans for the establishment of conservation or management of any forestry, agricultural, wildlife habitat, or actions related to perceived

threatened or endangered species are planned or under consideration by the Town.

LAND USE

The Town land use is primarily as open land with some areas of thick northern woodlands. These open lands include a mix consisting of croplands, unused fields, mixed forests, pastures, low density housing, and farms. Currently, an estimated 88% of the Town's land mass is open land with approximately 4% utilized as developed residential. Another 4% consists of wetlands and 3% is surface waters. Commercial uses account for 0.5% with the remaining 0.5% utilized by government and for institutional purposes. Please refer to the *Town of Pine River Existing Land Use* map (pg 27).

Existing Land Uses

Land Use	Description	% of Land
Open Land	croplands, unused fields, mixed forests, pastures, low density rural homes, farms	88%
Residential	housing subdivisions, mobile home park, duplexes, multi-family apartments	4%
Commercial	retail stores, trucking / bussing companies, services, light manufacturing, taverns	0.5%
Government	town facilities, fire department, churches, school, cemeteries	0.5%
Water	rivers, streams, creeks, ponds	3%
Wetland	swamps, marshes, bogs	4%

With the exception of Pine River Park, the Town Hall, Town Public Works buildings, and the Pine River Fire Department facility, which are Town owned, and the Pine River School property which is owned by the Merrill Area Public Schools, all of the remaining land within the Town is privately owned. No County, State, or Federal forests or any other government owned real estate parcels exist within the Town.

Historically, it has not been easy to purchase homes or vacant land within the Town due to several factors. In general, most people are long-term or lifelong residents. When a vacant parcel or a home becomes available, it was often sold by word-on-mouth to other family or community members. If listed with a realtor, it typically sold rather quickly.

In the years ensuing since the 2009 Recession, the real estate market and construction of new homes slowed to the point of stagnation.



The Town is finally experiencing an upturn in home sales and new construction. Park City Realty, LLC, of Merrill reports from April 2018 to April 2019, ten single family homes were sold in the Town of Pine River. During this same period, permits were issued for the construction of five new homes, one addition to an existing home, and seven accessory buildings.

Future Land Use Plan

The Planning Committee developed a future land use plan and map identifying growth projections for the next twenty years. Refer to the *Town of Pine River Future Land Use map* (pg 28).

Expectations for an expansion in residential and commercial development within the Town are primarily focused on two specific areas.

The US Highway 51 corridor sector will likely experience an increase in both commercial and residential development along State Road 17 / County W, specifically focused within the two-mile stretch between County G and Center Road. This prime frontage real estate is especially desirable due to its excellent visibility from US Highway 51 coupled with easy access.

Since State Highway 64 is a main thoroughfare, crossroads mixed use development consisting of commercial and residential projects are likewise anticipated from the Highways 51 / 64 interchange extending east five miles to the intersection of Balsam Avenue. With the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department located near the State Highway 64 / Range Line Road intersection, a close proximity to this area will appeal to both commercial and residential development.



It can be presumed additional residential development growth is likely in locals with current subdivisions and at additional locations, especially in the western portion of the Town due primarily to the areas convenience for prospective residents.

CHAPTER THREE TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

TRANSPORTATION

The four-lane US Highway 51 spans north and south through the far western portion of the Town of Pine River, with an access interchange at State Highway 64 (exit 208). State Highway 64 is a major east-west arterial highway bisecting the entire State from Marinette, on the border with Michigan stretching west to the St Croix River state line with Minnesota, just north of the twin cities.

Just west of the interchange is the City of Merrill. Approximately 15 miles to the south from this point is the City of Wausau in Marathon County. Traveling approximately 26 miles east from the interchange on State Highway 64 is the City of Antigo in neighboring Langlade County.

With easy and convenient access to US Highway 51 and State Highway 64, residents enjoy excellent connectivity between the Town of Pine River and other localities within the region and beyond. Please refer to the *T-Pine River 2015 Air Photo* map (pg 30).

State Road 17 runs north from this interchange area 43 miles to the City of Rhineland. Extending south from State Highway 64, State Road 17 becomes County W, which is a popular route among local residents leading directly to the City of Wausau.

Other main roads through the Town of Pine River include County Roads W, P, X, G, and WW, which sufficiently serve the community as

collector roads. Local roads managed and maintained by the Town serve the populace very well and completes the existing roadway network.

Along the Town's western edge, running north and south, is the only railroad which is operated by Wisconsin Central Limited. There are no public airport facilities within the Town. Central Wisconsin Airport is located at Mosinee, just 30 miles south of the Highways 51 / 64 interchange, providing major commercial domestic airline service with three major carriers operating from their modern terminal.

Due to the Town's rural nature, there are no policies or goals related to the development of specific transportation-related plans or projects.

UTILITIES

Electricity is provided to residents and businesses within the Town by the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS).



Newly upgraded in 2018, American Transmission Company's (ATC) 115,000 volt transmission line enters the Town from Marathon County near the Wisconsin River, traveling north to the Pines substation, which ATC shares with WPS. From there, the transmission line extends east-west through the center of the Town just south of State Highway 64, switching to the north side of 64 east of the "S" curve. ATC's new Ackley substation is located near this juncture. From there, the line splits with one branch continuing east into Langlade

County and another which veers south near State Highway 64 and Popular Drive into Marathon County. See the *T-Pine River Connect America* map (pg 31) for the transmission line routes.

Natural Gas service is available at the State Highways 64 / 17 interchange, north a short distance on 17 and south on County W, as well as areas located to the west of US Highway 51. The remainder of the Town generally utilizes either liquid petroleum (LP) or fuel oil with numerous local or regional suppliers.

Cell Phone service is dependable and widespread throughout the Town. Residents enjoy their choice of service carriers.

Broadband internet has recently arrived. In 2018, the Town of Pine River was included in the FCC's Connect America Fund (Phase II) broadband expansion project as fiber optic cables installation began and is expected to provide services for the majority of the Town's residents. This project should be completed in 2019. Small areas excluded from fiber optics servicing and any resident so choosing, can purchase high speed satellite internet services via other providers. See *T-Pine River Connect America* map (pg 31).

Water and Sewer service within the Town is entirely by private wells and septic systems.

Due to the Town's rural nature, there are no plans to develop public water, sanitary sewer, or stormwater management services or infrastructure within the Town of Pine River.

CHAPTER FOUR TOWN FACILITIES AND SERVICES

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Town of Pine River Town Hall is located on Deer Run Avenue, just south of State Highway 64 in the western section of the Town. It serves very well as the venue for Town board, committee, other community meetings or events, and is the Town's voting precinct. The property is also where the Town's Public Works facility is located.



Recycling Programs

Currently, the Town operates a recycling program for its residents on the third Thursday's evening along with morning hours on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. Items accepted include: glass, plastic, tin or steel cans, paper products, aluminum, and waste oil.

The Town also hosts *Clean Sweep Day* which is an annual opportunity in the spring for Town residents to recycle larger items such as: old appliances, batteries, used oils, lawn mowers, old farm equipment, tires on metal rims, and other metal items which are typically hauled away at

no charge. Electronics and rimless used tires are generally accepted with a nominal fee. The Town intends to continue both of these recycling programs.

PUBLIC WORKS

Roads within the Town of Pine River include 56 miles which are paved and 10 miles of gravel roads, all of which are maintained in excellent condition by the Public Works. Roads Maintenance Supervisor, Brian Oppen, leads his conscientious crew ensuring all roads, equipment, and Town properties are in top-notch shape.

Specific responsibilities of this department include: replacing culverts, hauling road gravel, crack filling, reconstruction of roads, and grading roads. Other duties of brush cutting, sign maintenance, and blade patching along with lawn care, facilities, and equipment maintenance for the Town Hall, Pine River Park, and the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department occupy their time in warmer months.

During the winter, a staff of three performs exceptionally well, often working extra long hours to make sure Town roads are plowed and safe for travel. Roads Maintenance Supervisor Oppen also shoulders the responsibility of declaring a snow emergency, when warranted.

The ability of the Town's Public Works to efficiently achieve and maintain such a high standard of excellence is highly commendable.



PUBLIC SAFETY

The creation of a Town fire department and first responders was proposed by concerned community members Marv Hartwig, Heath Heidemann, and John Uttech. These dedicated men also put in the necessary hard work to make the dream into a reality and a success.

In November 2004, the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department was established and followed in 2007 with the creation of the First Responders, which proudly serves the community.



A centrally located parcel of land, at N1622 Rangeline Road just south of State Highway 64 was obtained upon which the Town constructed the fire department. Staff training commenced in December 2004 and the building was completed by October 2005. Construction debt was paid in full by 2015.

Under the capable leadership of Chief John Uttech, the department staff consists of twenty-four fire fighters and eight first responder personnel. These dedicated men and women are, at the least, entry level fire fighter certified having completed 60 hours of training. Some members have advanced to achieve state certified level I, II, and driver / operator status.



The department has two certified CPR instructors who teach the technique to local dental and chiropractic staff, school and bus service employees, as well as the general public. In addition, two department members are state fire instructors who serve as adjuncts.

Currently, the department is equipped with: 1 engine, 2 tenders, 1 utility, 1 6x6 off road vehicle, 1 brush truck, and 1 rescue truck. The Town has just purchased a new custom-built Pierce engine with the capability to pump 1500 gallons per minute. This new primary engine is expected to be in service by August 2019.

Typically, the department responds to approximately thirty fire calls and between 70-80 EMS calls on an annual basis. Members of the department also conduct school fire prevention programs and they perform fire inspections twice each year.

During the summer of 2018, the department was audited by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), which provides independent ratings of more than 45,000 fire departments across the nation.



Every aspect of the department's readiness, ability to respond to fires, and performance was examined at length. Following the extensive process and in depth analysis, the department received an ISO fire protection class 6 rating.

The Pine River Volunteer Fire Department and First Responders are funded by local tax levy along with numerous grants and annual fundraisers. Baked good sales are held at the Town Hall during elections and each September



an annual pig roast and open house takes place at the fire department. This event consistently draws large crowds throughout the day and well into the evening. Safety presentations are included and a fireworks display caps off the festivities.

Area citizens and merchants generously donate

items for raffle drawings held during the pig roast. The public's loyal support and participation in these fundraisers speaks volumes to the quality of the department and the public's deep gratitude for their valuable service to the community.

TOWN PARK & RECREATION

The Town operates one small public park which is located along the east bank of the Pine River. It features



beautiful woodland habitat while providing public access to the water, a picnic table, parking, and primitive facilities. The access drive for the park is from Center Road between Hill View Road and Shady Lane Avenue. It is aptly named Pine River Park.

A regional snowmobile trail runs east-west through the center of Town. Town roads, with the exception of Bunker Hill Road, are open to ATV / UTVs. Horseback riding along scenic trails and an indoor arena for a variety of activities including therapeutic riding are available. Bicycling, hiking, and walking are other popular activities.

These Town facilities, services, and the Town's park meet the needs of the community very well. There are no plans to create any additional programs, parks, or facilities, nor any intention to expand or upgrade any of these existing facilities at this time. However that said, the Town is prepared and fully able to address any future facilities or services needs as they may arise.

CHAPTER FIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Pine River is a great place to live and work. Its location is ideal with easy access to US Highway 51



and State Highway 64 providing excellent connectivity. The Town is convenient to the City of Wausau for commuters while providing residents with a highly desirable rural lifestyle. Many prime sites for business development exist in the Town along main thoroughfares with excellent visibility.

The Town of Pine River is unique in its track record and commitment to maintaining a lower tax structure along with less regulations.

With unanimous agreement, residents expressed their desire for the Town to take a proactive approach in seeking out new business development, which is compatible with our vision. Achieving a balanced

approach towards business and residential development while maintaining the Town's rural charm will be the focus of efforts to attract new growth.

Encouraging and promoting Agritourism is another aspect of the Town's economic development goals.

Without a doubt, the Town of Pine River is an undiscovered gem with much potential for a very bright economic future of opportunities benefitting the Town and its residents. The "welcome" mat is out!

AGRICULTURE & AGRITOURISM

Agriculture activity within the Town of Pine River has transitioned from primarily

consisting of a community of family farms raising dairy and crops, to having far less farmers, but gaining more crop diversity. Very few full time farmers remain in the Town. As these farmers retire, the next generation does not



readily pick up the reins to continue farm operations. Those who do, in general, are repurposing these family farms for other crops or uses and are often doing so while employed in a non-farm occupation.

Although much of the Town's soil is excellent for farming, the short growing season and long frigid winters presents a significant challenge which limits the types of produce suitable to the climate. Current crops which are commonly grown include: corn, soybeans, oats, hay, wheat, ginseng, and Christmas trees. Beef, dairy, and elk are raised. Grass-fed meats and dairy are gaining in popularity and are in demand. Evergreen wreaths, garland, and other decorations which are crafted within the Town are sold across the nation. Landscaping trees, high quality maple syrup, and honey are also produced.

Resourceful agriculturalists are rising to the challenge.

Agritourism promotes the rural lifestyle and is gaining a foothold in the Town of Pine River. It employs farm land, farm buildings, or farm equipment and animals for rural recreation and / or amusement enterprises. The umbrella of Agritourism encompasses, but is not limited to the following activities: arts and crafts sales, bicycle and hiking trails, birding, membership produce co-ops, crop mazes, dairy farms, deer and elk ranches, farm-raised eggs and meats (beef, pork, poultry, etc...), farmers markets, fresh-cut-Christmas trees and wreaths, fresh produce stands, field trips, festivals, greenhouses and nurseries, group tours, hay rides, honey, horseback riding, maple syrup, pick-your-own produce, petting farms, pumpkin patches, sled dog races, sleigh rides, summer camps, square dances, trail rides, wagon rides, and wineries.

Wedding barn event venues are appearing within the Town. Such enterprises benefit the Town and community because operators utilize and preserve some of these beautiful old structures while bolstering farm family income. The Town has recently amended its ordinances to include provisions for these activities.

In 2016, the Pine River Town Board was approached by Lincoln County's Land Services department with an offer to participate in their *Farmland Preservation Plan*. Due to concerns over the program's restrictions and a loss of local control, the Town Board rejected the County's proposal.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town Board appointed the Planning and Zoning Committee tasking them with the responsibility of reviewing and updating the Town's Land Use Plan. The Board passed a resolution, as required in State law, to begin the process.

The Committee decided it was imperative to involve the public and solicit their input throughout the process during monthly meetings, as well as with multiple public participation meetings, prior to the statutory required official public hearing as the process is completed.

September Public Participation Meeting

The first informal public participation meeting was held on the 4th of September 2018 at the Town Hall with a dozen participants in attendance. Information was gathered on the topics of agricultural crops produced within the Town. With the shift in land use from having mainly full time family farms to few as farmers retire, the public's views on how land use should evolve was discussed. A preference to avoid "mega farms" was expressed and prevalent among those in attendance.

The topic of how residents envision the Town's economic future ranged from concern related to being able to earn a living wage to expanded entrepreneurial forays into Agritourism or organic tourism, home occupations, and increased recreational opportunities.

January Public Discussion Meeting

In January, a display ad was published in the local *FOTO News* weekly newspaper inviting Town of Pine River residents to participate in a "discussion about the future of our Town", hosted by the Planning and Zoning Committee, with refreshments to be served. In spite of very poor weather, the meeting was held on Tuesday evening, January 8, 2019, with a significant turnout of thirty-seven residents in attendance.

A productive discussion began on the topic of the aging population trajectory, economic development, and whether or not the Town ought to take purposeful steps to pursue new businesses. The general consensus among those present was overwhelmingly in favor of doing so. The question was posed: "should the Town take a proactive approach to growth" and by raised hands, the thirty-one attendees, who were present at this point in the meeting, agreed unanimously.

Moving on to the topic of what kind of future was envisioned for the Town, the decline of dairy farming was discussed. A gentleman who hauls livestock to the butcher expressed his observation of how not

only has dairy farming significantly diminished, but the raising of beef may also be declining.

A woman advanced the point that the community is "losing it's animal infrastructure". It was stated how a number of years ago, there were more businesses in the immediate area serving the needs of farmers, such as the feed mill, farm implement dealers, and large animal veterinarians, but these types of businesses are either gone or have adapted and are no longer primarily focused on the farming sector.

The three-part question was posed "Should the Town 1. remain rural; 2. focus on residential development; or 3. promote a balance of both?" By a show of hands, the results were as follows: seven (7) chose "remain rural", zero (0) were in favor of an emphasis on primarily residential development, with the majority of twenty-four (24) residents who voted for a "balance of both rural and residential development".

Next, the committee sought to learn how community members felt about reducing minimum lot size in Rural Residential 2 (RR2) zoning districts. Current minimum is five acre parcels, but by variance, people can request the creation of smaller parcels. Often, these cases have involved properties where an old farm house and outbuildings were being separated from the acreage, which often remained in crop farming. The Planning and Zoning Committee as well as the Town Board has always approved these requests, provided the smaller parcel would be self contained as far as having it's own

well and septic system. By reducing the minimum to two acre parcels with the caveat of being self-contained, it would save residents both time and money if they wished to divide a larger piece of land. When asked, twenty-seven (27) of those in attendance voted by raised hand to approve reducing the minimum lot size in RR2 to two acre parcels, while six (6) people preferred to preserve the current five acre minimum.

The meeting closed with a brief discussion on the various aspects of Agritourism and how it can benefit small family farms in the community, many of which are already participating in these activities, while promoting the Town, as a whole. The general consensus among attendees was quite favorable towards this vision.

August 2019 Public Hearing

[--Additional details on public comment and summary of the formal hearing to be included...]



INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Neighboring local governments in Lincoln, Marathon, and Langlade Counties will receive a final copy of this *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan*.

Several years ago, the Town of Pine River participated in a series of meetings and discussions with the City of Merrill in a sincere effort to develop and finalize an intergovernmental agreement. The purpose of which was to address mutual concerns related to Town lands within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction, primarily on issues involving annexation and service delivery, as well as future development along the US Highway 51 corridor. Although a good faith attempt was made, it is unfortunate these meetings did not bear fruit nor yield positive results.

Channels of communication remain open with all of the Town's neighbors while pertinent discussions and cooperation in achieving mutually beneficial solutions occur, as the need arises.

One example is an agreement which was reached with the neighboring town to the east which involved maintenance of Ackley Pine Road, a border road between the Town of Pine River and the Town of Ackley. Road maintenance and snow plowing duties for the road are performed by Pine River with monetary reimbursements from Ackley.

Another similar situation exists with the Town of Schley and the bordering Townline Road. In this case, both Towns have cooperated

with a plan to alternate years when each takes on the responsibility to plow snow.

The Town is willing to consider another effort to pursue a cooperative agreement with the City of Merrill, in the future, if circumstances were to improve.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Town of Pine River Vision Statement

The Town of Pine River will strive to preserve its quality of life and meet the broad needs of our growing community. We hope to promote thoughtfully planned housing and commercial development along with agricultural and recreational enterprises that meet the needs of our diverse population while minimizing their impact on our rural landscape and natural resources. (2019)

The Town Vision Statement and the takeaway from the committee's effort to gather public opinions throughout the planning process are supportive of the following Goals and Objectives for moving forward:



Goal 1: Preserve land owners' property rights

Objectives:

1. Maintain the Town's solemn commitment to support and protect its residents' right to self-determination in utilizing their own property while respecting their neighbors' right to do the same; and without interfering in adjacent property owners' right to enjoy their own properties.
2. Preserve and exercise the Town's sovereign right of autonomy through local control and governance for the benefit and protection of the Constitutional liberties of its residents.
3. Uphold and respect these important community values as updates and changes to the Town Zoning Ordinances are considered.
4. Avoid excessive regulations which drive up costs for housing, land development, and site development.

Goal 2: Promote a balanced approach towards development while preserving rural character

Objectives:

1. Encourage growth. The Town of Pine River is a great place to live and work. Both homes and businesses are welcome!
2. Conduct a full review and update of Town Zoning Ordinances.
3. Uphold the "good neighbor" ideal by maintaining adequate buffers between commercial and adjacent residential properties.
4. Include regulations in the Town Zoning Ordinances which will shield residential properties from commercial lighting, noise, and offensive odors.
5. In rural areas of the Town, establish limitations on noise and requirements to adequately shield residential properties from lights on adjacent properties which conduct business during nighttime hours in the Town Zoning Ordinances.
6. Follow through with residents' desire to reduce lot size from the current 5 acre minimum in rural areas (RR2) while maintaining setbacks and ensuring smaller parcels are self-sufficient in regards to having adequate space for a well and septic system.

Goal 3: Utilize a proactive approach to encourage economic development

Objectives:

1. Identify specific categories of businesses which are compatible with the Town's Vision and the preservation of its rural character.
2. Contact Highway 51 corridor land owners with properties suitable for commercial development to identify those who are interested in selling.
3. Prepare a promotional packet for prospective businesses to acquaint them with the Town and the benefits of locating within the Town of Pine River.
4. Develop a marketing plan to communicate development opportunities within the Town.
5. Promote the Town to specific businesses which are a good fit for the Town emphasizing highly desirable location, visibility, lower tax structure, and less regulations.
6. Maintain an attractive lower tax structure.
7. Encourage entrepreneurial business startups.
8. Encourage projects which cater to the Town's aging population.
9. Explore the possibility and benefits of offering municipal bonds to aid business development within the Town.
10. Consider establishing relationships with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA), and any other similar organization deemed appropriate to aid in achieving increased economic development.

Goal 4: Promote Agritourism

Objectives:

1. Consider establishing a Farmers Market to promote local agriculture and goods while serving as a means to improve access to fresh produce for residents, as an attraction for visitors to the Town, and to provide a financial benefit for the merchants.
2. Create an "Agritourism Guide" brochure identifying Agritourism businesses and attractions with descriptions of products or services offered and map these locations within the Town.
3. Create a webpage supporting the Town's Agritourism directory.
4. Distribute Town Agritourism brochures to area hotels, motels, businesses, tourism offices, and also have it available for downloading on the website.

Goal 5: Transportation

Objectives:

1. Continue to invest in an annual roadway maintenance schedule to efficiently utilize tax dollars.
2. Continue utilizing the Road Equipment Fund to set aside monies in a segregated account for future large equipment purchases.
3. Consider providing signage at the main entrances to the Town along State Road 64 (east and west), County W (south), and on Highway 17 (north).
4. Continue to monitor roadway signage to ensure good visibility and safe vehicle travel within the Town.
5. Continue to monitor traffic accident data to identify any problem intersections or roadway sections.

Goal 6: Protect Water Resources

Objectives:

1. Develop Town Zoning Ordinances for metallic and non-metallic mining consistent with State law which will protect water resources while preserving rural character.
2. Consider establishing adequate building setbacks for wetland areas while updating the Town Zoning Ordinances.

3. Consider the creation of a Flood Plains Zoning Ordinance.

Goal 7: Encourage Public Engagement

Objectives:

1. Continue to provide opportunities for public comment at all Town and Committee meetings.
2. Continue the long-standing tradition of following the Town's annual meeting with a luncheon for community members in attendance.
3. Increase public awareness of the Town's website as a hub for information, special announcements, various downloadable applications, meeting agendas, contact details, and other pertinent resources.

IMPLEMENTATION & UPDATING

The *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan* will serve as a longterm framework to guide the Town as decisions are made related to achieving these goals, establishing a planning process, developing Town policies, as well as updates to the Town Zoning Ordinances and the zoning map. It may also be beneficial to review the Future Land Use Map each year to keep it current.

Once the Planning & Zoning Committee has completed the draft *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan*, the recommendation for approval is forwarded to the Town Board. It is posted and a Class 1 notice for the formal public hearing is published and held. The *Plan* draft will be distributed in accordance with State law. It will be available for public review at the Town Hall and will also be posted on the Town's website prior to the public hearing. Copies will be available at the public hearing.

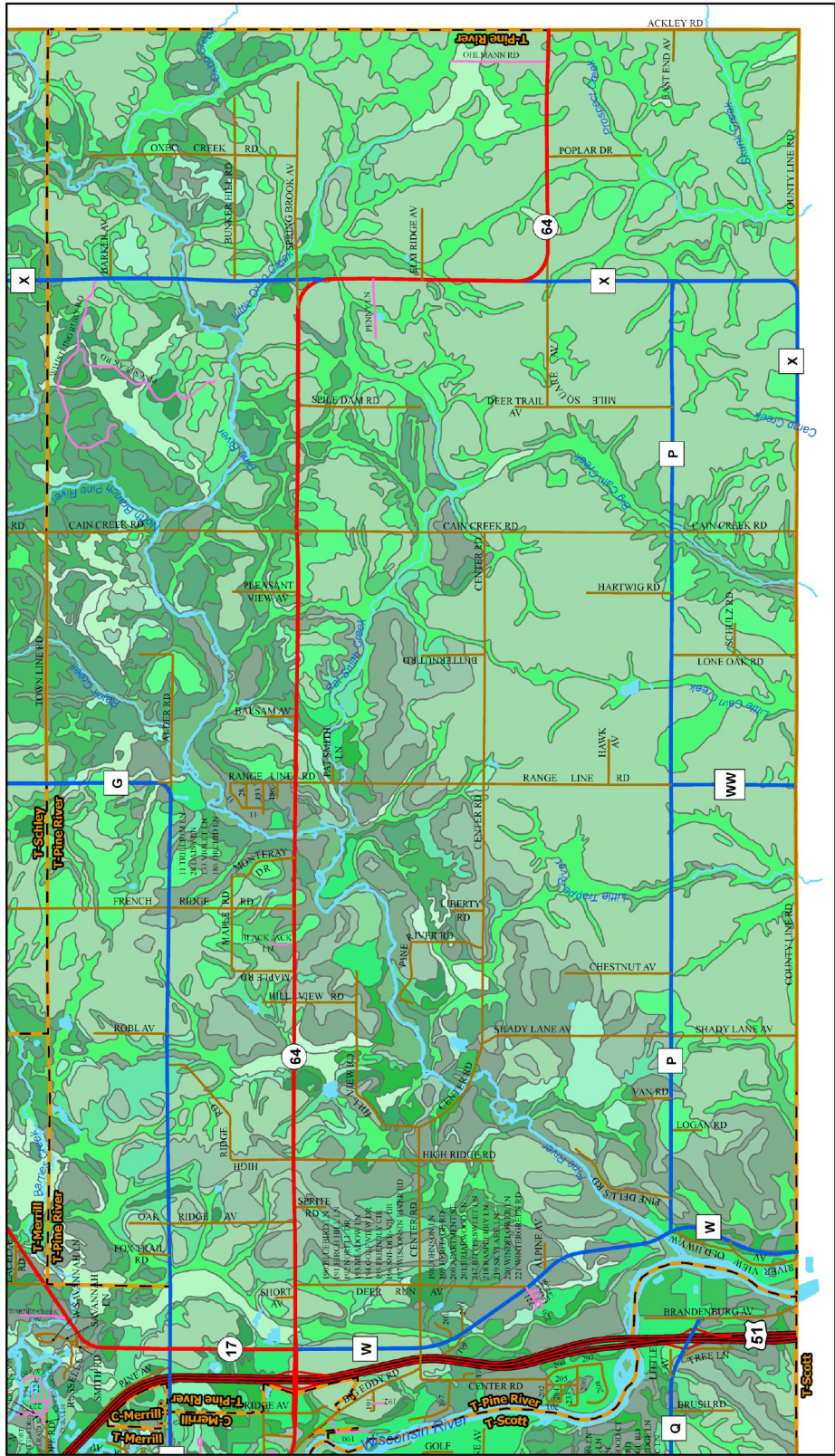
The adoption by the Town Board will formalize the plan as the framework to guide local decisions over the next twenty (20) years. The final approved *Plan* is submitted to the State of Wisconsin and distributed as directed in State law.

Periodic reviews of the *Plan* should take place on a continuing basis, at a minimum of once a year or more frequently, as necessary. These reviews may determine a need for updates or amendments. Reviews should consider relevance and community standards related to the goals and objectives, completion of these, and / or any need for additional goals and objectives. Evaluations of the *Plan* are recommended to take place at least every five (5) years and an update is required at least every ten (10) years. Any changes to the *Plan* will be made in accordance with State law following the original adoption procedure and shall be consistent with the existing *Plan*.

[notes: Copies of the formal resolutions related to the plan to be included.]

additional source details:

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2. Contains information originating from OpenStreetMap, which is made available here under the Open Database License (ODbL) <http://www.opendatacommons.org>.
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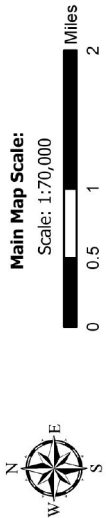
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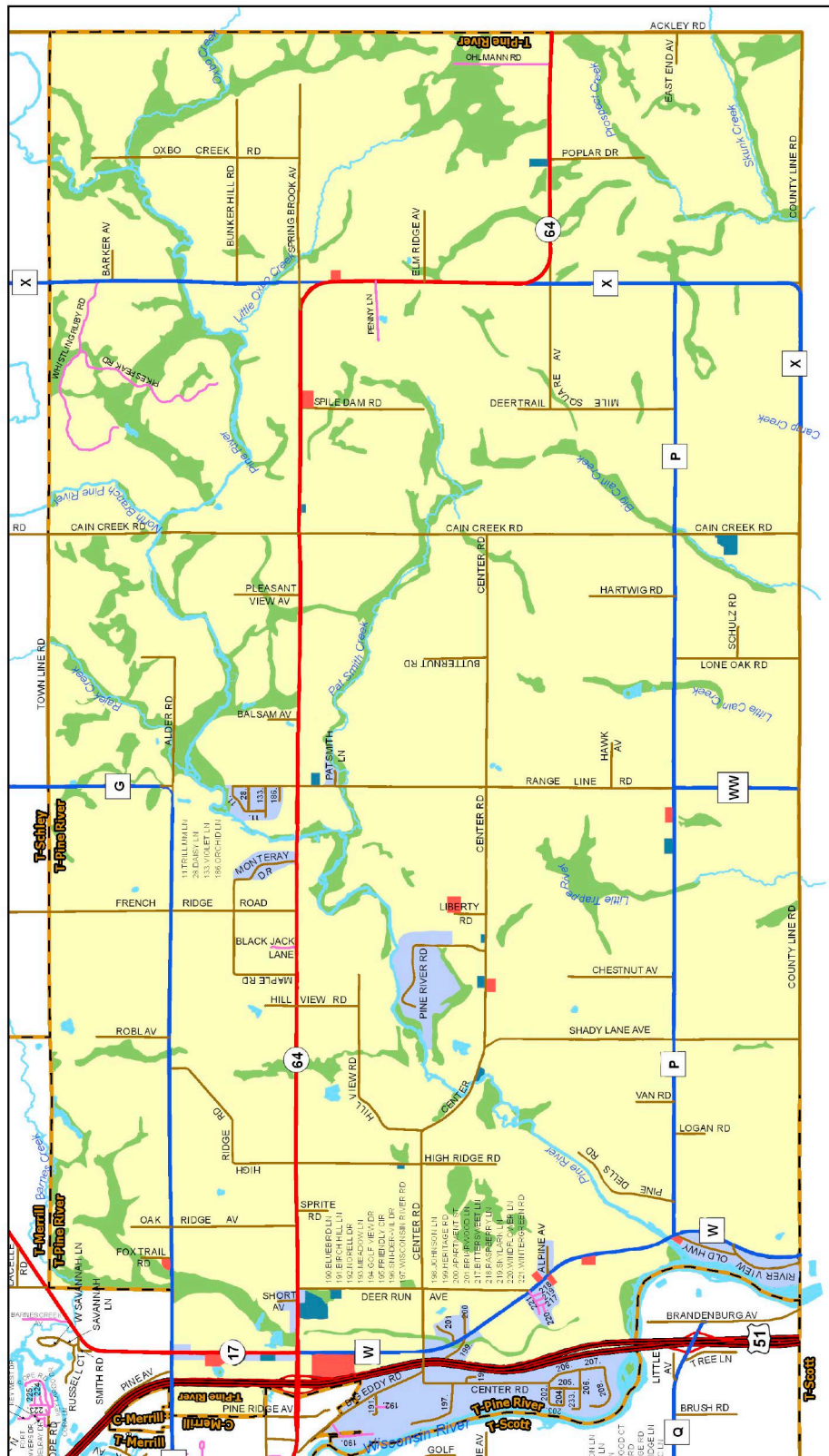
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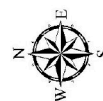
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 - State Highway
 - County Highway
 - Town Road
 - Private Road
 - Forest Road Gas-Tax
 - Forest Road No-Gas-Tax
 - Ramp
 - Municipal
 - AoB
- | | | |
|-----|-----|------|
| AcC | MgB | PoB |
| CpA | MkB | PcC |
| CsB | MoB | PeB |
| Fh | MoC | PeC |
| FoB | Ms | PeD |
| FoC | MxB | P |
| FsB | NpC | S-B |
| Lo | NwD | W |
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T-Pine River Soils





Town of Pine River Existing Land Use



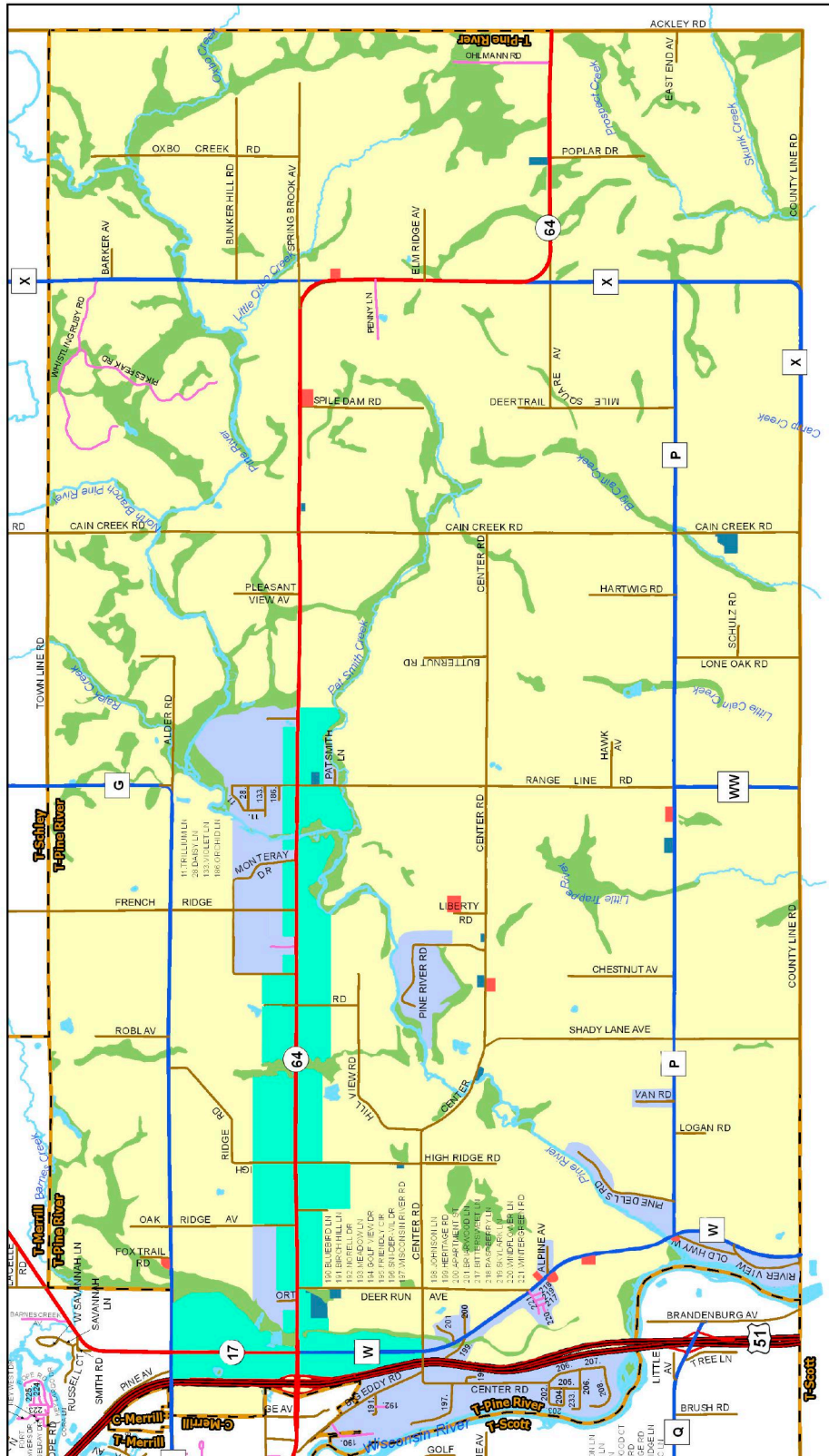
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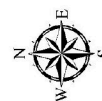
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 - County Highway
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 - Private Road
 - Forest Road Gas-Tax
 - Forest Road No-Gas-Tax
 - Ramp
 - Municipal Boundary
 - Open Land
 - Residential
 - Commercial
 - Crossroads Mixed Use
 - Government / Institutional
 - Water
 - Welland



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Town of Pine River Future Land Use



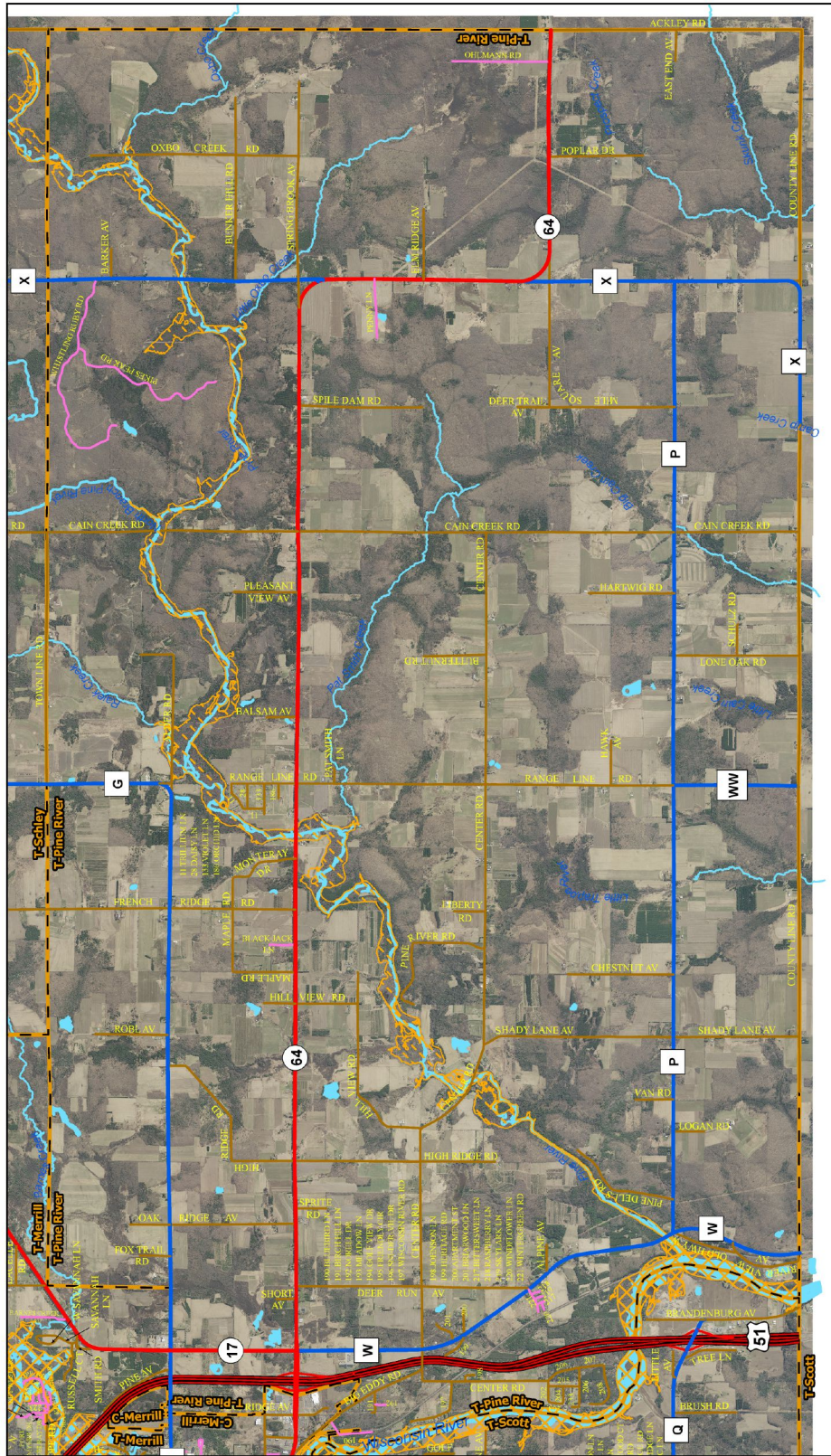
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2019

- Legend**
- US Highway
 - State Highway
 - County Highway
 - Town Road
 - Private Road
 - Forest Road Gas-Tax
 - Forest Road No-Gas-Tax
 - Ramp
 - Municipal Boundary
 - Open Land
 - Residential
 - Commercial
 - Crossroads Mixed Use
 - Government / Institutional
 - Water
 - Wetland



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T-Pine River Flood Plain

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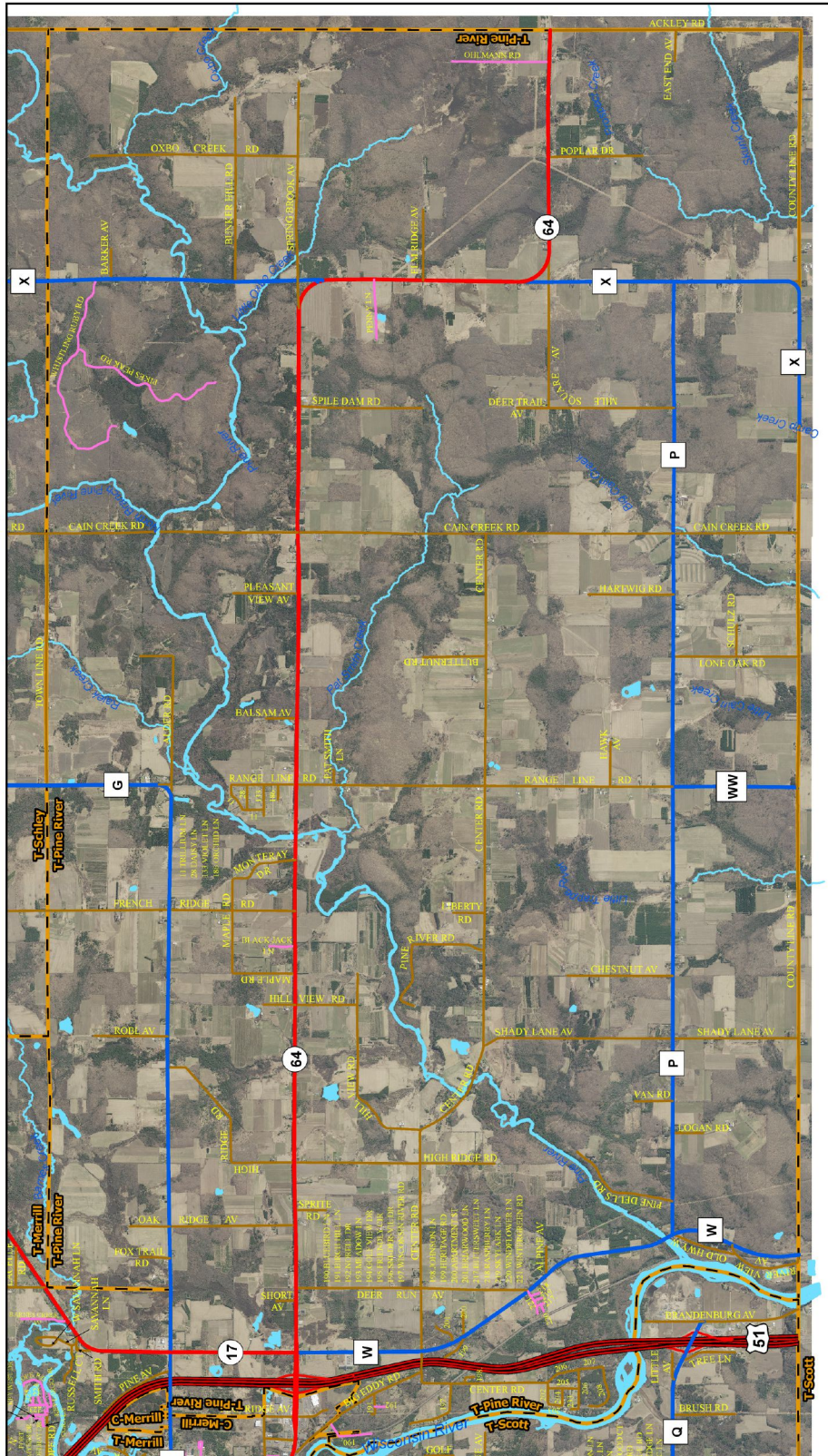
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Legend

- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town Road
- Private Road
- Forest Road Gas-Tax
- Forest Road No-Gas-Tax
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- Municipal
- 0.2 PCT ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD HAZARD
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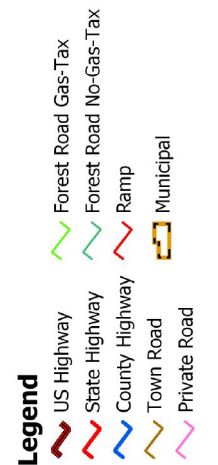
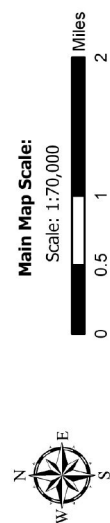


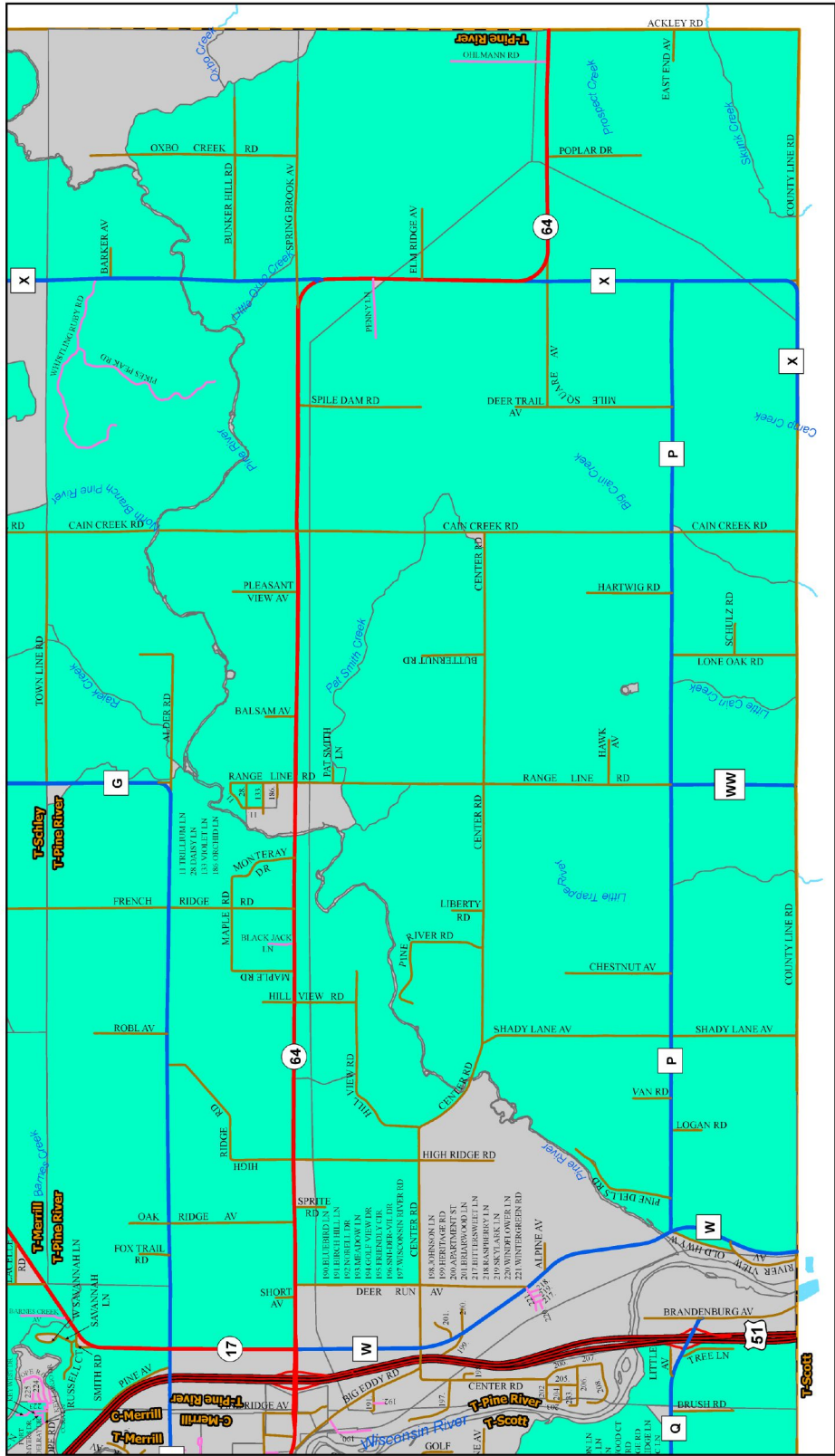
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T-Pine River 2015 Air Photo





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Legend

- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town Road
- Private Road
- Forest Road Gas-Tax
- Forest Road No-Gas-Tax
- Ramp
- Municipal
- Connect America
- Yes

T-Pine River Connect America

Main Map Scale:
 Scale: 1:70,000

0 0.5 1 2 Miles