

SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN GRASSLAND & STREAM CONSERVATION AREA – DANE COUNTY

FOR: JUNE 2012 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: RICHARD STEFFES

SUMMARY: The Department has an accepted offer for purchase of 134.3 acres of land from the James H. Gnewuch Trust for \$585,000.00 for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) in Dane County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000. The property adjoins and is east of the 203-acre Sherven parcel, approved for state purchase at the February NRB meeting.

The parcel is located in the core of the Perry-Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA), one of three BCA's within the project boundary of the SWGSCA and will be the second acquisition for the project. This property will secure the center of the BCA core in an area of the state that has limited public properties. The parcel contains important upland grassland nesting habitat for conservation and offers recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing to the nearby Madison Metro area.

The Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) project was established in 2009 and encompasses a 473,900 acre landscape within 19 townships in Dane, Iowa, Green and Lafayette Counties. The acquisition goal of 12,000 acres for the SWGSCA project is split evenly between three bird conservation areas, with the core of each BCA containing a 2,000-acre contiguous block of grasslands in public ownership. The remaining acquisition authority will use fee and easement acquisitions to conserve long-term grassland cover amidst a working agricultural landscape. 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 identified as one of the best grassland-dependent bird conservation opportunities in the Upper Midwest, and the "best of the best" in Wisconsin. The SWGSCA is identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area of Upper Midwest Significance in Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan. The same area is identified in the Land Legacy Report as the Blue Mounds – Blanchardville Prairie and Savanna and received a 5-star rating for its conservation significance and recreation potential. 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 agricultural landscape supporting rare species that, like grassland birds, 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. Project priorities include improving the "Impaired" streams within the project area, as well as enhancing and protecting the area's Outstanding/Exceptional Resource Waters.

The eastern side of the 134.3-acre Gnewuch property has a prairie remnant on the ridge tops that support many grassland birds. Topography is generally rolling to hilly, with upland along CTH G and then sloping down toward a valley with the intermittent stream frontage. Intermittent streams cross the property and the springs located on the north part of the property are the headwaters of Primrose Branch, a trout stream that flows to the Sugar River. The property has very scenic views from several of its higher locations. Native prairie remnants are located on the property as well as some scattered woodlands. Portions of the property are presently in the CRP program and under contract through 2017. The parcel has good access with one-half mile of frontage on County Hwy G, and more than one-quarter mile of frontage on County Hwy A.

Soil types on the property are primarily Sogn, Edmund, and Port Byron silt loams. USDA indicates that Sogn and Edmund silt loams are fair to poor for grain and seed crops due to their slopes, water erosion, and draught prone attributes. Port Byron has a good to fair rating for grain and seed crops where slope permits. All three soils indicate ratings of fair to good for grasses, legumes, and wild herbaceous upland plants.

The subject property lies within the Perry/Primrose Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Core of the SWGSCA, less than 1-hour drive from nearly 250,000 people in the Madison area. The "Cores" of the BCA's have been determined to be of high value to grassland bird conservation, and Perry/Primrose is no exception. Sightings of Henslow's sparrow and the Upland Sandpiper have been recorded on or close to the subject property. Bell's Vireo is present, a threatened species. In addition to these species, the property provides habitat for numerous grassland bird species (meadowlarks, bobolinks, ring-necked pheasant, etc.), a species guild that has declined more precipitously than any other bird group in North America. This BCA Core also lies at the headwaters of two important cold water streams in Southwest Wisconsin: the Kittelson Valley Creek and Primrose Branch of the Sugar River. The Primrose Branch is considered an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest due to its classification as a CLASS II trout water. The property, if acquired, will protect this important watershed and provide the grassland buffer needed to preserve good water quality in these streams.

The acquisition of the Gnewuch property will meet one of the primary objectives of the SWGSCA project by supporting agriculture through the utilization of areas of property for active and sustainable agriculture practices as a main component of the management activities. Somewhat unique to the project is the intended incorporation of compatible farming practices such as rotational grazing, grass-based and organic agriculture, and the production of biofuels as standard management practices to foster improvements to the wildlife habitat. As is the case in the landscape, various focus species, specifically Henslow's Sparrows, require residual plant materials for nesting which, are available on grazed land. This parcel is primarily open grassland with some trees and if acquired, the property would require management to improve grassland bird habitat. Boxelder would be removed and the Department Wildlife staff would conduct prescribed burns to suppress new trees and the small clusters of open grown oak trees offer outstanding potential for oak savanna restoration.

Acquisition of the 134.3-acre parcel will allow the Department to manage wildlife and restore habitat. Together with the adjoining Sherven parcel, this acquisition will create a property large enough to provide recreational opportunities in conjunction with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area, SWGSCA in close proximity to Madison.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 134.3 acres of land for \$585,000 for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area in Dane County.

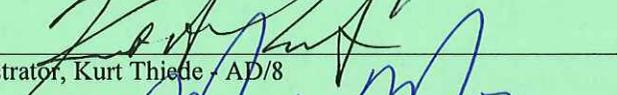
LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

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

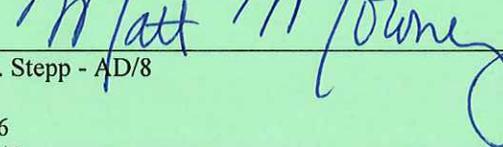
APPROVED:


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

6-7-12
 Date


 Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

6-7-12
 Date


 Secretary, Cathy L. Stepp - AD/8

6-8-12
 Date

cc: S. Miller - LF/6
 R. Steffes - LF/6
 L. Ross - AD/8
 T. Hauge - WM/6
 M. Aquino - South Central Region

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 7, 2012 FILE REF: WM 60178

TO: Scott Walker

FROM: Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, James H Gnewuch Revocable Trust Tract, File # WM 60178,
Approval Requested by July 30, 2012

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area
Dane County

Grantor:

James H. Gnewuch Revocable Trust
c/o Eric Grover
First Weber Group
561 Concord Drive
Oregon, WI 53575

Acres: 134.3Price: \$585,000Appraised Value: \$577,500; \$595,000Interest: Fee Title PurchaseImprovements: NoneLocation: The property is located in Dane County 6 miles southeast of the Village of Mount HorebLand Description: The subject land is gently rolling to hilly .Covertypes Breakdown:

Type	Acreage
Grass and Brush	35
Upland Woodland	38.3
Grassland (CRP)	61
Total:	134.3

Zoning: AgriculturePresent Use: CRP; idleProposed Use: Wildlife Habitat and Public RecreationTenure: 39 yearsProperty Taxes: \$680Option Date: June 06, 2012Comments: \$585,000 is the best price that could be negotiated.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 an accepted offer for purchase of 134.3 acres of land from the James H. Gnewuch Trust for \$585,000 for the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area (SWGSCA) in Dane County. The item is being submitted because the purchase price exceeds \$150,000. The property adjoins and is east of the 203-acre Sherven parcel, approved for state purchase at the February NRB meeting.

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The Department recommends acquisition of the 134.3-acre parcel to manage wildlife and restore habitat. Together with the adjoining Sherven parcel, this acquisition will create a property large enough to provide recreational opportunities in conjunction with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland & Stream Conservation Area, SWGSCA in close proximity to Madison.

3. LAND MANAGEMENT:

The 134.3-acre Gnewuch property is primarily open grassland with some trees and if acquired, the property would require management to improve grassland bird habitat within the objectives of the SWGSCA project. Boxelder would be removed and the Department Wildlife Management staff would conduct prescribed burns to suppress new trees. Small clusters of open grown oak trees offer outstanding potential for oak savanna restoration. Portions of the property are presently in the CRP program and under contract through 2017 and the Department will also work with local farmers regarding grazing opportunities.

4. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$5,255,000	\$2,039,000

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

Established: 2009

Acres Purchased to Date: 0.00*

Acquisition Goal: 12,000

Percent Complete: 0.00 %

Cost to Date: \$0.00

*203-acre Sherven parcel pending closing at a cost of \$933,800

6. APPRAISAL 1:

Appraiser: Paul Stone

Valuation Date: May 30, 2012

Appraised Value: \$595,000

Highest and Best Use: Mixed use or hobby farm

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 134.3 acres @ \$4,430.38 per acre: \$595,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$4,187-\$4,718

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus – June 6, 2012

APPRAISAL 2:

Appraiser: Julie Hanks

Valuation Date: May 30, 2012

Appraised Value: \$577,500

Highest and Best Use: Agricultural and rural residential

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 134.3 acres @ \$4,300 per acre: \$577,500
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$3,409 to \$5,082

Appraisal Review: Gregory Markus – June 6, 2012

Comments: The best price that could be negotiated was \$585,000 – between the two appraised values.

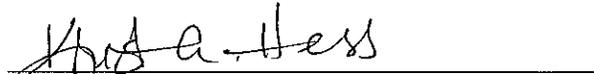
RECOMMENDED:



 Richard E. Steffes, Real Estate Director

6-7-12

 Date



 Kristin A. Hess, Bureau of Legal Services

6/7/12

 Date



 Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator

6/7/12

 Date

RES:

**James H.
Gnewuch Trust - Fee**
Southwest Wisconsin
Grasslands & Stream
Conservation Area

WM 60178

T5N R7E Sec 19
Town of Primrose
Dane County
134.3 Acres



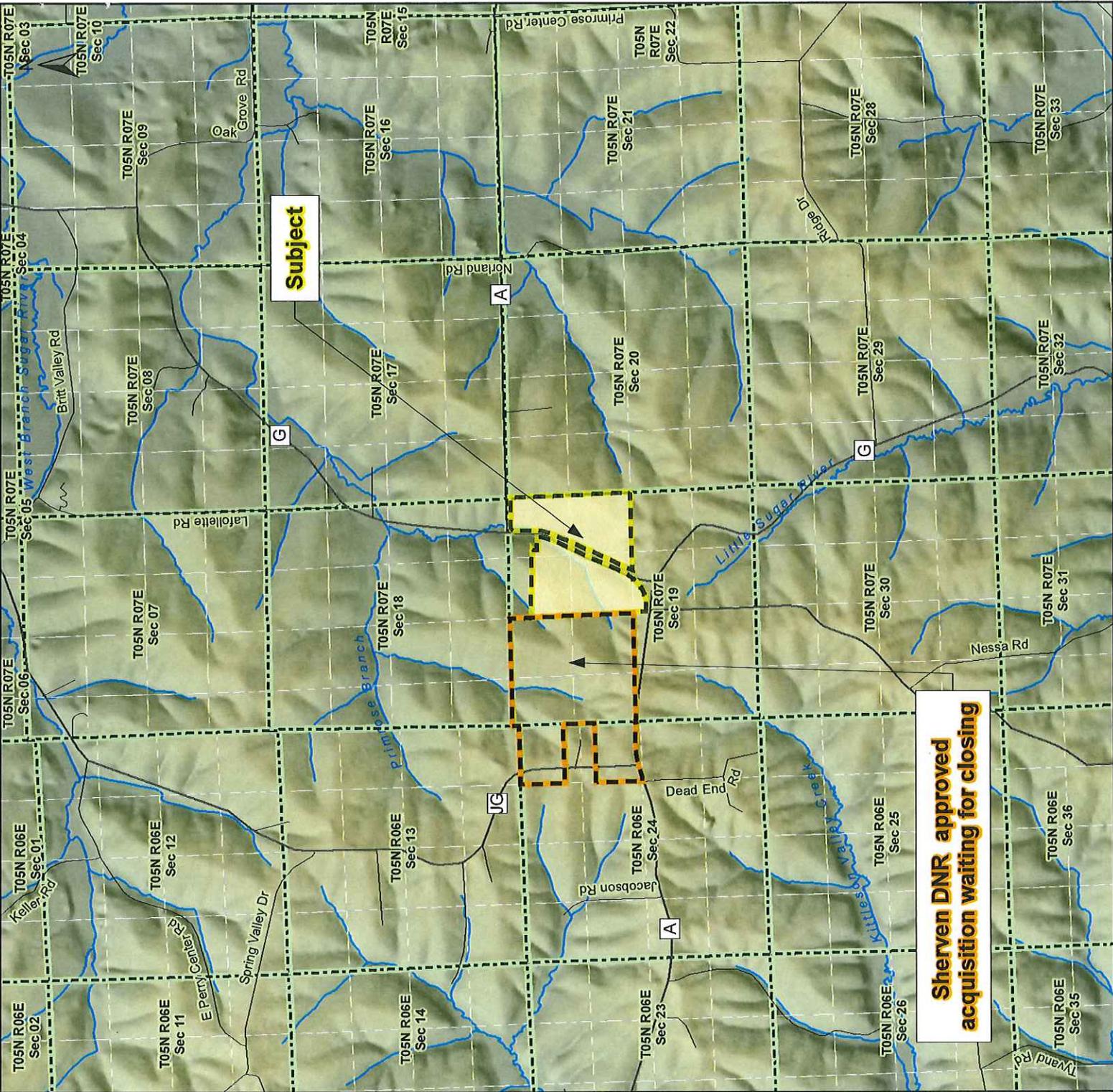
-  WDNR Owned
-  WDNR Easement
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  PLSS Section Line
-  QQ Section Boundary

0 600
Feet



★ Location of Property

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Jun 06, 2012 kmh



James H. Gnewuch Trust - Fee

T5N R7E Sec 19, Town of Primrose, Dane County



Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands & Stream Conservation Area

-  Subject
-  Sherven Parcel

-  DNR Owned
-  DNR Eased
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  Section Line
-  QQ Section Lines

0 150 300 450 Feet




Jun 06, 2012 kmb
Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands

SUBJECT PROPERTY LOCATION MAP TOWN OF PRIMROSE (DANE COUNTY)

