

## CHAPTER III. Implementation.

Given the diversity of places to be protected, the range of recreation experiences to be provided and conservation objectives to be met, the mix of partners that currently own and operate lands and facilities to meet recreation and conservation needs in the area, and the diversity of funding sources that will be needed to fulfill the goals of the project, implementation of the GHA project will be complicated. What follows is an implementation plan that seeks to leverage the unique strengths of many different organizations and agencies, realizing that reaching the vision is well beyond the capacity of any single entity. **Implementation of the project will need to be flexible and adapt to changing opportunities to create the GHA network.** That is, landowner interest may create opportunities to establish high quality components of the GHA network that are not currently envisioned.

All parties involved in creating the GHA plan currently have limited financial and staffing resources which are likely to continue in the foreseeable future. The Department, county governments, non-profit conservation groups, state and federal agencies, and other groups have collaborated in the past on many projects to meet the conservation and recreation needs of this region. **It is anticipated that this level of cooperation and success will continue during implementation of the GHA project.**

The discussion of implementation is organized as follows: land acquisition, habitat (vegetation) restoration and management, facility construction and development, and facility management.

### A. HOW THE GHA PLAN WILL AFFECT EXISTING OPERATIONS.

The plan incorporates a wide range of places and linking corridors designed, collectively, to provide a diversity of recreation experiences and address a range of conservation needs. Some of these places and connections are already in some form of formal protective ownership, others are not. In this plan some of the already protected places are to be expanded, while no change is planned at others. Each government agency or private conservation group that owns lands within the project area will, of course, use and manage their lands following their own guidelines and goals. **This plan does not dictate to other agencies or groups how they should use or manage their lands, but rather seeks to integrate the management plans for those properties into the broader network.** The Department's expectation is that partner agencies, local governments, and private organizations that own and manage land within the project area will use this GHA plan as a primary tool in developing their respective land use, protection, and management plans.

Implementation of the GHA project will involve many partners as well as many funding sources. Each partner will be influenced by their own operating constraints, have unique opportunities and needs, and react differently to changing circumstances. Implementation will be further complicated by a very wide range of external forces and conditions, most importantly the availability of funding and staffing. As such, each partner will need to remain flexible in approaching implementation and will need to continue working collaboratively with others in implementing the project. **There is no expectation that any partner, including the Department, must commit financial, staffing, or other resources into the future to implement the project.**

### B. THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTIES.

The GHA project is unique in many ways, but none more so than the depth and range of partnerships that have gone into its design and will need to continue in its implementation. One of the most notable manifestations of this partnership is that some of the lands in the network will be acquired and managed by the Department, some by the partners, and some will be acquired by the Department and managed and operated by a partner. The primary partner to manage these properties is the Jefferson County Parks

Department. It is possible that other partners may also wish to take on a range of roles in managing and operating properties in the future. As state, county, and local units of government address budgetary constraints, the development and strengthening of such partnerships – among all levels of government, non-profit groups, businesses, landowners, and others – becomes imperative.

The specific components of the network that the Department plans to acquire and enter agreements with partners (primarily Jefferson County, but other partners may emerge in the future) to manage and operate are described in detail in the next sections and are summarized here:

- 2,900 acres for seven new conservation parks.
- 330 acres for linking trails.
- 400 acres for 1 or 2 large river sites for shore fishing and water-access-only camping sites.

### ***Developing management agreements and implementation plans.***

The Department plans to enter into agreements regarding management of these properties in a stepwise process as follows:

- First, the Department will enter into an overarching **memorandum of understanding** (MOU) with Jefferson County. This MOU will describe the goals and objectives of the partnership, respective general roles, process for resolving problems, and other issues as needed. The MOU will be signed by the Department Secretary and the Jefferson County Board, or designees.
- Second, when the Department acquires land for the new conservation parks, linking trails or river sites, then an “**implementation plan**” will be developed for the property. The implementation plan will describe in more detail and map the specific natural and cultural resources, existing land cover and vegetation characteristics, and other unique features present on the land that is acquired. Earlier portions of the GHA plan described each park, linking trail, and river site, their intent, general goals and objectives, and potential recreation activities that the properties are likely well suited to address, and planned facilities. Using these parameters, *the implementation plan will also describe what recreation activities will occur in which parts of the property, what facilities will be developed, what habitats will be managed and restored, and what land management techniques will be used.*

As additional land holdings are acquired and a broader range of activities is possible at a park or river site, then the implementation plan will need to be amended to describe additional facility developments, designated use areas, and management activities. Implementation plans for the linking trails will be developed as complete or meaningful segments between destination points are acquired by either the Department or partners.

#### **An example of an implementation plan**

Within a conservation park, one section may be identified for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing with a series of trails mapped out, another area might be identified for higher intensity uses and include facilities such as a picnic area, barbeque pits and a shelter, and a third section might be only minimally developed with a few horseback riding trails passing through.

In developing the implementation plan, it could be determined, for example, that the trail area is likely to be only lightly used in the late fall and early winter. As such, the 9-day gun, the muzzle-loader, and the late bow season for deer could be compatible with the park’s primary users in this section. Similarly, depending on its size and the habitat present, the lightly developed area with the horse-back riding trails might be able to support these deer seasons in addition to spring turkey periods.

The implementation plan will map the locations of parking lots, trails, shelters, corrals, and other facilities as well as different recreational use areas. In addition, the plan will delineate where different habitats exist or are planned and describe how these different areas will be managed.

The Department believes that since the use of the parks, linking trails, and large access sites along rivers (both by local residents and visitors from further away) will most directly affect local communities and that the Jefferson County Parks Department will be responsible for managing these properties, it is most appropriate for the County Parks Department to lead the planning for their future use and operation. Because these lands will be owned by the Department, the *implementation plans will need to meet state planning standards* using procedures described in the DNR Master Planning Handbook for “Tier III” plans. The Department will assist in the development of the implementation plans as needed.

It is the Department’s intent that future users of the property help design the implementation plan. The Department will assist the County in ensuring that public involvement in the planning process that is commensurate with the complexity of the planned uses for the subject property occurs. *All implementation plans and amendments will need to be approved by the Department Secretary and the Jefferson County Parks Committee (or designees) prior to any facility development or management actions on Department-owned property.*

- Third, following completion and approval of an implementation plan, the Department will enter into a **15-year land use agreement**, or similar agreement, with Jefferson County for the subject property or group of properties. This agreement will describe the different specific roles that each party has in terms of carrying out the implementation plan (e.g., construction of trails, parking lots, picnic facilities, boat access sites, and habitat management actions), responsibility for enforcement actions, how revenues from sharecropping or timber harvest will be distributed, and other issues as necessary.

### C. GOALS AND ROLES IN ACQUIRING LAND OR LAND RIGHTS IN THE GHA.

The Department will primarily use funds from the state Stewardship program to purchase land or land rights. It is expected that partner groups will use a combination of locally raised money as well as matching funds from the Stewardship program and other sources to the degree that acquisitions qualify for available funding. ***All planned acquisitions described here are contingent upon the availability of adequate staffing and funding. If resources are not available, there is no expectation that the GHA project can be implemented by the Department or the partner agencies, organizations, and groups.***

The roles for acquiring land are planned as follows:

#### Conservation Parks.

The conservation parks are a combination of expansions of existing properties and new projects. In an effort to simplify management and operations at the conservation parks, it is planned that ownerships be unified as much as possible. That is, it is preferable for each of the conservation parks to have just one owner. To that end, **the partners currently leading acquisition efforts at the existing parks and preserves will continue to do so.** These five are: Cold Spring, Dorothy Carnes, Garman, and Korth Parks, and the Lake Ripley LMD Preserve and are planned to be expanded by a total of 901 acres.

**The Department will take the lead on acquiring land to establish the new conservation parks.** These seven parks are: Cushman Mill, Holzhueter, Hope Lake, North Shore Moraine, Oakland Highlands, Red Cedar Lake, and Scuppernong Valley. These conservation parks total a planned 2,900 acres.

The counties, local units of government and other partners will take the primary lead on contacting landowners, discussing potential acquisition options, arranging for appraisals and surveys, and other associated tasks in purchasing land for all the conservation parks, except for Red Cedar Lake for which the Department will take the lead. It is expected that this work will be completed as staffing and funding levels allow and will also be a function of the amount of landowner interest.

#### Linking Trails.

**The counties and local units of government will take the primary lead in purchasing land for the linking trails, with assistance from the Department where trails are near or connect to Department-owned land.** It is estimated that about 25% of the linking trails may be near or connect to Department lands. Thus, the Department will take the lead on acquiring up to 330 acres and the counties, local units of government, and other partner groups take the lead in acquiring 1,014 acres. The DNR's 330 acres of new authority to acquire land for linking trails does not include the existing acreage authority for the Glacial Drumlin Trail.

The counties, local units of government and other partners will take the primary lead on contacting landowners, discussing potential acquisition options, arranging for appraisals and surveys, and other associated tasks in purchasing land for the linking trails. It is expected that this work will be completed as staffing and funding levels allow and will also be a function of the amount of landowner interest.

Establishing linking trails will be difficult due to the number of potential landowners and their respective interests in selling strips of land or in allowing a trail on their property. To ensure that acquisition efforts do not lead to only small pieces of a linking trail being purchased that do not enable the construction of a useable trail, it is planned that the acquisition of land or land rights to create linking trails use long-term options. That is, landowners will be asked to sign options of several years in length that allow counties, local units of government, the Department, or other partners adequate time to assemble enough willing landowners to create a useable linking trail. If enough landowners agree to sell strips of land, then the Department, counties, or others can exercise the options at the same time. This approach is used by other states and communities in creating longer distance rural trails.

#### River-based Conservation Areas.

Three different types of places are planned to be acquired for river-based conservation areas as follows:

- **The counties, local units of government, and other partners will take the lead in purchasing land for the small access sites (75 acres) and the Department will take the lead in acquiring the larger blocks of land along major rivers for one or two river-based sites for shore fishing and water-access-only camping sites (400 acres).**
- **The Department will take the primary lead in purchasing land for the large, habitat-based areas at Allen Creek, the lower Bark River, and the lower Koshkonong Creek Woods (1,500 acres).**
- **The Department and partners will jointly work to purchase and protect narrow bands of permanent land along major rivers and streams (250 acres by the Department, 250 acres by partner groups).**

The counties, local units of government and other partners will take the primary lead on contacting landowners, negotiating potential acquisition options, arranging for appraisals and surveys, and other associated tasks in purchasing land for the small access sites. The Department and various partners will jointly take responsibility for this work in the large habitat-based areas and the narrow bands

along the major rivers and streams. It is expected that this work will be completed as staffing and funding allows and will also be a function of the level of landowner interest.

Wildlife & Natural Areas.

Three different types of places are planned to be acquired and protected for the wildlife areas as follows:

- Expansions to the existing Wildlife & Natural Areas. The Department will take the lead, in collaboration with various partner groups, in acquiring 21,325 acres within the expansions to the existing Wildlife Areas and 600 acres within the Red Cedar Lake Natural Area. The project boundaries for these properties are expanded in total to approximately 56,000 acres.
- Crawfish Prairie Habitat Area. This new project will be a mosaic of restored native habitats set within a landscape of working farmlands. The Department will take the lead, in collaboration with various partner groups, in acquiring 2,500 acres to protect or restore native habitats within the 6,455 acre project boundary at this new project.
- The new Rural Landscape Protection Areas are to be undeveloped areas primarily dominated by working farms with some conservation lands scattered within the area. The Department will take the lead, in collaboration with various partner groups, in acquiring 3,000 acres scattered within the Rural Landscape Protection Areas to protect or restore native habitats. The project boundaries for these RLPA in total encompass approximately 25,000 acres.

Partner groups will take the lead in working with landowners on protecting additional land within the areas identified for Wildlife Areas and work with landowners to encourage enrollment in Farm Bill programs, sell or donate farming easements, restore native habitats, and other similar actions. Partner groups will also take responsibility for working with landowners to keep other lands in the project boundaries in working farms (particularly areas with prime agricultural soils) through various farmland protection programs.

The Department will take the lead on contacting landowner, negotiating potential acquisition options, conducting appraisals and surveys, and other associated tasks in purchasing land for the expansions of the existing wildlife areas, the new Crawfish Prairie Habitat Area, and the Rural Landscape Protection Areas. It is expected that this work will be completed as staffing and funding allows and will also be a function of the level of landowner interest.

**In summary, the acquisition roles are as follows:**

<b>Category</b>	<b>TOTAL Planned <i>new</i> acquisition (acres)</b>	<b>Planned DNR-led acquisition (acres)</b>	<b>Planned Partner-led acquisition (acres)</b>
Conservation Parks	3,801	2,900	901
Linking Trails	1,344	330	1,014
River-based Conservation Areas	2,475	2,150	325
Wildlife & Natural Areas	27,425	27,425	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,045</b>	<b>32,805</b>	<b>2,240</b>

#### D. GOALS AND ROLES IN MANAGING HABITAT AND VEGETATION IN THE GHA.

The GHA plan calls for multiple entities to own lands that will make up the overall project. It is expected that initial restoration and ongoing habitat management costs for each of the entities involved will be covered by their respective operational funding or through other funding that they are able to tap. It is also hoped that a diversity of funding sources and partnerships will continue to be used in various restoration and management efforts. The Department's intent is to simplify management coordination as much as possible by minimizing the number of groups responsible for management and operation at specific sites. To accomplish this goal, the following management roles are planned:

##### Conservation Parks.

Jefferson County and other partners will take the lead in acquiring lands for the expansion of the five existing conservation parks and the Department will take the lead in acquiring land for the seven new conservation parks. **Lands acquired by the Department for conservation parks will be restored and managed by county or local governments or nonprofit conservation groups through memorandums of understanding, implementation plans, and land use agreements.** The Department will assist with habitat restoration and management as feasible. **County and local governments and nonprofit conservation groups will take the lead in restoring and managing lands for the conservation parks that they acquire.**

##### Linking Trails.

Narrow strips of land will be acquired to develop the linking trails. As such, very little undeveloped land will need to be actively managed as part of the linking trails. One task that will likely be necessary is removing invasive species, particularly woody plants such as box elder that may occur along these corridors. The entity maintaining and operating the trail segment will also perform vegetation management along the corridor as needed.

##### River-based Conservation Areas.

Three types of lands along river corridors will be protected. The 75 acres to be acquired for the small-scale recreation sites will not have any appreciable land needing habitat management so are not included here. The lands acquired as river-based conservation areas are to be managed as follows:

- High quality habitat areas. These three sites (Allen Creek, Lower Bark River, and Lower Koshkonong Creek) will be up to 500 acres apiece and primarily be focused on maintaining and restoring wetland and riparian habitats. **Lands acquired by the Department will be restored and managed by Department staff. Local governments and nonprofit conservation groups will be responsible for restoring and managing lands they acquire with assistance from Department staff as feasible.**
- Larger river access sites. The GHA plan calls for the Department to acquire up to 400 acres for one or two larger access sites along major rivers. These sites will provide shore fishing and campsites accessible only from the water. **Lands acquired by the Department for the larger river access sites will be restored and managed by county or local governments or nonprofit conservation groups through memorandums of understanding, implementation plans, and land use agreements.**
- Narrow bands of permanent habitat. Only a very small percentage of these corridors will be owned and managed by the Department, local governments, or nonprofit conservation groups. **Lands acquired by each partner group will be restored and managed by that partner, or by another partner under some form of agreement.**

State Wildlife & Natural Areas.

**All lands owned by the Department within the existing and expanded Wildlife and Natural Areas will be restored and managed by Department staff.**

**Lands within Wildlife or Natural Area project boundaries that are owned by other government agencies or non-profit groups are to be managed by the owner. Department staff will assist with management actions as staffing allows.**

#### **E. GOALS AND ROLES IN DEVELOPING FACILITIES TO PROVIDE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE GHA.**

The GHA project calls for the development of a substantial amount and diversity of facilities at the conservation parks including trails, observation decks, picnic areas and shelters, parking areas, drinking water and toilets to accommodate a variety of different recreation activities. The plan also calls for establishing many longer-distance linking trails between communities and parks to create a network of trail opportunities.

The number of facilities that are ultimately constructed will be contingent on the amount of money available to the Department and partners both to build and operate these facilities. It is expected that funding for construction will vary from year to year.

Nearly each type of facility can have a range of “elaborateness.” That is, the design complexity, materials used, size, and degree of refinement of everything from parking lots to kiosks can vary depending on available funding and desired experience for the visitor.

**Facilities to provide recreation opportunities on lands owned by the Department are to be funded through a combination of:**

- State funds allocated through a competitive process via submission to the agency’s 6-year Capital Budget. Requests through the Capital Budget process for Stewardship funds require substantial lead time and compete with other facility and enhancement requests throughout the state.
- Local funds, including those combined with qualifying grants such as those available through the Stewardship program.

If the recreation facilities on Department-owned lands are to be managed and operated by county park departments or other entities, a memorandum of understanding, agreement, contract or some other arrangement must be in place before construction occurs.

**Facilities on lands owned by local governments or nonprofit conservation groups are to be funded by these entities, most likely through a combination of local funds matched with qualifying grants from the Stewardship program and other sources.**

If agreeable to the respective owners of specific lands, partner groups will be encouraged to help develop facilities at project areas as funding and volunteer opportunities allow. As with the acquisition of lands, the Department and partner groups seek to work cooperatively to fulfill the goals for building and operating facilities to provide recreation opportunities.

**F. GOALS AND ROLES IN MAINTAINING AND OPERATING FACILITIES TO PROVIDE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE GHA.**

The workload for managing and operating different facilities will be directly a function of the amount and type of facilities constructed. As with habitat management tasks, it is expected that facility operations costs for each of the entities involved will be covered by their respective operational funding. Given that the establishment of new facilities and trails will occur over a long time period, it is likely that the funding needed to manage and operate facilities will increase modestly but consistently over time. It is also expected that a diversity of funding sources and partnerships will be applied to the management and operation of many recreation facilities. The Department and partners will need to remain flexible in determining what groups are best suited to manage different facilities and as a result the roles presented here may need to shift over time.

**It is planned that local and county governments or nonprofit conservation groups take the lead in performing ongoing maintenance and operations of facilities and trails on conservation parks (including those where the Department owns the land), linking trails, and the access sites that are part of the river-based conservation areas. Construction, management, and operation of these facilities on Department-owned land will occur through memoranda of understanding, implementation plans, and land use agreements with partner groups.** The Department will use the memorandum of understanding describing the development and operation of the State Trails Network as a model for these agreements.

**The Department will take the lead on maintaining and operating facilities and trails on all the existing and expanded State Wildlife and Natural Areas, the Crawfish Prairie State Habitat Area, and the lands acquired in the Rural Landscape Protection Areas.**