

APPENDIX H: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AT SCOPING MEETINGS

Comments & issues raised at the Southwest Grassland Feasibility Study Open Houses

The following comments, issues and opinions represent input received from people who attended the open house meetings held in Mount Horeb, Hollandale and Mineral Point in July 2005. Attendance totaled ~100 people.

Some of the resources and opportunities which are most important to you:

Things you like most about living in this area: *natural beauty, the rural landscape, and peace & quiet*

Natural features and resources which are most important to you: *groundwater quality, farmlands/rural character of landscape, air quality, and streams, rivers & wetlands*

Historical and cultural resources that most interest you: *farming history and culture; historic barns, churches, cemeteries and other sites*

Top recreational activities that you enjoy: *observing wildlife, hiking/walking, birdwatching, bicycling, and hunting*

Tools you think are most helpful in maintaining openspace in the landscape: *permanent land protection (e.g. conservation easements, land purchases or donations), maintaining profitable agriculture, promoting healthy rural economies, and community land use planning efforts (e.g. Smartgrowth plans)*

Tools you think are most helpful in maintaining working farms in the area: *permanent protections that allow continued agricultural use of the land (e.g. conservation easements, purchases of development rights), technical assistance to farmers (e.g. developing grazing plans), and new programs to help farmers keep farming*

Aspects of proposed project that you find exciting:

- Potential to preserve/restore rural agricultural lands, prairies, savannas, grasslands, and streams for future generations
- Large landscape scale and broad, cooperative nature of the proposed project
- Idea that conservation in this landscape is compatible with farming, recreation, and tourism
- Opportunities to integrate with existing programs and projects for a better chance of long term success
- Public is interested, supportive, and being engaged early in the process



Your suggestions for modifying the initially proposed project boundary included expanding the boundary north, south, east and west to include important areas of grasslands, prairies, and savannas.

*You're **concerned** about changes occurring in the landscape, about development pressure, and about the habitat becoming more fragmented. As a result, you see that conservation opportunities in this landscape are time-sensitive.*

*You asked some really good **questions** about the proposed project. We try to address these in the draft feasibility study.*

- How will the proposed project augment current efforts of the DNR and other groups in the area?
- How can a large project be feasible, effective, and manageable? Is funding identified and sufficient?
- What are conservation easements, and what role would permanent land protection such as easements play in the project? You would like more information about taxes that DNR pays on state owned lands.
- How would the proposed project relate to existing programs (e.g. CREP), projects (e.g. Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, DNR Land Legacy Study, Great Wisconsin Birding Trail, Blanchardville River Walk), and land use planning efforts (e.g. SmartGrowth)?
- How might this project affect the local economy?

*You suggested a variety of **conservation strategies**. Here are a few of them:*

- Use existing projects such as the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area as a model.
- A resource person is needed to assist farmers and landowners and to help coordinate efforts between agencies
- Education & outreach to landowners, local government and communities, and the public both about the importance of grasslands and related to specific conservation efforts is key
- Find incentives to get new farmers farming, and to build support among and interest farmers in the project
- Develop a website to build support for the project and to keep the public informed
- Manage habitat to open up former savannas and control invasive plants
- Incorporate tourism into the project, for example through a prairie heritage center
- Involve realtors in the project, work to protect ridgetops from development, and promote conservation subdivisions
- Work with local communities on their land use planning efforts.

