

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

5. Natural, Agricultural & Cultural Resources

5.1 Natural Resources

Overview

Natural resources relate to most, if not all, of the comprehensive plan chapters. As a result, natural resource issues may arise relating to each specific chapter and implementation of chapter goals, actions, and objectives. Several key resources and supporting information will be reviewed outlining the importance of issues relating to natural resources, cultural resources, and agriculture.

Natural Resource Inventory & Analysis

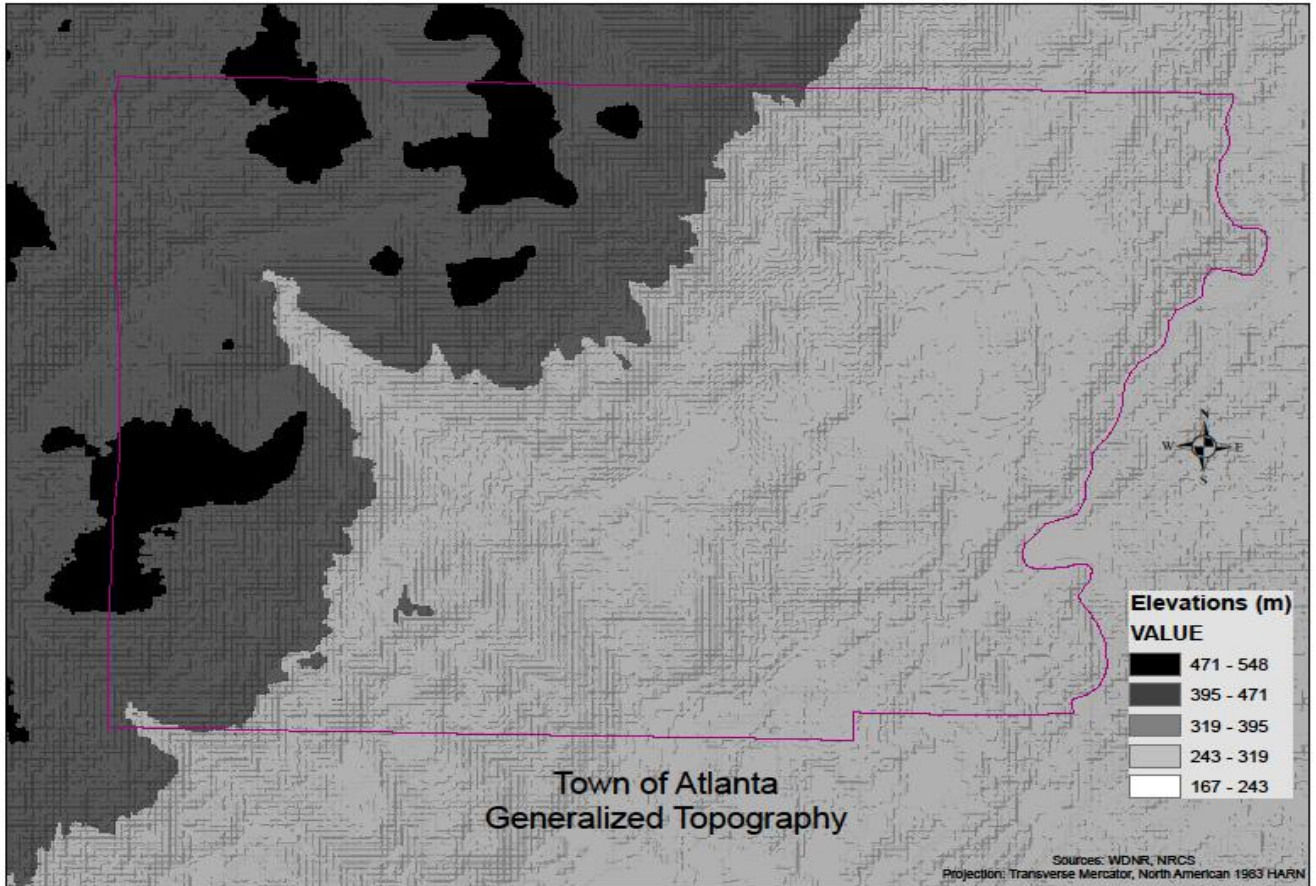
Understanding Town of Atlanta's natural features provide a framework for analysis and suggest possible disadvantages and advantages for particular land uses. It is essential to understand the location of environmentally sensitive areas to make responsible land use decisions. Maintenance of sensitive natural features is also important for the visual attractiveness of Town of Atlanta and for the functions they perform as natural communities. Representation of this information can help Town of Atlanta in making informed decisions relative to the goals for natural resource use, protection, and restoration. Additionally, the information ties to the Land and Water Management Plan and Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan. Because the natural environment has fixed locations, communities have options regarding the location of human development.

Topography & Elevation

Rusk County is found in the Northern Highland Geographical Province of Wisconsin. This region is characterized by an abundance of hills, lakes, streams and forests. The entire county lies within an area of recent glaciations; stream valleys are shallow, and drainage is not well established. As a result, the Township of Atlanta is dotted and laced with numerous swamps and streams. Glaciation has also resulted in a general drainage pattern from northeast to southwest.

Map 5.1 Topography

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



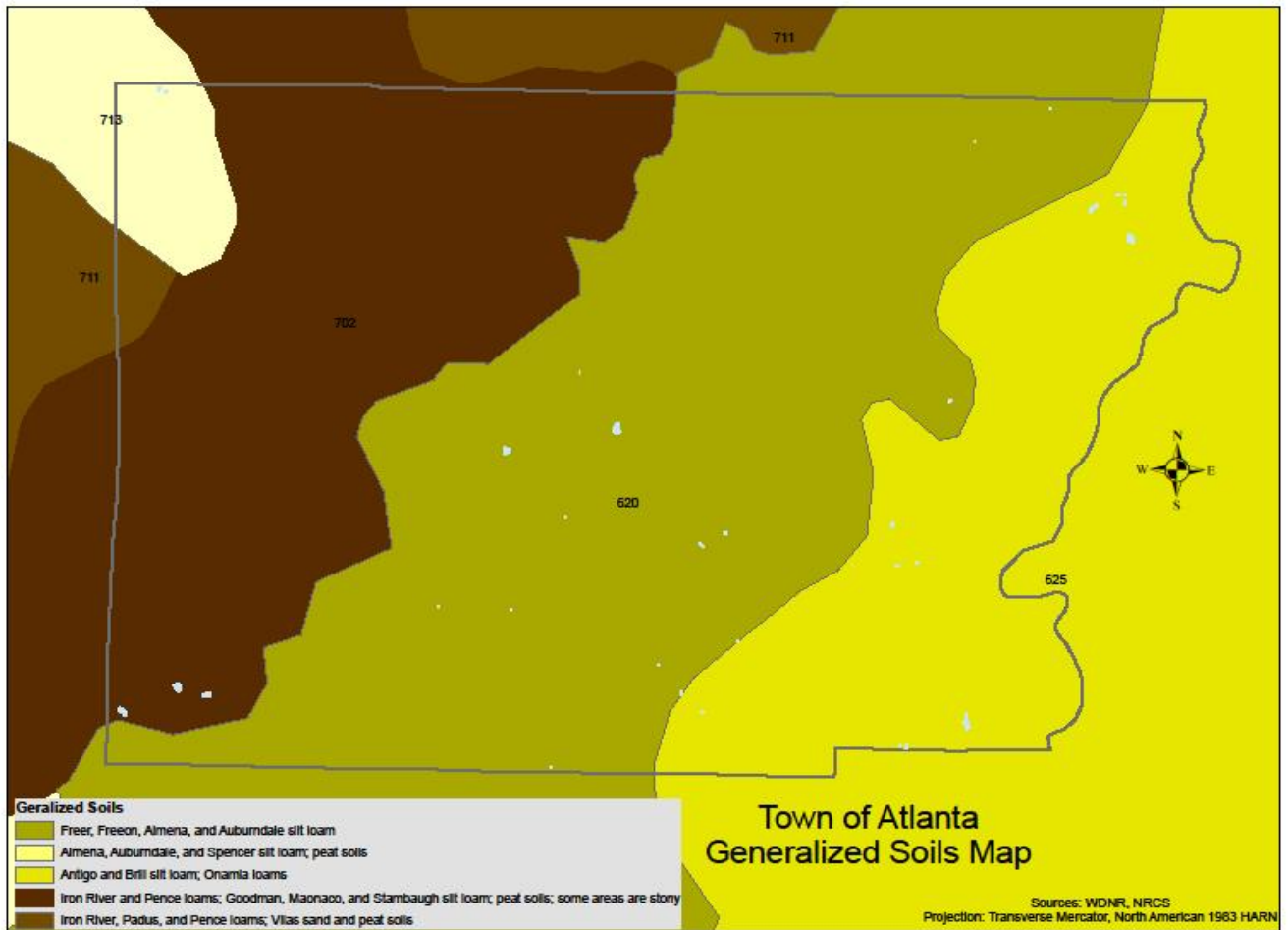
** Source Rusk County Conservationist

Soils

Deposits of glacial drift (a mixture of sand, silt, clay and boulders) cover the entire Town with the exception of a few small areas where bedrock is exposed. Depth of glacial drift material varies from several inches to over 100 feet. Many depressions are filled with muck or peat. Along the Chippewa River is a broad sandy plain. Along the western border is a range of steep quartzite ridges forming the backbone for the Blue Hills.

Map 5.2 Soil Map

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



** Source Rusk County Conservationist

Steep Slopes

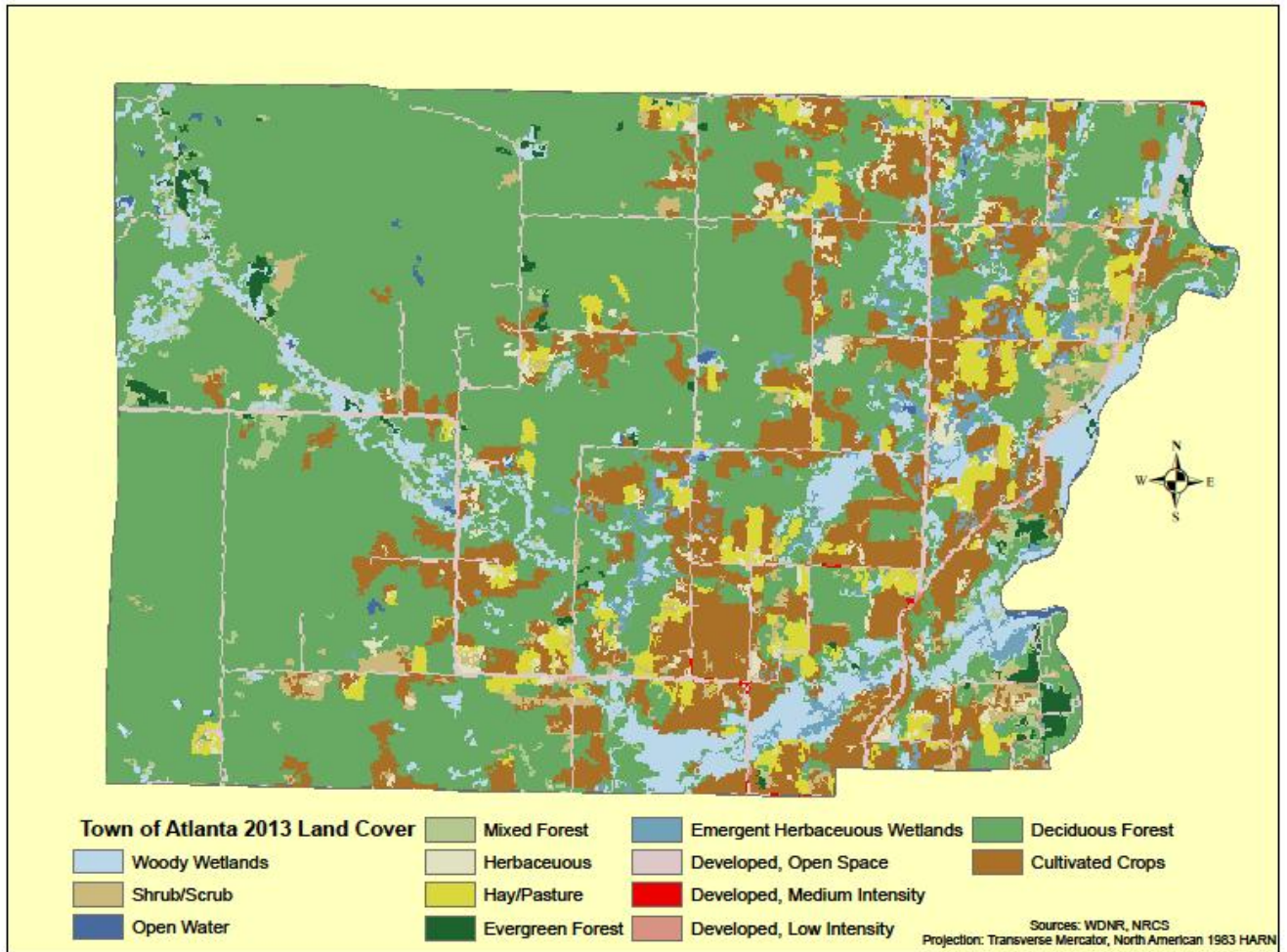
Areas with steep slopes (18% and greater) are scattered around Rusk County, but are mostly found towards the west and northwest of the county. The towns of Wilson, Wilkinson, Strickland, and Rusk have the greatest slopes in the county. Steep slopes are generally associated with either oval hills of glacial lift or directly adjacent waterways.

Forest Cover

Forests and woodlands play an important role in providing habitat for plants and animals as well as shaping the economy of many communities. The dominant forest cover type in Rusk County is Northern Hardwood.

Map 5.3 Land Cover

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Legacy Places

The “Wisconsin Land Legacy Report” produced by the WDNR is a statewide assessment and description of places the public and Department staff identified as most important to meet Wisconsin’s conservation and recreation needs for the next 50 years. Within Town of Atlanta, the WDNR has identified 2 legacy places: the Blue Hills and the Upper Chippewa River. Both are large areas which extend into or through the Town of Atlanta.

A considerable amount of formal protection has already taken place or been attempted in the Blue Hills while little formal protection has occurred on the Chippewa River. Any protection attempted is the work of individual land owners. Both areas possess excellent ecological qualities and contain species of regional significance. Restoration efforts have a high likelihood of success. They also possess excellent recreational potential.

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Wetlands

A wetland is defined by state statute as “an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophilic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, bogs, or marshes. Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants ranging from pesticides to animal wastes.

Wetlands can make rivers, lakes, and streams cleaner and drinking water safer; and provide valuable habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals and vegetation. Rare, threatened, and endangered species are found in wetlands. Some wetlands replenish groundwater supplies. Groundwater discharged from wetlands can be important in maintaining stream flows during dry months and can contribute high quality water to lakes and streams. Draining and filling of wetlands, or development near wetlands can remove these natural functions and values.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplain areas. These are areas that are predicted to be inundated with floodwaters in the 100-year storm event (a storm that has a 1% chance of happening in any given year). FEMA produces flood hazard maps called Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) showing areas subject to flooding that are currently regulated by FEMA. The State requires local regulation of development in floodplains. Development is discouraged in floodplains to avoid both downstream and on-site property damage. For official delineation and elevation, the FIRMs should be referenced for floodplain boundaries and can often be reviewed at local government offices and the Rusk County Courthouse--Zoning Office.

Groundwater

Groundwater is the water that occupies the spaces in between soil particles and rocks below the earth surface. Groundwater is the only source of drinking water for residents of Town of Atlanta. Groundwater is also important for supplying fresh water to lakes, streams, and rivers. Contamination of groundwater by human activity can be a severe problem because contaminants generally travel unnoticed, are difficult to remove, and may persist for decades. Water percolating through the soil can pick up human-made pollutants and transport them to the groundwater. Contaminants may also enter the groundwater through unused wells that are not properly sealed. Groundwater

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

contamination comes from a variety of sources including leaking underground petroleum pipes and tanks; use and storage of road salt; improper use, disposal, and storage of hazardous materials; and mismanagement of fertilizers, animal waste, and pesticides.

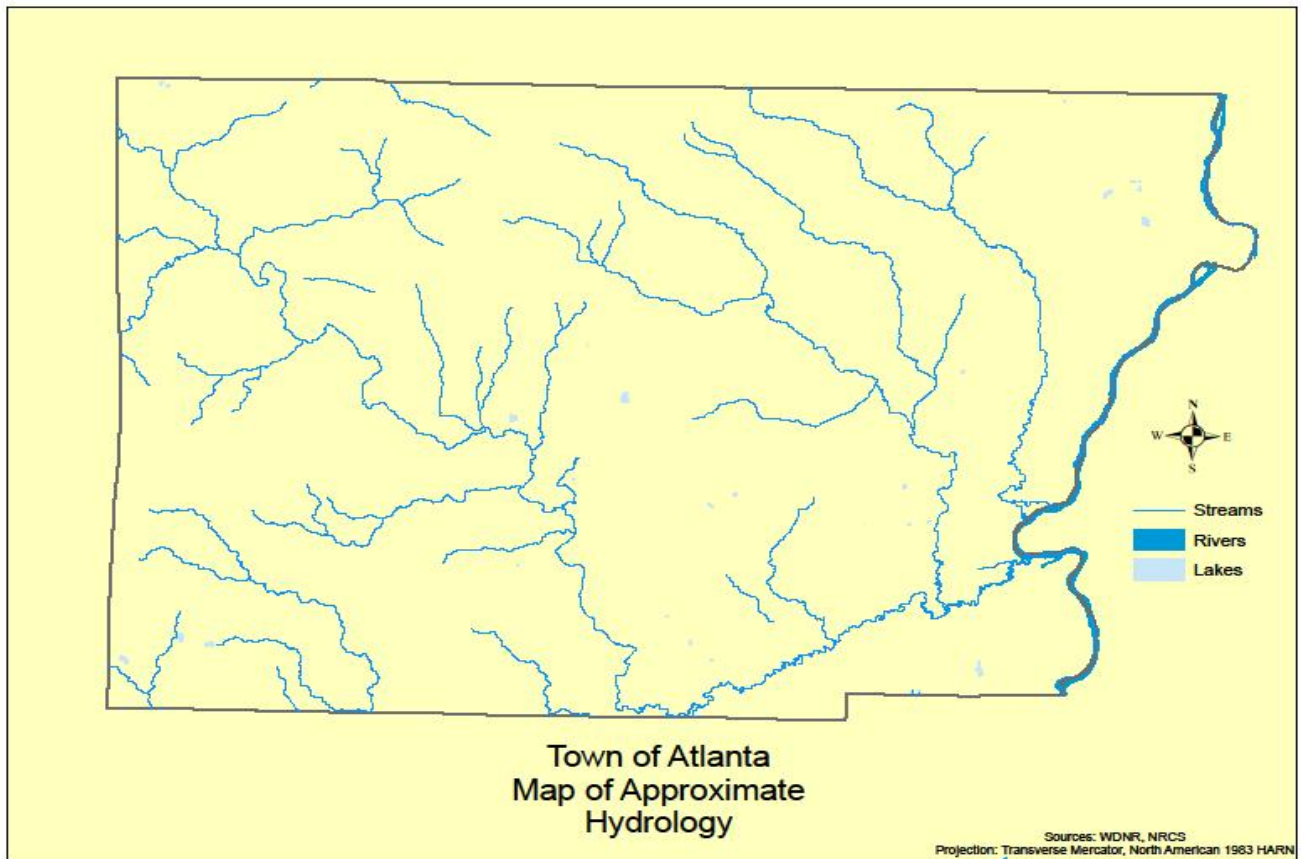
Hydrologic Areas

The state is divided into 3 major river basins each identified by the primary water body into which the basin drains. In Wisconsin, they are the Lake Superior Basin, Lake Michigan Basin and the Mississippi River Basin. Town of Atlanta is located within the Mississippi River Basin along with two-thirds of the land in Wisconsin. These areas are hierologically based subdivisions of the larger major basins of the state. Town of Atlanta is within the Upper Chippewa River Basin Water Management Unit.

Watersheds are interconnected areas of land draining from surrounding ridge tops to a common point such as a lake or stream confluence with neighboring land area. Watersheds are further hydrologic subdivisions of the Water Management Units.

Map 5.4 Hydrology Map

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



** Source Rusk County Conservationist

Shore lands

Shore lands include lands within 1000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake or pond and lands with 300 feet of ordinary high water mark or landward edge of the floodplain of a river or stream.

Surface Water

Surface waters are comprised of rivers streams, lakes, ponds and flowages. There are no lakes located in the Town of Atlanta.

The Chippewa River forms the eastern boundary of Town of Atlanta. Streams located in Town of Atlanta include Devils Creek, Hay Creek, Becky Creek, and Alder Creek.

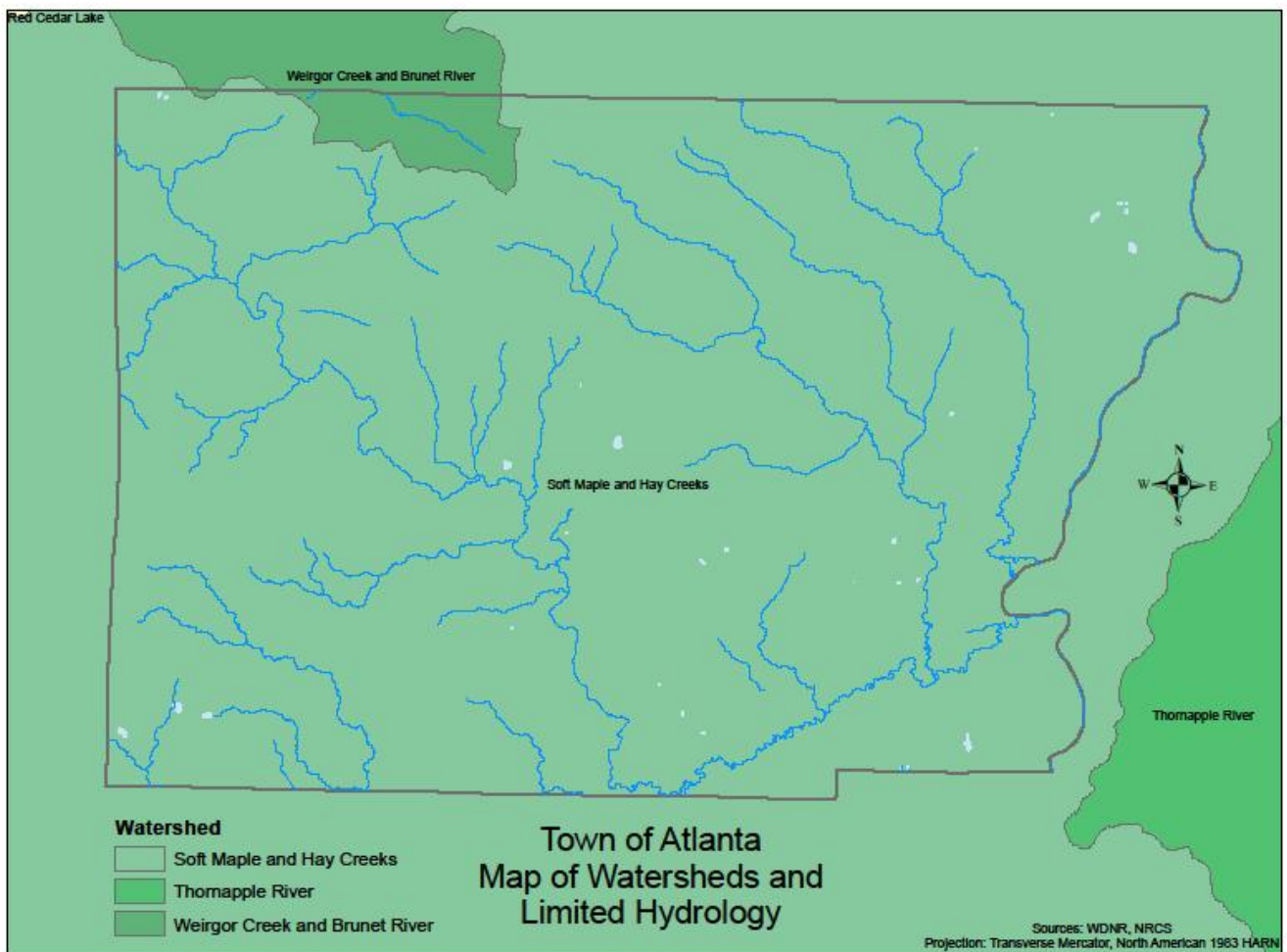
Surface water resources have been evaluated and rated for water quality, wildlife, fish, and aesthetic values of the WDNR. High quality water resources were classified as either Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) or Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW). Outstanding Resource Waters are defined as a lake or stream having excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, high quality fishing, and are free from

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

point source or non-point source pollution. Exceptional Resource Waters are defined as a stream exhibiting the same high quality resource values as an ORW but may be impacted by point or non-point sources of pollution or have the potential for receiving a wastewater discharge from a non-sewer community in the future. Devils Creek is rated ORW. Becky and Alder Creeks are rated ERW.

Impaired waters, as defined by Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act, are those waters that do not meet the state's water quality standards. In 2006, WDNR developed a proposed Impaired Waters List update. The list has not been finalized by WDNR and USEPA. According to this report the Chippewa River contains mercury and polychlorobiphenyls, indicating fish consumption advisory.

Map 5.5 Watersheds and Hydrology Map



** Source Rusk County Conservationist

Trout Streams

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Trout need certain environmental conditions to survive and flourish. Plenty of oxygen, cold water, sheltered places to hide and rest, and abundant supplies of insects and forage fish are the most important. Trout waters usually indicate relatively high water quality. The WDNR has classified some of the streams in the Town of Atlanta shown in the table below. There are three classes to show the different types of trout streams throughout the state.

Class 1

High quality trout waters that have sufficient natural reproduction to sustain population of wild trout

Class 2

Streams may have some natural reproduction, but, stocking is required to maintain a desirable sport fishery. These streams have good survival and carryover of adult trout, often producing some fish larger than average size

Class 3

These waters are marginal trout habitat with no natural reproduction occurring. They require annual stocking of trout to provide trout fishing. Generally, there is no carryover of trout from one year to the next.

Table 5.6

Stream Name	Portion Trout Waters	Brook	Brown	Class
Alder Creek	All	N		1
Becky Creek	All	N	X	1
Devils Creek	All	N	X	1,2,3

**From Rusk County Comprehensive Plan

Metallic and Non-metallic Mining Resources

The Rusk County Zoning Office maintains a complete list of metallic and non-metallic mines within Rusk County.

5.2 Agricultural Resources

Overview

This agricultural resources section is based on the principle of achieving sound long-range planning that protects prime agricultural resources of the town while treating landowners in a fair and equitable manner. Good planning helps rural communities promote agriculture and its contribution to rural economics support appropriate

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

development of land, manage renewable resources, avoid unnecessary conflicts among neighboring land uses, protect community features of special value, and encourage appropriate community development.

Agricultural Resources Inventory and Trends

Farming has been a significant land use activity throughout the town's history. Wisconsin farms can be diverse. There is no specific "right" definition of what a farm can be. The process to define what a farm is should begin with the inventory of agriculture operation in the community. Most government agencies that collect agricultural statistics define a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of the agricultural products were produced or sold in a normal year.

Rusk County Farmland Trends

The town is currently losing small dairy farms and growing the size of the remaining dairy farms.

5.3 Cultural and Historic Resources

REGIONAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Town of Atlanta is located in northwestern Wisconsin in Rusk County. Rusk County's total area is approximately 645,748 acres, or 931 square miles. The population in 2000 was 15,347 (16 persons per sq. mi.). Rusk County is bordered by Barron County to the west, Chippewa and Taylor Counties to the south, Price County to the east, and Sawyer County to the north. Twenty-four towns, eight villages, and one city are included in the county. Ladysmith (pop. 3,932) is the largest municipality in the county and is the county seat. The Village of Bruce (pop. 787), Village of Hawkins (pop. 317), and Village of Weyerhaeuser (pop. 353) are the next largest municipalities in the county.

EARLY HISTORY

The Town of Atlanta was inhabited for many hundreds of years by Native Americans, most recently the Ojibwa (Chippewa) people. The earliest Europeans to visit the area were the French explorers, fur traders and missionaries of the 17th century. In 1763 the area was ceded to British control, and, following the War of 1812, to the United States. In 1842 the Ojibwa were forced to cede their claim to the land in exchange for certain concessions. This opened the way for logging companies to move north.

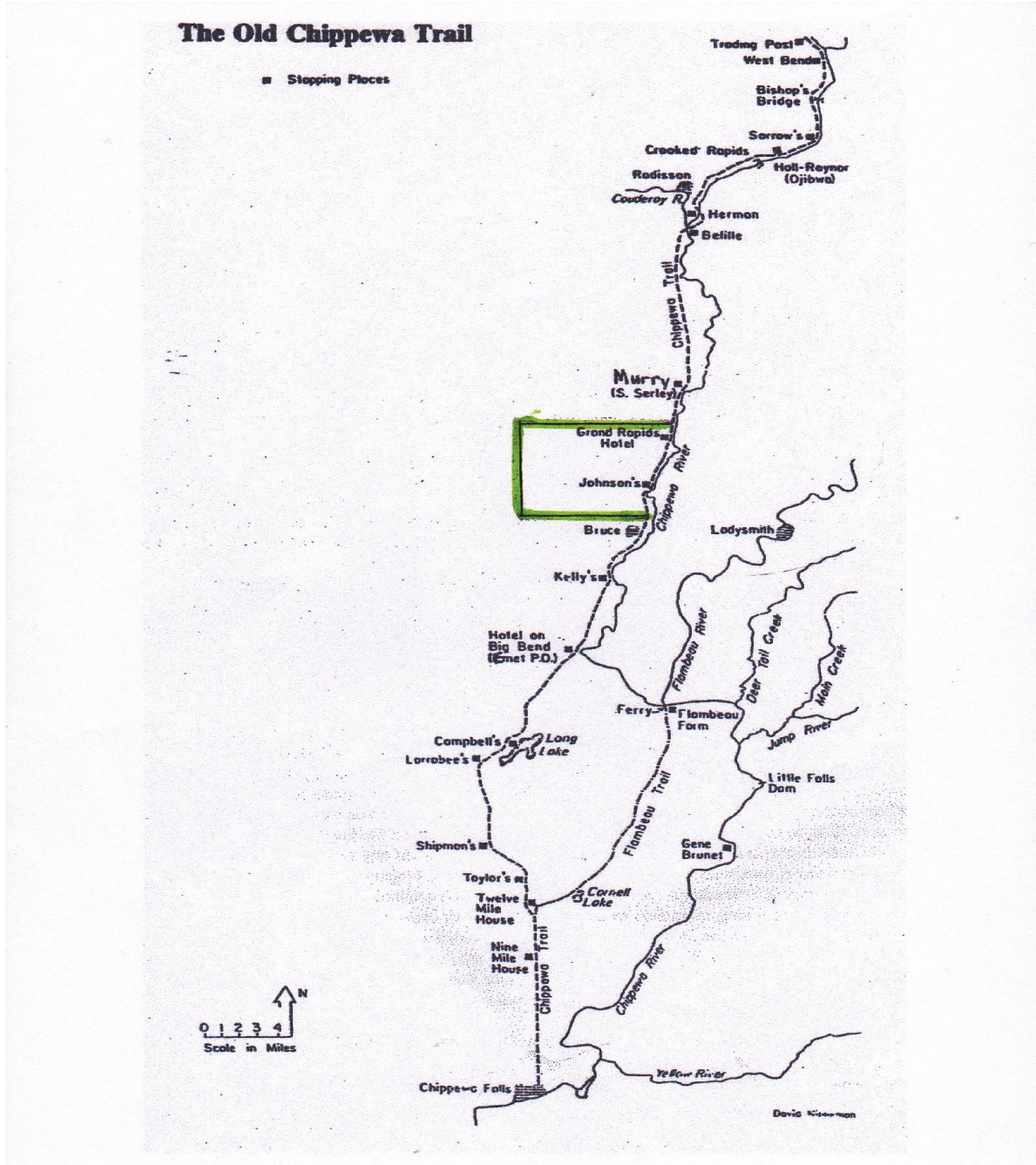
LUMBERING

Lumberjacks moved into and through the area on the Indian trail that ran along the west side of the Chippewa River. With increased traffic this widened into a 'tote' road, and

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

two stopping places (hotel, barns, store and blacksmith) were located along it in what is now the Town of Atlanta: the Grand Rapids Hotel (just south of present day Imalone) and the Johnson Stopping Place

Map 5.7 Old Chippewa Trail



(green square is the Town of Atlanta) ** Source ...And They Built A Church by Victoria Hoefft

The Chippewa River and Menomonie, Frederick Weyerhaeuser's logging railroad, was built north through the Town of Atlanta in the late 1880's to the Chippewa Logging

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

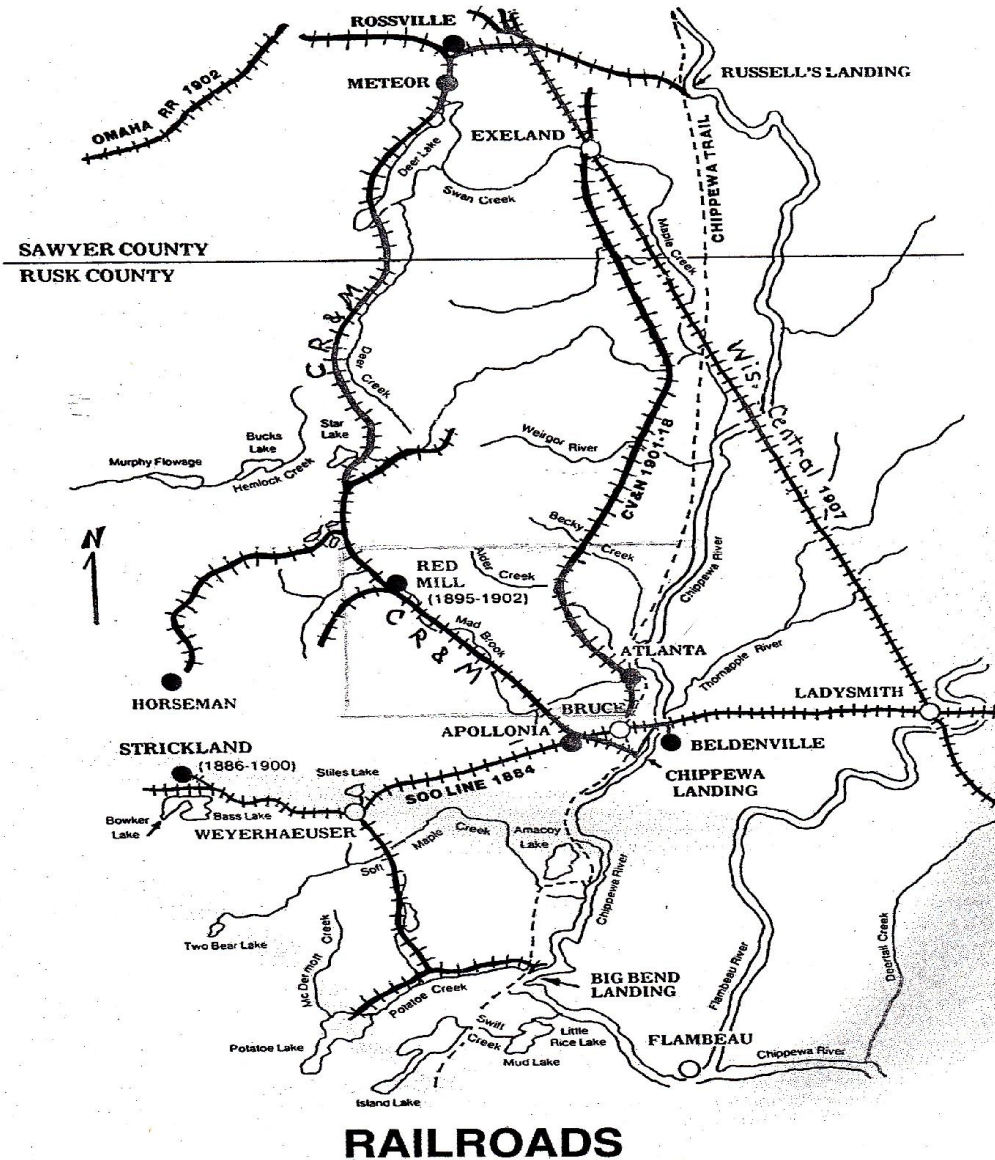
Company's Red Mill camp and into the Blue Hills. By 1902 the best hardwood lumber was exhausted, and the mill and track were dismantled. Today the fire lane lies along the old right of way, and the log pond beside it can still be seen.

In 1900 the Arpin Hardwood Lumber Company built a large sawmill and a dam on Devil's Creek west of where it empties into the Chippewa River, and began construction on a railroad, the Chippewa Valley and Northern, to haul logs to the mill. The mill area contained the mill, mill pond, office, a company store containing a U.S. Post Office, a boarding house, company and private houses, horse barns, a company farm to supply food for the store and the mill manager, and a three story home for the manager, Joseph Arpin, and his family. The

C V & N tracks ran from the Village of Bruce, through the Village of Atlanta, then parallel to present day County Highway H, and north to the Village of Exeland. Operations ceased in 1918 when the mill burned. Most of the remaining mill was sold or dismantled. A handful of buildings still remain or were moved to other sites.

Map 5.8 Railroads

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



(Square is the Town of Atlanta) ** Source from Brown, R.C. (Doc), Logging Railroads of Rusk County, Wisconsin, Chronotype Publications, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 1982

As the trees disappeared the cutover land was broken up and sold by the logging companies to individuals. These developed into the small family farms that thrived into the second half of the 20th century.

GOVERNMENT

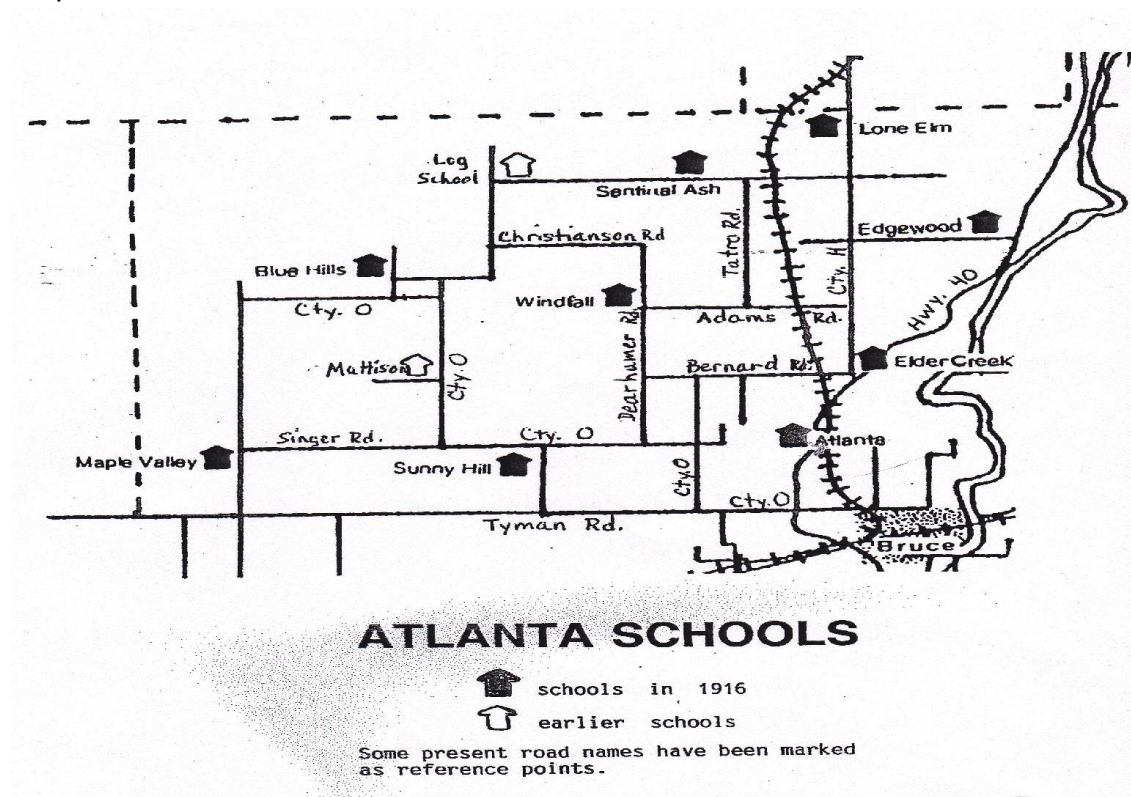
When the state of Wisconsin was admitted into the Union in 1848 the area that today forms the Town of Atlanta was legally part of Chippewa County. In 1901 the northern section of Chippewa County was detached and named Gates County, and was

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

renamed Rusk County in 1904. On May 28, 1901 the Town of Atlanta held its first annual meeting in the home of James Arrance. The town was formed out of a small part of the Town of Strickland and mostly from the Town of Big Bend. A year later a town hall was built on the west side of Hwy 40. Until 1913 the Town of Atlanta included most of the northwest part of the county, including the present Towns of Murry, Wilson, and Wilkinson.

SCHOOLS

Map 5.9 Schools



As the population of the town grew the Town Board established and set boundaries for school districts, making changes as the population grew and shifted. A total of 12 different schools were established in the town, but as districts were separated or joined over time there were never more than ten schools operating at any one time. Usually the schools were close enough for students to walk to. If students were more than two miles from a school parents were paid to provide transportation. The highest enrollment was at the Atlanta School in 1914 with a total of 50 students. It was the only two room school in the Town of Atlanta. During the 1940's most of the schools were closed and consolidated with the Bruce School District.

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

FARMING

The earliest farms in the area were carved from the cutover lands owned by the logging companies. Frequently the husband worked in the woods or at the mill while the wife and children cared for the cow and a few chickens and kept a garden. When logging came to an end farms began to increase in size and number, replacing logging as the major industry. Land was cleared of stumps, and grasses such as timothy and clover were planted using horses. Although herd size increased as more land was cleared, cows were milked by hand well into the 1930's.

To serve the dairy farms two cheese factories operated in the Town of Atlanta during the 1910's and 20's: the Krachenbuel (or Krachenbuhl) Cheese Factory located at the present day intersection of Sentinel Ash and Tatro Roads; and the Weutherich Cheese Factory, first located east of today's Hwy 40 just north of the Elder Creek bridge, and later, following a fire, just north of the Devil's Creek bridge. By 1940 both had closed due to the better services being offered by larger operators.

Over the years several different cash crops were also raised. Potatoes were important from about 1915 to the late 1930's. In the 1920's peas were grown in the area and canned at a factory in Ladysmith. In the 1940's the major cash crop was snap beans. Butter and eggs were also sold to the local grocery stores or traded for supplies.

By the 1940's horses began to be replaced by tractors and more machinery came into use. Farmers formed cooperatives and neighbors worked together particularly during the harvest.

Only a handful of small dairy farms (less than a hundred milking cows) are still in operation. A similar number of dairy farms have changed over to beef operations. One family owned dairy farm has grown into a large operation, milking about 800 cows.

UTILITIES

The first telephone service connected the Chippewa River & Menomonie Railroad headquarters in Apollonia with the Red Mill in the Blue Hills. This line, built in 1891, helped in dispatching the trains.

Except for the power generated at the Arpin sawmill and distributed in the Village of Atlanta, electric power did not come to the town until 1935. Lake Superior District Power Company gradually extended its lines as a result of President Franklin Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Administration.

TRAILS END YOUTH CAMP

Trails End is located along a section of the original Indian trail and lumbering tote road

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

where Devil's Creek empties into the Chippewa River. It is also the site of an old Ojibwa campsite and the Johnson Stopping Place.

The land was sold to a lumbering company that logged off all the white pine, then to the Arpin brothers who established a hardwood mill near the site. Eventually the mill closed, and the county acquired the land in 1926.

Claude Ebling, County Extension Agent in 1933, had a vision of a youth camp located on the historic site. He took his plan to the Rusk County Commissioners, and on August 10, 1933 the 86 acres was deeded to a special 4-H committee for the use of 4-H and FFA activities. The camp has since expanded to about 150 acres and has seen numerous improvements.

CHRISTIE MOUNTAIN

In 1951 Casper Hagen and Leo Miner purchased a 40 acre parcel of land in the Blue Hills to develop a downhill ski area. The facility, called Mount Atlanta, included one run, a warming house, and a tow rope run by a tractor motor. Over a period of time the business declined, and in 1975 it was purchased by George Sorensen of Rice Lake. The original downhill run was no longer part of the property. Sorensen constructed a chalet, T-bar and chairlift, and land was leased from the Town of Atlanta to develop the runs.

Jim and Laura Landreth bought the business in 1985, remodeling areas, adding runs, and developing a snowboarding area. They also acquired and developed the original Mount Atlanta run and introduced the "Blue Hills Beast" legend and logo.

In 1998 the business was sold to David and Suzanne Vohs who continue to make improvements, including adding a tubing area. They purchased 80 acres from the town in 2012.

5.4 Summary – Goals and Objectives

Goal: Protect, preserve, and efficiently utilize natural resource in the town, as well as provide employment and recreational opportunities. Promote the preservation of historic and cultural resources of the area.

Objectives:

1. Promote the responsible use of Rusk County resources.
2. Protect natural resource from pollution and degradation, and encourage proper land/timber management by government and private owners.
3. Seek and promote educational opportunities for people to learn more about historical and cultural resources.

TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

4. Maintain an agricultural presence in the town.

Actions:

- A. Promote development and agricultural practices which protect surface and groundwater quality, including proper erosion control, manure management, and storm water management practices.
- B. Work with the Rusk County Historical Society and other organizations interested in the preservation of historic and cultural resource.
- C. Continue formulation of the County Forest Management Plan and Land and Water Conservation Plan.
- D. Support education opportunities for residents and property owners that provide natural resource conservation practices, proper land management, agri-business issues, and historic and cultural resource understanding.