

SUBJECT: Land Exchange – Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, Crex Meadows, Amsterdam Sloughs, Keizer Lake and Danbury Wildlife Areas – Burnett County

FOR: DECEMBER 2012 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an agreement with officials of Burnett County for a land exchange designed to improve land management for the County Forest Program as well as for wildlife habitat management activities of statewide significance. As proposed, the Department will convey 5,672 acres of land plus \$660,750 cash to the county. The county will convey 6,362 acres of land to the Department. The county will enroll the land from the Department into the county forest program. The Department will add 1,322 acres as a connection between Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and Governor Knowles State Forest as well as permanently protect the 5,040 acres for sharp-tailed grouse and barrens management at the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area.

Established as a lease area on county land in 1956, the Department has provided critical habitat for 246 species of plants and 121 species of birds at Namekagon Barrens. That lease expires in 2017; this exchange will prevent potential loss of that habitat if the landowner chose to instead convert the land to red pine plantation. The land the Department proposes to add to Crex Meadows Wildlife Area is currently in the County Forest program. If traded to DNR, the state would gradually return that land to a grassland covertype to favor sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other wildlife.

The land being conveyed by the state to the county is in five locations. The County will add that land to the county forest program. Both parties have agreed to deed restrict the land to remain open for public use and to be used solely for conservation purposes. As restricted, the state land is no longer needed for conservation purposes.

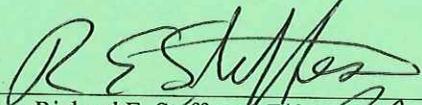
The effect of this exchange is that both the Department and the County will own and manage land that is better suited to their core missions in this area, wildlife management for the Department and sustainable forestry for Burnett County. The total of more than 12,000 acres will remain in conservation use and open for the public to use and enjoy.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the exchange of 5,672 acres of state land and \$660,750 in stewardship funding for 6,362 acres of county land for the Namekagon Barrens and Crex Meadows Wildlife Areas.

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 |

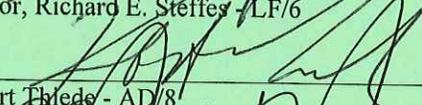
APPROVED:



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

11-21-12

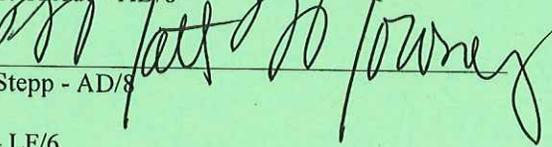
Date



Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

11/28/12

Date



Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

11/28/12

Date

- cc: S. Miller – LF/6
 R. Steffes - LF/6
 L. Ross – AD/8
 T. Hauge - WM/6
 J. Gozdzialski - Spooner

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 20, 2012
 TO: Governor Scott Walker
 FROM: Cathy Stepp
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Exchange, Burnett County and Department of Natural Resources Tracts,
 File # WM 60204 and WM 60205
 Approval Requested by January 25, 2013

FILE REF: WM 60204 and WM 60205

I. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area – 5,040 acres Crex Meadows Wildlife Area – 1,322 acres	Danbury Wildlife Area – 2,220 acres Keizer Lake Wildlife Area – 1,385 acres Amsterdam Slough Wildlife Area – 1,388 acres Crex Meadows Wildlife Area – 641 acres Yellow River Fishery Remnant – 38 acres
Burnett County	Burnett County

Grantors:

Burnett County Attn: Jason Nichols – Forest Administrator 7425 County Road K Siren, WI 54872	State Department of Natural Resources 101 S. Webster Street Madison, WI 53707
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<u>Acres:</u>	6,362	5,672
<u>Price:</u>	\$4,155,350	\$3,494,600 (net cash to county: \$660,750)
<u>Appraised Value:</u>	\$4,155,350	\$3,494,600
<u>Improvements:</u>	20'x26' brick building	None
<u>Interest:</u>	Fee Title	Fee Title

Location: The land is in eight different locations scattered across Burnett County. The largest part, Namekagon Barrens, is in the northeastern corner of the County.

Land Description: The land varies from level lowlands to rolling uplands. There are several small lakes on the Keizer Lake Wildlife Area and some stream and river frontage.

Covertypes Breakdown:

Type	Acreage	Acreage
Upland Barrens	4,832	
Upland Woodland	1,139	3,293
Lowland Woodland	391	2,379
Total:	6,362	5,672

<u>Present Use:</u>	1. Leased to DNR for barrens management - 5,040 acres 2. County forest – 1,322	Wildlife Management
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	acres	
<u>Proposed Use:</u>	Barrens Management	County Forest
<u>Tenure:</u>	50+ years	Assembled over 50+ years
<u>Property Taxes:</u>	Tax Exempt	Tax-Exempt

Public Use: The entire 12,034 currently is, and will continue to be open for public outdoor recreation.

Agreement Date: November 15, 2012 – Exchange also subject to County Board approval, Federal (USFWS) approval, and County Forest withdrawal.

Stewardship Land Access: The properties 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 obtained an agreement with officials of Burnett County for a land exchange designed to improve land management for the County Forest Program as well as for wildlife habitat management activities of statewide significance. As proposed, the Department will convey 5,672 acres of land plus \$660,750 cash to the county. The county will convey 6,362 acres of land to the Department. The county will enroll the land from the Department into the county forest program. The Department will add 1,322 acres as a connection between Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and Governor Knowles State Forest as well as permanently protect the 5,040 acres for sharp-tailed grouse and barrens management at the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area.

Established as a lease area on county land in 1956, the Department has provided critical habitat for 246 species of plants and 121 species of birds at Namekagon Barrens. That lease expires in 2017; this exchange will prevent potential loss of that habitat if the landowner chose to instead convert the land to red pine plantation. The land the Department proposes to add to Crex Meadows Wildlife Area is currently in the County Forest program. If traded to DNR, the state would gradually return that land to a grassland covertype to favor sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other wildlife.

The land being conveyed by the state to the county is in five locations. The County will add that land to the county forest program. Both parties have agreed to deed restrict the land to remain open for public use and to be used solely for conservation purposes. As restricted, the state land is no longer needed for conservation purposes.

The effect of this exchange is that both the Department and the County will own and manage land that is better suited to their core missions in this area, wildlife management for the Department and sustainable forestry for Burnett County. The total of more than 12,000 acres will remain in conservation use and open for the public to use and enjoy.

Innovative solutions to property management can provide significant savings to DNR programs. This proposal accomplishes important property acquisition goals that protect and expand the public's interest and recreational benefits at a lower cost in Stewardship dollars. The land trade proposal provides a common-sense approach to effective property management that reduces budgetary costs and results in higher efficiency for both the Department and Burnett County. All properties conveyed in the proposed transaction will be protected by deed restrictions requiring all existing public land uses remain intact and that conservation management practices continue.

The opportunity to secure permanent interest in the Namekagon Barrens WLA is an important part of this proposed land trade. With the additional lands defined for this exchange, the acreage tally for Burnett County property is 6,362 acres compared to 5,372 acres of DNR land.

Trading land within the Danbury Wildlife Area (DWA) for land more suitable for the management of sharp-tailed grouse habitat has been discussed for many years. In the Danbury Wildlife Area

Management plan Concept Element, which was written in 1989, there is reference to the potential for a land trade. This land trade proposed that some of the DWA may be traded at some time in the future to obtain sharp-tailed grouse habitat on other wildlife areas in Burnett County.

In early 2005 the Natural Resources Board requested that the Department conduct a feasibility study for the expansion of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (CMWA) and the Governor Knowles State Forest (GKSF). One of the issues brought up by a NR Board member very early on in the process was the potential of purchasing or trading land with Burnett County. It was determined that the County lands were already within the existing property boundary so this issue was decoupled from the ongoing boundary expansion feasibility study.

There are a number of advantages to this proposal. The DNR lands proposed to be traded are managed for forest wildlife habitat. They have limited developments, mainly parking lots and gates. Past wildlife habitat projects have included tree planting, commercial timber harvests, maintaining forest openings and brush control on old agricultural fields. Forest management has been conducted to promote the regeneration of intolerant forest types (aspen, jack pine, etc.). Similar management would continue to occur if these lands were managed by Burnett County Forestry and Parks Department as demonstrated by their current management activities on adjacent lands under their control.

From an efficiency standpoint it makes sense for the Department and Burnett County to consider trading land to consolidate ownership and management potential. Department lands proposed for trade are adjacent to current county land holdings. The best management objective for the Department lands is to maintain these habitats in a forested condition. The lands to be acquired by the Department from Burnett County have tremendous potential for restoration of globally rare pine/oak barrens community. They will facilitate a barrens habitat corridor between current CMWA barrens communities and restored habitat on the GKSF (Kohler Peet Wildlife Area). Their location within the boundaries of the CMWA will create efficiencies in management that can not occur on the DWA because of its increased distance from the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Work Unit headquarters. It will permanently protect the leased Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area and its past DNR investments in lease payments, property developments, and habitat management.

3. LAND MANAGEMENT:

Burnett County Land to DNR:

The benefit from the proposed exchange is consolidation and blocking. It will allow more cost-effective property management while still providing the same recreational benefits and uses to the public. Completion of the trade would eliminate duplication of effort by allowing a single agency to fulfill the property management obligations for the entire land tract. Recreational and public uses of the land would remain unchanged and protected by language in the deed.

Burnett County owned forest land — 1,322 acres

Burnett County owns a 1,322 acre tract of land within the property boundary of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. This is the largest remaining inholding and would be a critical addition to the Crex property. The county-owned land connects along its South boundary to the largest tract of pine/oak barrens habitat in the Midwest. This tract of County land can easily and efficiently be managed as pine/oak barrens habitat type. In addition, the county land also serves as a linking corridor to the Governor Knowles State Forest property (north), managed for pine/oak barrens. Pine/oak barrens habitat is globally rare and where established, accommodates numerous threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. Previous DNR property master plans and feasibility

studies have identified the 1,322 acres of county land as a high priority acquisition for the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area.

Burnett County owned; DNR leased land -- 5, 040 acres

The Namekagon Barrens WLA is located in the northeast corner of Burnett County. The Namekagon Barrens consists of a north and south unit and has been a large property management investment for the DNR since 1957 when the Department began leasing the property from Burnett County. Department interest in the property stemmed from declines in prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse populations due to diminishing pine/oak barrens habitat. Continuing natural forest succession and tree planting necessitated the development of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area as a self-contained unit capable of supporting a population of sharp-tailed grouse. Upon the 1992 lease renewal, the leased acreage was reduced in size by approximately 600 acres so the County could plant additional acreage to trees for forest management.

Currently the DNR pays \$22,000/year to lease this property. Acquiring the property in fee title would insure state management efforts withstand into the future. The current lease expires in 2017 and includes approximately 5000 acres. The County has previously been unreceptive to selling this acreage outright. Furthermore, the Department's long term and costly investment in barrens management in the property is not guaranteed by the County and could be terminated upon expiration of the present lease agreement. The exchange insures this critical habitat can continue on the landscape.

DNR lands proposed for trade to county:

DNR owned Danbury WLA - 2,220 acres

This wildlife area is managed by the DNR as forest wildlife habitat. Burnett County is performing the same type of forestry management on their adjacent lands abutting the south boundary of the Danbury Wildlife Area. The County is receptive to completing the trade in exchange for their above referenced lands.

The trade is desirable to the DNR as the Danbury property would remain in similar management under County ownership. In addition, the exchange allows for more efficient property management that cannot occur on the Danbury property due to its distance from the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Work Unit headquarters. The county land acquired under the proposal can be ideally managed for pine/oak barrens and sharp-tailed grouse habitat. Re-establishing the rare pine/oak barrens community on the county tract will facilitate a barrens habitat corridor between the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and the Kohler Peet Wildlife area located on the Governor Knowles State Forest property to the north.

DNR owned Amsterdam Sloughs WLA - approximately 1,388 acres

Amsterdam Sloughs WLA is located in Central Burnett County. Currently the Department owns 6,138 acres of property in this project. This eastern portion of the property is currently managed as forest and blocks with their County Forest property. The remaining acreage to the west would remain in DNR ownership.

DNR owned Keizer Lake WLA - approximately 1,385 acres

Keizer Lake WLA is located in central Burnett County. It is primarily a forested property, but contains seven lakes and several extensive wetlands. The wildlife property adjoins with Burnett County Forest land to the south; both properties are managed similarly. If Keizer Lake is approved as part of the subject land exchange with the county, the water and wetland resources will be protected via language in the deed.

Yellow River Habitat Area -- 38 acres

This isolated tract is located in the east-central part of Burnett County, acquired in 1964 as a remnant parcel on the Yellow River. The property is surrounded by Burnett County Forest land. This parcel is too small to provide significant recreational benefit to the public in and of itself, but has value due to its connectivity with other public land. It is a cost effective decision to remove this remote property from DNR property management responsibilities and convey interest to the County as part of this trade.

Burnett County Proposed Trade

WM 60204 &
WM 60205

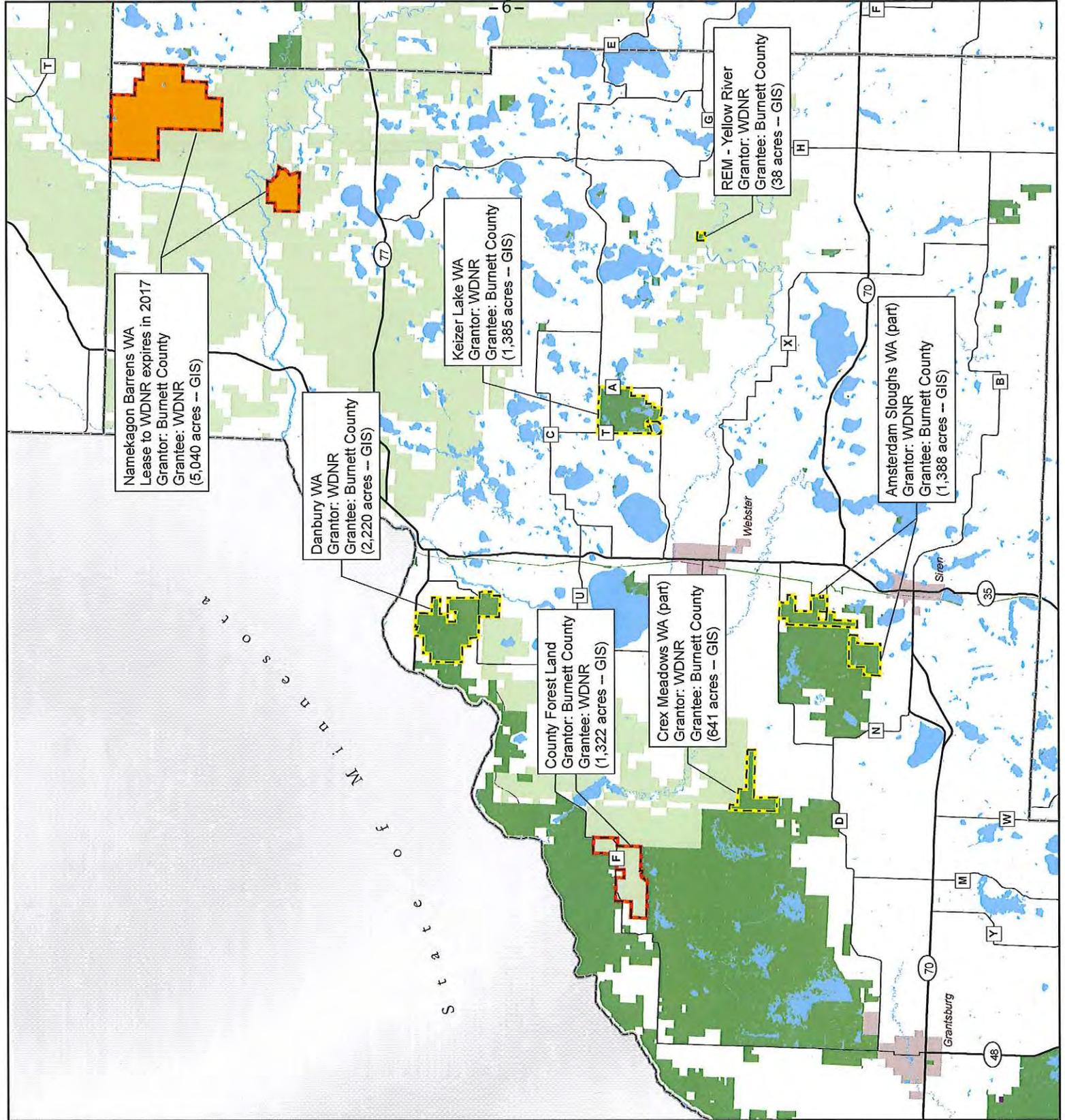
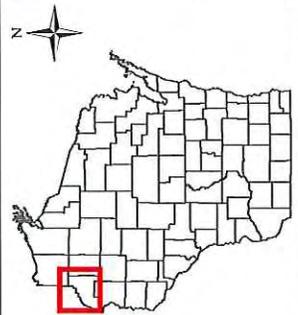
 Burnett Co. to DNR
(approx. 6,362 acres)

 DNR to Burnett Co.
(approx. 5,672 acres)

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 County Forest
 DNR Managed Land
 Fee
 Easement
 Lease

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Miles



Burnett County - Fee Acquisition

Burnett County

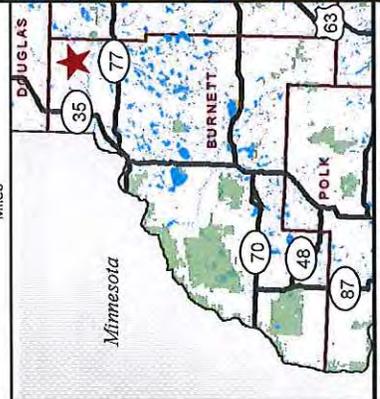
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WM 60204 & WM 60205

T42N R14W Sec 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 32 & 33
Town of Blaine
Burnett County
5,040 Acres

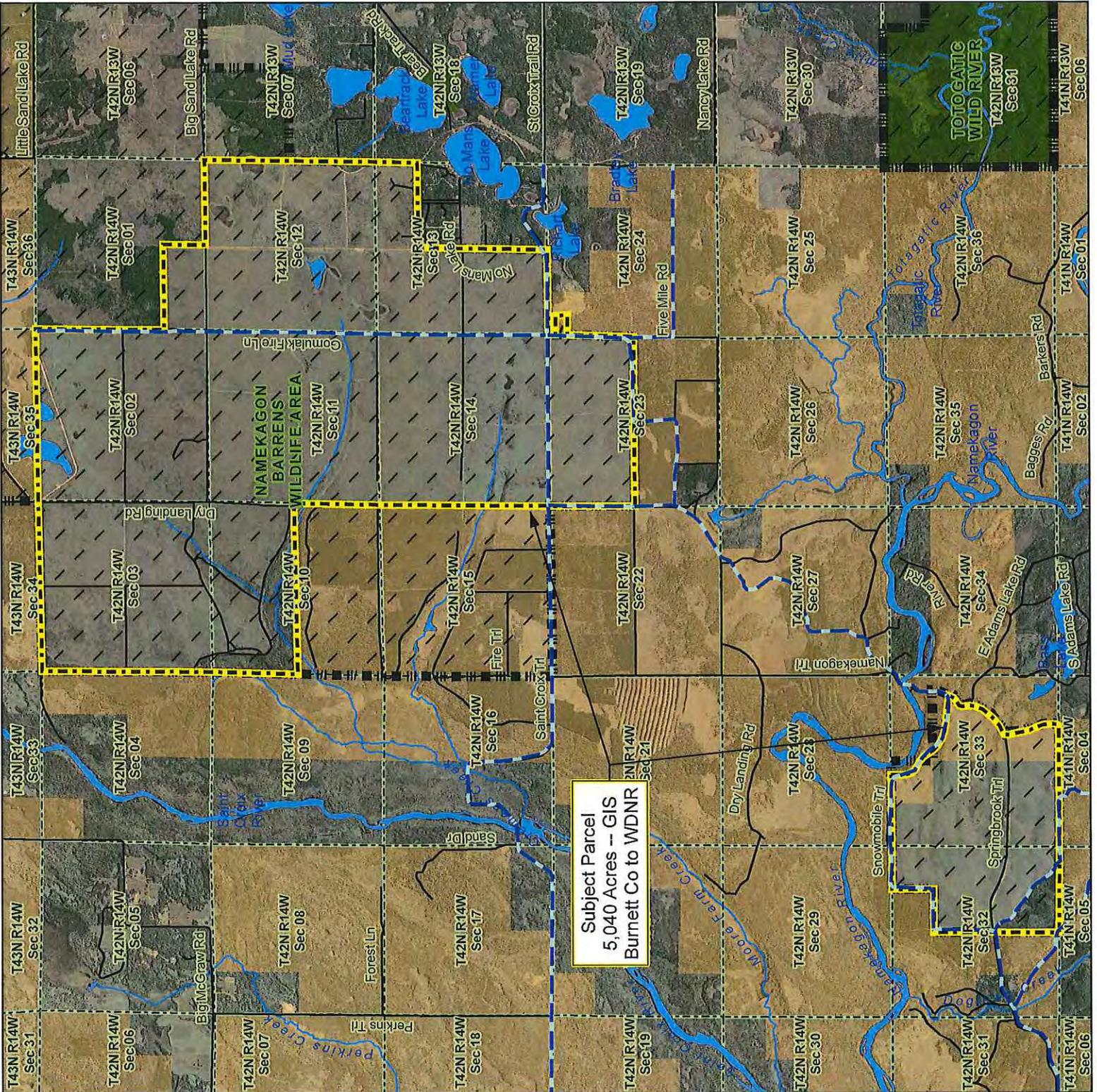
Subject

-  WDNR Owned
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  County Forest Land
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  PLSS Section Line



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov 16, 2012 swm



Burnett County - Fee Acquisition

Burnett County Forest

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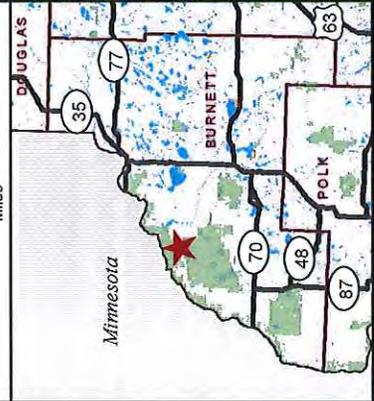
**WM 60204 &
WM 60205**

T40N R18W Sec 26, 33, 34, & 35
Town of Marshland
Burnett County
1,322 Acres



Subject

-  WDNR Owned
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  County Forest Land
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov. 16, 2012 swm



Subject Parcel
1,322 Acres -- GIS
Burnett Co to WDNR

Burnett County - Fee Sale

Danbury Wildlife Area

WM 60204 & WM 60205

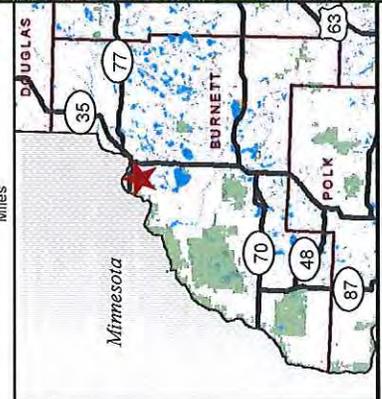
T40N R16W Sec 6
T41N R16W Sec 29, 30, 31 & 32
T41N R17W Sec 25 & 36

Towns of Oakland & Swiss
Burnett County
2,220 Acres



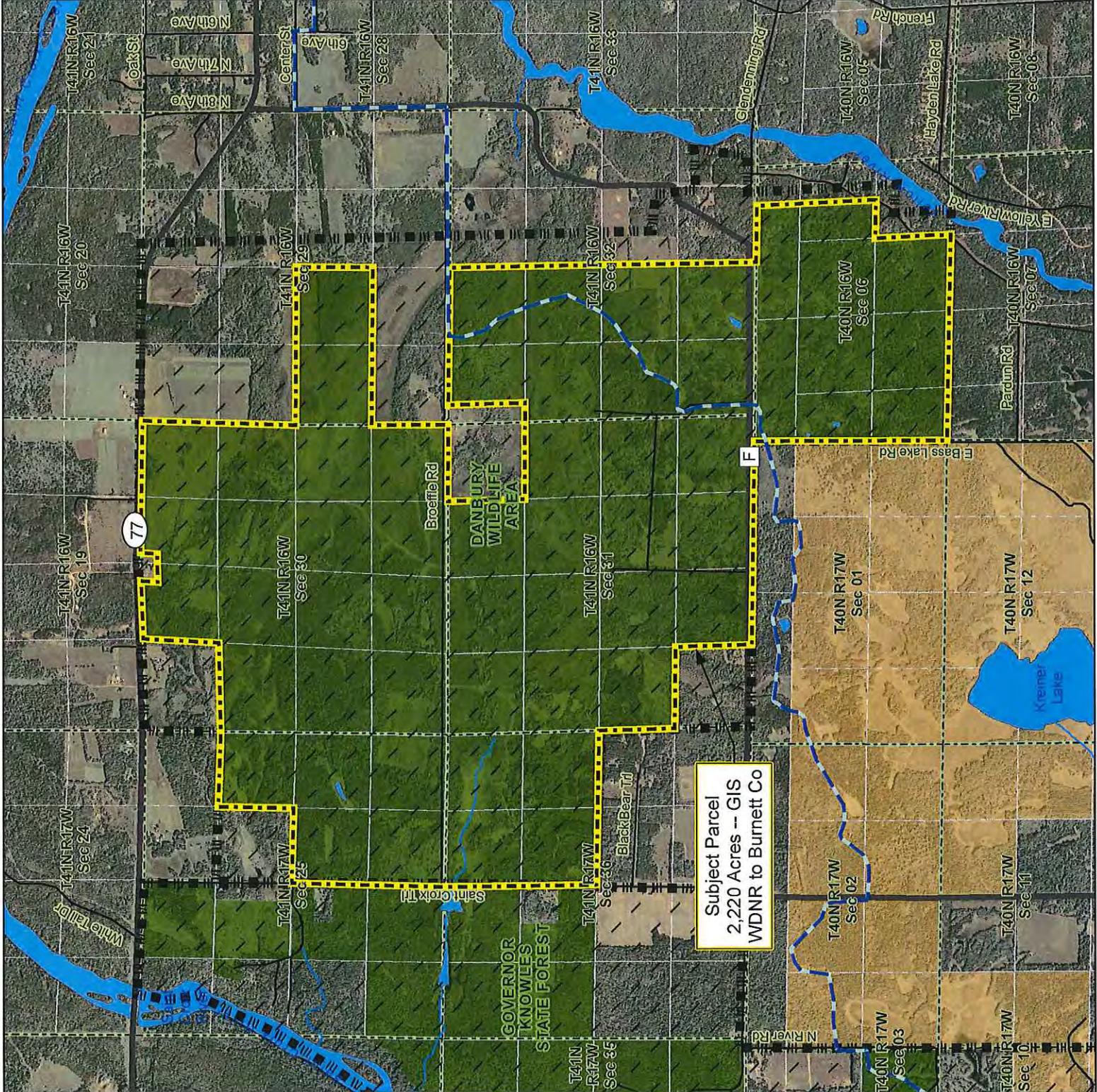
Subject

- WDNR Owned
- DNR Project Boundary
- County Forest Land
- Snowmobile Trail
- PLSS Section Line
- QQ Section Boundary



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov. 16, 2012 swm



Burnett County - Fee Sale

Amsterdam Sloughs
Wildlife Area

WM 60204 &
WM 60205

T38N R16W Sec 6
T38N R17W Sec 1 & 2
T39N R16W Sec 30 & 31

Towns of Siren,
Daniels & Meenon
Burnett County
1,388 Acres

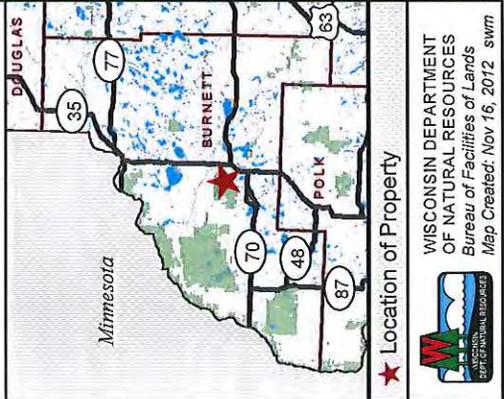
 **Subject**

-  WDNR Owned
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary

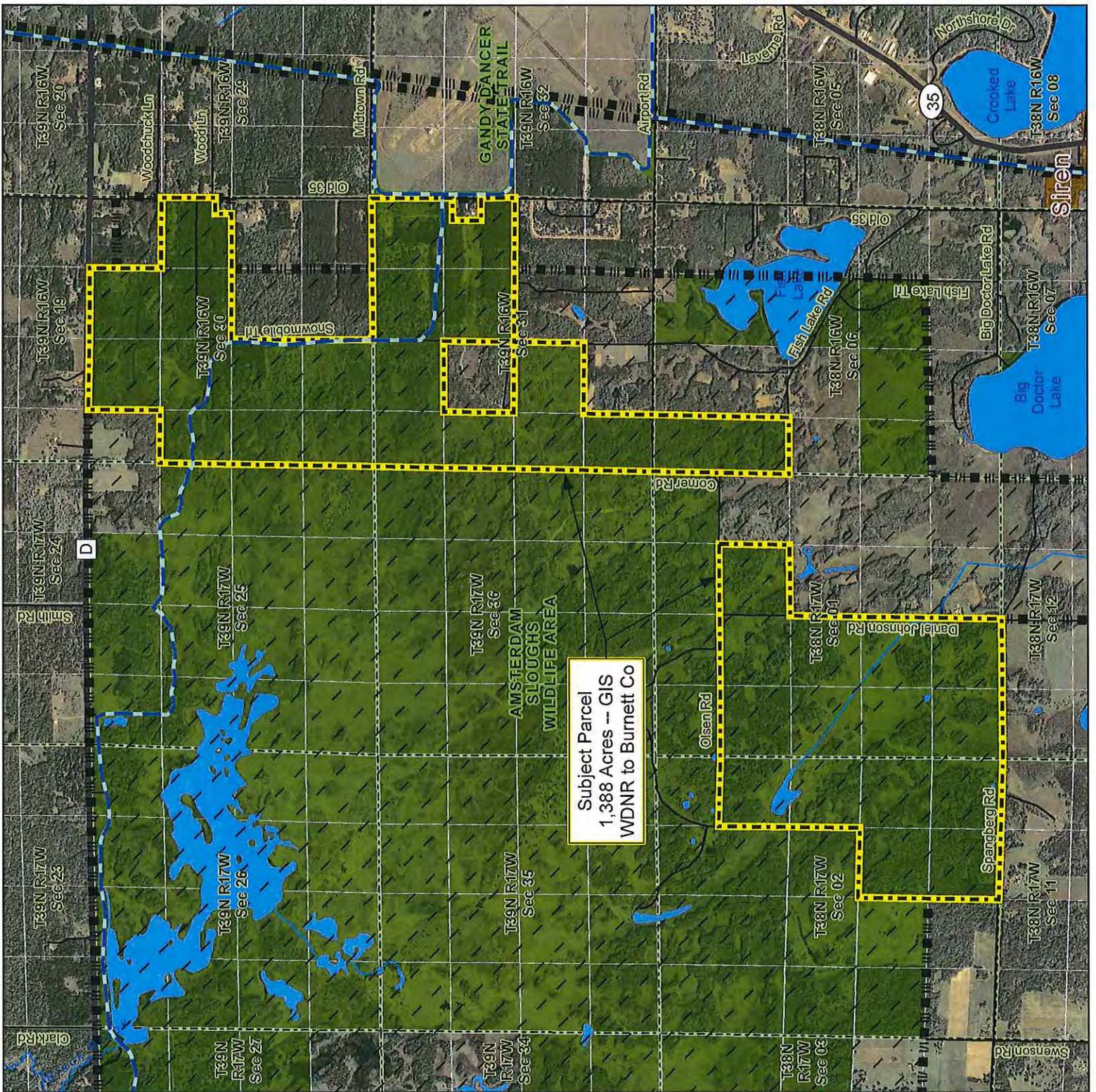
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Miles

Location of Property



MINNESOTA
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov 16, 2012 swm



Subject Parcel
1,388 Acres -- GIS
WDNR to Burnett Co

Burnett County - Fee Sale

Kiezer Lake Wildlife Area

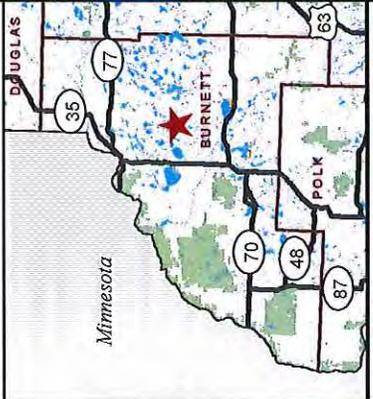
WM 60204 & WM 60205

T40N R15W Sec 29, 30 & 31
Town of Jackson
Burnett County
1,385 Acres



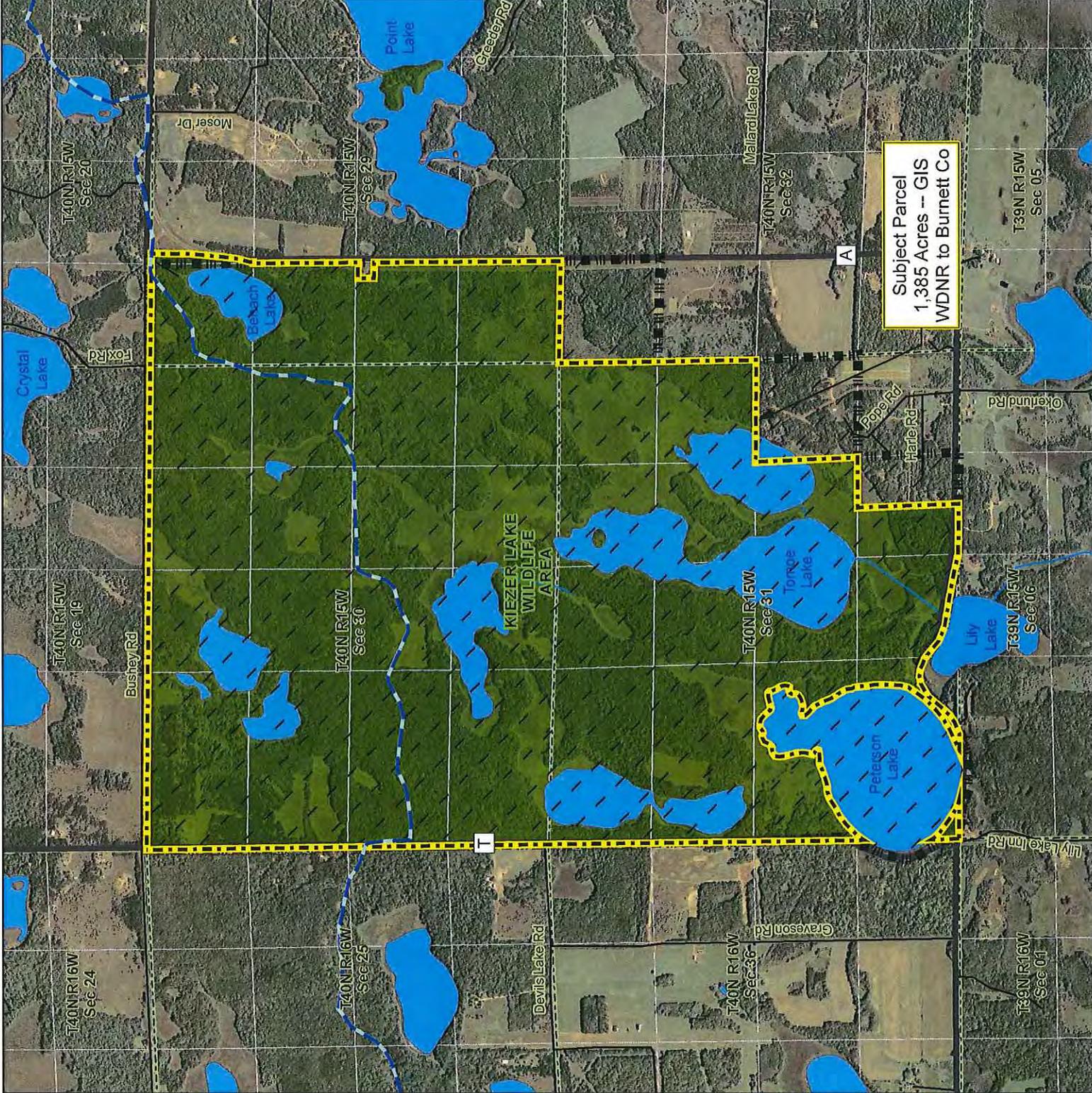
Subject

- WDNR Owned
- DNR Project Boundary
- Snowmobile Trail
- PLSS Section Line
- QQ Section Boundary



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov. 16, 2012 swm



Burnett County - Fee Sale

REM - Yellow River

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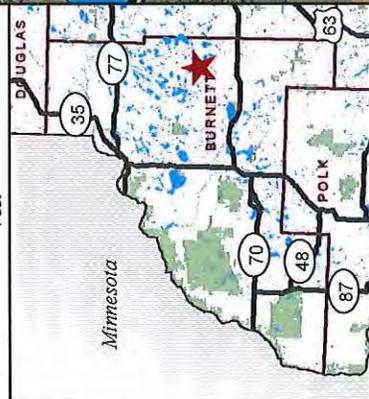
WM 60204 &
WM 60205

T39N R14W Sec 7
Town of Rusk
Burnett County
38 Acres



Subject

-  WDNR Owned
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  County Forest Land
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary



★ Location of Property



 WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
 OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 Bureau of Facilities of Lands
 Map Created: Nov 16, 2012 SWM



Burnett County - Fee Sale

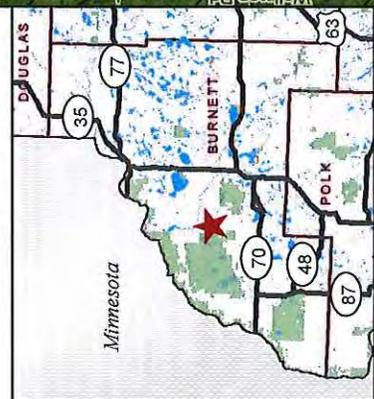
*Crex Meadows
Wildlife Area*

WM 60204 &
WM 60205

T39N R18W Sec 19 & 20
Town of Lincoln
Burnett County
641 Acres

Subject

-  WDNR Owned
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  County Forest Land
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov 16, 2012 swm

