

CORRESPONDENCE / MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

File

DATE: January 29, 1986
TO: David Jacobsen - NWD
FROM: James R. Huntoon - AD/5 *JRH*

In Reply Refer To:

RECEIVED

FEB - 7 1986

BUREAU OF
REAL ESTATE

SUBJECT: Approval of Behning Creek, Polk County, Fishery Area Management Plan

I have approved the Behning Creek Fishery Area Master Plan. The present acreage goal is 210.15 acres which is considered adequate to obtain the goals and objectives for this fishery area.

Attached are 20 copies of the approved Management Plan and the original maps for your district files to answer inquiries from the public and for future use in the implementation element plan.

The implementation element of the management plan process should be completed next. You are requested to supply this office with a copy on or about April 15, 1986.

Please convey my appreciation to the task force for a job well done in the completion of this management plan.

JRH:jm
4690L

cc: James Addis - FM/4
→ Carl Evert - OL/4
Vern Hacker - Oshkosh

Attachment

BEHNING CREEK FISHERY AREA
POLK COUNTY

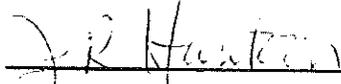
MANAGEMENT PLAN
CONCEPT ELEMENT



PROPERTY TASK FORCE

LEADER - Rick Cornelius, Fish Manager
John Porter, Wildlife Manager
Mike Grinyer, Forester

APPROVED BY:


J. R. Huntoon, Administrator,
Resource Management

DATE:

12/13/85

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SECTION I - ACTIONS

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Goals:

To manage the Behning Creek Fishery Area, Polk County, to provide high quality trout fishery, and to provide quality habitat for wildlife and land for other recreational and educational uses.

Annual Objectives:

1. Provide 75 angler days of brook trout fishing at an average catch rate of 0.7 trout per fishing hour.
2. Provide 130 participant days of hunting for white-tailed deer, squirrel, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and waterfowl.

Annual Additional Benefits:

1. Benefit nongame species indigenous to the region, including endangered or threatened species that may occur or migrate through the area.
2. Accommodate 100 days of other recreational and educational activities including trapping, nature study, hiking, photography, and berry picking.
3. Manage vegetative cover compatible with the goals, objectives, and aesthetic nature of the area.

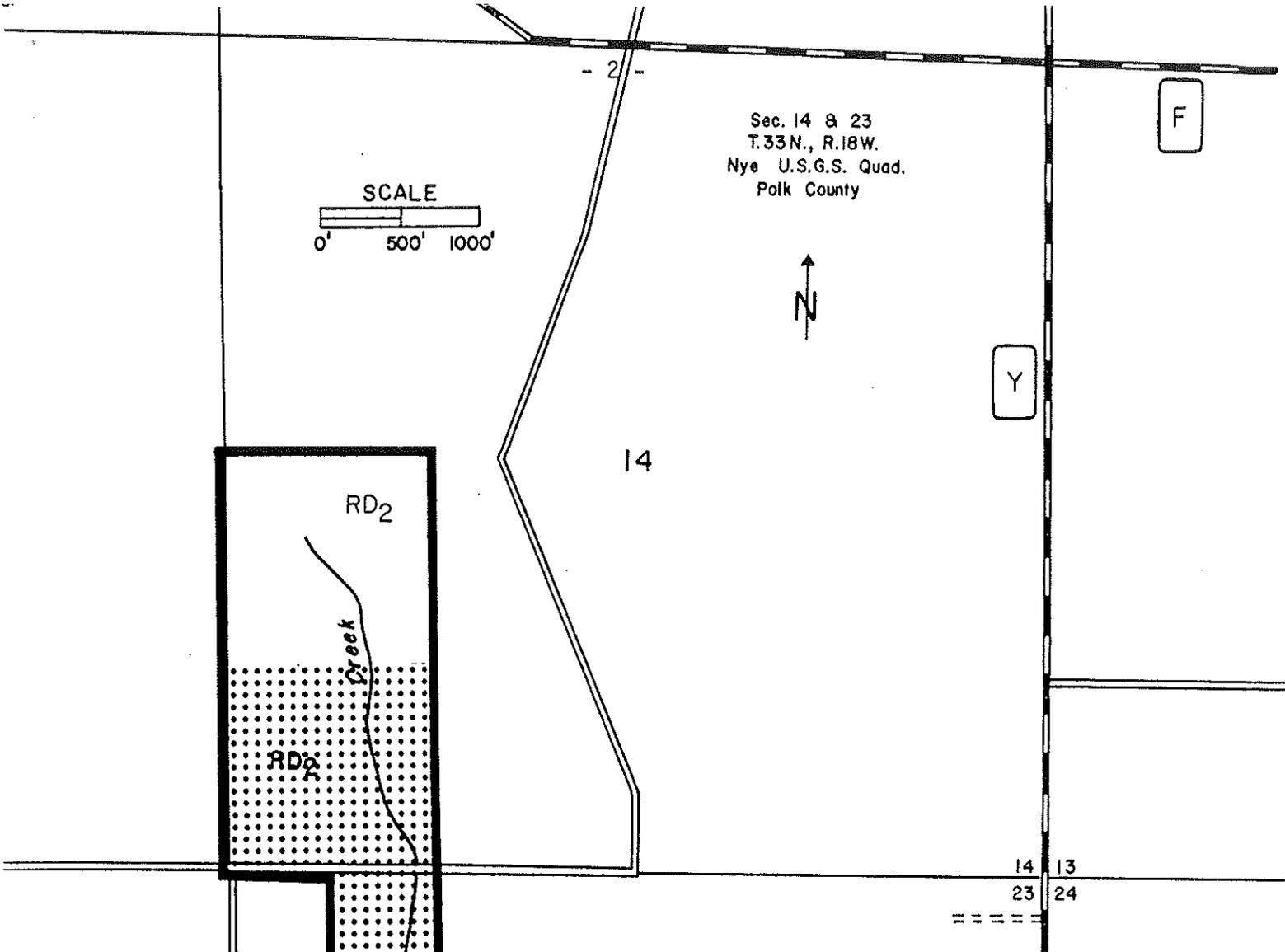
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The management program recommended for the Behning Creek Fishery Area, Polk County (Figure 1), includes completion of land acquisition (Figure 2), and habitat development (Figure 3).

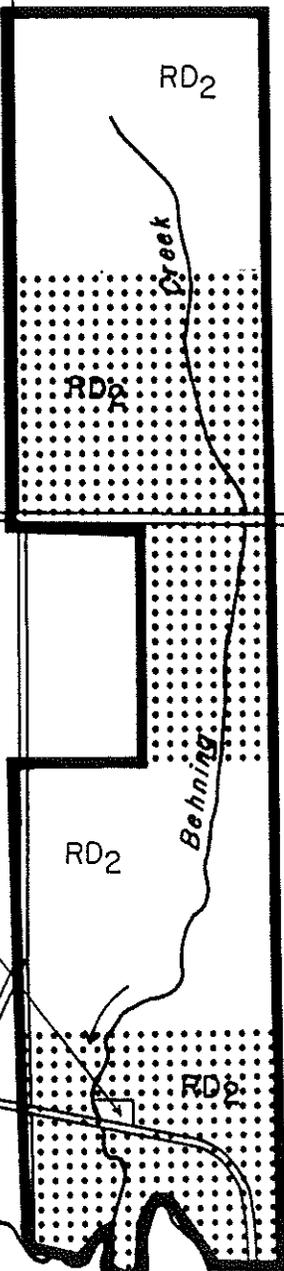
Efforts will continue to keep the 1.4 miles of Behning Creek Class I trout water free of beaver dams. This will include keeping beaver populations on the stream as low as possible through use of special trapping seasons and other regulations authorized by the Natural Resources Board.

Streambanks where brush removal has occurred (1,282 feet) will be kept free of woody vegetation (Figure 3). This will require periodic cutting and/or chemical control with a herbicide, as necessary. Initial brushing occurred in 1975-77. Because of Behning Creek's small size, intensive habitat improvement work is not warranted.

The lower portion of Behning Creek, where it enters Horse Lake, is probably utilized as a spawning area for northern pike from Horse Lake and should be preserved in its present state.



Private Parcel
(.63 Acre)

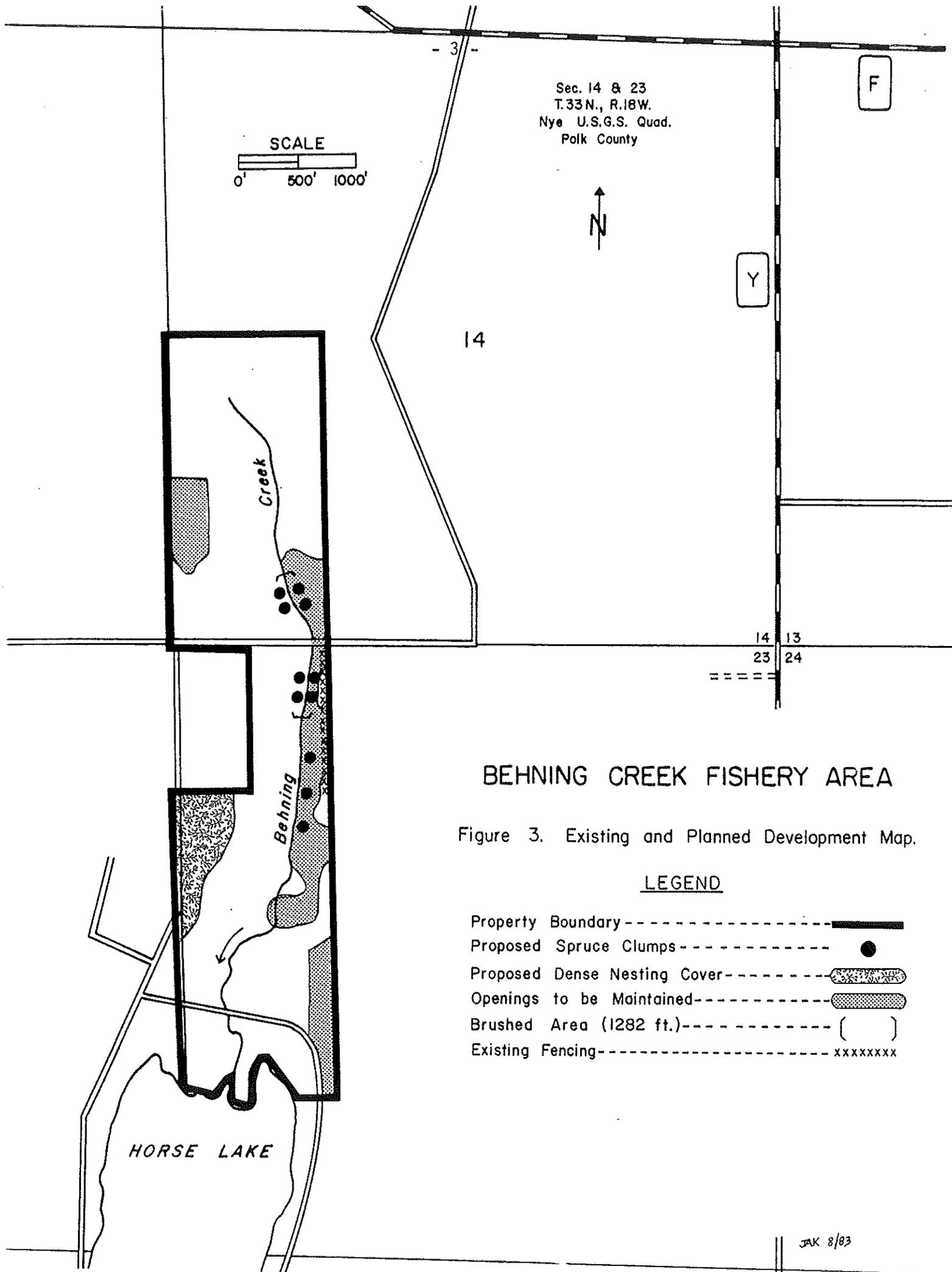


BEHNING CREEK FISHERY AREA

Figure 2. Property Ownership and Land Use Classification Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary - - - - -
- State Land - - - - -
- Private Land - - - - -
- Fish & Wildlife Management Area - - - - - RD2
(Entire Property)



Sec. 14 & 23
 T.33 N., R.18 W.
 Nye U.S.G.S. Quad.
 Polk County

SCALE
 0' 500' 1000'



14

Y

F

14 13
 23 24

BEHNING CREEK FISHERY AREA

Figure 3. Existing and Planned Development Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary ----- [thick solid line]
- Proposed Spruce Clumps ----- [black dot]
- Proposed Dense Nesting Cover ----- [stippled pattern]
- Openings to be Maintained ----- [shaded rectangle]
- Brushed Area (1282 ft.) ----- [dashed line]
- Existing Fencing ----- [xxxxxxx]

HORSE LAKE

Wildlife management will focus on the maintenance and development of diverse habitat types. The present ratio of vegetation types on the Fishery Area is very good. Approximately five to fifteen acres of open land will be planted to dense nesting cover for waterfowl, pheasants, and other ground nesting wildlife species (Figure 3). Remaining open land will be maintained as permanent wildlife openings. Openings which surround the Fishery Area are primarily cropland and pasture and do not provide the wildlife value found in natural openings. Scattered plantings of white spruce along the stream would provide additional wildlife cover and improved aesthetics. The plantings should be in clumps with a minimum spacing of 15 feet. Wildlife shrub plantings could be established around the spruce clumps.

Swamp hardwoods and northern hardwoods cover 55% of the property (Figure 4). Stands are predominantly sapling and pole-sized with scattered sawtimber trees in some areas. Management activities will not be required in either type before the year 2000. At that time a light thinning of poletimber will be beneficial in the northern hardwoods. As the timber matures, uneven-aged management by group selection will provide benefits in timber production, maintaining different canopy levels for wildlife and maintain water quality all with minimal aesthetic impact. Both hardwood cover types can be managed effectively using this system. Small patches of aspen on the property add to the diversity, but are too small to warrant special attention.

A complete biological inventory of the property will be conducted as funds permit. Additional property objectives may be developed following completion of such an inventory.

Fencing to exclude livestock from the Fishery Area will be constructed as necessary.

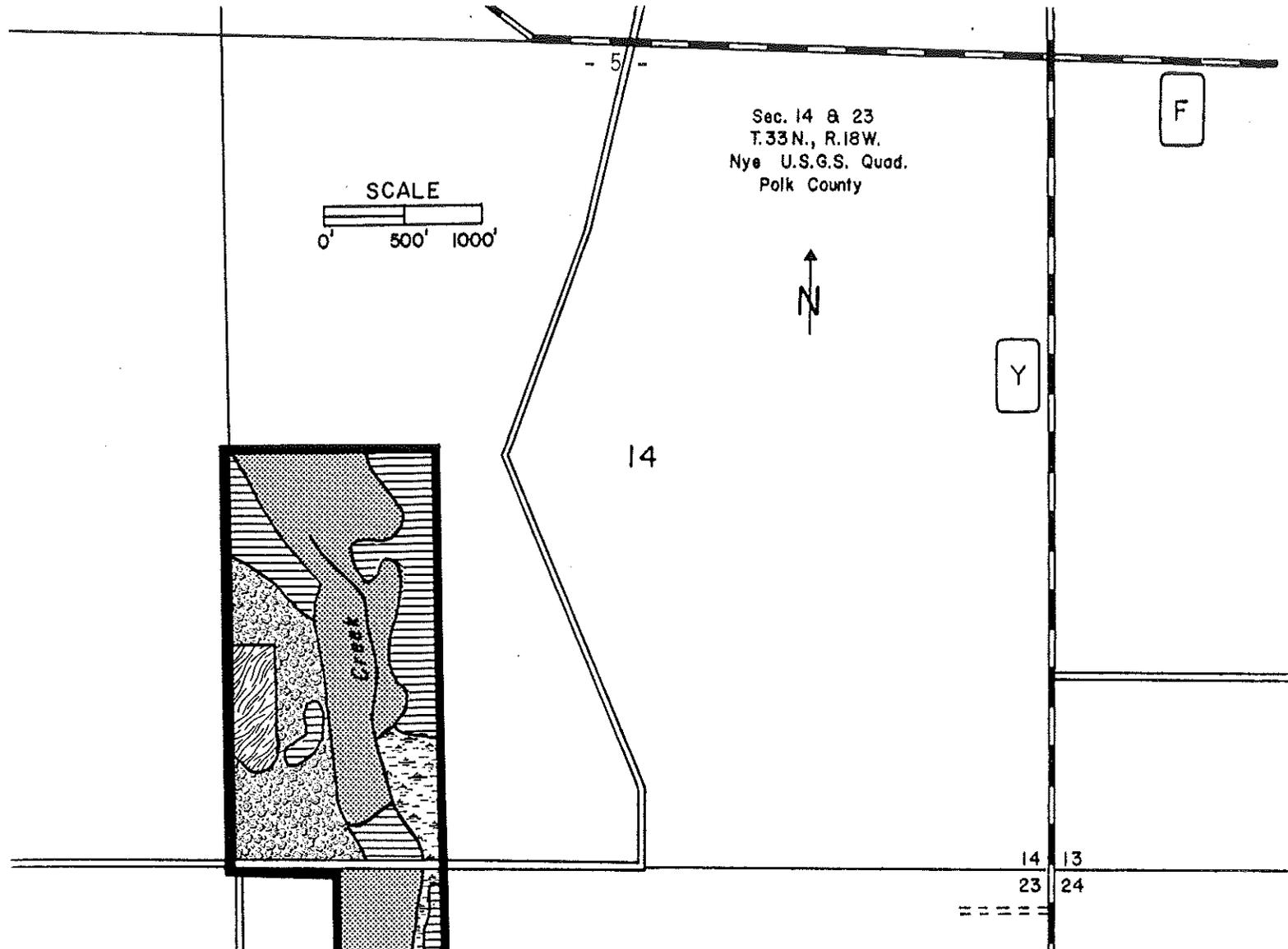
The present acreage goal of the Fishery Area is 210.15 acres. However, the present property boundary encompasses only about 180 acres of land (Figure 2). Therefore, the acreage goal should be reduced by 30.15 acres to 180 acres. This acreage is adequate to meet the Fishery Area goals and objectives.

The remaining 80 acres (approximate) of private land within the Fishery Area should be purchased when available. All past and future land acquisition has been, and will be, from willing sellers. No improvements are located on the remaining 80 acres to be purchased, aside from a small house and outbuilding located on a .63 acre of land (Figure 2). This dwelling is surrounded by state-owned land, and is in poor condition. The dwelling is located near Behning Creek, and is a problem from the standpoint of trespass and aesthetics. Therefore, the parcel should be included in acquisition plans when it is available from a willing seller.

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Behning Creek Fishery Area is located in southwestern Polk County about 30 miles from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The Fishery Area was established in 1962 because Behning Creek was one of the few quality trout



BEHNING CREEK FISHERY AREA

Figure 4. General Cover Map.

LEGEND

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Property Boundary | ----- | ————— |
| Northern Hardwoods | ----- | ▨ |
| Swamp Hardwoods | ----- | ▩ |
| Lowland Brush | ----- | ▧ |
| Upland Grasses | ----- | ▨ |
| Swamp Grasses | ----- | ▩ |
| Field | ----- | ▧ |
| Residential | ----- | ▨ |

HORSE LAKE

streams in southwest Polk County and was in danger of being developed as a private fish hatchery. In addition, this area contained one of the better pheasant populations in the county and generally had substantial wildlife value.

Current management is focusing on maintaining brushed portions of Behning Creek, and following the response of the trout population with periodic surveys. Routine land maintenance activities such as posting and litter pick-up are also taking place.

The present acreage goal of the Behning Creek Fishery Area, approved in 1970, is 210.15 acres. Since the initial acquisition in 1962, approximately 100 acres of land have been purchased with 80 acres remaining to be acquired from willing sellers.

RESOURCE CAPABILITIES AND INVENTORY

Water Resources

Behning Creek is a small (2.0 cfs) coldwater stream which flows southward for about 1.4 miles where it enters Horse Lake. The entire stream is located within the Fishery Area and is considered a Class I brook trout stream. Water quality is excellent, with maximum water temperatures rarely reaching the low 60's. The water is slightly basic (pH - 8.0), and is fertile (MPA - 85 ppm).

Fish and Wildlife

The entire 1.4 miles of Behning Creek is Class I trout water. In 1980, Behning Creek contained an estimated 106 legal brook trout (< 6.0 inches) per acre. However, because of the stream's small size, the number of trout available for angling is small. There is only one known trout spawning area on the stream, and it is located in a limited area. Streambank brushing has improved hiding cover and food resources for trout. Some sections of stream still have a heavy tag alder canopy.

Warmwater fish species migrate from Horse Lake into the lower portions of Behning Creek, competing with brook trout for food and space. These species include bluegills, yellow perch, green sunfish, creek chubs, fathead minnows and northern pike.

Game and furbearing species common to the Fishery Area include white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, squirrels, muskrat, mink, raccoon, and red and grey fox. Beaver and otter make occasional use of the area. Bird species which have management potential include ring-necked pheasants, grouse, woodcock, wood ducks, mallards, and bluewinged teal. Nongame species indigenous to lowland and wooded habitats in this part of the state exist on the property.

Vegetation

Wetland and upland areas adjacent to Behning Creek provide valuable wildlife habitat in a primarily agricultural area. The vegetative cover of the Fishery Area is dominated by lowland grass and brush (Table 1 and Figure 4).

Table 1. Distribution of Major Cover Types

| <u>Cover Type</u> | <u>Total Acres</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Swamp hardwoods (SH) | 63 | 37 |
| Lowland brush (LB, LBS) | 33 | 19 |
| Northern hardwoods (NH, OR) | 31 | 18 |
| Swamp grasses (KG) | 26 | 16 |
| Upland grasses (GG) | 10 | 6 |
| Field (F) | 5 | 3 |
| Residential (I) | 2 | 1 |

Soils

The primary soil type in the Fishery Area is Seelyville. This soil type is found for 300 to 400 feet on either side of Behning Creek. It is characterized as a deep, very poorly drained organic soil found in the depressional areas of outwash plains. The remaining soils on the Fishery Area are primarily sandy loams.

Geology

Sandstone, probably of Wonewoc or Tunnel City, underlie the fishery area. There is no known mineral resource in the area.

Historical, Archaeological, and Architectural Features

The State Historical Society, Historical Preservation Division, has stated that there are no known historic, archaeological, or architectural sites within the property that will be affected by the proposed management and development program.

Endangered and Threatened Species

No endangered or threatened species of fish, amphibians, molluscs, mammals, birds, reptiles or wild plants are known to be present on the property.

Proposed Land Use Classification

The size and location of the Behning Creek Fishery Area limit the land use potential for the property. The entire property should be classified as a Fish and Wildlife Management Area (RD₂).

Analysis of Alternatives

Do Nothing

If all management activities were suspended, trout habitat on Behning Creek would deteriorate due to beaver activity and encroachment of tag alders into brushed areas.

Wildlife habitat would also decline in quality. Openings would disappear due to natural succession, and forest stands would mature and deteriorate. Valuable timber would be unharvested.

Reduce Fishery Area

Important portions of Behning Creek, including headwater springs, would remain in private ownership and be unprotected. Attainment of the goals and objectives would not be possible if the area was reduced.

Enlarge Fishery Area

The entire stream is within the present property boundary. Enlargement of the property boundary is unnecessary to meet the stated goals and objectives.

Manage Habitat for Optimum Conditions Within Present Fishery Area (Recommended Alternative)

This alternative will produce the best possible condition for fish and wildlife on the property, providing hunting and fishing opportunities, and attainment of stated goals and objectives.

3760N

APPENDIX - Comments from outside reviewing agencies and DNR responses to the 45-day review copy.

A number of the comments to the 45-day review copy of the Behning Creek Management Plan were received from reviewers outside the DNR. Their comments and the Department's responses where necessary are included in this Appendix.

Stanley A. Nichols, Wisconsin Geological Survey, Madison, WI

Overall view of the Management Plan - Good.

Page 6, par. 4 - Miximum should probably be maximum. Nothing is said about geology. There are cliffs two miles west of the area that consist of Keweenaw basalt. Sandstone, probably of Wonewoc or Tunnel City underlie the area. There is no known mineral resource potential in the area.

DNR Response: Incorporated into text.

Mitchell G. Bent, Chairman, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, DePere, WI

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is pleased to be able to voice its comments regarding the Behning Creek Fishery Area - Master Plan Review. Wisconsin TU has a long history of support for DNR acquisition of land parcels that help to protect, preserve, and enhance the coldwater resource and the opportunities by the angling public to participate in its prudent usage.

Insofar as this Master Plan goes, Wisconsin TU will comment on particular aspects of it on a page-by-page basis. Comments will range from supportive to questioning to critical.

On page 3 under "Annual Objectives", point 1, we question the goal of 0.7 trout per fishing hour for a "harvest" rate. We feel that the management goal should be for a "catch" rate, not necessarily a "harvest" rate. We wonder if such a high "harvest" rate per fishing hour might be detrimental to the carryover fall trout population.

Also on page 3, third paragraph from the bottom, Wisconsin TU wholeheartedly approves of practices to reduce beaver usage of the fishery area. Beaver dams are highly destructive of the coldwater resource, and regulations for trapping and otherwise curtailing their populations should be implemented.

On page 6, second paragraph under "Fish and Wildlife", Wisconsin TU asks if consideration will be given to implementation of some type of weir to prevent migration of warm-water fish species into the trout water part of Behning Creek. We do not feel that northern pike and brook trout are compatible in the same habitat.

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited supports the Recommended Alternative for habitat management of the Behning Creek Fishery Area as outlined on page 8. We thank the DNR for this chance to participate in the decision-making process on this fishery area. If there are other things that Wisconsin TU can do to help implement the Master Plan, please feel free to advise us.

DNR Response: "Harvest rate" changed to "catch rate".

Construction of an effective fish barrier or weir would be very difficult due to low stream gradient.

Willard Lind, Wisconsin Conservation Congress, Amery, WI

Overall view of the Management Plan - Very Good.

I have a daughter and son in law living adjacent to this area and they suggest an intensive beaver control program to maintain creek access and water quality.

Also, if it is feasible, a barrier near Horse Lake Lane should be installed to prevent northern pike and carp from entering the trout water.

DNR Response: We will do our best to keep beaver numbers to a minimum on Behning Creek. Due to very low stream gradient, it would be extremely difficult to install an effective fish barrier on the stream near Horse Lake.

Dick Lindberg, Wild Resource Council

The Council has concluded that the Behning Creek property has no wild resource potentials. Therefore, the Council will not comment on the master plan for this property.

Thank you for the review opportunity.

DNR Response: Thank you for your review.

Cynthia A. Morehouse, Director, Bureau of Environmental and Data Analysis, Department of Transportation, Madison, WI

We have reviewed the Master Plan for the Behning Creek Fishery Area in Polk County. We have determined that the Recommended Management and Development Program would not have a significant adverse effect on our transportation facilities or interests. We are concerned, however, that efforts to control the beaver population in the fishing area may result in the beaver moving to areas outside the Fishery Area and causing beaver-related damage to local of county highways. We recommend, when you purchase land for the area which abuts the right-of-way of township roads, that you coordinate the purchase with the township's highway officials.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Master Plan.

DNR Response: Recommendation noted.