

SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN GRASSLAND & STREAM CONSERVATION AREA – DANE COUNTY

FOR: FEBRUARY 2012 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: RICHARD STEFFES

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 203.0 acres of land from Verdean and Mary Sherven for \$933,800.00 for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) in Dane County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.

The Sherven parcel is located in the core of the Perry-Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA), one of three BCA's within the project boundary of the SWGSCA and will be the foundation acquisition for the project. This property will secure the center of the BCA core in an area of the state that has limited public properties. The parcel contains important upland grassland nesting habitat for conservation and offers recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing to the nearby Madison Metro area.

The Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) project was established in 2009 and encompasses a 473,900 acre landscape within 19 townships in Dane, Iowa, Green and Lafayette Counties. The acquisition goal of 12,000 acres for the SWGSCA project is split evenly between three bird conservation areas, with the core of each BCA containing a 2,000-acre contiguous block of grasslands in public ownership. The remaining acquisition authority will use fee and easement acquisitions to conserve long-term grassland cover amidst a working agricultural landscape. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) joined with a diverse and dedicated group of conservation partners, local governments, and landowners in Southwestern Wisconsin to establish the SWGSCA project.

Southwestern Wisconsin has been identified as one of the best grassland-dependent bird conservation opportunities in the Upper Midwest, and the "best of the best" in Wisconsin. The SWGSCA is identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area of Upper Midwest Significance in Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan. The same area is identified in the Land Legacy Report as the Blue Mounds – Blanchardville Prairie and Savanna and received a 5-star rating for its conservation significance and recreation potential. The area stands out for its distinct combination of resources: exceptional populations of grassland birds; a high number of prairie remnants, concentrations of rare plants and animals, and spring-fed streams, all set within this expansive rural farming region of open fields, croplands, oak groves and pastures. In addition, the numerous prairie remnants in southwest Wisconsin are the remains of the original tall-grass prairie and oak savanna that once covered this region and harbored abundant populations of grassland animals including Greater Prairie chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse. These prairie remnants are still surrounded by a rural, relatively treeless agricultural landscape supporting rare species that, like grassland birds, are adapted to an open landscape.

Likewise the rivers and streams that drain the Southwestern Wisconsin's ridge tops vary in quality and condition. Increased grassland cover, improved agricultural practices and stream bank management have demonstrably improved water quality in many area streams. Project priorities include improving the "Impaired" streams within the project area, as well as enhancing and protecting the area's Outstanding/Exceptional Resource Waters.

The 203-acre Sherven property is primarily open grassland with very few trees and if acquired, the property would require very little management to improve grassland bird habitat. Topography is generally rolling to hilly, east from CTH JG and then sloping down toward a valley with the intermittent stream frontage. Three intermittent streams cross the property; one centrally located, another in the northeast portion of the property, and the third in the southeast. East of the central stream, the tract generally slopes up to its highest elevation along the eastern edge. The property has very scenic outlooks from several of its higher locations. Three small native prairie remnants are located in the northeast, southeast and near the center of the property as well. Portions of the property are presently in the CRP program and under contract through 2014 and 2018. A few scattered woodlands are located along the property lines and in the center, northeast and southeast portions of the property paralleling the intermittent stream valleys. The parcel has good access with one-half mile of frontage on County Hwy JG, and more than one-quarter mile of frontage on County Hwy A.

Soil types on the property are primarily silt loams; Sogn (42%), Edmund (34%), and Port Byron (24%). USDA indicates that Sogn and Edmund silt loams are fair to poor for grain and seed crops due to their slopes, water erosion, and draught prone attributes. Port Byron has a good to fair rating for grain and seed crops where slope permits. All three soils indicate ratings of fair to good for grasses, legumes, and wild herbaceous upland plants.

The subject property lies within the Perry/Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Core of the SWGSCA, less than 1 hour drive from nearly 250,000 people in the Madison area. The "Cores" of the BCA's have been determined to be of high value to grassland bird conservation, and Perry/Primrose is no exception. Sightings of Henslow's sparrow and the Upland Sandpiper have been recorded on or close to the subject property. In addition to these two species, the Sherven property provides habitat for numerous grassland bird species (meadowlarks, bobolinks, ring-necked pheasant, etc.), a species guild that has declined more precipitously than any other bird group in North America. This BCA Core also lies at the headwaters of two important cold water streams in Southwest Wisconsin: the Kittelson Valley Creek and Primrose Branch of the Sugar River. The Primrose Branch is considered an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest due to its classification as a CLASS II trout water. The Sherven property, if acquired, will protect this important watershed and provide the grassland buffer needed to preserve good water quality in these streams.

The acquisition of the Sheveren property will meet one of the primary objectives of the SWGSCA project by supporting agriculture through the utilization of areas of property for active and sustainable agriculture practices as a main component of the management activities. Somewhat unique to the project, it intended to incorporation comparable farming practices such as rotational grazing, grass based and organic agriculture, and the production/Harvey of biofuels as standard management practices to foster improvements to the wildlife habitat. As is the case in the landscape, various focus species, specifically Henslow's Sparrows require residual plant material for nesting which, if managed properly, is available on are managed with grazing practices.

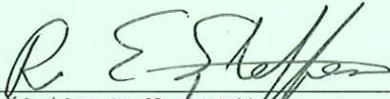
The Department recommends acquisition of the 203-acre parcel to mangle wildlife, restore habitat and provide recreational opportunities in conjunction with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area, SWGSCA.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 203.0 acres of land for \$933,800.00 for Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area in Dane County.

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

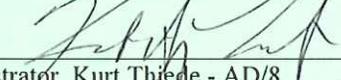
APPROVED:



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

1-20-12

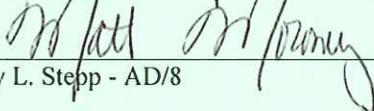
 Date



 Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

1-24-12

 Date



 Secretary, Cathy L. Stepp - AD/8

1-25-12

 Date

cc: S. Miller - LF/6
 R. Steffes - LF/6
 L. Ross - AD/8
 Thomas Hauge - WM/6
 M. Aquino - South Central Region

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 19, 2012 FILE REF: WM 60156 *

TO: Scott Walker

FROM: Cathy L. Stepp

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Verdean and Mary Sherven Tract, File # WM 60156 *,
Approval Requested by April 1, 2012

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area
Dane County

Grantor:

Verdean and Mary Sherven
784 CTH JG
Town of Perry, WI 53572

Acres: 203.0Price: \$933,800.00Appraised Value: \$933,800.00; \$1,055,600Interest: Fee Title PurchaseImprovements: NoneLocation: The property is located in Dane County 8 miles South of the City of Mount Horeb.Land Description: The subject land is generally rolling to hilly.Covertypes Breakdown:

	Type	Acreage
Grassland (CRP)		197.0
Upland Woods		6.0
Total		203.0

Zoning: Agriculture (A-1EX, RH-4, A-2(4))Present Use: Former dairy farm in CRPProposed Use: Wildlife Habitat and Public RecreationTenure: 16 years, and family for several generationsProperty Taxes: \$975.43Option Date: October 21, 2011Stewardship 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 obtained an option to purchase the 203 acre Verdean and Mary Sherven parcel for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) project. The Sherven parcel is located in the core of the Perry-Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA), one of three BCA's within the project boundary of the SWGSCA and will be the foundation acquisition for the project. This property will secure the center of the BCA core in an area of the state that has limited public properties. The parcel contains important



upland grassland nesting habitat for conservation and offers recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing to the nearby Madison Metro area.

The Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) project was established in 2009 and encompasses a 473,900 acre landscape within 19 townships in Dane, Iowa, Green and Lafayette Counties. The acquisition goal of 12,000 acres for the SWGSCA project is split evenly between three bird conservation areas, with the core of each BCA containing a 2,000-acre contiguous block of grasslands in public ownership. The remaining acquisition authority will use fee and easement acquisitions to conserve long-term grassland cover amidst a working agricultural landscape. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) joined with a diverse and dedicated group of conservation partners, local governments, and landowners in Southwestern Wisconsin to establish the SWGSCA project.

Southwestern Wisconsin has been identified as one of the best grassland-dependent bird conservation opportunities in the Upper Midwest, and the "best of the best" in Wisconsin. The SWGSCA is identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area of Upper Midwest Significance in Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan. The same area is identified in the Land Legacy Report as the Blue Mounds – Blanchardville Prairie and Savanna and received a 5-star rating for its conservation significance and recreation potential. The area stands out for its distinct combination of resources: exceptional populations of grassland birds; a high number of prairie remnants, concentrations of rare plants and animals, and spring-fed streams, all set within this expansive rural farming region of open fields, croplands, oak groves and pastures. In addition, the numerous prairie remnants in southwest Wisconsin are the remains of the original tall-grass prairie and oak savanna that once covered this region and harbored abundant populations of grassland animals including Greater Prairie chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse. These prairie remnants are still surrounded by a rural, relatively treeless agricultural landscape supporting rare species that, like grassland birds, are adapted to an open landscape.

Likewise the rivers and streams that drain the Southwestern Wisconsin's ridge tops vary in quality and condition. Increased grassland cover, improved agricultural practices and stream bank management have demonstrably improved water quality in many area streams. Project priorities include improving the "Impaired" streams within the project area, as well as enhancing and protecting the area's Outstanding/Exceptional Resource Waters.

The 203-acre Sherven property is primarily open grassland with very few trees and if acquired, the property would require very little management to improve grassland bird habitat. Topography is generally rolling to hilly, east from CTH JG and then sloping down toward a valley with the intermittent stream frontage. Three intermittent streams cross the property; one centrally located, another in the northeast portion of the property, and the third in the southeast. East of the central stream, the tract generally slopes up to its highest elevation along the eastern edge. The property has very scenic outlooks from several of its higher locations. Three small native prairie remnants are located in the northeast, southeast and near the center of the property as well. Portions of the property are presently in the CRP program and under contract through 2014 and 2018. A few scattered woodlands are located along the property lines and in the center, northeast and southeast portions of the property paralleling the intermittent stream valleys. The parcel has good access with one-half mile of frontage on County Hwy JG, and more than one-quarter mile of frontage on County Hwy A.

Soil types on the property are primarily silt loams; Sogn (42%), Edmund (34%), and Port Byron (24%). USDA indicates that Sogn and Edmund silt loams are fair to poor for grain and seed crops due to their slopes, water erosion, and draught prone attributes. Port Byron has a good to fair rating for grain and seed crops where slope permits. All three soils indicate ratings of fair to good for grasses, legumes, and wild herbaceous upland plants.

The subject property lies within the Perry/Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Core of the SWGSCA, less than 1 hour drive from nearly 250,000 people in the Madison area. The "Cores" of the BCA's have been determined to be of high value to grassland bird conservation, and Perry/Primrose is no exception. Sightings of Henslow's sparrow and the Upland Sandpiper have been recorded on or close to the subject property. In addition to these two species, the Sherven property provides habitat for numerous grassland bird species (meadowlarks, bobolinks, ring-necked pheasant, etc.), a species guild that has declined more precipitously than any other bird group in North America. This BCA Core also lies at the headwaters of two important cold water streams in Southwest Wisconsin: the Kittelson Valley Creek and Primrose Branch of the Sugar River. The Primrose Branch is considered an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest due to its classification as a CLASS II trout water. The Sherven property, if acquired, will protect this important watershed and provide the grassland buffer needed to preserve good water quality in these streams.

The acquisition of the Sheveren property will meet one of the primary objectives of the SWGSCA project by supporting agriculture through the utilization of areas of property for active and sustainable agriculture practices as a

main component of the management activities. Somewhat unique to the project, it intended to incorporation comparable farming practices such as rotational grazing, grass based and organic agriculture, and the production/Harvey of biofuels as standard management practices to foster improvements to the wildlife habitat. As is the case in the landscape, various focus species, specifically Henslow's Sparrows require residual plant material for nesting which, if managed properly, is available on are managed with grazing practices.

The Department recommends acquisition of the 203-acre parcel to mange wildlife, restore habitat and provide recreational opportunities in conjunction with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area, SWGSCA.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$3,110,200	\$1,551,613

4. ACQUISITION STATUS: SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN GRASSLAND & STREAM CONSERVATION AREA

Established: 2009
Acres Purchased to Date: 0.00
Acquisition Goal: 12,000.00
Percent Complete: 0.00 %
Cost to Date: \$0.00

5. APPRAISAL ONE:

Appraiser: Julie Hanks
Valuation Date: January 06, 2011
Appraised Value: \$933,800.00
Highest and Best Use: Agricultural with limited residential uses

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 203.00 acres @ \$4,600.00 per acre: \$933,800.00
- b. market data approach used, four comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$4,185 - \$4,627 per acre

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus – February 3, 2011

APPRAISAL TWO:

Appraiser: Michael Stone
Valuation Date: December 22, 2010
Appraised Value: \$1,055,600*
Highest and Best Use: Rural Residential-Hobby Farm (Mixed Use)

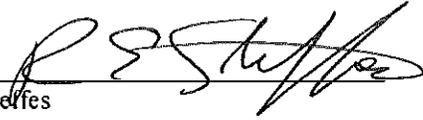
Allocation of Values:

- a. land: @ \$5,200 per acre: \$1,055,600*
- b. market data approach used, four comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$5,126 - \$5,257 per acre

Comments: Appraiser discounted the land value to \$978,400 if the landowner retained the CRP payments after DNR acquires the property.

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus – December 22, 2010

RECOMMENDED:


Richard E. Steffes

1-20-12
Date


Bureau of Legal Services

1/24/12
Date


Kurt Thiede

1/24/12
Date

RES:ch

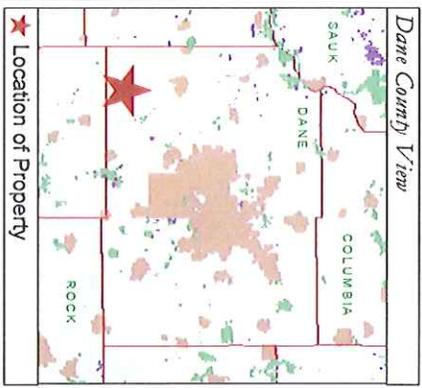
**Verdean &
Mary Sherven - Fee**
Southwest Wisconsin
Grassland & Stream
Conservation Area
WM 60156

T5N R6E Sec 24 &
T5N R7E Sec 19
Town of Perry &
Town of Primrose
Dane County
203 acres

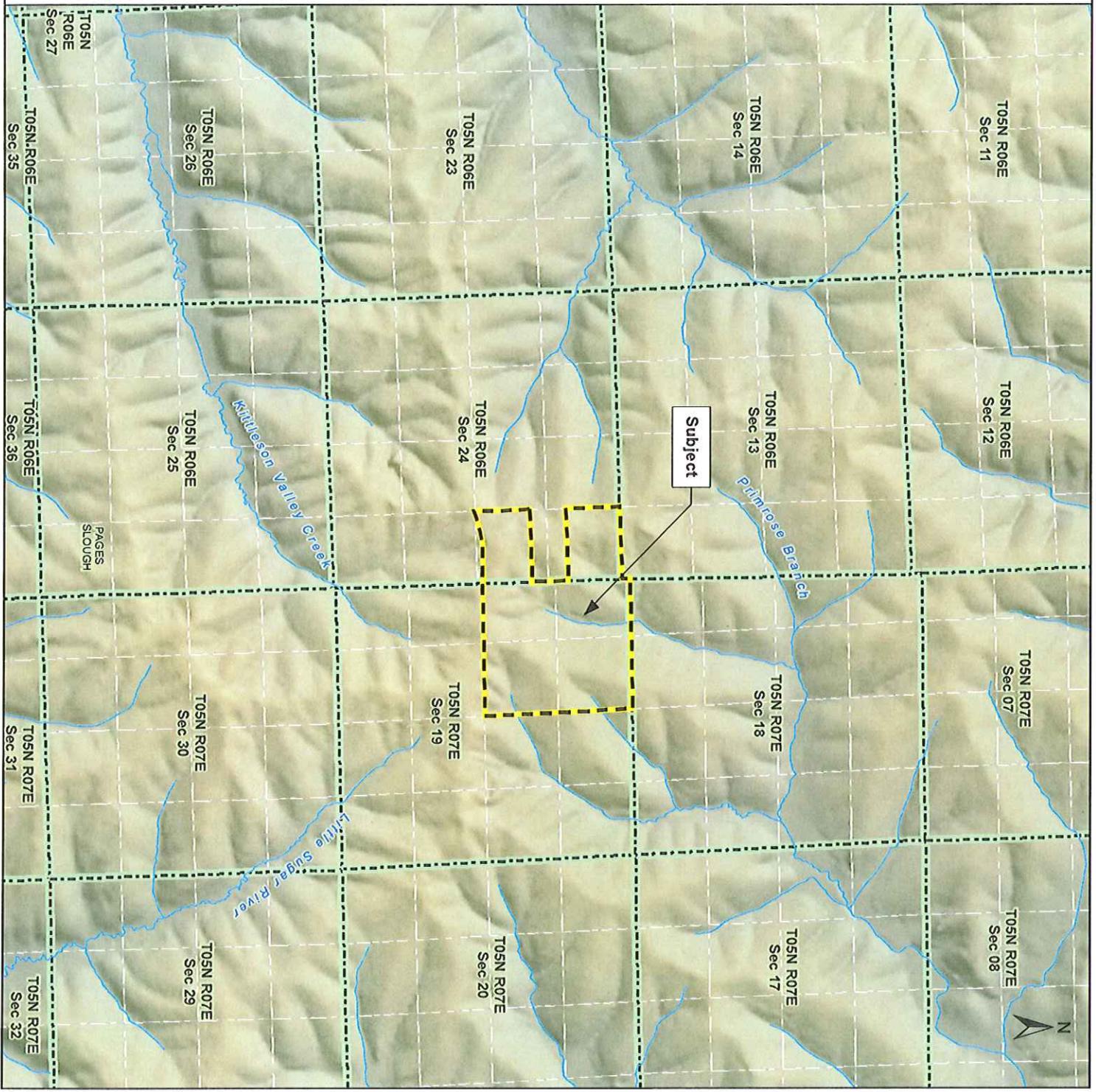


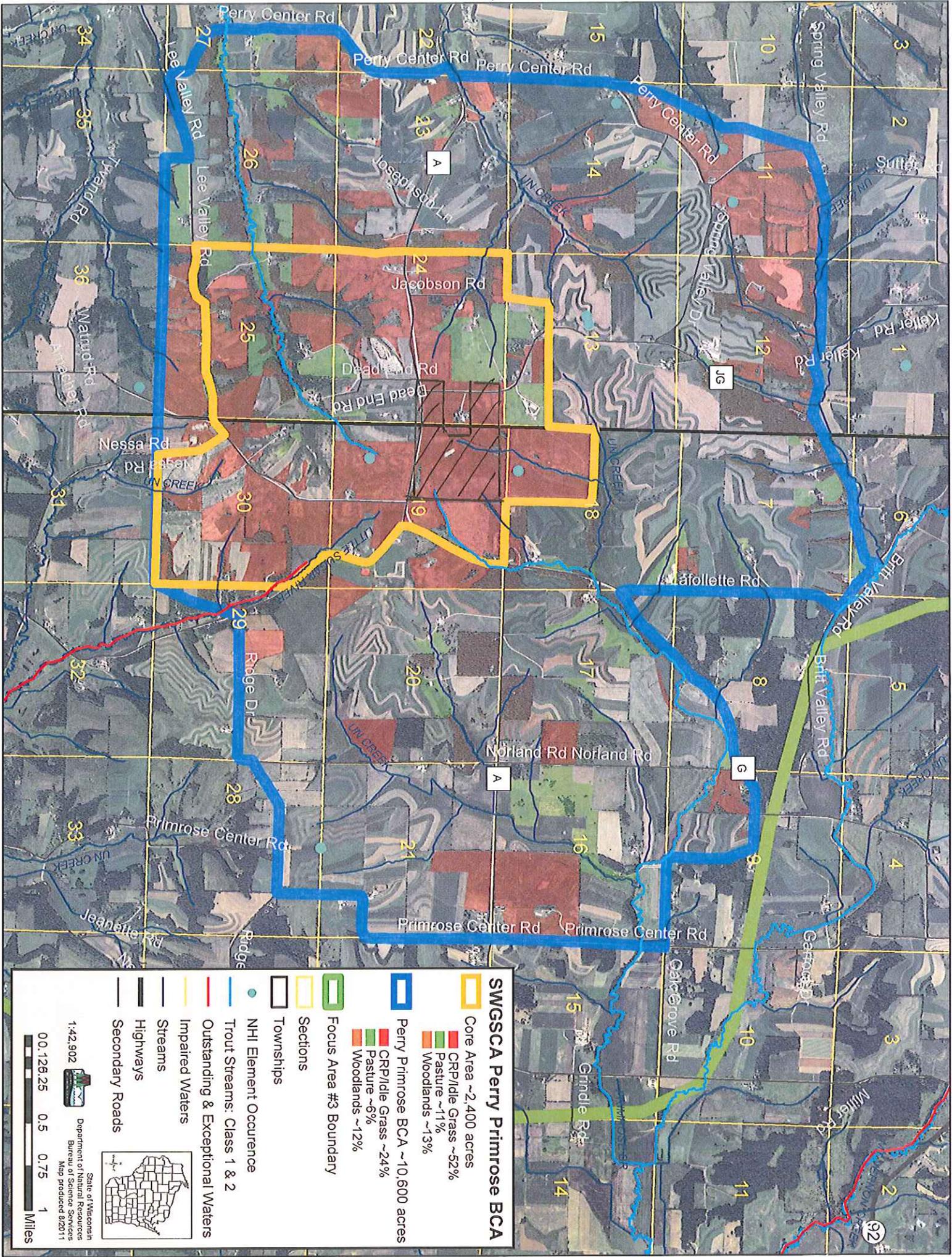
Subject Parcel

- PLSS Section Line
- QQ Section Boundary



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Oct 28, 2011 kmh





SWGSCA Perry Primrose BCA

Core Area ~2,400 acres

CRP/Idle Grass ~52%

Pasture ~11%

Woodlands ~13%

Perry Primrose BCA ~10,600 acres

CRP/Idle Grass ~24%

Pasture ~6%

Woodlands ~12%

Focus Area #3 Boundary

Sections

Townships

NHI Element Occurrence

Trout Streams: Class 1 & 2

Outstanding & Exceptional Waters

Impaired Waters

Streams

Highways

Secondary Roads



1:42,902
 Department of Natural Resources
 Bureau of Science Services
 Map produced 8/2011

