Form 1100-1
Rev. 5-91

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 3.B.9

SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – DEVIL'S LAKE STATE PARK – SAUK COUNTY

FOR: JUNE 2008 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an option to purchase 19.84 acres of land from the Estate of Virginia H. Semsar for $600,000 for Devil's Lake State Park in Sauk County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds $150,000.

The parcel is located in eastern Sauk County in the Town of Baraboo about 40 miles northwest of Madison and about five miles south of Baraboo. Department ownership will provide opportunities for public recreation, will consolidate department ownership, and prevent incompatible development in the area. This state park has about 1,400,000 visitors per year and is one of the premier natural resource areas in the Midwest.

The Semsar property is highly desirable as it is immediately adjacent to Devil's Lake Ice Age Campground. Its campsites are within 100 to 125 feet of Semsar's boundary. The park's Master Plan calls for 50 additional campsites for the Ice Age Campground. Those sites would probably be placed to the east of the existing sites, but acquiring this tract provides another option for that expansion. If not acquired by the Department for Devil's Lake State Park, the property will likely be converted to some other use, perhaps a use very incompatible with the campground. An incompatible use would not only impact the adjacent campsites, but the entire Ice Age Campground and the campgrounds south of CTH "DL." Intensive development is currently occurring just north of the park between Devil's Lake and the City of Baraboo.

The Semsar family has owned and operated a seasonal resort, "Devil's Lake Resort," for 50 years. The resort includes 15 cottages, a play area and office. The cabins were built in 1930 and have been added on to over the years, some more than once. The parcel also includes a house and a barn, which was converted to a commercial photography studio. Pending an evaluation of the condition of the cabins and house, the benefits and cost, some of these buildings may be used for seasonal housing for summer employees of the park. Buildings that can not be used will be sold for salvage or razed. The barn will probably be kept for storage for the short term, but may be sold for salvage or razed.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the acquisition of 19.84 acres of land for $600,000 for Devil's Lake State Park.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No ☒	Fiscal Estimate Required	Yes ☐ Attached
No ☒	Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required	Yes ☐ Attached
No ☐	Background Memo	Yes ☒ Attached

APPROVED:

Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF/6 — Date 5-21-08

Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD/8 — Date 5/27/08

Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8 — Date 6/9/08

cc: S. Miller – LF/6
R. Steffes – LF/6
L. Ross – AD/8
L. Eagan – SCR/Fitchburg

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: May 21, 2008

FILE REF: P-1918

TO: Governor Doyle

FROM: Matthew J. Frank

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, File # P-1918
Option expires July 10, 2008

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Devil's Lake State Park
Sauk County

Grantor:

Estate of Virginia H. Semsar
c/o Forrest D. Hartmann
P.O. Box 443
Baraboo, WI 53913

Acres: 19.84
Price: $600,000*
Appraised Values: $560,000 and $714,000

*Comment: Negotiated value that falls between the two appraisals

Improvements: There is an old seasonal resort that include house, barn, resort with 21 building, 15 cottages, office and outbuildings
Interest: Fee title
Location: Located in eastern Sauk County in the Town of Baraboo about 40 miles northwest of Madison and about five miles south of Baraboo.
Land Description: The parcel is rolling with a ravine drainage area separating the northern portion from the southern portion of the site.

Covertype Breakdown:

Type	Acreage
Upland Woodland	11.27
Building Site	6.00
Brush	2.57
TOTAL:	19.84

Zoning: Agriculture
Present Use: Residence and Seasonal Resort
Proposed Use: Resource Protection and Recreation
Tenure: 51 years
Option Date: December 3, 2007

Stewardship Land Access: Nature-based outdoor recreational uses will be permitted except for hunting and trapping due to park regulations.

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2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department recommends the acquisition a 19.84-acre wooded parcel from the Estate of Virginia Semsar for the Devil's Lake State Park project boundary. The parcel is located in eastern Sauk County in the Town of Baraboo about 40 miles northwest of Madison and about five miles south of Baraboo. Department ownership will provide opportunities for public recreation, will consolidate department ownership, and prevent incompatible development in the area.

Devil's Lake State Park is located in south-central Wisconsin, about three miles south of Baraboo and forty miles north of Madison. The project was established in 1911 as one of Wisconsin's original state parks. Since that time, it has become the most heavily used park in the state with more than 1,400,000 visitors each year. Located in the eastern part of the Baraboo Hills, which forms the largest block of continuous forest canopy in southern Wisconsin, on Baraboo quartzite, the park contains highly significant geological and natural history value. It is part of the nine-unit National Ice Age Scientific Reserve. Devil's Lake is managed to protect the scenic, geologic, and natural values of the Devil's Lake area and for a variety of recreational, educational, and scientific purposes. The property is used for picnicking, swimming, rock climbing, hiking, nature and geological study, natural history and geologic research, fishing, hunting, camping, educational meetings, cross-country skiing, and other outdoor recreational activities.

Devil's Lake State Park is located in the Baraboo Range, which has been designated a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service. Covering more than 50,000 acres, the range contains the largest block of non-fragmented deciduous forest remaining in the upper Midwest. The differences in elevation, exposure and soils within the range create an astounding variety of ecological habitats. At least 28 different natural communities have been identified within the range. These communities harbor 23 species that are federal or state-listed as threatened or endangered species. About half of the more than 2,200 species of vascular plants found in Wisconsin exist within the range. The range is also extremely important habitat for the preservation of Neotropical migratory birds. Many of these birds are dependent on the continued existence of large tracts of deciduous forest for suitable nesting habitat. Preservation of the forest of the Baraboo Range is critical to the future health of these bird species.

The Semsar property is highly desirable as it is immediately adjacent to Devil's Lake Ice Age Campground, its campsites are within 100-125 feet of Semsar's boundary. The park's Master Plan calls for 50 additional campsites for the Ice Age Campground. Those sites would probably be placed to the east of the existing sites, but acquiring this tract provides another option for that expansion. If not acquired by the Department for Devil's Lake State Park, the property will likely be converted to some other use, perhaps a use very incompatible with the campground. An incompatible use would not only impact the adjacent campsites, but the entire Ice Age Campground and the campgrounds south of CTH "DL." Intensive development is currently occurring just north of the park between Devil's Lake and the City of Baraboo. Zoning is General Agricultural, which would allow uses like condominium development, or perhaps restaurant or bar. Most of property is also within the sanitary sewer district allowing intensive development. The Department has acquired a number of small older resorts within the park boundary in the past because of fear of conversion of the sites to incompatible use.

The Semsar family has owned and operated a seasonal resort, "Devil's Lake Resort," for 50 years. The resort includes 15 cottages, a play area and office. The cabins were built in 1930 and have been added on to over the years, some more than once. The parcel also includes a house and a barn, which was converted to a commercial photography studio. Pending an evaluation of the condition of the cabins and house and the benefits and cost, some of these buildings may be used for seasonal housing for summer employees of the park. Buildings that can not be used will be sold for salvage or razed. The barn will probably be kept for storage for the short term, but may be sold for salvage or razed.

Purchase of this 19.84-acre property is recommended to prevent development within park boundaries that is incompatible with the goals of the project and to protect the scenic resources within Devil's Lake State Park.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
$2,500,000	$1,900,000

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF DEVIL'S LAKE STATE PARK:

Established: 1911
Acres Purchased to Date: 9,179.86
Acquisition Goal: 11,050.00 Acres
Percent Complete: 83.1%
Cost to Date: $6,173,337

5. APPRAISALS:

5a. Appraiser: Scott Appraisal Company (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: December 12, 2006
Appraised Value: $560,000
Highest and Best Use: Improved with most of the value in the land.

Allocation of Values:
a. land: 18.5 acres @ $30,000 per acre: $560,000 (Rounded)
b. market data approach used, four comparable sales cited
c. adjusted value range: $12,973 to $122,403 per acre

Appraisal Review: Ron Olson – March 12, 2007

5b. Appraiser: Julie Hankes (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: December 29, 2006
Appraised Value: $714,000
Highest and Best Use: Residential development land that would require the buildings are removed.

Allocation of Values:
a. land: 19.84 acres @ $36,000 per acre: $714,000
b. market data approach used, three comparable sales cited
c. adjusted value range: $25,087 to $40,146 per acre

Appraisal Review: Ron Olson – March 12, 2007

Comments: The final negotiated price falls between the two appraisal values. Acreage differences are not considered significant. Scott allocated $85,000 for the buildings. Hankes allocated zero for buildings as she felt they would be removed for development of more modern structures by future owners.

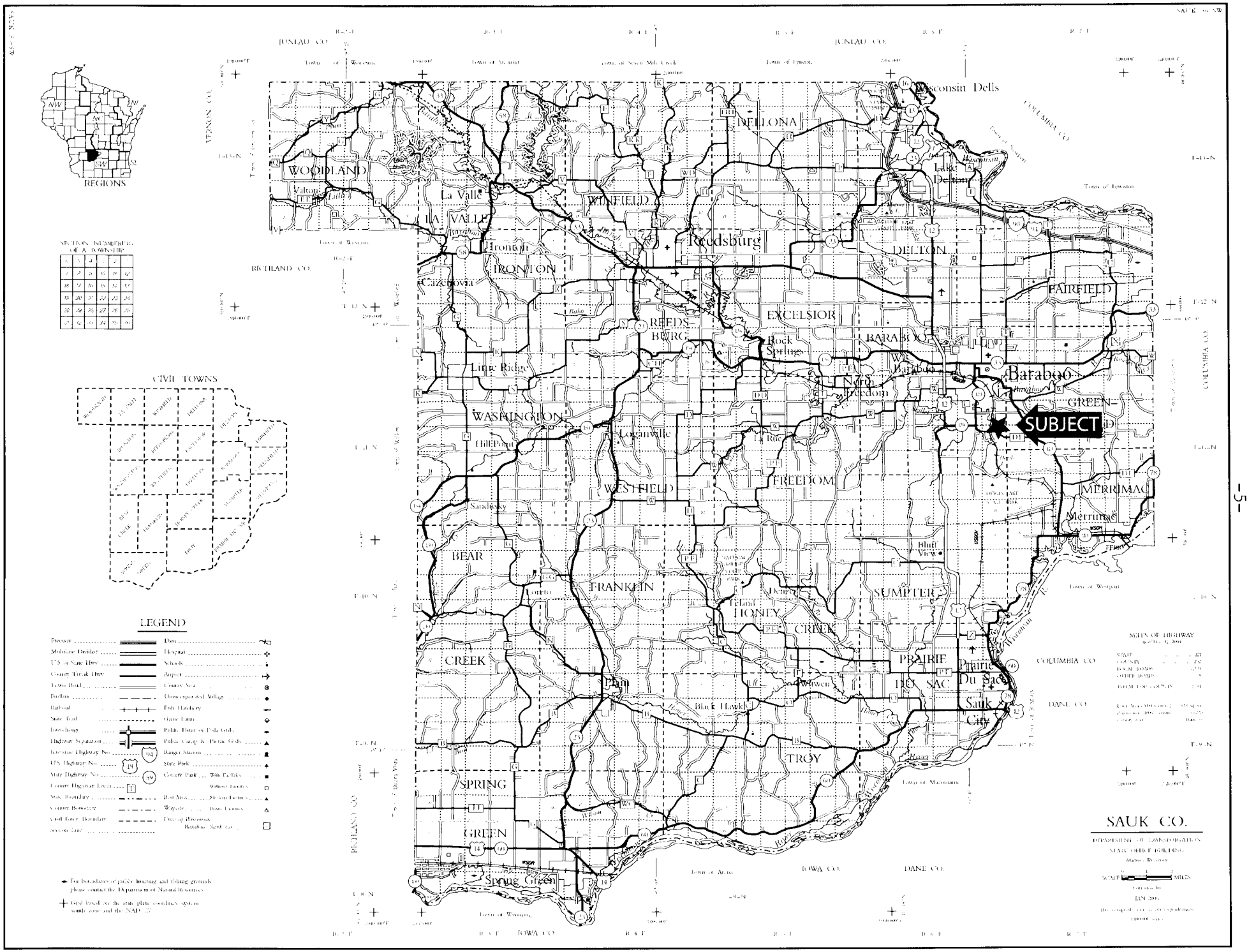
RECOMMENDED:

Richard E. Steffes — Date: 5-21-08

Bureau of Legal Services — Date: 5/22/08

Laurie Osterndorf — Date: 5/27/08

RES:dv


SAUK CO.
SUBJECT
Baraboo
Wisconsin Dells
Reedsburg
Lake Delton
Prairie Du Sac
Sauk City
Spring Green
Merrimac
WOODLAND
La Valle
IRONTON
WINFIELD
DELLONA
DELTON
FAIRFIELD
EXCELSIOR
REEDSBURG
BARABOO
WASHINGTON
WESTFIELD
FREEDOM
MERRIMAC
BEAR CREEK
FRANKLIN
HONEY CREEK
SUMPTER
PRAIRIE DU SAC
TROY
SPRING GREEN
Cazenovia
Lime Ridge
Loganville
Hill Point
Sandusky
Bluff View
Black Hawk
Wilson
Denzer
Leland
Lorenzo
Rock Springs
North Freedom
Wis. Baraboo
Town of Lewiston
Town of Westport
Town of Arena
Town of Wyoming
Town of Sumpter
Town of Sauk City
Town of Mazomanie
JUNEAU CO.
VERNON CO.
RICHLAND CO.
COLUMBIA CO.
DANE CO.
IOWA CO.
REGIONS
SECTION NUMBERING OF A TOWNSHIP
CIVIL TOWNS
LEGEND
Freeway
Multilane Divided
U.S. or State Hwy
County Trunk Hwy
Town Road
Furlong
Railroad
State Trail
Interchange
Highway Separation
Interstate Highway No.
U.S. Highway No.
State Highway No.
County Highway Letter
State Boundary
County Boundary
Civil Town Boundary
Section Line
Dam
Hospital
Schools
Airport
County Seat
Unincorporated Village
Fish Hatchery
Game Farm
Public Hunt or Fish Grids
Public Camp & Picnic Grids
Ranger Station
State Park
County Park
Rest Area
Waysite
Univ. of Wisconsin
Baraboo Sauk Co.
For boundaries of public hunting and fishing grounds please contact the Department of Natural Resources
Grid based on the state plane coordinate system south zone and the NAD 27
MILES OF HIGHWAY
SCALE
MILES

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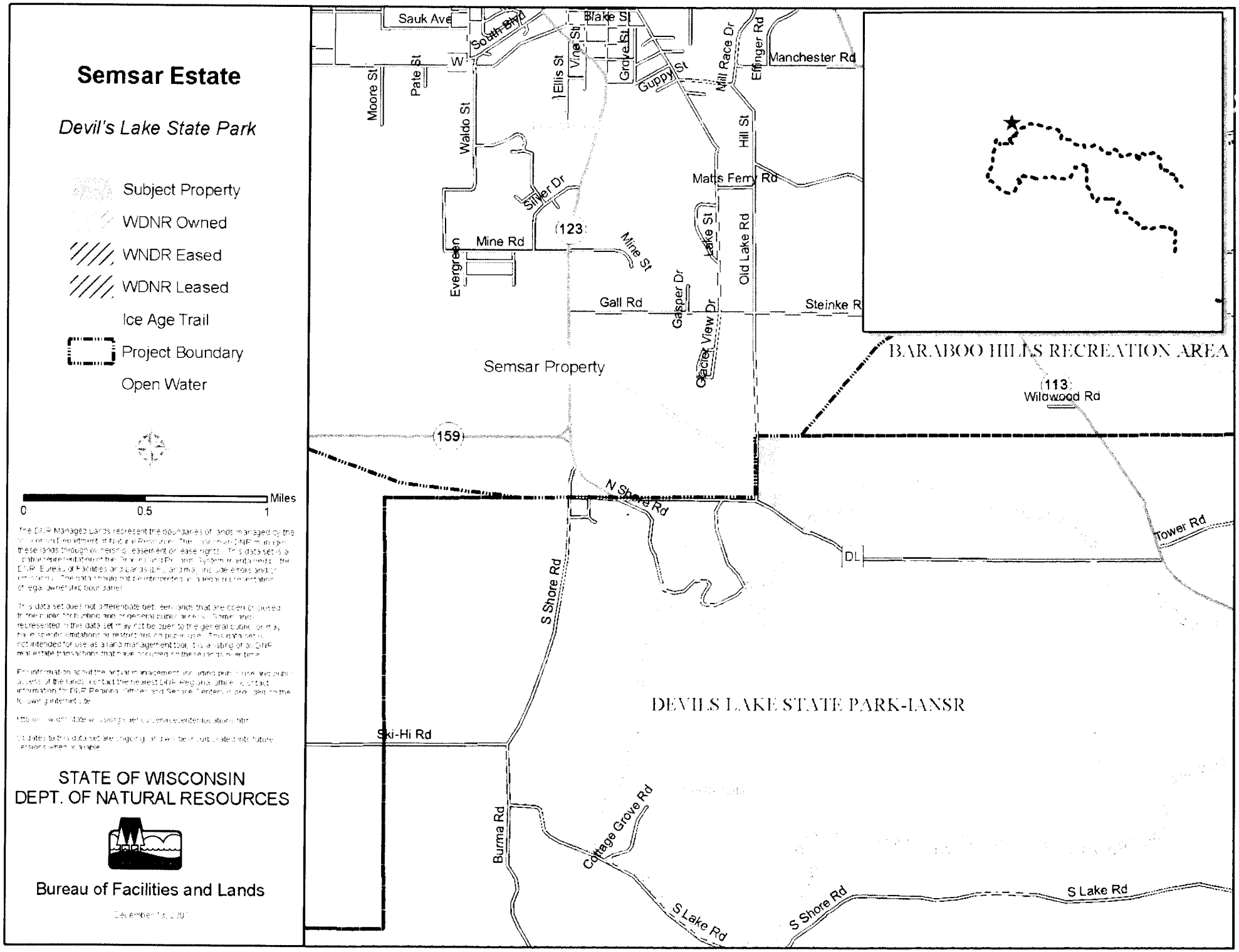
Semsar Estate

T 11N R 6E Section 13, Town of Baraboo, Sauk County

N

0 195 390 780 1,170 Feet

Created by Bureau of Facilities and Lands
Real Estate Section
December 13, 2007


Semsar Estate
Devil's Lake State Park
Subject Property
WDNR Owned
WNDR Eased
WDNR Leased
Ice Age Trail
Project Boundary
Open Water
0
0.5
1
Miles
STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities and Lands
Sauk Ave
South Blvd
Blake St
Vine St
Grove St
Guppy St
Mill Race Dr
Effinger Rd
Manchester Rd
Moore St
Pate St
Waldo St
Ellis St
Hill St
Matts Ferry Rd
Silver Dr
123
Mine Rd
Mine St
Evergreen
Lake St
Old Lake Rd
Gasper Dr
Gall Rd
Steinke R
Glacier View Dr
Semsar Property
BARABOO HILLS RECREATION AREA
113
Wildwood Rd
159
N Shore Rd
Tower Rd
DL
S Shore Rd
DEVILS LAKE STATE PARK-IANSR
Ski-Hi Rd
Burma Rd
Cottage Grove Rd
S Lake Rd
S Shore Rd
S Lake Rd