

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition – Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area – Rock County

FOR: MAY 2014 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Douglas J Haag

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 205.63 acres of land from Lillie Lenstrom for \$300,000 for the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Rock County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.

The Lenstrom property is located 10 miles west of Beloit and 15 miles southwest of Janesville, within a 1-hour drive of approximately 2,000,000 people. The Lenstrom property is bordered by Department land on the east, west and south, and is completely enclosed in the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area project boundary. Strategically positioned across the Lower Sugar River floodplain corridor, acquisition of the Lenstrom property will connect over 250 acres of current state ownership along the Illinois state line.

Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area began in 1960 as a Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration project to provide public hunting and produce ducks and pheasants. It is a 2,839-acre property located in Rock and Green Counties. Beginning in the Town of Spring Grove in Green County, the property follows the Sugar River bottoms through the Town of Avon in Rock County to the Illinois border. Avon Bottoms features a lowland hardwood forest in the floodplain of the meandering Sugar River. Large silver maples, swamp white oaks, and green ash dominate the diverse canopy of this wet-mesic forest. Other tree species are shagbark hickory, hackberry, cottonwood, bitternut hickory, bur oak, American elm, and basswood. Sycamores, at the northern limit of their range, are occasionally present and black willows are common along the river. Numerous sloughs and old oxbows wind among lowland hardwoods, grassland and agricultural cropland.

The Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area of state significance for the conservation of floodplain forest communities in Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan. The wildlife area is managed to provide opportunities for public hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreation while protecting the qualities of the unique native communities and associated species found on the property. Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is gaining new respect for its wild nature in close proximity to Wisconsin and Illinois population centers. Surrounding the many sloughs and oxbows of the lower Sugar River, the property includes two State Natural Areas set aside for their rare intact plant communities. There are over 30 endangered, threatened and special concern plant and animal species known in the area. Just recently, Avon Bottoms was declared a Wisconsin Important Bird Area, known for breeding Cerulean and Yellow-throated warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Yellow-crowned night-heron. The floodplain forest and grassy sloughs are heavily used by migrating birds of all description. In 2009, the Sugar River Floodplain Forest, primarily the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area and its included state natural areas, was designated a Wisconsin Wetland Gem by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

The Lenstrom parcel is a mix of wetland, lowland hardwoods, overgrown pasture and former cropland, now planted to lowland hardwoods. Except for the 11.52 acre farmstead area, the parcel is encumbered by a Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) perpetual easement. An old farmhouse, detached garage, cattle barn, chicken barn and various sheds are located on the farmstead area of the parcel. Staff will recycle and salvage as much as it can of the various outbuildings. The garage and a Quonset shed are newer and are good condition and will be sold the other improvements have little or no value. Reclamation costs for the remaining buildings are estimated not to exceed \$20,000.

The Department recommends acquisition of this 205.63 acre property for Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area to connect and consolidate state ownership in this project as well as to protect this important resource area. Acquisition of this parcel would protect wildlife habitat and protect the floodplain of the Lower Sugar River, allowing it to safely flood where it will not cause property damage; and provide additional opportunities for public hunting and public recreation and restore and provide habitat for a variety of rare plant and animal species.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 205.63 acres of land from Lillie Lenstrom for \$300,000 for the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Rock County.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No Fiscal Estimate Required
No Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required
No Background Memo

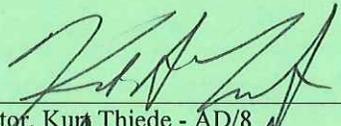
Yes Attached
Yes Attached
Yes Attached

APPROVED:



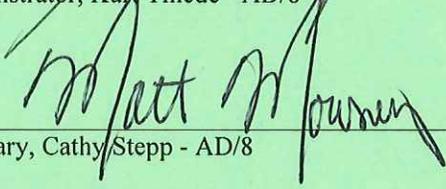
Deputy Facilities and Lands Bureau Director, Douglas J Haag - LF/6

4-23-14
Date



Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

4-24-14
Date



Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

4/28/14
Date

cc: S. Miller - LF/6
D. Haag - LF/6
L. Ross - AD/8
T. Hauge - WM/6
L. Osterndorf - SCD - FITCHBURG

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2014 FILE REF: WM 60249
 TO: Scott Walker
 FROM: Cathy Stepp
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Lillie Lenstrom Tract, File # WM 60249,
 Option Expires August 09, 2014

I. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area
 Rock County

Grantor:

Lillie Lenstrom
 7326 State Road 19, Unit 5616
 M. Gilead, OH 43338

Acres: 205.63

Price: \$300,000

Appraised Value: \$265,000 (Duesterbeck); \$330,000 (Stone)

Interest: Fee Title

Improvements: Old Farmhouse, barn, shed buildings (little or no contributory value) and Quonset shed and garage in fair condition

Location: The property is located 10 miles west of Beloit in Rock County

Land Description: The subject land is level and generally located in the floodplain.

Covertypes Breakdown:

Type	Acreage
Lowland Woodland	194.11
Building Site	11.52
Total:	205.63

Zoning: A-1 Exclusive Agricultural

Present Use: Recreational

Proposed Use: As part of the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area.

Tenure: 52 Years

Property Taxes: \$4,296.47

Option Date: April 11, 2014

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be open to the public for all nature based outdoor recreational activities to include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing. Physical features of the property may not be conducive to all these activities.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Lenstrom property is located 10 miles west of Beloit and 15 miles southwest of Janesville, within a 1-hour drive of approximately 2,000,000 people. The Lenstrom property is bordered by Department land on the east, west and south, and is completely enclosed in the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area project boundary. Strategically positioned across the Lower Sugar River floodplain corridor, acquisition of the Lenstrom property would



solidly connect over 250 acres of current state ownership along the Illinois line to the remainder of the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area.

Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area began in 1960 as a Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration project to provide public hunting and produce ducks and pheasants. It is a 2,839-acre property located in Rock and Green Counties. Beginning in the Town of Spring Grove in Green County, the property follows the Sugar River bottoms through the Town of Avon in Rock County to the Illinois border. Avon Bottoms features a lowland hardwood forest in the floodplain of the meandering Sugar River. Large silver maples, swamp white oaks, and green ash dominate the diverse canopy of this wet-mesic forest. Other tree species are shagbark hickory, hackberry, cottonwood, bitternut hickory, bur oak, American elm, and basswood. Sycamores, at the northern limit of their range, are occasionally present and black willows are common along the river. Numerous sloughs and old oxbows wind among lowland hardwoods, grassland and agricultural cropland.

The Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area of state significance for the conservation of floodplain forest communities in Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan. The wildlife area is managed to provide opportunities for public hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreation while protecting the qualities of the unique native communities and associated species found on the property. Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area is gaining new respect for its wild nature in close proximity to Wisconsin and Illinois population centers. Surrounding the many sloughs and oxbows of the lower Sugar River, the property includes two State Natural Areas set aside for their rare intact plant communities, and was recognized in 2006 by the Wisconsin Land Legacy Report as part of Legacy aquatic and floodplain communities. There are over 30 endangered, threatened and special concern plant and animal species known in the area. Just recently, Avon Bottoms was declared a Wisconsin Important Bird Area, known for breeding Cerulean and Yellow-throated warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Yellow-crowned night-heron. The floodplain forest and grassy sloughs are heavily used by migrating birds of all description. In 2009, the Sugar River Floodplain Forest, primarily the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area and its included state natural areas, was designated a Wisconsin Wetland Gem by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

The Department recommends acquisition of this 205.63 acre property for Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area to connect and consolidate state ownership in this project as well as to protect this important resource area. Acquisition of this parcel would protect wildlife habitat and protect the floodplain of the Lower Sugar River, allowing it to safely flood where it will not cause property damage; and at the same time provide additional recreational opportunities and vital habitat for a variety of plant and animal species.

3. LAND MANAGEMENT:

The Lenstrom parcel is a mix of wetland, lowland hardwoods, overgrown pasture and former cropland, now planted to lowland hardwoods. Except for the 11.52 acre farmstead area, the parcel is encumbered by a Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) perpetual easement. Under the easement, NRCS restored the cropland at great expense to a mix of wetland and bottomland hardwoods through a plan developed in conjunction with the DNR Wildlife Management staff. This plan may allow limited haying and grazing to assist with long-term brush control. The EWPP easement obligates NRCS to be the primary habitat management entity into the future. NRCS has already spent \$140,000 to restore the Lenstrom property. They have also committed over \$56,000 to WDNR for contract management and maintenance work on adjacent easement properties within the Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area. This will result in a considerable savings in seed, labor, equipment, and other management expenditures by the DNR.

The floodplain forest management objective is to protect the ecological river gradients from lowland to uplands, along with protection of the floodplain corridor. Forest management has been primarily passive, although a 97-acre timber sale was done in the winter of 2012-13, and additional efforts will likely be made in the near future to salvage extensive ash stands with the recent discovery of Emerald Ash Borer on the wildlife area. More extensive efforts are made to maintain grassland communities on the uplands through prairie restoration and management, mowing, prescribed burning and herbicide treatments. Where feasible, populations of invasive species are controlled or eliminated by cutting, pulling, burning, herbicide treatment and/or bio-control.

An old farmhouse, detached garage, cattle barn, chicken barn and various sheds are located on the farmstead area of the parcel. Staff will recycle and salvage as much as it can of the various outbuildings. The garage and a Quonset shed are newer and are good condition and will be sold the other improvements have little or no value. Reclamation costs for the remaining buildings are estimated not to exceed \$20,000.

4. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$2,065,386	\$599,418

5. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE AVON BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1960
Acres Purchased to Date: 2,834.67
Acquisition Goal: 3,006.92
Percent Complete: 94.27 %
Cost to Date: \$1,299,952.64

6. APPRAISAL 1:

Appraiser: Linn Duesterbeck
Valuation Date: February 10, 2014
Appraised Value: \$265,000
Highest and Best Use: Recreational

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 205.63 acres @ \$1,288.72 per acre: \$265,000
- b. market data approach used, 5 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1285 - \$1801 per acre

Appraisal Review:
 Gregory Markus Date: 3/13/2014

APPRAISAL 2:

Appraiser: Michael Stone
Valuation Date: March 06, 2014
Appraised Value: \$330,000.00
Highest and Best Use: Outdoor recreational

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 205.63 @ \$1,604.82 per acre: \$330,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1336 - \$2080

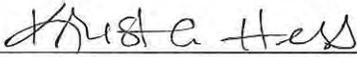
Appraisal Review:
 Gregory Markus Date: 3/14/2014

RECOMMENDED:



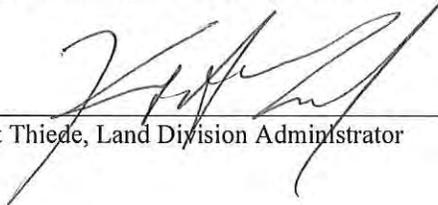
Douglas J Haag, Deputy Facilities and Lands Bureau Director

4-23-14
Date



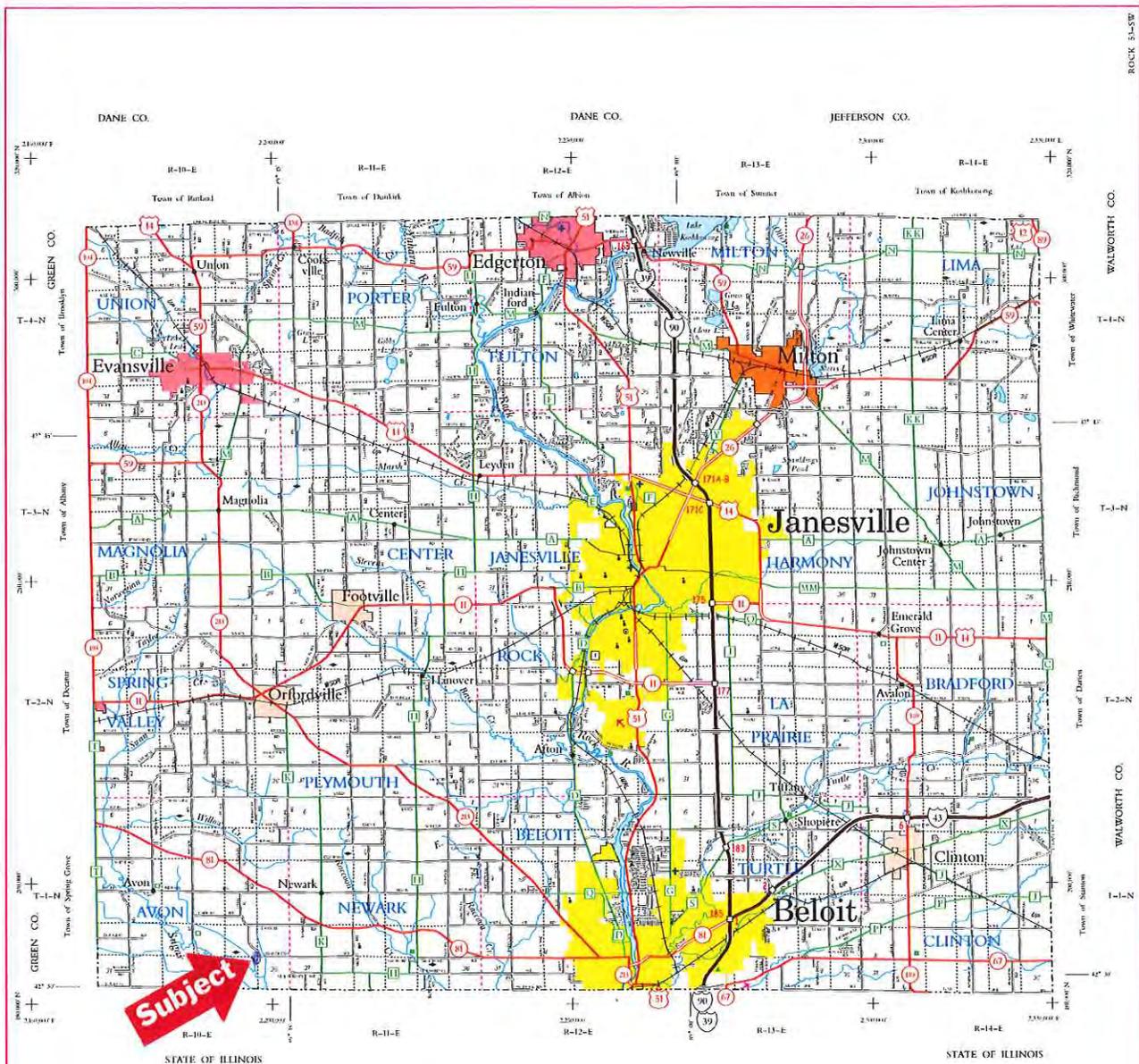
Kristin A. Hess, Bureau of Legal Services

4/24/14
Date



Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

4-24-14
Date



Subject

LEGEND

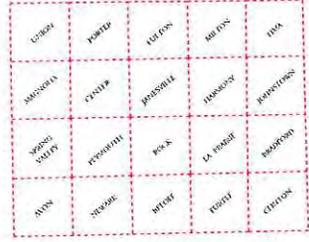
- Freeway
- Mobile Dial
- U.S. or State Hwy
- County Trunk Hwy
- Town Road
- Fireline
- Railroad
- State Trail
- Interchange
- Highway Separation
- Increase Highway No.
- US Highway No.
- State Highway No.
- County Highway Limit
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Civil Town Boundary
- Section Line
- Dam
- Hospital
- School
- Airport
- County Seat
- Unincorporated Village
- Fish Hatchery
- Public Trunk or Fish Club
- Public Camp & Picnic Gnd.
- Ranger Station
- State Park
- County Park
- Wild Fedns.
- Water Fedns.
- Reptile
- Base Fedns.
- Days of Weekson - Rock Co.



SECTION NUMBERING OF A TOWNSHIP

6	5	4	3	2	1
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

CIVIL TOWNS



MILES OF HIGHWAY

as of Dec. 31, 2012

STATE	252
COUNTY	220
LOCAL ROAD	1,070
OTHER ROAD	0
TOTAL FOR COUNTY	2,342

Land Area (2010 Census) - 291 sq. mi.
Population (2010 Census) - 152,502
County Seat - Janesville

ROCK CO.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATE OFFICE BUILDING
MILTON, WISCONSIN
Created by
JAN 2011
Base compiled from USGS Quads
1:250,000 Scale

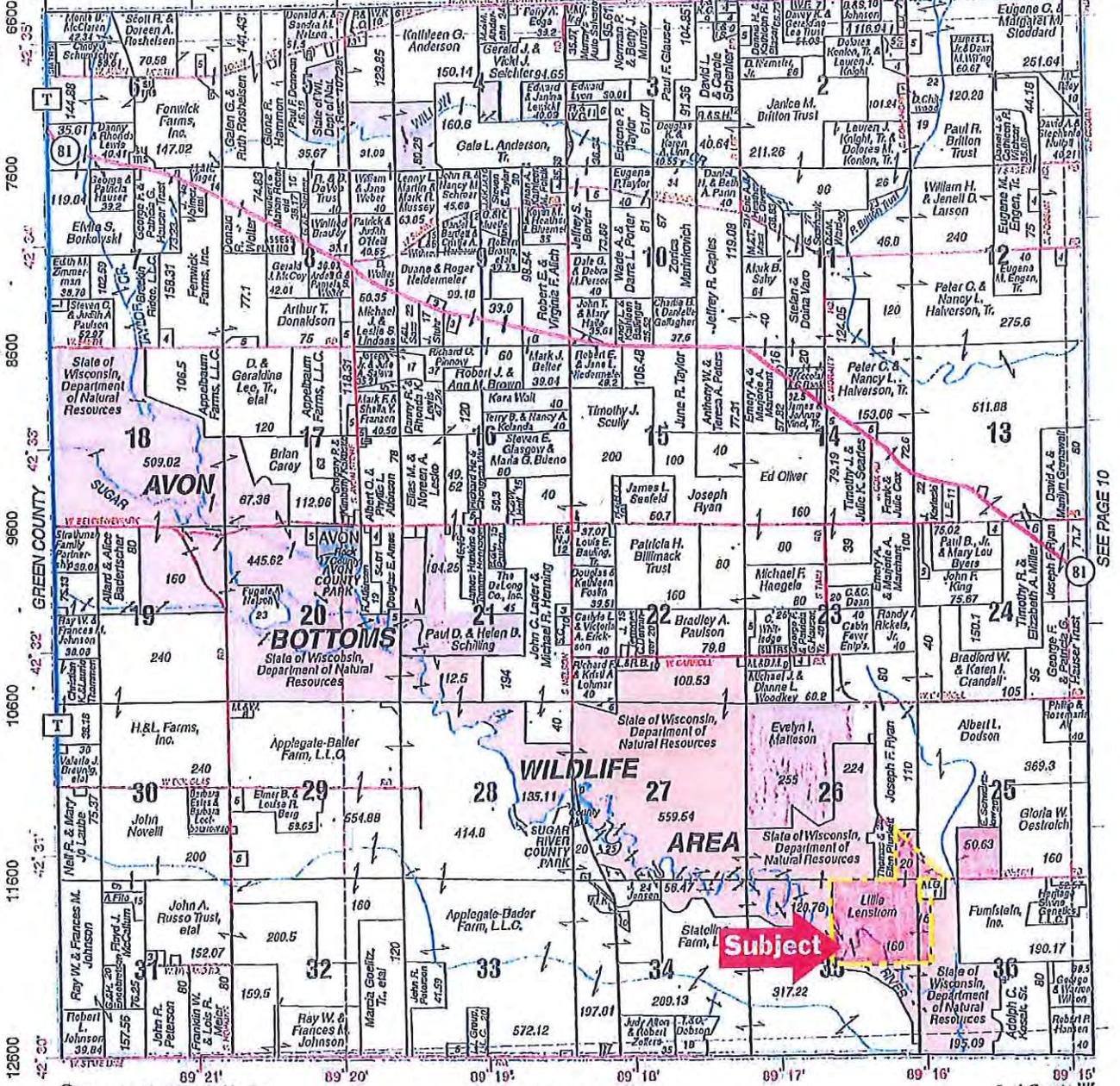


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AVON

SEE PAGE 18

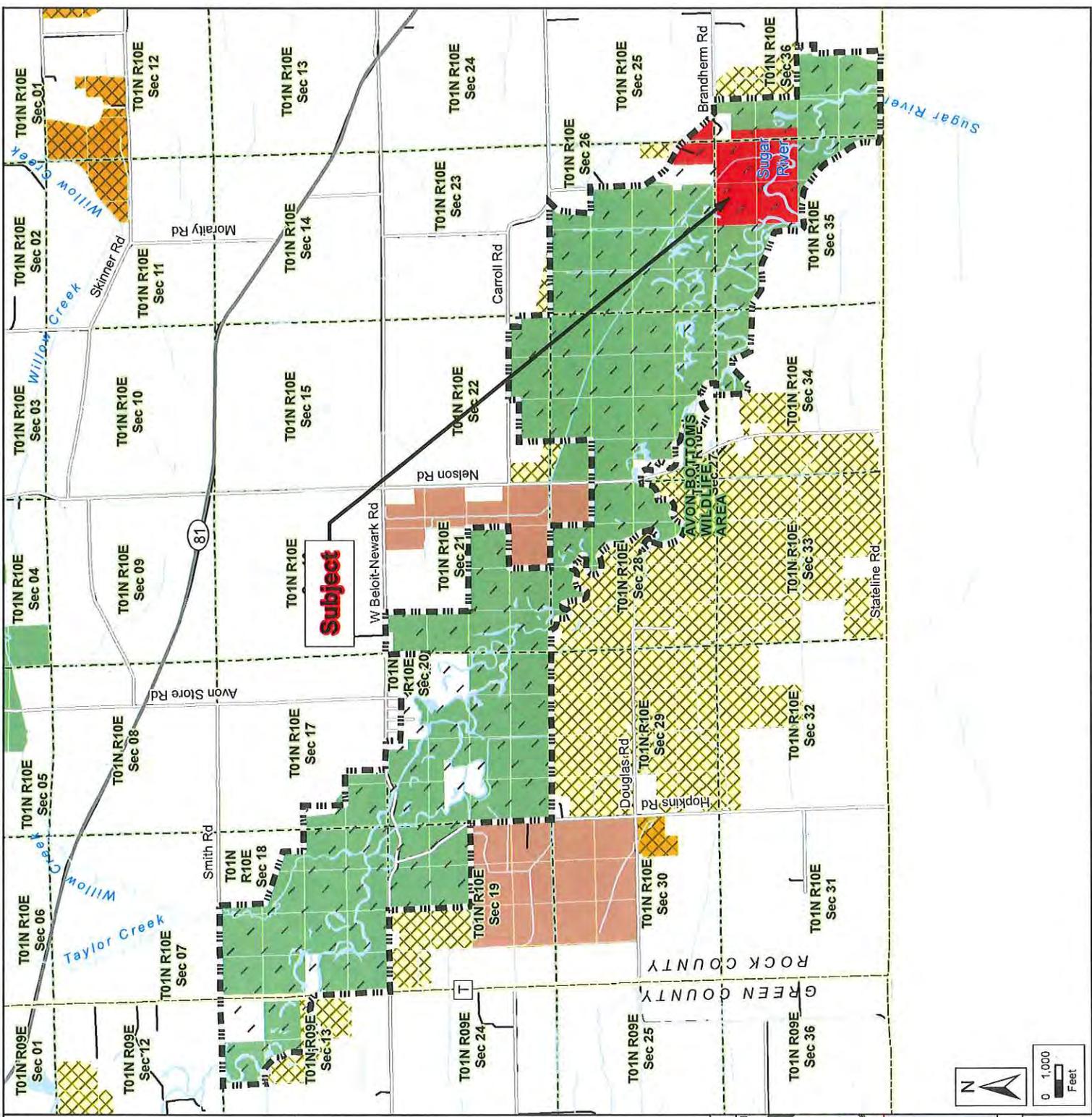
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18600 17600 16600 15600 14600 13600 12600
STATE OF ILLINOIS
Rock County WI

SEE PAGE 10



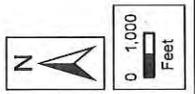
Lillie Lenstrom - Fee
 Avon Bottoms
 Wildlife Area
 WM 60249
 T1N R10E Sec 25,
 26, 35 & 36
 Town of Avon
 Rock County

- Subject**
- DNR Fee Title
 - DNR Easement
 - DNR Project Boundary
 - Public Hunting Grounds)
 - Voluntary Public Access
 - PLSS Section Line
 - QQ Section Boundary
 - NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
 - NRCS - EWPP-FPE (Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program - closed to public access)



Location of Property

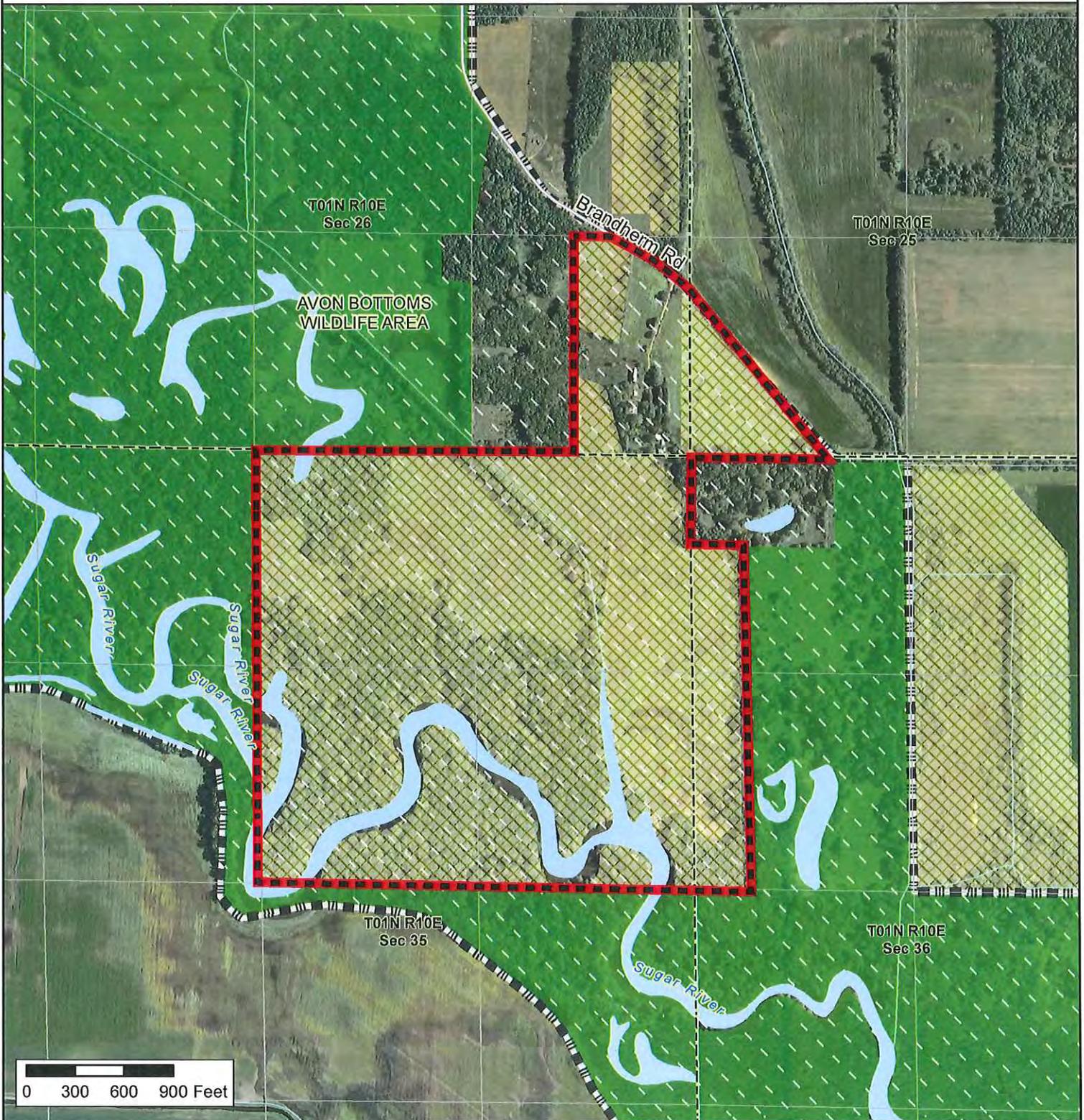
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
 OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 Bureau of Facilities of Lands
 Map Created: Apr 17, 2014 kmh



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, completeness, or legality of the information depicted on this map.

Lillie Lenstrom - Fee

T1N R10E Sec 25, 26, 35 & 36, Town of Avon, Rock County



Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area



Subject

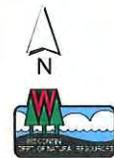
DNR Fee Title Land

DNR Project Boundary

Section Line

QQ Section Lines

NRCS - EWPP-FPE (Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program - closed to public access)

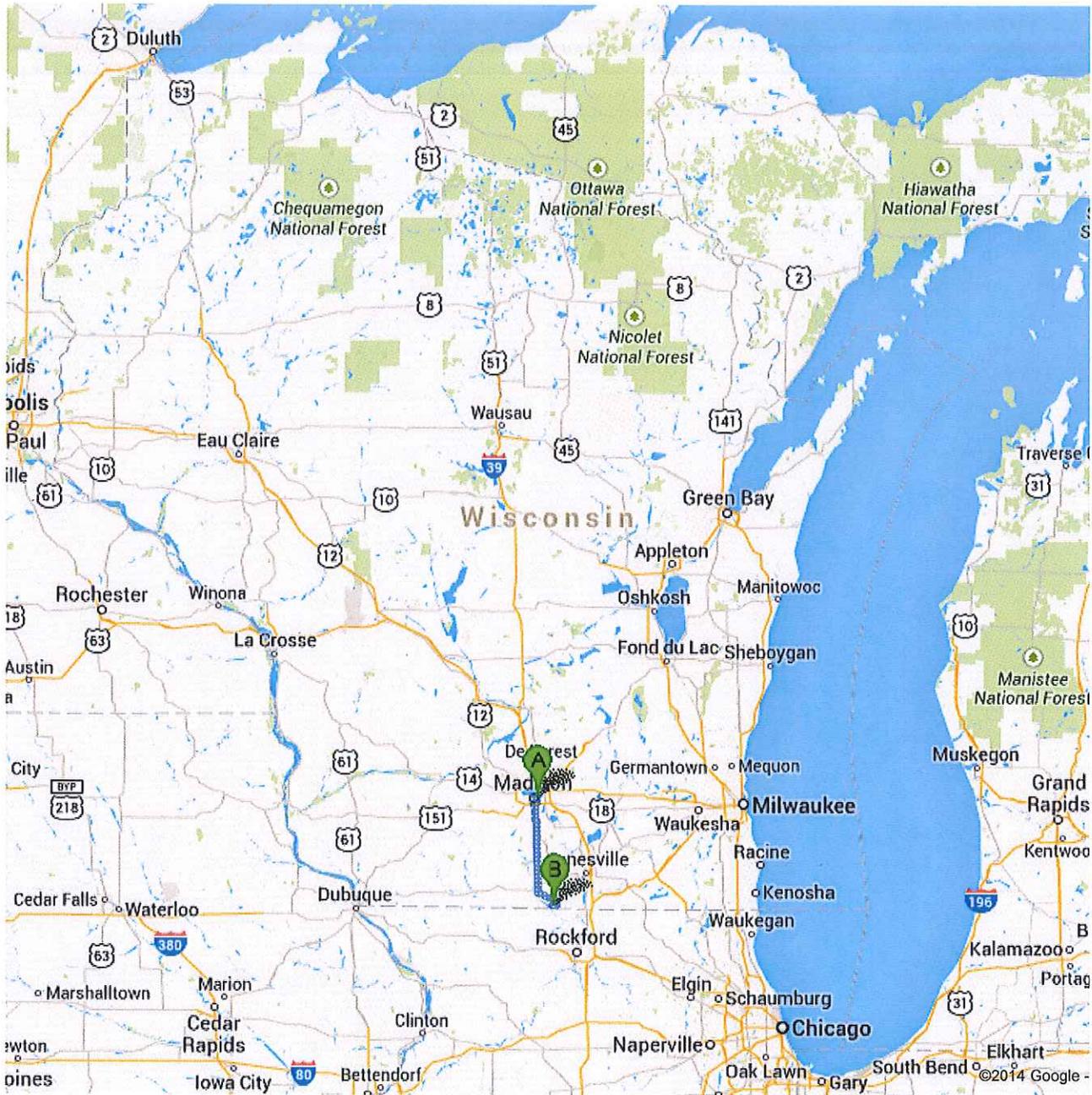


Apr 17, 2014 kmh

Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands



Directions to W Brandherm Rd
48.5 mi – about 1 hour 3 mins



11

 101 S Webster St, Madison, WI 53703



1. Head **northwest** on **S Webster St** toward **E Main St**

go 161 ft
total 161 ft



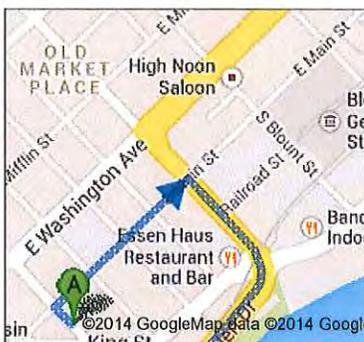
 2. Take the 1st right onto **E Main St**
About 56 secs

go 0.2 mi
total 0.3 mi



 3. Turn right onto **US-151 S/S Blair St**
Continue to follow US-151 S
About 2 mins

go 1.0 mi
total 1.2 mi



4. Continue onto **John Nolen Dr**
About 3 mins

go 1.8 mi
total 3.0 mi



- 5. Keep right at the fork, follow signs for **US-12 W/US-18 W** and merge onto **US-12 W/US-18 W**
About 1 min



go 1.2 mi
total 4.2 mi

- 6. Take exit **261A-261B** for **US-151 N/Park St** toward **US-14 E/Oregon**



go 0.2 mi
total 4.4 mi

- 7. Keep left at the fork, follow signs for **US 14 E/ Fitchburg**



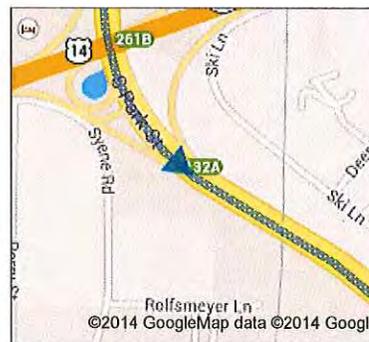
go 144 ft
total 4.4 mi

- 8. Turn left onto **S Park St**



go 0.3 mi
total 4.7 mi

- 9. Continue onto **US-14 E**
About 8 mins



go 8.3 mi
total 13.1 mi



10. Take the exit toward **Oregon**



go 0.3 mi
total 13.4 mi

11. Merge onto **Janesville St**



go 0.2 mi
total 13.6 mi



12. Turn left onto **Co Rd Mm/Wolfe St**
Continue to follow Co Rd Mm
About 5 mins



go 4.1 mi
total 17.8 mi

13. Continue onto **N Rutland Ave**
About 3 mins



go 2.1 mi
total 19.9 mi



14. Continue onto **WI-104 S**
About 15 mins



go 13.7 mi
total 33.6 mi

M

- 15. Continue onto **E 9th Ave/S Co Rd T**
Continue to follow S Co Rd T
About 7 mins



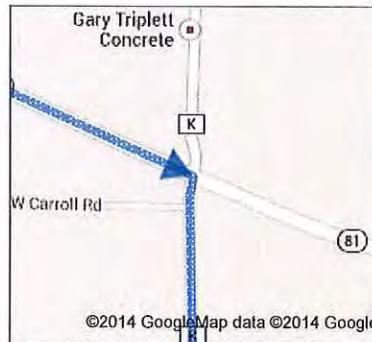
go 3.8 mi
total 37.4 mi

- 81** 16. Turn left onto **WI-81 E/WI-81 Trunk E**
About 8 mins



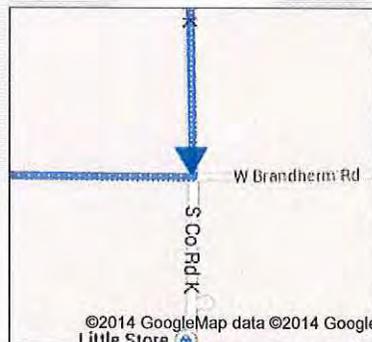
go 7.9 mi
total 45.3 mi

- ➔** 17. Turn right onto **S Co Rd K**
About 2 mins



go 1.0 mi
total 46.3 mi

- ➔** 18. Take the 2nd right onto **W Brandherm Rd**
About 5 mins



go 2.1 mi
total 48.5 mi

B W Brandherm Rd



15