

**SUBJECT: LAND DONATION – AVON BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA - ROCK COUNTY**

**FOR: SEPTEMBER 2007 BOARD MEETING**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes**

**SUMMARY:** Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) has offered to donate to the Department 351 acres of land for the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Rock County. The item is being submitted for Board acceptance of the donation as well as approval of the expansion of the wildlife area project boundary to include the 351-acre parcel.

The Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is located in southern Rock County, about 12 miles from Beloit. The property consists of floodplains and wetlands along the Sugar River, from just over the Green County line through southwest Rock County to the Illinois border. The property is managed to protect wildlife habitat along the river and to provide hunting, fishing, trapping and other recreational activities such as hiking, boating, canoeing, cross-country skiing and nature observation. Avon Bottoms is host to some unique or endangered species such as the ornate box turtle, whooping cranes, river birch, sycamore, and chinkapin oak.

This property was acquired and restored by NHLT in partnership in which the Department's Stewardship Grant Program and Natural Resources Conservation Services' Wetland Reserve Program Grant funds worked together to protect, buffer and restore these wetlands. Restoration activities included creating a mosaic of communities such as shallow marshes, wet meadows, floodplain forest, and prairie. These new communities have contributed significantly to the habitat needs of many wetland and upland species. The 351-acre property is located in the Town of Avon in Rock County, within a two-hour drive of the major population centers of Milwaukee, Madison and Chicago. The Stewardship grant totaled \$227,000.

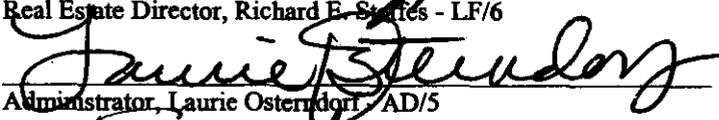
This gift of land that will provide opportunities for public recreation, allow wildlife management, and protect the restored habitat, wetland and grassland communities on this property.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board accept the donation of 351 acres of land for the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area, that a certificate of appreciation be sent to the Natural Heritage Land Trust and that an expression of appreciation be made a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board. In addition, that the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area project boundary and acreage goal be expanded to include the 351 acres of donated lands.

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Estimate Required                              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Attached            |
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Attached            |
| No <input type="checkbox"/> Background Memo  | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attached |

**APPROVED:**   
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF/6

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Administrator, Laurie Osterdorf - AD/5

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Secretary, Scott Hassett - AD/5

8-24-07  
 Date

8/28/07  
 Date

8/30/07  
 Date

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| cc: S. Miller – LF/6 | L. Eagan – SCR/Fitchburg |
| R. Steffes – LF/6    | T. Hauge – WM/6          |
| L. Ross – AD/6       |                          |

## CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 24, 2007 FILE REF: W-1719  
 TO: Natural Resources Board  
 FROM: Scott Hassett   
 SUBJECT: Proposed Gift of Land - Natural Heritage Land Trust Tract, File #W-1719,

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area  
 Rock County

Grantor:

Natural Heritage Land Trust  
 c/o Jim Welch  
 303 South Paterson Street  
 Madison, WI 53703

Acres: 351Price: N/AInterest: Donation of fee simple title.Improvements: NoneLocation: The tract is located in Rock County in the Town of Avon about 12 miles west of Beloit.Land Description: The subject is generally flat to gently rolling terrain.

<u>Covertypes Breakdown:</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
	Lowland Woodland	24.0
	Restored Wetland	327.0
	TOTAL	351.0

Zoning: Agriculture, Conservancy, and FloodplainPresent Use: Conservation and Wetland Restoration siteProposed Use: Wildlife Management and Public RecreationTenure: 2 years; purchased from the Lakin Trust using a Stewardship grant.Letter of intent date: August 10, 20072. JUSTIFICATION:

Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) has offered to donate 351 acres of land know as the Larkin Trust property to the Department. This land adjoins the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area, and if accepted the project boundary will be expanded to include the entire 351-acre tract as well as the acreage goal increased to 3,061 acres to accommodate this additional land. The property will provide opportunities for public recreation, allow wildlife management, and protect the wetland restoration work already completed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as part of their Wetland Reserve Program.

The Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area was established in 1960 and is located in southern Rock County, about 10 miles from Beloit. The property consists of floodplains and wetlands along the Sugar River, from just over the Green County line through Rock County to the Illinois border. The property is managed to protect wildlife habitat along the river and to provide hunting, fishing, trapping and other recreational activities such as hiking, boating, canoeing, cross-country skiing and nature observation. Avon Bottoms is host to some unique or endangered species such as the ornate box turtle, whooping cranes, river birch, sycamore, and chinkapin oak.

The Sugar River valley is mentioned in the Land Legacy Report as it is classified as Exceptional Resource Waters. It provides a protected network of corridors linking several department wildlife areas, including Avon Bottoms, in Green and Rock Counties as well as several parks and trails. This river valley supports many rare terrestrial and aquatic plants, insects, and grassland birds as well as connects to several scattered prairie remnants held in both public and private ownership.

The NHLT property is 351 acres in size and located adjacent to the acquisition boundary of the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area. This property was acquired by NHLT in partnership in which the Department's Stewardship Grant Program and Natural Resources Conservation Services' WRP Grant funds worked together to protect, buffer and restore these wetlands. Before the purchase and restoration, most of the 351 acres was low, drained cropland. Restoration activities included creating a mosaic of communities such as shallow marshes, wet meadows, floodplain forest, and prairie. These new communities have contributed significantly to the habitat needs of many wetland and upland species. The subject property is located in the Town of Avon in Rock County, within a two-hour drive of the major population centers of Milwaukee, Madison and Chicago. The public uses Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area heavily and acquisition of the tract would consolidate state ownership in this project as well as protect the land.

The NHLT parcel provides key habitat components that will complement the existing wildlife area. A unique feature of the wildlife area is that whooping cranes are known to stop over here during migration. Future management of this parcel will include continued management and restoration of wetlands, continued planting of native grasses, and establishment of upland nesting cover for waterfowl.

The Department recommends purchase of this parcel to protect wildlife habitat, to provide opportunities for public recreation, to allow natural resource management, to restore and provide habitat for a variety of species, and to consolidate state ownership.

3. FINANCING:

Funds are not required for this transaction.

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE AVON BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1960  
Acres Purchased to Date: 2,450.14  
Acquisition Goal: 2,710 acres  
Percent Complete: 90.4 %  
Cost to Date: \$1,229,288

RECOMMENDED:

  
Richard E. Steffes

8-24-07  
Date

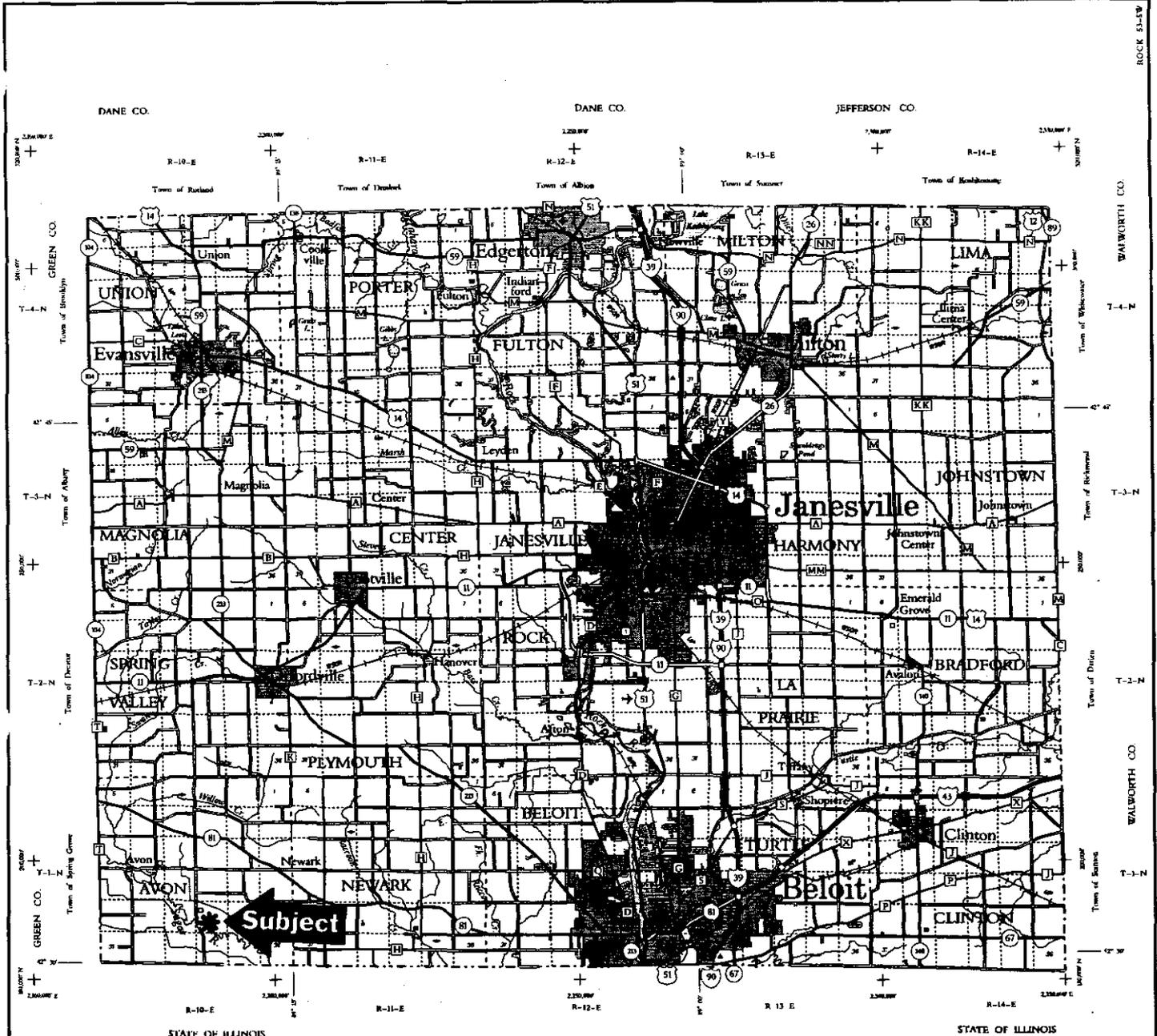
  
Bureau of Legal Services

8/27/07  
Date

  
Laurie Osterndorf

8/28/07  
Date

ROCK 53-SB



STATE OF ILLINOIS

**LEGEND**

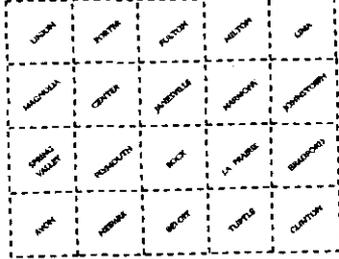
- Freeway
- Multi-lane Divided
- U.S. or State Hwy
- County Trunk Hwy
- Town Road
- Furrows
- Railroad
- State Trail
- Interchange
- Highway Separation
- Interstate Highway No.
- U.S. Highway No.
- State Highway No.
- County Highway Letter
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Civil Towns Boundary
- Section Line
- Dam
- Hospital
- Schools
- Airport
- County Seat
- Unincorporated Village
- Fish Hatchery
- Game Farm
- Public House or Fish Club
- Public Camp or Picnic Club
- Recreation Service
- State Park
- County Park
- Wildlife Refuge
- Rest Area
- Mobile Park
- Wayside
- Use of Wisconsin - Rock Co.



**SECTION NUMBERING OF A TOWNSHIP**

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36

**CIVIL TOWNS**



For boundaries of public lands and fishing grounds please contact the Department of Natural Resources  
 Grid based on the state plane coordinate system north zone and the NAD 77

**MILES OF HIGHWAY**  
as of Dec. 31, 2005

STATE	132
COUNTY	26
LOCAL ROAD	679
OTHER ROADS	11
<b>TOTAL FOR COUNTY</b>	<b>2,617</b>

Land Area (2004 Census) - 739 sq. mi.  
 Population (2000 Census) - 52,537  
 County Seat - Janesville

**ROCK CO.**

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
 STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
 Madison, Wisconsin  
 SCALE MILES  
 Corrected for  
 JAN. 2007  
 Map compiled from U.S.G.S. Quadrigraph  
 1:50,000 Series

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# Natural Heritage Land Trust Gift

## Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area

-  Subject Property
-  WDNR Owned
-  WDNR Eased
-  WDNR Leased
-  Ice Age Trail
-  Project Boundary
-  Open Water



The DNR Managed Lands represent the boundaries of lands managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Wisconsin DNR manages these lands through ownership, easement or lease rights. This data set is a spatial representation of the Oracle Land Records System maintained by the DNR, Bureau of Facilities and Lands (LF), and may include errors and/or omissions. The data should not be interpreted as a legal representation of legal ownership boundaries.

This data set does not differentiate between lands that are open or closed to the public for hunting and/or general public access. Some lands represented in this data set may not be open to the general public, or may have specific limitations or restrictions on public use. This data set is not intended for use as a land management tool; it is a listing of all DNR real estate transactions that have occurred on these lands over time.

For information about the actual management, including public use and public access of the lands, contact the nearest DNR Regional office. Contact information for DNR Regional Offices and Service Centers is provided on the following internet site:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caerics/servicecenter/locations.htm>

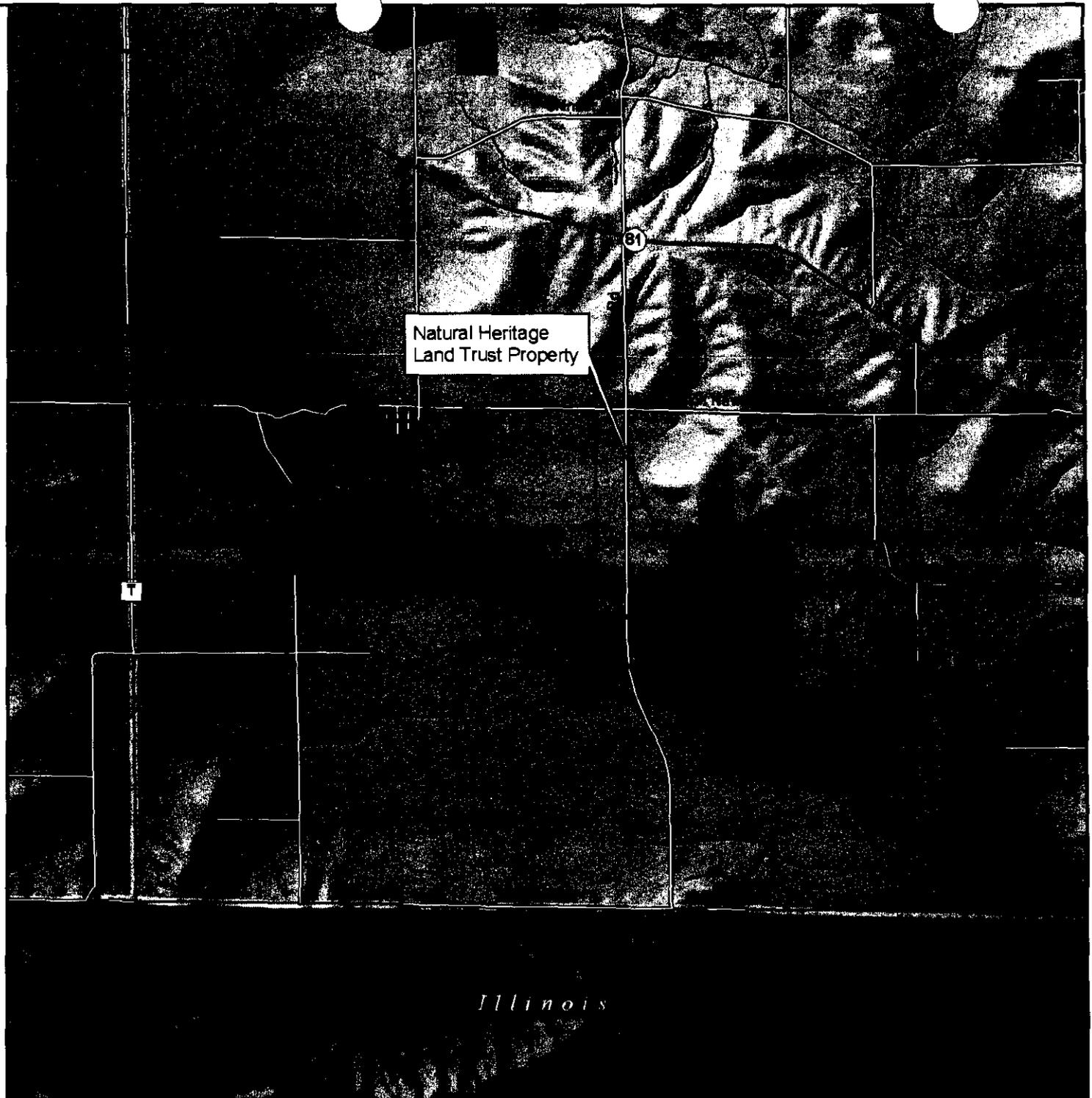
Updates to this data set are ongoing, and will be incorporated into future versions when available.

**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES**



**Bureau of Facilities and Lands**

August 23, 2007



## *Acknowledgment of Gift*

This is to certify that at its September 2007 meeting, the Natural Resources Board gratefully accepted a gift of 351 acres of land, known as the Larkin Trust property, from the

## **NATURAL HERITAGE LAND TRUST**

This donation of land will be used as an addition to the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Rock County. It is significant that the Department work with conservation organizations such as the Natural Heritage Land Trust who are interested in helping protect Wisconsin's natural heritage and contribute toward this end.

An expression of our appreciation is a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board. We present this certificate of sincere appreciation on behalf of present and future generations to thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

*Natural Resources Board*

Christine L. Thomas, CHAIR