

**SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION - CENTRAL WI GRASSLAND CONSERVATION AREA, PORTAGE COUNTY**

**FOR: JUNE 2010 BOARD MEETING**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes**

**SUMMARY:** The Department has partnered with The Conservation Fund (TCF) to acquire and protect 883.25 acres of land for the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area for \$2,173,074.83. This is one of five critical parcels of land for important state conservation projects. The lands will be held by TCF and then purchased by the Department, assuming approvals. The item is being submitted due to the significant size of the transaction.

The subject consists of two separate parcels of land of which one parcel (597.27-acres) is located in the Town of Pine Grove, and the other parcel (285.98 acres) is located in the Town of Buena Vista. Department acquisition, restoration and maintenance of adequate grassland habitat on this property will provide added security for the prairie chicken population in this specific area as well as provide additional wildlife habitat and numerous public recreation activities. State land borders the smaller parcel on three sides.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA), approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, seeks to protect up to 15,000 acres over the next ten years to meet the habitat needs of many rare and declining grassland species, most notably the greater prairie chicken. The CWGCA represents one of the last opportunities in the state to manage grasslands at a landscape scale. Another goal of the project is to provide limited low impact outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with grassland management.

The Department recommends the acquisition of the subject property to provide additional opportunities for public recreation and to better protect the natural and scenic resources of this site by preventing uses incompatible with the goals of the project and by promoting natural resource management.

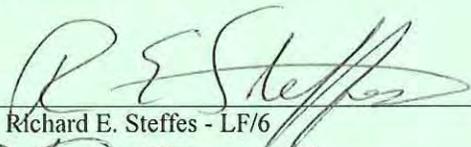
Note: The Department is facilitating this transaction by using an intermediary buyer, The Conservation Fund (TCF), to assist with acquisition and timing of the purchase. This price is inclusive of TCF's closing costs, administrative and holding fees and assumes the Department can close by August 31, 2010.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board approve the purchase of 883.25 acres of land for \$2,173,074.83 for the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area.

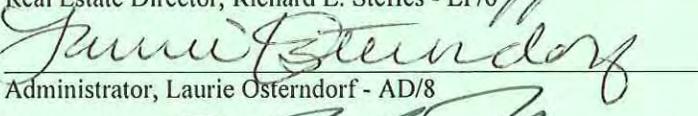
**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

- |  |   |   |          |
|--|---|---|----------|
| 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 |

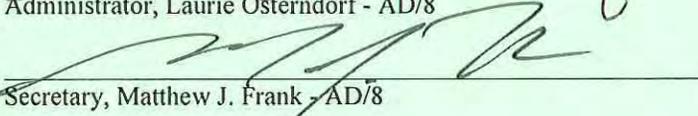
**APPROVED:**

  
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Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF/6

6-2-10  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
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Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD/8

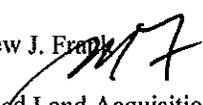
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Date

  
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Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8

6-9-10  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- cc: S. Miller - LF/6  
 R. Steffes - LF/6  
 S. Humrickhouse - WCR/Eau Claire  
 L. Ross - AD/8  
 T. Hauge - WM/6

## CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 1, 2010  
 TO: Governor Doyle  
 FROM: Matthew J. Frank   
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisitions, The Conservation Fund (TCF) Tract,  
 Approval is Requested by August 15, 2010

FILE REF: WM 60055

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area  
 Portage County

Grantor:

The Conservation Fund  
 Attorney Jodi O'Day  
 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 204  
 Annapolis, MD 21403  
 and  
 The Conservation Fund  
 Attorney Lily Engle  
 1655 North Fort Meyer Drive, Suite 1300  
 Arlington, VA 22209-3199

Acres: 883.25Price: \$2,173,074.83Appraised Value: See appraisal section below.Interest: Fee Title PurchaseLocation: The property is located in southwestern Portage County five miles south of Plover.Land Description: Topography is generally level to gently rolling.Improvements: Cattle loading shed

<u>Covertypes Breakdown:</u>	<u>Type:</u>	<u>Acreage:</u>
	Grassland/Pasture	883.25

Zoning: AgriculturePresent Use: Pasture/GrazingProposed Use: Grassland management and Public Recreation

Tenure: 22 years (Blue Top Farms); TCF acquired the land on December 11, 2009 for \$2,208,000. This consisted of \$2,045,000 to be reimbursed by the Department, plus donated funds. Dane County Conservation League donated \$100,000 and the Portage County Land Preservation Fund, through the Golden Sands group, donated \$63,000. This resulted in a sale price of about \$2,500 per acre.

Property Taxes: \$2,227Purchase Agreement Date: December 8, 2009

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be open to the public for all nature-based outdoor recreational activities to include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross-country skiing.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department has a contract to purchase an 883.25-acre parcel (former Blue Top Farms Inc. property) from TCF for the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area. The subject consists of two separate



parcels of land of which one parcel (597.27-ares) is located in the Town of Pine Grove, and the other parcel (285.98 acres) is located in the Town of Buena Vista. Department acquisition, restoration and maintenance of adequate grassland habitat on this property will provide added security for the prairie chicken population in this specific area as well as provide additional wildlife habitat and numerous public recreation activities. State land borders the smaller parcel on three sides.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA), approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, seeks to protect up to 15,000 acres over the next ten years to meet the habitat needs of many rare and declining grassland species, most notably the greater prairie chicken. The CWGCA represents one of the last opportunities in the state to manage grasslands at a landscape scale. Another goal of the project is to provide limited low impact outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with grassland management.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area covers portions of six counties. It surrounds several smaller wildlife management projects, the Buena Vista Wildlife Area being one of them, as well as two fishery management project areas. The project area boundary was developed by determining the core range for historic and current prairie chicken populations, and the management goals are primarily for grasslands species such as the prairie chicken and various songbirds.

The parcels are located within the current range of the greater prairie chicken, a state-threatened species and was historically cleared for farming and pasture and has continued to be used as agriculture lands in recent years. The subject's topography is fairly level and there is water frontage along two drainage ditches, the smaller 285.98 parcel has one mile of one-bank frontage on a drainage ditch, which does have native brook trout. The larger 597.27-acre parcel has a one-quarter mile of one-bank frontage on a small drainage ditch. This large parcel has a cattle loading shed of low value. The soil types that are present on the subject consist mainly of mucks and loamy sands that range from moderately well drained to poorly drained soils. The property is zoned general agricultural, which has a minimum lot size of two acres with a minimum width of 200 feet.

The Department recommends the acquisition of the subject property to provide additional opportunities for public recreation and to better protect the natural and scenic resources of this site by preventing uses incompatible with the goals of the project and by promoting natural resource management.

Note: The Department is facilitating this transaction by using an intermediary buyer, The Conservation Fund (TCF), to assist with acquisition and timing of the purchase. This price is inclusive of TCF's closing costs, administrative and holding fees and assumes the Department can close by August 31, 2010.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond (FY11) funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$50,000,000	\$26,845,046

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE CENTRAL WI GRASSLAND CONSERVATION AREA:

Established: 2005  
Acres Purchased to Date: 1,177.02  
Acquisition Goal: 15,000.0 Acres  
Percent Complete: 7.85%  
Cost to Date: \$1,306,443.00

5a. APPRAISAL:

Appraiser: Phil Lepinski

Valuation Date: February 13, 2009

Appraised Value: \$2,120,000

Highest and Best Use: Agriculture (cranberry bogs, pasture, or row cropland)

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 883.25 acres @ \$2,400 per acre: \$2,120,000
- b. market data approach used, five comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1,796.00 to \$3,610.00 per acre

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter -- August 13, 2009

5b. APPRAISAL:

Appraiser: Michael Augustyn

Valuation Date: February 4, 2009

Appraised Value: \$1,970,000.00

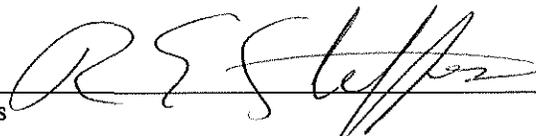
Highest and Best Use: Agriculture and Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 883.25 acres @ \$2,230 per acre: \$1,970,000
- b. market data approach used, five comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$2,160 to \$2,262 per acre

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter - February 25, 2009

RECOMMENDED:

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Richard E. Steffes

6-2-10  
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 Date

  
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 Bureau of Legal Services

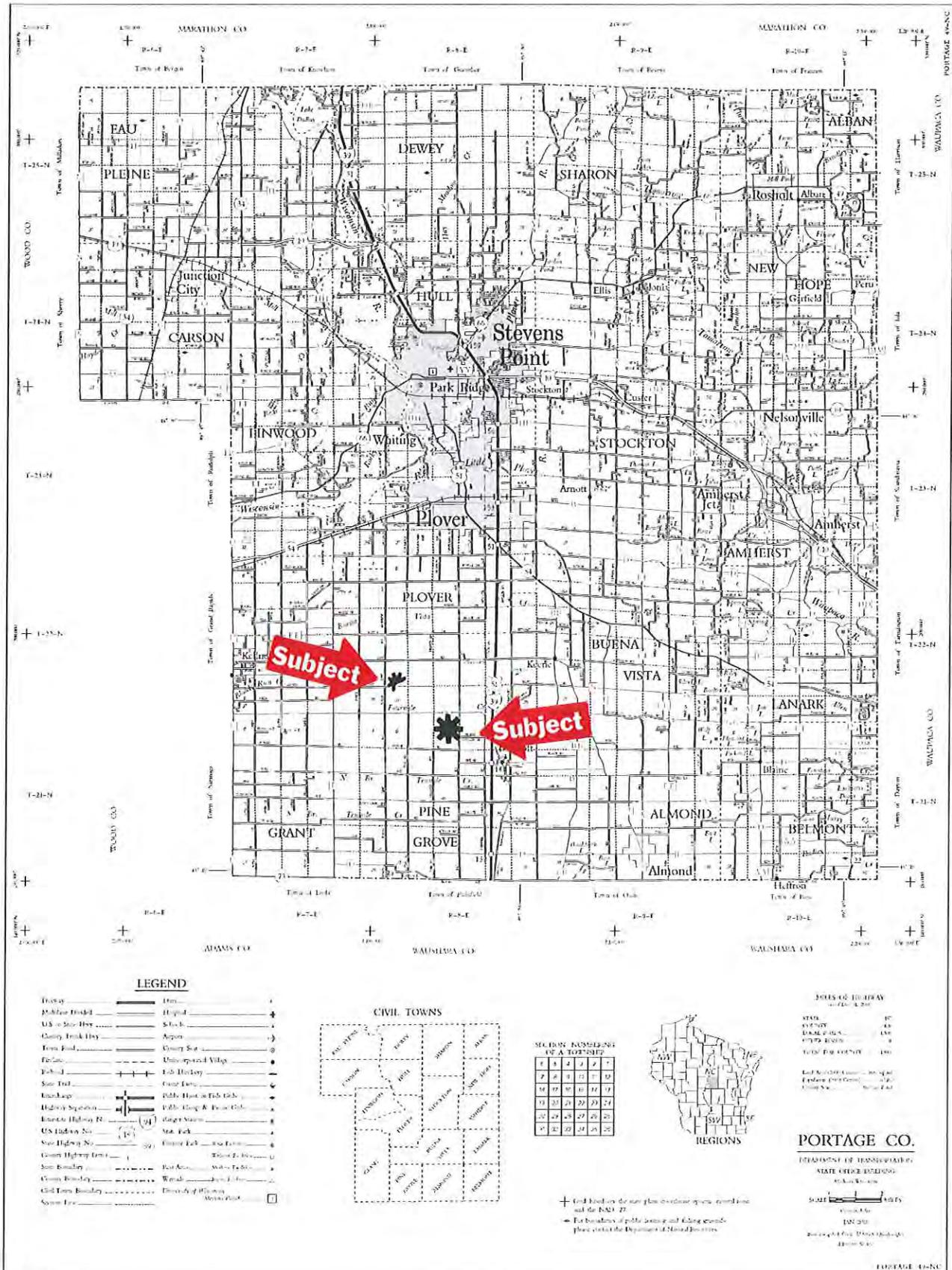
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 Laurie Osterndorf

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WM-60055  
CENTRAL WISCONSIN GRASSLAND  
CONSERVATION AREA

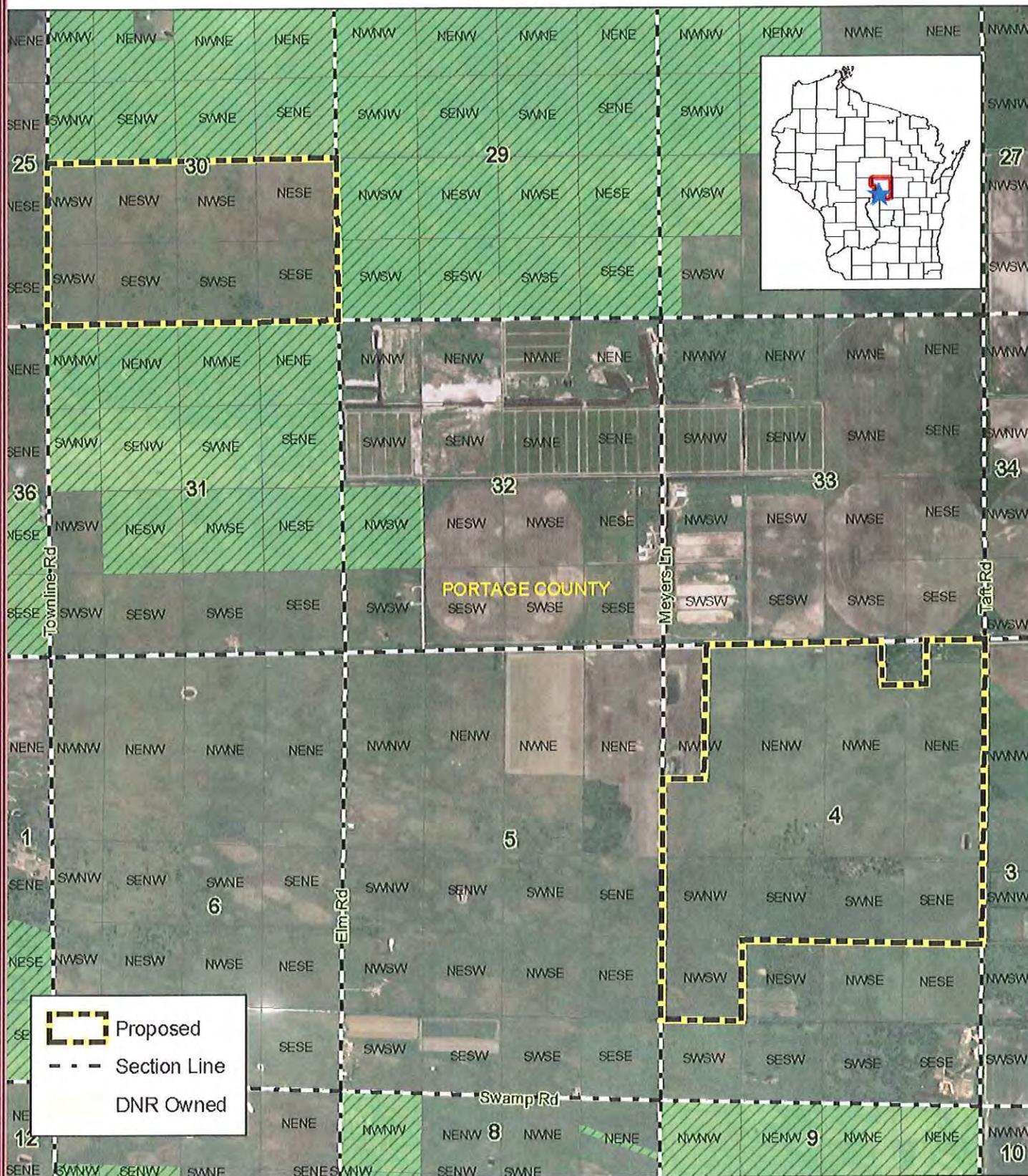


**Subject** →

← **Subject**

# The Conservation Fund

T21N R8E Sec. 4, and T22N R8E Sec. 30, Portage County, WI



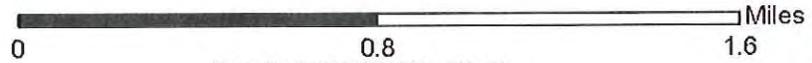
**Legend**

- Proposed
- Section Line
- DNR Owned

## PROPOSED

WM 60055

Central Wisconsin Grassland and Conservation Area



Created by Bureau of Facilities and Lands  
Real Estate Section  
June 30, 2009



# The Conservation Fund

T21N R8E Sec. 4  
and T22N R8E Sec. 30  
Portage County, WI

Central Wisconsin  
Grassland  
Conservation Area

**PROPOSED**  
WMI 60055



PLSS Section



Proposed



WDNR Owned



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 may be managed for public use, but the DNR does not have specific information on public use. This data set is not intended to be used 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/cear/ceservicecenters.htm>

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Bureau of Facilities and Lands  
June 30, 2008

