

DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED TRANSFER OF FEDERAL INTERESTS FROM 1,890 ACRES OF SCATTERED WILDLIFE PARCELS IN DANBURY, KEIZER LAKE, AMSTERDAM SLOUGH AND CREX MEADOWS WILDLIFE AREAS TO 2,086 ACRES AT NAMEKAGON BARRENS WILDLIFE AREA AND CREX MEADOWS WILDLIFE AREAS (BURNETT COUNTY, WISCONSIN)

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PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Proposed Action

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and 2,086 acres in Burnett County, WI to 2,086 acres in Burnett County as part of a larger land exchange transaction (Appendix A).

Before Exchange

Burnett County to WDNR	WDNR to Burnett County
Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area - 5,093.56 acres Crex Meadows Wildlife Area - 1,324 acres	Danbury Wildlife Area – 2,244.63 acres <i>962.99 acres with federal interest</i> Keizer Lake Wildlife Area – 1,352.1 acres <i>185.3 with federal interest</i> Amsterdam Slough Wildlife Area – 1,402.85 acres <i>742.46 with federal interest</i>
<i>Federal interest to be transferred to:</i> <i>762 acres at Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area</i> <i>1,324 acres at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area</i>	Crex Meadows Wildlife Area – 647.58 acres Yellow River Fishery Remnant – 38.91 acres

*Any discrepancies in acreages throughout this report are due to variances in GIS versus tax parcel acreage figures.

Purpose, Opportunity, and Need for Action

The Department has negotiated an agreement with officials of BC 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, WDNR will convey 5,686.07 acres of land plus approximately \$660,750 in Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds to BC. This land will be enrolled in the County Forest Program. The County will convey 6,417.56 acres of land to WDNR, which will permanently protect 5,093.56 acres for sharp-tailed grouse and barrens management at the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (NBWA) and provide a 1,324-acre connection between Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (CMWA) and Governor Knowles State Forest (GKSF).

The Department’s land involved in the exchange includes 1,890 acres restricted with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) federal interest scattered throughout the total proposed acreage. The WDNR purchased these properties between 1953 and 1992 with a combination of state conservation funding (including proceeds from the sale of hunting licenses) and federal grant funds from the Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (PR). Utilizing the federal grant funds restricted the properties’ uses to the purposes for which the grants were authorized, specifically for use as additions to the various State Wildlife Areas for wildlife habitat and public hunting. The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (known as WSFR) Division of the USFWS administers the PR program and holds the interest for these property use restrictions. The Department proposes to transfer the federal interest from the scattered ownership, to 2,086 acres of consolidated ownership at CMWA and NBWA.

Established in 1956 as a leased area on county land, WDNR has provided critical habitat for 246 species of plants and 121 species of birds at the NBWA. That lease is being paid with Wildlife Restoration funds. The current lease expires in 2017; this exchange will prevent potential loss of habitat if BC chose to instead convert the land to forest production through red pine plantation, or more beneficial economical use. The land WDNR proposes to add to CMWA is currently in the

County Forest program. If traded to WDNR, WDNR would gradually return that land to early successional pine/oak barrens and oak savanna cover types to favor sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other wildlife.

The net effect of this exchange is that both WDNR and BC will own and manage land that is better suited to their core missions in this area -- wildlife management for WDNR and sustainable forestry for BC. This is a common-sense approach to effective property management and reduces budgetary costs and results in higher efficiency for both WDNR and BC. A notice of federal participation restriction will be placed on the deeds to the land at CMWA and NBWA which will be brought in the WSFR program in the proposed exchange. Both parties have agreed to deed restrict the land to remain open for public use and managed solely for conservation purposes. The total of more than 12,000 acres will remain conserved and open for public use and enjoyment.

USFWS is the program administrator for the federal program that places restrictions on 1,890 acres of Department land's use and management and thus, for the proposed exchange. The program has provisions for exchange of land and USFWS needs to respond to WDNR's exchange request under the requirements of the WSFR program. Before the State of Wisconsin is able to transfer the 1,890 acres to BC, USFWS needs to ensure that the program they administer is made whole. USFWS requires an exchange of property of equal or better fair market value, wildlife habitat value and recreational value consistent with the WSFR programs.

This environmental assessment (EA) evaluates the alternatives to and the effects of the proposed land exchange on 1) recreational use by the public, 2) wildlife habitat and management on the proposed exchange parcels and 3) financial aspects. Indirect effects to neighboring areas are reviewed where applicable. The EA is part of the decision-making process in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) by the USFWS. The agency will prepare a finding of no significant impact or notice to prepare an environmental impact statement after completing the EA preparation process. The EA process provides the public with opportunities to participate; in the initial phase during the scoping process and in the middle to comment on the draft EA.

The proposed action would allow the WDNR to consolidate ownership and management of land more consistent with the goals of the WSFR program. The best management objective for WDNR lands is to maintain these habitats in a forested condition. The lands to be acquired by WDNR from BC have tremendous potential for continued restoration of globally rare pine/oak barrens community and will facilitate creation of a barrens habitat corridor between current CMWA barrens communities and restored habitat on the GKSF (Kohler Peet Wildlife Area). Acquisition of the NBWA will also protect the past WDNR investments in lease payments, property developments and habitat management. The acquisition of NBWA also will protect the significant WSFR investment in the project via the long term lease costs.

Decision to Be Made

USFWS needs to decide whether or not to transfer its Federal interest under the Pittman-Robertson Act from 1,890 acres of scattered wildlife parcels at Danbury, Keizer Lake, and Amsterdam Slough Wildlife Areas to 2,086 acres at NBWA and CMWAs. USFWS will also decide whether this

Environmental Assessment (EA) is adequate to support a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) decision, or whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will need to be prepared. The decision maker for the USFWS in this process is Tom Melius, Midwest Regional Director.

Definitions & Scope of Analysis

This assessment evaluates the conservation (wildlife and their habitat), recreational and financial values of the proposed exchange. Effects to surrounding properties are included where applicable.

For the purposes of this assessment, conservation, recreation, and financial values are evaluated for the following:

Conservation: 1) existing habitat composition, 2) wildlife populations, where known and 3) habitat management and restoration.

Recreation: 1) opportunities for users, as expressed in types of users and number of efforts, and 2) public availability, defined as distance from major population centers.

Financial: 1) fair market values of the proposed exchange parcels as determined by appraisals and 2) additional costs and revenue that directly result from the proposed action.

Conservation. For this assessment, conservation is defined as the habitat restoration and management for wildlife species. Managing public lands for hunting and fishing is the primary objective for the WDNR and the WSFR program. This information on game species is readily available and heavily utilized in this analysis. Available information of non-game species and species of greatest conservation need is limited. Evaluation of non-game species is habitat-based, as these species benefit from habitat restoration for game species.

Recreation. Recreation includes primary activities of hunting, trapping, fishing, and compatible secondary activities of other forms of recreation. Wildlife viewing is a compatible secondary activity indirectly supported by the WSFR program, but other recreational activities, such as hiking, cross-country skiing, picnicking, mushroom hunting and berry-picking are conducted without WSFR assistance. Generally, all non-hunting and non-fishing recreational activities are classified together as secondary (or other) recreational uses, unless otherwise noted.

Financial. In order for USFWS to satisfy the requirements of their programs, the appraised value of the replacement land would need to be equal to or greater than the proposed area for divestiture. The State of Wisconsin contracted a certified appraiser who appraised the two properties using Federal appraisal standards. The appraisal was reviewed and approved by a third party reviewer accepted by USFWS. The reviewer has assured the USFWS that the fair market value of proposed County replacement land is greater than the comparable to the fair market value of WDNR's exchange property and adequate to proceed with the exchange.

Efforts. Primary and secondary recreational use is measured by efforts, a term commonly used in professional management for hunting and fishing. An effort is defined by a visit or an attempt to perform a recreational activity by one user. Over the course of the year, an individual may contribute multiple efforts. Some secondary activities, such as hiking and wildlife viewing, typically

are measured by visits. For this document, the term effort is used in reference to all forms of recreational use.

Future Development Activities. Future construction activities that may occur on the proposed area to be transferred to WDNR are not included in this analysis. Construction and other development activities will be reviewed and assessed by applicable state and federal laws and regulations as they occur in the future. Future compliance reviews may include endangered species consultations, historical and archeological reviews, and NEPA environmental assessments.

Supporting planning documents. In addition to personal communications with staff experts at the WDNR, the following documents are used for the analysis with their abbreviated titles:

- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report
- Managing habitat for grassland birds: a guide for Wisconsin
- Northwest Sands Corridor Habitat Plan
- The future of Pine Barrens in Northwest Wisconsin: a workshop summary 1993, 1995
- Northwest Sands Landscape Level Management Plan
- Wisconsin's biodiversity as a management issue: a report to WDNR managers
- Wisconsin sharp-tailed grouse: a comprehensive management and conservation strategy
- Wisconsin's Ecological Landscape Handbook
- Wisconsin's Strategy for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Avian Ecology in Wisconsin Pine barrens
- GKSF Master Plan
- CMWA Master Plan
- NBWA Master Plan
- KLWA (KLWA) Master Plan

The above planning documents were completed by different authors at different times. Thus, they have some inherent differences in terminology and inferences with respect to the time they were written. This EA takes into account those differences and analyzes the most accurate, up-to-date information available.

List of Acronyms Used

ASWA – Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area

BC – Burnett County

CMWA – Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area

DMU – Deer Management Unit

DWA – Danbury Wildlife Area

GKSF – Governor Knowles State Forest (includes the Kohler Peet Wildlife Area and Natural Area)

GLG – Glacial Lake Grantsburg Work Unit

KLWA – Kiezer Lake Wildlife Area

NBWA – Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area

RU – Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Unit

USFWS – United States Fish & Wildlife Service

WDNR – Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Summary of Authorizing Programs & Laws

Endangered Species Act (ESA). Section 7 of the ESA requires that any federal action does not jeopardize the existence of any listed endangered or threatened species or adversely modifying their critical habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identifies four federally-listed species that occur within Burnett County, Wisconsin:

- **Canada lynx** (*Lynx canadensis*) – Federally-listed as threatened
- **Karner blue butterfly** (*Lycaeides Melissa samuelis*) – Federally-listed as endangered
- **Spectaclecase mussel** (*Cumberlandia monodonta*) – Federally-listed as endangered
- **Whooping crane** (*Grus americana*) – Non-essential experimental population
- **Northern Long-Eared Bat** (*Myotis septentrionalis*) – Federally-listed as endangered

In Section 7 Phase I review for the proposed action, the WDNR Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation has recommended a “no effect” determination for species as trade/acquisition of the land will not detrimentally impact the species and any future management and development activities on lands with federal interest will require individual Section 7 screening.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (P.L. 91-190). Requires consideration of environmental effects in the federal decision-making process. An environmental assessment is prepared when a federal agency must determine whether or not a proposed federal action may have a significant effect on the human environment.

National Historical Preservation Act. Requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Section 106 of the Act outlines a process of consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer prior to the approval of any federal action.

The Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) conducted an archeological and historical review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for the proposed action. SHPO has issued a “No Historic Properties Affected” finding for the proposed land trade with the condition that “any future development that might result in soil-disturbance will require consideration of potential cultural resource impacts.” No further consultation under Section 106 is required.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This environmental assessment discusses requirements under the ADA and impacts to individuals that are protected under the Act. The WDNR is held to ADA standards by a programmatic agreement with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for all Fish and Wildlife Areas under Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson. WDNR compliance with ADA standards is reviewed under these programmatic agreements and under individual grants.

Opportunities for enhanced accessibility are discussed very briefly in this analysis. Enhanced accessibility refers to features used by individuals with limited mobility but who do not meet the definitions of “disabled” under ADA. These features are not required.

Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. Federal aid is provided to states for the management and restoration of wildlife, including acquisition of wildlife habitat.

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Programs. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service works with states, insular areas and the District of Columbia to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, their habitats, and the hunting, sport fishing and recreational boating opportunities they provide. The WSFR mission is to work through partnerships to conserve and manage fish and wildlife and their habitats for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. The authorizing legislation for WSFR activities are the Pittman-Robertson Act and the Dingell-Johnson Act (16 U.S.C. 669-669k and 16 U.S.C. 777-777n). Grant funding comes from an excise tax on hunting, boating and fishing equipment and a portion of the federal fuels tax.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A - No Action. Federal interests remain on the 1,890 acres of scattered wildlife parcels at Danbury, Keizer Lake, Amsterdam Slough, and CMWAs and the Wildlife Areas continue to be managed for hunting and wildlife restoration by the WDNR.

Under no action, no changes occur to the existing conservation, recreation, or financial values on these properties. As a result of no action, the exchange does not occur.

The 2,086 acres of the BC land proposed for federal interest remain in County ownership - 1,324 acres remain in County Forest enrollment and NBWA stays under lease through at least 2017, but then is at risk of private sale. No expectation of public recreation or wildlife management exists if sold. It is noted that NBWA has a soil type more suited to successful red pine forest production than many other area land ownerships. The potential for conversion of NBWA, at the end of the current lease, is described later in this document and is supported by a partial acreage loss at the last renewal negotiation. Loss of NBWA's pine-oak barrens habitat, if converted to red pine plantation as part of a county forest initiative, would have a devastating effect on sharp-tail grouse habitat as well as habitat for many other species.

Alternative B - Proposed Action. Federal interest in the WSFR program is transferred from 1,890 acres scattered throughout Danbury, Keizer Lake, and Amsterdam Slough, Wildlife Areas to 2,086 acres consolidated at NBWA and CMWAs. A notice of federal participation restriction will be placed on the deeds for the 2,086 acres at NBWA and CMWA that are being brought in the WSFR program through the proposed exchange. WSFR interests are transferred without the use of WSFR funds or hunting or fishing license fees. All land involved in the overall exchange (more than 12,000 acres total) will be deed restricted for public access and conservation.

As a result of the exchange action, the DNR and County will have better consolidated and blocked properties, allowing for more cost-effective property management and permanent protection of public access and forest and wildlife habitat conservation.

Summary of Considered Alternatives

Table 1. Summary of Alternative Actions by Issues

	ALTERNATIVE A : NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE B : PROPOSED ACTION
WSFR interests	No change. Federal interests remain on 1,890 acres scattered over 4 Wildlife Areas. No interests are added to County Lands.	Federal interests are removed from 1,890 acres of scattered parcels and transferred to 2,086 consolidated acres at NBWA and CMWAs.
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDNR continues to manage for forest wildlife habitat at DWA, KLWA, Amsterdam Slough, and [that portion of] CMWA and for fish at Yellow River Fishery Remnant. • BC continues to manage 1,324 acres as County Forest and to lease 5,094 at NBWA to WDNR for barrens management through 2017. Disposition unknown at lease expiration – could be sold for private use with no guaranteed habitat management, or converted to red pine plantation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 12,000 acres deed restricted and permanently managed for wildlife and sustainable forestry. • 5,094 acres at NBWA will continue to be managed for barrens and sharp-tailed grouse habitat. The threat of conversion on these acres will be eliminated. • 1,324 acres at CMWA will be gradually returned to barrens and oak savanna covertype to favor sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other wildlife.
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public use is available on 5,686 acres of WDNR land. • Public use is currently available on 6,418 acres of County land, however this land is not deed restricted and could be sold into private ownership. • Primary recreational activities include small upland game hunting, waterfowl, black bear and deer hunting. Hunting and trapping of furbearers. • Secondary recreational activities include wildlife viewing, hiking, and gathering of nuts, berries and mushrooms. Wildlife conservation education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 12,000 acres deed restricted and permanently available for public use. • Primary recreational activities include small upland game hunting, waterfowl, black bear and deer hunting. Hunting and trapping of furbearers. • Secondary recreational activities include wildlife viewing, hiking, and gathering of nuts, berries and mushrooms. Wildlife conservation education.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDNR continues to use Wildlife Restoration to pay lease payments for NBWA (currently \$22,000 per year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair market value of the 2,086 acres to be conveyed to WDNR is greater than the 1,890 acres to BC. • WSFR funds have been invested for years in the lease payments for NBWA. Ownership would free up this funding for management and other eligible uses. Also, WDNR’s long term and costly investment in barrens management at this site will be protected. • Consolidated ownership of land more suited to the management obligations of each party allows more cost-effective property and habitat management while still providing the same recreational benefits and uses to the public.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Danbury Wildlife Area

The existing DWA consists of 2,244.63 acres in western Burnett County about one mile west of the town of Danbury. It is roughly bounded by State Highway 77 to the north, GKSF to the west, County Forest land to the south and private ownership to the east. It includes several parking areas and a segment of a Burnett County snowmobile trail.

The proposed exchange would convey the entire DWA to BC for addition to their County Forest Program. Approximately 963 acres of DWA have USFWS federal interest.

DWA is one of four properties comprising the Glacial lake Grantsburg Work Unit (GLG). It occupies a portion of the Northwest Wisconsin pine/oak barrens. Historically, wild fires were common in these barrens and this kept the landscape in a relatively open condition. Prior to settlement, the barrens were covered by scattered jack and red pine, oak (mostly sprouts), and prairie grasses and forbs. Numerous shallow marshes are scattered throughout the region.

Conservation. DWA consists of a 450 acre shallow marsh/Northern Sedge community interspersed with aspen islands and surrounded by aspen, oak, jackpine forests, and agricultural fields. The lowland forests are dominated by trembling aspen with scattered swamp hardwoods and swamp conifers. The drier sandy sites contain vegetation typical of the original pine/oak barrens. In the absence of fire, these sites have grown into oak-jackpine forests. Both northern pin and bur oak are common. Large red and white pine are scattered throughout the property. Grassy openings are dominated by prairie grasses and forbs. The shallow marshes are dominated by sedges, cattail and leatherleaf with an overstory of tag alder and willow.

A variety of resident and migratory wildlife use the area. Resident game species include white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse, woodcock, gray squirrel, beaver, mink, and otter. Woodcock, snipe, and several species of ducks are the principal migratory game species using the area. The property is used by many nongame bird species including bald eagle, great blue heron, sedge wren, American bittern, sora rail, and a large variety of song birds. Lowland shrub communities at DWA, generally found on the margins of open wetlands or as the dominant cover in a wetland, provide breeding habitat for bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), including golden-winged warbler, black billed cuckoo and veery. Other SGCN documented at DWA include brown thrasher, field sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, least flycatcher, northern harrier, vesper sparrow, whip-poor-will and wood thrush. One federally-listed species, Karner Blue Butterfly, is also found at Danbury.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation. In terms of recreational activities, hunting and trapping are the primary uses managed for by WDNR at any wildlife area. Secondary uses, not actively managed for, generally include wildlife viewing, nature study, gathering of nuts, berries, and mushrooms, and hiking.

Upland game hunting, also referred to as small game hunting, occurs throughout the property. Small game at DWA includes cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, fox and gray squirrels, red and grey fox, raccoon, coyote, bobcat, crow, mourning dove, American woodcock, snipe, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. Roughly 1,000 small game hunting efforts occur per year at DWA.

White-tailed deer and black bear hunting are very popular at DWA with an estimated 1,500 hunting efforts occurring per year. In 2012, the hunting pressure for opening day of gun deer hunting season was estimated at 53 hunters on the property. DWA is a popular black bear hunting wildlife area. Forty seven black bears were

harvested in DMU 10, which is where DWA is located. Waterfowl hunting recreation is limited to a few small beaver pond complexes with an estimated 40 waterfowl hunting efforts. Trapping of furbearers occurs on DWA and includes fisher, beaver, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, otter, raccoon and wolf. Approximately 500 trapping efforts occur per year.

Other recreational opportunities at DWA include wildlife observation, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation, snowmobiling and natural food gathering like morel mushrooms and berries. The actual number of these activities is unknown, but is estimated at 600 participant days. This does not include the number of “sightseers” that are simply driving through the area.

Most users either live in close proximity, within the county, neighboring counties or live in the Minneapolis metropolitan area.

Paved town, county, and state roads adjoin the property along 5 of the area’s 11.75 miles of boundary; 8 miles of the boundary are shared with private landowners. There are no official hunter walking trails but hunters do use the winter recreation trail and old firebreaks. The trail gates are opened for motorized access only during the frozen ground period for snowmobiling.

None of the above listed recreational opportunities at DWA are anticipated to be limited once the exchange is completed.

Financial. Management activities on all 2,244.63 acres are supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds. WSFR funds were used to purchase 963 of the 2,244 acres.

Surrounding property. Most of the land surrounding this property is privately owned except a portion of land along the West boundary that is owned by the State of Wisconsin and managed as part of the Governor Knowles State Forest (GKSF) and adjacent BC lands on the South. There are thousands of acres of BC Forest land within a mile of the property.

Keizer Lake Wildlife Area

Established in 1947, KLWA is a 1,352 acre property located in central Burnett County, in the southwest corner of Jackson Township. Hwy T borders the west side and Hwy A borders the south and part of the east side. Parking areas can be found on the south, north and west sides of the property.

The proposed exchange would convey the entire Keizer Lake Wildlife Area to BC for addition to their County Forest Program. Approximately 185 acres of Keizer Lake Wildlife Area have USFWS federal interest.

The property has a wide variety of habitat types, including aspen, northern hardwood, white pine, jack pine, wetlands and many old fields. There are six named and several unnamed lakes within the boundary and six miles of trails present.

Today, management consists of timber harvests on the uplands for wildlife habitat benefits and wood products, and the old fields are mainly managed through prescribed burns to maintain warm season grasses and forbs for plant and wildlife diversity. Most trails are gated or bermed to provide quality hunting and hiking experiences.

Conservation. Sixty percent or more of the 1,352 acre KLWA is forested with aspen, oak hardwoods, pine forests and pine plantations. There are five small field openings that have been managed with prescribed fire. The vegetation in the fields are predominately little blue, with wild lupine and other forbs. There are 6 lakes surrounded by wetlands comprised of sedge, willow, alder and tamarack.

A variety of resident and migratory wildlife use the area. Resident game species include white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare, turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, gray squirrel, beaver, mink, otter, snipe, and several species of ducks. It is estimated that 25-50 duck broods are produced annually, primarily mallard, wood duck, and blue-winged teal.

Comprehensive surveys for uncommon wildlife species have not taken place on the property, but there are documented occurrences of both Blanding's Turtle and bald eagle, although eagles are not known to nest at KLWA currently. Due to its primarily forested uplands, this property is used by forest-interior birds both during migration and breeding season. Loons are known to use the lakes during migration and may nest on some of the lakes. Wild lakes, in the context of a maturing pine forest, are an uncommon ecological feature for Burnett County and in the larger landscape of this portion of Wisconsin. This habitat is important for wildlife species such as bald eagle and osprey.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation. The property is open to public hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, berry picking, hiking and canoeing/kayaking. Game hunting and trapping opportunities includes deer, bear, wolf, coyote, fox, waterfowl, woodcock, ruffed grouse, rabbit, squirrel and turkey.

There are boat landings on Banach, North and Big Lakes. Additional access to Keizer and Tomoe Lakes is available through gated access. These gates are opened in August until just before the gun deer season for waterfowl and bear hunting seasons. One set of gates are opened for a snowmobile trail connection.

In terms of recreational activities, hunting and trapping are the primary uses managed for by WDNR at any wildlife area. Secondary uses, not actively managed for, generally include wildlife viewing, nature study, gathering of nuts, berries, and mushrooms, and hiking and kayaking/canoeing.

Upland game hunting, also referred to as small game hunting, occurs throughout the property. Small game at KLWA includes cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, fox and gray squirrels, red and grey fox, raccoon, coyote, bobcat, crow, mourning dove, American woodcock, snipe, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. Roughly 1,200 small game hunting efforts occur per year at KLWA.

White-tailed deer and black bear hunting are very popular at KLWA with an estimated 1,600 hunting efforts occurring per year. In 2012, the hunting pressure for opening day of gun deer hunting season was estimated at 36 hunters on the property. KLWA is a popular black bear hunting wildlife area. Sixty-eight black bears were harvested in DMU 11, which is where KLWA is located. Waterfowl hunting recreation is the next most popular recreation on the property with an estimated 400 efforts. Fishing, boating, kayaking and canoeing exist on the lakes of KLWA. One thousand angling effort days are estimated.

Trapping of furbearers occurs on KLWA and includes fisher, beaver, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, otter, raccoon and wolf. Approximately 500 trapping efforts occur per year.

Other recreational opportunities at KLWA include wildlife observation, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation, snowmobiling and natural food gathering like morel mushrooms and berries. The actual number of these activities is unknown, but estimated at 2,000 and do not include the number of “sightseers” that are simply driving through the area.

Most users of either live in close proximity, within the county, neighboring counties or live in the Minneapolis metropolitan area.

Paved town and county roads adjoin the property along five of the area’s seven miles of boundary; two miles of the boundary are shared with private landowners. There are slightly more than six miles of hunter walking trails. The trail gates are opened for motorized access for bear hunting, waterfowl hunting and snowmobiling. The trails are also used for management purposes and provide easy walking for users with limited mobility.

None of the above listed recreational opportunities at KLWA are anticipated to be limited once the exchange is completed.

Financial. Management activities on all acres are supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds. WSFR funds were used to purchase 185 of the 1,352 acres.

Surrounding property. All of the land surrounding this property is privately owned. There are thousands of acres of BC Forest land within a mile of the property.

Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area

Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area (ASWA) is a 6,144-acre property located in Burnett County just northwest of Siren. Access to the area is from County Road D on the north, County Road N on the west and several township roads on the south and east.

The proposed exchange would convey approximately 1,402.85 acres along the eastern side of the ASWA to BC for addition to their County Forest Program; approximately 742.46 acres of which have USFWS federal interest. Property usage data is representative of the property as a whole. Since the proposed trade affects 22.8% of the property, usage figures in Table 2 have been adjusted to reflect this fact.

Conservation. ASWA features extensive areas of forested and unforested wetlands, mixed forest uplands, a man-made flowage and a naturally-occurring lake. Northern Sedge Meadow dominates the wetland acreage, with interspersed areas of shrub swamp and upland “islands” that contain white pine, oak and red maple. The shoreline of Blomberg Lake is entirely state-owned and consists of a peat-dominated wetland, some of which is open and other areas with a black spruce and tamarack mix. The Black Brook Flowage is a large, man-made waterbody on the north end of the property and is bordered by open wetlands, shrub swamp and mixed forest uplands of aspen, oak and pine.

Game species present include deer, bear, coyote, gray wolf, red and gray fox, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and gray squirrel. Species of Greatest Conservation Need are also well-represented, with Blanding’s Turtle, bullsnake, mink frog, black tern, great blue heron, American bittern, osprey, bald eagle and several invertebrates all having reproducing populations on the property in various habitats.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation. The property is open to public hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, berry picking, hiking and canoeing/kayaking. Game hunting and trapping opportunities includes deer, bear, wolf, coyote, fox, waterfowl, woodcock, ruffed grouse, rabbit, squirrel and turkey.

There are boat landings on Black Brook Flowage and Blomberg Lake. Additional water access occurs on a number of smaller wetlands managed for waterfowl production. A gated trail system exists to access forest compartments for harvest and to manage water control structures. These trails are open to the public for walk in access only. One trail has been identified for disabled access and is available by reservation and is gated. One set of gates are opened for a snowmobile trail connection.

In terms of recreational activities, hunting and trapping are the primary uses managed for by WDNR at any wildlife area. Secondary uses, not actively managed for, generally include wildlife viewing, nature study, gathering of nuts, berries, and mushrooms, and hiking and kayaking/canoeing.

Upland game hunting, also referred to as small game hunting, occurs throughout the property. Small game at ASWA includes cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, fox and gray squirrels, red and grey fox, raccoon, coyote, bobcat, crow, mourning dove, American woodcock, snipe, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. Roughly 1500 small game hunting efforts occur per year at ASWA.

White-tailed deer and black bear hunting are very popular at ASWA with an estimated 4500 hunting efforts occurring per year. In 2012, the hunting pressure for opening day of gun deer hunting season was estimated at 144 hunters on the property. ASWA is a popular black bear hunting wildlife area. Forty seven black bears were

harvested in DMU 10, which is where ASWA is located. Waterfowl hunting recreation is the next most popular recreation on the property with an estimated 2000 efforts.

Trapping of furbearers occurs on ASWA and includes fisher, beaver, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, otter, raccoon and wolf. Approximately 1000 trapping efforts occur per year.

Other recreational opportunities at ASWA include wild rice harvesting, boating, kayaking and canoeing, wildlife observation, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation, snowmobiling and natural food gathering like morel mushrooms and berries. The actual number of these activities is unknown, but estimated at 15,000 and do not include the number of “sightseers” that are simply driving through the area.

Most users of either live in close proximity, within the county, neighboring counties or live in the Minneapolis metropolitan area.

Paved town and county roads adjoin the property along 6.5 of the area’s 24.5 miles of boundary; all 24.5 miles of the boundary are shared with private landowners. There are slightly more than four miles of hunter walking trails. The trail gates are gated or bermed to restrict motorized access. The trails are also used for management purposes and provide easy walking for users with limited mobility.

None of the above listed recreational opportunities at ASWA are anticipated to be limited once the exchange is completed.

Financial. Management activities on all acres are supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds. WSFR funds were used to purchase 742 of the 1,403 acres proposed to be traded.

Surrounding property. All of the land surrounding this property is privately owned.

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area

The NBWA is a 5,094 acre property that is split into two units. The North Unit is 4,332 acres and the South Unit is 762 acres. It is located in the northeast corner of Burnett County and is approximately ten miles northwest of Minong. Access to the North Unit is from County Line Roads, Dry Landing and St. Croix Trail. Access to the South Unit is from Namekagon Trail and Spring Brook Trail.

The proposed exchange would convey all of these acres and an additional five acres with a cabin to WDNR. The 762 acres in the South Unit would be encumbered with USFWS-WSFR federal interest. The property is globally significant for wildlife habitat. It is high value pine/oak barrens critical for sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other barren habitat dependent species.

Conservation. The NBWA is a dry, sandy open landscape with vegetation typical of the original pine/oak barrens and interspersed with scattered shallow marsh/northern sedge meadow, bogs and small shallow lakes. This property is of the finest high-quality intact pine/oak barrens in Northwestern Wisconsin. Pine/oak barrens are widely acknowledged as globally rare and this community type is also known habitat for numerous uncommon species of both plants and wildlife. Annual prescribed fires prevent these sites from growing into oak-jack pine forests and aspen/scrub oak forests. Through the use of prescribed fire and other management techniques, the property has long been managed for early seral-stage pine/oak barrens, resulting in sparse canopy cover and a sometimes dense shrub layer consisting of oak grubs, American hazelnut, sweet-fern, New Jersey tea, and blueberries. The shallow marshes and bogs are diverse with many species of uncommon and common wetland plants.

Protection of the rare habitat and its related species is documented as high priority in Wisconsin in many state management plans including the Wildlife Action Plan, Strategies for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Needs and Managing Grasslands for Birds-A guide for Wisconsin. The NBWA was identified as globally significant conservation opportunity area by the state wildlife action plan 2005, is also designated as an Important Bird Area by the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative and is a part of the Great Wisconsin Birding & Nature Trail network. The wildlife area hosts breeding population of several species of greatest concern including sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpiper, northern harrier, Blanding's turtles, brown thrasher and golden-winged warbler. Many scientific research projects have been completed that document the importance and value of this property.

In addition to the rare species, a variety of resident and migratory wildlife use the area. Resident game species include white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare, woodcock, gray squirrel, beaver, mink, and otter. Woodcock, snipe, and several species of ducks are the principal migratory game species using the area. Uncommon wildlife and plant species documented at NBWA include sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpiper, Connecticut Warbler, dickcissel, Western Meadowlark, prairie skink, pygmy shrew, speckled rangeland grasshopper, club-horned grasshopper, clear-winged grasshopper, rocky mountain sprinkled locust, mottled duskywing, Henry's elfin, cobweb skipper, dwarf milkweed, one-flowered broom-rape, and Richardson's sedge.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation.

Upland game hunting, also referred to as small game hunting, occurs throughout the property. Small game at NBWA includes cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, gray squirrels, red and grey fox, raccoon, coyote, bobcat, crow, mourning dove, American woodcock, snipe, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. Roughly 3,500 small game hunting efforts occur per year at NBWA.

White-tailed deer and black bear hunting are very popular at NBWA with an estimated 1,500 hunting efforts occurring per year. In 2012, the hunting pressure for opening day of gun deer hunting season was estimated at

95 hunters on the property. NBWA is a popular black bear hunting wildlife area. Eighty three black bears were harvested in DMU 8, which is where NBWA is located. Waterfowl hunting recreation is limited to a few small beaver pond complexes and lakes with an estimated 25 waterfowl hunting efforts.

Trapping of furbearers occurs on NBWA and includes fisher, beaver, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, otter, raccoon and wolf. Approximately 200 trapping efforts occur per year.

This property supports the largest population of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin and people come from all over the country to view sharp-tailed grouse dance in the spring. There are three dancing grounds with public viewing blinds. The NBWA offers 300 sharp-tailed grouse viewing efforts each spring on three dancing grounds and some of the best photography opportunities for this bird and the rare habitat community in the nation. It is part of the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail and offers birders the opportunity to see birds rarely seen anywhere else in the state or Midwest.

Seven years ago the Friends of the NBWA (FNBWA) was organized. FNBWA hosts many field trips every year on the property, which include photography, wildlife watching, youth events, property tours, botany and more are being planned for the future.

Dog handlers train their dogs on the sharp-tailed grouse in the wide open landscape. It is estimated 600 dog training days annually. NBWA is host to one or two dog trials annually with 100 or more participants at each event. Region 19 of Amateur Field Trial Clubs of America boast that this property offers “one of the most, if not the most, unique ecosystem” in all of North and South Dakotas, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The property is open to public hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, berry picking, hiking, nature photography, dog training and dog trialing. Trout fishing has been popular on the Clemens Creek with roughly 250 efforts per year.

Most users of NBWA either live in close proximity, in the county or neighboring counties, in the Minneapolis metropolitan area, or throughout North American based on Friends of the NBWA Members and dog trial lists.

Access to the property is by gravel/sand town roads and/or fuel breaks developed with the sole purpose of managing the property with prescribed burning. They provide access throughout the property and provide easy walking for users with limited mobility, although much of the North Unit is easy walking throughout the property because it is relatively flat and mostly grassy and open. The existing snowmobile/winter use trail is open from December 1 through March 31, You may ride your ATV/UTV/Snowmobile on state-funded winter use trails with a 4 inch groomed snow base. ATV/UTVs can only operate when the trail is open for snowmobile use. The remainder of the property is closed to motorized access.

This exchange will ensure these recreational opportunities will not be lost any time in the future. The lease expires in 2017, at which time the future of the property and these uses would be threatened.

Financial. Management activities on all acres are supported and the lease is paid with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds.

Surrounding property. The property is surrounded primarily by County Forest and timber company lands. Most private land is congregated along the nearby lakes.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area

CMWA is a 28,956 acre property of wetlands, brush prairies, and forests scattered across a gently rolling landscape. It is located in western Burnett County. Property usage data is representative of the property as a whole. Since the proposed trade affects 2.2% of the property, usage figures in Table 2 have been adjusted to reflect this fact.

Overall, this trade involves divesting 647.58 acres of WDNR ownership on the eastern boundary of CMWA to BC (no federal interest) in exchange for 1,324 acres from BC that will link together CMWA and the GKSF. This ownership will be encumbered with USFWS-WSFR federal interest. This land is currently in the County Forest program, but will gradually be returned to pine/oak barrens and oak savanna cover types to favor sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers, Karner blue butterflies and other wildlife.

Conservation. CMWA provides a substantial proportion of the remaining large pine/oak barrens and sedge meadow habitat in northwestern Wisconsin and is critical to the long-term survival of many Special Concern and state listed reptile species. Of significant importance to both game and non-game birds are the wetland habitats including wet meadows, marshes, and flowages for breeding and stopover habitat. The barrens habitats at CMWA also support numerous uncommon grassland and shrubland birds. In all, the site is known to support at least nineteen different rare bird species breeding populations. This site is an outstanding concentration area in both fall and spring for waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds, hosting tens of thousands of ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, and a diversity of shorebirds. Grassland and shrubland species that breed on the property includes conservative wildlife species such as upland sandpiper, brown thrasher, northern harrier, bullsnake, Blanding's Turtle and Karner Blue Butterfly.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation. The property is open to public hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, berry picking, hiking and canoeing/kayaking. Game hunting and trapping opportunities includes deer, bear, wolf, coyote, fox, waterfowl, woodcock, ruffed grouse, rabbit, squirrel and turkey.

There are boat landings on Phantom, North Fork, Middle North Fork, Upper North Fork, Dike 1, Dike 6 flowages, and Monson, Furman, and Reed lakes. Additional water access occurs on a number of smaller wetlands managed for waterfowl production. A gated trail system exists to access forest compartments for harvest and to manage water control structures. These trails are open to the public for walk in access only. One set of gates are opened for a snowmobile trail connection.

In terms of recreational activities, hunting and trapping are the primary uses managed for by WDNR at any wildlife area. Secondary uses, not actively managed for, generally include wildlife viewing, nature study, gathering of nuts, berries, and mushrooms, and hiking and kayaking/canoeing.

Upland game hunting, also referred to as small game hunting, occurs throughout the property. Small game at CMWA includes cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, fox and gray squirrels, red and grey fox, raccoon, coyote, bobcat, crow, mourning dove, American woodcock, snipe, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. Roughly 8000 small game hunting efforts occur per year at CMWA.

White-tailed deer and black bear hunting are very popular at CMWA with an estimated 16,000 hunting efforts occurring per year. In 2012, the hunting pressure for opening day of gun deer hunting season was estimated at 675 hunters on the property. CMWA is a popular black bear hunting wildlife area. Forty seven black bears were harvested in DMU 10, which is where CMWA is located. Waterfowl hunting recreation is the next most popular

recreation on the property with an estimated 6500 hunter efforts.

Trapping of furbearers occurs on CMWA and includes fisher, beaver, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, otter, raccoon and wolf. Approximately 3000 trapping efforts occur per year.

Other recreational opportunities at CMWA include wild rice harvesting, boating, kayaking and canoeing, wildlife observation, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation, snowmobiling and natural food gathering like morel mushrooms and berries. The actual number of these activities is unknown, but estimated at 150,000 and do not include the number of “sightseers” that are simply driving through the area.

Most users of either live in close proximity, within the county, neighboring counties, live in the Minneapolis metropolitan area, throughout North America and worldwide.

Paved town and county roads adjoin and bisect the property providing vehicle access from more than 50 miles of maintained roadway. There is a 24 mile auto tour and more than twenty one miles of hunter walking trails. The trails are also used for management purposes and provide easy walking for users with limited mobility.

None of the above listed recreational opportunities at CMWA are anticipated to be limited once the exchange is completed.

Financial. Management activities on all acres are supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds. **None of the 648 acres proposed to be traded were purchased with WSFR funds.**

Surrounding property. All of the land surrounding this property is privately owned

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Conservation

Alternative A – No Action.

Danbury Wildlife Area. Property would remain in ownership by WDNR. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Long term habitat values will be protected. Management inefficiency would continue to be problematic due to the distance from work unit headquarters.

Kiezer lake Wildlife Area. Property would remain in ownership by WDNR. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Long term habitat values will be protected.

Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area. The part of the property proposed for trade would remain in ownership by WDNR. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Long term habitat values will be protected. Management inefficiency would continue to be problematic due to the distance from work unit headquarters.

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. This leased wildlife area will continue to be managed for early stage barrens habitat through 2017. In 2017, the current 25 year lease for the property with BC will expire. If the lease is not renewed, BC could choose to re-forest this property for maximum economic return. BC could also decide to sell this property in part or in whole to private entities, or develop it as a motorized recreation-based property, resulting in the loss of existing wildlife habitat and 50+ years of management costs. While forested habitat is relatively common in the local landscape, early stage pine/oak barrens is less common. Pine/oak barrens are widely acknowledged as globally rare and this vegetative community type is also known habitat for numerous uncommon species of both plants and wildlife. Early stage barrens require active management to maintain the type of habitat that is used by these uncommon species. If the NBWA is not traded to the State of Wisconsin, barrens management is unlikely to continue, resulting in the permanent loss of habitat for numerous uncommon plant and wildlife species.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The 647.55 acres of the property proposed for trade would remain in ownership by WDNR. Management on this part of the property would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Long term habitat values will be protected.

Burnett County Forest Lands. The 1324 acres of BC forested land adjacent to CMWA would continue to be managed for maximum economic return through the sale of forest products. These lands would remain open for public recreation as long as BC chose to do so. These lands could be sold or converted to other uses. There would be no opportunity to create a habitat corridor between CMWA and Kohler-Peet Barrens State Natural Area, both of which currently have a similar mix of habitats. Providing a link between the two areas would increase populations of conservative wildlife species and allow for genetic exchange between currently isolated populations of wildlife and plants.

Alternative B – Proposed Action.

Danbury Wildlife Area. Property would be transferred to BC and entered into the County Forest system. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Commercial forest products would continue to be harvested on a sustainable basis. Long term habitat values will be protected through deed restriction prior to the trade. Management efficiency would be improved as these lands are adjacent to current BC lands

managed for a similar purpose.

Kiezer Lake Wildlife Area. Property would be transferred to BC and entered into the County Forest system. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Commercial forest products would continue to be harvested on a sustainable basis. Long term habitat values will be protected through deed restriction prior to the trade. Management efficiency would be improved as these lands are adjacent to current BC lands managed for a similar purpose.

Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area. The part of the property proposed for trade would be transferred to BC and entered into the County Forest system. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Commercial forest products would continue to be harvested on a sustainable basis. Long term habitat values will be protected through deed restriction prior to the trade. Management efficiency would be improved as these lands are adjacent to current BC lands managed for a similar purpose.

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. This leased wildlife area will continue to be managed for early stage barrens. The WDNR will no longer be required to pay an annual lease payment (currently \$22,000/yr). This will allow the WDNR to free up \$22,000/yr that can be redirected into habitat management and development on the property. The threat to convert this property to forest plantation for maximum economic return would be eliminated. This property will be protected in perpetuity and the threat of sale or development as a motorized recreation property would be eliminated. Investments made by WDNR over the past 56 years in barrens habitat management and development will be protected. Pine/oak barrens are widely acknowledged as globally rare and this vegetative community type is also known habitat for numerous uncommon species of both plants and wildlife would be protected in perpetuity.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The part of the property proposed for trade would be transferred to BC and entered into the County Forest system. Property management would continue to emphasize forest wildlife. Commercial forest products would continue to be harvested on a sustainable basis. Long term habitat values will be protected through deed restriction prior to the trade. Management efficiency would be improved as these lands are adjacent to current BC lands managed for a similar purpose.

Burnett County Forest Lands. The 1,324 acres of BC forested lands would be transferred to WDNR and become part of the CMWA. The threat to convert this property to forest plantation for maximum economic return would be eliminated. This property will be protected in perpetuity and the threat of sale or development would be eliminated. These lands would remain open for public recreation in perpetuity. The addition of 1,324 acres of land at CMWA will provide an essential habitat link between CMWA and the nearby Kohler-Peet Barrens State Natural Area. Both CMWA and Kohler-Peet State Natural Area are managed for early seral stage barrens and grassland. The addition is located between the two properties and in the long term, this property will also be managed for a pine/oak barrens/oak savanna/grassland mix that is complementary to existing management in the local landscape. This will allow for increased populations of conservative wildlife species that use this habitat, such as sharp-tailed grouse, bullsnake, Karner blue butterfly and dwarf milkweed. CMWA is identified as a recovery property for the federally endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. These acres will be managed for habitats that will increase populations of these endangered butterflies. This in turn will help the WDNR meet the recovery goals of the Superior Outwash Recovery Unit.

Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation

Alternative A – No Action.

Under the no-action alternative, all properties will remain with their current ownership.

All lands currently owned by WDNR will remain open to hunting, fishing and wildlife associated recreation.

On 5,094 acres currently owned by BC but leased to WDNR all hunting, fishing and wildlife associated recreation will not change through 2017. In 2017 the current lease for the NBWA will expire. If the lease can't be renegotiated this property's management will be returned to BC. Public access is not guaranteed. Hunting and associated recreation could be lost on 5094 acres. Past investments in the development and management of globally rare barrens habitats on these 5,094 acres could be lost. Sharp-tailed grouse viewing and hunting may be lost, as would the dog training and dog trialing that occur on the NBWA. Pine/oak barrens wildlife and botany species would be lost.

BC will continue to own 1324 acres of land within the CMWA purchase boundaries. Public access is not guaranteed. Hunting and associated recreation could be lost on 1,324 acres.

Alternative B – Proposed Action.

Under the proposed action alternative, the land trade will occur.

The entire DWA encompassing 2,244.63 acres will be transferred to BC. All 2,244.63 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. There will be no loss of hunting and wildlife associated recreation. Management efficiencies will be enhanced. The entire KLWA encompassing 1,352.1 acres will be transferred to BC. All 1,352.1 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. There will be no loss of hunting and wildlife associated recreation. Management efficiencies will be enhanced. Part of the ASWA encompassing 1,402.85 acres will be transferred to BC. All 1,402.85 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. There will be no loss of hunting and wildlife associated recreation. Management efficiencies will be enhanced. Part of the CMWA encompassing 647.58 acres will be transferred to BC. All 647.58 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. There will be no loss of hunting and wildlife associated recreation. Management efficiencies will be enhanced.

The entire leased NBWA encompassing 5,093.56 acres will be transferred to WDNR. All 5,093.56 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. There will be no loss of hunting and wildlife associated recreation. Management efficiencies will be enhanced. All 5,093.56 acres will be protected in perpetuity. The threat of conversion to forest plantation or development will be eliminated. The annual lease payment of \$22,000 will be eliminated and those savings will be redirected into habitat management activities. Identified globally rare habitats will be protected in perpetuity. The 1,324 acres of BC lands adjacent to the CMWA will be transferred to WDNR. All 1,324 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and to require the lands to be managed for conservation purposes. Additional hunting and wildlife associated recreation will be created. The threat of conversion to forest plantation or development will be eliminated.

Financial

Alternative A – No Action.

Under the no-action alternative, all properties will remain with their current ownership. Management activities on all WDNR acres will continue to be supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds. Annual lease payments of \$22,000 will continue to be made through 2017.

Net Result. Existing ownership and management of the properties do not change. Thus, no additional financial impacts are expected.

Alternative B – Proposed Action.

Under the proposed action alternative, the land trade will occur.

In accordance with Federal standards, appraisals were completed for proposed exchange areas at each property in October 2012. The appraisals determined the fair market value of the 5,686.07 acres of WDNR lands in addition to the fair market value of 6,417.56 acres of BC lands. In order to equalize the value of the trade between WDNR and BC the WDNR will add \$660,750 in Knowles Nelson Stewardship Funding to complete the trade. The appraisals were reviewed and approved by the WDNR Review Appraiser and a third party reviewer accepted by the USFWS. The USFWS agrees that the fair market value of the proposed BC lands have an adequate replacement value for the proposed WDNR lands.

NBWA. With the transfer of this leased wildlife area from BC to WDNR, annual \$22,000 lease payments at NBWA will be eliminated. This will create a net savings of \$22,000 per year in WSFR funded lease payments.

BC. With the transfer of 1,324 acres of BC land to WDNR for addition to the CMWA all future management activities will be supported with WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account funds.

DWA. With the transfer of DWA to BC all future management costs will be the responsibility of BC.

KLWA. With the transfer of KLWA to BC all future management costs will be the responsibility of BC.

ASWA. With the transfer of part (1,402.85 acres) of the ASWA to BC all future management costs will be the responsibility of BC.

CMWA. With the transfer of part (647.58 acres) of the CMWA to BC all future management costs will be the responsibility of BC.

Net Result. Under this alternative, the fair market value of the proposed BC exchange parcels is equal or greater than the WDNR exchange parcel. Overall management costs will be reduced due to better alignment of land management capabilities and efficiencies gained due to proximity to other WDNR lands.

Surrounding properties

Alternative A - No Action.

Under the no-action alternative, all properties will remain with their current ownership. There will be no impacts anticipated to surrounding properties.

Alternative B – Proposed Action.

Under the proposed action alternative, the land trade will occur.

NBWA. No impacts to nearby landowners are expected. This property has been leased from BC since 1956 and managed by WDNR. This will not change. The only difference will be that WDNR will now own the property.

BC. Minimal impacts to nearby landowners are expected. These lands are already surrounded by WDNR lands.

DWA. Minimal impacts to nearby landowners are expected. Management will change little after the land trade occurs. The property will still be open to the public for recreation and it will continue to be managed for sustainable forestry.

KLWA. Minimal impacts to nearby landowners are expected. Management will change little after the land trade occurs. The property will still be open to the public for recreation and it will continue to be managed for sustainable forestry.

ASWA. Minimal impacts to nearby landowners are expected. Management will change little after the land trade occurs. The property will still be open to the public for recreation and it will continue to be managed for sustainable forestry.

CMWA. Minimal impacts to nearby landowners are expected. Management will change little after the land trade occurs. The property will still be open to the public for recreation and it will continue to be managed for sustainable forestry.

Cumulative Impacts

If alternative B is approved and the land trade between BC and WDNR is finalized it is anticipated that there will be no significant cumulative impacts.

On the other hand if the land trade between BC and WDNR is not finalized there may be significant cumulative impacts. The NBWA has been leased from BC for more than 57 years. This 5094 acre property has been identified as a globally rare habitat type in a number of planning documents. The current 25 year lease will expire in 2017. The last time the lease was renegotiated the size of the area was reduced in addition to the substitution of less productive acres on adjacent BC lands exchanged for more productive acres on the NBWA. Throughout the last lease negotiation it became apparent that BC might choose to end the lease and sell, develop, or convert the site to plantation forestry. Had this occurred, all the past investments in habitat management and development would have been lost. This proposed land trade will protect the unique and high quality habitat values of the NBWA in perpetuity.

The WDNR owned DWA, KLWA, ASWA (part proposed for trade), and CMWA (part proposed for trade) are all 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.). From an efficiency standpoint it makes sense for the WDNR and BC to consider trading land to consolidate ownership and management potential. The best management objective for the WDNR lands is to maintain these habitats in a forested condition. By transferring these lands to BC in exchange for BC lands more suitable for barrens management, the WDNR is facilitating their ability to affect barrens habitats on a landscape scale. These advantages are compounded when considering additional WDNR land acquisitions that have occurred in the surrounding area and give the WDNR the opportunity to leverage early seral stage barrens habitats on a truly grand scale in the NW Sands.

The BC lands within the boundary of the CMWA were identified in the 1985 CMWA master planning process as the #1 acquisition priority. These BC lands 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 do not occur on the other WDNR lands because of their increased distance from the work unit headquarters. They will also greatly expand management options to benefit the federally endangered Karner Blue Butterfly within the Superior Outwash RU. If the land trade does not occur this opportunity will be lost.

Without the land trade moving forward it is almost a certainty that over time critical barrens habitats in the Northwest Sands will decline quantitatively and qualitatively.

Public Input

This section of the final EA will be completed after the draft is made available for public review and comment. Those comments, if any, will be discussed and addressed in this section of the final EA.

Public Notification and Involvement

11 September 2008, County of Burnett, Natural Resources committee meeting. Discussion regarding BC's interest in negotiating possible land trade with WDNR. County Forest Administrator is approved to begin negotiations. Public noticed meeting.

13 November 2008, County of Burnett, Natural Resources committee meeting. CMWA/County Land Trade Negotiation Committee was formed with 6 members from BC. Public noticed meeting.

8 January 2009 CMWA/County Land Trade Negotiation Committee meeting. WDNR staff met with BC to set framework for potential land swap. Public noticed meeting.

12 March 2009, CMWA/County Land Trade Negotiation Committee meeting. WDNR staff met with BC to discuss options for potential land swap. Public noticed meeting.

11 October 2012, County of Burnett, Natural Resources committee meeting. Land trade proposal was discussed. County Forestry Administrator recommends approval. Public noticed

meeting.

8 November 2012, County of Burnett, Natural Resources committee meeting.

County Forestry Administrator updated the committee on the proposed land trade between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and BC. An updated land trade map was reviewed. Public noticed meeting.

20 December 2012, County of Burnett, Board of Supervisors.

Update on BC land trade was presented. County Board discussion. Resolution will be voted on at January meeting. Public noticed meeting.

11 January 2013, County of Burnett, Natural Resources committee meeting.

Resolution to approve land trade was carried by a voice vote. Public noticed meeting.

24 January 2013, County of Burnett, Board of Supervisors.

Resolution 2013-02 BC Land Trade With WDNR and Withdrawal of County Forest Lands (1322 acres North of CMWA and 5 acres in Blaine), passed by voice vote.

Public noticed meeting.

WDNR – Natural Resources Board (NRB)

2005 CMWA Boundary Expansion Feasibility Study

Land trade was proposed by NRB chair inquiring about the potential of purchasing or trading land with BC. Public meeting and comment period.

12 December 2012, NRB approved Land Exchange - NBWA, CMWA, Amsterdam Sloughs, Keizer Lake and DWA – BC. Public comments all in support. Personal testimony, correspondence. Friends of the Namekagon Barrens, Friends of Crex Meadows, and the WI Sharptail Grouse Society all had representatives of their groups provide testimony in support of the land trade.

Table 2. Comparison of alternatives by conservation, recreation, and financial issues discussed in Environmental Consequences section.

	NO ACTION			PROPOSED ACTION		
	WDNR	BC	Net	WDNR	BC	Net
Conservation						
Acres in WSFR federal program	1,890	0	1,890	2,086	0	2,086
Acres protected for conservation purposes by deed restriction	5,686.07	0	5,686.07	6,417.56	5,686.07	12,103.63
Habitat types (in acres)						
Early successional barrens	0	4,886	4,886	4,886	0	4,886
Forested Lands	3,307	1,139	4,446	1,139	3,307	4,446
Water and wetlands	2,379	391	2,770	391	2,379	2,770
Nongame wildlife						
Karner Blue Butterfly	No changes to Karner Blue Butterfly habitat at CMWA. No additional opportunities will exist to increase Karner habitats on WDNR owned properties as part of the Superior Outwash RU.			1,139 acres of lands suitable for Karner Blue Butterfly habitat management will be permanently protected by WDNR. All 1,139 acres can be added to the Superior Outwash RU.		
Habitat for non-game wildlife	No changes expected on WDNR and BC lands through 2017. After 2017, there are 5094 acres of BC land that are leased by WDNR that could be lost. The habitat values of this unique globally rare habitat could be lost or converted to a lower value condition.			Protected Habitat loss:	Protected Habitat gain:	Net habitat Permanently Protected:
				Pine/oak Barrens: 0 acres	Pine/oak Barrens: 4,886 acres	Pine/Oak Barrens: 4,886 acres gain
				Forest: 0 acres	Forest: 1,139 acres	Forest: 1,139 acres gain
				Water & Wetlands: 0 acres	Water & Wetlands: 391 acres	Water & Wetlands: 391 acres gain
Fragmentation	Effects of fragmentation on WDNR and BC lands are limited to what currently exists.			The 5,093.56 acre NBWA is considered a core barrens property within the NW Sands landscape. Its loss would deal a major blow to the biological functioning of the NW Sands landscape. This would reduce the overall biologic function of surrounding properties. Based on current research this could threaten the viability of Sharp-tailed grouse in the entire landscape in addition to a variety of plants and animals that are dependent on this rare habitat type. The 1,324 acre addition to the CMWA would greatly benefit the connectivity of existing barrens habitats on GKSF and		

		<p>CMWA. Future habitat management in this area will create a corridor connecting existing barrens habitats that will benefit barrens dependent wildlife greatly and may lead to the recovery of the Karner Blue Butterfly in the Superior Outwash RU.</p>
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Table 2 (cont.). Comparison of alternatives by conservation, recreation, and financial issues discussed in Environmental Consequences section.

	NO ACTION			PROPOSED ACTION		
	WDNR	BC	Net	WDNR	BC	Net
Recreation (est. efforts)						
Small game	2,718	0	2718	3868	2718	6586
Deer & Bear	4478	0	4478	2236	4478	6714
Turkey(in Small Game)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waterfowl	1039	0	1039	324	1039	1363
Fishing	1000	0	1000	250	1000	1250
Trapping	1294	0	1294	138	1294	1432
Compatible secondary uses	9320	0	9320	8000	9320	17,320
Public availability						After land trade is completed 12,102 acres will be deed restricted to guarantee public access and protection for conservation purposes.
Distance to Siren	15 miles	15 miles	Only WDNR lands provide guaranteed public access, this includes 5,686 acres.	15 miles	15 miles	
Distance to Duluth/Superior	75 miles	75 miles		75 miles	75 miles	
Distance to Eau Claire	110 miles	110 miles		110 miles	110 miles	
Distance to Minneapolis	90 miles	90 miles		90 miles	90 miles	
# of properties within 30 miles that provide public use	No Change	No Change		No Change	No Change	
Enhanced accessibility	No change from current status.			Both WDNR and BC have access plans in place. They are similar in nature with a few slight differences. It is anticipated that there will not be a significant change in access to these lands after the trade occur. All lands involved in the trade will be deed restricted to protect conservation values and guarantee continued public recreation.		
ADA accessible hunting opportunities	No Change from current status.			The WDNR managed properties will continue to look for opportunities to expand ADA accessible hunting opportunities where feasible and appropriate.		
Financial						
Appraised values of proposed exchange parcels	The fair market values of the proposed exchange parcels are not applicable under no action.			The fair market value of the BC land to be transferred to WDNR is equal or greater than the exchange lands from WDNR to be transferred to BC. BC is transferring 6,415.56 acres to WDNR in exchange for 5,686.07 acres of WDNR land.		

Management and operational costs	No Change from current status.	Funding for management and operational costs will continue to come from WSFR and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account. It is anticipated that management costs will be reduced due to better alignment of land management capabilities, improved blocking of land holdings, and reduced travel and logistical costs.
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REFERENCES CITED

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