

The DNR Land Acquisition Strategy for the Stewardship Program *with action items for 2010 to 2015*

I. INTRODUCTION

THE CURRENT NELSON-KNOWLES STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The 2007-2009 budget bill authorized continued funding for the Stewardship program through the 2019 fiscal year at \$86 million annually with \$50 million/year to be used to purchase land to meet recreation and conservation needs. The broad funding allocations for the Stewardship program can be seen in the accompanying box.

The underlying authority for Department land acquisition is found in Chapters 23, 27, 28 and 29 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Key sections of these statutes include Section 23.09, the “Conservation Act”, which calls for an adequate and flexible system for the protection, development and use of outdoor resources in Wisconsin, and Section 23.0917 which establishes the Stewardship Program. Section 23.0916 establishes access requirements for lands acquired with Stewardship funding. In addition, Section 23.091 enables the Department to designate and acquire land for recreation areas, and Section 28.02(2) establishes the state forest system. Other sections in these chapters enable the Department to acquire land to provide for State Parks, Wildlife and Fisheries Areas and State Natural Areas. The Natural Resources Board has provided further clarification through Administrative Code NR 1.40 on the types of lands that are priorities for acquisition.¹

THE PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THIS ACQUISITION STRATEGY

While the legislative authority for Department land acquisition specifies the purpose for which lands may be acquired, it does not specify which lands should or should not be acquired. Thus, the Department, with the advice and consent of the Natural Resources Board, periodically updates its acquisition strategy based on evolving needs and opportunities. The two most recent plans approved by the Natural Resources Board are the “Five Year Land Acquisition Plan” (approved in May, 1996) and the “Land Legacy Report Implementation Priorities” (approved in March, 2004). With the reauthorization of the Stewardship Program for 2010-2020 it is an appropriate time to once again develop an updated land acquisition strategy. **This strategy was prepared to guide Department-led land acquisition for the period 2010-2019, with specific acquisition targets and allocation methodology for the first five years.**

A REVIEW OF PAST ACQUISITION EFFORTS

Since 1876 the Department of Natural Resources and its predecessor agencies have acquired land for outdoor recreation, natural resources protection, and habitat management purposes. These public lands not only harbor healthy populations of game and non-game species, they also contribute environmental services ranging from purifying air and water to reducing flooding impacts to sequestering carbon. These lands provide vital habitat for

Stewardship Funding

July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2019
\$86 million/year

Funding for land acquisition:

- At least \$12 million of matching funds for Non-government Organizations.
- \$2 million/year to acquire land from the Board of Commissioners of Public Land.
- \$3 million/year to acquire lands for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail.
- Matching funds to County Forest programs and acquisition projects where the Department requests County assistance (amount undefined).
- Up to \$45 million/year for the Department for general land acquisition.

Funding for facility development/acquisition:

- \$10 million for development projects on Department properties.
- Up to \$11.5 million of matching funds for Local Units of Government (can be used for acquisition).
- \$2.5 million/year of matching funds for recreational boating aids.

¹ See Appendix A for a listing of statutes and codes related to the Department's land acquisition.



our rarest plants and animals and protect some of the last remaining occurrences of high quality native plant communities. This collection of properties also provides exceptional opportunities for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities. Together these lands, in concert with lands protected by partners including conservation groups, land trusts, Native American Tribes, and municipal, county, and federal governments, are a significant component of what makes Wisconsin a great place to live, work, visit, and recreate.

Although there are a few exceptions, generally the Department of Natural Resources is authorized by the legislature and Natural Resources Board to purchase land only within approved “project boundaries.” The project boundaries and the number of acres within the boundaries that the Department proposes to acquire at each project are established through extensive planning processes. These processes consider an area’s physical and biological environment, existing landscape patterns, recreation capabilities, the views of the public and landowners, and the availability of funding and staffing to successfully accomplish the purposes of the project.

	Fishery Areas	Natural Areas	Northern Forests	Parks & Southern Forests	Wildlife Areas	Wild Rivers & Resource Areas	Misc ²	STATE
Number of Projects	90	20	11	106	147	9	18	401
Acres Owned	104,286	82,029	584,057	165,022	465,125	149,025	6,930	1,556,474
Remaining Authorization	73,428	42,760	178,426	48,803	234,670	51,074	0	629,161
Percent Complete	59%	66%	77%	77%	66%	74%	100%	70%

¹ In addition to active projects, the Department owns 107, 847 acres within projects that have been closed.
² Miscellaneous projects include fire towers, fish hatcheries, rearing ponds, ranger stations, etc.

With the inception of more consistent funding sources (namely the ORAP and Stewardship programs), the Department has been able to establish new projects (particularly state wildlife and fishery areas and state parks) and significantly expand many others. Currently, the Department has 401 active land acquisition projects throughout the state and has the authority to purchase approximately 630,000 additional acres within the existing boundaries (see accompanying table).

THE NEED TO PRIORITIZE

For over 100 years, the state has acquired land for state parks, trails, forests, wildlife & fishery areas, natural areas, wild rivers, recreation areas and assorted facilities such as fish hatcheries, tree nurseries, and fire towers. The Department now owns (either in fee title or easement) over 1.6 million acres within nearly 900 different acquisition projects. At about half of these properties, the Department has successfully met its land acquisition goal. For many other existing state forests, parks, wildlife areas and other properties, the land base that has been acquired to date enables the properties to achieve much of their intent and purpose, even if the entire acquisition goals originally envisioned have not been met. Additional acquisitions may incrementally increase the conservation or recreation benefits provided at a property, but may not be critical to its overall function and value. These successes demonstrate the importance and value of broad public support for land acquisition, stable funding sources, the willingness of owners to sell land for public benefits, and strong relationships with a variety of partners.

As our landscape has changed and as our understanding of ecological processes and needs has increased, different conservation priorities have evolved than those identified decades ago. Similarly, as our population has increased, aged, urbanized, and diversified, new outdoor recreation demands have emerged. Further, many projects have been affected by land use changes and developments in and around their boundaries since their inception. As a result, future acquisitions of some parcels within some existing properties are neither feasible nor



would substantively help meet today's recreation or conservation goals. Together, these changes require the Department to continually refine its land acquisition focus and priorities.²

This strategy seeks to focus future acquisitions on those places that address today's highest priority recreation and conservation needs of the state. With the renewal of the Stewardship program, the Department and partner groups have the opportunity to make additional key acquisitions in the coming years to help fulfill the state's goal of preserving Wisconsin's significant land and water resources for future generations and providing the land base and recreational facilities needed for quality outdoor experiences. This strategy describes the priorities on which the Department will focus its efforts over the next ten years with specific targets for the years 2010 to 2015 and outlines a methodology for allocating funds. Our success will determine if future generations enjoy the same environmental and recreational opportunities and the same quality of life that we do today.

OTHER USES OF STEWARDSHIP FUNDING NOT ADDRESSED IN THIS STRATEGY

Stewardship funds are also used by the Department and partner groups to build, repair, and improve facilities that support a wide variety of recreation activities. These include campgrounds, trails, roads, visitor centers, fish hatcheries, parking lots, and many other structures. The Department has a separate planning process, known as the "Six-Year Facilities Development Plan" to identify development priorities.

In addition, the Stewardship program helps to fund the establishment and development of a diverse portfolio of protected lands and waters by local units of government and non-profit conservation groups by providing matching grants. Collectively, these partner-owned properties provide significant outdoor recreation opportunities and serve to preserve and restore natural communities and provide habitats that support healthy populations of native plants and animals. Although this acquisition plan covers only Department-led acquisition efforts, the partner groups will be in a better position to accomplish their priorities as well as collaborate with the Department with a clear understanding of the Department's land acquisition priorities.

THE AMOUNT OF LAND THAT COULD BE PURCHASED WITH STEWARDSHIP FUNDS

The amount of land ultimately protected with Stewardship funds depends on many factors including the cost per acre of land protected, the success of partners to leverage Stewardship funds, the availability of federal matching funds and our ability to compete successfully for them, and the degree to which the Department purchases different types of easements, rather than fee ownership, to provide public access and resource conservation.

If the cost of land over the next ten years is similar to the last decade, then the Stewardship funding will allow the Department and partners to acquire approximately 100,000 to 150,000 acres by 2019. Clearly this would be a considerable amount of land and would enable the Department to make significant progress towards meeting recreation and conservation goals. However, it would comprise less than one-quarter of the land the Department currently has authority to acquire within existing projects and does not include funding for new projects such as new state parks or easements on working forests. Thus, identifying high priority needs in the state and providing clear objectives for the land acquisition program are essential for effective management of the Department's financial and human resources.

² State statute 23.15 states that the Department may sell land if the NRB and Governor determine that the land is no longer necessary for the state's use for conservation purposes. Given the type and quality of land that the Department has historically purchased, it has sold land on only rare occasions.



II. VISION

Stewardship funds are used, in collaboration with our partners and other funding sources, to establish and develop a diverse portfolio of properties that collectively:

- provides all Wisconsin residents with readily accessible opportunities to participate in a range of high quality outdoor experiences,
- preserves and restores natural communities and habitats throughout the state that support healthy populations of plants and wildlife,
- protects and improves environmental quality and provides a range of ecosystem services, and
- enhances the state's natural resource-based economy, including tourism establishments, the wood products industry, and other businesses.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To achieve the land acquisition vision, the Department will follow these principles:

- **Focus efforts for results.** Allocate funds to projects that both meet the state's most pressing recreation and conservation needs and have unique implementation opportunities.
- **Commitment to ongoing projects.** Maintain efforts to continue acquiring land within existing high priority projects. Purchase inholdings that are critical to an existing project's ability to meet high priority recreation or conservation objectives.
- **Adapt to changing circumstances.** Establish a limited number of new projects and emphasize some expansion of others to meet evolving recreation and conservation needs and unique opportunities.
- **Meet recreation demand close to home.** Prioritize acquisition on a geographic basis to provide outdoor opportunities close to large urban centers and other areas experiencing rapid population growth. Acquire readily accessible lands that enable residents to participate in healthy outdoor activities.
- **Partner to meet shared goals.** Aggressively seek federal (and other) matching funds consistent with our land protection priorities. Maximize cooperative approaches among a diverse array of partners in acquiring, developing, and managing properties.
- **Leverage our nature-based economy.** Acquire lands that enhance our natural resource-based economy, particularly places that benefit the state's leisure and hospitality industries.
- **Complement efforts to protect our rural landscapes and economies.** Ensure that lands acquired are consistent with local and state efforts to maintain working farms and forests. Protect lands that supply a diversity of materials to the wood products industry and other businesses that use natural resources.
- **Focus on sustainability.** Acquire lands that enhance the state's environmental and economic sustainability (e.g., acquire lands that minimize the environmental and economic impacts of flooding or protect groundwater recharge areas supplying municipal drinking water).
- **Be fiscally prudent.** Acquire lands at the lowest cost that meet the purpose and intent of the project. Acquire lands and develop recreation facilities that provide high levels of quality and satisfying recreation participation for the cost incurred.



IV. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Consistent with the vision and statutory direction, the three broad land acquisition goals and the associated objectives for this strategy are:

Goal A. Provide the public land base needed for high-quality nature based **outdoor recreation experiences**.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Purchase land and easements that allow the Department and partners to *address the most pressing shortages and critical gaps in outdoor recreation* as described in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).³
2. Provide opportunities for residents to participate in outdoor recreation *close to where they live*, focusing on areas near large urban centers.
3. Provide a wide range of high-quality recreation experiences –including motorized and non-motorized as well as consumptive and non-consumptive activities– best suited to each region’s features.
4. Fill critical gaps in *recreation trails*, particularly those identified in the State Trails Network Plan.
5. Protect places with high *scenic or historic* values.

Goal B. Preserve Wisconsin’s **high conservation value** lands and waters.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Protect, enhance, and restore *high-quality occurrences of biodiversity* at the species, natural community, and landscape levels for which the state plays a critical conservation role.
2. Protect and restore habitats throughout the state that support each area’s *representative species and habitats, including game and non-game fish and wildlife species*.
3. Protect and restore places harboring state-significant populations of rare species, particularly *Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)*, and places harboring state-significant occurrences of natural communities, including areas that can be used as *ecological reference areas*.
4. Protect and restore places in each region of the state that help to facilitate species’ *adaptation to shifting land uses and climate change impacts*.
5. Protect and restore *critical linkages* between large habitat blocks that help maintain functioning ecological landscape systems, such as providing corridors for climate change adaptation.

Goal C. Maintain a portfolio of public lands that supports and enhances Wisconsin’s **nature-based economy**.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Acquire lands that enrich and expand Wisconsin’s *nature-based tourism⁴ and outdoor recreation industries*.
2. Acquire lands that support and complement *local and state economic growth plans*, including lands that provide material for the *sustainable production of wood products*.
3. Acquire lands that *improve the sustainability of local communities* and enhance their quality of life, including factors such as reducing the impacts of flooding and protecting groundwater recharge areas.
4. Acquire lands that *provide high levels of participation in recreation activities* that are in greatest demand.
5. Acquire lands that *leverage partnerships*, including federal funds and matching grants.
6. Acquire lands that maximize long-term recreational and ecological benefits while *minimizing long-term staffing and management costs*.

³ Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. 2006. pages 5-21, 22.

⁴ Nature based activities are those where the primary focus or purpose is the appreciation or enjoyment of nature. These activities may include but are not limited to hiking, bicycling, wildlife or nature observation, camping, nature study, fishing, hunting, trapping, picnicking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and motorized and non-motorized trail activities.



V. TRENDS AFFECTING LAND ACQUISITION

Many ecological, social, and land use trends affect the department's and partners' ability to protect properties that will be critical to meeting conservation and recreation needs. A summary of some of the most pressing trends include the following:

- **Growing recreation demand.** Demand for a wide variety of outdoor opportunities close to major population centers, particularly trail-based activities, is growing. Residents are looking for readily accessible places near where they live to recreate after work or on weekends.
- **Increasing popularity of some activities.** Due to a variety of factors, participation in some outdoor activities is growing strongly. Examples include ATV riding, geocaching, and kayaking.
- **Recognition of the health benefits of getting outdoors.** Health professionals are increasingly recognizing the physical and mental health benefits, particularly for children, of spending time outdoors in natural settings.
- **Need for connection to the outdoors.** Today's youth spend considerably less time outdoors than previous generations and are increasingly disconnected from nature. Participation in many traditional nature-based recreation activities has declined among young people over the last several decades.
- **Habitat and species loss.** The state's biodiversity is being lost, primarily due to development patterns, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species. Meeting the goal of protecting the state's biodiversity is difficult due both to the increasing number of species at risk and the fragmentation of the rural landscape.
- **Parcels are shrinking.** The size of ownership holdings continues to decrease throughout the state. This increases the difficulty for the Department and partners to acquire blocks of land large enough to provide significant recreation opportunities or meet critical habitat needs.
- **Forest fragmentation.** Large blocks of privately-owned forest are at risk of being divided and developed. Ownership parcelization typically leads to habitat fragmentation and degradation, increased development and road building, and lands being closed to public access.
- **Economy affects recreation demand.** Economic constraints and the cost of travel are affecting how and where Wisconsinites and Midwesterners recreate. People are increasingly looking to reduce travel time and costs and as a result recreation demand, particularly near urban centers is dramatically increasing. Similarly, as Midwesterners defer taking longer vacations to distant destinations (e.g., out West or overseas), tourism demand in northern Wisconsin has also increased.
- **Energy impact increasing in the future.** As interest in alternative energy increases, large swaths of rural Wisconsin may be involved in growing biomass for energy production. This could significantly affect land use throughout the state.
- **Access to water.** Public demand continues to be very high for access to clean lakes, rivers, and streams for many types of water-based recreation. Some areas of the state are experiencing problems with drinking water quality or quantity.
- **Changing demographics.** Wisconsin's population, average age, and ethnic diversity are all increasing. The population is increasingly urbanized as younger people migrate to cities for employment. However, as communication technology advances, this movement may be somewhat counteracted by people's ability to work from remote settings.
- **Recreation conflict.** As more people recreate on public lands and as participation rates in different activities change over time, user conflicts among and between activities are increasing. To reduce conflicts, recreation activities are often separated thus increasing demand for more lands that can provide high quality experiences.
- **Need for publicly accessible land.** Access to land that had been available for public access in the past is increasingly being lost. Common examples include new landowners restricting access, lands being subdivided and developed, and landowners that previously permitted access no longer doing so.
- **Increased flooding.** Land use changes are resulting in more impervious surfaces which, when combined with increasingly strong storm events, has resulted in more flooding. Existing land uses in many flood-prone areas may become infeasible.
- **Climate change.** Global climate change will continue to affect our natural resources and the ecological, economic, environmental, social and recreational benefits they provide. Land protection will be of increasing importance in developing a coordinated system of reserves, buffers, and corridors that facilitate species-level adaptation and the changing structure, composition, and diversity of our native habitats.



VI. ALLOCATING STEWARDSHIP LAND ACQUISITION FUNDS

From July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2019, annual Stewardship funding for general land acquisition will total \$50 million, of which \$2 million is dedicated to purchasing land from the Board of Commissioners of Public Land (BCPL). In addition, a portion of the remaining funding is to be used to provide matching funds for land acquisition by county forest programs and to counties to purchase land for projects that promote nature-based outdoor recreation or conservation and for which the Department requests the county's assistance. For the period **July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2015**, the Department proposes to divide the remaining \$48 million of annual funding to meet two types of acquisition needs:

1. Inholdings within existing projects

The Department's existing properties contain over 600,000 acres of in-holdings or areas of remaining acquisition authority. Acquiring private in-holdings increases management efficiencies and reduces management costs. In addition, acquiring in-holdings reduces the potential negative ecological, economic and social impacts of potential development adjacent to public lands. Recognizing the importance of maintaining a commitment to acquiring lands within established projects, administrative code directs the Department to place an emphasis on consolidating and completing existing projects.⁵ Acquiring priority in-holdings will accomplish one or more of the following:

- increase options to provide the most efficient means of accessing state-owned lands for management purposes;
- increase recreation options for trails, hunters and public access points;
- reduce staff time and survey work required when managing state-owned lands;
- reduce resources spent on trespass and encroachment complaints;
- increase ecological benefits by reducing fragmentation and expanding habitat blocks;
- increase implementation of master plan management prescriptions;
- increase ecological benefits through consistent implementation of common management objectives across a landscape;
- and save costs for local units of government by reducing needed services.

The Department proposes to allocate **60%** of the Stewardship acquisition funds to the land acquiring programs in the agency – Wildlife, Forestry, Fisheries, Parks, Natural Areas, and Facilities & Lands – to purchase inholdings within existing acquisition projects. Each program will be allotted a portion of this overall allocation based on four criteria: the amount of land currently approved for future acquisition within their projects, the proximity of these properties to where people live, the relative shortage of existing recreation opportunities within the county which the properties are located, and the alignment of properties with statewide ecological and conservation priorities. See Maps 1-3 for a visual presentation of these attributes.

The Department expects that the bulk of the Stewardship funds will be focused on projects that meet high priority recreation and conservation needs. Criteria to identify projects best suited to meet recreation and conservation goals – and the trends affecting them – are presented in Appendix B. Some of these funds will also be used to acquire critical inholdings at properties that may not be acquisition priorities from a statewide perspective. Appendix C lists the criteria that the Department will use in evaluating the relative importance of specific inholdings.

The reauthorization of the Stewardship program includes a requirement that the Department establish a grant program that enables counties to apply for matching funds to acquire land either for county forests managed under State Statute 28.11, or to provide nature based outdoor recreation for which the Department requests the county's assistance. In determining allotments to the programs, all 29 county forest acquisition plans were combined with the Division of Forestry's existing acquisition projects. Thus, the Forestry Division will be responsible for managing the allocation of funds for both state forests and county forests.

⁵ See NR 1.40(2)(a)



In those circumstances in which the Department requests assistance from a county in acquiring land to fulfill a priority acquisition, the applicable program requesting county assistance will be responsible for managing the process in concert with the county.

2. New opportunities

In addition to purchasing land within existing acquisition projects, the Department is often presented with opportunities to acquire significant properties outside of these projects. It is the Department's experience that some of these lands are likely to be viewed by the Department, the NRB, and the public as unique, one-of-a-kind opportunities that should be priorities for acquisition. These may be unusually large acreages, lands that could leverage significant federal or partner funding, or other properties that could address significant ecological or recreation goals and needs. Examples could include purchasing working forest easements on large blocks, land for a motorized recreation area or a new state park, or exceptionally high quality or sensitive habitats.

There are often compelling reasons to seize these opportunities, yet diverting funds to them can create obstacles to the ongoing planning and management of the Department's real estate operations. To address this situation, the Department proposes to allocate 40% of the Stewardship acquisition funds to acquire unique, one-of-a-kind properties or to acquire lands within recently approved projects. Allocating funds for unknown opportunities may appear counter-intuitive to the intent of developing this acquisition strategy, but the Department believes doing so will enable the agency to more effectively and efficiently address the realities of shifting real estate markets. The Department will evaluate these potential new opportunities using the criteria described in Appendix D. If an opportunity emerges to purchase a unique property more expensive than the money remaining for this purpose, then the acquisition would need to be spread out over more than one year.

For the period July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2019, the Department will determine funding allocations for different acquisition needs based on its experience with this approach.



VII. TRACKING PERFORMANCE

Based on average land prices throughout the state, the Department anticipates being able to acquire between 10,000 to 15,000 acres per year with the Stewardship funding. Annually, the Department will present the Natural Resources Board a summary report of the past year's land acquisitions as they relate to the goals and objectives of the Stewardship program. In addition, the Department will describe how the lands acquired are distributed based on the following three factors used to determine funding allocations to programs:

(1) Proximity to population.

The Department seeks to focus acquisition efforts in places accessible to large numbers of people. Map 1 portrays five different zones based on the number of people within an hour's drive time. Properties within Zones A and B are reachable for a short outing after work or on a weekend by a majority of the state's residents. The Department seeks to emphasize land acquisitions at properties in these zones that provide opportunities for people to engage in nature-based recreation activities they can pursue for a couple of hours at a time.

That said, many people like to visit completely different settings and thus, a trip to the north woods for camping, deer hunting, snowmobiling, and other pursuits remains a mainstay of outdoor recreation in the state. Although the bulk of public land in Wisconsin is already in the north, the Department will continue to seek strategic acquisitions that fill critical needs, particularly those related to longer-stay outings.

(2) Priority conservation areas.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WWAP) describes a series of tasks and opportunities to protect and sustain Species of Greatest Conservation Need. In addition, the WWAP identifies conservation opportunity areas (COAs) where habitat protection and restoration is most pressing. Map 2 shows the different levels of ecological significance of the COAs in Wisconsin. The Department seeks to focus acquisition efforts to protect habitat within these COAs to help sustain and improve populations of the Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

(3) Counties with relative shortages of recreation opportunities.

Some areas of the state have many opportunities and facilities to support a range of nature-based outdoor recreation for their resident populations, while other areas of the state are relatively underserved. The Department seeks to focus acquisition efforts (as well as facility development) in areas to help address relative shortages of recreation opportunities. As part of the SCORP, data were collected on the supply of different types of lands and facilities that support nature-based recreation activities. Map 3 shows the relative supply of recreation opportunities per capita by county.

The exceptional outdoor amenities in some counties, particularly in the northern part of the state, draw visitors from throughout the state and Midwest region. Although they may have an adequate supply of recreation opportunities to serve their residents, because these counties draw people from a very broad area, the Department will continue to seek acquisitions that complement and enhance the range of outdoor experiences provided in these destination areas.



Appendix A:

Legal underpinnings and guidance related to Department land acquisition.

STATE STATUTE

23.09 Conservation.

(2) DEPARTMENTAL RULES; STUDIES; SURVEYS; SERVICES; POWERS; LONG-RANGE PLANNING.

(d) Lands, acquisition.

Acquire by purchase, lease or agreement, and receive by gifts or devise, lands or waters suitable for the purposes enumerated in this paragraph, and maintain such lands and waters for such purposes; and may condemn lands or waters suitable for such purposes after obtaining approval of the appropriate standing committees of each house of the legislature as determined by the presiding officer thereof:

1. For state forests.
2. For state parks for the purpose of preserving scenic or historical values or natural wonders.
3. For public shooting, trapping or fishing grounds or waters for the purpose of providing areas in which any citizen may hunt, trap or fish.
4. For fish hatcheries and game farms.
5. For forest nurseries and experimental stations.
6. For preservation of any endangered species or threatened species under s. 29.604.
7. For state recreation areas designated under s. 23.091.
8. For state natural areas as authorized under s. 23.27 (4) and for state natural areas as authorized under s. 23.27 (5) except that land may not be acquired through condemnation under the authority of s. 23.27 (5).
9. For any other purpose for which gift lands are suitable, as determined by the department.
10. For the ice age trail as designated under s. 23.17 (2).
11. For the purposes provided in ss. 30.40 to 30.49 in the lower Wisconsin state riverway as defined in s. 30.40 (15).
12. For state trails.
13. For the stream bank protection program.
14. For habitat areas and fisheries.
15. State wildlife areas.
16. For bluff protection under s. 30.24.

23.0917 Warren Knowles–Gaylord Nelson stewardship 2000 program.

(3) LAND ACQUISITION SUBPROGRAM.

- (a) Beginning with fiscal year 2000–01 and ending with fiscal year 2019–20, the department may obligate moneys under the subprogram for land acquisition to acquire land for the purposes specified in s. 23.09 (2) (d) and grants for these purposes under s. 23.096, except as provided under ss. 23.197 (2m), (3m) (b), (7m), and (8) and 23.198 (1) (a).
- (b) In obligating moneys under the subprogram for land acquisition, the department shall set aside in each fiscal year \$3,000,000 that may be obligated only for state trails and the ice age trail and for grants for the state trails and the ice age trails under s. 23.096. The period of time during which the moneys shall be set aside in each fiscal year shall begin on the July 1 of the fiscal year and end on the June 30 of the same fiscal year.
- (bm) During the period beginning with fiscal year 2001–02 and ending with fiscal year 2019–20, in obligating money under the subprogram for land acquisition, the department shall set aside not less than a total of \$2,000,000 that may be obligated only to provide matching funds for grants awarded to the department for the purchase of land or easements under 16 USC 2103c. (Forest Legacy Program)



- (br) Beginning with fiscal year 2010–11 and ending with fiscal year 2019–20, in obligating moneys under the subprogram for land acquisition, the department shall set aside in each fiscal year not less than \$12,000,000 that may be obligated only to provide for grants awarded to nonprofit conservation organizations under s. 23.096.
- (c) In obligating moneys under the subprogram for land acquisition, the department shall give priority to all of the following purposes and to awarding grants under s. 23.096 for all the following purposes:
 1. Acquisition of land that preserves or enhances the state’s water resources, including land in and for the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway; land abutting wild rivers designated under s. 30.26, wild lakes and land along the shores of the Great Lakes.
 2. Acquisition of land for the stream bank protection program under s. 23.094.
 3. Acquisition of land for habitat areas and fisheries under s. 23.092.
 4. Acquisition of land for natural areas under ss. 23.27 and 23.29.
 6. Acquisition of land in the middle Kettle Moraine.
- (dm) Except as provided in subs. (4g) (b), (4m) (k), (5) and (5m), the department may not obligate under the subprogram for land acquisition more than the following amounts:
 1. For fiscal year 2000–01, \$28,500,000.
 - 1m. For fiscal year 2001–02, \$34,500,000.
 2. For each fiscal year beginning with fiscal year 2002–03 and ending with fiscal year 2006–07, \$45,000,000.
 3. For fiscal year 2007–08, \$43,500,000.
 - 3m. For fiscal years 2008–09 and 2009–10, \$42,500,000.
 4. For each fiscal year beginning with fiscal year 2010–11 and ending with fiscal year 2019–20, \$62,000,000.
- (e) For purposes of this subsection, the department by rule shall define “wild lake”.

23.0953 Grants to counties for land acquisition.

- (1) In this section, “nature–based outdoor recreation” has the meaning given by the department by rule under s. 23.0917 (4) (f).
- (2) (a) Beginning with fiscal year 2010–11 and ending with fiscal year 2019–20, the department shall establish a grant program under which the department may award a grant to a county for any of the following:
 1. Acquisition of land for a county forest under s. 28.11.
 2. Acquisition of land for a project that promotes nature–based outdoor recreation or conservation and for which the department is requesting the county’s assistance.
- (b) Grants under this section shall be awarded from the appropriation under s. 20.866 (2) (ta), and, for purposes of s. 23.0917, shall be treated as moneys obligated from the subprogram under s. 23.0917 (3).
- (3) Each county receiving a grant under this section shall provide matching funds that equal at least 50 percent of the acquisition costs.
- (4) A county may not convert the land, or any rights in the land, acquired with grant moneys awarded under sub. (2) (a) 2. to a use that is inconsistent with the type of nature–based outdoor recreation or conservation activity for which the grant was awarded unless the natural resources board approves the conversion.

23.1985 Acquisition of certain public lands.

Beginning in fiscal year 2006–07 and ending in fiscal year 2019–20, from the appropriation under s. 20.866 (2) (ta), the department shall set aside \$2,000,000 in each fiscal year that may be obligated only to acquire land from the board of commissioners of public lands under s. 24.59 (1). If the department sets aside, but does not obligate moneys in a fiscal year under this section, the department may obligate those non-obligated moneys in a subsequent fiscal year under this section in addition to the amounts the department is required to set aside for that subsequent fiscal year. For purposes of s. 23.0917, moneys provided from the appropriation under s. 20.866 (2) (ta) shall be treated as moneys obligated under the subprogram under s. 23.0917 (3).



ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

NR 1.40 Acquisition of recreational land.

- (1) In the acquisition of recreational lands, the department shall place principal emphasis on the acquisition of lands in the heavily populated areas of the state and in places readily accessible to such areas.
- (2) Projects under this section will be undertaken based on the following descending order of priority:
 - (a) Consolidation and completion of existing projects.
 - (b) New acquisition projects based on the following criteria listed in descending order of priority:
 1. Land to protect rare and threatened natural resources; to protect genetic and biological diversity; and to protect, manage or restore critical fish and wildlife habitat.
 2. Unique, one-of-a-kind opportunities that may only be available once; projects of special scenic quality; and projects that are “irreplaceable”; an uncommonly large tract of unique natural resources of sufficient size to provide immediate and significant results in meeting program goals.
 3. Water-based resources that include land important to protect and improve the quality of the state’s surface and ground water; and land for recreation and management along streams, rivers, lakes and flowages.
 4. Lands to accommodate broad, natural resource-based outdoor recreation and state recreational trails.
 5. Land within 40 miles of Wisconsin’s 12 largest cities. If funding limits the ability to purchase available lands within existing urban areas, preference will be given to rural lands near population centers.
 6. Protection of scenic lands that meet the department priorities in subds. 1. to 5.
 - (c) Proposed new projects which fall within the following criteria will be given lower priority. Low priorities are not listed in order.
 1. Wetland projects acquired primarily to provide additional protection beyond regulation and zoning that do not meet other recreational, water quality or resource management needs.
 2. Projects to protect and preserve natural resources not threatened with incompatible use.
 3. Projects not part of large, broad-based integrated management efforts to provide multiple outdoor recreational opportunities.
 4. Timber production areas that do not meet other recreational, water quality or resource management needs.
 5. Lands owned by another unit of government and not threatened with sale or incompatible use.

NR 1.41 Land acquisition authorization.

- (1) The following land transactions of the department shall require board approval:
 - (a) Acquisitions where the purchase price is \$150,000 or more.
 - (b) Acquisitions where more than 40 acres are outside of an established project boundary.
 - (c) Acquisitions where the purchase price exceeds the highest appraised value.
 - (d) Acquisitions by condemnations of land.
 - (e) Acquisitions by gifts of land to the department.
 - (f) Acquisitions where improvement values exceed 35% of total appraised value.
 - (g) Acquisitions of short tenure with substantial increased value.
 - (h) Sales of state land that are no longer needed for conservation purposes where the value exceeds \$50,000 or where the acreage exceeds 40 acres.
- (2) The secretary may approve all other land transactions.
- (3) The department shall submit to the board a yearly statistical report on the land control program, including an analysis of the program’s status in relationship to the state recreational plan.
- (4) The department shall submit to the board at each meeting a report on the status of all options and pending land acquisitions showing the date of each option.



NR 52. Stewardship Land Access.

52.01 Purpose and Applicability.

- (1) Pursuant to s. 23.0916, Stats., lands acquired in whole or in part with funding from the stewardship program are open for public hunting, trapping, hiking, fishing and cross country skiing unless public access is prohibited pursuant to this chapter. Decisions to prohibit public access for these activities will be reviewed by the department using professional judgment and will be based on sound science, legitimate safety issues, factual data and relevant information. A restriction of a nature based outdoor activity may be considered a prohibition if the restriction prevents a major or a significant amount of the nature based activity from occurring.
- (2) The purpose of this chapter is to implement s. 23.0916, Stats., which directs the department to establish standards and criteria for prohibiting public access for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross-country skiing, defined as nature based outdoor activities under s. 23.0916 (1) (b), Stats. This chapter applies to land acquired in whole or in part with funding from the stewardship program under ss. 23.0915 and 23.0917, Stats. The rules in this chapter are intended to maximize the number of compatible users and uses, to the extent practical, on lands subject to s. 23.0916, Stats.
- (3) Pursuant to s. 23.0916 (5) (a), Stats., the natural resources board has determined that ss. NR 1.61 and NR 51.07 (3) (e) govern public access on all other lands funded in whole or in part with funding from the stewardship program under ss. 23.0915 and 23.0917, Stats that are not referred to in sub. (1) or (2).

52.02 Definitions. In this chapter

- (1) “Accommodate Usership Patterns” means to consider the factors found in s. NR 52.05 (1) (c) when making a determination to prohibit an NBOA.
- (2) “Department” means the Wisconsin department of natural resources
- (3) “Department land” means land acquired by the department in fee title, or with an easement on former managed forest land on or after October 27, 2007, with stewardship program funds under s. 23.0917, stats.
- (4) “Former managed forest land” has the meaning given in s. 23.0916 (1) (a), Stats.
- (5) “Hunting” means shooting, shooting at, taking, catching or killing any wild animal, other than by trapping, or pursuing for the purpose of shooting, shooting at, taking, catching or killing any wild animal.
- (6) “Natural values” has the meaning given in s. 23.27 (1) (f), Stats.
- (7) “NBOA” means the nature based public outdoor activity of hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking or cross-country skiing as described in s. 23.0916 (1) (b), Stats.
- (8) “Non-department land” means land acquired in fee title, or with an easement on former managed forest land on or after October 27, 2007, by a non-profit conservation organization or local unit of government with the assistance of a stewardship program grant under s. 23.0917, stats.
- (9) “Primary purpose” means the recreational or conservation purpose for which the property is being acquired as guided by ss. 23.09 (2), 23.09(20) (am), 23.0915, and 23.0917, Stats., by s. NR 51.05, and by state, regional or local plans that support the project.
- (10) “Prohibit access for an NBOA” means not to allow the activity in its entirety, or to restrict the activity so that a major or significant amount of the activity is not allowed.

Note: A temporary restriction of an NBOA for department approved land management practices is not considered a prohibition of an NBOA.
- (11) “Stewardship program” means the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program authorized under ss. 23.0915 and 23.0917, Stats.
- (12) “Unique animal or plant community” means a natural community composed of different plant and animal species, along with their associated geological and archaeological features, that exist together in a specific area, time and habitat. A unique animal or plant community is one identified as endangered, threatened, rare or ecologically sensitive. A unique plant or animal community may also be critical species habitat or an ecological reference area. The sources for identifying unique animal and plant communities include reports or databases, such as the natural heritage inventory, wildlife action plan, regional planning commission reports or other publications routinely



referenced by conservation biologists. Individual game species shall not be considered as unique animal species for purposes of this chapter.

Note: References for, or copies of such databases, publications and reports may be viewed or obtained at the Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Endangered Resources, 101 S. Webster Street, PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921.

52.03 General Provisions.

(1) DEPARTMENT LAND.

- (a) All department land transactions are subject to s. NR. 1.41.
- (b) The department shall incorporate an evaluation of the requirements of s. 23.0916 (3), Stats., in master plans under ch. NR 44, feasibility studies and other planning documents that include land acquisition as an implementation strategy. This paragraph applies to new plans as well as any plan updates that may be undertaken for existing department projects that are subject to s. 23.0916 (3), Stats.

(2) NON-DEPARTMENT LAND. In addition to the requirements of ch. NR 51, stewardship program grant applications to acquire non-department lands subject to s. 23.0916 (2), Stats., shall include all of the following:

- (a). A description of the public uses proposed for the property being acquired and a checklist indicating which of the specific NBOAs shall be permitted on the property. The checklist shall be in a format determined by the department and shall include at a minimum:
 - 1. An indication as to whether a specific NBOA shall be allowed on the property.
 - 2. For hunting, the checklist shall include information for allowing waterfowl, small game, turkey and big game hunting and shall include gun and archery hunting.
 - 3. For trapping, the checklist shall include information for allowing water trapping and upland trapping.
 - 4. For fishing, the checklist shall include information for permitting shore fishing and boat fishing.
 - 5. For hiking, the checklist shall include information for allowing trail hiking and hiking off-trail.
 - 6. For cross-country skiing, the checklist shall include information for allowing groomed trail skiing and off-trail skiing.
- (b). An explanation of the primary purpose for the acquisition. The primary purpose for the acquisition shall be based on ss. 23.09 (2), 23.09(20) (am), 23.0915, or 23.0917, Stats. and s. NR 51.05 and on state, regional or local plans that support the acquisition. The application shall include the name of the plan being used and a description of the formal or informal public input received.
- (c). A description of the NBOAs to be prohibited on the property and the reason for the prohibition. The reason for the prohibition shall be consistent with s. NR 52.05 and the applicant shall address in the application the specific factors in s. NR 52.05 that apply.

(3) DETERMINATIONS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH S. 23.0916, Stats., and S. NR 52.05.

- (a) When a determination has been made in accordance with s. 23.0916, Stats., and s. NR 52.05 to prohibit one or more NBOAs on department land the feasibility study and master plan for the project where the NBOA will be prohibited shall be amended to describe the prohibited activity and a rule change may be initiated to enforce it.
- (b) The stewardship grant contracts executed between the department and sponsor under s. NR 51.07 that are subject to s. 23.0916 Stats., and this chapter, shall describe any determination to prohibit one or more NBOAs and require the sponsor to contact the department if any of the factors identified in s. 52.05 changes such that a prohibition may be necessary, or is no longer necessary. The department shall evaluate those changes to determine the applicability to this chapter.

(4) Public use of lands purchased in whole or in part with funding from the stewardship program under s. 23.0917, Stats., shall be subject to all applicable federal, state and local laws; including but not limited to the public trust doctrine.

(5) Contributions of separate property used as sponsor match under ch. NR 51., subch.1., are not subject to this chapter.



- (6) An organization with an identified policy prohibiting or restricting one or more NBOAs must comply with the provisions of this chapter regardless of the organization's policies.

52.04 Public Notice.

- (1) In addition to the public notice requirements of ch. NR 150, the department shall provide individual notification over the internet to any person requesting to receive a notice of any proposal to prohibit an NBOA on department or non-department land subject to s. 23.0916 (2) or (3), Stats. Any public notice regarding a proposal to prohibit an NBOA shall include all of the following:
 - (a) The name, address and phone number of the department's contact person for the project.
 - (b) The checklist described in s. NR 52.03 (2) (a).
 - (c) A summary of the NBOAs to be prohibited and the factors that were considered under s. NR 52.05.
 - (d) The department's initial assessment of the proposal to prohibit the NBOA pursuant to ss. 23.0916(2) (b) or (3) (b), Stats. The department's assessment shall include an evaluation of s. NR 52.05 (1) (a) through (c) and shall involve the department's resource management professionals at the local, regional and statewide level.
- (2)
 - (a) Public comments concerning the proposal to prohibit an NBOA shall be submitted in writing to the department. The comment period shall be 15 business days beginning on the day immediately following the day the department sends out the notice electronically.
 - (b) Objections must show the proposed prohibition of an NBOA to be inconsistent with ss. 23.0916(2) (b) or 23.0916(3) (b), Stats., and s. NR 52.05.
 - (c) If an objection is received during the 15 business day comment period the department shall have up to 15 additional business days following the close of the comment period to evaluate the public comment, including any objections. The department shall contact anyone that submitted an objection under par. (a) and the person that requested the stewardship program funding to notify them that the objection was received and to gain more information about the proposal to prohibit an NBOA.
 - (d) The department shall create a written summary of its determination on the proposal to prohibit one or more NBOAs at the conclusion of the public comment and evaluation periods in pars. (c) and (d). The department's written determination shall be based on ss. 23.0916(2) (b) or (3) (b), Stats., and s. NR 52.05 and the department shall provide the written summary to anyone that submitted an objection in accordance with par. (a), and to the person that requested the stewardship program funding.
 - (e) The department shall submit to the natural resources board for each regularly scheduled meeting a report that summarizes determinations made under par. (d). The report shall contain the information made available to the public under s. NR 52.04 (1), public comments, including any objections, gathered under s. NR 52.04 (2), and the department's written determination made under par. (d). The department shall deliver the report to the natural resource board and make the information available to the public over the internet at least five working days preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board. The natural resources board shall allow public participation to receive public testimony regarding the department's determinations and vote whether to ratify prohibitions on non-department land that appear on the monthly report.

52.05 Natural Resources Board Determinations.

- (1) In accordance with s. 23.0916, Stats., the natural resources board has determined that it is necessary to prohibit one or more NBOAs on department or non-department land for one or more of the following reasons listed below. In accordance with s. 15.05 (1) (b), Stats., the department shall make administrative determinations for each individual proposal to prohibit an NBOA, under the direction of the board, utilizing the process established in ss. NR 52.03 and 52.04, and based on the following reasons and factors.
 - (a) To protect public safety. One or more of the factors to consider when evaluating a proposal to prohibit an NBOA to protect public safety include:
 1. The primary purpose for the project.
 2. Laws and ordinances that may impact one or more NBOAs on the property.Note: NBOAs may be affected by local laws or ordinances and may change as local laws or ordinances change.



3. User conflicts that may create public safety issues and impact one or more NBOAs on the property.
 4. The physical characteristics of the property including size, shape, groundcover, topography or proximity to inhabited buildings that create public safety issues and influence NBOAs on the property.
 5. A proposal to prohibit one or more NBOAs on a parcel 5 acres or smaller, located within the boundaries of cities and villages, shall be determined to be necessary in order to protect public safety and shall not be subject to s. NR 52.04 unless:
 - a. The parcel is adjacent to a parcel where the NBOAs to be prohibited already exist or;
 - b. The parcel is adjacent to a public waterway.
- (b) To protect a unique animal or plant community. One or more of the factors to consider when evaluating a proposal to prohibit an NBOA to protect a unique animal or plant community include:
1. The primary purpose for the project.
 2. The necessity to prohibit an NBOA to protect and enhance the biological diversity, composition and ecological functions of natural communities exhibiting relatively little human disturbance or that have the capacity to be easily restored to such conditions.
 3. The potential for an NBOA to impact the natural values of the site, according to s. 23.28 (3), Stats.
 4. The potential for an NBOA to accelerate or increase over time and cause damage to the natural values of a site.
 5. The potential for an NBOA to increase the risk of poaching rare plant or animal species, or the removal or destruction of rare geological or archeological features.
- (c) To accommodate usership patterns. One or more of the factors to consider when evaluating the necessity to prohibit an NBOA to accommodate usership patterns include:
1. The primary purpose for the project.
 2. User incompatibility and how this incompatibility may lead to the primary purpose of the project being significantly altered or curtailed.
 3. The complexity, feasibility, practicality and cost effectiveness of separating activities by time and space or any other manner that might mitigate user incompatibility and or reduce the need for enforcement.
 4. The size, shape and location of the property as well as surrounding land uses, including the use of public lands immediately adjacent to the property which may or may not have been funded with stewardship funds. The use of adjacent lands shall not be used as the sole factor in making a determination to prohibit an NBOA to accommodate usership patterns.
 5. The mix of NBOAs at the location of the property that, to the extent practicable, will provide a quality experience for all compatible users and uses.



Appendix B:

Criteria to identify existing properties on which to focus acquisition efforts.

To address these trends and to meet the acquisition goals and objectives, the Department will focus efforts on acquiring lands that meet the following criteria.

CRITERIA A: Lands and waters that provide high quality outdoor experiences for those activities that currently are, or are projected to be, in highest demand or that address significant shortages in supply.

Recreation demand varies across the state based on many factors including regional population, habitat quality, landscape and water features, scenery, and climate. Similarly, the supply of places open to the public to meet demand differs across the state. Effectively providing high quality recreation experiences requires matching local and regional demand for different activities, the features and attributes of lands and waters, existing opportunities for outdoor recreation, and many other factors. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and other recreation research studies provide insights into demand for and supply of different outdoor activities and how these may shift over time. In particular, demographic, social, and environmental changes are likely to lead to increases and decreases in the demand for different activities over the coming decades.

Participation (and thus demand) in outdoor recreation is ultimately driven by people's overall satisfaction with their outings. The Department wants to encourage and facilitate more participation in a wide range of outdoor activities and thus wants to provide a variety of high quality outdoor experiences. Recognizing traditional outdoor activities such as hunting and providing new opportunities for them, DNR is also interested in providing readily accessible opportunities for activities that can lead people to engage in other outdoor activities, too. Sometimes referred to as "gateway" activities, these often include fishing, biking, camping, and hiking.

Of course, quality and satisfaction are subjective issues, but typically the following conditions lead to satisfying experiences:

- Places that require minimal travel time for the experience provided.
- High quality recreation facilities and habitat that are provided in a quantity that is worth the travel investment.
- Desired elements are seen or experienced (e.g., hunters see their target game species, bird watchers see their species of interest, or someone seeking solitude experiences their desired setting).
- Level and nature of interactions with others is consistent with expectations. Minimize the likelihood of unforeseen conflicts between different users.

Places that **provide high quality outdoor experiences for the current and projected highest recreation demands and shortages in the state** include:

A1. Places located in areas that provide readily accessible opportunities for the greatest number of people.

An important component of demand relates to people's willingness and ability to travel to participate. For activities such as camping, many people are willing to travel relatively long distances because their trips are often multi-day vacations. For other activities, such as hiking or biking, many people are looking for nearby opportunities to visit during the week after work or on part of a weekend day. Similarly, access to nearby hunting lands is a limiting factor for many participants and is an issue that the Department and partner groups continue to address. To be sure, some activities can only be provided in particular places (e.g., whitewater paddling) and a remote, wilderness experience can only be provided in some areas distant from population centers. One of the



priorities listed in Administrative Code for acquiring recreation land is places within 40 miles of the 12 largest cities in the state.⁶

The biggest barriers to participation in outdoor recreation have consistently been (and are likely to continue to be) travel time and cost. Generally, people prefer to visit places that provide the outdoor experiences they seek that are closest to where they live. As such, a priority for the Department is to provide high quality outdoor experiences in the closest reasonable proximity to where the greatest numbers of participants live.

A2. Places that provide settings and habitats supporting high quality experiences.

People are drawn to scenic, natural places to recreate. Yet, a wide variety of settings can provide satisfying experiences. Some outdoor activities do not require high quality prairies, wetlands, forests and other habitats, while others do. For example, places with lower ecological quality can still provide high quality mountain biking or cross country skiing experiences. Indeed, some outdoor activities such as ATV riding, horseback riding, or camping are not compatible with areas supporting high ecological quality and should primarily be located in areas with minimal environmental sensitivity.

Conversely, providing high quality hunting or wildlife watching experiences requires areas supporting high quality habitats that support healthy populations of desired species.

In addition to being located in appropriate locations and habitats, places intended to provide high quality outdoor experiences need to be large enough to supply enough opportunities to warrant the travel effort and investment. The amount of opportunity needed to provide a high quality experience varies for different recreation activities. For example, a high quality day hiking experience could be provided with five miles or less of trail on 80 acres while a high quality weekend horseback riding experience could require 50 or more miles that might cover 500 acres or more. Similarly, although relatively small properties are huntable, high quality experiences are provided when there is both enough habitat to support healthy populations of game species as well as enough space that hunters are not crowding each other.

A3. Places that address key gaps in current opportunities to participate in outdoor activities based on existing and projected demand.

Existing gaps have been identified by the SCORP and other recreation surveys. The largest gaps include providing trail-based opportunities in conjunction with associated activities such as wildlife watching and camping. This need is most acute near large urban centers, particularly in southern and eastern parts of the state. As discussed earlier, people are generally willing to travel further to participate in activities that they will be engaged in for longer periods (e.g. camping). Based on this information, the Department concludes that the highest priority gaps are:

- **Day hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing experiences** within 40 miles of 500,000 or more people.
- **Access to lakes, rivers or streams** for boating, paddling, and fishing.
- **Wildlife (bird) watching opportunities**, particularly in the spring and fall and in association with non-motorized hiking and biking trails.
- **Developed and primitive camping** opportunities, including sites to accommodate group, equestrian, and paddling use, within 80 miles of 2,000,000 or more people.
- **Hunting, fishing, and trapping experiences** within 40 miles of 500,000 or more people.
- Experiences for **motorized recreational use**, including ATVs, in places that are adequately buffered.

⁶ Administrative Code Chapter NR 1.40(2)(b) states that acquisition of recreational land within 40 miles of the 12 largest cities are a priority. The 12 largest cities in Wisconsin are: Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Kenosha, Racine, Appleton, Waukesha, Oshkosh, Eau Claire, West Allis, Janesville, La Crosse. (2000 Census)



A4. Places that provide high quality experiences for the most popular outdoor activities.

Wisconsinites are an outdoor-loving population. The state has consistently ranked among the national leaders in participation rates for many activities, no doubt reflecting both the quality of our lands and waters as well as our long social and cultural connections to the outdoors.

The popularity of different activities has shifted over time based on a number of factors including the demographics of the population, personal preferences and free time available, transportation time and cost, and technological advancements in equipment. Yet, several activities have been consistently popular across generations. Fishing and hunting, enjoying a hike, watching birds during their spring migration, spending a day at a beach, camping and other activities have long enjoyed wide participation.

According to the SCORP, the most popular outdoor activities in Wisconsin are (in descending order): wildlife watching & photographing, day hiking, biking, fishing, visiting a beach or swimming in lakes and streams, camping, hunting, canoeing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and ATV riding.

A5. Places that harbor exceptional scenic or historic features and values.

In addition to providing places for high quality, satisfying outdoor experiences, the Department is also charged with protecting places of exceptional scenic or historical value. Many of these places also provide unique and popular settings for different types of outdoor activities. As with areas supporting high ecological quality, many of the state's most scenic and historically rich sites are sensitive and not suited to intensive types of recreation.

CRITERIA B: Places that could best meet the current and projected highest habitat-based needs in the state.

As with recreation, opportunities to protect and restore important habitats vary across the state. In much of northern and central Wisconsin, existing large public land holdings already protect many critical habitats. Remaining needs are focused on protecting sites with exceptional ecological quality, making key linkages, and blocking in strategic gaps. In much of southern, western, and eastern Wisconsin, the paucity of existing public lands and native habitats affects the nature and scale of protection goals. In these regions, the most pressing needs are focused on protecting remaining remnants (including those of relatively moderate value) and buffering and expanding them through habitat restoration. Protection efforts will also need to focus on different scales of biodiversity - from species to natural communities to ecoregions - throughout the state.

Places that could best meet the current and projected highest habitat-based needs in the state include those harboring significant populations of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), with exceptional occurrences of natural communities, and providing critical landscape functions. Habitat types or conditions of high priority are as follows:

B1. Lands and waters of highest ecological significance.

i. Northern Forest

- Old-growth forests.
- Older forest land that connects or fills in important gaps within existing protected forests.
- Rare types of northern forests including boreal forests.

ii. Southern Forest

- Larger blocks of high quality remaining forest in the Driftless Area and the Kettle Moraine.
- Blocks of high quality forest large enough to provide source populations of species of greatest concern, particularly birds.



iii. Oak and Pine Barrens

- Barrens that connect or fill in gaps in existing protected barrens habitat in the northwest part of the state.
- Largest remaining blocks of high quality oak and pine barrens habitat.
- Floodplain barrens habitat.
- Bracken grassland habitat.

iv. Oak Savannas

- Oak openings and oak savanna in several places across southern and western Wisconsin.

v. Prairies & Grasslands

- Dry to mesic prairies and grasslands primarily in southern, central, and western Wisconsin.
- Wet to mesic prairies and grasslands primarily in southern and central Wisconsin.
- Small remnant prairies that are key sources of genetic and biological diversity.

vi. Wetlands

- Riparian wetlands that provide both high quality habitat and reduce flooding impacts locally and regionally. Focus on areas that are currently or projected to be subject to severe flooding.
- Large blocks of wetlands that provide high quality resting, nesting, and feeding habitat for migratory and resident species, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds.

vii. Aquatic Communities

- Corridors along the state's major rivers to extend and create wildlife corridors, improve water quality.
- Narrow corridors along productive warmwater streams to improve water quality.
- Corridors along cool and coldwater streams to improve water quality.
- Wild, undeveloped, and under-developed lakes that provide unique recreational or ecological values.

viii. Unique Communities and Features

- Great Lakes shoreline, particularly larger blocks of undeveloped land along Lake Michigan and smaller pockets of coastal wetlands along Lake Superior.
- Rare, unique, or unusual geological, topographical, or other features that provide critical habitat or otherwise contribute to the life history needs of native species.
- Sites with exceptional archaeological, historical, or cultural values.

B2. Lands and waters in regions of the state that fill key gaps in supporting and sustaining representative species, habitats, and ecological systems across the full range of environmental gradients.

In addition to protecting places that retain high ecological values, there is a significant need in the state to restore native habitats and the species they support, particularly in areas that have experienced wide-scale land conversions. Given the large amount of habitat fragmentation that has occurred since settlement, there is also a need to connect areas supporting native habitats.

Much of northern Wisconsin suffered devastating impacts during the cutover period. Due to the combined efforts of local, state, and federal agencies and the forest industry, the region has since recovered and now supports a diverse range of healthy forests that play a major economic role in both the forest and tourism industries. A large percentage of the region is already in some form of protective ownership and remaining needs are focused on making important linkages between protected habitat blocks.

Much of western Wisconsin is a mix of forests, cropland, and pasture that has enabled most native species to survive. However, the large savanna complexes that formerly dominated the region are now absent. The primary need is to restore blocks of savanna habitat that can support viable populations of both game and non-game species. Another need is continuing efforts to protect and restore the coldwater streams that characterize the region.



The landscape of southern and eastern Wisconsin is the most impacted by human settlement. The primary habitats of the region -- savannas, prairies, and wetlands -- have been converted to other uses or degraded to varying degrees by fragmentation, invasive species, ditching, and other factors. Despite the immense changes to the landscape in this part of the state, most native species remain, albeit in greatly reduced numbers in many cases. A large portion of the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need originally occurred here and there is significant need to restore large blocks of grasslands and wetlands to recover their populations. Further, restoring large blocks of these habitats would improve the populations of many game species. Relatively little protected land occurs in the southern and eastern parts of the state.

Finally, protecting important lands within each region of the state will be essential as species adapt to changing climate conditions. Given the large unknowns associated with how plants and animals will respond to changes in temperatures and precipitation throughout the year, protecting and restoring lands throughout the state will provide species the greatest flexibility to adapt to future conditions.

Sources of information describing protection and restoration priorities throughout the state include the following:

- Wisconsin Land Legacy Report
- Ecosystem Management Handbook
- Managing Habitat for Grassland Birds: a guide for Wisconsin
- Wisconsin All-Bird Conservation Plan
- 6-Year Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Management Plan
- Wisconsin Statewide Forest Assessment and Implementation Plan
- Biodiversity Report

B3. Places that provide significant environmental benefits.

The protection and restoration of land has many environmental benefits. Examples include:

- Establishing buffers along waterways to reduce polluted run-off and improve water quality.
- Establishing or replanting forests, prairies, and other types of permanent vegetation to sequester carbon.
- Restoring riparian wetlands to absorb (and slowly release) run-off generated from large storm events, thus minimizing flooding impacts downstream.
- Protecting the drainage area feeding groundwater recharge areas that supply water to municipal drinking water systems.



CRITERIA C: Places that support and enhance the state’s nature-based economy and provide taxpayers with a high return on their investment.

High quality conservation and recreation lands are the foundation of Wisconsin’s nature-based economy. The outdoor tourism and wood products industries in particular depend on a variety of high quality public lands and facilities to provide recreation opportunities and forest material that directly support businesses throughout the state. Spending by these businesses – ranging from restaurants to sawmills to outfitters – in turn ripples further out in the economy and helps support suppliers, distributors, and many other small businesses.

Acquiring land that provides the most “bang for the buck” to Wisconsin’s nature-based economy entails assessing not only the cost of land, but also the amount of overall benefits provided. That is, in some cases land that is expensive on a cost/acre basis may provide substantial economic and social benefits and thus would be a better financial deal than land that is cheaper, but provides fewer local and statewide economic benefits.

C1. Places that maximize local and state economic returns from nature-based tourism.

Some areas of the state have extensive tourism industries based around their natural resources and have long attracted visitors, often from considerable distances. Examples include Door County, the Minocqua/Woodruff area, Lake Geneva, the Bayfield peninsula, and the Wisconsin Dells. In other areas of the state, businesses have tapped into their natural resource base to attract visitors interested in specific activities, such as fishing in the cool trout waters in the Driftless Area, bird watching during spring and fall migrations, or mountain bike riding through northern forests. Still other areas are actively building their tourism bases and tapping in to the growing demand for a variety of outdoor recreation.

Some of the Department’s properties have been foundations that have supported nature-based tourism businesses for decades (e.g., Northern Highland American Legion State Forest, the five state parks in Door County, the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, and the Kettle Moraine State Forest). Future acquisitions will likely provide critical opportunities that will boost local tourism economies.

C2. Places that can provide high levels of potential “recreation user days per dollar spent” and can maximize local and state economic returns from nature-based tourism.

Areas closer to major urban centers can provide readily accessible opportunities for large numbers of residents, but typically cost considerably more than lands further away. These properties allow large numbers of people quick access for short and long recreational pursuits. In some cases this additional investment is economically warranted because not only can more people use the properties, but their collective travel costs and impacts are reduced. The Department’s goal is to focus on areas that balance travel distances and land costs. Of course, the least expensive lands near urban centers (typically un-developable wetlands) cannot accommodate a variety of outdoor activities.

C3. Places that can support significant economic activity related to the production and use of natural resources (e.g., wood products and biofuel industries).

In addition to providing recreation opportunities and habitats for a wide range of plants and animals, some lands the public owns or eases also provide material to the wood products industry. Although these properties contribute only a fraction of the total material used by the statewide industry, they are an important part of the overall mix of sources. As biofuel markets develop and



evolve, there are likely to be additional opportunities for public lands to help provide different types of biomass.

C4. Places that can be efficiently operated, managed or restored.

Properties range in their operational costs, often in direct relation to the type and intensity of recreation experiences provided. Land management costs vary across habitat types due to the type and amount of active management needed to maintain their ecological condition. Costs also are significantly influenced by scale and configuration of ownership. Similarly, restoration costs are influenced both by the habitat type and the level of habitat degradation in need of restoration. In some locations, only spot treatments may be needed to remove undesirable species; in other locations, extensive restorations of vegetation or hydrology may be required.

Although there may be many compelling reasons to pursue acquisition projects with moderate or even high land restoration costs, the Department will need to be cautious about undertaking projects with high ongoing operational or land management costs for the recreational and ecological values provided.

CRITERIA D: Lands and waters under significant threat of conversion or impairment and where there is a high likelihood that the Department will be successful in acquiring a meaningful amount of land to meet recreation and conservation goals.

In addition to harboring characteristics and features with high recreation and conservation values, a critical component of prioritizing acquisition is to focus on projects where the Department's efforts will make a substantive difference. That is, although some projects may have particularly high recreation and/or conservation values, they may not be priorities for focusing future efforts due to factors including:

- Lack of threats to convert land to incompatible uses.
- Little public support for the Department to acquire lands in the area.
- The property is close to reaching its acquisition goal.
- Local land use plans are not compatible with or do not recognize additional Department acquisitions.
- Lack of significant involvement by partners to help reach recreation and conservation goals.

D1. Places under significant threat of conversion to incompatible uses *and* where Department is very likely to be able to acquire meaningful and adequate land holdings to achieve the intended recreation and conservation goals.

Although some high value conservation lands are under only limited threat of conversion (e.g., wetlands), many lands, particularly those in regions experiencing strong population growth, are under significant threat. Most often, this is in the form of the construction of new housing – either scattered rural residences or suburban neighborhoods.

Places under significant threat of conversion to incompatible uses present a dilemma – almost by definition, the greater the threat, the less likely the Department or partners will be in acquiring enough land to provide the desired recreation experiences or habitats capable of supporting desired wildlife. Thus, the Department seeks to focus on places that are under threat, but where there is a high degree of likelihood that it will, over time, be able to acquire or protect a meaningful amount of land that will meet the intended recreation and conservation goals.



D2. Places with a documented high level of local support for Department acquisition, including support of locally-elected officials.

Few factors have a greater determination in the Department's long-term success in acquiring land than local support, particularly from locally-elected county boards, mayors, town supervisors, and others. Of course, not all residents or elected officials in an area will support Department acquisition efforts, but for the project to have a high degree of success, a strong base of public support is necessary.

One of the clearest ways of assessing the nature and range of local support is through the planning processes undertaken for feasibility studies and master plans.

D3. Places where local land use plans meet the state's Smart Growth requirements and are consistent with the project. Department acquisition goals are incorporated into local land use plans.

The Stewardship program enables the state to make significant investments in acquiring land and building facilities to address recreation and conservation needs. The Department seeks to focus these investments in areas of the state where they are most likely to provide recreation and conservation benefits over a long period of time. For example, purchasing land for a wildlife area intended to provide critical habitat and hunting opportunities would be most appropriate in areas where local land use policies actively support maintaining large undeveloped rural landscapes.

D4. Places that maximize the leveraging of matching funds from partner agencies and organizations to meet state acquisition priorities.

The Department has successfully competed for a variety of federal funds including Farm Bill programs (e.g., Wetland Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Farmland and Ranchland Reserve Program), the Forest Legacy program, the Coastal Management program, and Fish & Wildlife Service grants. In addition, the Department has collaborated with many non-profit conservation organizations to protect critical places. Although levels of funding from government agencies and private conservation groups can vary from year to year, the Department expects there will continue to be opportunities to leverage partner funds to acquire lands that are consistent with state priorities.



Appendix C:

Criteria to identify priority inholdings.

In determining which inholdings are appropriate to purchase (including those within the featured projects, high priority projects, as well as other existing projects), the Department would place **primary** emphasis on parcels with the following characteristics:

A) Parcels with high context values:

- Bordered on 2 or more sides of existing state ownership.
- Relatively large compared to other parcels in the boundary (i.e., greater than 40 acres).
- High likelihood of development that would negatively impact the DNR property's goals and uses.
- Buffer against adjacent land uses that diminish habitat, management or visitor experiences.
- Reduce or resolve significant land management issues or significantly improve management efficiency.
- Connect existing ownership blocks, particularly along water (e.g., LWR and Wild Rivers).
- Substantially improve public access to existing public properties.

B) Parcels with high ecological values:

- Protect exemplary or significant natural communities and habitats for rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- Contain extraordinary features of regional or statewide renown, such as expansive vistas, bedrock outcroppings, or other significant geological formations or features.
- Maintain quality or integrity of critical habitat or ecological functions.
- Maintain integrity or connectivity of rare species' populations.
- Restore and maintain critical habitats to support healthy and viable populations of native species throughout the state.
- Restore and maintain riparian habitats throughout the state.

C) Parcels with high recreational values:

- Facilitate or improve recreational access to existing public lands.
- Provide access to public waters.
- Connect or help complete existing trail systems.
- Threaten existing public access to the property.
- Contribute to the development of planned facilities or infrastructure (e.g., expansion of a campground facility) identified in the master plan.

D) Parcels with high other values:

- High local public interest and support.
- Developed partnerships with multiple organizations contributing to acquisition costs.
- Sellers are willing to donate a portion of the property value.
- Contain no structures or major developments.
- Meet other program needs or priorities.



Appendix D:

Criteria to identify new projects to allocate Stewardship funding.

A. Places that address the state's most pressing needs.

1. Ecological needs.

- Places that harbor high priority native communities or that provide restoration opportunities for priority communities, such as providing critical habitat for SGCN. Higher priority will be given to properties which do not require habitat restoration, or require only relatively minimal restoration, or for which the majority (or substantial amount) of the restoration work will be completed using external partner funds.
- Places that provide critical landscape or ecosystem linkages.
- Places that protect critical headwaters, recharge areas or priority undeveloped lakes and rivers.

2. Recreational needs.

- Places that provide high quality trail-based activities, and associated opportunities such as wildlife watching and camping, *final description to be determined by the recreation filter used in the allocation formula.*
- Places that provide hunting, trapping, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities within 60 miles of 500,000 or more people.
- Places with extraordinary scenic or geologic features.
- Places providing public access to priority areas with high recreation potential.

3. Economic needs.

- Places that will help maintain or contribute to significant additional economic activity (e.g., recreation and tourism, agriculture-enterprise zones, biomass production or wood products industry).
- Places that will leverage significant partner funds.

B. Time-sensitive opportunities for Department land acquisition.

1. Imminent opportunity to achieve protection and recreation goals.

- Places with partners that can significantly contribute to achieving protection and recreation goals.
- Places that have high levels of documented public and landowner support.
- Places where acquisition efforts to protect conservation and recreation lands will complement, and be complemented by, state, regional, or federal conservation plans or local land use plans.

2. Greatest threat to loss or degradation.

- Places harboring unique or exceptional resources, for which Wisconsin plays a critical and central conservation role, that are under imminent threat of loss.
- Places providing important recreational opportunities or linkages.

Process for selecting new projects and pursuing acquisition on newly approved projects

- A. It is anticipated that proposals for new properties will come from various sources. Department staff, NRB members, partner organizations, engaged members of the public, legislators and the Governor may all play a role in identifying opportunities for the establishment of new DNR properties.



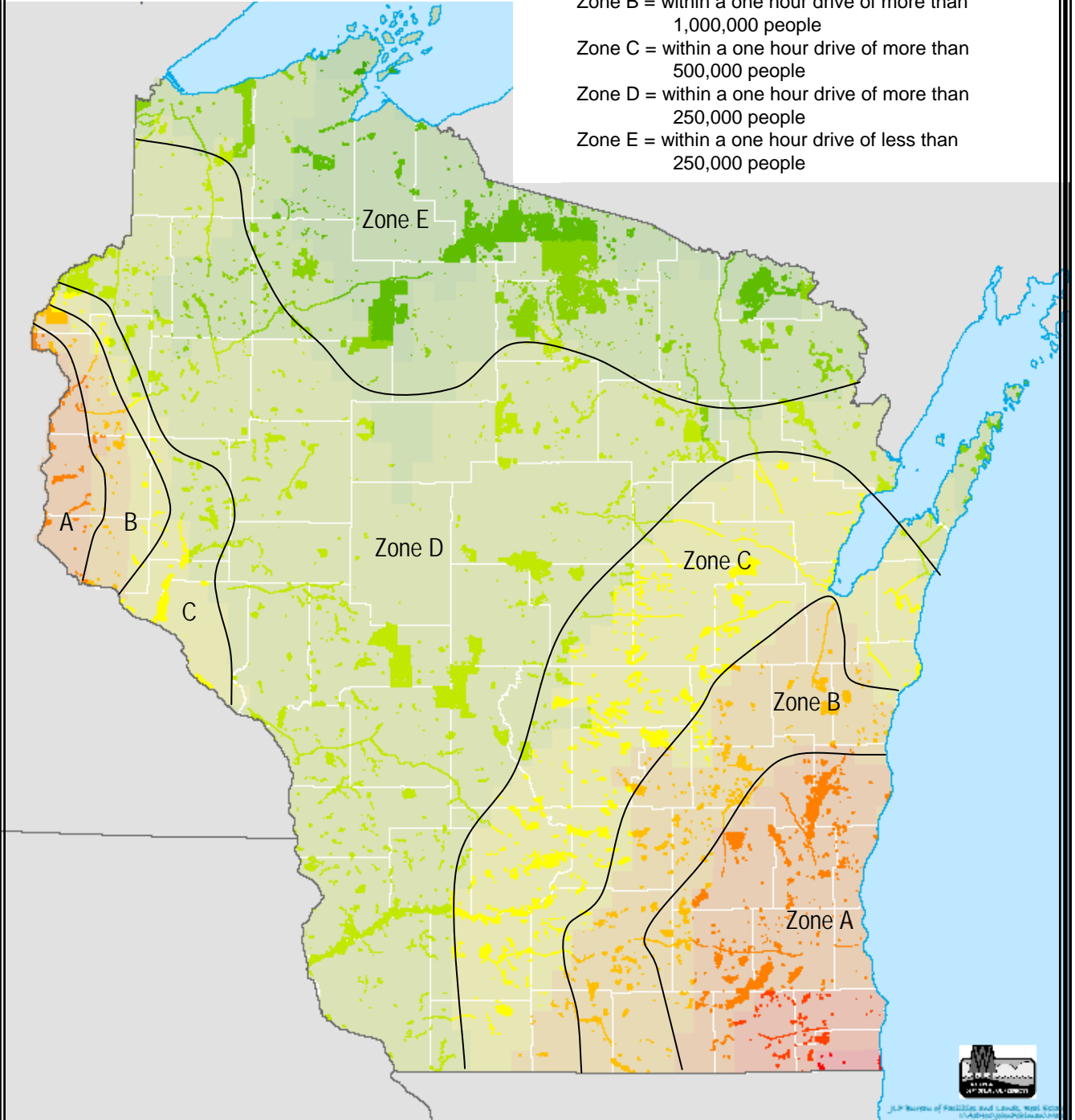
- B. The department will evaluate proposals from internal and external sources on a quarterly basis, assessing them against the aforementioned criteria. The administrators of the Land, Forestry and Water divisions will play a lead role, advised by the bureau directors from Parks & Recreation, Lands & Facilities, Wildlife Management, Endangered Resources, Forest Management, Fisheries Management and the Real Estate Director. Additional meetings will take place when quick action is needed.
- C. The Administrators will make recommendations to the Secretary regarding which projects to pursue.
- D. New projects will be submitted to the NRB for approval.



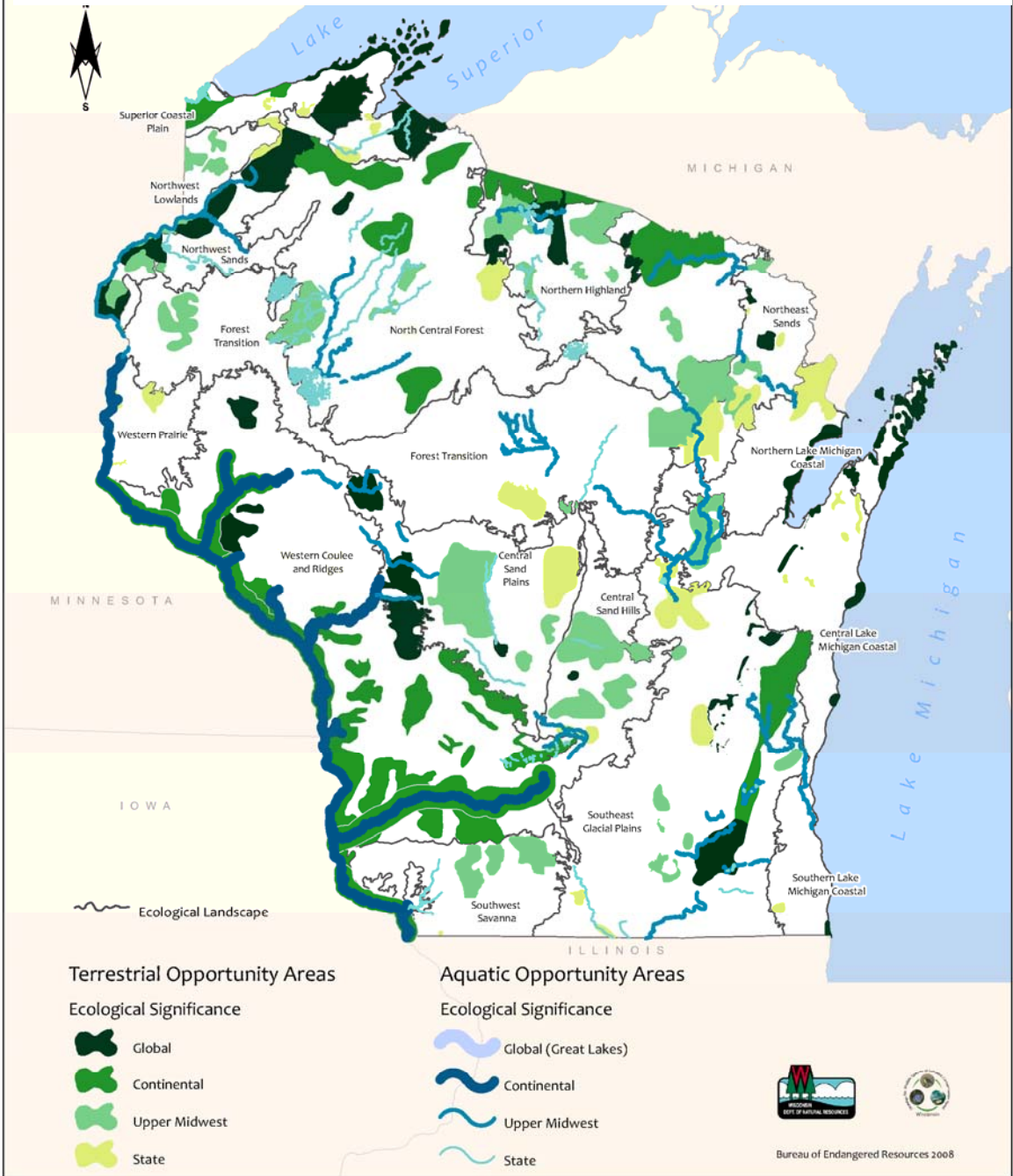
Map 1: DNR Managed lands and their proximity to people

Population drive time zones

- Zone A = within a one hour drive of more than 2,000,000 people
- Zone B = within a one hour drive of more than 1,000,000 people
- Zone C = within a one hour drive of more than 500,000 people
- Zone D = within a one hour drive of more than 250,000 people
- Zone E = within a one hour drive of less than 250,000 people



Map 2: Wisconsin's Priority Conservation Opportunity Areas for Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need 2008 – 2015



Bureau of Endangered Resources 2008

