

**SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – WESTERN PRAIRIE HABITAT RESTORATION – ST. CROIX COUNTY**

**OR: SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Richard Steffes

**SUMMARY:** The Department has obtained an option to purchase 155.00 acres of land from Lowell Bliss and William Potts for \$465,000 for the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration in St. Croix County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.

The 210-acre Casey Lake State Wildlife Management Area borders the west side of the parcel. It contains Casey Lake, the headwaters of the Kinnickinnic River and an active Great Blue Heron rookery which is on the northwest side of Casey Lake. Department acquisition of the Bliss/Potts parcel will connect Casey Lake to the subject's uplands, thus, increasing the brood and nesting success of birds. Along the east side of the property, is a complex of forested wetlands. Further to the east is Pine Lake. Pine Lake has protected shoreland via easements through the West Wisconsin Land Trust. The lake offers good brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl. The connected complex of wetlands and uplands of Casey Lake, the Bliss/Potts property, the forested wetlands and Pine Lake creates a vital association of nesting areas in this area.

The Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area Project was established in 1999 and encompasses 350,000 acres within 15 townships in St. Croix and Polk Counties. The acreage goal of 15,000 acres will permanently protect approximately 10% of the historic grassland acreage within the project. The project area includes prairie remnants from one of the largest prairies found in the state along with a mix of grasslands, potholes and marshes that are extremely conducive to pheasant and waterfowl production. The large, landscape scope of the project is based upon comprehensive research of biodiversity and ecosystem management practices.

The state, local units of government and non-profit conservation organizations currently own approximately 5,000 acres within the project boundary. These groups will continue to partner with the Department to purchase land and ultimately achieve the habitat protection and restoration goals for the project.

Department acquisition of the 155-acre parcel will consolidate state ownership, provide additional recreational opportunities, and allow habitat restoration and management of the area for wildlife in conjunction with the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area project.

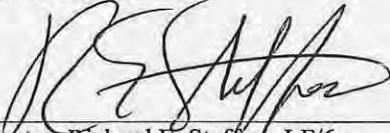
**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board approve the purchase of 155 acres of land for \$465,000 for Western Prairie Habitat Restoration.

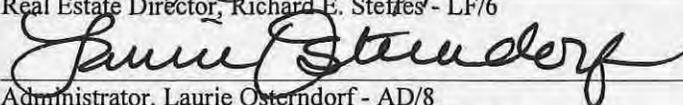
**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

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

- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached

**APPROVED:**

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

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator, Laurie Osterdorf - AD/8

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8

8-4-09  
Date

8/24/09  
Date

9/2/09  
Date

- 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: August 3, 2009  
 TO: Governor Doyle  
 FROM: Matthew J. Frank *MJF*  
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Bliss and Potts Tract, File # WM 60057,  
 Option Expires October 15, 2009

FILE REF: WM 60057

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Western Prairie Habitat Restoration  
 St. Croix County

Grantor:

Lowell Bliss  
 William Potts  
 12700 Welcome Lane  
 Burnsville, MN 55337

Acres: 155Price: \$465,000Appraised Value: \$465,000; \$543,000Interest: Fee title purchaseImprovements: None

Location: The property is located in central St. Croix County in the Town of Erin Prairie about six miles northwest of the Village of Baldwin.

Land Description: The land is gently rolling.

<u>Covertypes Breakdown:</u>	<u>Type:</u>	<u>Acreage:</u>
	Grassland	110
	Lowland Woodland	45
	TOTAL:	155

Zoning: AgriculturePresent Use: AgricultureProposed Use: Wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreationTenure: 16 yearsProperty Taxes:Option Date: July 17, 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 has obtained an option to purchase the 155-acre Bliss/Potts parcel for the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area Project (WPHRA). The parcel is in the project boundary of the WPHRA and will connect to other blocks of department ownership. Of the 155 acres, approximately 106 acres are currently enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program contracts. The 210-acre Casey Lake State Wildlife Management Area creates the western boundary of the parcel. It contains Casey Lake, the headwaters of the Kinnickinnic River and an active Great Blue Heron rookery, which is on the northwest side of Casey Lake. The uplands acquisition of the Bliss/Potts parcel will enhance the connectivity of Casey Lake to the

subject's uplands, thus, increasing the brood and nesting success of birds. Along the east side of the property is a complex of forested wetlands. Further to the east is Pine Lake. Pine Lake has protected shoreland via easements through the West Wisconsin Land Trust. The lake offers good brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl. The connected complex of wetlands and uplands of Casey Lake, the Bliss/Potts property, the forested wetlands and Pine Lake creates a vital association of nesting complexes in this area.

The Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area project was established in 1999 and encompasses 350,000 acres within 15 townships in St. Croix and Polk Counties. The acreage goal of 15,000 acres will permanently protect approximately 10% of the historic grassland acreage within the project. The project area includes prairie remnants from one of the largest prairies found in the state along with a mix of grasslands, potholes and marshes that are extremely conducive to pheasant and waterfowl production. The large, landscape scope of the project is based upon comprehensive research of biodiversity and ecosystem management practices. Restoration of viable grasslands and wetlands to provide habitat for waterfowl, pheasants and grassland birds is the primary objective of the WPHRA project. The intent is to widely scatter suitable habitat throughout the area, rather than concentrating the habitat in one place. Reductions in habitat quality and quantity because of land use changes have contributed to the decline of grassland nesting wildlife populations. In addition, wetland loss or degradation has been an important factor in the decline of many wetland wildlife species. Ten species of birds known to occur in this area are state-listed as endangered or threatened and 19 species are listed as special concern.

The state, local units of government and non-profit conservation organizations currently own approximately 5,000 acres within the project boundary. These groups will continue to partner with the Department to purchase land and ultimately achieve the habitat protection and restoration goals for the project.

The Department recommends acquisition of the 155-acre parcel to consolidate state ownership, to provide additional recreational opportunities, and to allow habitat restoration and management of the area for wildlife in conjunction with the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area project.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to Wildlife program (FY10):	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$5,300,000	\$1,110,357

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE WESTERN PRAIRIE HABITAT RESTORATION:

Established: 1999  
Acres Purchased to Date: 1,065.38  
Acquisition Goal: 15,000.00  
Percent Complete: 7.10%  
Cost to Date: \$1,866,826.00

5. APPRAISAL:

Appraiser: Michael Augustyn  
Valuation Date: April 23, 2009  
Appraised Value: \$465,000.00  
Highest and Best Use: Agriculture with rural residential as ancillary focus

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 155 acres @ \$3,000 per acre: \$465,000
- b. market data approach used, three comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$2,869 to \$3,206 per acre

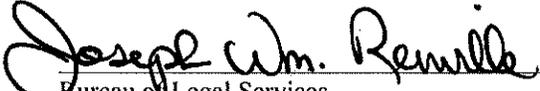
Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter - June 18, 2009

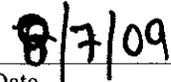
Comment: A second appraisal report was done by Norby and Associates. That firm estimated value at \$543,000. The Augustyn report was considered the better indicator of value and its value was used for negotiations.

RECOMMENDED:

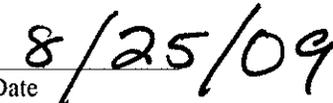
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Richard E. Steffes

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Date

  
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Bureau of Legal Services

  
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Date

  
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Laurie Osterndorf

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

RES:dv

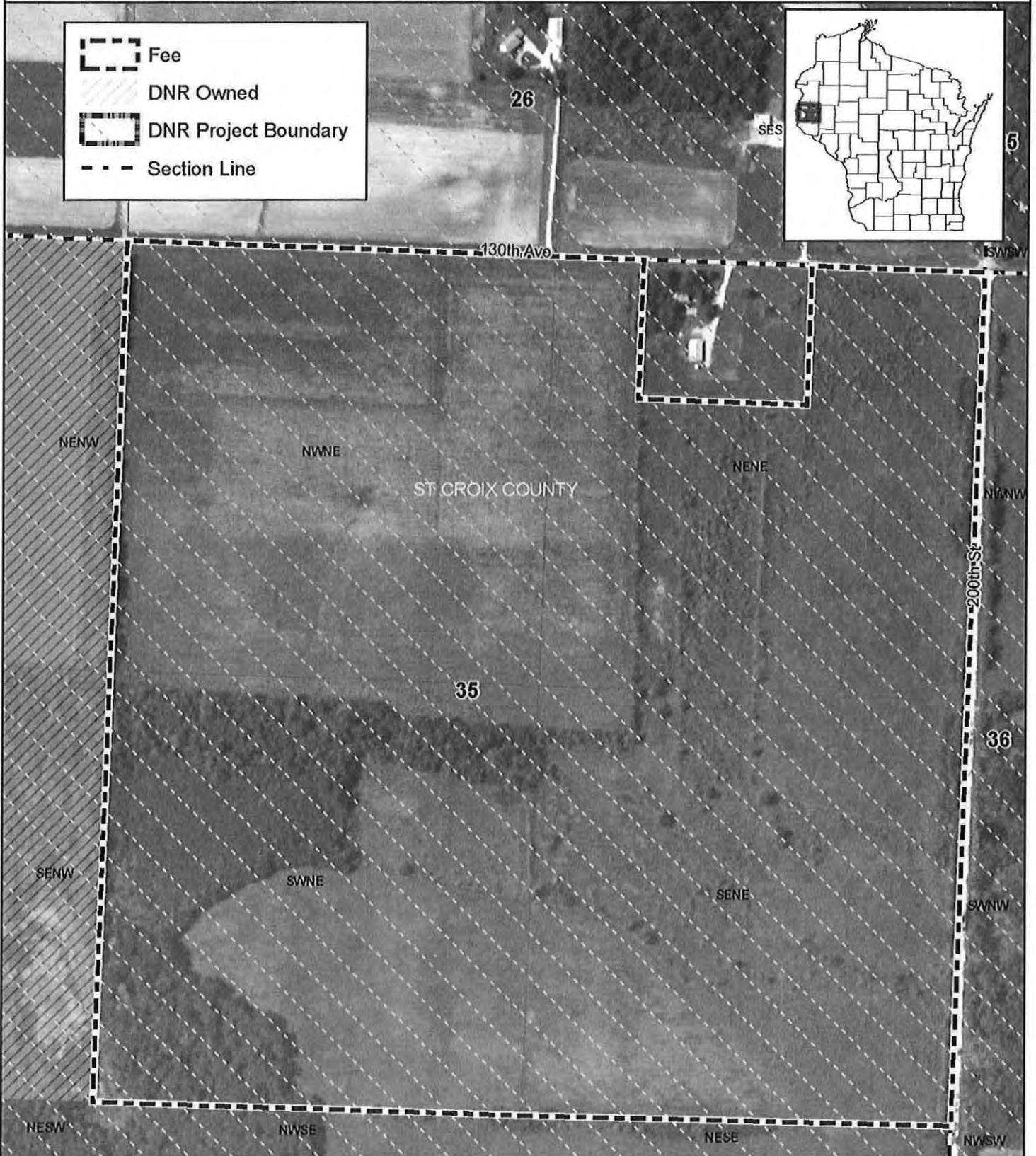


# Lowell Bliss Fee

T30N R17W Sec. 35, Town of Erin Prairie, St. Croix County, WI

Legend:

- Fee
- DNR Owned
- DNR Project Boundary
- Section Line



WM 60057

Orthophoto

Western Prairie  
Habitat Restoration



0

0.125

0.25 Miles

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



# Lowell Bliss Fee

T30N R17W Sec. 35  
 Town of Erin Prairie  
 St. Croix County, WI  
 WM 60057

Western Prairie  
 Habitat Restoration



	PLSS Section
	Fee
	Project Boundary
	WDNR Owned



The DNR Managed Lands represent the boundaries of lands managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Wisconsin DNR manages these lands through ownership, easement or lease rights. This data set is a spatial representation of the Oracle Land Records System maintained by the DNR, Bureau of Facilities and Lands (FL), 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 have specific limitations or restrictions on public use. This data set is not intended for use as a land management tool; it is 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:

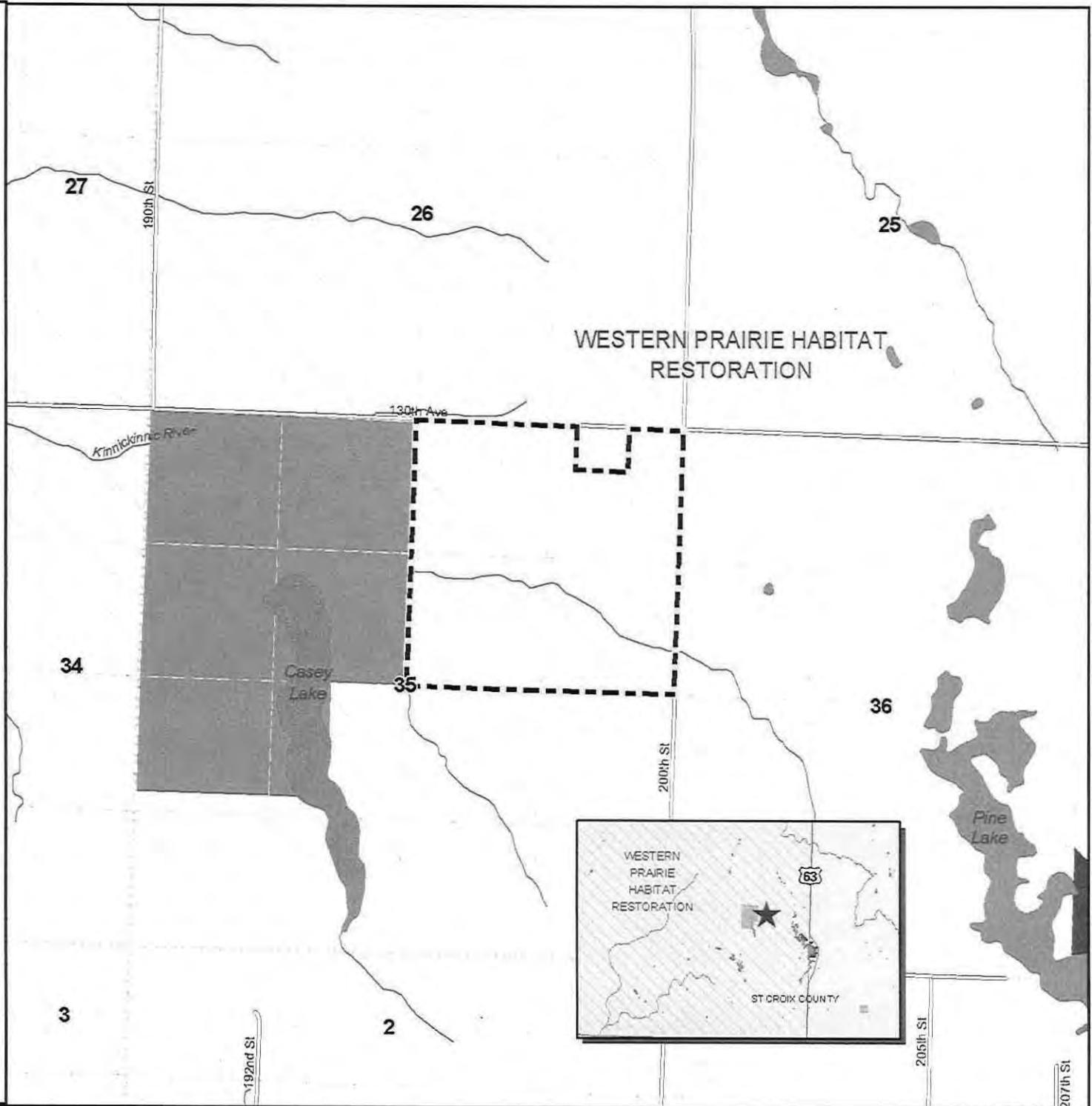
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/bif/oa/oa/servicecenter/locations.htm>

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  
 July 27, 2009



# WESTERN PRAIRIE HABITAT RESTOR

-  Owned Land
-  Project Boundary
-  Eased Land
-  SNA Project Boundary
-  Leased Land



00.39,7 Miles  
1:266,349



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BCF

