

SUBJECT: Approval of the Master Plan for Sandhill, Wood County & Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

FOR: DECEMBER 2011 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY / TITLE: Tom Hauge

SUMMARY:

This agenda item was tabled at the October 2011 meeting at the request of NRB members who asked for additional time to review the draft master plan.

To recap:

The 90,000-acre Work Unit is located in west central WI and includes Sandhill, Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas. While the DNR has management responsibility for all three properties, only Sandhill is entirely under Department ownership. Wood County WA is owned by Wood County and managed under a long-term lease with Wood County; Meadow Valley WA is largely federal land managed by the DNR under a Cooperative Agreement with USFWS.

The plan reflects that management of the properties will emphasize forest and wetland wildlife conservation with an emphasis on habitat management.

Proposed boundary expansions, totaling 2,513 acres, are as follows: Sandhill WA - 1,668 ac; Wood County WA - 481 ac Meadow Valley WA - 364 ac. The Sandhill and Meadow Valley expansions protect important natural communities; the Wood County expansion provides public access to existing public lands.

The Department received letters of support from both the USFWS and Wood County Advisory Committee. The Department also received favorable comments as a result of the public open house and subsequent public comment period. Master Plan documents can be viewed online at: dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/sandhill/.

RECOMMENDATION: Board approval of the master plan per NR 44.04(3), including approval of the boundary changes.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No Fiscal Estimate Required

No Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required

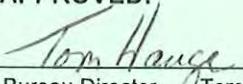
No Background Memo

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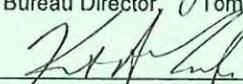
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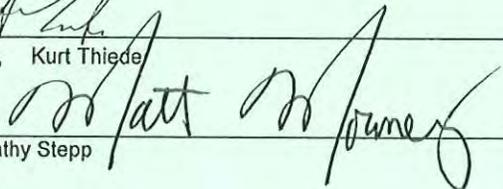
APPROVED:


Bureau Director, Tom Hauge

11/15/11
Date


Administrator, Kurt Thiede

11/16/11
Date


Secretary, Cathy Stepp

11/16/11
Date

cc: NRB Liaison
DNR Rules Coordinator

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DATE: November 14, 2011

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: Approval of the Sandhill-Meadow Valley Work Unit Master Plan & Environmental Assessment

At the October Natural Resources Board meeting, NRB members voted to table approval of the master plan for Sandhill, Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas. Board members requested additional time for review of the documents and to visit the properties.

The item is on the December NRB agenda. The previous green sheet package included a memo discussing the important partnership with USFWS and Wood County, the proposed boundary expansions, and a summary of public comments received. It also included a master plan summary describing the properties' significance, general management and acreages, and a map to outline the proposed boundary expansions.

The Department consulted with both the USFWS and Wood County Advisory Committee throughout the master planning process. Each organization provided a letter of support for this plan. The Department also hosted a public open house on July 27th followed by a public comment review period to receive comments on the draft plan. Responses at the open house and during the public comment period were favorable. *Master plan documents can be viewed online at: dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/sandhill/.*

This master plan reflects a concerted effort to outline management and public use of the Work Unit. These properties are notable for the large wetlands with open bogs, shrub swamps, impoundments and sedge meadows, which are of Upper Midwest/Regional significance. The properties have significant opportunities for protection, management or restoration of barrens, floodplain forest, white pine-red maple swamp, and Central Sands pine-oak forest. The properties' location among other significant tracts of public land provides unique large-scale management opportunities. Management to support upland hunting, waterfowl hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing focuses largely on habitat management; no significant facility development is proposed.

I recommend that the Natural Resources Board approve the Sandhill-Meadow Valley Work Unit Master Plan and Environmental Assessment.