

Form 1100-1  
Rev. 11-82

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 636

**SUBJECT:** MASTER PLANNING: Approval of the master plan for Loon Lake Wildlife area, Barron County, including a land acquisition boundary modification.

**FOR** April **BOARD MEETING**  
(month)

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Dave Gjestson

**SUMMARY:**

The Department proposes to manage a state-owned wildlife area for optimum waterfowl production, forest wildlife and fish as well as other compatible multiple-use benefits.

The proposed property boundary change will delete 740 acres of land comprised of cropland, timber and tracts containing improvements which are not needed for recreational or management purposes. An additional 320 acres are incorporated into the property boundary to accommodate flowage construction and nesting cover development to support the waterfowl production objective. The acquisition goal remains unchanged (3,298.14 acres).

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Natural Resources Board approval of the Loon Lake Wildlife Area Master Plan including a land acquisition boundary modification.

**LIST OF ATTACHED REFERENCE MATERIAL:**

- No  Fiscal Estimate Required
- No  Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required
- No  Background Memo

- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached

- cc: Judy Scullion - AD/5
- James Huntoon - AD/5
- Carl Evert - OL/4
- Steve Miller - WM/4
- Dave Gjestson - WM/4
- H. S. Druckenmiller - EA/6
- David Jacobson - Spooner

**APPROVED:**

Steven W. Miller 3/10/86  
Bureau Director Steven W. Miller Date

James R. Huntoon 3/19/86  
Administrator James R. Huntoon Date

C. D. Besadny 4-9-86  
Secretary C. D. Besadny Date

## CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: March 7, 1986 File Ref: 2300  
To: C. D. Besadny  
From: Steven W. Miller   
Subject: Loon Lake Wildlife Area

The final Concept Element of the subject Plan is presented for your approval. The Plan has been subjected to a 45-day review by the appropriate Department functions, advisory groups and other resource agencies.

Comments received have been reviewed by the Bureau of Wildlife Management and the Northwest District. Agreement was reached on the treatment of comments, the majority of which were incorporated into the final draft. Advisory group and outside agency comments along with Department responses are shown in the Plan Appendix. No public controversy has been brought to our attention during the review process.

The Plan establishes annual objectives to produce ducks as well as provide public hunting and fishing opportunities. Other public benefits include hiking, boating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation and photography.

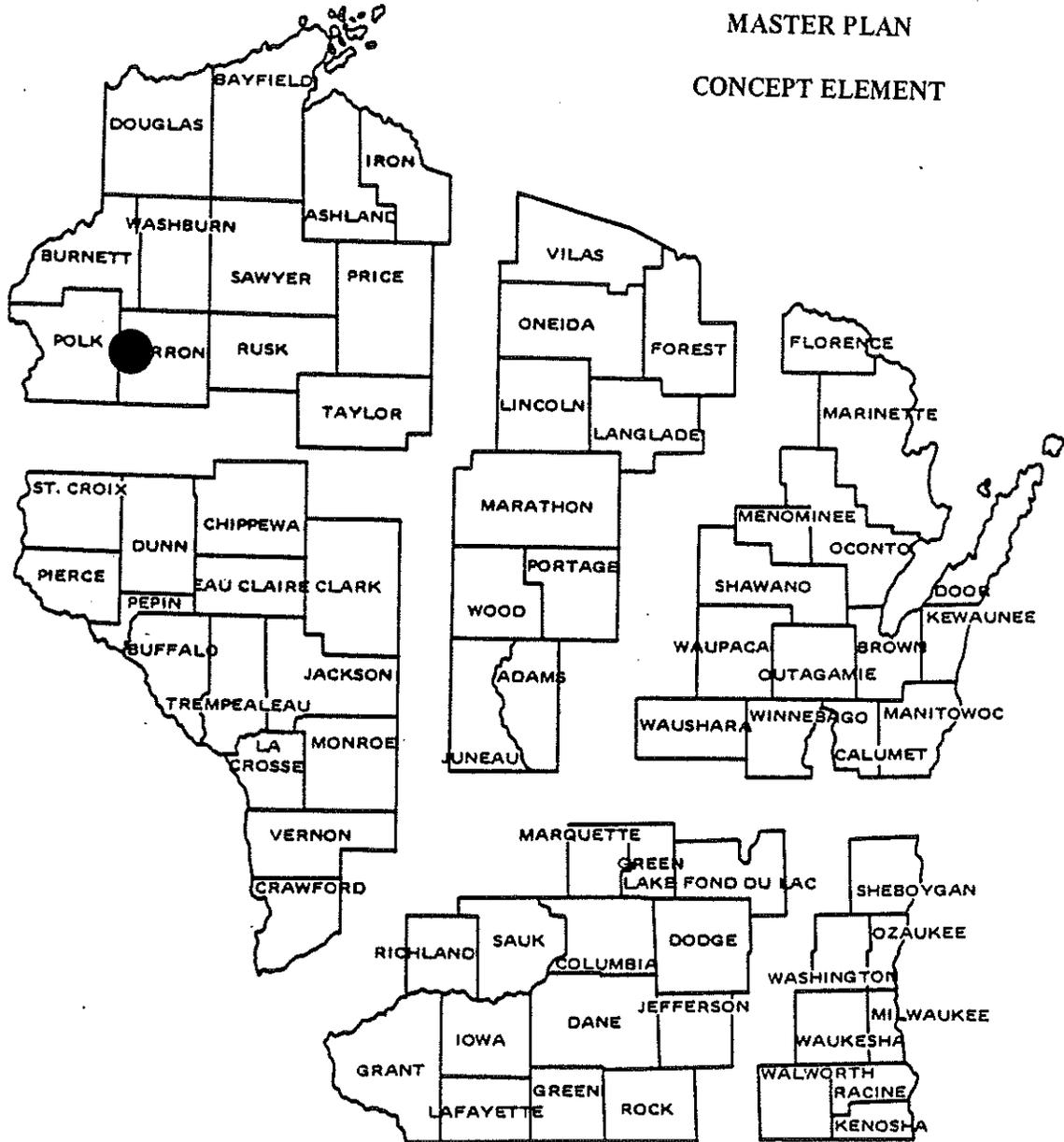
Presently, the state owns 2,392.64 acres. A boundary change deleting 740 acres and adding 320 acres is necessary to achieve the proposed goal and objectives for this property. The purchase goal (3,298.14 acres) will remain unchanged.

DLG:mg

# LOON LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

## MASTER PLAN

### CONCEPT ELEMENT

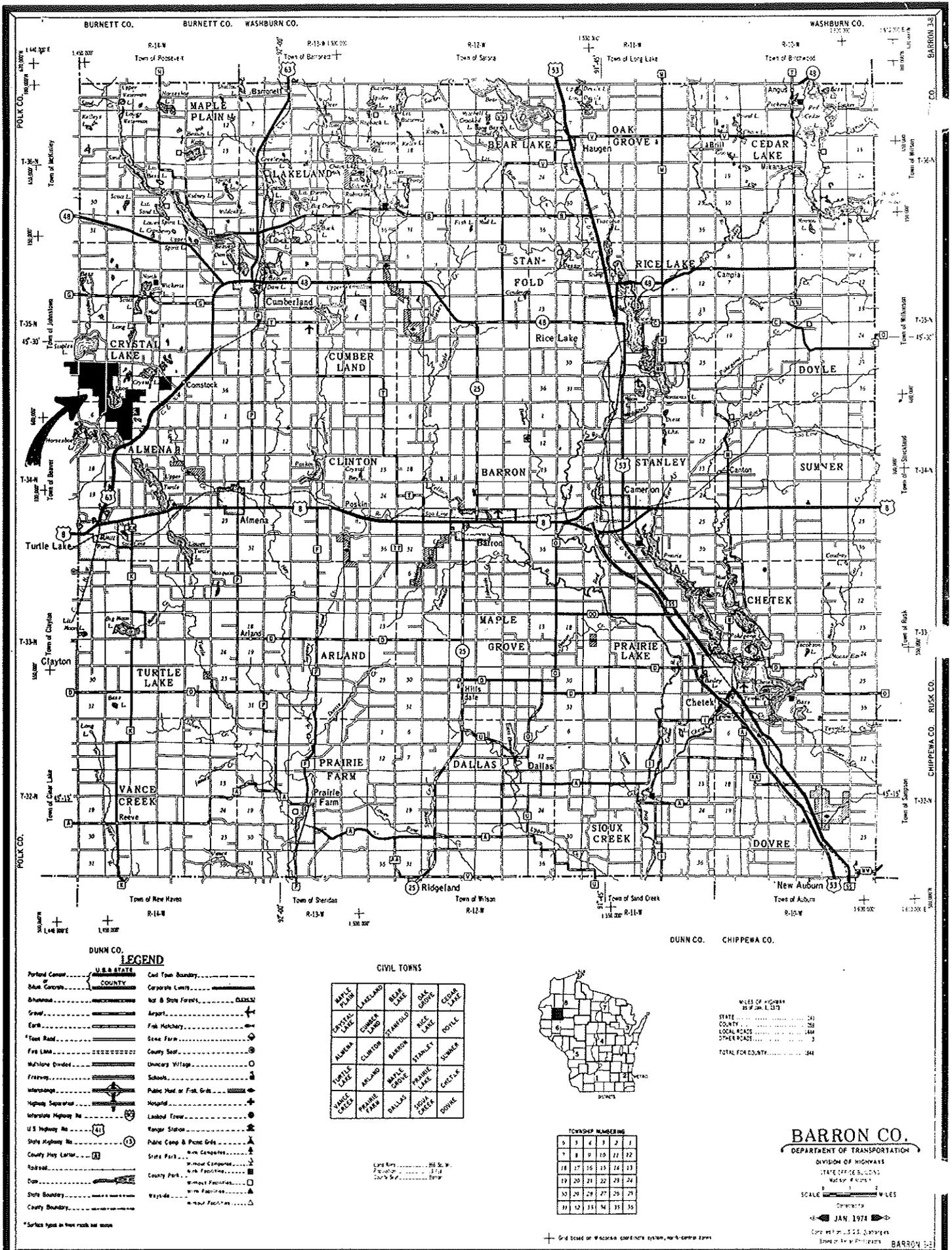


Property Task Force

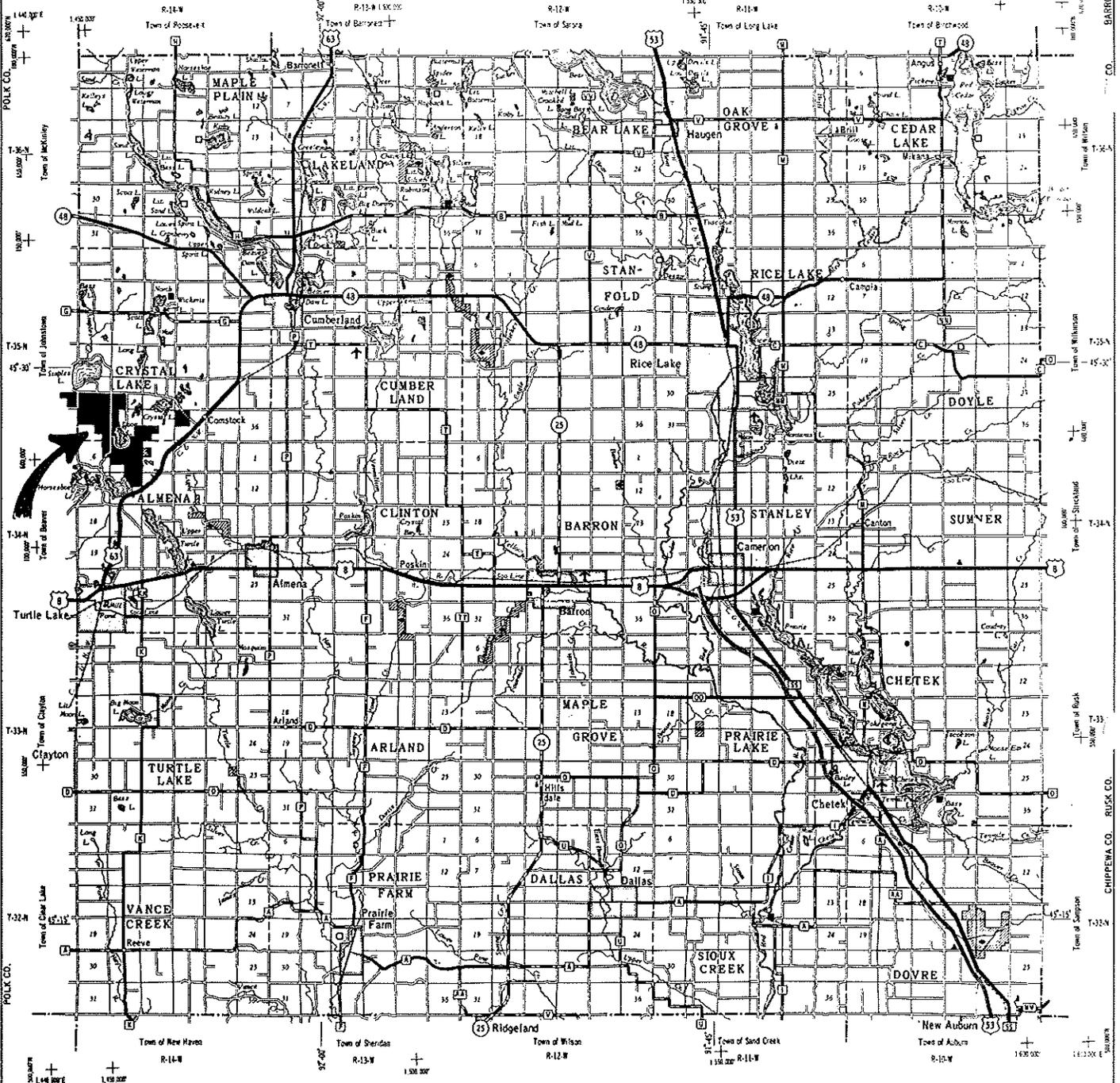
Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader: John L. Porter, Wildlife Manager  
Richard R. Cornelius, Fish Manager  
Dennis L. Waterman, Forester  
Owen Anderson, Conservation Warden

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



BURNETT CO. BURNETT CO. WASHBURN CO. WASHBURN CO.



**LEGEND**

- Portland Cement
- Ohio Concrete
- Shelburne
- Gravel
- Earth
- \*Trestle Road
- Fire Line
- Highway Divided
- Frontage
- Interchange
- Highway Superior
- Interstate Highway No.
- U.S. Highway No.
- State Highway No.
- County Hwy. L.P.M.
- Railroad
- Dam
- State Boundary
- County Boundary

**CIVIL TOWNS**

MAPLE PLAIN	LAKELAND	BEAR LAKE	OAK GROVE	CECILIA
CRYSTAL LAKE	CUMBERLAND	STANLEY	DOYLE	
ALMENA	CLINTON	BARRON	STANLEY	SUMNER
TURTLE LAKE	ARLAND	MAPLE GROVE	PRAIRIE LAKE	CHETEK
VANCE CREEK	PRAIRIE FARM	DALLAS	STIOUX CREEK	DOVRE



**TOWNSHIP NUMBERING**

5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39

**MILES OF HIGHWAY**  
AS OF JAN. 1, 1974

STATE	241
COUNTY	253
LOCAL ROADS	148
OTHER ROADS	13
<b>TOTAL FOR COUNTY</b>	<b>645</b>

**BARRON CO. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WISCONSIN CAPITOL  
SCALE 1" = 10 MILES

DATE: JAN. 1974  
COPY BY: U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

FIGURE 1 LOCATOR

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## LOON LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

### Section I - Actions

#### GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

##### Goal

To manage a state-owned wildlife area for optimum production of waterfowl, forest wildlife and fish, as well as other compatible multiple-use benefits.

##### Annual Objectives

- 1) Produce one duck per acre on 780 acres of permanent water (about 780 total ducks).
- 2) Provide 7,500 participant-days of hunting and trapping opportunity as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Participant-days</u>
Waterfowl hunting	2,500
Deer (gun and bow)	2,000
Ruffed grouse & woodcock	1,500
Furbearers	600
Other small game	900

- 3) Provide 4,000 angler-days of warm water fishing.

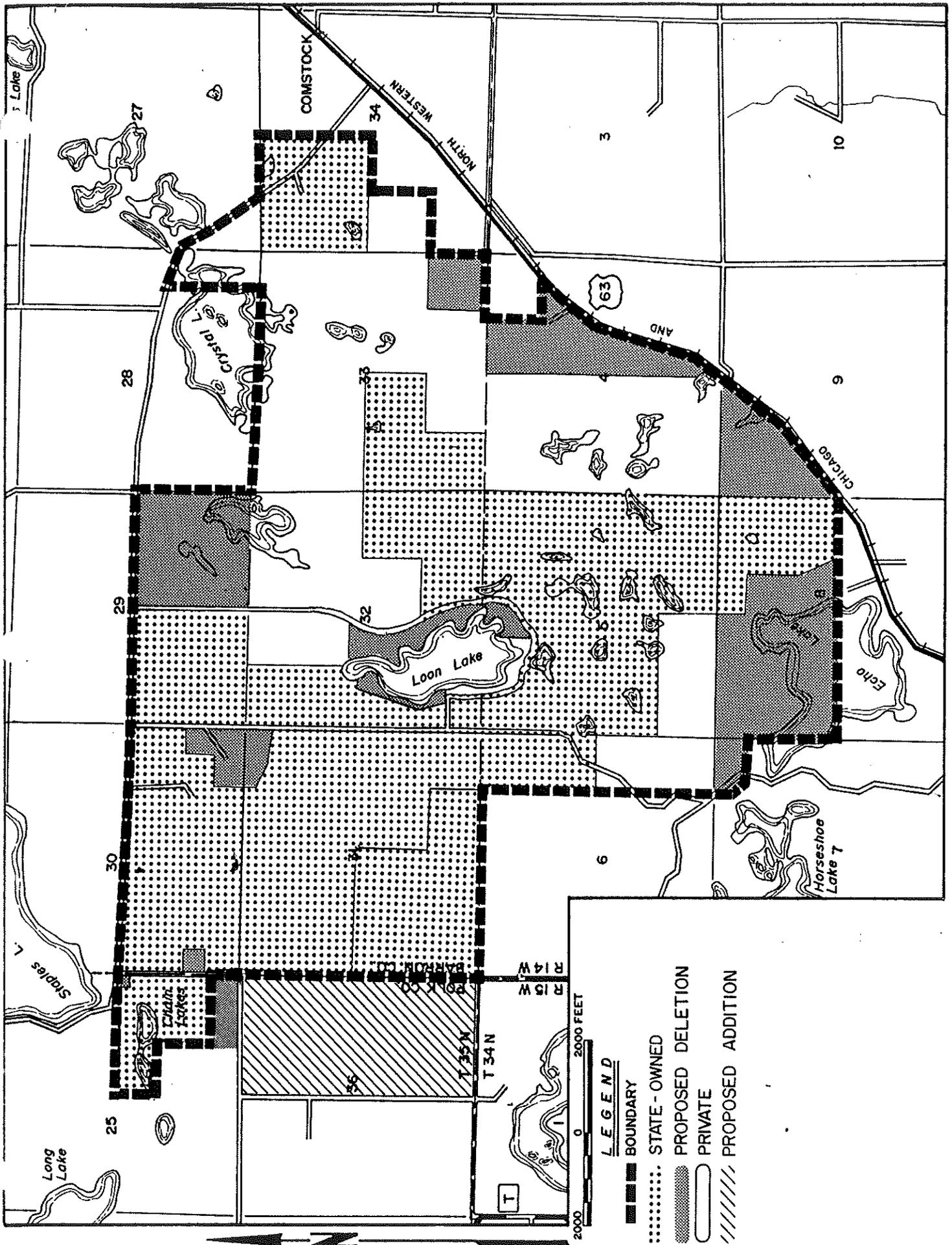
##### Annual Additional Benefits

- 1) Accommodate 2,000 participant-days of educational and recreational activities including hiking, boating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation and photography.
- 2) Contribute to the habitat of other wildlife, including migratory, endangered and threatened.
- 3) Provide a harvest of merchantable timber based on an average annual cost of 80 acres.

#### RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

##### Land Acquisition (Figure 2)

State ownership on June 30, 1985 was 2,392.64 acres with a purchase goal of 3,298.14 acres. The proposed modification of the acquisition boundary is shown in Figure 2. The tracts deleted from the property contain high value



LOON LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

FIGURE 2 OWNERSHIP

improvements and state ownership is not necessary to meet proposed objectives. This boundary change will delete 740 acres from the original boundary and add 320 acres by extending the western boundary. The purchase goal will remain unchanged.

The new acreage goal will allow purchase of all tracts necessary to meet the proposed goals and objectives. A 20-acre tract of agricultural land on the northwest boundary is surplus to the property needs and should be sold or utilized for trading purposes. All lands will be acquired from willing sellers.

### Wildlife

Wildlife management activities will be directed at enhancing waterfowl and forest wildlife production. Wetland habitat development will emphasize increased waterfowl production through construction of a complex of flowages, surrounded by dug-out pair ponds. Dense nesting cover will be established on adjacent agricultural fields to increase waterfowl production (Figure 3). The flowages will be approximately 15, 180 and 250 acres, respectively, and will be created by installing low head dikes (4-6 feet) and water control structures on drainage ditches that were excavated in the 1930's. The main water-control structures are on the Apple River, which was channeled in the 1930's. Twenty-five waterfowl pair ponds will be excavated near the flowages to increase waterfowl production.

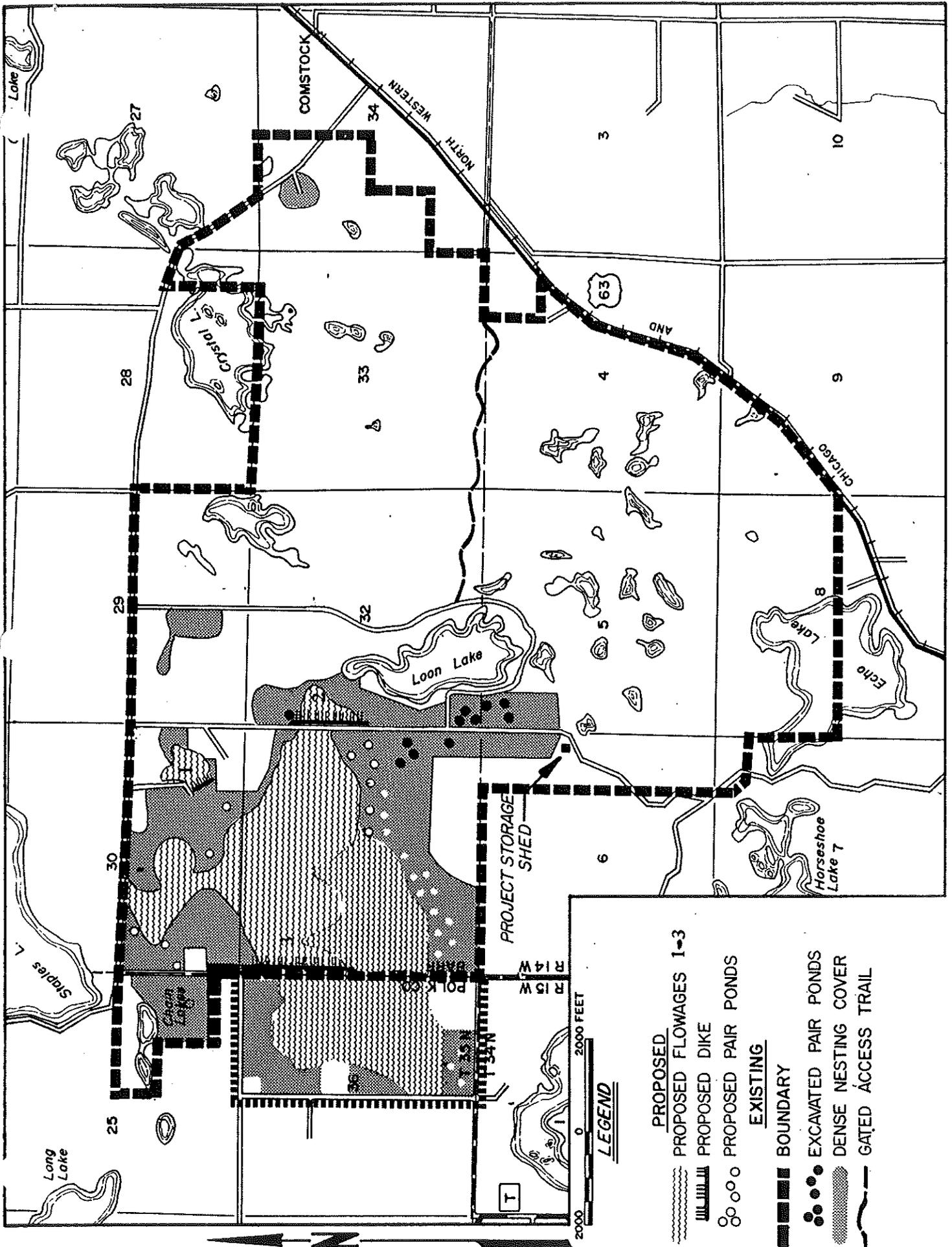
Three hundred seventy-five acres of dense grassy cover will be established as waterfowl nesting cover. This cover will be established on old farm fields located near and adjacent to the flowages. Prescribed burning of dense nesting cover and marshes will be conducted every 3 to 7 years to stimulate grass development and to control invasion of woody and other undesirable vegetation. Limited chemical use will also be necessary to establish nesting cover and control unwanted plants. Chemicals will be those commonly used in agriculture and will require Department approval.

Flowage construction will also favor furbearers, especially muskrat and mink. Den trees will be left untouched during timber operations to maintain raccoon habitat. Beaver are a valuable resource on the property by themselves and for the habitat they create. They will be trapped only during the regular season, unless they cause road damage.

Sharecropping will be conducted on 60 acres. Sharecroppers will plant dense nesting cover and establish small, scattered food plots for general wildlife use and openings maintenance in return for the privilege of farming additional state lands.

### Fish

There are 4 named lakes, 23 unnamed lakes and one permanent stream within the property boundary. Two of the lakes are greater than 50 acres in size, 22 are less than 10 acres, and all but the 4 largest lakes suffer at least occasional, partial winterkill conditions.



LOON LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

FIGURE 3 PROPOSED & EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS

Although most of the lakes contain some fishery (panfish, minnows), only the 4 named lakes contain fish populations of value to the angler. These lakes are Chain Lake, Crystal Lake, Loon Lake and Mud Lake. Of these lakes, Crystal Lake (90.5 acres) and Loon Lake (92.4 acres) have high quality fisheries and receive considerable angling pressure.

Public access to Loon Lake and Crystal Lake is nearly nonexistent. Access to Loon Lake is presently gained across private property on the south end of the lake and access to Crystal Lake is obtained from a town road which can be hazardous. Purchasing land and developing adequate public access with a boat ramp is urgently needed on both lakes, and will be pursued through state acquisition and development. The remainder of the lakeshore frontage on all lakes within the boundary should be preserved in their natural state without public accesses.

The planned 18-acre waterfowl flowage on the intermittent outlet of Loon Lake will most likely create northern pike spawning habitat. A northern pike spawning run from Loon Lake into the flowage may develop and could increase the northern pike population in Loon Lake.

The Apple River is the only permanent stream within the property boundary. The majority of the Apple River within the Loon Lake Wildlife Area was channeled during large scale drainage projects in the early 1930's. The stream contains a low value, warmwater fishery. Approximately 3,500 feet of the Apple River will be flooded by the proposed 250 and 180 acre flowages.

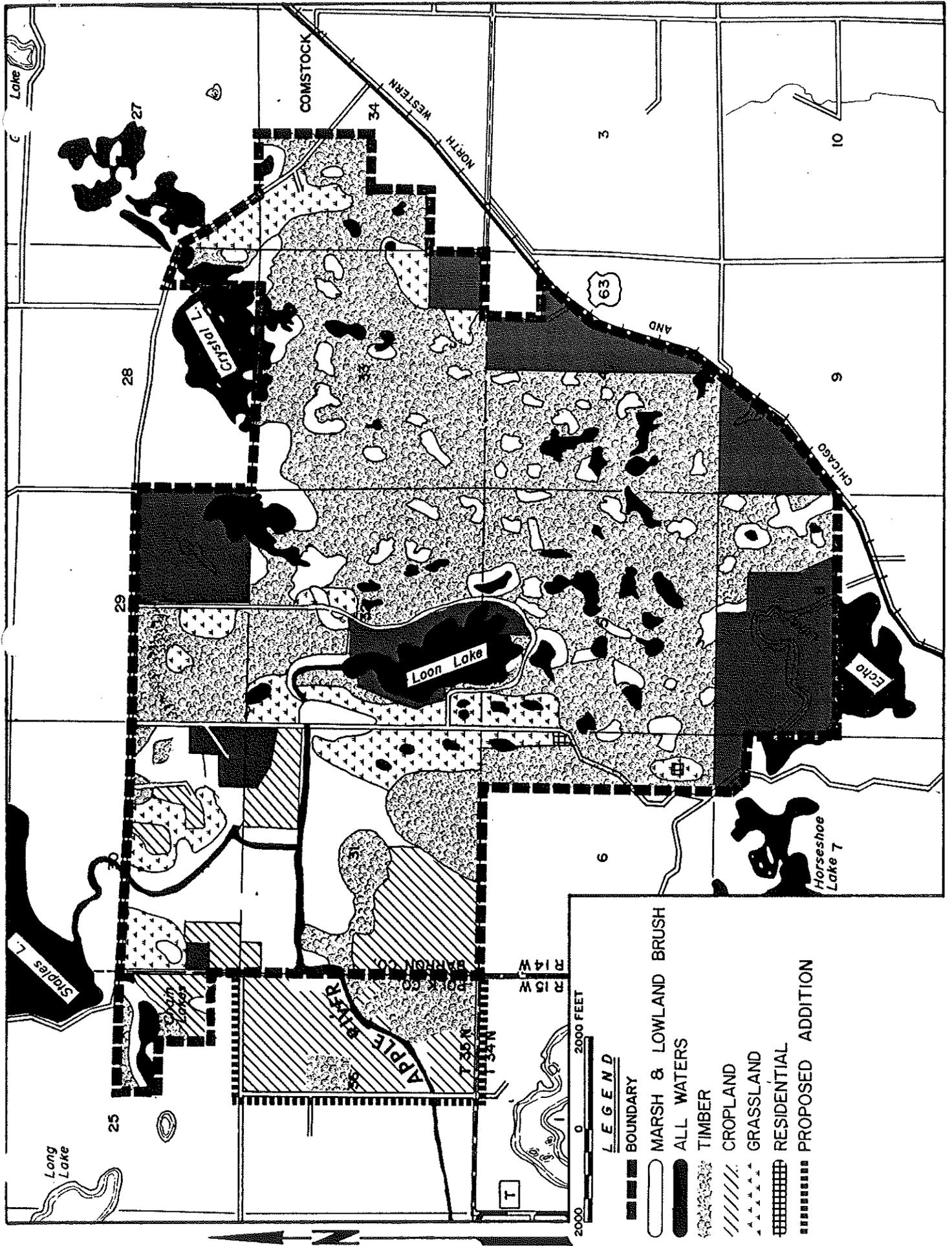
#### Forestry (Figure 4)

The wildlife area forest cover is predominately aspen and oak with young northern hardwoods mixed in the oak stands. The oak and aspen are good to very good in quality and the majority of the acreage is in need of a commercial timber harvest in the next 10 years. Compartment reconnaissance will be updated and a harvest tract plan will be developed.

Forest management objectives and practices will follow guidelines outlined in the Silvicultural and Forest Aesthetics Handbook (M.C. 2431.5), to provide a maximum combination of high quality wildlife habitat, timber production and aesthetic values. Commercial and non-commercial practices will be designed to provide a diverse forest habitat necessary to meet wildlife management objectives while improving the future quality of timber products.

Forest wildlife management will focus on maintaining the maximum amount of intolerant types, primarily aspen and oak, for the benefit of deer, ruffed grouse, woodcock and squirrels. Aspen will be managed in small stands (10 to 40 acres) to obtain a diversity within the forest. However, because the majority of aspen is near or at maturity, it will be necessary to schedule approximately 80 acres for harvest annually during this planning period.

The oak type is generally mixed with northern hardwoods and management will be by selective harvest and non-commercial thinning to favor oak in these stands. Oak regeneration cuts or hand planting of seedlings may be necessary



LOON LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

FIGURE 4 VEGETATION

in the future as the oak reaches maturity. All other forest types will be managed to improve the quality of forest wildlife habitat. The planned interspersation of age classes and forest types will be very beneficial to game as well as nongame species by producing a habitat structure that is much more diverse than presently occurs on the area.

All openings that occur within the forested area will be maintained for their wildlife and aesthetic values. Areas that are cleared for log landings will be seeded and maintained as forest openings following commercial harvest. Openings will be maintained by mowing, mechanical and limited chemical treatment using approved chemicals only.

Existing trails will be widened and seeded following timber sales and used for access and wildlife openings. All trails will be gated to restrict motorized vehicles from using them, with the exception of vehicles required for carrying out management activities.

Management Costs

Land Acquisition (estimated) - 905.5 acres @ \$450.00/acre	\$407,475
Boat Access Development	10,000
Flowages - 14 acres	15,000
180 acres	75,000
250 acres	75,000
Dense nesting cover - 375 acres @ \$50/acre	18,750
Excavate 35 waterfowl pair ponds	10,000
Non-commercial silvicultural practices	<u>10,000</u>
Total Acquisition and development costs	\$621,225
Annual maintenance costs - including dike maintenance, signing, trail and gate maintenance, prescribed burning and chemical treatment. -	\$ 2,000

Section II - Support Data

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Loon Lake Wildlife Area is located in portions of Almena and Crystal Lake Townships in western Barron County, and Johnstown Township and eastern Polk County. The property is located 5 miles southwest of Cumberland and approximately 4 miles directly north of Turtle Lake. The Wildlife Area is administered by the Department of Natural Resources wildlife manager located at the Barron DNR office, 16 miles from the wildlife area.

The wildlife area was established in 1962 by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission under a federal aid (Pittman-Robertson) project to acquire and develop the area primarily for waterfowl and furbearers, as well as to protect and enhance a deer yarding area. Since 1962, 2,392.64 acres have been purchased from willing sellers at a cost of \$538,582.90; the purchase goal is 3,198.14 acres.

Because the wildlife area is characterized by a variety of cover, terrain and soil types, it offers diversified management and recreational opportunities. The area is best described as a pitted outwash plain containing 60 potholes, 4 lakes and 2 large (300+ acres) drained wetlands surrounded by open farmland. Soil types range from Milaca-Cloquet sandy loam in the rolling upland to peat and muck in the lowland and Barronett loam on the open farmlands. The area is approximately 50% forested and 50% open marsh and farmland (Figure 4).

Table I - Vegetative Cover

<u>Cover Type</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cover Type</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Aspen	1,068	Residential	100
Oak	541	Muskeg	355
Northern hardwood	105	Cropland	553
White pine	121	Water	152
Red pine	5	Grass & Upland brush	499
Swamp hardwood	115	Lowland brush	158
White birch	145	Gravel pits	6
Tamarack	34	Right-of-way	30

Management efforts have focused primarily on land acquisition. Habitat practices to improve the area for wildlife have consisted of aspen clearcuts, openings maintenance, excavation of waterfowl pair ponds, wildlife food plots and dense nesting cover establishment. Ring-necked pheasants were stocked for a number of years, but were discontinued in 1980 because of the limited pheasant habitat available and the very large number of hunters.

Current public use consists of hunting, fishing, trapping, cross-country skiing, sightseeing, berry picking and hiking.

The state threatened red-shouldered hawk has been observed on the property. No other endangered or threatened species or archaeological sites are known to exist on the property.

The common game birds and mammals on the area are the mallard, blue-winged teal, woodduck, woodcock, muskrat, mink, raccoon, red fox, white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, squirrel, cottontail rabbit, with the ring-necked pheasant and Canada goose being present, but not common.

The aquatic furbearers and waterfowl populations will increase with the completion of the planned developments. Many species of nongame wildlife are present on the project and an inventory will be initiated in the future as funds are available. Fish species present are listed below:

<u>Loon Lake</u>	<u>Crystal Lake</u>	<u>Mud Lake</u>	<u>Chain Lake</u>
Walleye	Northern pike	Northern pike	Northern Pike
Northern pike	Largemouth bass	Largemouth bass	Largemouth bass
Largemouth bass	Walleye	Bluegill	Bluegill
Bluegill	Bluegill	Brown bullhead	Pumpkinseed
Black crappie	Black crappie	Stickleback	Yellow perch
Rock bass	Brown bullhead	Mudminnow	Black crappie
Pumpkinseed			Black bullhead
Yellow perch			White sucker
Green sunfish			
White sucker			
Brown-bullhead			
Fathead minnow			
Mudminnow			

The Loon Lake Wildlife Area is designated as a Fish and Wildlife Management Area (RD<sub>2</sub>). This land use designation will permit habitat management for wildlife and fishery resources found on the area. It will also provide for utilizing the commercial value of wood products resulting from habitat management actions.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

Many of the management problems at Loon Lake Wildlife Area are people-related. Littering, destruction of signs and gates, illegal firewood cutting, and off-road vehicle travel are all frequent problems. These problems appear to be simple acts of vandalism, and are not generally associated with hunting and fishing activities.

The property, while located in a rural area, is surrounded by a highly populated farming community. Domestic dogs running loose and killing deer in the winter has been a problem during every severe winter.

Public access to fish Crystal Lake and Loon Lake is very limited. Access to Crystal Lake is directly off a town road, and extremely dangerous. Loon Lake is accessible only across private lands. Resistance to public access development by private landowners has delayed solving these problems.

High water tables have generally limited farming activities and benefited wildlife populations. It has also caused some management problems due to restricted access and restricted farming for wildlife.

## ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

### Status Quo

Discontinuing acquisition and development would have a profound effect on waterfowl production and hunter/trapper recreation. Without flowages and additional nesting cover, the duck production objective would be reduced by 500. Waterfowl hunting would be reduced to less than 1,000 participant-days, and furbearer trapping would remain at about 200 participant-days. Small game hunting would remain at less than 500. Without purchase and development of 2 accesses, angler-days would peak at 2,000 and hazardous boat launchings would continue.

Without forest management, hunting of deer and ruffed grouse would not be initially affected. However, as the forest continues to mature, losing aspen and other important habitat types, hunting opportunity would decline. There would also be obvious loss of revenue and waste of forest products.

Cost of further acquisition and development would be saved for other use. However, the public would likely object to any alternative which would detract from the property's original purpose or fail to bring the area to full potential for public recreation.

### Expand Purchase Area

The boundary outlined in this plan will allow attainment of all property objectives. Surrounding lands could be purchased for wildlife production/hunter recreation. However, the best potential wildlife lands are already included in the boundary. Expansion would not be cost-effective.

Purchase of all acres within the boundary would increase total ownership by 419 acres. This would reduce hunter/landowner conflicts, but at increased cost. These acres are not considered necessary to meet the objectives of the property. Complete acquisition is not considered necessary.

Reduce Purchase Area

740 acres of the initial project have been eliminated within this plan to remove high cost-low need lands. Further reduction would significantly reduce the objectives of the property. While reduction would save money, it would also reduce the potential of the property to the point where criticism by the public would occur.

Recommended Management

The recommended management is to complete acquisition goals, and implement the management plan as outlined in Section I. This will provide for maximum wildlife production and recreational opportunities at the most reasonable cost.

4723L

APPENDIX A  
MASTER PLAN COMMENTS

By: Dick Lindberg  
Representing: The Wild Resources Advisory Council  
Date: September 3, 1985

An area as large as this one could very well have opportunities for natural area designations yet none were mentioned. The Council feels that the greatest potentials are in Sections 4, 5, 32 and 33. There are no wild or wilderness area potentials on the property. A timber type map should be included in the plan as well as an explanation of the type abbreviations. For example, the Council is not sure of the definition of the 355 acre KEG type. What affects do the flowages have on Apple River water quality and flow and what considerations are given to watershed protection? In the absence of advanced study, environmental damage could occur. Some mention of the area's potentials for protecting or establishing endangered or threatened resources would be helpful. Even the name of the area suggests opportunities for these species. Why are certain lands descriptions deleted from the property boundaries? The proposed deletions in Sections 29 and along the line between Sections 30 and 31 should be explained. The duck production estimate of one per acre is questioned. How does this measure up against production at other waterfowl areas such as Crex Meadows and its satellite areas. In general, the Council felt that this was a rather brief plan for a property of this size.

DNR Response:

The Department does not feel the area is large enough or unique enough to warrant natural area designations. The cover types found in Sections 4, 5, 32, and 33 are common throughout the region. However, timber harvesting will not occur in the immediate vicinity of most water areas. KEG type has been changed in the text to Muskeg. The Apple River is a fertile watershed. Flowages can act as a trap, depending on how they are designed. A top draw, low flow system would be most effective with a baffle system or downstream rubble to help reintroduce oxygen. Present management practices and state ownership are the only available means to protect endangered or threatened resources. Deleted land descriptions are mostly high valued tracts with many high valued improvements on them. The small tract of land between Sections 30 and 31 is a 40-acre parcel of land and farm buildings that were owned by the state then sold back to private interest because of high valued improvements. Duck production is about the same or slightly higher than Crex Meadows and its satellite areas. The Department is sorry that the brevity of the plan does not meet up to the Council's desires, but feels it effectively serves its purpose.

By: Forest Sterns  
Representing: The Natural Areas Preservation Council  
Date: October 17, 1985

The Natural Areas Preservation Council (NAPC) has reviewed the recently completed draft of the Loon Lake Wildlife Area Management Plan and offers the following comments. We recommend that the property manager, coordinating with the Bureau of Endangered Resources, establish grassland bird surveys within the 375 acres of grassy cover to be created. We recommend protection of a complex of hardwater seepage lakes and mature forest by classifying 280 acres of the Loon Lake Wildlife Area as a Public Use Natural Area (PUNA). The PUNA should encompass the following area: T34N, R14W, Sec. 5, E 1/2 NE 1/4, SE 1/4 and Sec. 8, NE 1/4 NE 1/4.

DNR Response:

Though the Department agrees a grassland bird survey would provide useful information, it is unlikely that time constraints would allow such a study to be performed at this time. Although the Department did consider PUNA status for the property, public managed area status (PUMA) was chosen instead. The original purpose for acquisition of the property was as a deer yard, and the aspen and oak cover are in need of harvest.

By: Stanley A. Nichols  
Representing: Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey  
Date: October 2, 1985

Nothing is said about geology, soils, mineral ownership or the 7 1/2 minute quadrangle sheet where the parcel is located. Townships and Range property location has to be surmised from the county map. This is all basic resource information which was overlooked. Page 3 - Fish, nothing is said about the Echo Lake Fishery. Page 7 - \$1,000 annual maintenance fee appears low compared to the cost.

DNR Response:

The Department feels the property is adequately described in the text as it is written. Appropriate text has been inserted with regard to geology and soils. Echo Lake has been deleted from the property boundary because of high priced development. The annual maintenance fee has been changed to \$2,000.

By: Cynthia A. Morehouse  
Representing: Department of Transportation  
Date: August 14, 1985

We have reviewed the Management Plan for the Loon Lake Wildlife Area in Barron and Polk Counties. We have determined that the Recommended Management and Development Program would not have a significant adverse effect on our transportation facilities or interests. It is our concern and recommendation, however, that coordination with township officials should be initiated whenever your Department acquires land that abuts the right-of-way of township roads.

DNR Response:

The Department will coordinate with township officials in instances where there may be conflict between township roads and management objectives.

By: Loren Miller  
Representing: Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Date: August 18, 1985

I think Mr. Porter has done a good job on this Management Plan. I would like to see urgent emphasis placed on public boat landings on Loon and especially Crystal Lake. The situation on Crystal is very hazardous and there are sportsmen's clubs with funds that would be donated to such a cause.

DNR Response:

The DNR appreciates the support of the Conservation Congress and looks forward to rectifying boat landing hazards.

By: John Antonetti  
Representing: Crystal Lake Lions  
Date: August 8, 1985

Interested in boat landing on Crystal Lake.

DNR Response:

A boat landing on Crystal Lake is being given Department consideration.

By: Dale Thorsbaben  
Representing: Self  
Date: August 7, 1985

I believe the Loon Lake Wildlife Area Plan to be beneficial to the general public based on the following: Without state (public) owned lands a large majority of people would have access to many of our lakes and the large beautiful areas of Wisconsin. Acquisition of only those areas proposed in this plan seems wise in that it is designed to improve wildlife habitat and yet leave those lands in private ownership which support the adjoining management plan without eliminating any tax base. If loss of tax base is or becomes serious, I favor compensation by the state to the local municipalities.

DNR Response: The Department appreciates the support and comments of private citizens.

By: Jerry Chasteen  
Representing: West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Date: July 22, 1985

The overall management plan was well prepared combining a practical approach to future acquisition and development activities. The ring-neck pheasants stocking program was discontinued in 1980. Is there any prospect of re-stocking to enhance the comprehensive nature of the upland game in the wildlife area?

DNR Response: There is a possibility for limited pheasant stocking once the area is developed and dense nesting cover established. Natural production should improve with permanent nesting cover.

By: Walter S. Knutson  
Representing: Barron County Highway Department  
Date: July 22, 1985

Excellent use for marginal land. Possible gravel pit sites should be made available for municipal use: E 1/2 SW 1/4 Section 29-35-14  
NW 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 30-35-14

DNR Response:

Gravel deposits exist throughout the property. Pits have been closed but can be re-opened if need be. However, the Department feels gravel can be purchased on private lands.

By: Richard W. Dexter  
Representing: State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
Date: August 29, 1985

We have search our records for information on properties of architectural, historical, or archaeological significance in the Loon Lake Wildlife Area as mapped in your correspondence of July 19, 1985.

There are no structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places located within the area of the proposed undertaking. Furthermore, we are not aware of any structures that may be eligible for the National Register in this area.

One known archaeological site is located adjacent to the northwest edge of the wildlife area and many portions of the wildlife area have high archaeological sensitivity. Therefore, we recommend that prior to any ground-disturbing activities in the wildlife area, the Department of Natural Resources should consult with our office to determine whether an archaeological survey is needed.

DNR Response:

The Department will contact the State Historical Society to obtain the location of the archaeological site and prior to undertaking any ground-disturbing activities.

By: Douglas R. West  
Representing: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Date: August 9, 1985

The Management Plan describes commendable management efforts to enhance the stated wildlife and recreation objectives. The Management Plan reaffirms the original management goals for waterfowl, forest game, deer and fish outlined in the early project proposals for Federal funding of land acquisition. The recommended management and development program is supported. The Plan does not state a general time frame for accomplishment of acquisition and construction features.

- 1) Your efforts to alleviate the vandalism and trespass problems are encouraged.
- 2) Acquisition and development of public fishing accesses on Loon and Crystal Lakes is strongly supported.

DNR Response:

The Department appreciates the support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Acquisition and construction features should be complete within 10 years.

DISTRICT OR BUREAU Northwest
DOCKET NUMBER
TYPE LIST DESIGNATION(S) NR 150.03(2)(d)4

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
(ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)  
(REFERENCE INFORMATION SOURCES UTILIZED)

Applicant: Cumberland Area Wildlife Management

Title of Proposal: Loon Lake Wildlife Area Management Plan

Location: County Barron-Polk  
Township 34, 35 North, Range 14, 15 ~~East~~, West  
Section(s) see maps  
Political Town Almena, Crystal Lake, Johnstown

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

- General Description (brief overview)** Loon Lake Wildlife Area (purchase goal of 3298 acres) will be developed including flowages of 15, 18, 180 and 250 acres. Nesting cover (375a) will be planted and maintained. Waterfowl pair ponds (25) will be excavated. Nesting cover and marshes will be burned every 3 to 7 years. Sharecropping will be conducted on 60 acres. About 2000 acres will be managed for forest wildlife habitat and timber production. Adequate public access to Loon Lake and Crystal Lake will be developed.
- Purpose and Need (include history and background as appropriate)**  
This wildlife area was established in 1962 by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission under a federal aid (P-R) project to acquire and develop the area for waterfowl and furbearers, as well as to protect and enhance a deer concentration area.
- Authorities and Approvals (list statutory authority and other relevant local, state and federal permits or approvals required)**  
MC 3565.1 to comply with statutes 31.02, 31.05, 31.06  
County approval under Shoreland-Wetland Zoning  
Army Corps of Engineering 404 permit may be required  
Town approval to use road as dike
- Estimated Cost and Funding Source** Sources of funding include Pittman-Robertson, ORAP, waterfowl stamp, and segregated force account

Land Acquisition -	\$ 491,000
Flowages	185,000
Dense Nesting Cover	18,750
Pair Ponds	7,500
Non-Commercial-	10,000
Silviculture	

**PROPOSED PHYSICAL CHANGES**

**5. Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources (include relevant quantities - sq. ft., cu. yds., etc.)**

About 53,000 cubic yards of earth will be moved for dikes and ponds (see attached). About 375 acres of land will be tilled and planted to dense nesting cover and 60 acres will be tilled and sharecropped. About 2,000 acres of forest will be managed with annual harvests on 0-100 acres. Nesting cover and adjacent marshes will be burned about an average of 100 acres annually.

**6. Manipulation of Aquatic Resources (include relevant quantities - cfs., acre feet, MGD, etc.)**

Four flowages of 15, 18, 180, and 250 acres will be built. Impoundments will total about 865 acre feet. Twenty-five potholes averaging 2000 ft<sup>2</sup> and no more than 3 feet deep will be dug.

**7. Buildings, Treatment Units, Roads and Other Structures**

Stoplog structures will be required on each flowage. The water control structures will most likely be "tin whistle" types of about 3-4 feet diameter.

Storage building presently on property will remain.

First street through the property will be raised to act as a dike.

**8. Emissions and Discharges**

Exhaust fumes from construction equipment during construction.

Emission from burning 100 acres of grass/marsh:	Particulates	12,750
	Carbon monoxide	75,000
	hydrocarbons	15,000
	nitrogen oxides	<u>1,500</u>
		104,250 lbs.

**9. Other Changes**

None

**10. Attach Maps, Plans and Other Descriptive Material as Appropriate (list)**

Loon Lake Management Plan  
Wetland type summary - water budget  
Typical cross sections for dikes

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**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

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Information Based On (check all that apply):

- Literature/correspondence  
 Personal Contacts (list in item 31)  
Field Analysis By:  Author,  Other (list in item 31)  
Past Experience With Site By:  Author  Other (list in item 31)

11. **Physical (topography - soils - water - air - wetland amounts and types)**  
Northwest portion of the project is level marsh, while remainder of area is rolling terrain with scattered small lakes and wetlands. Soils are peat, Onamia loam, and Barronett loam with the majority being Milaca-Cloquet-Peat complex. The Apple River flows in a modified channel through the northwest corner of the property and leaves the property and continues to flow southwest to the St. Croix River. Wetlands include 364a of emergent dominant, (especially ELK, E2H) 168a of shrub dominant, 87a of timber dominant and over a hundred wetland basins under 2 acres not identified. A further breakdown of wetlands type attached.
12. **Biological**

**a. Flora**

Major forest types as aspen and oak with young northern hardwoods as reproduction. Tamarack, ash, aspen, and willow are common on lower sites. About 500 acres are in cropland or grass/upland brush. Open wet meadows are vegetated with bluejoint grass and sedges.

- b. Fauna** Common wildlife on the property include mallard, blue-winged teal, woodduck, woodcock, muskrat, mink, raccoon, beaver, red fox, whitetailed deer, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit, great horned owl, barred owl, red tailed hawk, kestrel, red winged blackbird, microtines, spring peepers, chorus frogs, leopard frogs, painted turtle. common fish are northern pike, largemouth bass, walleye, bluegills, and pumpkinseeds.

13. **Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups, and zoning if applicable)**  
Land use in the surrounding area is recreational (lake homes and cottages on nearby Staples Lake, Loon Lake, Horseshoe Lake, and Echo Lake) and agricultural. About 40% of the surrounding four townships is in dairy farms. Approximately 17% of the wildlife area is in agricultural land.

The nearest settlement of St. Croix Tribe of Chippewas is about 10 miles away on Round Lake.

Area around Loon Lake is zoned Residential 2 and Residential-Recreational. Lands which were in department ownership as of 1976 are zoned conservancy and other lands are zoned agricultural-residential. No farms are entered in farmland preservation zoning. The Apple River is channelized through the property and provides a very limited fishery or other recreational experience. Loon Lake and Crystal Lake both are valuable fisheries but each has poor access; Loon Lake across a private parcel which could change and Crystal Lake off a town road which is a safety hazard.

14. **Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)**

No endangered or threatened species or archaeological sites are known to exist on the property. The project has been reviewed for scientific and natural area status, but does not meet criteria.

White-tailed deer use the wooded portions of the property for over-winter cover. This is not a classic deer yard but is locally important to the deer herd.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (probable adverse and beneficial impacts including indirect and secondary impacts)**

**15. Physical (include visual if applicable)**

1. About 53,00 yds<sup>3</sup> of earth will be moved for dikes and ponds.
2. Timber sales (thinnings and regeneration cuts) will take place on 80 acres per year (2000a total).
3. Prescribed burns will kill some woody species and blacken about 100 acres per year.
4. Some present cropland will be converted to dense nesting cover.
5. 463 acres of lowland will be flooded with 865 acre feet of water.
6. About 3500 ft. of channelized Apple River will be flooded.

**16. Biological**

1. Shallow marsh, wet meadow and low pasture land and cropland will be converted to deep and shallow marsh, providing habitat for waterfowl, muskrat, mink, amphibians.
2. Nesting cover will increase populations of dabbling ducks, harriers, and other groundnesters.
3. Through timber sales, much of forest will be maintained in early successional stage (aspen).
4. Dissolved oxygen may be lowered immediately downstream of flowages.

**17. Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups and zoning if applicable)**

About 1100 acres of privately owned land will be purchased by the Department if the owners are willing to sell.

About 7500 participant days of hunting and trapping and 4000 days of fishing will be provided.

Some landowners on North and South White Ash Lake 10 miles downstream are concerned about fluctuating water levels. Flowage construction could tend to stabilize water levels, although effect would be minimal.

**18. Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)**

1. Additional wetlands and undisturbed uplands could provide habitat that would be beneficial to Blanding's Turtles which are not now present.
2. Ospreys and bald eagles could begin to use the area due to increased populations of prey (bullheads).

**19. Probable Adverse Impacts That Cannot Be Avoided**

3500 ft. of Apple River will be flooded

Prescribed burns will cause emissions and kill woody species.

53,000 cubic yards of earth will be removed for dike building.

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ALTERNATIVES (no action - enlarge - reduce - modify - other locations and/or methods)

20. Identify, describe and discuss feasible alternatives to the proposed action and their impacts. Give particular attention to alternatives which might avoid some or all adverse environmental effects.

No Action: This EIA is written on the Loon Lake Management Plan, which is required by handbook and manual code. Thus, no action is not an acceptable alternative. In a broader sense though, the management plan could be changed to read no action. In this case, the property would continue as it is with no major development and no increase in waterfowl production or recreation days. No further acquisition would take place. Management plan objectives would not be met.

Enlarge property boundary: This alternative is not necessary to meet objectives. If it were to be considered, the direction of expansion should be southwest to include a 300 acre existing marsh. While 740 acres of the original area was deleted by this plan, 320 acres were added on the western edge of the project to allow the development of a 180 acre shallow water flowage.

Reduce program: Depending upon the reduction, the results could be close to the no action alternative or closer to the plan as written. In actuality, it is likely that for some time to come the property will be managed at this level, due to unwilling landowners, work force shortages or inadequate budget.

Modify program: This plan is written with the best knowledge possible today. With time, wildlife techniques may change and management changes will follow. In addition, detailed engineering is not complete for the area. When it is complete, changes in detail may be put in place.

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

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21. **Secondary Effects:** As a result of this action, is it likely that other events or actions will happen that may significantly affect the environment? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

No

22. **New Environmental Effect:** Does the action alter the environment so a new physical, biological or socio-economic environment would exist? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 5-10 or 15-18 as appropriate.

About 375 acres of dense nesting cover and 463 acres of deep and shallow water marsh will be formed.

23. **Geographically Scarce:** Are the existing environmental features that would be affected by the proposed action scarce, either locally or statewide? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

No

24. **Precedent:** Does the action and its effect(s) require a decision which would influence future decisions? Describe.

No

25. **Controversy:** Discuss and describe concerns which indicate a serious controversy or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

No

26. Consistency With Plans: Does the action conflict with local or agency zoning or with official agency plans or policy of local, state or federal government (e.g., NR 1.95)? If so, how? Refer to applicable comments in item 31.

No

27. Cumulative Impacts: While the action by itself may be limited in scope, would repeated actions of this type result in additional or more severe impacts? Are there other activities occurring locally that would compound the impacts?

Repeated actions in the locale would result in additional use of area by waterfowl. With the exception of DNR activities (the nearest being Joel Marsh) this is not likely to occur.

28. Foreclose Future Options: Is the action irreversible? Will it commit a resource (e.g., energy, habitat, historical features) for the foreseeable future?

All actions are reversible although flooded lowland timber or brush would take a long time to recover if dikes were removed to reverse action.

29. Socio-cultural Impacts: Will action result in direct or indirect impacts on ethnic or cultural groups or alter social patterns?

No

Yes, refer to item 17.

30. Other:

LIST OF AGENCIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT (Include DNR personnel and Title)

31.	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Comment Summary</u>
	February, 1984	Larry Damman-Water Mgt. Spec.	Requirements of zoning
	February, 1984	Barron Co. Zoning Adm.	Present zoning classifications
	July 12, 1985	David Edstrom - Bureau of Wildlife Mgt.	Concurs with plan's send on 45-day review

Project Name: Loon Lake Wildlife Area Management Plan

County: Barron-Polk

RECOMMENDATION

EIS 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:

*\* see attached addendum*

SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR <i>John L. Potts</i>	DATE 4/24/84
NOTED: AREA DIRECTOR OR BUREAU DIRECTOR <i>John Schweitzer</i>	DATE 4/26/84

Number of responses to public notice 0

Public response log attached?..... no

*- Comments addressed  
9/14/84  
JWC*

CERTIFIED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH WEPA

DISTRICT DIRECTOR OR DIRECTOR OF BEI (OR DESIGNEE) <i>Sally A. Birt</i>	DATE March 18, 1986
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This decision is not final until certified by the appropriate District Director or the Director of BEI. If you believe you have a right to challenge this decision, you should know that Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Codes establish time periods within which requests to review Department decisions must be filed. For judicial review of a decision pursuant to ss. 227.15 and 227.16, Stats., you have 30 days after service of the decision to file your petition for review. The respondent in an action for judicial review is the Department of Natural Resources. You may wish to seek legal counsel to determine your specific legal rights to challenge a decision. This notice is provided pursuant to s. 227.11(2), Stats.

Department of Natural Resources  
P. O. Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For Release

July 26, 1985

MADISON, WISCONSIN--The Division of Resource Management of the DNR has prepared a Master Plan for the Loon Lake Wildlife Area, Barron and Polk Counties. The proposal includes a modification of the land purchase boundary. The property will be managed for duck production, public hunting and fishing, as well as accommodating hiking, boating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation and photography.

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 Impact Assessment that led to this preliminary determination can be obtained from: John Porter, 311 E. LaSalle Avenue, Barron, Wisconsin 54812 (715-537-5046).

Public comments on the proposed plan are welcomed and should be received by Porter no later than 4:30 p.m., September 2. These comments can be oral or written communication.

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