

SUBJECT: EASEMENT DONATION AND PROJECT BOUNDARY MODIFICATION – GRASSY LAKE WILDLIFE AREA– COLUMBIA COUNTY

FOR: SEPTEMBER 2011 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department proposes to accept an 83.5 acre conservation easement from Madison Audubon Society, Inc. for the Grassy Lake Wildlife Area in Columbia County. The item is being submitted because it is a gift and is partially outside the project boundary.

The Madison Audubon Society has offered to donate an 83.5 acre conservation easement on the Briggs property which is adjacent to Grassy Lake Wildlife Area to the west and east and also borders Grassy Lake State Natural Area to the south. Other than monitoring of the easement, this proposal will not involve any cost to the Department.

The parcel is composed of lowland woods, wetland, grasses and open water. It includes 1,000 feet of frontage on the north edge of Grassy Lake. The property is in the northern most part of the property boundary, and if the easement is acquired the parcel will provide good habitat for small furbearers, sandhill cranes, herons, waterfowl as well as upland birds such as wild turkeys.

The Grassy Lake Wildlife Area was established as a wildlife area in 1958 with a boundary encompassing the wetland basin known as Grassy Lake. The property was established to provide opportunities for public hunting, particularly waterfowl, and an area for wildlife production. Current public use of the property is highest for hunting of deer, waterfowl, and pheasant. Trapping for muskrats and other furbearing animals is significant. Historically, the primary management objective for Grassy Lake WLA was to provide hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities. As lands were acquired, marginal farm fields were converted to prairie to compliment the existing native prairie community and provide additional wildlife habitat and hunting opportunity. Current management objectives focus on protecting the Grassy Lake wetland basin and managing for pre-settlement vegetation types. This includes maintaining existing prairies and savannas and seeking opportunities to increase these cover types and monitoring for invasive species such as black locust and garlic mustard.

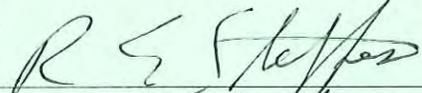
While this easement donation does not permit public use, it will preserve its undeveloped character as well as give the Department the first right of purchase on the property if offered for sale. Acceptance of the conservation easement donation from Madison Audubon Society, Inc. will provide opportunities for management of the area for wildlife and habitat and preservation of open space. No state Stewardship dollars were used by the land trust in acquiring the easement.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board accept the donation of the conservation easement from Madison Audubon Society, Inc. on 83.5 acres of land for the Grassy Lake Wildlife Area, that a certificate of appreciation be sent to the donors, that an expression of appreciation be made part of the official records of the Natural Resources Board and that the project boundary be expanded to include this parcel.

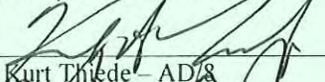
LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 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 |

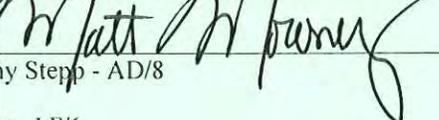
APPROVED:


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

8-16-11
Date


Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

8-18-11
Date


Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

9-9-11
Date

- cc: S. Miller - LF/6
R. Steffes - LF/6
L. Ross - AD/5
T. Hauge - WM/6
M Aquino - SCR/Fitchburg

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 16, 2011 FILE REF: WM 60143
TO: Natural Resources Board
FROM: Cathy Stepp
SUBJECT: Donation of Easement on the Madison Audubon Society, Inc. Tract, File # WM 60143

I. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

GRASSY LAKE WILDLIFE AREA
Columbia County

Grantor:
Madison Audubon Society, Inc.
c/o Marsha Cannon
222 S. Hamilton Street, Suite 1
Madison, WI 53703

Acres: 83.5
Price: N/A - Donation
Interest: Conservation Easement
Improvements: None

Location: The tract is located in Columbia County 1/2 mile west of Doylestown .
Land Description: The subject land is sloping to fairly level.

Covertypes Breakdown:

Table with 2 columns: Type, Acreage. Rows: Grass (14.0), Woodland (31.0), Water (15.0), Wetland (23.5)

Total: 83.5

Zoning: Agricultural
Present Use: Rural Residential / Outdoor Recreation
Proposed Use: Resource Protection
Tenure: Briggs: 39 years; MAS easement 1 month

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be not open to the public for all nature based outdoor recreational activities including hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross-country skiing. This proposal is for acceptance of an easement donation with a right of first refusal.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Madison Audubon Society has offered to donate a 83.5 acre conservation easement on the Briggs property which is partially within the project boundary of the Grassy Lake Wildlife Area. The property is adjacent to existing state-owned lands on the west and south side and is located in Columbia County near Doylestown and southeast of Rio. The property is adjacent to the 277 acre Grassy Lake State Natural Area, which is a part of the state wildlife area.



The Grassy Lake Wildlife Area was established as a wildlife area in 1958 with a boundary encompassing the wetland basin known as Grassy Lake. The property was established to provide opportunities for public hunting, particularly waterfowl, and an area for wildlife production. Current public use of the property is highest for hunting of deer, waterfowl, and pheasant. Trapping for muskrats and other furbearing animals is significant. Historically, the primary management objective for Grassy Lake WLA was to provide hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities. As lands were acquired, marginal farm fields were converted to prairie to compliment the existing native prairie community and provide additional wildlife habitat and hunting opportunity. Current management objectives focus on protecting the Grassy Lake wetland basin and managing for pre-settlement vegetation types. This includes maintaining existing prairies and savannas and seeking opportunities to increase these cover types and monitoring for invasive species such as black locust and garlic mustard.

Situated within rolling morainal topography, Grassy Lake is a shallow, hard-water seepage lake that supports dense stands of emergent aquatic vegetation throughout its basin. Soft-stem bulrush is the dominant species with wool-grass, common bur-reed, narrow-leaved bur-reed, water horsetail, and water dock. Submerged aquatics include coon's-tail, common waterweed, whorled water milfoil, white water crowfoot, common arrowhead, and northern bladderwort.

The Briggs property contains wetlands and is being restored to prairie, grassland, oak savanna, and oak woodland habitat to benefit associated wildlife. The property contains 1,000 feet of frontage on Grassy Lake. The property's wetland complex of 38 acres includes part of a shallow hard-water seepage lake (Grassy Lake), an un-named shallow seepage lake that includes open water, sedge meadow, and an ephemeral pond.

The property includes 31 acres of woods that are dominated by open grown white and black oaks and contains excellent oak regeneration. Also present is shagbark hickory and black cherry. Huckleberry is a common woodland shrub. The woodlands are being restored to oak savanna and oak woodland habitats by removal of invasive species and prescribed burning. A 1.5 acre prairie remnant contains big bluestem, bergamot, lupine, toadflax, and spiderwort. The 14-acre grassy field is dominated by cool season grasses and provides nesting habitat for waterfowl.

The property contains a wide diversity of wildlife. Species found year round include white-tail deer, river otter, beaver, wild turkey, barred and great-horned owls. Species found during the nesting season include wood duck, blue-winged teal (special concern), hooded merganser, red-necked grebe (endangered), American bittern (special concern), least bittern (special concern), great blue heron (special concern), great egret (endangered), northern harrier, Virginia rail, sora, sandhill crane, Wilson's snipe, black tern (special concern), marsh wren, eastern bluebird, and field sparrow (special concern). One of the largest nesting concentrations of black terns in southern Wisconsin is found at Grassy Lake.

While this easement donation does not permit public use of the land it will preserve its undeveloped character and will give the Department the first right of purchase of the property if offered for sale. The Department recommends acceptance of the conservation easement donation from Madison Audubon Society, Inc. to provide opportunities for management of the area for wildlife and habitat, protection from development and preservation of open space.

3. FINANCING:

No funding is required for this transaction.

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE GRASSY LAKE WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1958

Acres Purchased to Date: 695.00

Acquisition Goal: 729.0 acres

Percent Complete: 95.34 %

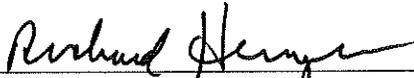
Cost to Date: \$80,950.00

RECOMMENDED:



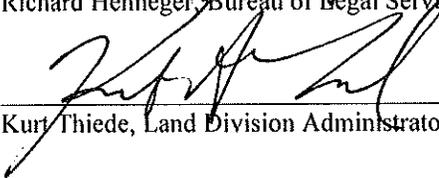
Richard E. Steffes, Real Estate Director

8-16-11
Date



Richard Henneger, Bureau of Legal Services

8/12/11
Date



Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

8/18/11
Date

Acknowledgment Of Gift

This is to certify that at its September 2011, the Natural Resources Board gratefully accepted a gift of a 83.5 acre easement from the

Madison Audubon Society, Inc.

The easement will be used for the Grassy Lake Wildlife Area - Columbia County. 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

David Clausen, CHAIR

**Madison Audubon Society, Inc.
Easement Gift**

Grassy Lake Wildlife Area

WM 60143

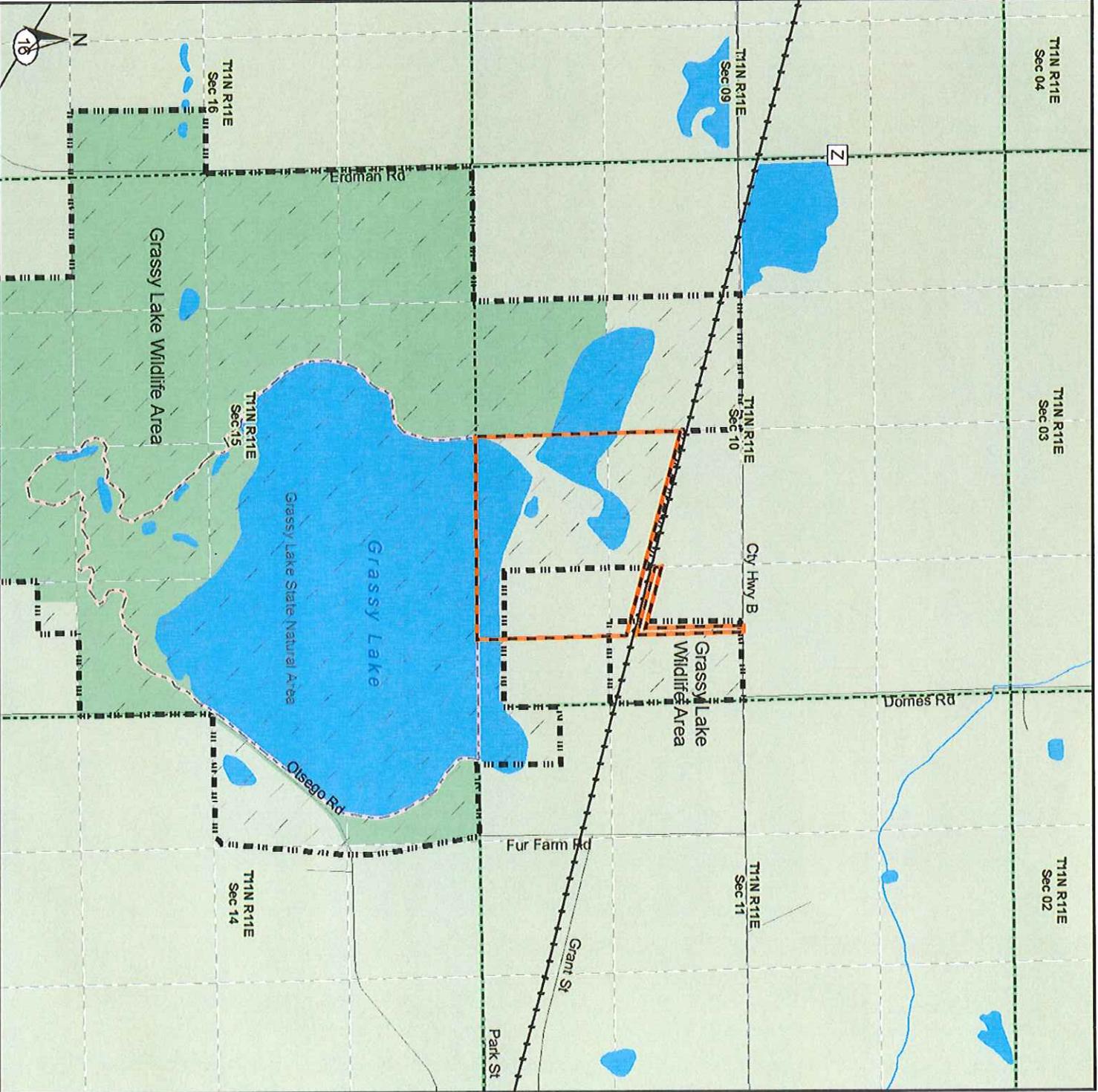
T11N R11E Section 10
Town of Ostego
Columbia County
(83.50 acres—easement)

 Subject Parcel

-  Project Boundary
-  WDRN Owned
-  State Natural Area
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary
-  Railroad

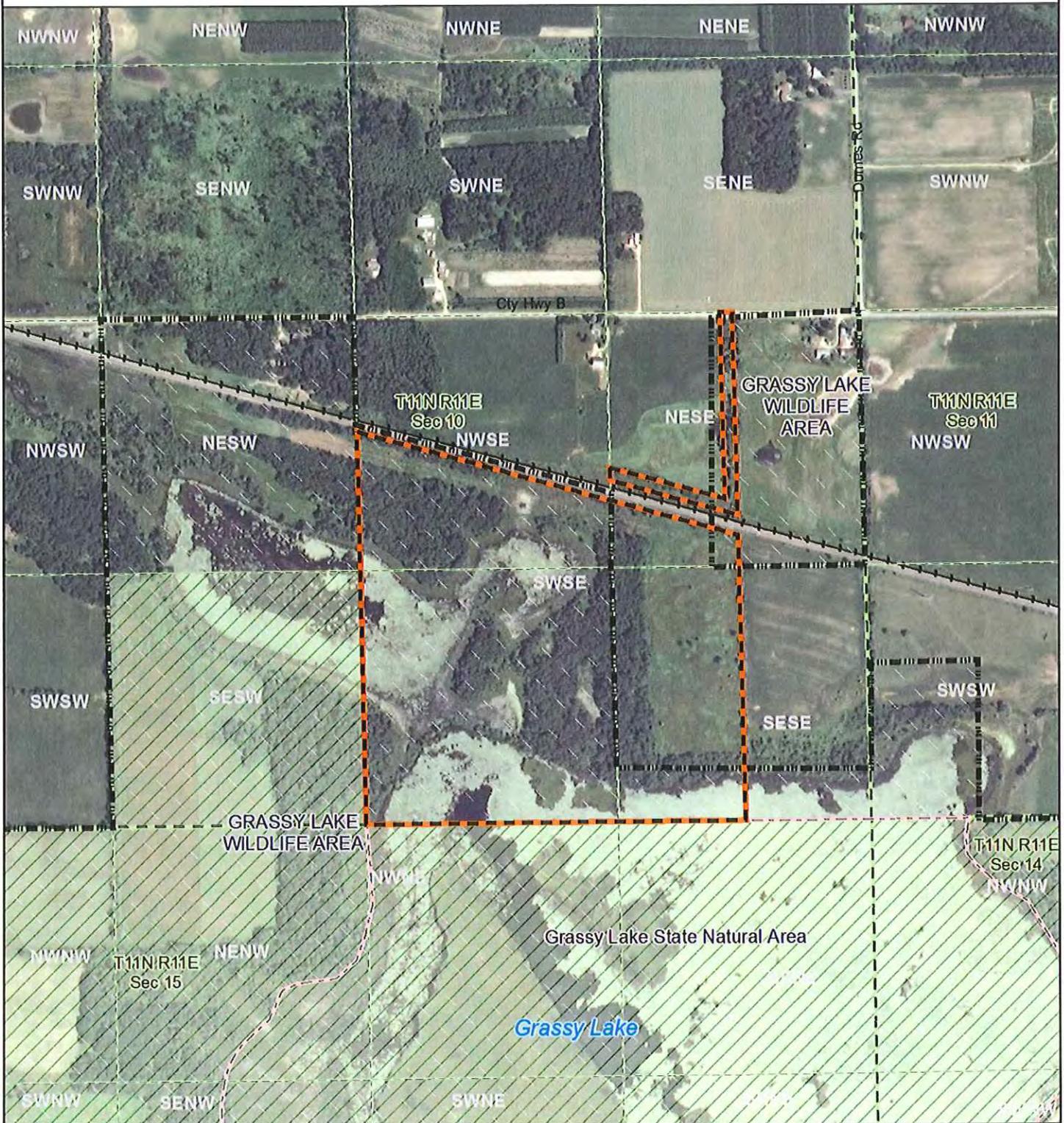


WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Map Created July 12, 2011 smm



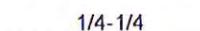
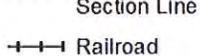
Madison Audubon Society, Inc. Easement Gift

T11N R11E Section 10, Town of Ostego, Columbia County



Grassy Lake Wildlife Area WM 60143

 Subject Parcel

-  Project Boundary
-  DNR Owned
-  State Natural Area
-  Section Line
-  1/4-1/4 Section Line
-  Railroad



N




July 12, 2011
 Real Estate Section
 Bureau of Facilities and Lands