

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Madison, Wisconsin

ITEM RECOMMENDED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA

TO THE SECRETARY: C. D. Besadny

Date November 28, 1980

FROM: James T. Addis

SUBJECT: MASTER PLANNING - Approval of conceptual master plan for the Elk Creek Fishery Area, Chippewa and Dunn Counties.

1. To be presented at December Board meeting by Vern Hacker.

2. Appearances requested by the public:

Name

Representing whom?

3. Reference materials to be used:

Memorandum dated November 28, 1980, from James T. Addis to C. D. Besadny. Elk Creek Fishery Area, Chippewa and Dunn Counties Master Plan.

4. Summary:

The final draft of the Conceptual Master Plan for this property has been finalized and is presented for review and approval. The Elk Creek and Big Elk Creek Fishery Areas are combined in this master plan. The present, combined acreage goal of the two properties is 670 acres of which 249.37 acres have been acquired in fee title, and 153.48 acres in perpetual easements, with 267.15 acres yet to be acquired. The Task Force recommends that the acreage goal remain the same and that the present approved combined boundary of 3,915 acres be reduced by 2,076.5 acres for a new boundary encompassing 1,838.5 acres.

5. Recommendation:

That the Master Plan be approved.

APPROVED:

J. R. Huntoon 12-4-80
J. R. Huntoon, Administrator Date

A. C. Damon
A. C. Damon, Deputy Secretary Date

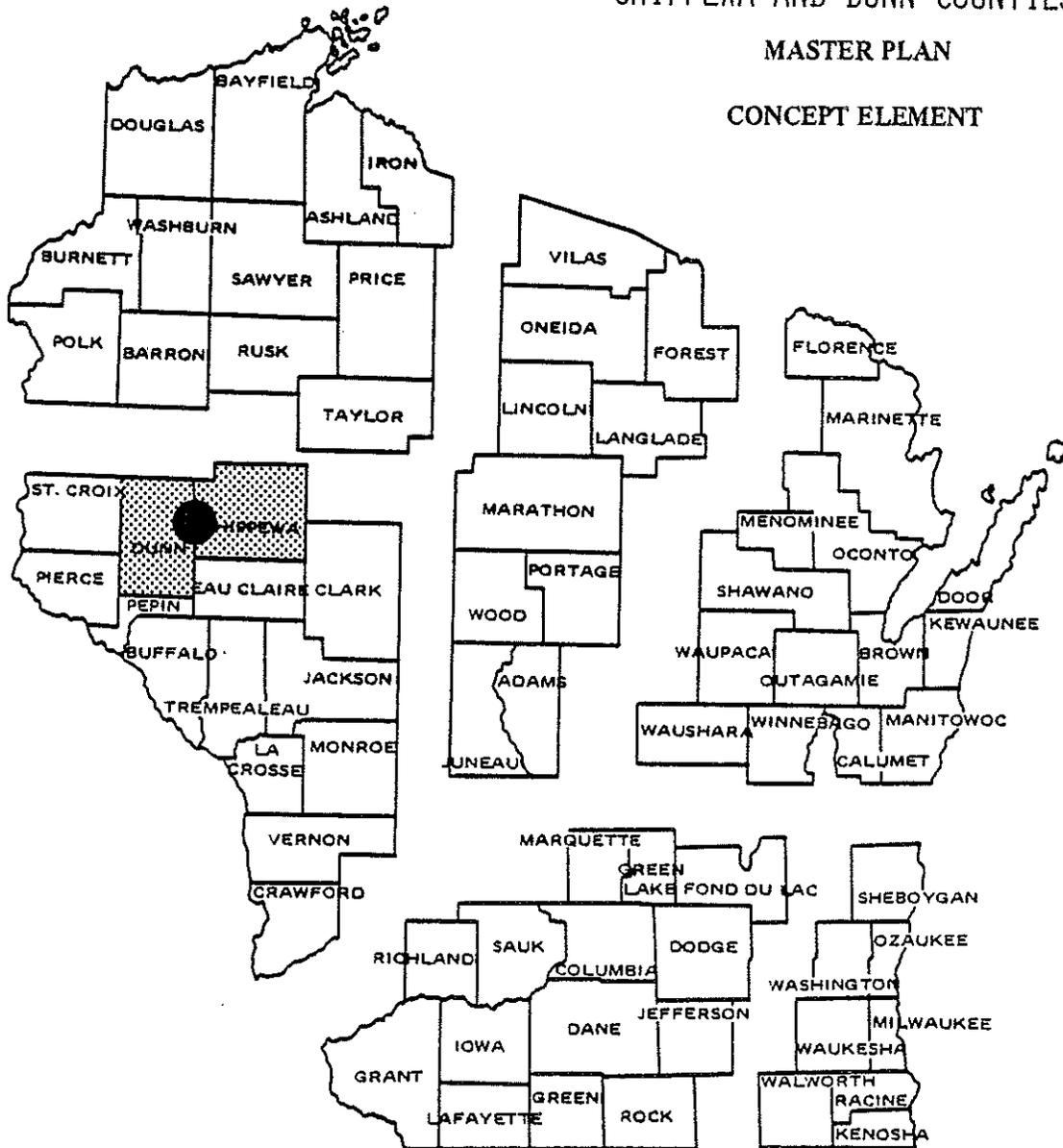
C. D. Besadny 12-4-80
Secretary C. D. Besadny Date

Signed:

James T. Addis
James T. Addis, Director
Bureau of Fish Management

- cc - Judy Scullion - ADM/5
- Ron Nicotera - ADM/5
- James T. Addis - FM/4
- C. W. Threinen - FM/4
- Ed Faber - RE/4
- Vern Hacker - Oshkosh

ELK CREEK FISHERY AREA
 CHIPPEWA AND DUNN COUNTIES
 MASTER PLAN
 CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Leader - DOUGLAS ERICKSON, FISH MANAGER
 ROLLAND NESBIT, WILDLIFE MANAGER
 BRIAN MARINELLO, FORESTER
 NORMAN PAZDESKI, PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Approved by Natural Resources Board

_____ Date

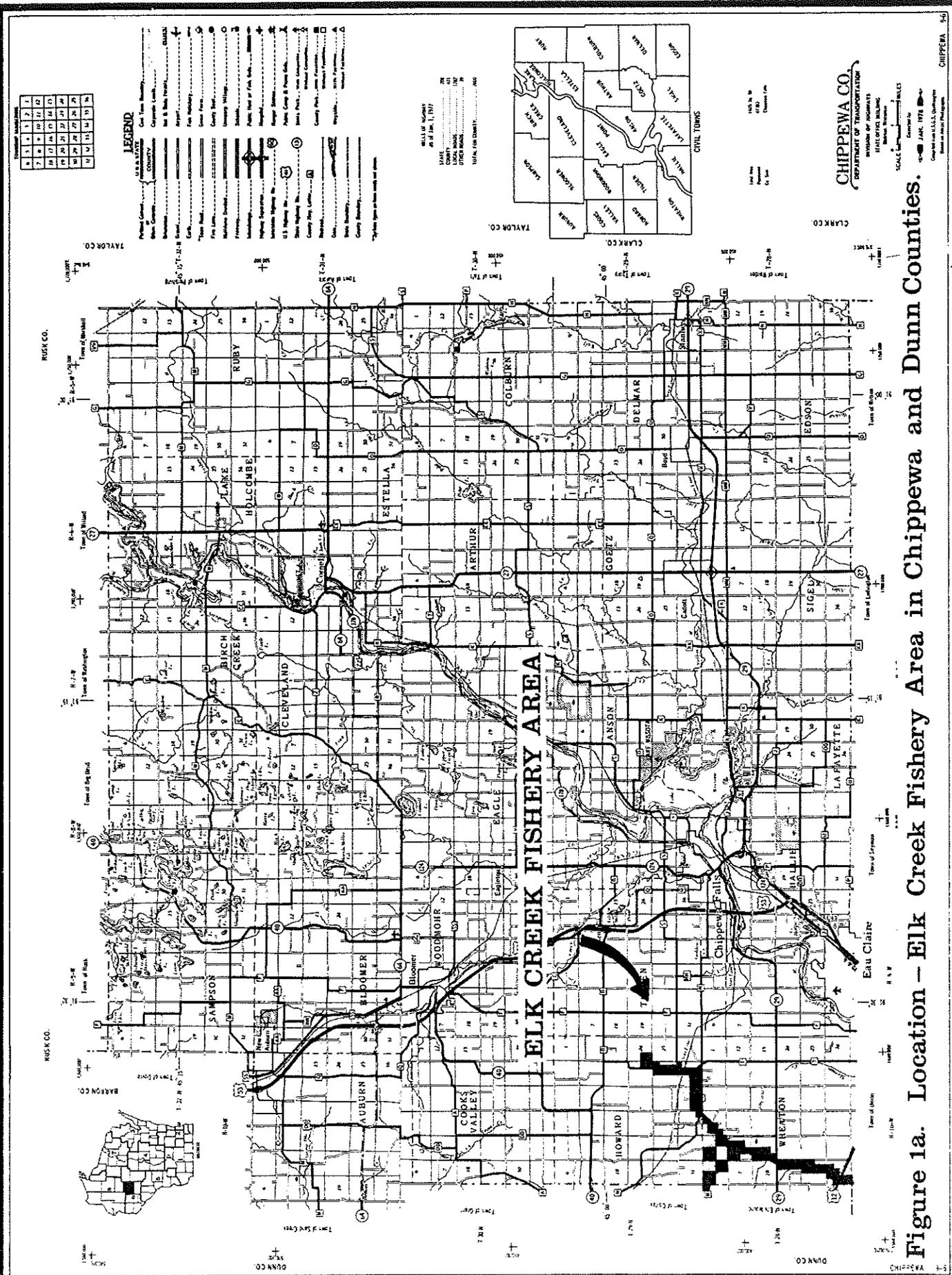


Figure 1a. Location - Elk Creek Fishery Area in Chippewa and Dunn Counties.

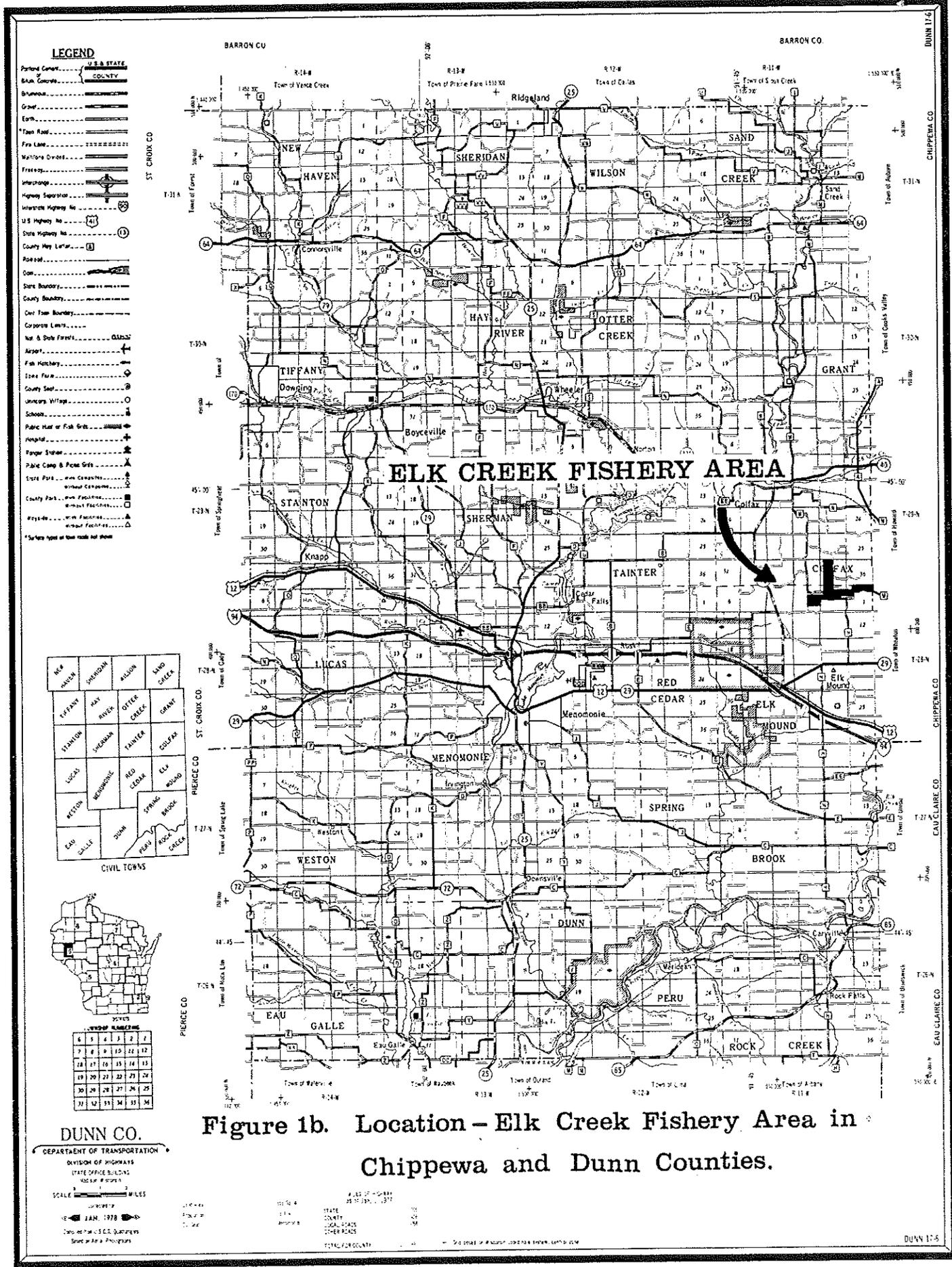


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SECTION I - ACTIONS

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Goals:

To obtain land control, and to manage, preserve and protect all property within the boundary of the Elk Creek Fishery Area in Chippewa and Dunn Counties; to enhance the habitat for fishing, aesthetics, education and other recreational activities.

Annual Objectives:

1. Manage the stream to produce a biomass of 150 pounds of brown trout per acre which will accommodate 9,200 participant days of fishing and an angler exploitation rate of 0.7 fish per hour.
2. Provide 345 participant days of hunting for deer, squirrels, grouse, rabbits, waterfowl and trapping for muskrats and beaver.
3. Manage timber lands to provide 63 cords of firewood.

Annual Additional Benefits:

1. Provide 4,500 participant days annually of non-consumptive use activities including sightseeing, berry and mushroom picking, photography, picnicking, hiking, bird watching, nature study, cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing.
2. Benefit endangered, threatened and non-game species indigenous and transient to the area.

RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This master plan proposes the consolidation of two separate fishery areas, Elk Creek, and Big Elk Creek, its major tributary, into one (Figure 1). At the present time, Elk Creek Fishery Area has an acreage goal of 550 acres, with 249.37 acres acquired in fee title, and 115.98 acres in perpetual easements, 4 to 10 rods wide on each bank, for a total of 365.35 acres. Big Elk Creek Fishery Area has an acreage goal of 120 acres, of which 37.5 acres have been acquired in perpetual easement. Combined, the two fishery areas (which will be described as the Elk Creek Fishery Area in the remaining text of this master plan), have land control on 402.85 acres, with 267.15 of the goal yet to be acquired. This task force recommends eliminating 1,772.3 acres from the boundary of the Elk Creek Fishery Area and 304.2 acres from the Big Elk Creek Fishery Area. The combined 2,076.5 acres removed will result in a new boundary encompassing 1,838.5 acres. (Figure 2).

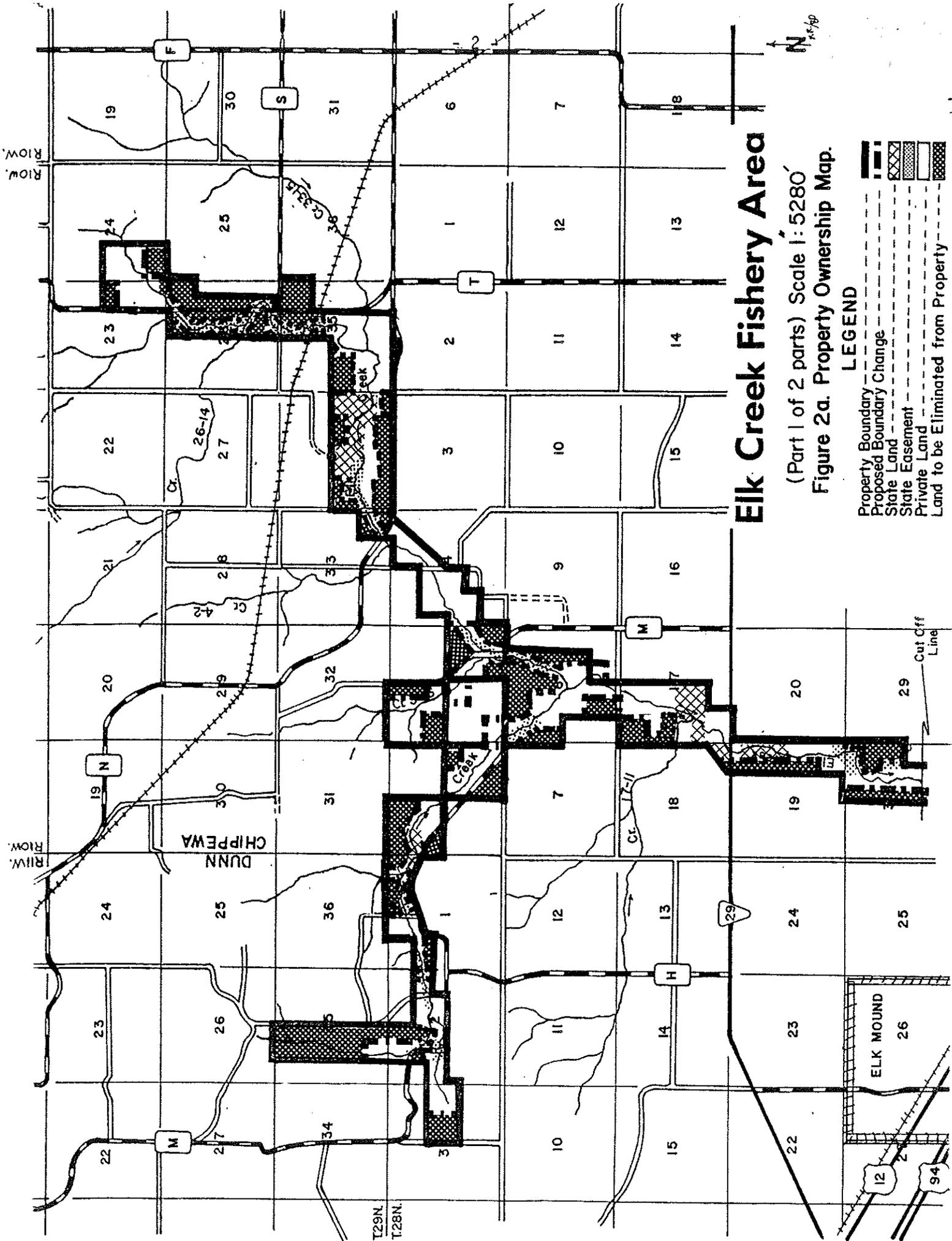
The boundary and acreage goals show a considerable difference in size. This is because the lands to be acquired will be purchased by 4 to 10 rod easements or in fee title and it is impossible to exactly define the property boundary. The boundary and acreage goal is our best estimate as to what and where property will ultimately be purchased within the fishery area.

The recommended management program for the Elk Creek Fishery Area includes acquisition by permanent easement or fee title, streambank fencing, cattle crossing construction and instream habitat improvement work where needed, general maintenance and continued monitoring of the fishery, as well as wildlife and forest management.

Acquisition is expected to continue at a rate of at least two tracts a year for a projected (1980) total cost of \$292,530 with an average annual price increase of 15%. The primary purchase method will be perpetual easement but lands will be acquired through a combination of perpetual easements and fee title purchases or trades as rapidly as willing sellers, acquisition procedures, and available funds permit. The entire fishery area is recommended to be designated as a resource development area.

As acquisition on fisheries and wildlife management (RD₂) areas continues through pastured lands, streambanks will be fenced, where needed, at an estimated cost of \$6,000 per mile. Assuming two tracts of land are purchased annually, each with a quarter mile of stream thread, new fence development will cost approximately \$3,000 yearly. Since approximately 80% of the Elk Creek watershed is used for agriculture, 24.5 miles of streambank may have to be fenced, pending future land use.

Subsequent construction of one cattle crossing, machinery crossing or watering hole per 40 acres purchased may have to be developed along with the fencing at a cost of \$1,000 each.



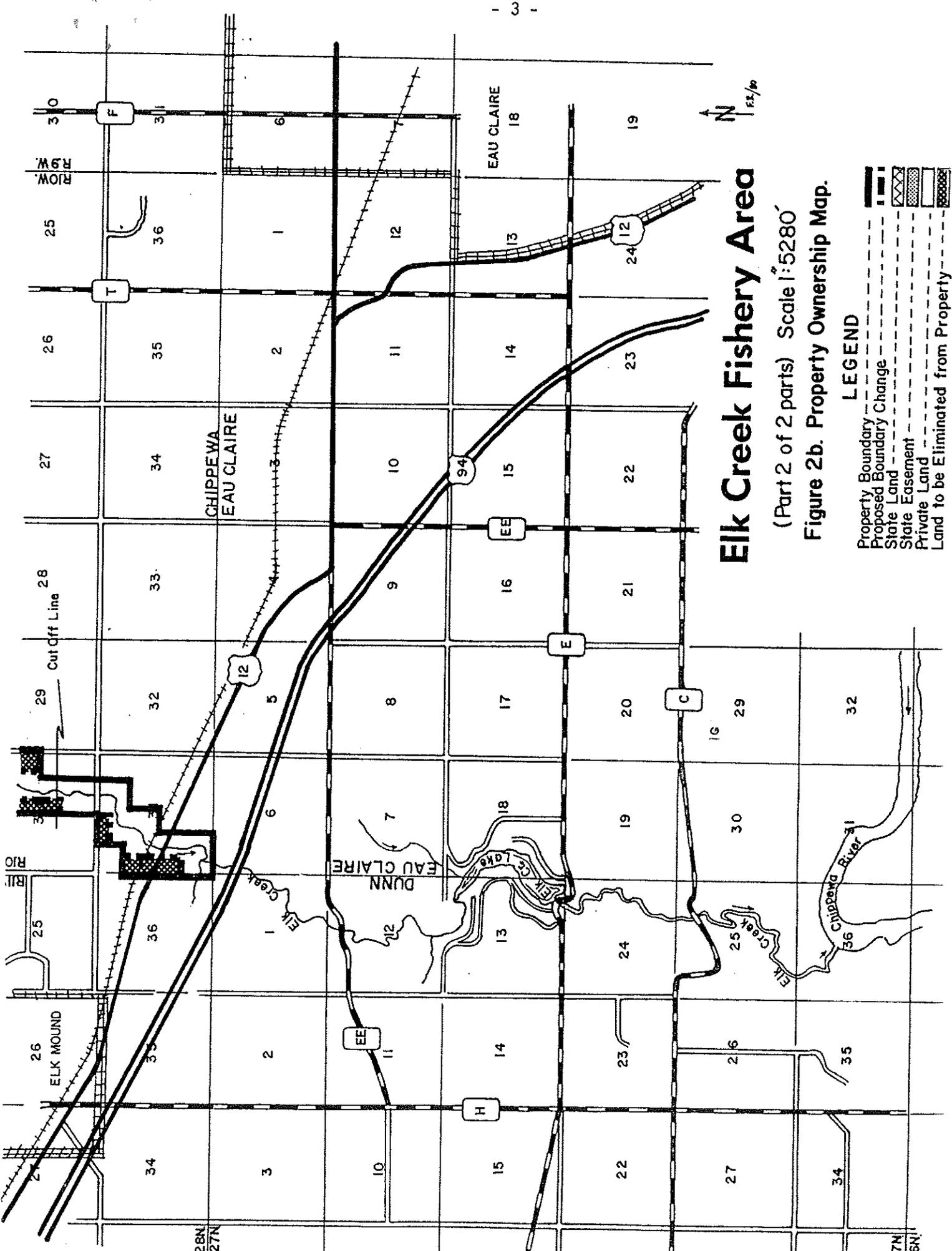
Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 1 of 2 parts) Scale 1" = 5280'

Figure 2a. Property Ownership Map.

LEGEND

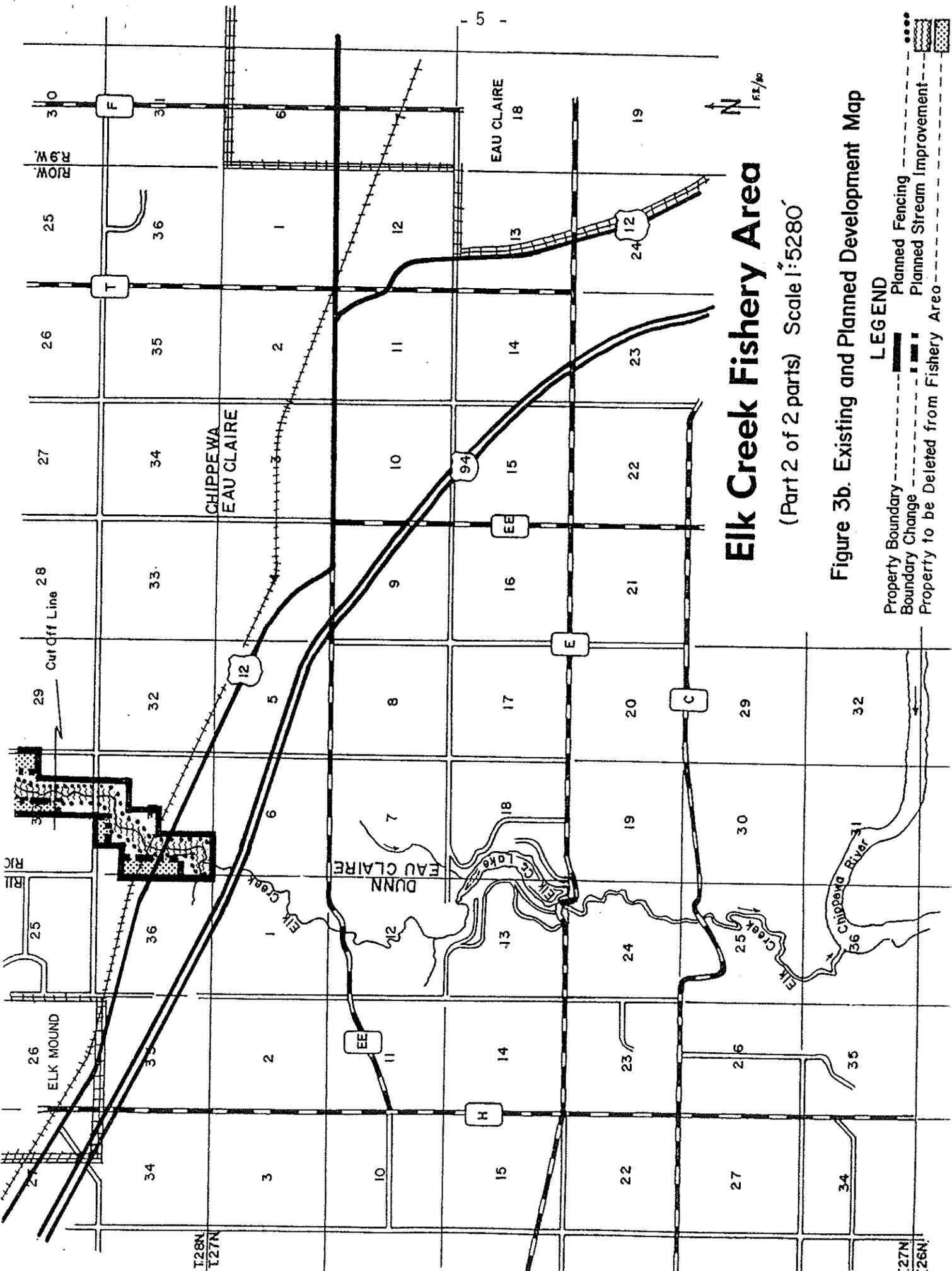
- Property Boundary ————
- Proposed Boundary Change - - - - -
- State Land [Cross-hatched pattern]
- State Easement [Diagonal line pattern]
- Private Land [Stippled pattern]
- Land to be Eliminated from Property [Dotted pattern]



Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 2 of 2 parts) Scale 1:5280
 Figure 2b. Property Ownership Map.

- LEGEND**
- Property Boundary ———
 - Proposed Boundary Change - - - - -
 - State Land [Cross-hatch pattern]
 - State Easement [Dotted pattern]
 - Private Land [Dashed line]
 - Land to be Eliminated from Property - - - - -



Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 2 of 2 parts) Scale 1:5280'

Figure 3b. Existing and Planned Development Map

- LEGEND**
- Property Boundary ————
 - Boundary Change - - - - -
 - Property to be Deleted from Fishery Area ·····
 - Planned Fencing ————
 - Planned Stream Improvement ————

Instream habitat improvement work will continue through at least 1981 on State-controlled lands (Figure 3). This will include approximately two miles of boom cover, riprap and wing dam construction on the lower reaches of Elk Creek at an estimated cost of \$32,000 per mile funded by the Trout Stamp. Also included will be streambank brushing in the upstream areas of Elk Creek above CTH "M". Work of a similar nature will continue in other areas of Elk Creek and Big Elk Creek as lands are acquired and monies become available.

Current and future needs will include property surveillance and maintenance. An estimated 75 man-days per year will be required for sign posting, beaver removal, cattle crossing repair and streambank fence maintenance. This will cost an estimated \$75 per mile of stream.

Stream survey work evaluating fishery response to habitat improvement will continue on an irregular basis on acquired areas, and on a regular basis every 10 years on stream sections not under State control to determine trends in the fish population.

Two locations have been designated as potential parking sites if demand in the future dictates need for development (Figure 3). Both sites could be improved to accommodate parking for approximately 10 cars each and an access road at an estimated cost of \$2,500.00.

Wildlife Development on RD₂ areas (figures) will consist primarily of edge sites adjacent to the stream, created by fencing which will be allowed to grow up to tall grasses and weeds, providing nesting, feeding and escape cover for small game and songbirds. A total of 52.0 acres of fee title lands within present boundaries will remain "as is" for wildlife and non-game habitat. Wood duck boxes will be constructed and placed along the stream in suitable locations. As additional lands are acquired, suitable wildlife management plans will be developed and appended to the master plan.

A substantial amount of fee title lands presently owned within the fishery area will be designated as Forest Production (RD₃) areas (Figure 4). A total of 197.3 acres will be managed to provide a sustained yield of wood products, good habitat conditions for wildlife species found in forested areas, and important winter cover.

Forested areas of commercial value on fee title lands include portions of Section 34, T29N, R10W, which are recommended for harvest in 1983, 1985 and 1987. Preliminary planning has been completed for a timber sale in Section 17, T28N, R10W calling for the removal of large red oak sawlogs. An estimated 44,000 board feet of low quality oak sawlogs could be removed to encourage Jack pine growth.

A 7-acre parcel in Section 19, T28N, R10W, is a semi-open area where pine was cut many years ago and is recommended to be clear-cut and hand-planted to red pine.

Timber sales on RD₃ areas will be intended to support total land management for public benefit using silvicultural guidelines, and to promote beneficial conditions for wildlife as much as possible.

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of Property Creation

Elk Creek is a medium sized trout stream located in Western Chippewa County. It flows in a southerly direction through an intensively farmed watershed and is a tributary of the Chippewa River which ultimately flows into the Mississippi River. Big Elk Creek flows east into Elk Creek from Dunn County. At their confluence, both streams are located 8.5 miles west of Chippewa Falls.

Elk Creek has always been respected as a good trout producer. During the winter of 1950-1951, sportsman clubs from nearby cities expressed interest in stream habitat improvement. In 1951, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission approved development of a cooperative project with local sportsman clubs to protect streambanks and develop trout habitat in Elk Creek. This was one of the first cooperative projects of its kind in the State. The Conservation Commission agreed to set up protective zones adjacent to the stream for a 20-year lease term and provide technical assistance to the landowners.

On August 9, 1958, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission approved the establishment of the Elk Creek Fishery Area with an acreage goal of 550 acres. In 1979, the Natural Resources Board established the Big Elk Creek Fishery Area, with an acreage goal of 120 acres. Big Elk Creek is a major tributary of Elk Creek, as property boundaries of the two fishery areas merge. Accordingly, the combined fishery areas are treated as one in this master plan, and lands within the combined boundaries presently total 3,915 acres, while combined acreage goals are 670 acres.

To date, 365.35 acres of Elk Creek are under department control. Of this amount, 115.98 acres are under permanent easement, purchased at a cost of \$21,165. An additional 249.37 acres have been acquired under fee title purchase at a cost of \$24,351. Lands acquired under permanent easement are invariably those containing the valuable lands containing stream sections, hence the higher cost per acre. Total permanent easement and fee title acquisition costs on Elk Creek to date have been \$45,516.

Current Management Activities and Uses

The Elk Creek Fishery Area includes portions, or all of six of the 21 named and numbered trout streams in Chippewa County and Elk Creek has the largest acreage of the Chippewa County trout streams. It is managed for both brown and brook trout. The stocking of brown trout has been the practice in Elk Creek, but recent surveys indicate excellent natural reproduction of brown trout occurs and stocking is currently being phased out.

Development by private sportsmans' clubs in the early 1950's included fencing, cattle crossing construction, instream work and tree planting. Currently, the Department has approximately 18 miles of streambank fence that requires annual maintenance along with several cattle and machinery crossings and watering holes that need periodic maintenance (Figure 3). Intensive instream improvement work, bank stabilization and streambank brushing was initiated in 1979 funded by trout stamp revenues and is scheduled to continue through 1981 on Department-controlled lands (Figure 3). Increased beaver numbers and their dam building activity has necessitated control and removal efforts by Department personnel and the public. Demand for firewood in this area has prompted issuing a limited number of free permits on Department fee title lands. Trout stream inventories conducted in 1978 through Department-controlled areas revealed an average brown trout biomass of 118 lbs. per acre. The increased natural reproduction of brown trout and improved habitat conditions through streambank fencing and reduced bank erosion has led to a change in stream classification above Elk Creek Lake to Class I brown trout water.

The Elk Creek Fishery Area sustains moderate to heavy use by anglers primarily from three urban centers; Eau Claire, Menomonie and Chippewa Falls; all are within a 1/2 hour drive of the stream. A creel census study in 1974 indicated a total of 9,200 angler days of fishing pressure per year. Hunters and trappers account for an estimated 345 man-days of recreation per year. Attempts were made by Department Fish Management personnel to include hunting and trapping rights in the perpetual easements. However, most landowners along the Elk Creek watershed were not receptive to this. Sportsmen who wish to trap or hunt must obtain landowner's permission for the right of trespass on eased land. Other recreational uses account for an estimated 4,500 man-days per year including mushroom and berry-picking, bird watching, photography, cross-country skiing and nature hiking.

Ownership

At the present time, a total of 249.37 acres in fee title and 153.48 acres in perpetual easement have been purchased toward the 670 acre goal. The total acquisition of 402.85 acres leaves 267.16 acres on 61 privately owned tracts to be acquired to complete the acreage goal. At current (1980) values, the estimated total cost for completion of the acreage goal is \$292,530. There are 19.16 miles of streams within the boundary of the combined fishery area, and of that, the department controls 10.78 miles of stream thread. Figure 2 shows department and private ownership and depicts the separated parcels and needed frontage.

Public access to the stream is good. There are sections where over a mile exists between access points. Most of the access to Department easement and fee title lands is from road crossings over the stream. Presently, Big Elk has four road crossings and Elk Creek has 14 road crossings above Elk Creek Lake, and, three below. Two corridors exist on streams that serve as access to landlocked state-owned parcels. One is located outside of the boundary along Creek 17-11, T28N, R10W, and the other is located in the boundary along the west side of the S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 34, T29N, R10W. Most of the lands adjoining Department controlled lands are private and some are marked with "No Trespassing" signs which tend to exclude the general public. Two undeveloped parking areas are presently on the fishery area (Figure 3).

The bulk of the land within the fishery area boundary is agricultural. Approximately 80% is used as cropland and pastureland. The remainder is wooded or wild land.

RESOURCE CAPABILITY

Soils, Geology and Hydrology

Soil survey interpretations provided by the Soil Conservation Service indicate two soil association types in the Upper Elk Creek (and tributaries, including Big Elk) watershed: the Urne-Elk Mound and the Dakota-Meridian-Shiffer. Both associations are well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils

that have a loam and a very fine sandy-loam subsoil underlain by sandstone and gravel. The predominant soil types found adjacent to the upper Elk Creek Area are wet alluvial land and Markey muck. The upland soils consist primarily of Billett sandy loam, Plainfield loamy sand, Gotham loamy sand, Managha loamy sand, and Moundville loamy sand.

The lower end of the Elk Creek watershed is also composed of two soil associations: the Plainfield-Plainbo and the alluvial land-wet Boas. Soils adjacent to Elk Creek on state-owned land consist primarily of alluvial land-loamy, alluvial land-sandy, alluvial land-wet, terrace escarpments-loamy and terrace escarpments-sandy. Almost all soils in the Elk Creek Fishery Area are highly susceptible to streambank erosion.

The surface waters of Chippewa County are all within one of Wisconsin's major drainage systems, the Chippewa River. The Elk Creek Fishery Area drains a predominantly loamy sand to sandy loam watershed that comprises a 73.6 square mile area. The topography of the Elk Creek watershed was carved by running water in pre-glacial times and was hilly with large valleys. The area was subsequently overrun by one or more ice sheets, the last one occurring 28,000-32,000 years ago. This glacier did not alter the landscape to any large degree. Erosion at this time was minimal, but deposition occurred. Blankets of rich sediments accumulated on the hills and glacial melt water deposited sand and gravel in the valleys.

During the last great ice sheet, a large amount of loess was deposited along the Chippewa Valley, which accumulated up to 100 feet in thickness and extended along the uplands of the Elk Creek watershed. In past glacial time, a considerable amount of erosion occurred in the Elk Creek watershed and much of the silt was deposited along the Elk Creek Valley floor, giving the area its characteristic soil type, a sandy loam.

The lower section of Elk Creek has extended itself almost as deep as the Chippewa River in post-glacial time. Here the stream has cut through more than 100 feet of alluvium deposits and is beginning to show more of a sand-gravel type of bottom associated with the last glacial period of 28,000 years ago. Conversely, upper Elk Creek and its tributaries (including Big Elk) have not entrenched more than 10-15 feet. Typically, the upper end occupies a large valley with a low gradient and the channel is composed primarily of silt and sand.

Elk Creek is a tributary to the Chippewa River. Of the 1,042 square miles of land and water in Chippewa County, the Chippewa River drains 997 square miles. The southwestern section of Chippewa County, which includes the Elk Creek watershed, is the oldest glaciated area. The surface is comprised of rolling prairies and has the hilly land uses that are characteristic of sandstone outcrop. It has well developed drainage patterns and few swamps. The maximum elevation of Chippewa County is about 1,500 feet and the minimum is 795 feet above sea level.

Within the fishery area, Elk Creek has an average width of 15 feet and an average depth of 1.3 feet. Big Elk Creek has an average width of 4 feet and an average depth of .7 feet. The stream gradient of Elk Creek ranges from 11-23 feet per mile which is not sufficient to prevent sand and silt deposition. Water sources for both Big Elk and Elk Creek are provided by springs, groundwater seepage from upland headwaters, and watershed runoff. Base flow of Elk Creek is 22-24 cfs with a slight suspended silt load. Average annual flood crest is approximately 4 feet. The stream gradient of Big Elk Creek ranges from 13-23 feet per mile, and stream entrenchment has been minimal. Base flow ranges between 2.5-4.0 cfs with a slight suspended silt load. Both streams have a pH of 7.0 being neither alkaline nor acid, and total alkalinity values of 27-32 ppm, being borderline hard water.

Fish and Wildlife

The Elk Creek Fishery Area offers a diversified fish population. Although nineteen different species of fish inhabit the stream and tributaries, only brown and brook trout are sought by anglers. Other species include sunfish, minnows, darters, dace, chubs, burbot, walleyes and northern pike with the warmwater species being found in proximity to Elk Creek Lake. A list of fish species found in the fishery area is on file at the Eau Claire Area Headquarters. Trout fishing quality within the fishery area is considered good to excellent.

Creel census data obtained during the summer of 1974 indicates a projected harvest for the year of 13,477 trout, of which 308 were brook trout. The creel census included all of Elk Creek, but did not include Big Elk or other tributaries which have higher brook trout densities. The census also indicated a projected 33,882 hours of angling effort (May-September), or a total of 801.5 hours per acre of water surface, with a projected catch of 0.44 fish per hour. This degree of pressure apparently is not harmful to the resource base.

Wildlife present in the Elk Creek Fishery Area are those common to the agricultural areas of West Central Wisconsin. White-tailed deer and cottontail rabbits are the most common game animal within the property boundaries. Ruffed grouse, pheasant, grey and fox squirrels are also present. Muskrat, beaver, mink and weasels are the most common furbearers with lesser numbers of raccoon, skunk and fox. Coyotes have been infrequently reported.

The Elk Creek Fishery Area also provides habitat for woodcock and wood ducks. Mallards and blue-winged teal are known to use the area for brood rearing to a limited degree. In addition to the above listed game birds, animals and furbearers, many non-game species are present such as songbirds, badger and woodchuck. A complete list of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles known to be in the fishery area is retained in files of the Eau Claire Area Office.

Hunting and trapping activities are restricted within the fishery area boundary primarily to fee title lands and easement areas where landowner permission can be acquired. Most landowners from whom easements were attained were not receptive to including hunting and trapping rights, thus, hunting and trapping are quite limited.

Currently, no endangered or threatened species have been identified within the fishery area. However, continuing observations will be made for the presence of endangered or threatened species and the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator contacted for advice if any are found. Prior to any development of significant areas the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator will be consulted. All sites will be evaluated and protective measures taken for significant locations. A complete survey of all animals within the fishery area should be undertaken as soon as time and funds are available.

Vegetative Cover

Generally, the aquatic vegetation of the Elk Creek Fishery Area can be described as scarce. This is attributed mainly to the dense overhead stream canopy which blocks out needed solar energy. It is also difficult to establish the roots of aquatic plants due to the shifting sand bottom. The most commonly found species include water buttercup (Ranunculus sp.), Veronica sp., pondweeds, (Potamogeton sp.) and duckweed (Lemna sp.). A complete list of aquatic plant species and their relative abundance is on file at the Eau Claire Area Office.

Original land survey records (circa 1850) show that lands around the Elk Creek Fishery Area were oak savanna. The primary vegetation types were bur oak, white oak and bluestem. These areas burned over nearly every year. With settlement, the fires were stopped, and areas left uncultivated in the uplands grew into the dense white oak, black oak, and red oak forest of today (Table 1). Most of the area adjacent to the streams and tributaries of Elk Creek have shrub-marsh vegetation. The major cover species is tag alder with scattered lowland aspen and other grasses (Figure 4).

In the area adjacent to Elk Creek for two miles below Highway 12, the cover type changes to lowland aspen, birch, soft maple, black oak and elm (where a glacial lake existed 15,000 years ago). There, three forested areas with possible commercial value are controlled by the Department. Other forested areas under Department control nearby are best left as streambank protection and for wildlife benefits due to the poor quality of timber and soils.

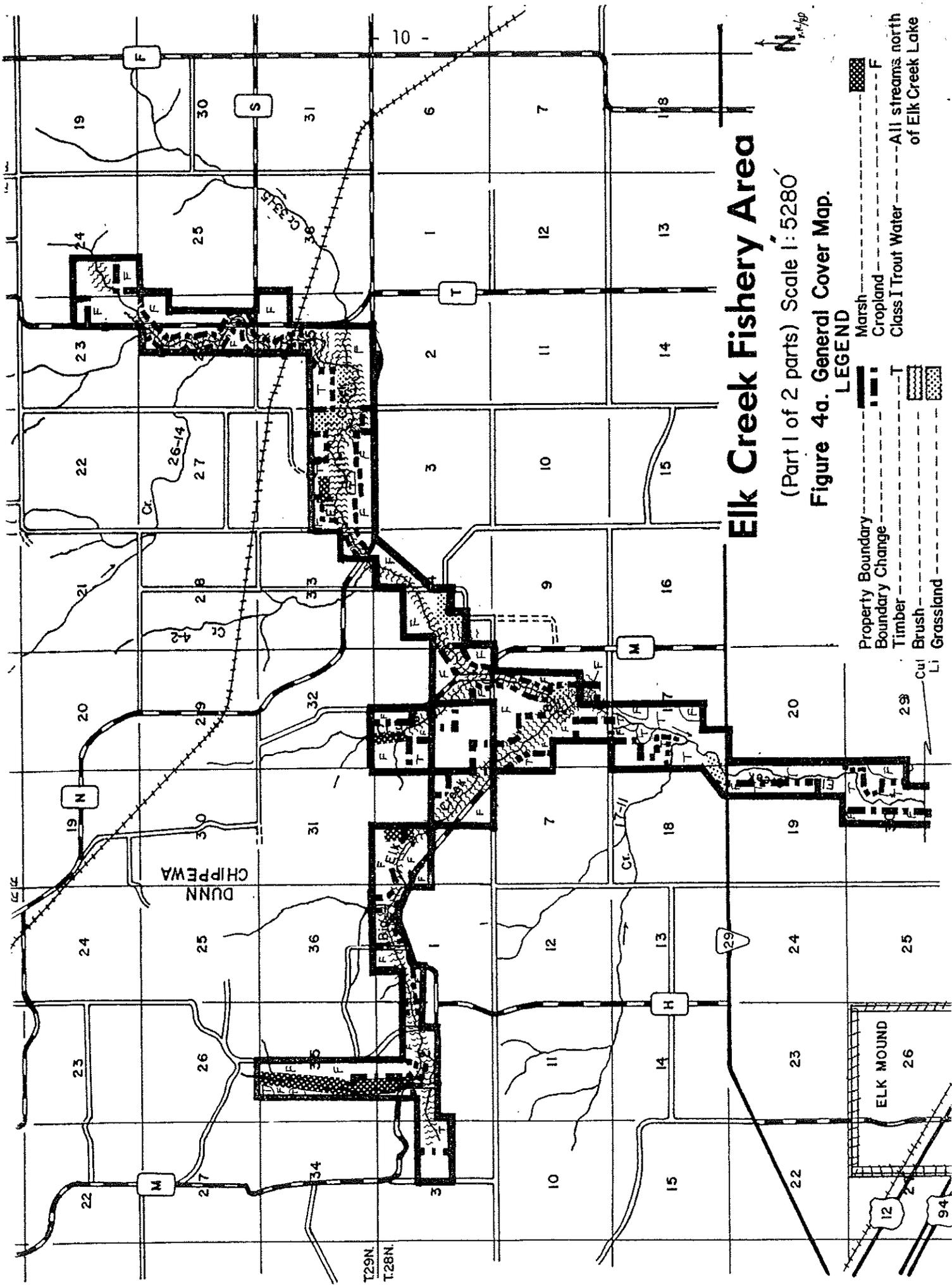
Other forested areas with commercial value controlled by DNR are in T29N, R10W, Section 34 and T28N, R10W, Section 17 (Figure 4). The Department owns a total of 207.8 acres in these two areas. The aspen timber is pole sized, and approximately 85% is 35 years or older. Many of the trees are deformed and callused resulting from popple borers (Saperda calcarata) and have little commercial value. Shearing of two to three acres per year could be implemented to benefit upland wildlife species.

In Section 34, T29N, R10W, approximately 40 acres have been planted to red pine and have shown good growth. An additional three acres should be planted with red pine. Also, there is an area which has good natural white pine production, although some of it is suppressed by red oak and several acres that are primarily tag alders and lowland aspen.

According to compartment reconnaissance, there are 57 acres suitable for forest management in T28N, R10W, Section 17. This area is comprised of scattered jack pine and large oak with oak brush and scattered oaks, jack pine and aspen, and tag alder brush along the streambank.

No endangered or threatened species of vegetation have been identified within the fishery area. However, if sites containing these species are located then approximate protective measures will be taken in the same manner as animal species. A complete survey of plants should be undertaken as soon as time and funds are available.

A copy of the detailed compartment reconnaissance is available in the Eau Claire Area Office files while general cover types on state-owned lands are shown in Table 1:



Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 1 of 2 parts) Scale 1:5280

Figure 4a. General Cover Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary
- Boundary Change
- Timber
- Brush
- Grassland
- Marsh
- Cropland
- Class I Trout Water
- All streams north of Elk Creek Lake

ELK MOUND

DUNN
CHIPPEWA

T29N.
T28N.

12

94

29

19 N

F

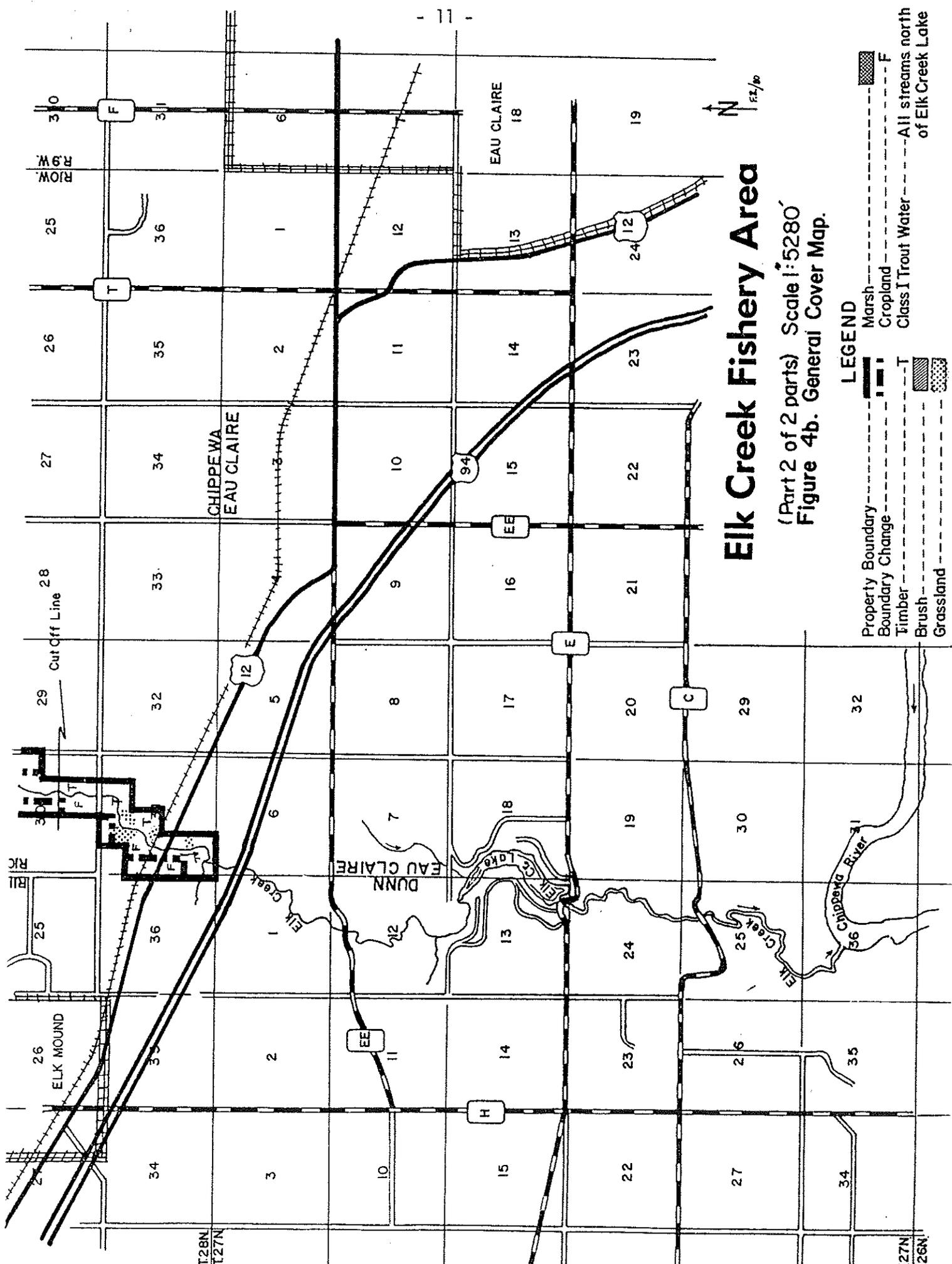
S

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Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 2 of 2 parts) Scale 1:5280'
Figure 4b. General Cover Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary
- Boundary Change
- Timber
- Brush
- Grassland
- Marsh
- Cropland
- Class I Trout Water
- All streams north of Elk Creek Lake

Table 1. TERRESTRIAL VEGETATIVE COVER TYPES WITHIN THE COMBINED ELK CREEK AND BIG ELK CREEK FISHERY AREAS, CHIPPEWA AND DUNN COUNTIES.

Elk Creek

<u>Cover Type</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Estimated Percentage of Area</u>
Pine	21.90	6%
Northern Hardwoods	43.80	12%
Aspen	45.75	15%
Lowland Brush & Marsh	124.10	34%
Grass-Fields-Upland Brush	105.85	29%
Water	<u>14.60</u>	<u>4%</u>
Total	356.00	100%

Big Elk Creek

Northern Hardwoods	6.75	18%
Aspen	4.5	12%
Lowland Brush & Marsh	11.62	31%
Grass-Fields-Upland Brush	13.5	36%
Water	<u>1.12</u>	<u>3%</u>
Total	37.49	100%

Water Resources

The fishery area boundaries, for the most part, are longitudinally bisected by Elk Creek and latitudinally bisected by a number of feeder streams of which Big Elk is the largest (Table 2). Elk Creek is 19.5 miles in length and 42.5 surface acres in size averaging 15 feet in width and 1.3 feet in depth. It has an average flow of 22 cfs, and a gradient of 11 feet per mile. Elk Creek above Elk Creek Lake is classified as a Class I brown trout stream for 12.1 miles from its headwaters to the lake, and is Class II brown trout water from Elk Creek Lake dam to its confluence with the Chippewa River. The water is cold, neutral in pH and is a borderline hard water system. The Elk Creek watershed is intensively agriculturally developed despite the fact that the soil is a sandy loam of limited fertility. This soil type is very vulnerable to severe and accelerated erosion. Much of Elk Creek has also been plagued with silt deposition. Several areas utilized by livestock have been pollution sources in the past, but present management techniques, including fencing and construction of cattle crossings, have kept overgrazing and organic pollution to a minimum.

Big Elk Creek, presently a small Class I brook trout stream, enters Elk Creek from the northwest. The entire 5.35 miles and 2.1 surface acres of stream are located within the fishery area property boundary. The stream drains a 7.6 square mile agricultural watershed. The water is clear, cool, neutral and is also a borderline hard water system. Big Elk Creek has a sand bottom type common in Western Chippewa and Eastern Dunn County streams. The stream averages 4 feet in width and 0.7 foot in depth, has an average flow of 4.0 cfs and an average gradient of 13 feet per mile.

The annual flood crest ranges from one to three feet. The upper end of the watershed is quite hilly and flooding can be a problem on the lower watershed. A total of 3.9 miles of Big Elk is considered navigable. It is relatively unaffected by pollution except for agricultural drainage. Fencing of the streambanks to prevent livestock grazing has contributed to the improvement of existing trout habitat.

Creek 17-11 (T28N, R10W) which flows into the Fishery Area and is a major tributary is considered a Class I brook and brown trout stream and enters Elk Creek below the junction with Big Elk Creek. Only the lower 0.35 mile of Creek 17-11 is included in the Fishery Area boundary. Creek 17-11 has an average width of 6.6 feet and an average depth of 0.4 feet. The water is clear, cold, slightly acidic and is a borderline hard water system. The bottom is composed of 65% sand, 26% silt with the remaining 9% in rubble and gravel. There is a slight erosion problem due to livestock and seasonal high water levels.

Other tributaries which supply vital spring water to Elk Creek include Creeks 33-15, 5-16 and 26-14 in T29N, R10W and Creeks 17-11 and 4-2 in T28N, R10W. These tributaries average about 1.5 miles in length and 2.0 to 6.0 feet in width but only portions of them are within the boundary (Figure 2). These waters are clear, cool, slightly acidic to neutral and are borderline hard water systems. All of these streams and 12 small, unsurveyed feeder streams that drain into the tributaries have a more sand-gravel bottom type than Elk Creek. Because all of these systems drain a predominantly agricultural watershed, some erosion and organic pollution is evident. These waters serve as excellent brook and brown trout nursery areas and supply native trout to Elk Creek.

Table 2. MAJOR WATER AREAS OF THE ELK CREEK FISHERY AREA, CHIPPEWA AND DUNN COUNTIES

<u>Name</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Length (Miles)</u>	<u>Class I (Miles)</u>
Elk Creek	Chippewa	12.10	12.10
Big Elk Creek	Chippewa	1.93	1.93
Big Elk Creek	Dunn	3.42	3.42
Creek 17-11 (T28N, R10W)	Chippewa	0.35	0.35
Creek 33-15 (T29N, R10W)	Chippewa	0.25	0.25
Creek 5-16 (T29N, R10W)	Chippewa	0.96	0.96
Creek 26-14 (T29N, R10W)	Chippewa	0.15	0.15
	Totals:	19.16	19.16

Historical and Archaeological Features

Of the two counties bordering the fishery area, only Chippewa County has been systematically surveyed for properties of potential architectural significance. Neither of the counties has been surveyed for properties of purely historical interest. The Big Elk Creek Lutheran Church on County Trunk "M", north of Myhre Road (Section 6, T28N, R10W) has been designated as architecturally significant as are two bridges of some engineering interest located in the Fishery Area, one on Highway 12, crossing the Elk River in Section 31, T28N, R10W and the other on CTH "H" over Big Elk Creek, Sections 5 and 8, T28N, R10W. None of the above properties have been evaluated in terms of their eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Prior to any operation on the fishery area involving the movement of structures or soils, the State Historical Society will be consulted for advice or survey, and significant sites protected.

Land Use Potential

The uniform classification system of land uses has been used to designate the land use potential of the project and appropriate symbols are entered on the attached map (Figure 5).

Several resource development classifications are evident. The area comprising the Elk Creek Fishery Area and the adjacent wetlands should be classified as a Fisheries and Wildlife Management Area (RD2). This classification was selected to preserve the cold water habitat. Anticipated management will include instream trout habitat structures and bank erosion work on approximately two miles of trout water during the 1980-1981 work periods (Figure 3). All habitat operations will take place on state-owned or eased lands.

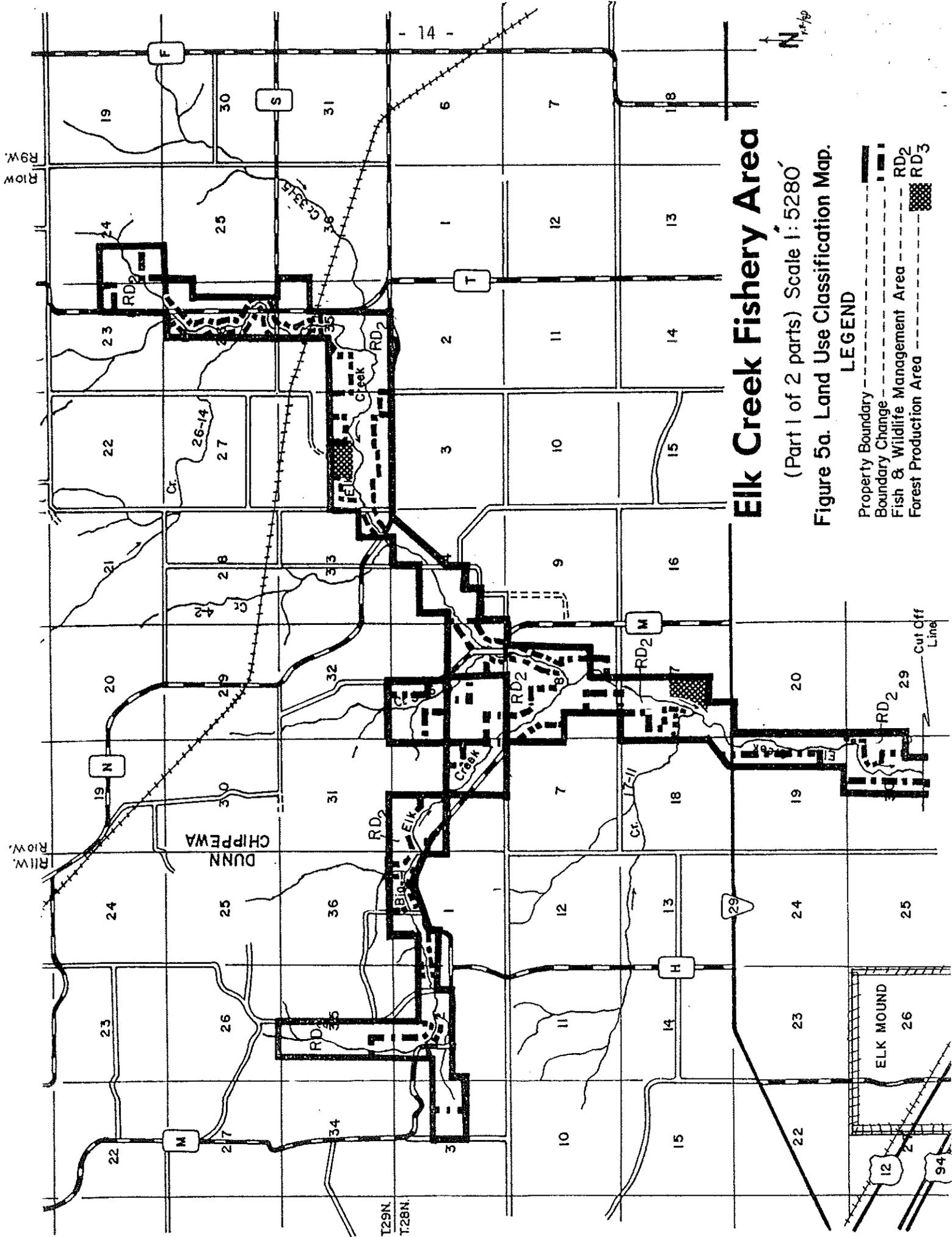
Wildlife development areas are primarily edge sites adjacent to the stream thread. Many wildlife and nongame species benefit from fish management activities. Tall grasses and weeds which grow along the stream provide nest cover for rabbits, mallard ducks, woodcock and a variety of song birds. In addition, fencing creates an "edge effect" that provides habitat and escape cover for many species of wildlife. Approximately 52.0 acres of Department fee title lands will be left "as is" for wildlife habitat and stream protection. Succession may have a negative effect on nongame mammals and birds, reptiles and amphibians but is not expected to significantly reduce the productivity of these areas for wildlife in the next ten years. Wood duck boxes will be constructed and placed in areas where feasible.

Forest production areas (RD3) constitute the bulk of property acreage lands. Approximately 197.3 acres should eventually be managed to provide a sustained yield of wood products and good habitat conditions for wildlife species found in forested areas. Forested areas with possible commercial value controlled by the Department are in T29N, R10W, Section 34 and T28N, R10W, Section 17 (Figure 4). Another area, located in T28N, R10W, Section 19, is a semi-open area where pine was cut many years ago. The entire 7-acre area could be clearcut on the east side of Elk Creek and scatter-planted to red pine. Access to this side of the stream is very good.

Timber sales on RD3 areas would be intended to serve as a tool in the attainment of total land management for public benefit. Silvicultural guidelines used in determining the time, methods, and details of timber harvest will be administered by local forest management personnel. Detailed stand recommendations will be made in the implementation to long-term maintenance of cover types and aesthetic values, and would be in accordance with the major objectives of the fishery area.

Preliminary planning has been completed for a timber sale in Section 17, T28N, R10W, site 1. This would call for removal of the large red oak sawlogs. An estimated 44,000 board feet of low quality oak sawlogs could be removed to encourage jack pine growth. This should be accomplished in 1980 or 1981 if market conditions permit. Other harvests are not anticipated until 1996 and 2046.

The harvest timetable for forested areas in Section 34, T29N, R10W should be, 1983, 1995 and 1997.



Elk Creek Fishery Area

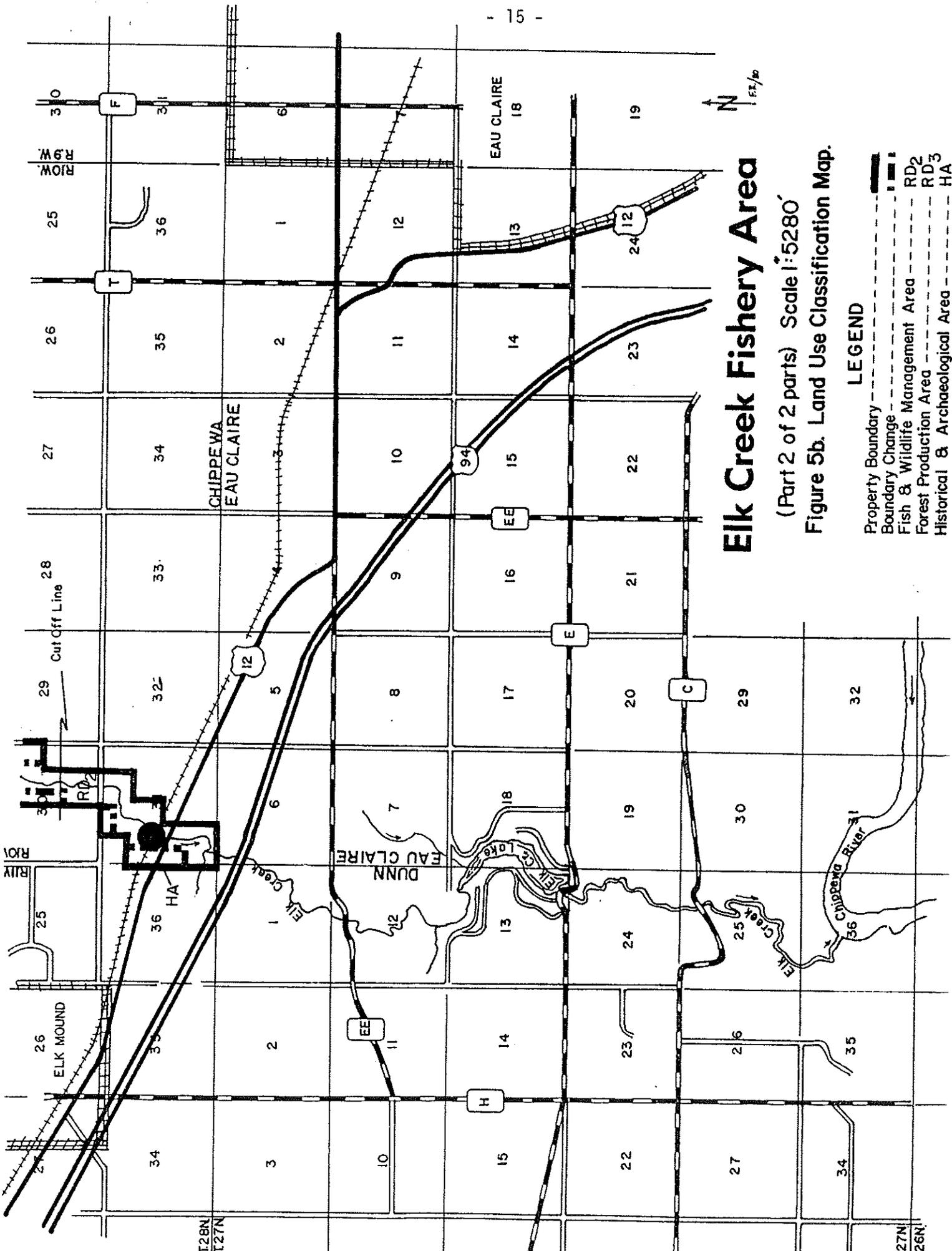
(Part 1 of 2 parts) Scale 1:5280'

Figure 5a. Land Use Classification Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary - - - - -
- Boundary Change - · · · · ·
- Fish & Wildlife Management Area - - - - -
- Forest Production Area - [Hatched Pattern]
- RD2 - [Dashed Line]
- RD3 - [Dotted Line]

Cut Off Line



Elk Creek Fishery Area

(Part 2 of 2 parts) Scale 1"=5280'

Figure 5b. Land Use Classification Map.

LEGEND

- Property Boundary - - - - -
- Boundary Change - - - - -
- Fish & Wildlife Management Area - - - - -
- Forest Production Area - - - - -
- Historical & Archaeological Area - - - - -

MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

Private Inholdings

Completing the acquisition of public land along the Elk Creek Fishery Area is a major problem. Contacts have been made with all remaining landowners on numerous occasions, regarding their willingness to sell to the Department or give perpetual easements. Within the last two years little progress has been made in attaining this objective. During the period from 1972 to the present, all 20-year leases have expired, and none of these properties have been re-acquired either through perpetual easement or fee title.

Private Development Encroachments

Private development within the Elk Creek Fishery Area boundaries presently consists of 16 farmsteads, and 10 permanent residences. In addition, there are 17 farmsteads and 9 year-round homes within the proposed boundary expansion segments. Almost 50 percent of these structures are close enough to the stream to constitute an environmental threat.

Development of year-round housing could become a major resource management problem. Wild lands and relatively poor farm land are being divided into small plots and sold for residential use. Blue Valley Estates to the southwest of Eau Claire, and the Hiawatha Plat on Elk Creek Lake are examples that predicate more development will occur in the future. Such development can make management difficult. Problems would include the necessity to acquire small tracts of land, fences along lawns, and public trespass on private property.

Stream Bottom Composition

The water quality of Elk Creek and adjoining tributaries and feeders is good. However, the stream bottom is primarily shifting sand and silt loam which is poor trout habitat, relatively unstable for aquatic plants and very poor in terms of invertebrate production. Streamside brushing for increased light penetration, riprapping and wing deflectors for channel narrowing and deepening will help alleviate these problems.

Soils and Sedimentation

The soil, generally a sandy loam, contributes a considerable amount of sedimentation to the Elk Creek watershed through erosion and active streambank slumping. Applied management practices such as riprapping, sloping, seeding, and sodding can reduce erosion.

Access and the Lack of Parking Facilities

There are 16 public road crossings and two undeveloped parking areas along the Elk Creek Fishery Area (Figure 3). These provide access to the stream and to Department-controlled streambanks. Consideration will be given in future land acquisition to provide a walk-in corridor for fishermen access in some areas. Parking along public roads is presently adequate but creates a potential traffic hazard. The construction and improvement of parking lots may be necessary in the future. Parking lots are considered undesirable from the standpoint that they tend to concentrate fishermen in the areas immediately adjacent to the parking lot. If parking becomes a problem in the future, it will be dealt with as the need arises.

Beaver Damage to Instream Trout Habitat

Dams, whether built by humans, beaver or by an accumulation of floating debris, are detrimental to trout habitat in most similar low-gradient streams. Water impounded by dams may warm in the summer and cool excessively in the winter killing deposited eggs. Water upstream above the dam is deeper and may provide a good place for trout to live and grow for a short time but eventually the pond silts and trout disappear. Spawning migrations are also blocked. Beaver management within the property boundary will be designed to achieve minimum populations as per NR 1.16 (1)(G)(b).

The Effects of Pasturing Livestock on Instream Trout Habitat and Water Quality

Pasturing causes a loss of bank cover by grazing and trampling and results in serious erosion problems. Livestock also cause sloughing of overhanging banks which provide trout cover. The erosion causes siltation resulting in wider, shallower, warmer streams with little cover. Cattle wastes entering the water add unwanted nutrients and decrease water quality. Fencing livestock from trout streams is an effective way of improving water quality and trout habitat. Efforts will continue to gain control and fence pastured lands to restrict cattle use along the streams.

Excessive Woody Streambank Vegetation

Woody streamside vegetation has become excessive in some areas along the fishery area. This leads to poor quality trout habitat and reduced angling. Brushing the streambank to increase sunlight to the stream and regrowth of natural grasses on the banks will increase plant and aquatic invertebrate production instream and help prevent erosion. The end result will then be greater fishability and increased biomass of trout although it is recognized that streamside brush removal can adversely affect cover for woodcock, wood duck broods and several nongame species.

Timber Harvest and Disease

Mature timber suitable for harvest will be marketed when conditions are favorable, consistent with good fish and game management practices and general aesthetic values bordering the stream. Tree diseases such as Dutch elm, oak wilt, heart rot and popple borers exist on Department property. Control of such diseases can only be accomplished with proper silvicultural techniques to eliminate diseased trees, limit logging to certain times of the year or by removing mature timber to leave only the most vigorous, high quality trees. Insect problems are currently of minor importance.

Misuse

Misuse such as littering is a minor but increasingly recurring problem. Increased patrols by law enforcement personnel may be needed in the future.

RECREATION NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATION

Today's recreation is viewed as an integral part of our lives. The society in which we live has developed technologically to the point where long working hours and vigorous physical labor have become the exception rather than the rule for most people. As a result, there is need for various forms of outdoor activities to fill longer leisure hours.

The Elk Creek Fishery is located in Chippewa and Dunn Counties, which had a combined 1978 population of 81,416. A 1974 creel census on Elk Creek indicated that 92% of the anglers originated from within a 15-mile radius of the stream. The bulk of the anglers were from the cities of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls and Menomonie. The creel census estimated 33,882 man-hours of recreation over a five-month period, or 801.5 man-hours per acre of water, with a catch rate of 0.44 fish per man hour.

The population distribution in Chippewa County is currently shifting. It is estimated that the urban areas of villages and cities will show a 6.35% population increase from 1977-1980, while the townships not within the urban area will show a 4.06% decrease in population. Population distribution projections for the future indicate that the shift to the incorporated communities will continue at a fairly rapid pace. In a 23-year period (1977-2000), the urban area, villages and cities will increase 73.80% while the townships not in the urban area will increase at 7.13%.

Dunn County is also witnessing a shift in population trends. The rural population has decreased by 8.2% over the last decade while the number of city dwellers in the only urban population center of Menomonie has increased 4.6%.

The impact of these shifts in population distributions will have a significant effect on the recreational resources of the county. In general, rural people create less impact on the recreational resources as they tend to use their own property for recreational activities. On the other hand, people living in the cities, villages and urban areas do not have access to large open spaces. Consequently, recreational areas must be provided for them. As the population distribution becomes more oriented toward cities, villages and urban areas, more public recreational areas will have to be provided by various units of government.

The Elk Creek Fishery Area is within a half-hour drive of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls and Menomonie, which will have an estimated population of 77,779 in 1980. Since these cities are expected to continue to grow rapidly in the future, higher demands will be placed on recreation facilities including the Elk Creek Fishery Area. The impact of the 1.5 million population of St. Paul and Minneapolis, 75 miles from the Fishery Area must also be noted. Some major considerations for the future include:

1. Fishing

According to the 1977 Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Plan, surface water resources in Wisconsin's Region 11, which includes Chippewa, Eau Claire and Clark Counties, are below the state average on a per capita basis. Chippewa County contains the majority of Region 11 waters, which in turn accentuates the deficiencies in Eau Claire and Clark Counties. For example, the region contains a little less than 3% of the state's total surface water area, and Chippewa County contains 80% of the region's water.

Dunn County is a part of Wisconsin Region 13 which has nearly double the state average of surface water on a per capita basis. Again, localized deficiencies in supply exist in the region. Dunn County has 44 of 147 (30.0%) trout streams extending 195.9 of the 555.9 miles (35.2%) in the six-county region. On the other hand, it only has 9 of the 328 named lakes (2.7%) which cover 3,682 acres of 47,331 acres (7.8%) in the region. Thus it is rich in trout waters, but poor in fishing lakes.

The Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Plan emphasizes that in both regions, governmental agencies must be committed to securing lake and river frontage wherever it is available, and protecting and improving the quality of the waters to accommodate increased fishing participation.

Surface water resources in Dunn County also provide an abundance of fishing opportunities. Of 61 named streams, 30 are managed trout waters, totalling 206.6 miles.

Over 12,000 fishing and 4,600 sportsmens licenses are sold in Chippewa County annually. Approximately 3,500 of these licenses are purchased by nonresidents, an indication that the county's water resource attracts many tourists to the area. Fishing supply, demand and need estimates for Dunn and Chippewa Counties indicate the improvement and development of existing fishery facilities are currently more important than the development of new waters. Protection of fishery habitat and availability of access should be priority management goals to meet the expected 15% increase in the number of recreation outings by 1990.

2. Wildlife

Approximately 6,000 acres of land are designated specifically as public hunting grounds in Chippewa County. An analysis of license sales reports in 1976 indicate 14,119 residents purchase some type of hunting license. Hunting participation demand projections indicate the number of annual recreation occasions will increase from 155,649 in 1976 to 169,312 in 1990. This is approximately an 8% increase. In general, there is a good supply of hunting land in Chippewa County, but not all of it is available for public use. Hunting will not be a major consumptive use activity along the Elk Creek Fishery Area because land rights purchased by perpetual easements do not include hunting without landowner consent as requested by Elk Creek landowners.

In The West Central District (DNR), Chippewa County ranked highest in beaver harvest and fourth highest in otter harvest during 1976-1977. Future estimated trapping demands are expected to remain fairly stable. Trappers are territorial in their sport and 20 to 25 persons may be the only users of the Elk Creek Fishery Area. Future management of land within the boundary will assure the protection of furbearer habitat. However, trappers, like hunters, will have to obtain landowner's permission for the right to enjoy their sport.

3. Other Recreational Uses

Attractive physical features in both Dunn and Chippewa Counties form the background for a wide variety of recreational development and activities. The fastest growing outdoor activities include water-based recreation, pleasure driving and nature study.

The number of persons participating in nature study, bird watching, berry and mushroom picking, cross-country skiing and photography activities has not been determined accurately enough to generate adequate supply and demand data. However, these activities are increasing. Local FFA and sportsman clubs have expressed interest in the Elk Creek Area. It is also utilized by the geology, geography and biology departments of the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire and Stout for outdoor study.

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

Maintain the Status Quo

One alternative is to do nothing and to leave the fishery area "as it now exists". This alternative would leave many acres of privately owned land without public access or streambank protection. Streambanks would continue to erode and destroy valuable spawning sites and instream habitat. The stream and its tributaries would probably continue to function as trout water because of high water quality, but would continue to produce below potential.

Enlarge Project

An alternative plan is to expand the property boundaries to include several areas in Dunn and Eau Claire Counties immediately above Elk Creek Lake, and from Elk Creek Lake to the confluence with the Chippewa River. The fishery area boundaries under this proposal would also be extended to include five major tributaries and 12 feeder streams to the northwest and northeast of Elk Creek. The total acreage goal would need to be expanded and would also include the consolidation of the Elk and Big Elk Creek fishery areas. The tributaries have excellent water quality, carry brook trout populations and serve as vital spawning and nursery areas for trout. The beneficial effects of the tributaries are felt for many miles downstream.

The area below Elk Creek Lake is good trout water. A 1974 creel census showed high angler usage in the segment from CTH "C", Dunn County, upstream to Elk Creek Lake. The area immediately above Elk Creek Lake is considered to be some of the best trout water in the Elk Creek Watershed. This area offers much in geological history, scenery and the best open areas for the fly fishermen. Both areas, above and below Elk Creek Lake, have serious erosion problems. Stabilization of the area should have high priority, but is presently outside the property boundary.

Reduce Instream Improvements of the Fishery Area

The fishery area could be reduced in scope simply by reducing the number of structures placed in the stream or limiting the work to riprapped bank protection only.

In an analysis of the existing factors limiting the trout population, it is probable that an increase in trout biomass will be directly proportional to increased habitat, that can be accomplished with the installation of an increased number of instream structures. Placement of fewer structures than planned would result in a fishery at some level below its full potential.

A reduction in acreage will lead to reduced stream protection, limited public access, reduced erosion control, reduced opportunities for instream habitat development and a declining fishery.

Timber Production and/or Wildlife Production Only

Conversion of low quality oak, aspen and brush to conifers and planting of all open areas to conifers would greatly reduce the wildlife and nongame habitat. Conversely, the elimination of existing economic forest species and conversion to an early stage of succession by controlled burning or mechanical means would seriously affect economic forest production.

Continue the Existing Management Program

Various management programs have been initiated by the Department on the Elk Creek Fishery Area since 1969, and are recommended to be continued in this master plan. They consist of the following:

1. Land acquisition for public access, stream protection and improvement.
2. Instream habitat improvement and streambank brushing.
3. Inventory of critical erosion sites and deteriorating instream trout habitat.
4. Management for minimal beaver populations.
5. An annual fish stocking program of 1,600 legal-sized brown trout in Elk Creek, which will be terminated in 1981.
6. Forest management.
7. Streambank fencing.

Increased Development

1. Public Access:

Creation of narrow walk-in access points may be necessary in future acquisitions. It is not necessary at this time to create parking areas which cause concentrations of anglers.

2. Recreational Development Areas:

The need for a variety of recreational developments has been considered and rejected for canoe and tubing landings, picnic and camping areas and trails. Elk Creek is relatively narrow, too many instream obstacles exist, and floaters would be disruptive to fishermen. No demand presently exists for picnic or camping facilities, being met by private facilities. Cross-country skiing and hiking are permitted on state-owned and easement property, but a marked and maintained trail is not available or planned at this time.

Combination of Alternatives

It is possible to manage the stream for improved water quality by stabilizing streambanks and restricting livestock in areas where cattle may cause damage. Instream habitat improvement will increase brown trout cover and population biomass. Finally, land control in the proposed boundary extension areas and consolidation of Elk Creek and Big Elk Creek Fishery Areas will ensure good water quality and guarantee public access now and in the future.

Appendix - Master Plan comments by outside reviewing agencies

Comments regarding the Elk Creek Master Plan were received from a number of reviewing agencies. Their comments, and DNR responses where necessary, follow:

Mr. Forest Stearns, Chairman, Scientific Areas Preservation Council:

We have completed our review of the Elk Creek Fishery Area concept master plan and find that our interests in this project area are adequately covered. We encourage acquisition and scientific area designation for the old growth pine stand described on page 14 of the plan.

DNR Response: The 45 day review copy of this master plan noted the existence of a privately owned, old growth white pine stand on the banks of Elk Creek as a potential Scientific Area. That reference is eliminated in the draft for Natural Resources Board approval. The white pine grove is located on a stream section within a proposed expanded boundary that has been eliminated in this draft of the master plan.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Twin Cities, Minnesota:

Excellent job of planning, analysis, and consideration of alternatives! Management Problems (p. 14) and Recommended Management and Development Program (p. 1) should facilitate the setting of priorities and the best use of funds.

Additional Comments: P. 14, Paragraphs 6-8. How do commercial forestry practices fit into the objectives for the area unless wildlife values are benefited? Would removal of large red oaks benefit wildlife, especially squirrel? How would removing a semi-aspen area and scatter-planting with red pine help meet are objectives? What would be the actions needed to meet the one forestry objective of providing 63 cords of firewood?

DNR Response: Any cutting of oaks will be on a selection basis and wildlife benefits will certainly be considered at the time of harvest. Removing the semi-open area and replacing with red pine would provide a loafing or nesting area for wildlife including deer, grouse and other non-game species. The red pine would be scatter planted for a more natural appearance. The actions required for the removal of 63 cords of firewood would include issuance of free firewood permits and through limited (in size and scope) commercial timber sale contracts.

Mr. Thomas J. Evans, Geological and Natural History Survey:

The staff of the Geological and Natural History Survey have reviewed the Concept Element of a Fisheries Area Master Plan for Elk Creek Fishery Area in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. Based upon this review, I have no additional comments or suggestions with respect to this document.

Mr. James Dahl, Chairman, Chippewa County Conservation Congress:

Page 20 (1) -- walk in area vs. parking. I feel this is the correct approach to access as you state - helps eliminate the congestion problem.

Page 19 -- Analysis of Alternatives -- Enlarge Project. I feel that the recommendations as outlined in this portion of the plan are very good and the Department of Natural Resources, Trout Unlimited, Soil Cons. Service and other interested agencies and groups should adopt this plan.

DNR Response: The recommended alternative submitted in the final draft for Natural Resources Board approval maintains the present approved acreage goal.

Mr. Henry W. Koika, Chairman, Wild Resources Advisory Council:

The Wild Resources Advisory Council wishes to compliment the Elk Creek Fishery Area Master Plan Concept Element Task Force for their bold proposal to incorporate nearly the total tricounty Elk Creek watershed into a state managed cold water fishery. In the opinion of the WRAC and particularly of its Chairman, this is the best route to go to protect, preserve and enhance a quality natural resource such as a prime trout stream. By controlling the total watershed many of the associate problems such as: floods, offstream erosion and nonpoint pollution can be held to minimum levels and the quality of the resource can be maintained at optimum level. The Task Force proposal needs to consider a few secondary adjustments to reach the level of near perfection as a fishery project -- in the opinion of the WRAC.

General Review

The Elk Creek Fishery Area Master Plan Concept Element Task Force has come up with the best proposal for controlling the destiny of a quality trout stream, that WRAC has reviewed up to this point in time. The chairman, from his professional point of view (Geographer), has often recommended total control over the watershed, lake or stream, to achieve the best management of the waters within any project area. Under certain circumstances this procedure is impossible in today's world, but wherever the possibility does exist, it is the best way to go with the total or almost total control of the watershed certain associate stream problems will be reduced to minimal level solutions rather than constant aggravations to be endured. The WRAC is convinced that the Task Force made a mistake when it failed to identify a stream corridor to be managed as fishery habitat with the water habitat (Roche A Cri fisheries identified 2 rods each side of the stream as fishery domain). Such a program provides the best trout fisherman's aesthetics, prescribes annoying and useless brush removal and an excellent habitat for wildlife that live in the association with the water in a stream. The WRAC does not endorse timber cutting or commercialization in wood products in the project area. The Council concern arises from the fact that since 80% of fringing lands outside of the project area are devoted to agriculture. The remnant woods, in the project area, are extremely important for the welfare of certain birds and some mammals that use these forest areas as their living space. The Council has no qualms over clearcutting of aging and diseased aspen stands.

DNR Response: Although some commercial timber harvest is planned, it in no way will be extensive, and every consideration will be given to the wildlife and

aesthetics of the area. Forest Management is a management tool which perpetuates and maintains forest lands in a healthy and vigorous condition. Through cutting, areas will be exposed to sunlight, which in turn will promote the growth and development of young trees and shrub species commonly used by wildlife for food and cover.

Comments and Recommendations:

1. pp. 1 Goals, Objectives and Additional Benefits.

Goals -- The Wild Resources Advisory Council urges modification of the last part of the sentence after Counties: "to enhance the habitat for fishing, aesthetics, education and other recreational activities."

DNR Response: Agreed. Correction made.

2. pp. 1, item 3 under Annual Objectives.

The WRAC questions the quality of this objective.

DNR Response: Refer to earlier response to this question.

3. pp. 1, item 2 under Additional Benefits.

The WRAC suggests that the word transient be added after indigenous. Thus the sentence would read: "indigenous and transient to the area."

DNR Response: Agreed. Addition made.

4. pp. 1 and 4 Recommended Management and Development Program.

The WRAC, as indicated in General Review, endorses the main concept proposed by the Elk Creek Fishery Area Task Force. The history of use, the recreational and educational needs of nearby growing urban areas and the quality of the fishery resource, justify such bold action as proposed by the Task Force. The chairman personally has been privileged to have fished most of the stream thread for over 30 years. In that period of time he has observed the continued deterioration of the trout water habitat, the encroachment of settlements and stream squalor created by man and his poor land management as well as the wallowing of his animals in the stream and on its banks. To me and other users of Elk Creek this proposal promises the reversal of past stream violations and potential re-instatement of quality to it. The following comments are addressed to the two page section on Recommended Management and Development Program.

a. Item 2, pp. 1 under expanded boundaries recommended.

To prevent further home siting in the river corridor the WRAC suggests enforcement of state flood plain ordinance.

DNR Response: This portion of stream, proposed as an expanded boundary in the 45 day review copy of the master plan is not included in the copy to be submitted to the Natural Resources Board for approval.

b. pp. 4, 1st paragraph.

The WRAC considers the proposed property boundary expansion to 9,265 acres

as absolutely necessary to protect and properly manage the 23 miles of stream thread within proposed fishery area. The Council recommends that Natural Resources Board approves the expanded acreage goal.

DNR Response: The NRB copy of the master plan revises the boundary to encompass 1,838.5 acres.

c. pp. 4, 4th paragraph.

The WRAC advocate fencing of the stream corridor only where the farm animal pressure indicates deterioration of the stream thread, since this is an expensive manipulation.

DNR Response: The Task Force heartily agrees.

d. pp. 4, Fifth paragraph from the bottom--Wildlife Development on RD₂ areas.

Since a good share of the stream threads suffer from farm animal trespass and consequently needs fencing and since a sizable portion is choked with invading nuisance brush and since quality trout habitat requires the control of both problems, the WRAC recommends that the project Task Force adopt the system used by some of the better fishery projects by proposing a trout stream corridor and plotting the same on one of your charts. By doing this you will be operating under sounder cold water fishery philosophy, more meaningful fishery criteria and will be making more trout fishermen happy.

DNR Response: Does not agree. Maps are standardized, and already are complicated.

e. pp. 4, past 4 paragraphs. Referring to timber harvests.

The WRAC has already indicated its displeasure regarding harvesting of timber on tightly zoned fishery and wildlife lands. The Council questions its feasibility, logistics or its appropriateness in a wildlife area.

DNR Response: Please note previous response.

5. pp. 9 Fish and Wildlife paragraphs 3 and 4 under this heading.

The WRAC feels that all Master Plans should include as up-to-date inventories, of all fauna and flora, as it available. This Council's and other Council's comments and recommendations need such information in order to judge whether project area plans consider the welfare of all species of wildlife. To know that such information rests in the files of district offices is of no help to us who are too often involved in crash time limit inputs. The last sentence in the last paragraph does indicate that the Task Force intends to complete its survey of all animals within the fishery area--eventually. A good resolution, but not sufficient for Council's purpose.

DNR Response: Does not agree.

6. pp. 9, last paragraph on pp. 9.

This paragraph again indicates the need for identifying a stream corridor designation as meaningful adjunct to the stream bed.

7. pp. 12 Table 1.

Something went wrong with the mathematical process in Table 1. In the estimated percentage of area of cover type, the total percentage adds up to 137%. The WRAC recommends the substitution of water total of 4% instead of 41% to cover the error.

DNR Response: Task Force agrees. Correction made.

8. pp. 13 Table 2.

The WRAC finds a minor infraction in the column of miles under Class I and Class II categorie. Shouldn't the first item under Class I column be 15.2 miles?

DNR Response: The table has been revised and corrected.

9. pp. 14 Land Use Potential.

The WRAC finds this section excellently handled by the Task Force--in general. The Council endorses the concept of Natural Area for the 110 acres, when it is acquired. Likewise the Council agrees with the suggestion of the special interest to designate the area above Elk Lake as either natural or Scenic Area.

The Council is very pleased with the content of paragraph 5 (from top of page). We think the paragraph would gain greater strength if the corridor concept were written into the content.

Paragraphs 6, 8 and 8 are completely out of line with the goals of the project area and for the welfare of the wildlife that uses these sites as its living realm.

DNR Response: The natural and scenic area proposed was within an expanded boundary that has been eliminated from the final copy. The Task Force does not agree with the corridor concept. Forest production areas have already been discussed.

10. pp. 14 Private Development.

From my personal experience and others who fish the Elk, the sections with home developments are no longer considered worthy of spending fishing time. They are noisy, smell of manure and lack the desired aesthetics. For the sites already occupied little can be done but for future plans flood plain zoning regulation enforcement should be used.

11. pp. 17 Beaver Damage to Instream Trout Habitat.

The WRAC urges strict beaver control for the project area.

12. pp. 17 Timber Harvest and Disease.

The WRAC endorses the program of aspen harvest management but it does not favor removal of mature timber. Refer to previous position of the Council on this issue.

DNR Response: Refer to previous comments by Task Force.

13. pp. 19 Analysis of Alternatives.

The WRAC considers the justification of enlarging the project (2nd paragraph under the above heading) one of the best of its kind and completely endorses it.

DNR Response: The Natural Resources Board copy of the master plan proposes that the approved acreage goal be retained in a reduced boundary.

14. pp. 20 Comments on last page.

Item 2 under Continue the Existing Management.

The WRAC suggests that the statement reads 2. "Instream and stream corridor habitat improvement."

DNR Response: Does not agree .

Item 6--The Council suggests 6 be "Vegetative Wildlife Management."

DNR Response: The Task Force prefers the term Forest Management.

The rest of the content of this page is excellent and fits the primary goals of the project.

15. The charts are very adequate and do the job of interpreting the text very well. The WRAC suggests shading in and identifying the stream corridor on one of the charts.

DNR Response: Does not agree.

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Central Offices - Madison

Date: November 28, 1980

File Ref: 2100

To: C. D. Besadny

From: James T. Addis



Subject: Elk Creek Fishery Area, Chippewa and Dunn Counties Master Plan

We are herewith submitting the conceptual master plan for the Elk Creek Fishery Area in Chippewa and Dunn Counties. An Environmental Assessment Screening Worksheet regarding the master plan, available for scrutiny of the public during the 45 day review period, has been approved by the District, and has been forwarded to, and filed by the Bureau of Environmental Impact. The master plan has been supplied to other interested parties and internal bureaus during the 45 day review period. Comments from internal bureaus have been considered, and revisions made where appropriate. Comments from outside reviewing agencies and the DNR responses are shown in the appendix attached to the master plan.

This master plan combines two adjacent fishery areas into one: Elk Creek, with an approved acreage goal of 550 acres, and a major tributary, Big Elk Creek which has an approved acreage goal of 120 acres. Combined, the two fishery areas have an approved acreage goal of 670 acres and are surrounded by a boundary encompassing 3,915 acres.

To date, 249.37 acres have been acquired in fee title and 115.98 acres in perpetual easements 4 to 10 rods wide on each bank of Elk Creek, and 37.5 acres have been acquired in perpetual easements on Big Elk Creek. Combined, the fishery area on the two streams has land control on 402.85 acres with 267.15 acres yet to be acquired. There are 19.16 miles of Class I trout streams on the combined fishery area, and of that, the department controls 10.78 miles of stream thread.

The task force recommends that the acreage goal of the combined fishery area remain at 670 acres and that the boundary be revised by eliminating 1,772.3 acres from Elk Creek and 304.2 acres from Big Elk Creek. The combined 2,076.5 acres removed will result in a new boundary encompassing 1,838.5 acres.

The boundary and acreage goals show a considerable difference in size. This is because the lands to be acquired will be purchased by 4 to 10 rod easements or in fee title and it is impossible to exactly define the property boundary. The boundary and acreage goal is our best estimate as to what and where property will ultimately be purchased within the fishery area.

Recommended for the fishery area is continuation of acquisition of the remaining lands to complete the acreage goal by perpetual easement to obtain land control on as much of the stream thread as possible, although purchase by fee title may be necessary on some properties. Management proposed will include streambank fencing,

C. D. Besadny - November 28, 1980

2.

Cattle crossing construction, instream habitat improvement using trout stamp funds, continuing monitoring of the fishery, wildlife and forest management practices and general maintenance where needed.

Your approval is requested to submit the plan to the Natural Resources Board at the December, 1980 meeting.

JTA:aep

Attach

cc - Judy Scullion - ADM/5
James R. Huntoon - ADM/5
Ron Nicotera - ADM/5
C. W. Threinen - FM/4
Ed Faber - RE/4
Vern Hacker - Oshkosh

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: November 24, 1980

File Ref: 2100

To: Lewis Posekany _ EI/3

NOV 27 1980

From: *GH*
Vern Hacker - Bureau Master Plan Coordinator - Fish Management

Subject: Revision of the Elk Creek Fishery Area, Chippewa and Dunn Counties Master Plan Environmental Assessment Screening Worksheet

On April 30, 1980, an Environmental Assessment Screening Worksheet for the Elk Creek Fishery Area, Dunn, Chippewa and Eau Claire Counties Master plan was prepared and signed by Douglas Erickson, Fish Manager, Chippewa Falls. The master plan and environmental assessment screening worksheet were subjected to public scrutiny during the 45 day review period for the master plan which ended on July 5, 1980. On June 4, 1980, the EASW was certified to be in compliance with WEPA by Gordon Slifer, WCD Environmental Impact Coordinator, and was subsequently submitted to the Central office for filing.

The 45 day review copy of the master plan and the EASW recommended that in addition to combining Elk and Big Elk Creek fishery areas, with a combined acreage goal of 670 acres and a boundary encompassing 3,915 acres, that an additional 1,321 acres be added to the acreage goal, and a new boundary be established encompassing 9,265 acres.

A subsequent change in policy relating to acreage goal increases has required that the combined Elk Creek Fishery acreage goal remain at 670 acres. Additionally, the boundary surrounding the fishery area has been pared down to 1,838.5 acres, and these two recommendations are being submitted in the master plan to the Natural Resources Board at the December, 1980 meeting.

After considering these changes and reductions, it is my conclusion that they do not substantially change the meaning or content of the Environmental Screening Worksheet, and I can see no reason why it should be revised except to note the change in acreage goal and boundary.

Your approval is requested to accept the changes noted and to maintain the Elk Creek master plan EASW as originally prepared.

VAH:aep

APPROVED:

Lewis A. Posekany 11/25/80
Date

Department of Natural Resources
West Central District
1300 West Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

EAU CLAIRE, WI---The Department of Natural Resources proposes to adopt the Elk Creek Fishery Area Master Plan which proposes acquisition or easement of 1321 acres along 20 miles of stream presently lying outside of existing project boundaries. Acreage within the total project boundary is now approximately 9265 acres, lying in parts of Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. Other work proposed in the Master Plan includes instream habitat improvement, streambank vegetation management, streambank fencing, and cattle crossing construction where needed.

There is a substantial acreage of wetlands involved.

The Department has made a preliminary determination that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required for this action.

Copies of the Department's Environmental Assessment Screening Worksheet that led to this preliminary determination can be obtained from: Douglas L. Erickson, DNR, Courthouse, Box 550, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729. Telephone 715-723-4069.

Public comments on the proposed project are welcomed and should be received by Mr. Erickson no later than 4:30 p.m. May 22, 1980. These comments can take the form of either verbal or written communication.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING WORKSHEET
(Attach Additional Sheets if Necessary)

Applicant: State of Wisconsin - Department of Natural Resources

Title of Proposal: Elk Creek Master Plan

Location: County Chippewa - Dunn - Eau Claire
Township 27 North, Range 11 ~~East~~ West, Sec. 1,12,24,25,36; T27N-R10W, Sec.6;
Section(s) T28N-R10W, Sec. 4,5,6,7,8,17,18,19,30,31; T28N-R11W, Sec.1,2,3,10,11,12,13
Political Town Spring Brook, Union, Elk Mound, 14; T29N-R10W, Sec.20,21,22,23,24,26
27,28,32,33,34,35; T29N-R11W, Sec. 35
36, and T29N-R9W, Sec. 30

Project:

- 1) Description (overview) of applicant's entire project proposal. Attach maps, plans and other descriptive material as appropriate.

The recommended management program for the Elk Creek Fishery Area includes easement acquisition, streambank fencing and cattle crossing construction where needed, instream habitat improvement work where feasible, general maintenance and continued monitoring of the fishery.

Consolidation of the Big Elk Creek and Elk Creek Fishery Areas and acceptance of the proposed boundary extensions are essential for the protection and management of this watershed. Sixty-one tracts totalling 474 acres and approximately 8 miles of stream thread remains to be acquired within the original Elk and Big Elk Creek boundary. New primary acquisition objectives are to acquire by easement or fee title a strip of land 4-10 rods on each side of the stream thread over a total stream length of approximately 31 miles. This would require acquisition of an additional 1,321 acres along 20 miles of stream.

This represents a substantial increase in acquisition objectives as can be seen by comparing 31 miles and 1,321 acres to the original and currently approved boundary that encompasses 17.8 miles and 670 acres.

In addition, the Department may purchase larger tracts of land within the project boundary and if and where landowners preferred. Acreage with the total boundary is approximately 9,265 acres. Acquisition is expected to continue at a rate of two tracts a year for a projected total of \$1,448,177 with an average annual increase of 15%. The primary purchase method will be perpetual easement but lands will be acquired through a combination of perpetual easements and fee title purchases as rapidly as willing sellers, acquisition procedures and available funds permit.

As acquisition continues through pastured lands, streambanks will be fenced, as needed, at an estimated cost of \$6,000 per mile. Assuming two tracts of land are purchased annually, each with a quarter mile of stream thread, new fence development will cost approximately \$3,000 yearly. Since approximately 80% of the Elk Creek watershed is used for agriculture, 28 miles of streambank may have to be fenced, pending future land use.

Subsequent construction of one cattle crossing, machinery crossing or watering hole per 40 acres purchased may have to be developed along with the fencing at a cost of \$1,000 each.

Instream habitat improvement work will continue through 1981 on State controlled lands. This will include approximately two miles of boom cover, riprap and wing dam construction in the lower reaches of Elk Creek at an estimated cost of \$32,000 per mile funded by the Trout Stamp. Also included will be sporadic streambank brushing in the upstream areas of Elk Creek above CTH M. Cut stumps will be treated with the herbicide Ammate X-NI to prevent regrowth. Ammate X-NI is the commercial name for the ammonium salt, ammonium sulfamate. This herbicide has been approved by the DNR for usage near water. Work of a similar nature will continue in other areas of Elk Creek, Big Elk Creek and the unnamed feeder streams as lands are acquired and monies become available.

Current and future needs will include property surveillance and maintenance. An estimated 100 man-days per year will be required for sign posting, beaver removal, crossing repair and streambank fence maintenance. This will cost an estimated \$75 per mile of stream.

Stream survey work evaluating fishery response to habitat work will continue on an irregular basis depending on acquisition and on a regular basis every 10 years on stream sections not under State control to determine trends in the fish population.

Two areas have been designated as potential parking sites if demand in the future dictates need for development. Both sites could be improved to accommodate parking for approximately 10 cars each and an access road at an estimated cost of \$2,500.00.

The entire project area is designated for fish and wildlife development. Other uses compatible with fish management practices and good soil and water conservation will be considered when the need arises.

2) Purpose and Need (include history and background as appropriate)

Elk Creek Fishery Area is heavily fished and yet a highly productive trout stream, and requires intensive management programs to maintain and protect the fishery. It is located equi-distant from three of the largest population centers in West Central Wisconsin, Eau Claire, Menomonie and Chippewa Falls.

Statutory Authority: Wisconsin Statutes 23.09 and 30.12, Chapter NR 80 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

Estimated Project Costs: Projected total cost is \$1,448,177, with an average annual increase of 15% for acquisition; streambank fencing as needed \$6,000 per mile; cattle crossings as needed \$1,000 per mile; instream habitat improvement \$32,000 per mile; land maintenance \$75 per mile; parking lots \$2,500 each.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

1) Physical (Topography-soils-water-air-wetland types)

Elk Creek drains a 73.6 square mile sandy loam area flowing south from southwestern Chippewa County through Eau Claire and Dunn Counties into the Chippewa River. It is interrupted by Elk Creek Lake near the Dunn-Eau Claire County line. In the project boundary, Elk Creek has an average width of 15 feet and an average depth of 1.3 feet with a base flow of 22-24 cfs. Big Elk Creek has an average width of 4 feet and an average depth of .7 feet with a base flow of 2.5 to 4.0 cfs. Typically, the upper end of Elk Creek occupies a large valley with low gradient and the stream bottom is composed primarily of silt and sand. Below Elk Creek Lake it has cut almost to the level of the Chippewa River and the bottom is comprised mostly of sand and gravel. Approximately 10% of the project acreage consists of Type I, III or VI wetlands. The only significant mineral resources known to exist in the vicinity are sand and gravel. No active sand and gravel operations now occur within the project boundary. Very likely the project boundary encompasses substantial acreage of prime agricultural land.

2) Biological

a) Flora

Aquatic vegetation can be described as scarce, although it would include such species as: Water buttercup (Ranunculus sp.), Veronica sp., pondweeds (Potamogeton sp.) and duckweed (lemna sp.). Most of the area adjacent to the stream and tributaries have shrub marsh vegetation. The major species being tag alder with scattered lowland aspen and other grasses.

b) Fauna

The Elk Creek Fishery Area offers a diversified fishery. Although nineteen different species of fish inhabit the stream and tributaries, only brown and brook trout are sought by anglers. A variety of birds inhabit the project area both on a seasonal and permanent basis. White-tailed deer and cottontail rabbits are the most common game animals, while ruffed grouse, pheasant, grey and fox squirrels are present. Muskrat, beaver, mink and weasels are the most common furbearers, with lesser numbers of raccoon, skunk and fox. The area also provides habitat for woodcock and wood ducks, with mallards and blue-winged teal frequently using the area for brood rearing.

3) Social

Elk Creek is the major trout stream in the area and sustains moderate to heavy use by anglers from Eau Claire, Menomonie and Chippewa Falls, all of which are within a half-hour drive. A 1974 creel census indicated 9,200 angler days of fishing pressure per year. Hunters and trappers

account for 345 man-days of recreation and photographers, nature hikers, birdwatchers, and berry pickers account for another 500 man-days. Private development within the proposed boundary consists of 33 farmsteads and 19 year-round homes.

4) Economic

With an increase in fishing potential, the project would help stimulate the local economy. Area bait shops, service stations, taverns, and restaurants would experience some increase in patronage. Habitat improvement would provide seasonal employment for four persons on an LTE basis. This project itself will generate income for suppliers of materials and will likely prevent some erosion and the associated loss of valuable topsoil from fertile farm land.

5) Other (include archaeological, historical, etc.)

Only Chippewa County has been surveyed for properties of architectural significance. Three properties are located in the Village of Old Albertsville, an abandoned schoolhouse, a church on the east side of the Albertsville Road, and Nelson's Meat Market in the center of Old Albertsville. Others are the Big Elk Creek Lutheran Church on CTH "M", north of Myhre Road. Finally, two bridges are included, U.S.H. 12 crossing over Elk Creek and CTH "M" bridge over Big Elk Creek.

BENEFICIAL AND ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (include indirect and secondary impacts)

1) Physical

The beneficial physical impacts include supplemental instream cover, increased water velocity, and a deeper channel. Beneficial impacts will be noticed immediately after any brushing and structure installation. Brushing will result in a flushing action eliminating silt and organic debris. Covered gravel beds will be cleared of silt. The channel will deepen and the flow will increase. Stream side grasses will arch into the stream providing cover for all aquatic organisms. Wing deflectors and boom covers will have much the same effect.

Adverse physical impacts will be minor. There will be a temporary disruption of the streambed where structures are installed. Brushed areas may expose streambank soil until a grass cover is established. A small erosion hazard will exist. A very small amount of herbicide may reach the stream during application. The concentration should be insignificant and have no effect on stream life. An additional erosion hazard from the scraping and compaction of soils resulting from heavy equipment operation during the boom cover placement will exist. Some vegetation will be removed during construction further increasing the erosion hazard. Acquisition will serve to protect those wetlands within the project boundary.

The Elk Creek Master Plan does not discuss the disposition of any prime agricultural lands that might be acquired. However, it is likely the Department would follow the normal policy of resale or share cropping of these lands.

Other probable adverse impacts that would result from management activities, e.g., surveys, should be negligible.

2) Biological Impacts

Beneficial biological impacts will strongly outweigh all expected adverse impacts. The removal of tag alders may have a minor adverse effect on woodcock and ruffed grouse. The acreages involved, however, would be small compared to the large adjacent amount of this habitat type which would remain untouched. The tag alders would be replaced by reed canary grass and this in conjunction with the brush piles would provide escape cover and brood cover. There will be an increase in sunlight reaching the stream. This will stimulate plant growth providing cover and a substrate for invertebrate life.

The increased food supply will also result from the installation of wing dams and boom covers. The rocks used in construction will increase substrate for invertebrates. These structures, however, will primarily provide additional trout cover.

Increased flow will eliminate silt and debris from the stream bottom. This will expose gravel areas that may be used for spawning. An additional artificial spawning area will be developed.

Adverse biological impacts resulting from the placement of structures will be a temporary disruption of the streambed and streambank. Both flora and fauna will be affected for a short time, but not significantly.

The plantings of spruce, pine and shrubs will increase wildlife cover and food resources. No adverse impacts are expected from this project. Selective cuttings will be kept small as to limit any erosion hazard. These cuttings will not occur on steep slopes. There will be an increase in young browse for deer. No adverse impact from cutting is expected.

All areas of development will also be examined for the presence or absence of endangered and threatened species and appropriate protective measures will be taken for significant sites. If any sites are found during development, construction will be suspended until the Office of Endangered Species and Nongame Species (DNR) is consulted. The site(s) will be evaluated and protective measures taken for significant locations.

3) Economic

Improvement in the trout fishery of Elk Creek may attract more anglers, but the effect on the local economy will be insignificant. Payments in lieu of taxes will be made to the local township to ease the loss of tax base.

4) Social

There should be an improvement in the trout population which would provide recreational opportunities. Wildlife habitat will improve resulting in additional hunting activities. Relocation, if necessary, will be processed in accordance with the current state guidelines.

PROBABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Habitat development projects will temporarily disturb the stream, streambed and streambank. Disturbance, however, will be limited. Brushing and post-treatment may result in a minor erosion hazard and minor discharge of the herbicide and sediment into the waterway. The effects should be inconsequential. Immediately following brushing and structure installation, a temporary decrease in trout numbers may be noticed. The heavy equipment used for instream deflectors and covers will disturb flora for one growing season. Re-seeding will follow if the area suffers to any extent.

The development of quality game and fish habitat may cause increased use. The Elk Creek Fishery Area will experience only minor adverse impacts resulting from increased use. Increased littering, vandalism and disturbance of flora and fauna will occur, but not to any major degree.

IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

1) Energy

Gasoline and oil used in transporting people to and from the project area and that used in actual construction cannot be recovered.

2) Archaeological and Historic Features or Site

None will be affected.

3) Other

The shrub and tree plantings will be irretrievable. No irreversible management activities are planned for the area. Wing dams, boom covers, and wildlife plantings can be removed and/or replaced if necessary. Selective cuttings for wildlife and stream side brush is not irreversible, except on a temporary basis. Herbicide used to control regrowth of streambank vegetation would be irretrievable.

ALTERNATIVES (No Action-Enlarge-Reduce-Modify-Other Locations and/or Methods. Discuss and describe fully with particular attention to alternatives which might avoid some or all adverse environmental effects. Attach additional sheets if necessary).

1) Status Quo

One alternative is to do nothing and to leave the project "as it now exists." This alternative would leave several acres of privately owned land without public access or stream bank protection.

Stream banks would continue to erode and destroy valuable spawning sites and instream habitat.

The stream and its tributaries would probably continue to function as trout water because of high water quality, but would continue to produce below potential.

2) Enlarge Project

A proposal has been made to extend the project boundaries to include several areas in Dunn and Eau Claire Counties immediately above Elk Creek Lake, and from Elk Creek Lake to the confluence with the Chippewa River. The project boundaries under this proposal would also be extended to include six tributaries to the northwest and northeast of Elk Creek. The total acreage goal would have to be expanded and would include the combination of the Elk and Big Elk Creek project areas. These tributaries carry brook trout populations and serve as spawning and nursery areas for trout from Elk Creek. It is important to the overall welfare of the total watershed that the Department have control of these tributaries. A decline in the water quality of these tributaries would result in a decline in water quality within Elk Creek proper.

The area below Elk Creek Lake is good trout water. The 1974 creel census showed high angler usage in the segment from CTH "C", Dunn County, upstream to Elk Creek Lake. The area immediately above Elk Creek Lake is considered to be some of the best trout water in the Elk Creek watershed. This area offers much geologic history, scenery, and the best open areas for the fly fishermen. Both areas, above and below Elk Creek Lake, have serious erosion problems. Stabilization of the area should have high priority, but is presently outside the project boundary area.

Finally, consolidation of Elk Creek and Big Elk Creek Fishery Areas would streamline acquisition, records and management of the two areas. This proposal has been submitted concurrent with this document.

3) Reduce the Project

The project could be reduced in scope simply by reducing the number of structures placed in the stream or limiting the work to riprapped bank protection only.

Given analysis of existing limiting factors controlling the trout population, we can predict that an increase in trout biomass will be directly proportional

to increased habitat; however, there is an optimum number of structures which can be placed instream to achieve the desired results. Placement of fewer structures than planned would simply mean the stream would produce a fishery at some level below its full potential.

A reduction in acreage will lead to reduced stream protection, limited public access, no erosion control, no opportunity for instream habitat development and a declining fishery in any areas removed from the project.

4) Timber Production and/or Wildlife Production Only

Conversion of low quality oak, aspen, and brush to conifers and planting of all open areas to conifers would greatly reduce the wildlife habitat. Conversely, the elimination of existing economic forest species and the elimination of the conversion and maintenance of an early stage of succession by controlled burns or mechanical means would seriously affect economic forest production.

5) Continue the Existing Management Program

Various management programs have been initiated by the Department on the Elk Creek Fishery Area since 1951 and on Big Elk since 1969. Existing programs in the project area consist of the following:

- a. Land acquisition for public access, stream protection and improvement.
- b. Instream habitat improvement and streambank brushing.
- c. Inventory of critical erosion sites and deteriorating instream trout habitat.
- d. Management for minimal beaver populations.
- e. Fish stocking program of 1600 legal-sized brown trout restricted to Elk Creek only to be terminated in 1981.
- f. Timber management.
- g. Streambank fencing.

6) Increased Development

a. Public Access

Creation of narrow walk-in access points may be necessary in future acquisitions. It is not necessary at this time to create parking areas. Such parking areas may cause concentrations of anglers around these points.

b. Recreational development areas

1. Canoe landings* - Recreational canoeing is not practical because of stream size and numerous instream obstacles.

2. Picnic areas* - The need for these facilities within the project boundaries has never been demonstrated.
3. Camping areas* - To date no demand for camping areas has been demonstrated. It is anticipated that should the need arise, it will be met by private and public campgrounds nearby.
4. Trails - Cross-country skiing is permitted in state-owned and easement property within the project boundary. A marked and maintained trail is not available at this time.

7) Other Alternatives

- a. Increase stocking rates of legal size fish to allow a simple put and take fishery. There is little quality in this type of fishery. Holdover trout are highly prized but few streams have the potential for these "lunker" sized fish.
- b. Increase the "quality of the fishing experience" by promoting special restrictions on given areas of the stream. Some restrictions might include: fly fishing only, artificial flies and lures only, catch-release, slot size limits, restrictions on creel limits, or any combination of the above.

Though restrictions of this nature may provide differing types of quality fishing, quality fishing regulations are not enjoyed by all anglers and the total angling public may not accept them.

Perhaps in future years the "quality fishing experience" will be recognized and enjoyed by a larger percentage of anglers and these types of regulations can be employed.

8) Combination of Alternatives

It is possible to manage the stream for improved water quality by stabilizing stream banks and restricting livestock in areas where cattle may cause damage. Instream habitat improvement will increase brown trout cover and population biomass. Finally, land control in the proposed boundary extension areas and consolidation of Elk Creek and Big Elk Creek Fishery Areas will ensure good water quality and guarantee public access now and in the future.

*If these developments were ever justified, they would have to be located on fee title lands.

EVALUATION (Discuss each category. Attach additional sheets and other pertinent information if necessary.)

- 1) As a result of this action, it is likely that other events or actions will happen that may significantly affect the environment? If so, list and discuss. (Secondary effects)

There may be increased littering, trespass and temporary erosion and siltation during construction. These effects are not anticipated to be significant.

- 2) Does this action alter the environment so a new physical, biological or socio-economic environment would exist? (New environmental effect)

The environmental effect will be to reduce erosion and create permanent habitats for fish, particularly brown trout.

- 3) Are the existing environmental features that would be affected by the proposed action scarce, either locally or statewide? If so, list and describe. (Geographically scarce)

No, there are numerous miles of trout streams in Chippewa County.

- 4) Does the action and its effect(s) require a decision which would result in influencing future decisions? Describe. (Precedent setting)

No, the Department of Natural Resources has been protecting and improving trout streams for several years.

- 5) Discuss and describe concerns which indicate a serious controversy. (Highly controversial)

Increased state purchase of land or land rights along the stream may be somewhat controversial, although the DNR has been actively purchasing lands in this area for more than 20 years and no controversy has arisen to date. While the use of chemicals is always potentially controversial, the use of Ammate for brush control has not proven to be such.

- 6) Does the action conflict with official agency plans or with any local, state or national policy? If so, how? (Inconsistent with long-range plans or policies)

This project is consistent with state and federal fish management and recreational plans and policies.

- 7) While the action by itself may be limited in scope, would repeated actions of this type result in major or significant impacts to the environment? (Cumulative impacts)

It may significantly reduce erosion and increase stable fish habitats resulting in greater fish productivity.

- 8) Will the action modify or destroy any historical, scientific, or archaeological site?

No, it may provide greater protection for some of these features.

- 9) Is the action irreversible? Will it commit a resource for the foreseeable future? (Foreclose future options)

No, although not very feasible, this action could be reversed.

- 10) Will the action result in direct or indirect impacts on ethnic or cultural groups? (Socio-cultural impacts)

This project will have no impact on native Americans or their land.

- 11) Other

None.

ELK CREEK WATER PROJECT

OF AGENCIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT

Date	Agency Personnel and Title	Comments
3-79	Rollie Nesbit-DNR Wildlife Manager	Favorable to project - Wildlife Mgt. comments included in Master Plan
8-79	Brian Marinello - DNR Forester	Favorable to project - Forestry Mgt. comments included in Master Plan
26-79	Ojibeau Chapter - Trout Unlimited c/o Ron Koshoshek	Highly favorable to habitat improvement project.

COMMENDATION

- Not Required
- Analysis of the expected impacts of this proposal is of sufficient scope and detail to conclude that this is not a major action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In my opinion therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required prior to final action by the Department on this project.
- Refer to Office of the Secretary
- Major and Significant Action: Prepare EIS
- Request EIR

Additional factors, if any, affecting the evaluator's recommendation:

SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR
/s/ Douglas Erickson *de*

DATE
April 30, 1980

CERTIFIED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH WEPA

DISTRICT OR BUREAU DIRECTOR (OR DESIGNEE)
Cirion E. [Signature]

DATE
6-4-80

APPROVED (if required by Manual Code)

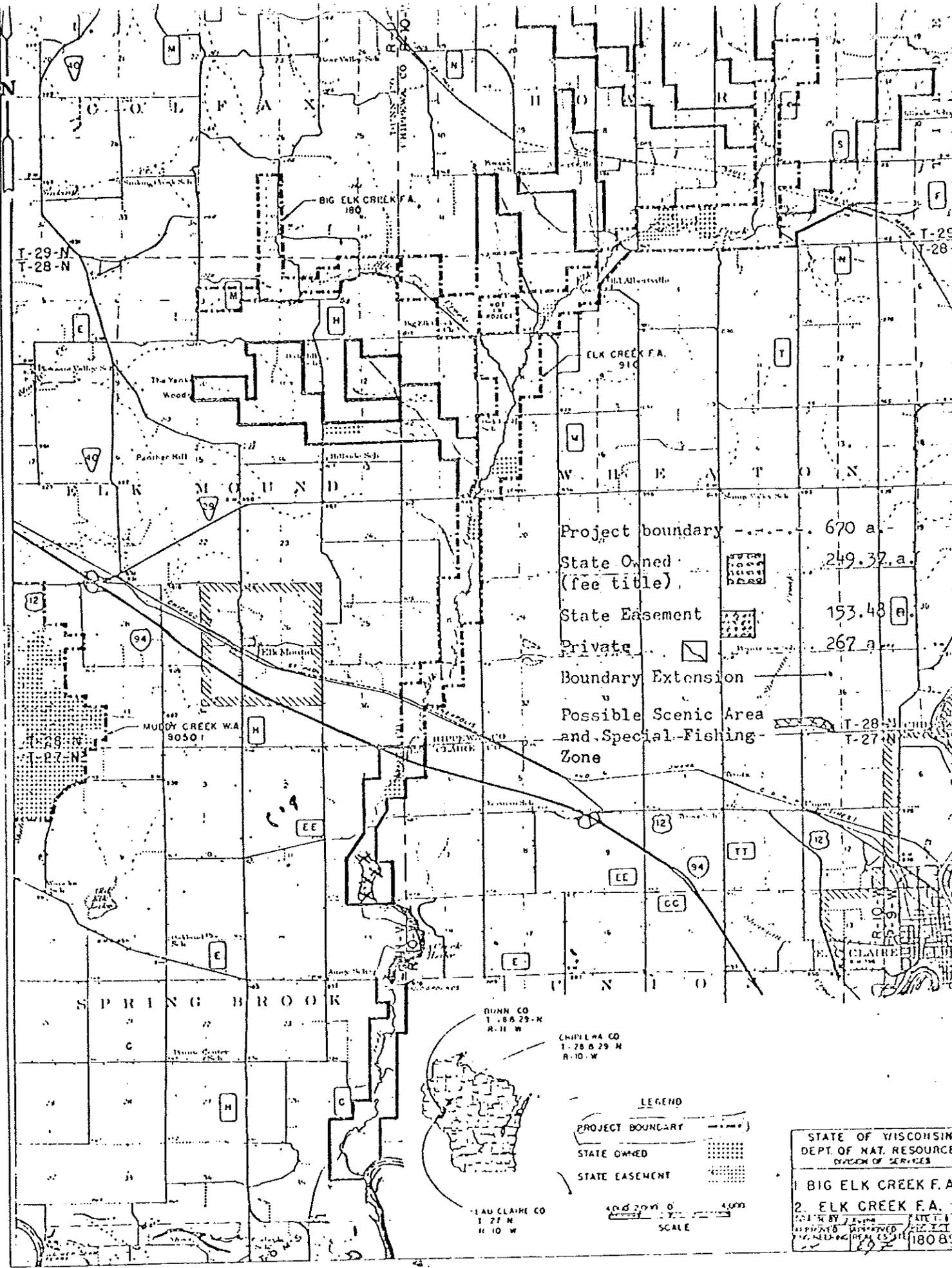
DIRECTOR, BEI

DATE

This decision is not final until approved by the appropriate Director and/or Director, BEI.

LIST AGENCIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT

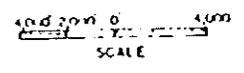
1-22-80	William Tans Scientific areas	Comments attached
1-28-80	Richard Dexter Historic Preserva- tion Division	Comments attached



Project boundary	670 a.
State Owned (fee title)	249.37 a.
State Easement	153.48 a.
Private	267 a.
Boundary Extension	
Possible Scenic Area and Special Fishing Zone	

LEGEND

PROJECT BOUNDARY	
STATE OWNED	
STATE EASEMENT	



STATE OF WISCONSIN
 DEPT. OF NAT. RESOURCE
 DIVISION OF SERVICES

1 BIG ELK CREEK F.A.
 2 ELK CREEK F.A.
 180 BS

DUNN CO
 T. 28 & 29 - N
 R. 11 - W

CHIPPEWA CO
 T. 28 & 29 - N
 R. 10 - W

EAU CLAIRE CO
 T. 27 - N
 R. 10 - W

William Tans - Madison

SUBJECT

Master Planning

Doug Erickson, DNR
Box 550
Chippewa Falls, Wis - 54729

DATE

22 Jan 1980

SAGE

This is in response to your request for natural area or scientific area information on Hay Creek (Chippewa Co.) and Elk Creek Fishery Areas.

Hay Creek = No known features of natural or scientific value; there may be small areas

Elk Creek Fishery = One area of particular significance is located in Dunn County T27N R11W W1/2 NW1/4 NE1/4 12. This is an old growth, white pine stand on the banks of Elk Creek, known since the 1950's. This should be designated a natural area, although now privately owned, with the possibility of scientific area status.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment. SIGNED William Tans

DATE

SIGNED

THIS COPY FOR PERSON ADDRESSED

January 20, 1980

Mr. Doug Erickson, Fish Manager
Department of Natural Resources
Chippewa County Courthouse
Box 550
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729

SHSW 78-80

RE: Elk Creek Fishery Area

Dear Mr. Erickson:

In regard to your letter of 10 January 1980, we have searched our records for information concerning the cultural resources of the Elk Creek Fishery Area.

Of the two counties which the Fishery Area straddles, only Chippewa County has been systematically surveyed for properties of potential architectural significance. Neither county has been surveyed for properties of purely historical interest. Of the architectural properties in Chippewa County, three are located in the village of Old Albertsville, Section 4, T28N, R10W. The properties include an abandoned schoolhouse on the north side of an unnamed road, 0.2 miles east of Albertsville Road; a church on the east side of Albertsville Road, 30 yards north of the intersection of Starr Road; and Nelson's Meat Market in the center of Old Albertsville. Further downstream, is the Big Elk Creek Luther Church on County Trunk "M", north of Lyhre Road (Section 6, T28N, R10W). Finally, there are two bridges of some engineering interest located in the Fishery Area: one on USH 12 crossing the Elk River, Section 31; and the other on CTR "M" over Big Elk Creek, Sections 5 and 8, T28N, R10W. None of the above properties have been evaluated in terms of their eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

There are probably other buildings in the Fishery Area which may be of some architectural or historical interest located in Dunn County. If you wish to have any of these buildings evaluated for its potential significance, please send me a photograph of it along with the date of its construction (if known) and a map showing its location.

No systematic archeological survey has been done for either Chippewa or Dunn counties, so we have virtually no information on these resources. Based on our experience elsewhere, however, we believe the Chippewa River and its tributaries has a very high potential of containing both prehistoric and historic archeological sites. We recommend that all plans for the development or improvement of the Fishery Area be reviewed for the impact

Mr. Doug Erickson - 2

January 28, 1980

such actions could have on the Fishery Area's potential archeological resources. We would be pleased to assist you with these reviews in whatever way we can.

Although the above information is not as complete as I could wish, I trust that it will prove useful. If I can be of any further assistance on this matter, please contact me. My telephone number is (609) 262-2732.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Dexter
Compliance Coordinator

RWD:en