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Rev. 5-91

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 3.B.5

SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – CENTRAL WISCONSIN GRASSLAND CONSERVATION AREA – ADAMS COUNTY

FOR: OCTOBER 2008 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 160 acres of land from Marjorie Staples for $339,000 for the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA) in northern Adams County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds $150,000.

The 160 acres lies approximately one mile north of existing state ownership and if managed for grassland habitat would help provide a link between two prime habitat areas, the old Leola Marsh Wildlife Area and the Buena Vista Wildlife Area both managed for the greater prairie chicken. The parcel was historically cleared for farming and has been partially hayed and pastured while other parts of it have been left fallow for a number of years. It consists of approximately 140 acres of open grass and 20 acres of brush/woods. There is good access via ½-mile of paved town road frontage on its north line and ½-mile of gravel town road frontage on both its west and south boundaries.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area, approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, is designed to protect up to 15,000 acres to meet the habitat needs of many rare and declining grassland species, most notably the Greater Prairie Chicken. The CWGCA represents one of the last opportunities in the state to manage grasslands at a landscape scale. Another goal of the project is to provide limited low impact outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with grassland management.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area covers portions of six counties. It surrounds several smaller wildlife management projects, as well as two fishery management project areas. The project area boundary was developed by determining the core range for historic and current prairie chicken populations, and the management goals are primarily for grasslands species such as the prairie chicken and various songbirds.

The Staples land lies within the current range of the greater prairie chicken, a state threatened species. The parcel lies in a portion of the Buena Vista Grasslands, which is part of CWGCA, with relatively low numbers of prairie chickens and low activity levels, as defined by the number of males on spring booming grounds, and compared with the remainder of the property.

Department ownership of this land will provide opportunities for public recreation, consolidate state ownership, allow for wildlife management, and protect the site from development incompatible with the goals of the project.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 160 acres of land for $339,000 for Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area in Adams County.

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 9/5/08

Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD 8 — Date 10/7/08

cc: S. Miller – LF 6
R. Steffes – LF 6
T. Hauge – WM 6
L. Ross – AD 8
C. Thompson – WCR La Crosse

State of Wisconsin

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

FILE REF: WM 60006

DATE: September 2, 2008

TO: Governor Doyle

FROM: Matthew J. Frank

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Marjorie Staples Tract, File = WM 60006.
Option Expires December 5, 2008

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area
Adams County

Grantor:

Marjorie Staples
c o Attorney Tom Kubasta
P.O. Box 347
Plainfield, WI 54966

Acres: 160.00
Price: $339,000.00
Appraised Value: $339,000; $360,000
Interest: Fee
Improvements: None

Location: The property is located in north-central Adams County in the Town of Leola about 80 miles north of Madison.

Land Description: The land is level with slightly more relief on the western half of the property.

Water Resources: There is approximately one-mile of two-bank frontage on an unnamed drainage ditch.

Covertype Breakdown:	Type:	Acreage:
	Grass Pasture	140.00
	Upland Woodland	20.00
	TOTAL:	160.00

Zoning: No town zoning
Present Use: Agriculture and some recreational use
Proposed Use: Wildlife Management and Public Recreation
Tenure: More than 20 years
Property Taxes: $108,000
Option Date: August 12, 2008

Comments: The landowner desires a 2008 closing.

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be open to the public for all nature-based outdoor recreational activities to include hunting, fishing, trapping and cross-country skiing.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

Marjorie Staples has agreed to sell 160 acres of her property to the state as an addition to the Central Wisconsin Grasslands Conservation Area in Adams County. The 160 acres lies approximately one mile north of existing state ownership and if managed for grassland habitat, would help provide a link between two prime habitat areas, the old Leola Marsh Wildlife Area and the Buena Vista Wildlife Area both managed for the greater prairie chicken. The parcel was historically cleared for farming and has been partially hayed and pastured while other parts of it have been left fallow for a number of years. It consists of approximately 140 acres of open grass and 20 acres of brush woods. There is good access to the subject via ½-mile of paved town road frontage on its north line and ½-mile of gravel town road frontage on both its west and south boundaries

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area, approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, is designed to protect up to 15,000 acres to meet the habitat needs of many rare and declining grassland species, most notably the Greater Prairie Chicken. The CWGCA represents one of the last opportunities in the state to manage grasslands at a landscape scale. Another goal of the project is to provide limited low impact outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with grassland management.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area covers portions of six counties. It surrounds several smaller wildlife management projects, as well as two fishery management project areas. The project area boundary was developed by determining the core range for historic and current prairie chicken populations, and the management goals are primarily for grasslands species such as the prairie chicken and various songbirds.

The Staples land lies within the current range of the greater prairie chicken, a state threatened species. The parcel lies in a portion of the Buena Vista Grasslands, which is part of CWGCA, with relatively low numbers of prairie chickens and low activity levels, as defined by the number of males on spring booming grounds, and compared with the remainder of the property. Acquisition of this parcel will allow the development of quality grassland acreage at a minimal cost and in an area where it is most needed. The development and maintenance of adequate grassland habitat on this property will provide added security for the chicken population in this specific area. Other state-owned lands managed for grassland habitat lie to the east of the parcel.

Department ownership of this land will provide opportunities for public recreation, consolidate state ownership, allow for wildlife management, and protect the site from development incompatible with the goals of the project.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
$4,000,000	$2,116,166

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN GRASSLAND CONSERVATION AREA:

Established: 2005
Acres Purchased to Date: 1,114.06
Acquisition Goal: 15,000.00
Percent Complete: 7.43
Cost to Date: $1,306,443.00

5. APPRAISALS:

5a. Appraiser: Rodney Bush - (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: July 1, 2008
Appraised Value: $360,000.00
Highest and Best Use: Agriculture

Allocation of Values:
a. land: 160.00 acres @ $2,250.00 per acre: $360,000.00
b. market data approach used. four comparable sales cited
c. adjusted value range: $2,170.00-$2,293.93

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter - July 14, 2008

5b. Appraiser: Phil Lepinski - (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: May 7, 2008
Appraised Value: $339,000
Highest and Best Use: Agriculture

Allocation of Values:
a. land: 160.00 acres @ $2,150 per acre: $344,000 minus $5,000 for reclamation costs: $339,000
b. market data approach used, four comparable sales cited
c. adjusted value range: $1,750-$2,486

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter - July 14, 2008

Comments: There are some old remnants and foundations from a residence and set of farm buildings along with a sand-point well and sanitary system present. The appraiser deducted a reclamation cost from the estimated value of the subject to take care of these reclamation fees. The Lepinski report was selected by the Department for use in the negotiations.

RECOMMENDED:

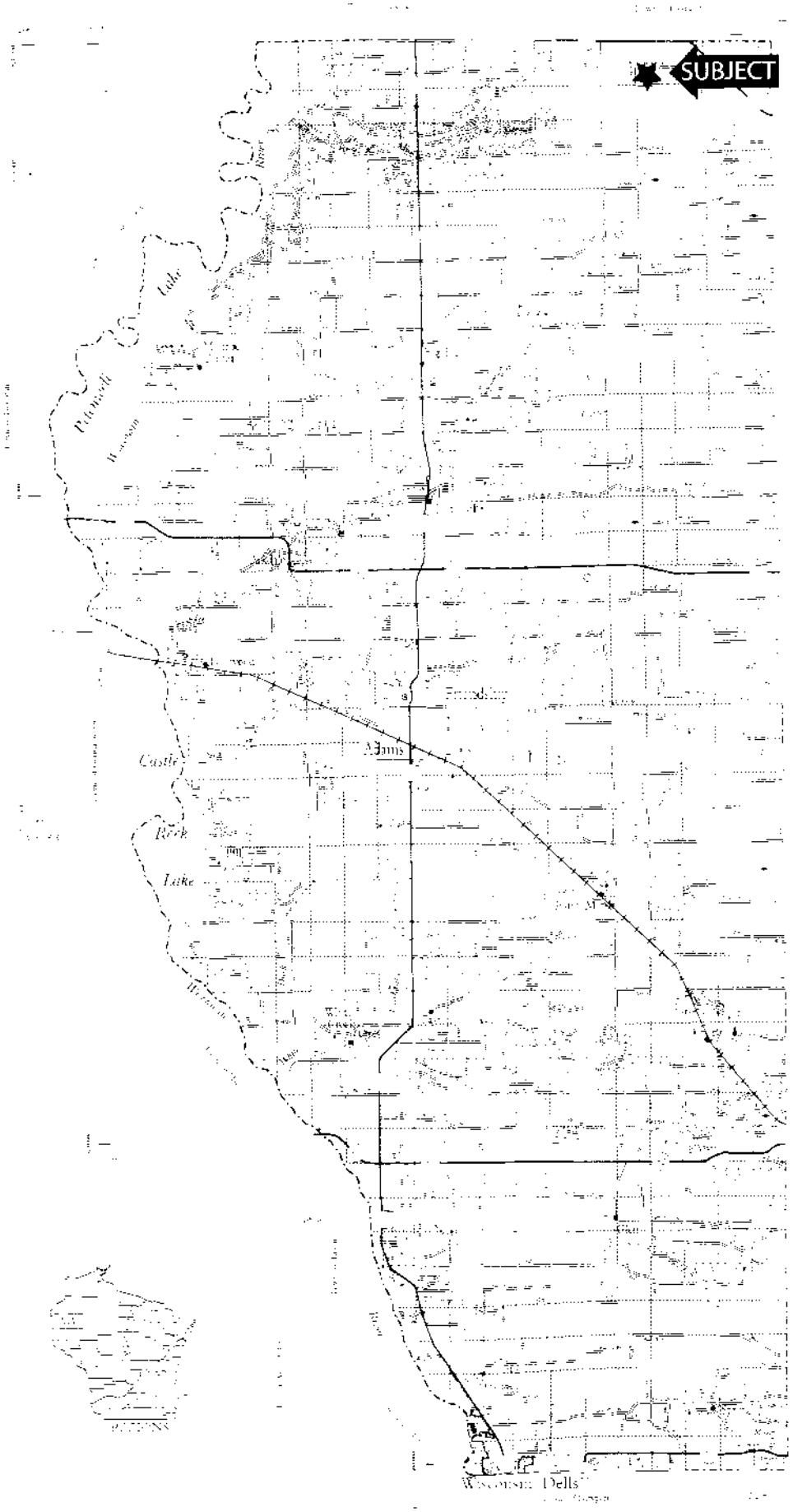
Richard E. Steffes — Date

Joseph Wm. Renville
Bureau of Legal Services — Date 9/4/08

Laurie Osterndorf — Date

RES:dv

LEGEND



ADAMS CO.

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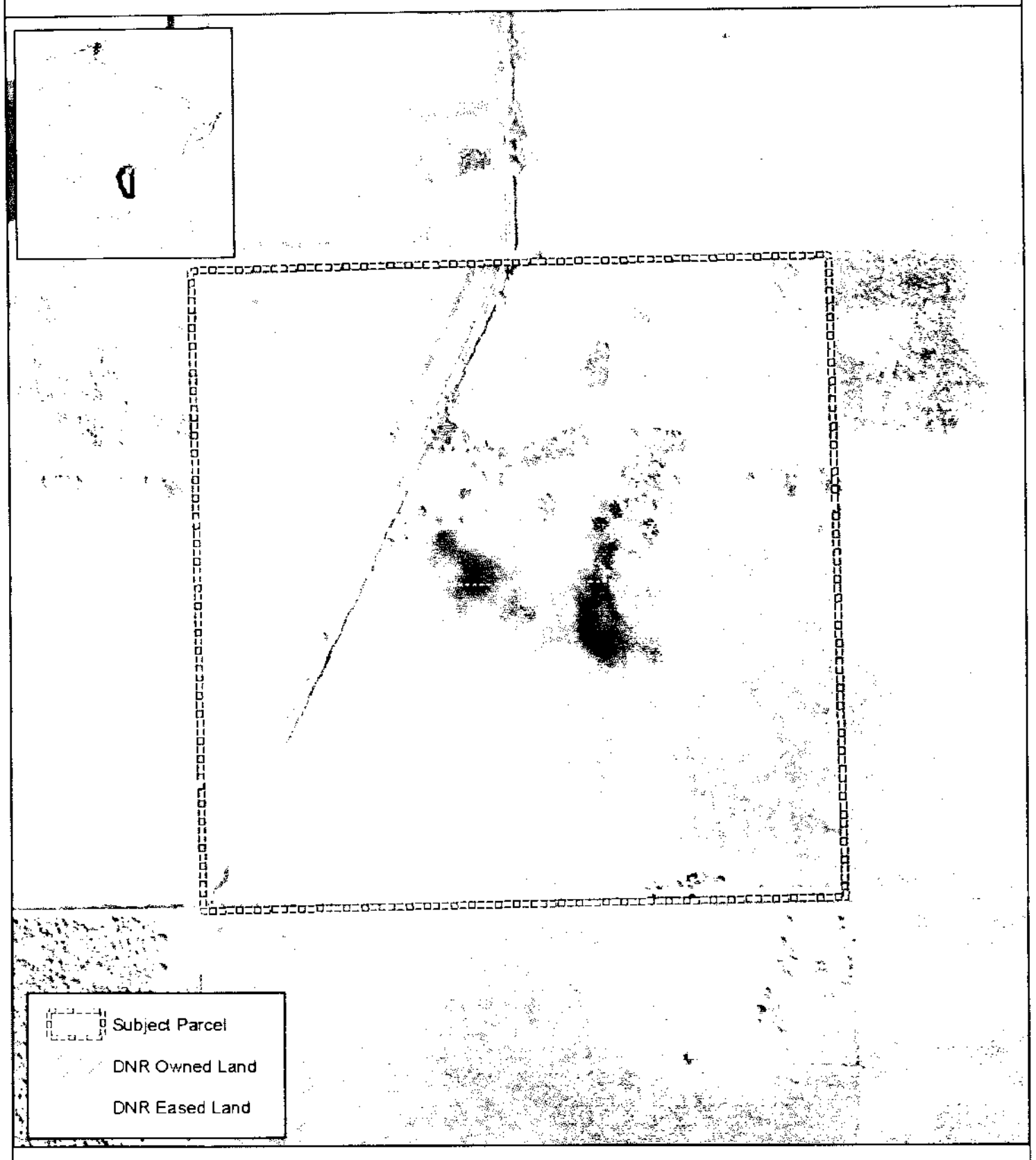
Staples Property

T 20N, R 7E, Section 4, Town of Leola, Adams County



N

0 470 940 1,880 2,820 Feet

Prepared by: Bureau of Facilities and Lands
Real Estate Section
August 26, 2003

Staples Property

Central Wisconsin Grasslands Conservation Area

Subject Property

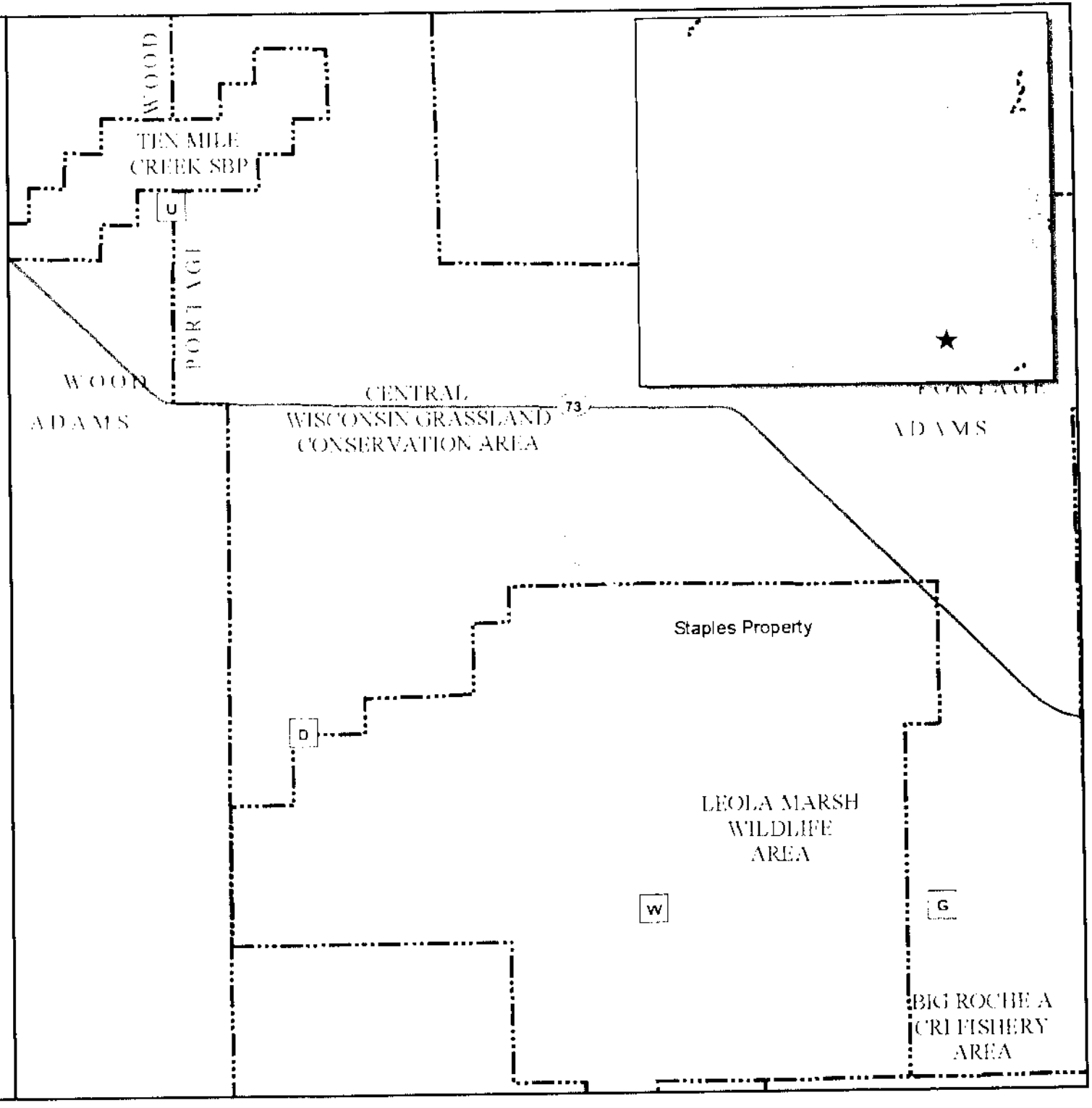
WDNR Owned

WNDR Eased

WDNR Leased

Ice Age Trail

Project Boundary

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Bureau of Facilities and Lands