Form 1100-1
Rev. 5-91

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 3.B.10

SUBJECT: LAND DONATION - LOWER WOLF RIVER BOTTOMLANDS NATURAL RESOURCE AREA - WINNEBAGO COUNTY

FOR: OCTOBER 2008 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust has offered to donate 441.92 acres of land to the Department for the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area in Winnebago County.

The 441.92-acre tract known as "Winneconne Wetlands" is located in the Town of Winchester in Winnebago County about 15 miles northwest of the City of Oshkosh. The parcel falls within the focus area of the project boundary. Access to the parcel is along an easement from Highway MM on the east side of the parcel. The Rat River Wildlife Area project about 1.5 miles to the northeast and the Wolf River Wildlife Area project about one mile to the northwest.

Winneconne Wetlands have been identified through numerous surveys as containing very high quality northern sedge meadow and emergent marsh natural communities. The site was historically used as a mowing meadow. The site is dominated by blue-joint grass and tussock sedge in some areas, and cattail-bulrush in others. This type of wetland was once very common in the area, but most of this habitat type has been lost or degraded by land use practices. Winneconne Wetlands is remarkably devoid of significant invasive plant species problems, such as reed canary grass and purple loosestrife. The site provides high quality wildlife habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and a host of other wetland bird and mammal species. Species found include beaver, muskrat, otter, northern harrier, Sandhill crane, American bittern, and Virginia rail. Blanding's turtle and wood turtle (both state-threatened) are found here, and the state-threatened yellow rail nests on-site.

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area was established to protect the Lower Wolf River and Embarrass River corridor and their important floodplain forests, and includes portions of the Lake Winnebago pool system, which is important to many aquatic species, especially the lake sturgeon. This is an ecologically important landscape tucked away between the urban areas and agricultural communities of east-central Wisconsin and the extensive forests of northern Wisconsin. The project area is predominately open and rural with large, highly productive wetlands that are dominated by native vegetation. Agricultural areas are another predominant element of this landscape. The close proximity of the project area to the population center of the Fox River Valley makes it very popular for a multitude of recreational pursuits, especially fishing and hunting. Land uses in the area are quickly changing and development pressure is increasing. There are existing DNR projects within the Lower Wolf River Bottomland project boundary. The Department owns and manages approximately 31,000 acres within those projects.

Ownership by the Department would allow for natural area, wildlife, and habitat management and to provide for public recreation including hunting, trapping, hiking and cross-county skiing. The parcel is proposed for state natural area designation through the master planning process.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board accept the donation of 441.92 acres of land for the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area program, that a certificate of appreciation be sent to Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust and that an expression of appreciation be made a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No ☒	Fiscal Estimate Required	Yes ☐	Attached
No ☒	Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required	Yes ☐	Attached
No ☐	Background Memo	Yes ☒	Attached

APPROVED:

Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF 6 — Date

Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD 8 — Date 9/11/08

Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8 — Date 10/6/08

cc: S. Miller – LF 6; R. Steffes – LF 6; L. Ross AD 8; T. Hauge WM 6; J. Romback-Bartels NER Green Bay

State of Wisconsin

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

FILE REF: WM 60007

DATE: September 10, 2008

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Matthew J. Frapp

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Donation, Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust, Tract, File = WM 60007
Option Expires on January 2, 2009

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area
Winnebago County

Grantor:

Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust
c/o Robert Stadel, President
14 Tri-Park Way, Building 1, Suite 1
Appleton, WI 54913

Acres: 441.92
Price: $0
Appraised Value: $667,000 (Augustyn); $596,500 (Steiro)
Interest: Gift of fee title
Improvements: None

Location: The tract is located in Winnebago County 15 miles northwest of the City of Oshkosh.

Land Description: The subject land is level to gently rolling

Covertype Breakdown:	Type:	Acreage:
	Wetland	375.92
	Lowland/Woods	60.0
	Grassland	6.0
	TOTAL	441.92

Zoning: Agriculture and Floodplain Wetland
Present Use: Recreation
Proposed Use: Wildlife Management and Public Recreation
Tenure: Clark/Adolphson – In the family for many decades; Northeast WI Land Trust to acquire from Clark/Adolphson and immediately donate to the Department
Letter of Intent: September 5, 2008

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.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department proposes to accept the donation from the Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust of the 441.92 acre tract known as "Winneconne Wetlands" that is located in the Town of Winchester in Winnebago County about 15 miles northwest of the City of Oshkosh. The parcel falls within the focus area of the

project boundary. Access to the parcel is along an easement from Highway MM on the east side of the parcel. The Rat River Wildlife Area project is about 1.5 miles to the northeast and the Wolf River Wildlife Area project about a mile to the northwest. Lake Winneconne is a mile south.

The Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust plans to acquire the property in the near future using $100,000 of North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds held by Ducks Unlimited and $518,688 in the Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant funding under the Habitat Areas subprogram. After its purchase is complete, the land trust desires to donate the land to the state. Ownership by the Department would allow for natural area, wildlife, and habitat management and will provide for public recreation including hunting, trapping, hiking and cross-county skiing. The parcel is proposed for state natural area designation through the master planning process.

Winneconne Wetlands have been identified through numerous surveys as containing very high quality northern sedge meadow and emergent marsh natural communities. The site was historically used as a mowing meadow. The site is dominated by blue-joint grass and tussock sedge in some areas, and cattail-bulrush in others. This type of wetland was once very common in the area, but most of this habitat type has been lost or degraded by land use practices. Winneconne Wetlands is remarkably devoid of significant invasive plant species problems, such as reed canary grass and purple loosestrife. The site provides high quality wildlife habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and a host of other wetland bird and mammal species. Species found include beaver, muskrat, otter, northern harrier, Sandhill crane, American bittern, and Virginia rail. Blanding's turtle and wood turtle (both state-threatened) are found here, and the state-threatened yellow rail nests on site.

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area was established to protect the Lower Wolf River and Embarrass River corridor and their important floodplain forests, and includes portions of the Lake Winnebago pool system, which is important to many aquatic species, especially the lake sturgeon. This is an ecologically important landscape tucked away between the urban areas and agricultural communities of east-central Wisconsin and the extensive forests of northern Wisconsin. The project area is predominately open and rural with large, highly productive wetlands that are dominated by native vegetation. Agricultural areas are another predominant element of this landscape. The close proximity of the project area to the population center of the Fox River Valley makes it very popular for a multitude of recreational pursuits, especially fishing and hunting. Land uses in the area are quickly changing and development pressure is increasing. There are existing DNR projects within the Lower Wolf River Bottomland project boundary. The Department owns and manages approximately 31,000 acres within those projects.

This area is important for migrating waterfowl and other birds. Approximately ten percent of the world's tundra swans migrate through the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area in the spring, along with other waterfowl numbering in the tens of thousands.

The Department recommends acceptance of the 441.92-acre Winneconne Wetlands parcel to allow natural area, wildlife, habitat management, and to provide for nature-based outdoor recreation.

3. FINANCING:

No department land acquisition funds are required. However, $518,688 will be paid from Stewardship funds via a grant to the non-profit organization for use in acquiring the land from private owners.

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE LOWER WOLF RIVER BOTTOMLANDS NATURAL RESOURCE AREA:

Established: 2002
Acres Purchased to Date: 3,289.95
Acquisition Goal: 45,000.00
Percent Complete: 7.31
Cost to Date: $6,142,785.75

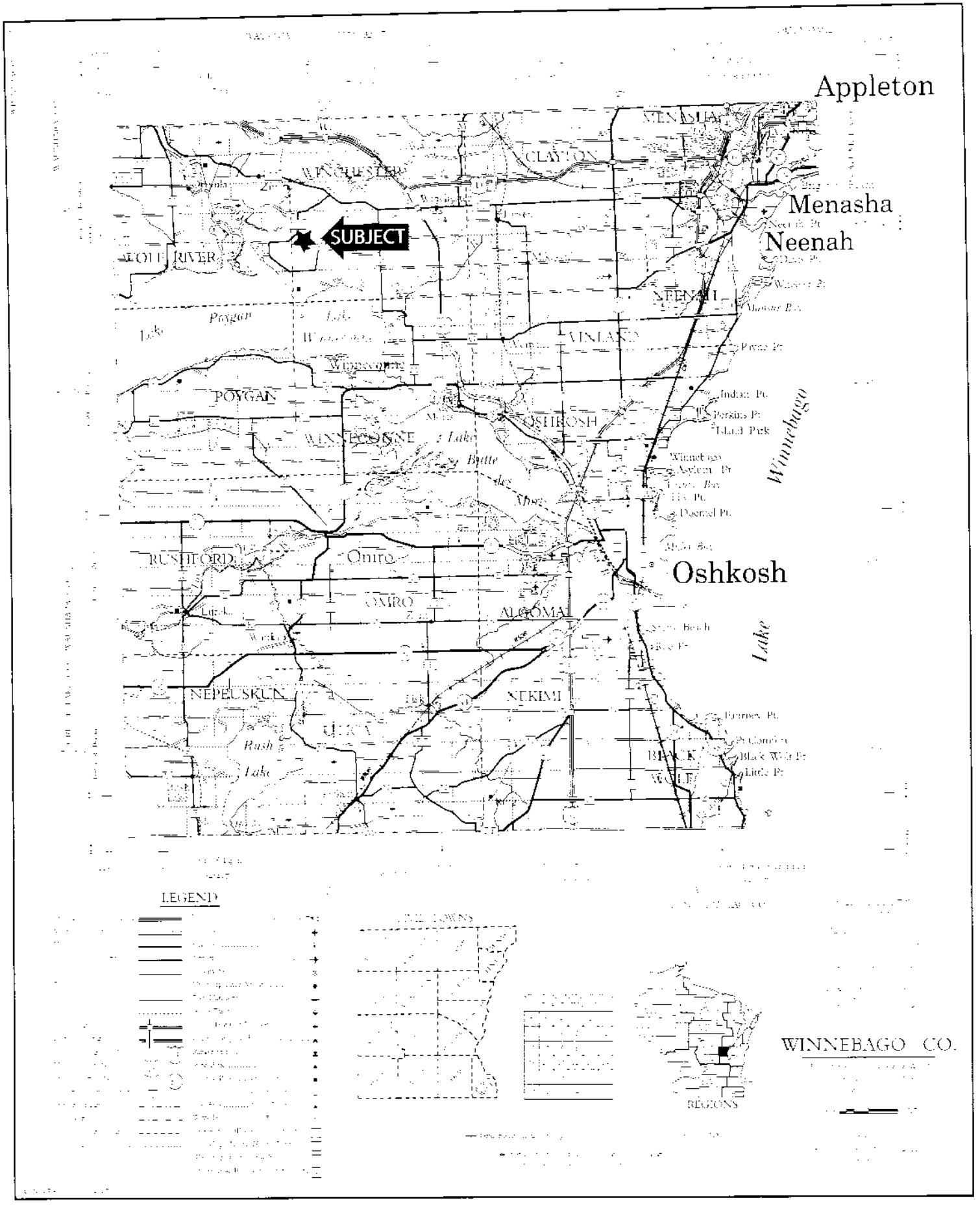
RECOMMENDED:

Richard E. Steffes — Date

Joseph Wm. Renville — 9/11/08
Bureau of Legal Services — Date

Laurie Osterndorf — Date

RES:ch

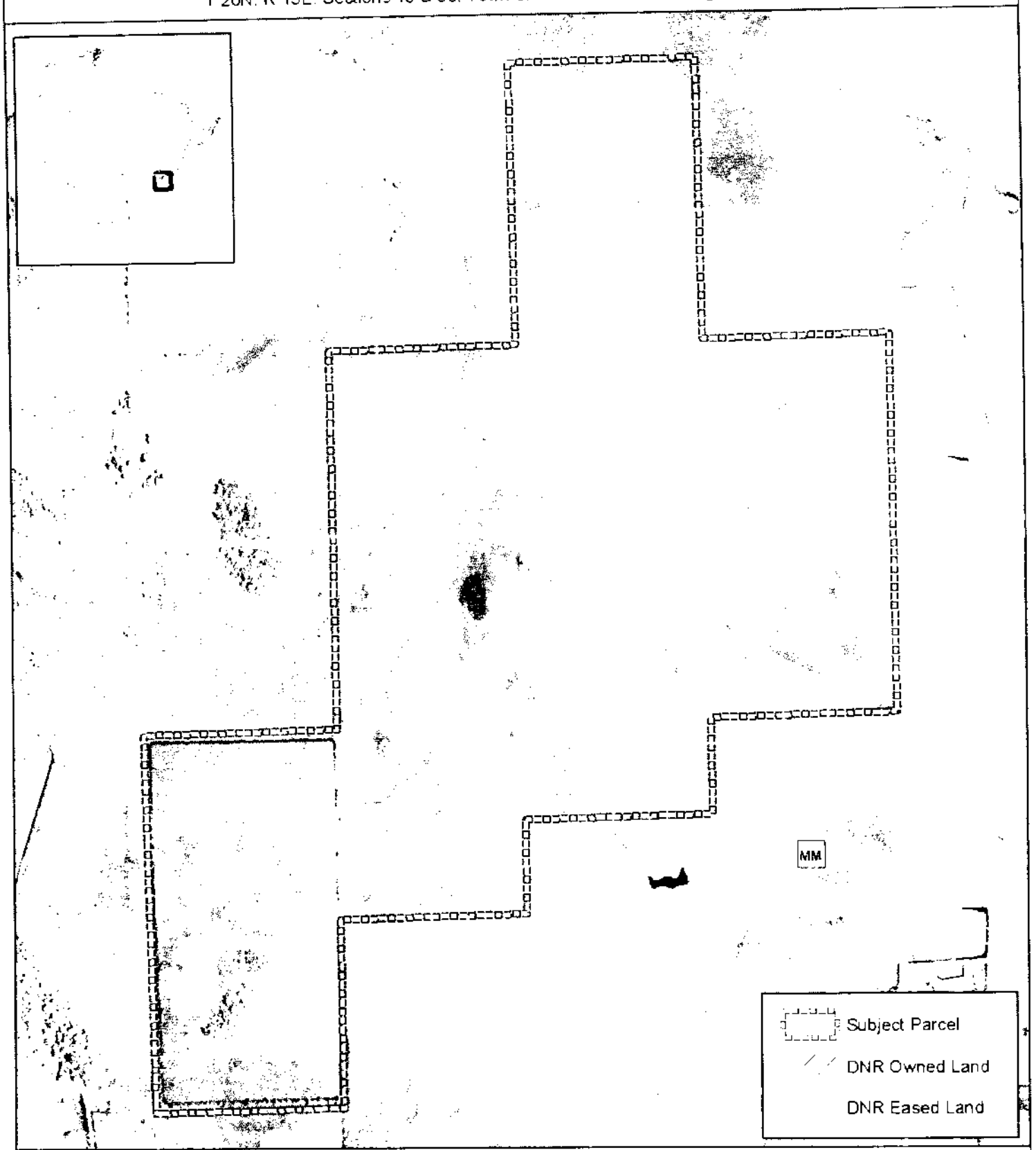

Appleton
Menasha
Neenah
Oshkosh
SUBJECT
WINCHESTER
CLAYTON
VINLAND
POYGAN
OSHKOSH
WINNECONNE
RUSHFORD
Omro
OMRO
ALGOMA
NEPEUSKUN
NEKIMI
Winnebago
Lake
LEGEND
WINNEBAGO CO.

Due to copyright laws, this page is not available online.

Please contact laurie.ross@wisconsin.gov for a hard copy of this document.

Northeast WI Land Trust Property

T 20N, R 15E, Sections 19 & 30, Town of Winchester, Winnebago County



N

0 800 1,600 3,200 4,800 Feet

Prepared by: Bureau of Facilities and Lands
Real Estate Section
September 8, 2008

Northeast WI Land Trust Property

Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area

Subject Property

WDNR Owned

WNDR Eased

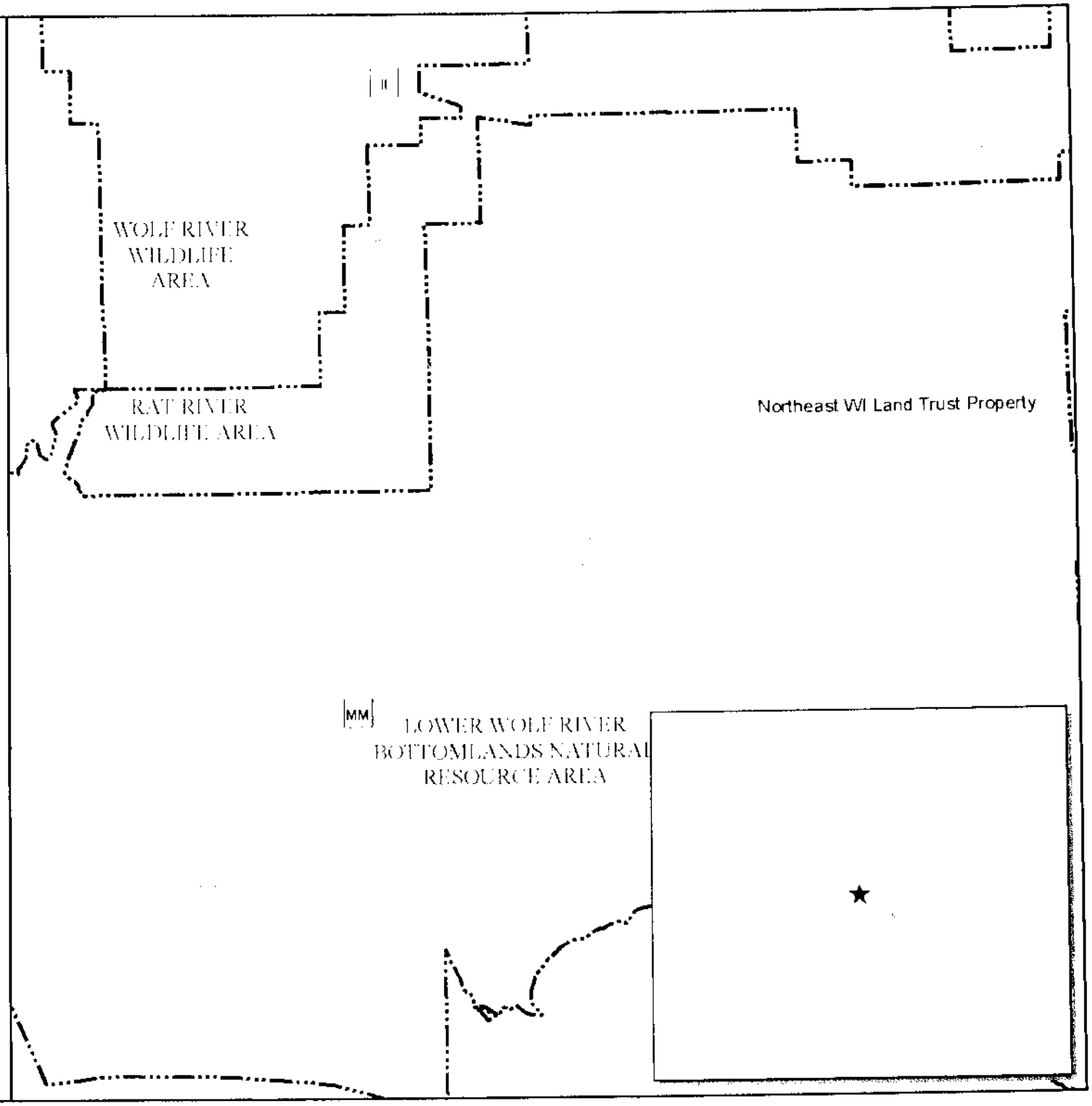
WDNR Leased

Ice Age Trail

Project Boundary

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Bureau of Facilities and Lands



Acknowledgment Of Gift

This is to certify that at its October 2008 meeting, the Natural Resources Board gratefully accepted gift of 441.92 acres of land in Winnebago County for the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resources Area from

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN LAND TRUST

It is significant that organizations such as yours are interested in helping protect Wisconsin's natural heritage and contribute materially toward this end.

An expression of our appreciation is a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board. We present this certificate of sincere appreciation on behalf of present and future generations to thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Natural Resources Board

Christine Thomas, CHAIR