

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition – Buena Vista Wildlife Area – Portage County

FOR: MAY 2014 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Douglas J. Haag

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 80 acres of land from James Alexander and Linda Alexander for \$168,000 for the Buena Vista Wildlife Area in Portage County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.

The Alexander parcel is located within the Buena Vista Wildlife Area (BVWA) in south-central Portage County, approximately 12 miles south of Stevens Point. The BVWA project was established in 1988 and is a large project with nearly 13,000 acres of primarily grassland habitat consisting of lands that are owned or managed through lease by the DNR. The BVWA is the largest grassland area east of the Mississippi River. In 2006, it was designated an Important Bird Area (IBA), as it represents one of the best opportunities in the state for large-scale grassland management and supports most of Wisconsin's priority grassland species. Two state natural areas are found within the borders of this wildlife area, including the Buena Vista Quarry Prairie and the Buena Vista Prairie Chicken Meadow. The BVWA is within the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA), which is a DNR land acquisition project that was established in 2005. The CWGCA's primary goal is to protect, restore, and manage grassland habitat in central Wisconsin for the wildlife species that use it with special emphasis on the Greater Prairie-chicken. There is also a CWGCA Partnership and Partnership Coordinator who oversees the partnership among dozens of conservation agencies, organizations and citizens who work together to secure permanent grassland.

The Alexander parcel is bordered by Department owned land to the north and south. Department leased lands from Dane County Conservation League are to the west, along with private ownership and additional leased Dane County Conservation League land to the east. Acquisition and management of this 80 acre parcel would connect these lands together, creating a contiguous tract of nearly 3,000 acres. This parcel will provide nesting, brood (young) rearing, and year-round cover habitat for Greater Prairie-chickens. Other grassland Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) utilize this property and the surrounding area, including but not limited to State-Threatened Henslow's Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Savanna Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, Northern Harriers, Dickcissels, and the state's largest population of Short-Eared Owls and State Endangered Regal Fritillary Butterflies.

The Alexander parcel contains approximately 65 acres of mixed woods, consisting mainly of willow and cottonwoods along with some pine and brush in the south. There are 14 acres of open land that are cut for hay. The property is split in half by a ¼ mile of drainage ditch (Ditch #9) that runs east/west. This water is classified as a Class I trout stream as it is part of the north branch of Ten Mile Creek. There are 3 small ponds in the south that contain approximately 1 acre of surface water.

The CWGCA Coordinator successfully acquired a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grant for land acquisition which ends June 30, 2014. The grant provides a 25% match to purchase this parcel.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 80 acres of land from James and Linda Alexander for \$168,000 for the Buena Vista Wildlife Area the in Portage County.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------|
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No <input type="checkbox"/> | Background Memo | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 17, 2014
 TO: Scott Walker
 FROM: Cathy Stepp
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, James Alexander Tract, File # WM 60246,
 Option Expires July 23, 2014

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Buena Vista Wildlife Area
 Portage County

Grantor:

James and Linda Alexander
 3141 Tower Rd.
 Plainfield, WI 54966

Acres: 80
Price: \$168,000
Appraised Value: \$168,000
Interest: Fee Title
Improvements: 2 small storage sheds, 3 small bridges, several deer stands and fencing (no contributory value)

Location: The property is located 12 miles south of Stevens Point in Portage County.

Land Description: The subject land is fairly level with 0-3% slopes.

Covertime Breakdown:

Type	Acreage
Grass / Pasture	14.00
Water	1.00
Lowland Woodland	65.00
Total:	80.00

Zoning: None
Present Use: Recreation and hay cutting
Proposed Use: Public Recreation and Habitat Management
Tenure: 26 years
Property Taxes: \$1867.41
Option Date: March 25, 2014

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be open to the public for all nature based outdoor recreational activities, including but not limited to hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, bird watching, and cross country skiing.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department has obtained an option to purchase 80 acres of land from James Alexander and Linda Alexander for \$168,000 for the Buena Vista Wildlife Area in Portage County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.



The Alexander parcel is located within the Buena Vista Wildlife Area (BVWA) in south-central Portage County, approximately 12 miles south of Stevens Point. The BVWA project was established in 1988 and is a large project with nearly 13,000 acres of primarily grassland habitat that is owned or managed through lease by the DNR. The BVWA is the largest grassland area east of the Mississippi River. In 2006, it was designated an Important Bird Area (IBA), as it represents one of the best opportunities in the state for large-scale grassland management and supports most of Wisconsin's priority grassland species. Two state natural areas are found within the borders of this wildlife area, including the Buena Vista Quarry Prairie and the Buena Vista Prairie Chicken Meadow. The BVWA is within the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA), which is a DNR land acquisition project that was established in 2005. The CWGCA's primary goal is to protect, restore, and manage grassland habitat in central Wisconsin for the wildlife species that use it with special emphasis on the Greater Prairie-chicken. There is also a CWGCA Partnership and Partnership Coordinator who oversees the partnership among dozens of conservation agencies, organizations and citizens who work together to secure permanent grassland.

The Alexander parcel is bordered by Department owned land to the north and south. Department leased lands from Dane County Conservation League are to the west, along with private ownership and additional leased Dane County Conservation League land to the east. Acquisition and management of this 80 acre parcel would connect these lands together, creating a contiguous tract of nearly 3,000 acres, which is essential for species with large grassland area requirements, such as the State-Threatened Greater Prairie-chicken. There are five active prairie chicken booming grounds (i.e. breeding grounds) within 1.5 miles of this property, which is within range of where Greater Prairie-chicken hens will nest. Therefore, this parcel would play a key role in providing nesting, brood (young) rearing, and year-round cover habitat for Greater Prairie-chickens. Other grassland Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) utilize this property and the surrounding area, including the State-Threatened Henslow's Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Savanna Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers, and Dickcissels. BVWA is also home to the state's largest population of Short-eared owls and State Endangered Regal Fritillary Butterflies. Occasionally, federally endangered whooping cranes are also observed on this wildlife area. In the winter, snowy owls and the occasional gyrfalcon are also observed utilizing the BVWA grasslands.

The Alexander parcel contains approximately 65 acres of mixed woods, consisting mainly of willow and cottonwoods along with some pine and brush in the south. There are 14 acres of open land that are cut for hay. The property is split in half by a ¼ mile of drainage ditch (Ditch #9) that runs east/west. This water is classified as a Class 1 trout stream, as it is part of the north branch of Ten Mile Creek. There are 3 small ponds in the south that contain approximately 1 acre of surface water. There are two small sheds, several wooden deer stands, three small bridges, a gate and perimeter fencing on the parcel. Reclamation costs are estimated to be \$2500.

Acquisition of the Alexander parcel would connect larger blocks of public land that will meet the large grassland area requirements of Greater Prairie-chickens, which in turn meets the needs of numerous other species with smaller grassland area requirements. Acquisition of this parcel would also increase public recreational opportunities including hunting, trapping, hiking, and bird watching.

The CWGCA Coordinator successfully acquired a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grant for land acquisition which ends June 30, 2014. The grant provides a 25% match to purchase this parcel.

3. LAND MANAGEMENT:

Management duties will be carried out by Wildlife Management staff from both the Buena Vista field office and the Wisconsin Rapids office. The primary management goal of this parcel would be to maintain it in grassland habitat. New property corners will be identified and posted. The 65 acres of scattered woodland and smaller brush will be removed. Larger trees (e.g. cottonwood) will be hand cut using chainsaws. Smaller diameter brush (e.g. willow) will be mowed using tractors and brush hog mowers when ground conditions are dry enough to allow for access. Any brush that re-sprouts following mowing will be treated with herbicide. Some inter-seeding of grass and prairie flowers may occur to increase species diversity. In future years, brush and invasive control tools may also include the use of sharecropping and grazing (especially on the drier 40 acres north of the ditch). The road boundary and blocking nature of this parcel will reduce boundary posting needs, encroachments and neighbor conflicts. Blocking Department ownership on these large grassland properties also reduces risks to private property and eliminates the need for fire breaks along private property boundaries. There are two small sheds, several wooden deer stands, three small bridges, a gate and perimeter fencing on the parcel. Reclamation costs are estimated to be \$2500.

4. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$2,065,386	\$949,218

5. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE BUENA VISTA WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1988
Acres Purchased to Date: 8,046.84
Acquisition Goal: 14,000.00
Percent Complete: 57.48 %
Cost to Date: \$1,970,989.39

6. APPRAISAL:

Appraiser: Phil Lepinski
Valuation Date: January 24, 2014
Appraised Value: \$168,000.00
Highest and Best Use: Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 80.00 acres @ \$2,100 per acre: \$168,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1,900 - \$2,166

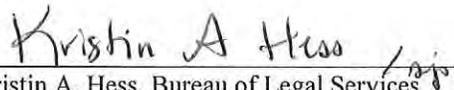
Appraisal Review:
 Peter Wolter

Date: 2/20/2014

RECOMMENDED:


 Douglas J Haag, Deputy Facilities and Lands Bureau Director

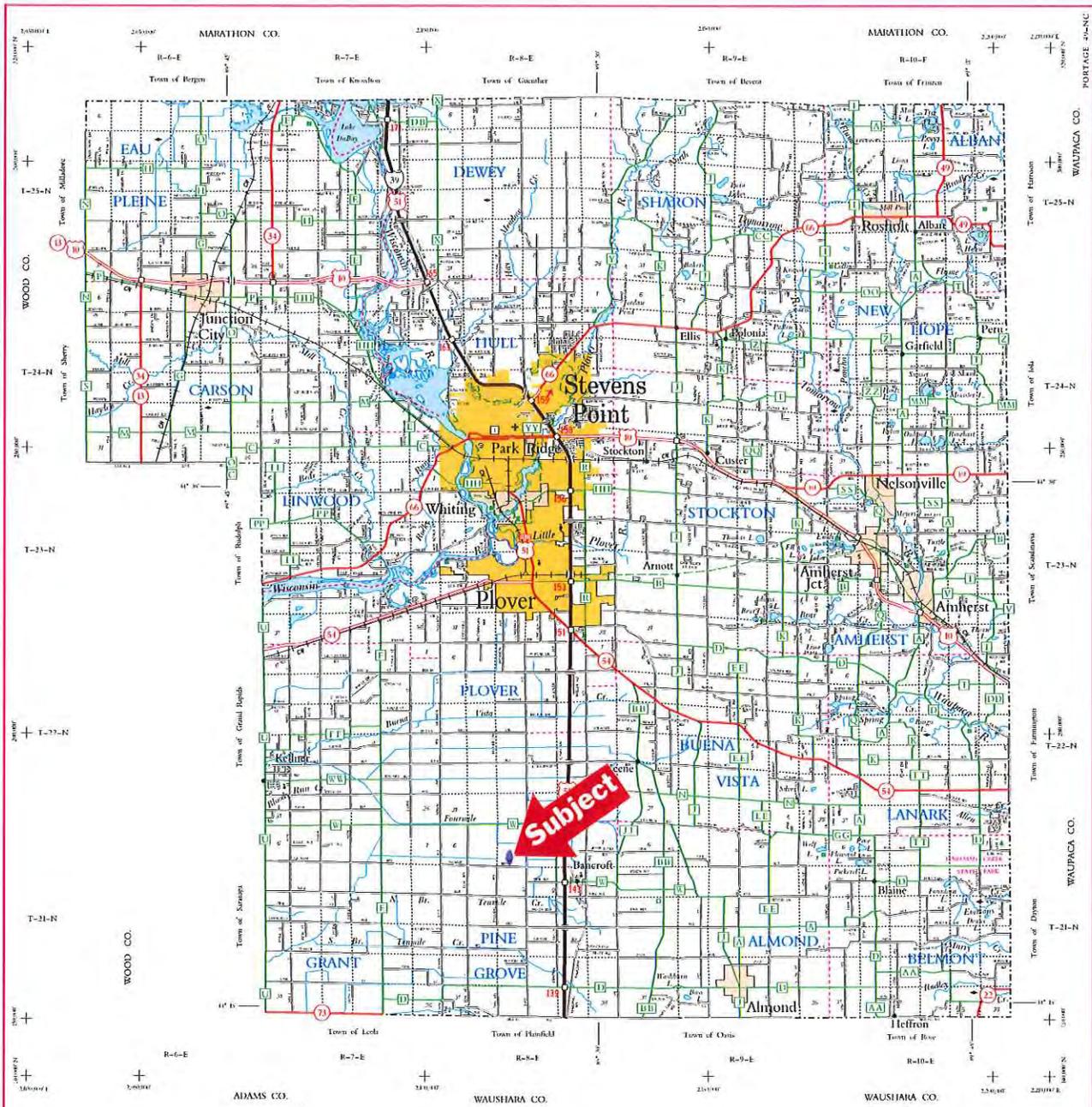
4-17-14
 Date


 Kristin A. Hess, Bureau of Legal Services

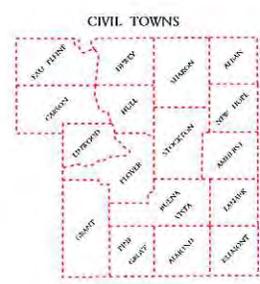
4/18/14
 Date


 Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

4/22/14
 Date



- LEGEND**
- Dam
 - Milestone Decided
 - U.S. or State Hwy
 - County Trunk Hwy
 - Town Road
 - Fence
 - Railroad
 - Six-Foot
 - Interchange
 - Highway Separation
 - Interstate Highway
 - U.S. Highway No.
 - State Highway No.
 - County Highway Letter
 - State Boundary
 - County Boundary
 - Civil Town Boundary
 - Section Line
 - Hospital
 - School
 - Airport
 - Company Site
 - Unincorporated Village
 - Fish Hatchery
 - Game Farm
 - Public Trust or Fish Gids
 - Range Mitten
 - State Camp & Picnic Gids
 - County Park
 - State Forest
 - Rest Area
 - Public Facility
 - State Facility
 - University of Wisconsin
 - Airport Field



MOTION NUMBERING OF A TOWNSHIP

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36



MILES OF HIGHWAY
as of Dec. 31, 1982

STATE	157
COUNTY	418
FEDERAL AID	1,046
OTHER FUNDS	0
TOTAL FOR COUNTY	1,621

PORTAGE CO.
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATE OFFICE BUILDING
MILWAUKEE
STATE HIGHWAY 1
MILES
Created by
JAN 24
Revised from DMSA QuakeMap
11/2003/300

Grid based on the state plane coordinate system (central zone and the NAD 21)
For boundaries of public, mining and fishing grounds, please contact the Department of Natural Resources

James Alexander - Fee
 Buena Vista
 Wildlife Area
 WM 60246

T21N R8E Sec 4
 Town of Pine Grove
 Portage County

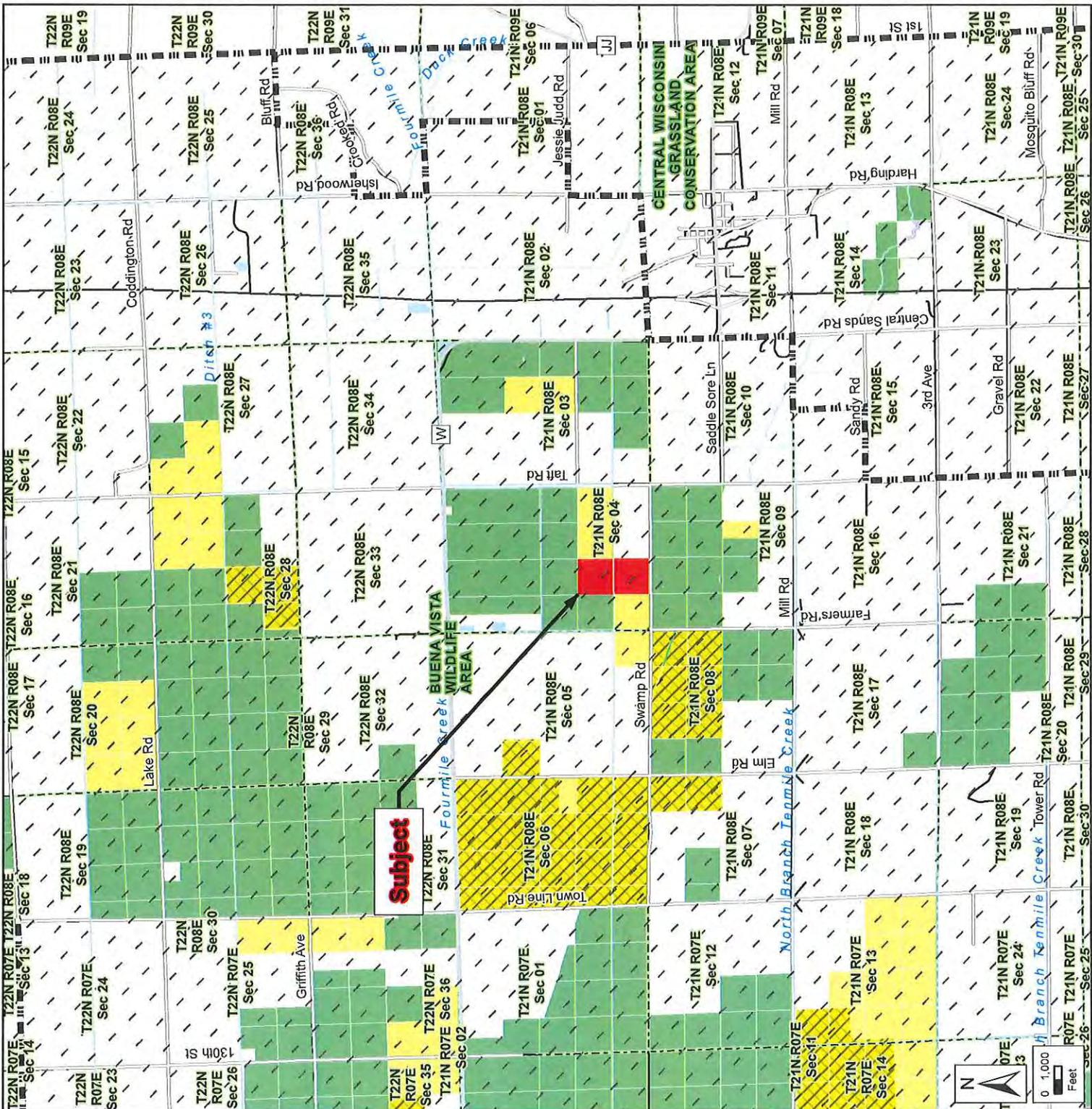
Subject

-  DNR Fee Title
-  DNR Easement
-  Department Leased Land
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  County Forest
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary
-  NRCS - GRP (Grassland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)



Location of Property

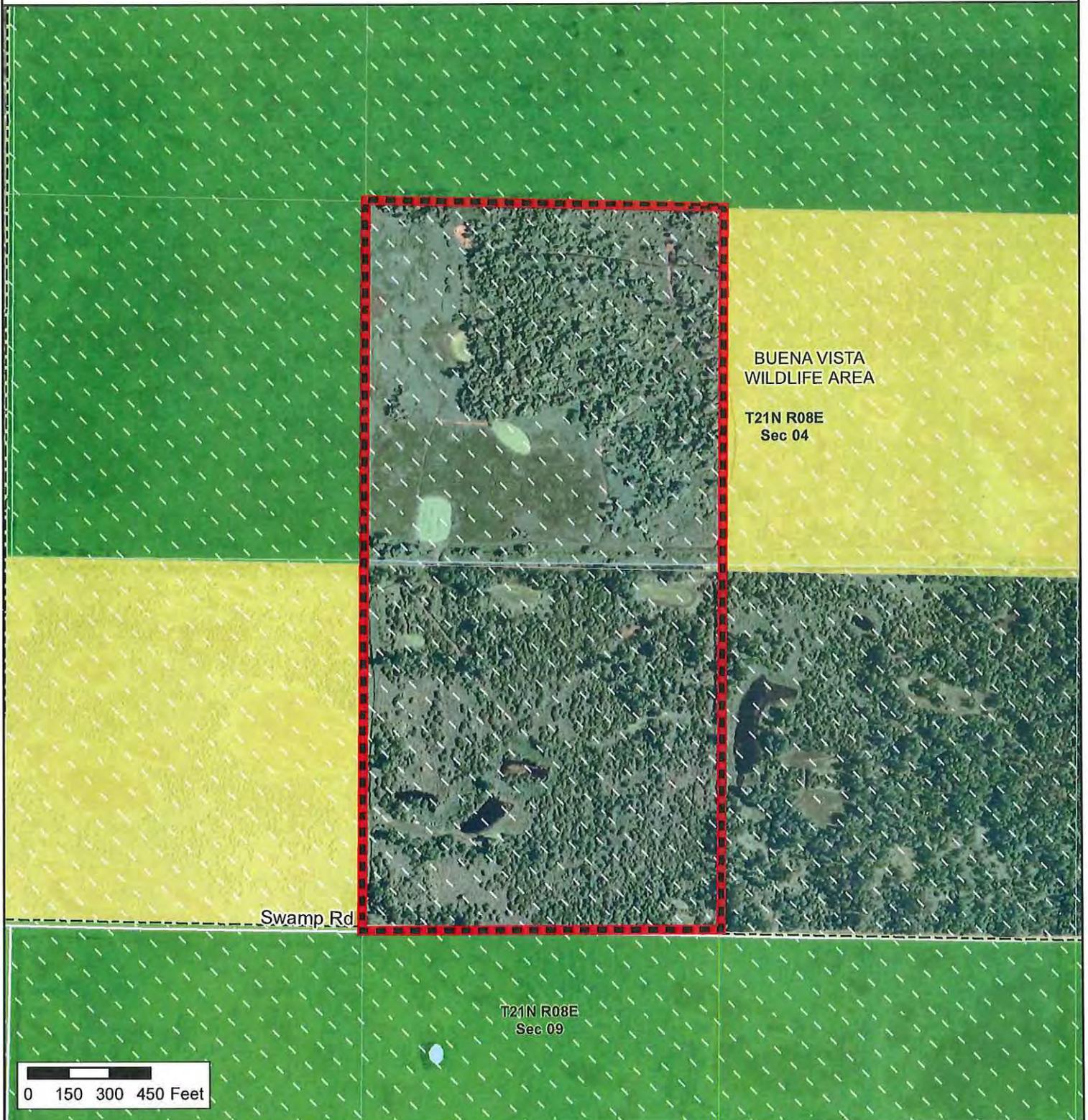
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 Bureau of Facilities of Lands
 Map Created: Apr 14, 2014 .kmh



The data shown on this map have been obtained from various sources, and are of varying age, reliability and resolution. This map is not intended to be used for navigation, nor is this map an authoritative source of information about legal land ownership or public access. Users of this map should confirm the ownership of land through other means in order to avoid trespassing. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding accuracy, applicability for a particular use, completeness, or legality of the information depicted on this map.

James Alexander - Fee

T21N R8E Sec 4, Town of Pine Grove, Portage County



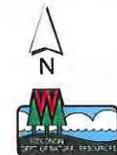
Buena Vista Wildlife Area



Subject

-  DNR Fee Title Land
-  Department Leased Land
-  DNR Project Boundary

-  Section Line
-  QQ Section Lines

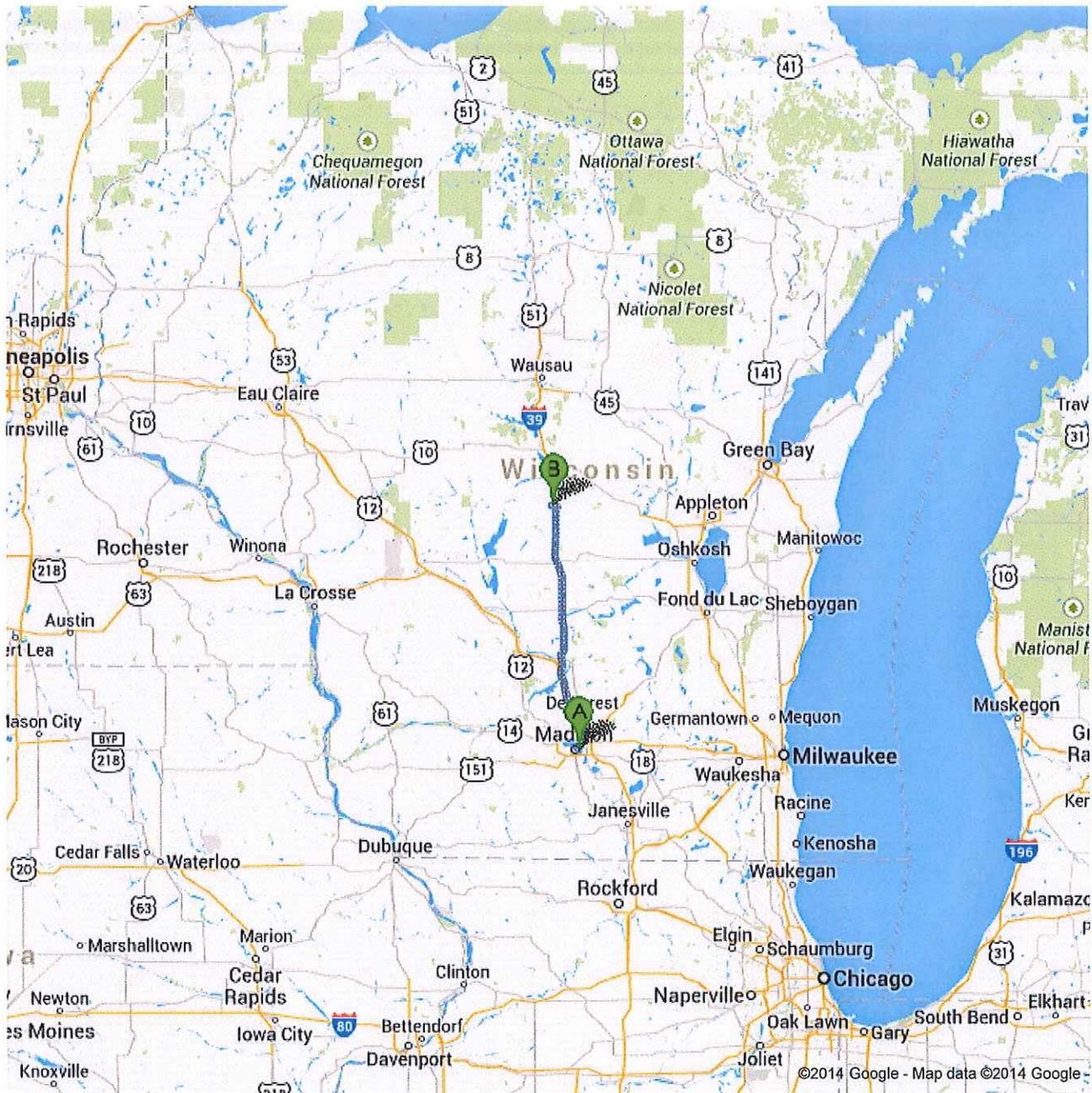


Apr 14, 2014 kmh

Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands



Directions to Swamp Rd
93.9 mi – about 1 hour 37 mins



 101 N Webster St, Madison, WI 53703



1. Head **northwest** on **N Webster St** toward **N Hamilton St**



go 315 ft
total 315 ft

 2. Take the 1st right onto **N Hamilton St**



go 499 ft
total 0.2 mi

 3. Turn right onto **N Butler St**
About 55 secs



go 0.2 mi
total 0.4 mi

 4. Take the 2nd left onto **E Washington Ave**
About 8 mins



go 4.0 mi
total 4.4 mi



5. Turn left onto **US-51 N/N Stoughton Rd**
Continue to follow US-51 N
About 6 mins



go 4.4 mi
total 8.8 mi



6. Take the ramp onto **I-39 N/I-90 W/I-94 W**
About 21 mins



go 23.7 mi
total 32.4 mi



7. Keep right to continue on **I-39 N**, follow signs for **Wisconsin 78 Trunk S/Merrimac/US-51/Wausau Portage**
About 52 mins



go 58.9 mi
total 91.3 mi



8. Take exit **143** for **County Rd W** toward **Bancroft/Wis Rapids**



go 0.3 mi
total 91.6 mi



9. Turn left onto **County Hwy W W/Main St**
Continue to follow County Hwy W W
About 2 mins



go 0.3 mi
total 91.9 mi

12

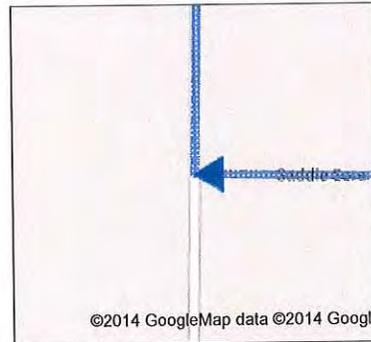
10. Continue onto **Saddle Sore Ln**
About 3 mins



go 1.0 mi
total 92.9 mi



11. Turn right onto **Taft Ave**
About 2 mins



go 0.5 mi
total 93.4 mi



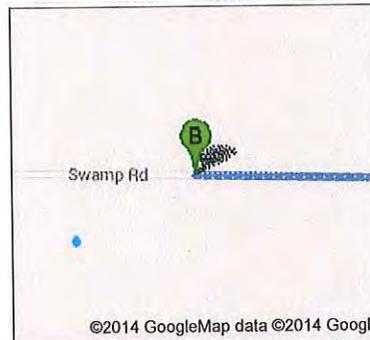
12. Take the 1st left onto **Swamp Rd**
About 2 mins



go 0.5 mi
total 93.9 mi



Swamp Rd



These directions are for planning purposes only. You may find that construction projects, traffic, weather, or other events may cause conditions to differ from the map results, and you should plan your route accordingly. You must obey all signs or notices regarding your route.

Map data ©2014 Google

Directions weren't right? Please find your route on maps.google.com and click "Report a problem" at the bottom left.