

SUBJECT: LAND DONATION - PAUL OLSON WILDLIFE AREA – WOOD COUNTY

FOR: DECEMBER 2009 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Mead Witter Foundation has offered to donate 39 acres of land in Wood County for the Paul Olson Wildlife Area. That smaller project is within the Central Wisconsin Grasslands Conservation Area (CWGCA).

The primary goal of the CWGCA is to increase the amount of protected grassland habitat for grassland-dependent species, such as the state threatened greater prairie chicken. The tract is located about 6.5 miles northwest of Wisconsin Rapids in the Town of Sherry. This parcel would provide better management of wildlife species such as the prairie chicken and various songbirds. The parcel adjoins state-owned lands to the south and west.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area, approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, seeks to protect up to 15,000 acres over the next ten years 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.

This property is an important addition to the CWGCA, meeting several established criteria that identify critical lands for acquisition. The property adjoins two sides of existing state land, of which 120 acres is currently managed for grassland habitat, thus creating a larger, contiguous and more effective grassland block. Further, an active, persistent greater prairie chicken booming ground (breeding area) is located on this property. In addition, the gifted property has been kept in agriculture and cut annually for a hay crop. Therefore, it can easily be managed for cool season grassland with minimal resource input. Finally, numerous other grassland-dependent bird species are present on this property, including, but not limited to Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Upland Sandpipers, Northern Harriers and several sparrow species.

This property was purchased by the Mead Witter Foundation for the purpose of gifting it to the State of Wisconsin to be managed for grassland habitat for greater prairie chickens and other grassland-dependent species as part of the Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area. The Mead Witter Foundation has a strong land ethic and rich history of conservation support in central Wisconsin including land acquisition in and around the George W. Mead Wildlife Area and significant contributions toward the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center. Their new commitment to land acquisition within the Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area further demonstrates their dedication to grassland conservation and those grassland-dependent species of threatened, endangered or special concern.

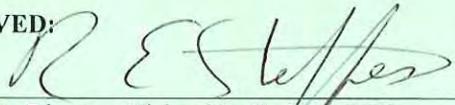
Acceptance of this gift from the Mead Witter Foundation will provide opportunities for public recreation, consolidate state ownership, allow for wildlife management and protect the site from development incompatible with the goals of the project.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board accept the donation of 39 acres of land for the Paul Olson Wildlife Area, that a certificate of appreciation be sent to Mead Witter Foundation, and that an expression of appreciation be made a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board.

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 |

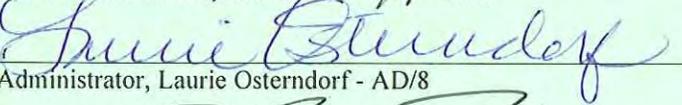
APPROVED:



Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF/6

10-28-09

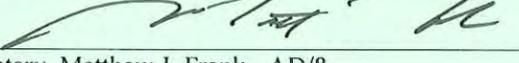
Date



Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD/8

11/5/09

Date



Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8

11/11/09

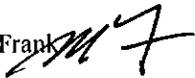
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- cc: S. Miller – LF/6
 R. Steffes – LF/6
 L. Ross – AD/8
 T. Hauge - WM/6
 S. Humrickhouse – WCR/Eau Claire

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 28, 2009

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Matthew J. Frank 

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Donation, Mead Witter Foundation
Tract, File # WM 60068

FILE REF: WM 60068

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Paul Olson Wildlife Area
Wood County

Grantor:

Mead Witter Foundation
Ms. Susan Feith
730 First Avenue South
P. O. Box 39
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Acres: 39Price: GiftInterest: Fee title donationImprovements: None

Location: The tract is located in Wood County about 6.5 miles northwest of Wisconsin Rapids in the Town of Sherry.

Land Description: The subject land is flat, open grassland.

<u>Covertypes Breakdown:</u>	Type:	Acreage:
	Grassland	39

Zoning: Shoreland/FloodplainPresent Use: Resource protectionProposed Use: Resource protection and public recreationTenure: Less than one yearOption Date: October 6, 2009

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 is proposing to accept a 39-acre gift of land from the Mead Witter Foundation for the Paul Olson Wildlife Area that is within the Central Wisconsin Grasslands Conservation Area (CWGCA). The tract that adjoins state-owned lands to the south and the west is located in Wood County about 6.5 miles northwest of Wisconsin Rapids in the Town of Sherry. The primary goal of the CWGCA is to increase the amount of protected grassland habitat for grassland-dependent species, such as the state

threatened greater prairie chicken. This parcel would provide better management of wildlife species such as the prairie chicken and various songbirds.

This property is an important addition to the CWGCA, meeting several established criteria that identify critical lands for acquisition. The property adjoins two sides of existing state land, of which 120 acres is currently managed for grassland habitat, thus creating a larger, contiguous and more effective grassland block. Further, an active, persistent greater prairie chicken booming ground (breeding area) is located on this property. In addition, the gifted property has been kept in agriculture and cut annually for a hay crop. Therefore, it can easily be managed for cool season grassland with minimal resource input. Finally, numerous other grassland-dependent bird species are present on this property, including, but not limited to Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Upland Sandpipers, Northern Harriers and several sparrow species.

This property was purchased by the Mead Witter Foundation for the purpose of gifting it to the State of Wisconsin to be managed for grassland habitat for greater prairie chickens and other grassland-dependent species as part of the Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area. The Mead Witter Foundation has a strong land ethic and rich history of conservation support in central Wisconsin including land acquisition in and around the George W. Mead Wildlife Area and significant contributions toward the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center. Their new commitment to land acquisition within the Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area further demonstrates their dedication to grassland conservation and those grassland-dependent species of threatened, endangered or special concern.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area, approved by the Natural Resources Board in October of 2004, seeks to protect up to 15,000 acres over the next ten years 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, the Paul Olson Wildlife Area being one of them, 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 Department recommends acceptance of this gift from the Mead Witter Foundation to 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:

No funding is required for this transaction.

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE PAUL OLSON WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1973

Acres Purchased to Date: 1,988.88

Acquisition Goal: 1,583.07

Percent Complete: 125.63%

Cost to Date: \$522,601.00

RECOMMENDED:


Richard E. Steffes

10-28-09
Date


Bureau of Legal Services

11/2/09
Date


Laurie Osterndorf

11/5/09
Date

RES:dv

Acknowledgment Of Gift

This is to certify that at its December 2009 meeting, the Natural Resources Board gratefully accepted a gift of 39 acres of land in Wood County for the Paul Olson Wildlife Area that is within the Central Wisconsin Grasslands Conservation Area from

MEAD WITTER FOUNDATION, INC.

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

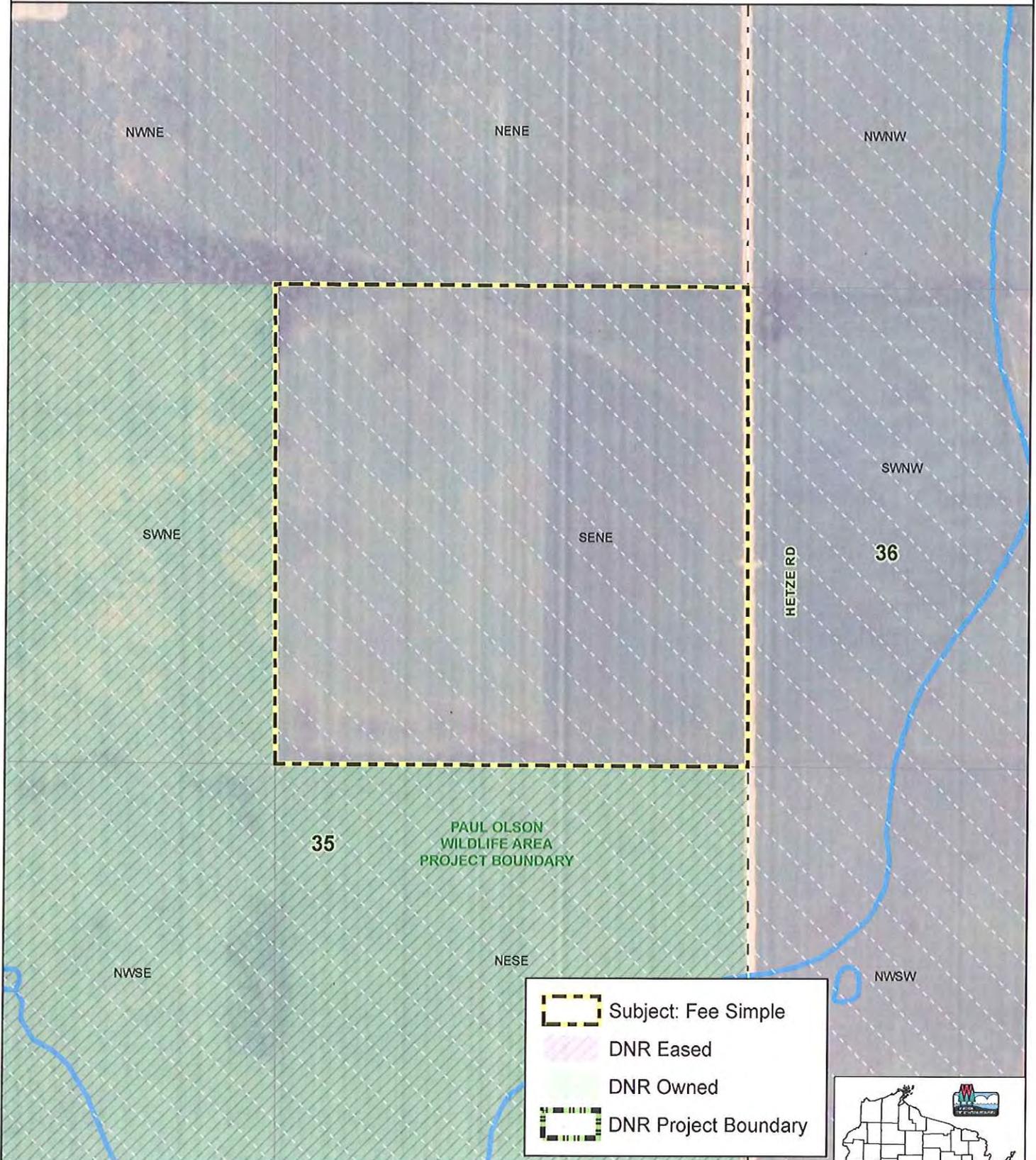
An expression of our appreciation is a part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board. We present this certificate of sincere appreciation on behalf of present and future generations to thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Natural Resources Board

Christine Thomas, CHAIR

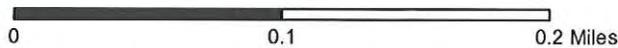
Mead Witter Foundation, Inc. Fee Simple

T24N R5E Section 35, Town of Sherry, Wood County, WI (39.00 Acres)



WM 60068

Paul Olson
Wildlife Area



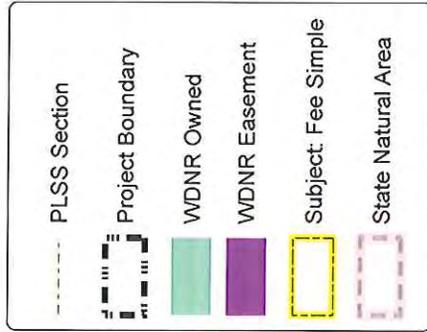
Created by Bureau of Facilities and Lands
Real Estate Section
October 27, 2009



**Mead Witter
Foundation, Inc.
Fee Simple**

T24N R5E Section 35
Town of Sherry
Wood County, WI
(39.00 Acres)

WM 60068
Paul Olson
Wildlife Area



The DNR Managed Lands represent the boundaries of lands managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Wisconsin DNR manages Wisconsin's public lands and waters. The DNR's GIS system provides a spatial representation of the Crown, Land Easement, System maintained by the DNR, Bureau of Facilities and Lands (LF), and may include errors and/or omissions. The data should not be interpreted as a legal representation of legal ownership boundaries.

This data set does not differentiate between lands that are open or closed to the public for hunting and/or general public access. Some lands represented in this data set may not be open to the general public, or may be open to the general public under certain conditions. For more information not intended for use as a land management tool, if a listing of all DNR real estate transactions that have occurred on these lands over time.

For information about the actual management, including public use and public access of the lands, contact the nearest DNR Regional Office. Contact information for DNR Regional Offices and Service Centers is provided on the following internet site:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/cerc/serve/center/locations.htm>

Updates to this data set are ongoing, and will be incorporated into future versions when available.

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Bureau of Facilities and Lands
October 27, 2009

