

## **Jefferson County, Wisconsin**

Jefferson County is located in southeast Wisconsin, with the Rock River flowing through its center. Jefferson has seen various floods in the past and current century. One major event occurred in June 1993, after which \$1.5 million was awarded in federal recovery assistance grants. Two more significant flooding events occurred in 2007 and 2008, after which Jefferson County received more than \$10 million in federal grants and loans for mitigation. In total, the county has acquired more than 120 properties in the floodplain, and continues to pursue additional buyouts for hazard mitigation purposes.

The vast majority of flood properties in Jefferson County are currently being allowed to return to a natural state. Several of the properties are being maintained by adjacent property owners, via written permission from Jefferson County. One buyout area provides public access to fishing with a wharf which was funded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and made possible in part by Fishing Has No Boundaries. That property is actively managed by Jefferson County and the Wisconsin Conservation Club, a local conservation organization. However, management concerns on the sites are persistent and funding for project development remains a challenge. Management issues on the properties include; driving off the designated roadway onto the land, operating ATV's on the land, managing the properties by individuals without permission, storing vehicles/trailers/boats/sheds/etc. on the land, signing the public property as if it were private property, waste disposal, etc.

To address these management issues, ELI and UNC began to work with Jefferson County in July 2017 to identify publically-supported uses for the sites and to develop a transparent and consistent plan for management of the acquired sites. To that end, ELI and the Jefferson County Parks Department hosted 1) a meeting for municipal officials within Jefferson to share information on the County's buyouts and solicit ideas from municipal officials within the County about possible uses and ways to work together to best manage the properties, and 2) a public workshop to gather community ideas on the management of buyouts in the County and on additional, publically-supported uses for the properties. About 15 municipal officials attended the first meeting during which we discussed current management and management opportunities and solicited input on potential future uses. About 30 members of the public attended the open workshop during which we received constructive feedback on management of the buyout sites.

ELI and UNC-IE are continuing to work with the community to develop the management plan. Jefferson County plans to continue engaging the public – especially neighbors of the buyout properties – in the iterative development of the plan. We have also developed a template management plan based on our work with the county. The plan will be posted on our website - <https://www.eli.org/public-participation-for-buyout-planning-management>.