

**SUBJECT:** Land Acquisition – Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area – Iowa County

**FOR:** MAY 2013 BOARD MEETING

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Douglas J Haag and Eric Lobner

**SUMMARY:** The Department has obtained an option to purchase 360 acres of land from James Davis for \$1,150,000 for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area in Iowa County. The item is being submitted because purchase price is more than \$150,000.

The Davis parcel is located completely within the project boundary of the SWGSCA and will be the first acquisition within the Barreldown Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) project was established in 2009 and encompasses 473,900 acres within 19 townships in Dane, Iowa, Green and Lafayette Counties. The acreage goal for the project is 12,000 acres. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) joined with a diverse and dedicated group of conservation partners, local governments, and landowners in Southwestern Wisconsin to establish the SWGSCA project.

Southwestern Wisconsin has been recognized for many years as one of the best grassland conservation opportunities in the Upper Midwest. The area stands out for its distinct combination of resources: exceptional populations of grassland birds; a high number of prairie remnants, concentrations of rare plants and animals, and spring-fed streams, all set within this expansive rural farming region of open fields, croplands, oak groves and pastures. In addition, the numerous prairie remnants in southwest Wisconsin are the remains of the original tall-grass prairie and oak savanna that once covered this region and harbored abundant populations of grassland animals including Greater Prairie chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse. These prairie remnants are still surrounded by a rural, relatively treeless landscape supporting unique plant and animal species that are adapted to an open landscape.

Likewise, the rivers and streams that drain the southwestern Wisconsin's ridge tops vary in quality and condition. Increased grassland cover, improved agricultural practices and stream bank management have demonstrably improved water quality in many area streams. Others still suffer from poor water quality and sedimentation. SWGSCA priorities include such "impaired" streams, as well as the area's "Outstanding/Exceptional Resource Waters."

The 360-acre Davis property is primarily open grassland with very few trees. If acquired, the property would require very little management to improve grassland bird habitat. The Mineral Point Branch of the Pecatonica River flows north to south through portions of the eastern portion of the property. The topography of the western portion of the property is generally rolling to hilly, and slopes down to the stream corridor to the east. The property has scenic outlooks from several of its higher locations, and gives one the feeling of what Wisconsin must have looked like in the 1800's. The property is dominated by wide open expanses of grassland, primarily non-native cool season grasses. A few large, open grown oaks are found growing along ridges and slopes. Access to the parcel is from the south off Bennett Rd.

The subject property lies within the Barreldown BCA Core of the SWGSCA between the cities of Mineral Point and Dodgeville. The "Cores" of the BCA's have been determined to be of high value to grassland bird conservation, and the Barreldown BCA is no exception. This BCA Core consists of over 1,000 acres of grass pasture land, including the 360 acre Davis property. Grassland bird species such as bobolink, eastern meadowlark, savanna sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, northern harrier, and upland sandpiper (proposed to be listed as state threatened) all occur in good numbers in this core. In addition, the state endangered loggerhead shrike was sighted on the Davis property during a 2012 summer bird survey. The small woodlots and open grown oaks provide habitat for the declining red-headed woodpecker. The Davis property also provides excellent habitat for other wildlife species such as red fox, badger, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and ring-necked pheasant.

The Department recommends acquisition of the 360-acre parcel to manage wildlife, restore habitat, and provide recreational opportunities in conjunction with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area.

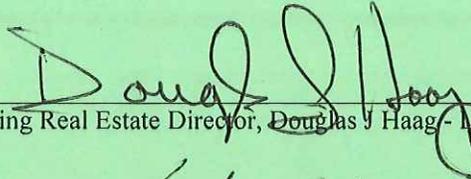
**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board approve the purchase of James Davis 360 acres of land for \$1,150,000 for Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area the in Iowa County.

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

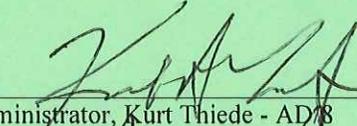
No  Fiscal Estimate Required  
No  Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required  
No  Background Memo

Yes  Attached  
Yes  Attached  
Yes  Attached

**APPROVED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting Real Estate Director, Douglas Haag - LF/6

4-22-13  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

4/24/13  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

4/25/13  
Date

cc: S. Miller - LF/6  
D. Haag - LF/6  
L. Ross - AD/8  
T. Hauge - WM/6  
L. Osterndorf - SCR - MADISON

## CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 16, 2013  
 TO: Scott Walker  
 FROM: Cathy Stepp  
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, James Davis Tract, File # WM 60218,  
 Option Expires August 06, 2013

FILE REF: WM 60218

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area  
 Iowa County

Grantor:

James Davis  
 750 Permisson Drive  
 St. Charles, IL 60174

Acres: 360Price: \$1,150,000Appraised Value: \$1,300,000 and \$1,098,000Interest: Fee Title PurchaseImprovements: NoneLocation: The property is located in Iowa County 1.5 miles North of Mineral PointLand Description: The subject land is level, with steep ridgesCovertypes Breakdown:

| Type            | Acreage |
|-----------------|---------|
| Upland Woodland | 10      |
| Wetland         | 40      |
| Grass / Pasture | 310     |
| Total:          | 360     |

Zoning: A1 AgriculturalPresent Use: Recreational and AgriculturalProposed Use: Conservation and public recreation as part of the Southwestern Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area ProjectTenure: 24 YearsProperty Taxes: \$833Option Date: April 08, 2013Stewardship 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:

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### 3. LAND MANAGEMENT:

Wildlife Management staff from the Fitchburg and Dodgeville offices will be responsible for the maintenance of the property. The property will be managed in accordance with the goals for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area, and that is to protect and enhance the grassland habitat for grassland birds. Various management tools may be used to reach these goals, such as mowing of brush/woody vegetation, herbicide use, prescribed burning, and grazing. Historical and current grazing practices have helped to keep intruding brush at bay, and to keep the property in its current open, grassy state. The DNR will utilize a rotational grazing plan for the Davis property. Grazing pressure will be reduced during the late spring/early summer period to help grassland birds during their nesting season. Some areas of the property will be designated as "set aside" areas, where no grazing will occur in some years, but may be grazed in other years. Also, this site could be a good candidate for "patch burn grazing", a grazing management technique more common in the south-central states (Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma). This technique utilizes prescribed burning on smaller "blocks" of pasture, which promotes the growth of lush vegetation. Cattle are then attracted to these areas, and focus less on unburned areas of pasture, which also results in

the grazing rotation. In grazing agreements on other DNR lands, it is typical that the farmer is responsible for fencing and watering of their livestock, and for movement of animals.

Hunting and trapping will be allowed on this property, so all livestock will be removed by mid-October. To avoid conflicts with spring turkey hunters, livestock will be permitted on the property after the turkey hunting season in late May.

4. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

| Funds allotted to program: | Balance after proposed transaction: |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| \$6,311,450                | \$1,127,036                         |

5. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN GRASSLAND & STREAM CONSERVATION AREA:

Established: 2009

Acres Purchased to Date: 134.30

Acquisition Goal: 12,000

Percent Complete: 1.12 %

Cost to Date: \$588,000

6. APPRAISAL #1:

Appraiser: Julie Hanks

Valuation Date: March 15, 2013

Appraised Value: \$1,300,000

Highest and Best Use: Agricultural and recreational with potential for future rural residential lots.

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 360 acres @ \$3,600 per acre: \$1,300,000 rounded
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$3,025 - \$3,850

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus - 4/1/2013

APPRAISAL #2:

Appraiser: Lee Steigerwaldt

Valuation Date: March 08, 2013

Appraised Value: \$1,098,000

Highest and Best Use: Agricultural with secondary benefits derived from recreational.

Allocation of Values:

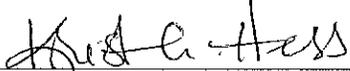
- a. land: 360 acres @ \$3,050 per acre: \$1,098,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$2,712-\$3,227

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus - 4/1/2013

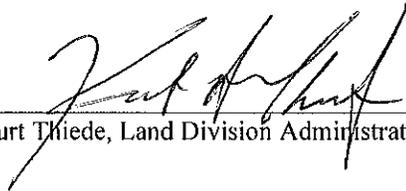
RECOMMENDED:

  
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Douglas J Haag, Acting Real Estate Director

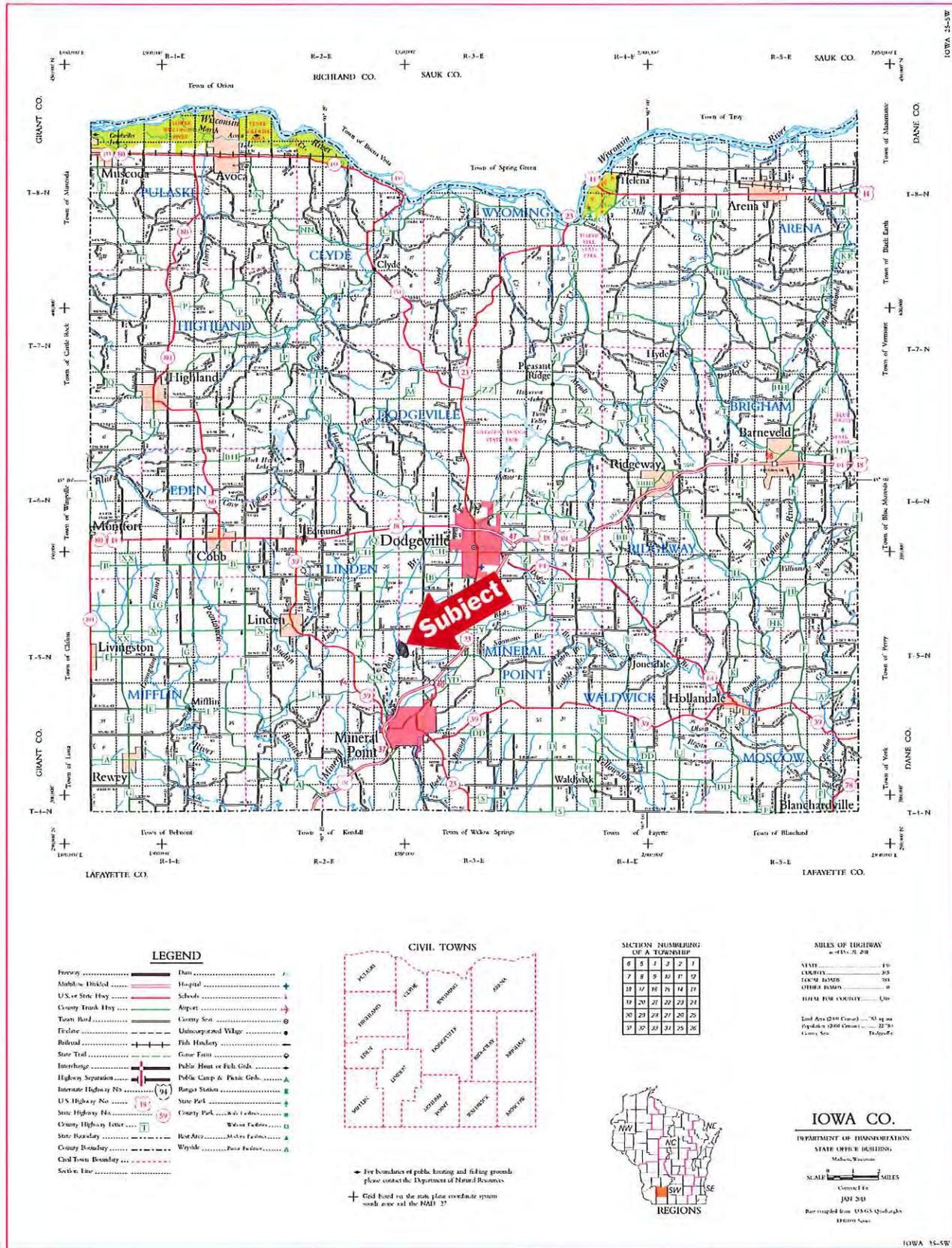
4-22-13  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kristin A. Hess, Bureau of Legal Services

4/23/13  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

4/24/13  
Date

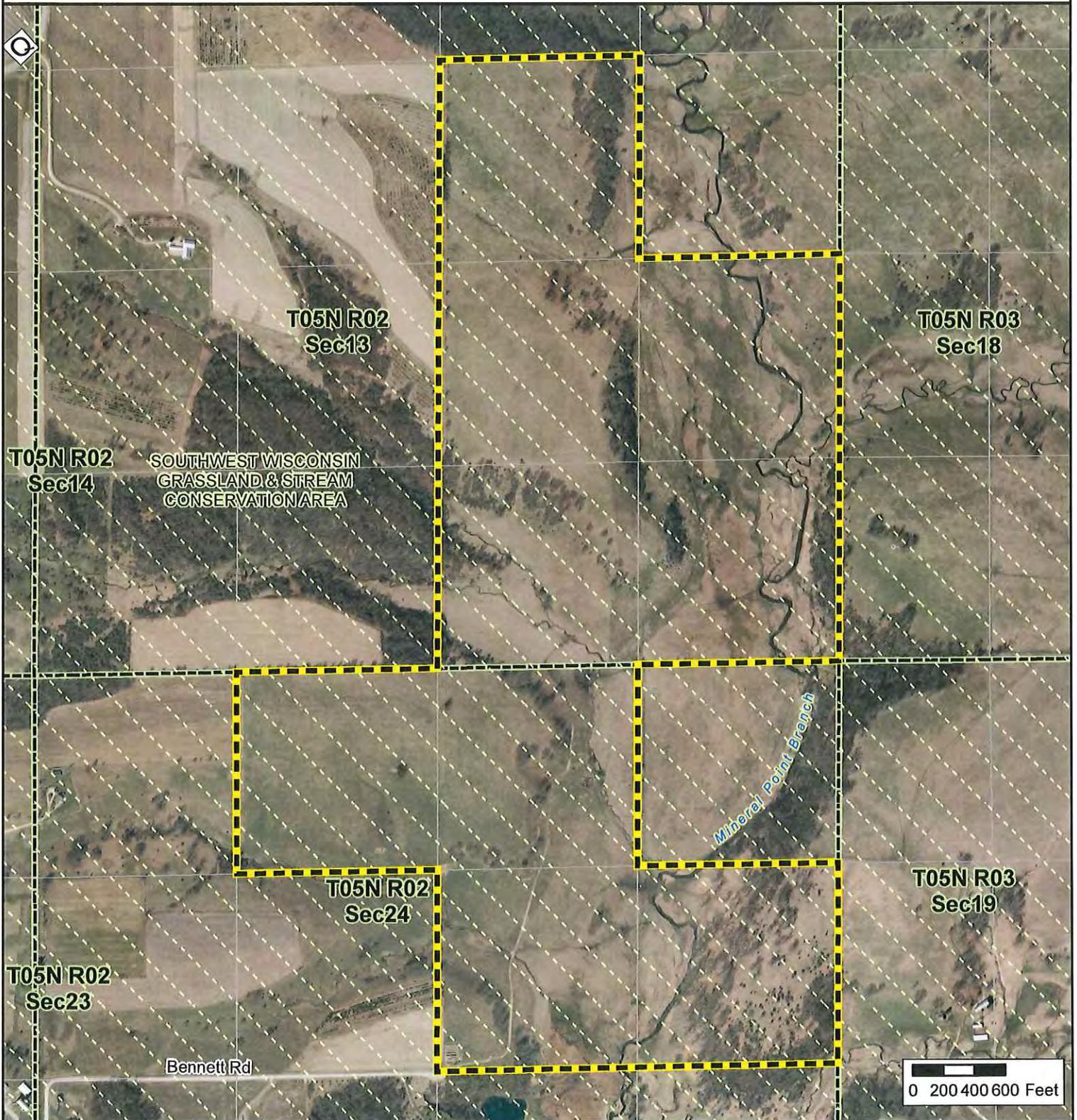


AS-1 VALD



# James Davis - Fee

T5N R2E Sec 13 & 24, Town of Linden & Mineral Point, Iowa County



## Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area



Subject

 DNR Fee Title

 DNR Eased

 WDNR Easement  
(Closed to Public Access)

 DNR Project Boundary

 Section Line

 QQ Section Lines



Apr 10, 2013 kmh  
Real Estate Section  
Bureau of Facilities and Lands



0 200 400 600 Feet

