



**SITE-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT SHEET
TIER-3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROPERTY**

Property Name: Pewits Nest

Property Designation or Type: State Natural Area

SNA Designation Number: 200

Property Location: Sauk County

Real Estate:

Project boundary acreage: 34

Fee acres owned: 34

Dedicated acres: 36, DNR file #D21 (1987) and DNR file #NA 470 (1992)

DNR Easement acres: 0.6

Federal aid interest: None

Land use agreements: None

Maps:

A. Project Boundary

B. Existing and Proposed Infrastructure

Property Manager: **Nate Fayram, Southwest Ecologist**

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Fitchburg, WI 53711

608-273-5943

Prepared By (District Ecologist):

Name: Nate Fayram

Title: Conservation Biologist

Date: 4/10/2017

Reviewed/Approved By: (Bureau)

Name: Drew Feldkirchner

Title: Bureau Director, Natural Heritage Conservation Date: 4/10/2017

Approved by Natural Resources Board: Date: 6/28/2017

A. Regional and Property Assessment

- 1. General Property Description (topography, soils, vegetation, water resources):** The dominant feature at Pewits Nest is a 30- to 40-foot deep gorge formed during the retreat of the last glacier. Associated with it are Skillet Creek, shaded cliffs, and a northern dry-mesic forest. When Glacial Lake Baraboo drained, Skillet Creek cut a narrow canyon through the Cambrian sandstone, forming a series of potholes and waterfalls. The layers of Cambrian sandstone show that a finer-grained sediment was laid down by the Cambrian seas "inside" the syncline, a process different from that at Parfrey's Glen SNA where coarser Cambrian conglomerates and sandstones are found in layers. Skillet Creek has a gradient of 38 feet/mile and an average flow of 0.8 cfs. Forest cover includes red cedar, white pine, hemlock, and yellow birch.
- 2. Ecological Landscape:** [Western Coulee and Ridges EL](#) is characterized by its highly eroded, unglaciated topography with steep sided valleys and ridges, high gradient headwaters streams, and large rivers with extensive, complex floodplains and terraces. It offers the best opportunities in the state to maintain many of southern Wisconsin's natural communities. Many rare species have been documented here due to the diversity, scale, types, condition and context of the natural communities present.

Forests can be managed and conserved here at virtually all scales, including areas up to hundreds, or even thousands, of acres. Oak forests are more abundant here than any other ecological landscape, mesic maple-basswood forests are also widespread, and some of the Upper Midwest's most extensive stands of Floodplain Forest occur here along major rivers. All of these forest types can provide critical breeding and/or migratory habitat for significant populations of native plants and animals. Maintaining large blocks of these forest types, including areas with combinations of these types, is a major opportunity. Since much of the forested acreage is privately owned, there are opportunities to work with private landowners, looking for places to combine efforts and plan on a much larger scale than an individual property.

Less common natural communities also provide excellent management opportunities here. Conifer relicts, by definition, are almost entirely restricted to the Western Coulees and Ridges, with lesser management opportunities present in the Southwest Savanna. Fire-dependent oak ecosystems are well-represented here include Oak Openings, Oak Barrens, Oak Woodland and dry to mesic oak forests. Bluff prairies and sand prairies are better represented in this Ecological Landscape than anywhere

else in Wisconsin and probably better than anywhere else in the Upper Midwest. These fire-dependent communities could be managed in a continuum with savanna and forest communities, wherever possible.

Bedrock features are important throughout the Western Coulees and Ridges and include cliffs, caves, talus slopes and Algific Talus Slopes. Some bats and reptiles are dependent on caves, tunnels and abandoned mines as roost sites and hibernacula.

3. **Ownership and Adjacent Land Uses:** County highway, public road, agricultural and residential lands.

4. **Property Management Issues, Trends and Needs:**

Invasive Species: Buckthorn, garlic mustard.

Invasive Species Control History: Limited control of garlic mustard and buckthorn.

Forestry/Silviculture: Opportunities may exist outside the gorge to use commercial timber harvests to help reach ecological goals for the property.

Prescribed Burning: Prescribed fire can be used as a management practice on this property.

Facility/Amenity development:

- a. **Existing:** Parking lot, gate, signage.
- b. **Future:** Establish a designated trail from the parking area to the base of the gorge and to two scenic overlooks above the gorge. Construct a stairway to top of gorge. Install rustic barriers and signs to define the closed zones and overlooks. Install additional regulatory and interpretive signs at the parking lot and elsewhere.

5. **Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern Species or Habitats, and wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need:** 1 state endangered species, 2 state threatened species, 1 state special concern species, and 1 federal species of concern are known to occur here and/or in the general area. For detailed EO data, see Appendix A.

6. **Conservation Opportunity Area:** None

7. **Easements:**

- a. 0.6 acre management access easement, DNR file #SA71, Grantor: Elaine Gasser

8. Land use Agreements: None.

9. Significant Cultural and Archaeological Features: State Natural Areas (SNAs) may contain historic Native American or Euro-American sites. Activities with potential to disturb archaeological sites will only be undertaken after consultation with the DNR Archaeologist. Any sites with cultural or historical value will be managed in accordance with guidance and statutory requirements (see ss. 44.40 and DNR Manual Code 1810.10). More details can be found in Appendix B.

10. Refuges and other Closed Areas: Establish an area closed to all public access encompassing the gorge edges, cliffs, and the eroded forest area above the gorge. Install barriers and signage to delineate the closed area.

11. Primary Public Use: Recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, cross country skiing, hunting, trapping, scientific research, wild edibles collection, , and wildlife viewing are allowed. Reference the State Natural Areas [Visitation Guidelines](#) and the property's specific [webpage](#) for more information.

12. Biotic Inventory needs: Currently, no plant or vertebrate inventory needs have been identified beyond normal monitoring through established SNA Site Inspection protocol.

B. Property Purpose and Goals/ Management Objectives and Prescriptions

1. Property Purpose and Goals

- a. **Purpose:** The purpose of the SNA Program is to protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape of natural communities, significant geological formations and archeological sites. Natural areas are valuable for research and educational use, the preservation of genetic and biological diversity, and for providing ecological benchmarks for determining the impact of use on managed lands. They also provide habitat for numerous rare plants and animals.
- b. **Goal:** Manage the site as a geological feature protection site, a cliff community protection area, and as a historic feature protection site.

2. **Management Objectives by Natural Community Type:**
 - a. Natural processes will primarily determine the structure of the gorge and cliff communities.
 - b. Provide opportunities for research and education on the highest quality geological features and cliff communities.
 - c. Restrict and reduce inappropriate uses that have degraded the ecological, educational, and aesthetic values of the site.

3. **Management Prescriptions by Natural Community Type:**
 - a. Natural processes will determine the gorge and cliff community ecological characteristics.
 - b. Remnants of the old grist mill historic feature will be left on-site for interpretation.
 - c. Other allowable activities include control of invasive plants and animals, maintenance of existing facilities, and access to suppress wildfires, enforce laws, and perform emergency services.
 - d. Salvage of trees after a major wind event can occur if the volume of woody material inhibits access for geological interpretation, or to meet other ecological objectives with consultation of the SNA program.
 - e. Implement changes in regulations and infrastructure to change use of the site to conform to the goals of the property.
 - f. Restore areas that have been de-vegetated due to trampling, soil compaction, and vandalism to native forest vegetation.
 - g. Active management and restoration of the old fields to more desirable native vegetation is allowed.
 - h. Active management is allowed to restore and maintain oak forest in the western portion of the property, outside the stream and gorge. Passively manage trees along cliffs and streams.
 - i. Contain or eradicate invasive species through the use of department approved manual, chemical, biological, and mechanical practices, as well as prescribed fire.

4. **Special Management Issues and/or constraints:**
 - a. Pewit's Nest is open daily 6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
 - b. Food and beverages other than water are not allowed.
 - c. Extensive public visitation has resulted in site degradation and a network of extremely compacted and eroding volunteer trails on the north side of the gorge. Visitors climb cliff walls and rocks, denuding them of native vegetation, mosses and lichens. Graffiti carved into sandstone cliffs is a recurring problem. A narrow closed zone prohibiting all public access to the cliff faces and edges (while retaining scenic overlooks of the gorge) and to the highly

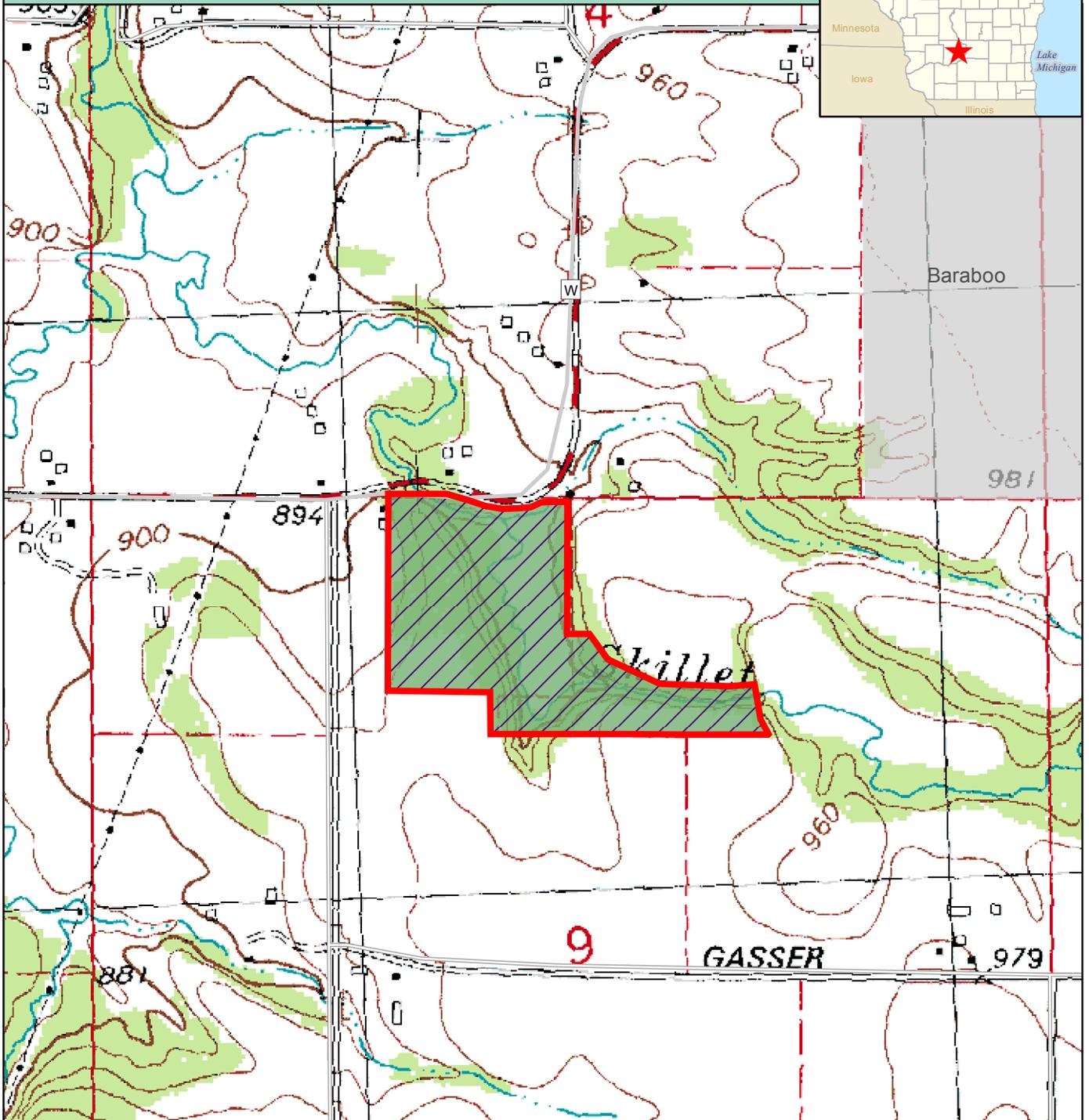
eroded forest ecosystem above the gorge will be established to alleviate the ongoing damage to the ecosystem and permit the area to revegetate. A stairway from the valley floor to the top of the gorge will be constructed to channel visitors and prevent gully erosion.

- d.** Address public safety concerns. Climbing and jumping from cliffs into the small pools of Skillet Creek as it passes through the gorge has resulted in numerous injuries from falls and to jumpers who strike the cliff walls or unseen objects submerged in the water. Several serious injuries, requiring the use of technical rescue gear by local EMTs, have occurred here in the past. A narrow closed zone along the edge of the gorge, including the cliff faces, and a rule prohibiting climbing on the cliffs and jumping from the gorge walls into the water will be created to protect public safety.
- e.** To channel public use and prevent excessive erosion and site degradation, establish a designated trail from the parking lot to the gorge. Establish designated scenic overlooks above and below the gorge. Establish a stairway, where a sustainable trail is not possible, to reach the overlooks above the gorge.
- f.** Recent expansion of the parking lot occurred to accommodate increased use. The current size of the parking lot is appropriate for the carrying capacity of the property, and no future expansions of the parking lot will be allowed.
- g.** Establish the entire property as a designated fee area.
- h.** Continued safety or enforcement issues could result in additional closures, restrictions, or the site being closed to all public use.
- i.** Removal of hazardous trees along trails, overlooks, and public use areas is allowed.

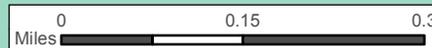
Table 1: Current Facilities or Infrastructure

Type of Facility	Total (number/length)	Management Activities	Management Issues and Constraints
Roads – public	None		
Roads – maintenance/service	Cleared off road path for emergency access.	Access for emergency personnel and rescue teams.	
Roads – access easement	None		
Parking lots	1		
Boat landings	None		
Designated trails	None		
Dikes, ditches	None		
Dams	None		
Other			

Pewits Nest State Natural Area PROJECT BOUNDARY



-  Project Boundary
-  DNR Owned
-  State Natural Area



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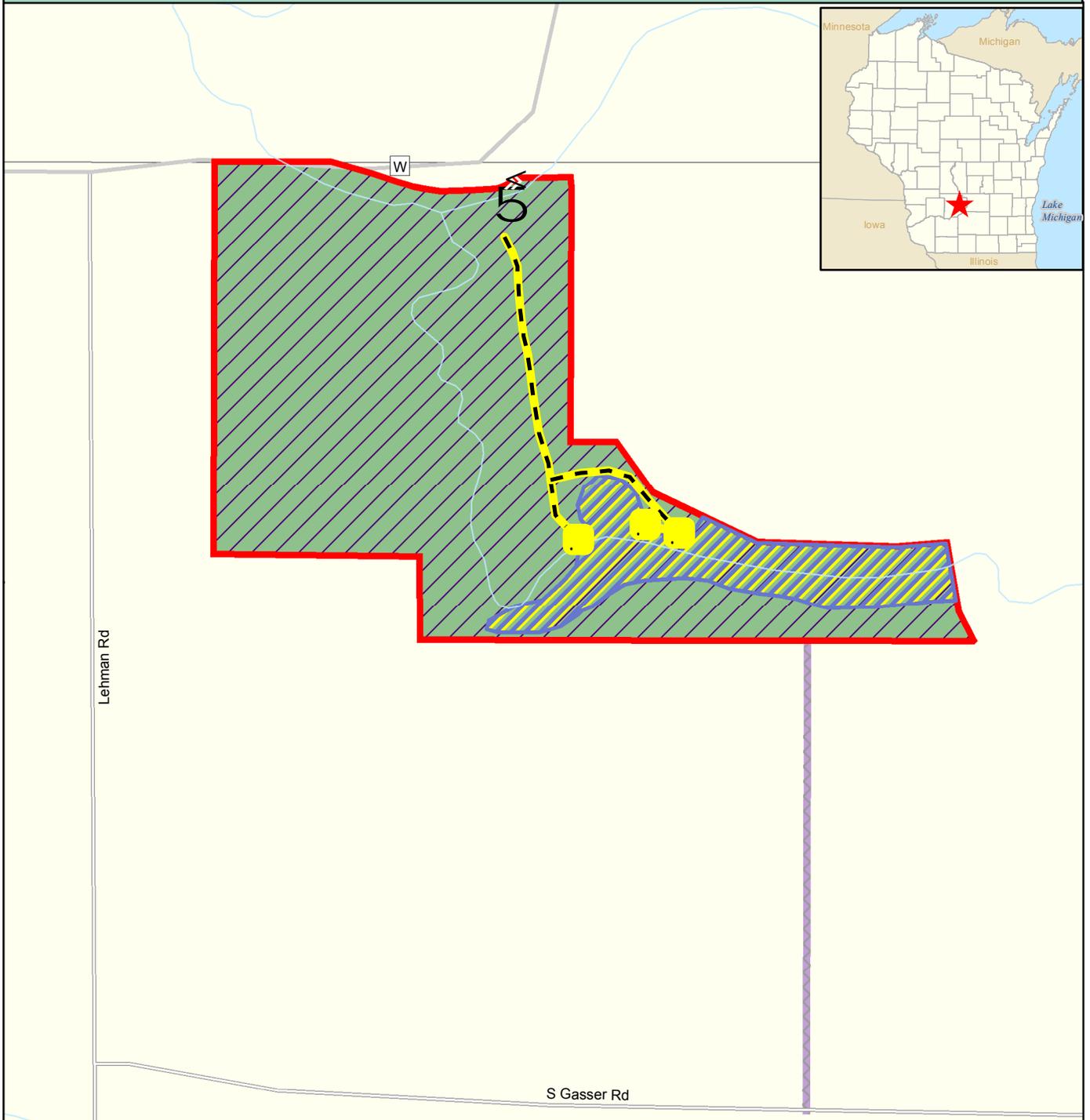
SNA Tier 3 dmh

MAP A

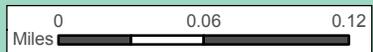
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Pewits Nest State Natural Area

EXISTING AND PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE



- | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|--|
| | Parking Lot (existing) | | Project Boundary |
| | Gate (existing) | | State Natural Area |
| | Proposed Overlook | | DNR Owned |
| | Proposed Trail | | DNR Easement (Closed to public access) |
| | Closed Area | | |



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MAP B

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