

SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – LOWER CHIPPEWA RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA – EAU CLAIRE COUNTY
FOR: FEBRUARY 2012 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 153.8 acres of land from Huntsinger Farms, Inc. for \$319,000. for the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area in Eau Claire County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000.

The Huntsinger Farms parcel is located in the Town of Brunswick, approximately 7 miles west of the City of Eau Claire. It is irregular in shape and meanders around part of Lake Powell. It lies within the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area boundary. The Chippewa River flows along the northeast corner of the property and state land abuts its west side.

The Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area features the largest concentration of remaining prairies and savannas in the state. This extensive project contains over 2,000 acres of prairie, which equals 25% of all known remaining prairie in the entire state. Lying along and interspersed within the river channels are islands of floodplain savanna and forest while the surrounding hillsides contain prairie and savanna. A large diversity of bird species thrive in these extensive forests. Additionally, seventy percent of all the fish species in the state find suitable habitat in the Chippewa and Red Cedar Rivers including the rare paddlefish, blue sucker, crystal darter, and goldeye. The Chippewa River is one of three places in the world that is home to the state endangered Pecatonica River mayfly.

Powell Lake was an approximately 100 acre meandered lake in western Eau Claire County. Sometime in the 1940's or 50's, West Creek, one of the water sources for Powell Lake, was realigned to facilitate the drainage for agriculture. Since then, the Lake only fills temporarily when the Chippewa River reaches flood stage and drains out through a channel on the southwest end of the lakebed. The lakebed is still owned by the State of Wisconsin. Last fall and this spring the lake bed was dry due to lack of runoff and the existing drainage patterns.

This acquisition will give the Department the unique opportunity to restore Powell Lake back to near historic condition. This will also provide nesting cover and a significant property for public outdoor recreation.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 153.8 acres of land for the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area.

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 |

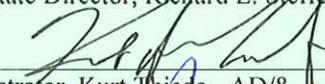
APPROVED:



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

1-6-12

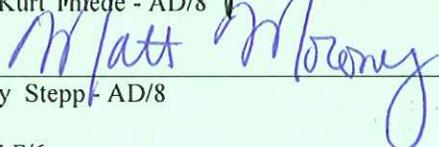
Date



Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

1-11-12

Date



Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

1-11-12

Date

- cc: S. Miller – LF/6
 R. Steffes – LF/6
 L. Ross – AD/8
 L. Ostendorf - ER/6
 S. Humrickhouse– WCR

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 5, 2012
 TO: Scott Walker
 FROM: Cathy Stepp
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Huntsinger Farms, Inc. Tract, File # NA 20076,
 Option Expires March 31, 2012

FILE REF: NA 20076

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area
 Eau Claire County

Grantor:

Huntsinger Farms, Inc.
 c/o Ken Traaseth
 2424 Alpine Road
 Eau Claire, WI 54703

Acres: 153.8Price: \$319,000Appraised Value: \$319,000Interest: Fee Title PurchaseImprovements: Small wood frame shedLocation: The property is located in Eau Claire County approximately 7 miles west of the City of Eau Claire.Land Description: The subject land is uneven terrain containing a ravine in the northwest portion and rolling upland in the center of the parcel.Covertypes Breakdown:

	Type	Acreage
Cropland		50.0
Lowland Woodland		99.0
Brush		4.8

Total: 153.8

Zoning: AgriculturePresent Use: Recreation and CroplandProposed Use: Resource Restoration, and Public Outdoor RecreationTenure: Combination of 1977, 2007 and 2009 purchasesProperty Taxes: \$1,465.53Option Date: December 2, 2011Stewardship 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 153.8 acres of land from Huntsinger Farms, Inc. for \$319,000 for the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area in Eau Claire County. The parcel is located in the Town of Brunswick, approximately 7 miles west of the City of Eau Claire. It is an irregular shaped parcel that meanders around part of Lake Powell and lies within the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area boundary.



The Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area features the largest concentration of remaining prairies and savannas in the state. At the time of European settlement Wisconsin had over 7.7 million acres of native prairie but today only about 8,000 acres remain. This extensive project contains over 2,000 acres of prairie, which equals 25% of all known remaining prairie in the entire state. Lying along and interspersed within the river channels are islands of floodplain savanna and forest while the surrounding hillsides contain prairie and savanna. The largest contiguous floodplain forest in the Midwest is located just south of Durand within this natural area. A large diversity of bird species thrive in these extensive forests including six state-threatened species - red-shouldered hawk, Acadian flycatcher, cerulean warbler, hooded warbler, Kentucky warbler, and yellow-crowned night heron. Additionally, seventy percent of all the fish species in the state find suitable habitat in the Chippewa and Red Cedar Rivers including the rare paddlefish, blue sucker, crystal darter, and goldeye. The Chippewa River is one of three places in the world home to the state endangered Pecatonica River mayfly.

The Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area is within Bird Conservation Region 23, Prairie Hardwood Transition. Seventy five percent of the breeding birds documented in Wisconsin use the Lower Chippewa River corridor for nesting. It is estimated that the number of migratory songbirds reach 100,000 during peak migration days in the spring along the Lower Chippewa River. In recognition of the landscape's importance to birds, the area has been designated a State Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy. In addition, the adjoining Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was been recognized as a Global Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy.

Powell Lake was an approximately 100 acre meandered lake in western Eau Claire County. Sometime in the 1940's or 1950's, West Creek, one of the water sources for Powell Lake, was realigned to facilitate the drainage for agriculture. Since then, the Lake only fills temporarily when the Chippewa River reaches flood stage and drains out through a channel on the southwest end of the lakebed. The lakebed is still owned by the State of Wisconsin. Last fall and this spring the lake bed was dry due to lack of runoff and the existing drainage patterns. Purchase of the land around the lakebed would give the Department the unique opportunity to restore an historic lake near to its original condition. The Chippewa River adjoins the northeast corner of the property and state land abuts its west side

This acquisition will provide opportunities for outdoor public recreation and give the Department the opportunity to restore Powell Lake back to near historic condition. It will also provide critical habitat for high priority species associated with grasslands including Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, and Henslow's Sparrow and will positively impact species associated with shallow marshes, sedge meadows, oxbow lakes, and sloughs including American Bittern, Northern Harrier, Greater Yellowlegs, King Rail, Common Moorhen, American Woodcock, Wilson's Phalarope, Black Tern, Willow Flycatcher, Sedge Wren and Marsh Wren. This parcel would provide a significant area for public outdoor recreation.

Partial funding is being provided from a Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant. This parcel is also being used as match for the grant that allowed the Department to acquire another wetland parcel on the Lower Chippewa River.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds (\$288,000) and federal NAWCA funds (\$31,000) are anticipated.

State Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$1,260,000	\$304,940

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE LOWER CHIPPEWA RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA:

Established: 2000
Acres Purchased to Date: 1,908.29
Acquisition Goal: 15,470.00
Percent Complete: 12.34 %
Cost to Date: \$3,268,116.20

5. APPRAISAL:

Appraiser: Tom Olson

Valuation Date: October 4, 2011

Appraised Value: \$319,000

Highest and Best Use: Recreation/Agriculture

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 153.8 acres @ \$2,074.12 per acre: \$319,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1,971 - \$2,118 per acre

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter, October 13, 2011

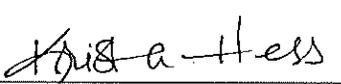
RECOMMENDED:



 Richard E. Steffes, Real Estate Director

1-5-12

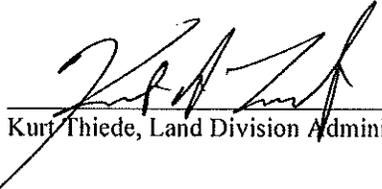
 Date



 Kristin A. Hess, Bureau of Legal Services

1/9/12

 Date



 Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

1/11/12

 Date

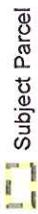
RES:sjs

Huntsinger Farms Inc. - Fee

Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area

NA - 20076

T26N R10W Sec 6
Town of Brunswick
Eau Claire County
153.80 acres



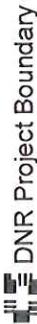
Subject Parcel



WDNR Easement



WDNR Owned



DNR Project Boundary

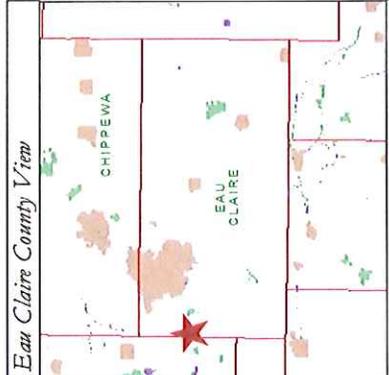


PLSS Section Line



QQ Section Boundary

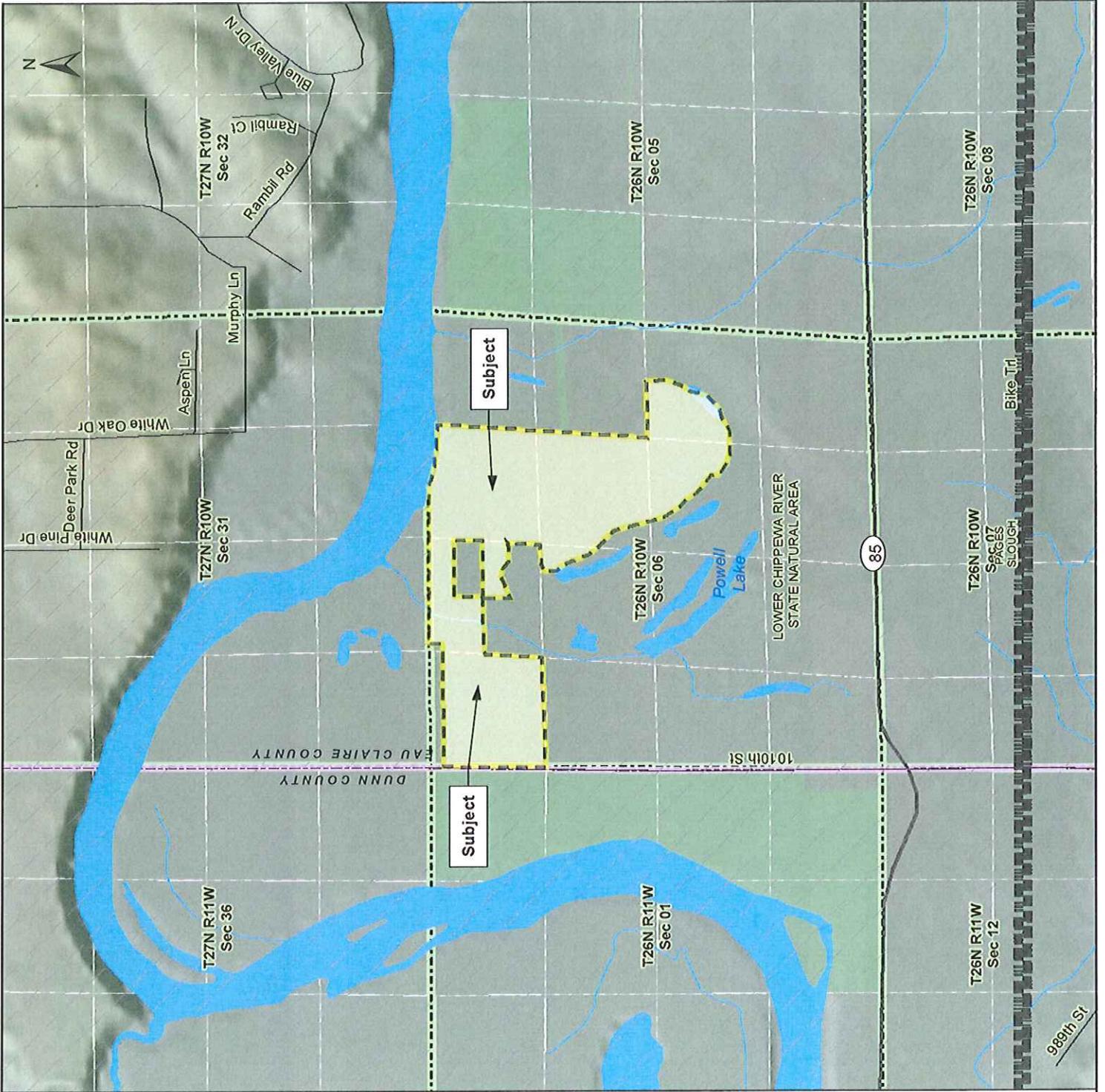
000 Feet



★ Location of Property

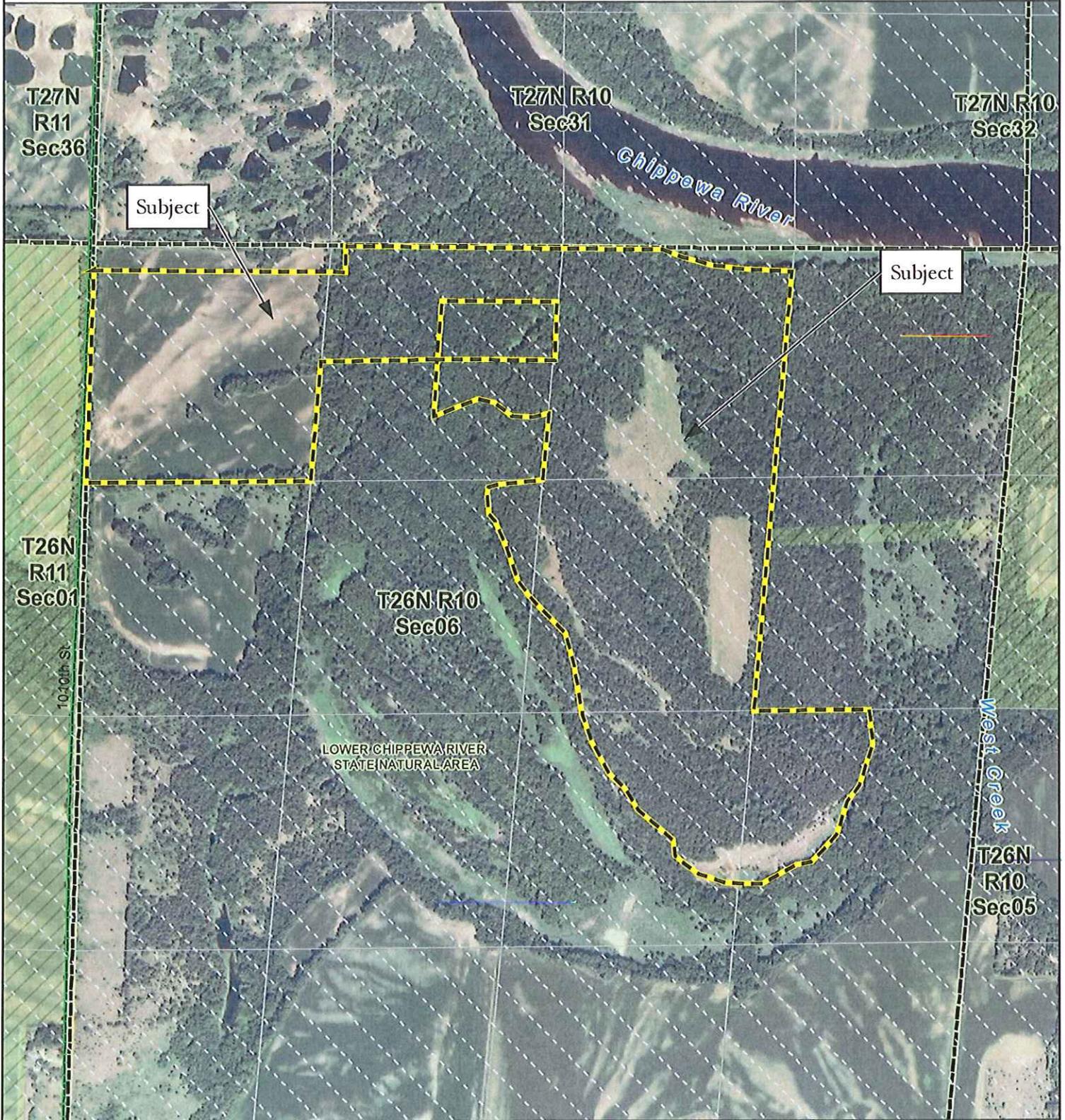


WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Nov. 08, 2011 kmh



Huntsinger Farms Inc. - Fee

T26N R10W Sec 6, Town of Brunswick, Eau Claire County



Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area

 Subject Parcel

 DNR Owned

 DNR Project Boundary

 Section Line

 QQ Section Lines



Nov 08, 2011 kmh
 Real Estate Section
 Bureau of Facilities and Lands