

NORTHWEST BARRENS PROPERTIES DRAFT MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Tuesday
August 30, 2016
Chicog Town Hall

NORTHWEST BARRENS PROPERTIES

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The draft **master plan** for the Northwest Barrens properties is ready for public review and comment. Management, use and development plans for the next 15 years are outlined. Please take this opportunity to comment.

Properties include:

- Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area: 6,438 ac.
- Douglas County Wildlife Area: 4,005 ac.
- Totogatic Wild River: 2,379 ac.



Douglas County Wildlife Area

Master Plan Timeline and Public Input

- Public Open House Aug 30
- Submit comments via US mail, email, electronic web form, or in-person.
- See page 4

Approximately 13,000 acres of oak/pine barrens habitat on these northwest Wisconsin properties support abundant deer, wild turkey and bear hunting, and provide a wide range of recreation opportunities. Canoeing, kayaking, and fishing on the **Totogatic River, one of only five designated 'Wild Rivers'** in Wisconsin (out of more than 53,000 streams and rivers), provides a rare opportunity to enjoy a river in its natural and free-flowing condition.

Economic benefit provided to the region from public use of these properties dates back to 1925, when the Northern

States Amateur Field Trial Association conducted its first bird dog trial on Douglas County Wildlife Area. Along with Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, these two properties are significant destinations in North America for bird dog trialers **due to the presence of sharp-tailed grouse.**

Although sharp-tailed grouse populations are below historic levels and occur in only a few areas of the state, these properties still offer sharp-tailed grouse hunting. Land management activities that will preserve their habitat, bolstered by an informal

partnership of regional land managers, can enable this sport to continue. Viewing the springtime elaborate courtship dance of sharp-tailed grouse (from a blind) is a popular public activity, and one that is managed with reservations and help from the volunteer Friends Groups.

Funds from sales of hunting and fishing licenses; from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act; and donations from nonprofit Friends Groups, including the WI Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, all contribute to management of these properties.

We will accept comments on the draft master plan through **Sept 10, 2016**

- Summary/Response to Public Comments available October 2016
- NR Board approval meeting December 14, 2016

Vision

The Northwest Barrens properties are a vital contributor to the preservation of oak/pine barrens, a rare and globally imperiled natural community, in the Northwest Sands Ecological Landscape. In addition, this landscape plays a major ecological role in enhancing and protecting unique water resources. These properties provide abundant hunting, trapping, gathering, wildlife watching and educational opportunities. The abundance and diversity of wildlife, including rare bird species, that inhabit this landscape attracts visitors who appreciate not only the wildlife, but also the grand scale of oak/pine barrens and the rare 'wild river' experience found here. The variety of nature-based uses and education, supported in part by The Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary, and the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, enhance public appreciation and support for wildlife and wildlife management for current and future generations.

RECREATION GOALS

- Provide abundant recreational opportunities for hunting, trapping, gathering, wildlife viewing, scenic enjoyment, and other nature-based uses, compatible with the property's capabilities and habitat management goals.
- Contribute to the local and regional economies through management of wildlife and nature-based recreational opportunities and sustainably produced forest products.
- Provide a wildlife conservation education program that generates a land and wildlife ethic in perpetuity.



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS



- Restore, manage and perpetuate the oak/pine barren and wetland habitats that support an intact Northwest Sands (barrens) ecological landscape.
- Maintain and enhance ecological connectivity between terrestrial communities, especially barrens, and on a landscape scale, promote their sustainability in association with other nearby town, county, state, federal and tribal lands.
- Provide habitat for wildlife that are dependent on oak/pine barrens, such as the sharp-tailed grouse and upland sandpiper, and for wildlife associated with the wetlands and rivers.
- Protect the wild nature of the Totogatic River through bank protection and sound property and watershed management practices. Work with partners and the public to promote sustainable use and "leave no trace" river recreation.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Wisconsin is known for its abundant natural resources, and for the value our citizens place on the rich traditions of hunting, trapping, hiking, and bird-watching. Conserving these resources is an investment that pays many dividends, both economical and social. A University of Minnesota study reported a return up to \$4 for every \$1 invested in conserving natural areas. One can imagine that Wisconsin produces similar or better investment returns.

In particular, the Douglas County and Namekagon Barrens wildlife areas and Totogatic Wild River are an economic benefit for the state, county and nearby towns. The barrens are a unique recreational resource that draws yearlong visitation. Statewide, an influx of revenue from hunters is anticipated during fall hunting seasons; however, visitor season here is much longer. People from throughout Wisconsin and many non-residents regularly visit the area each spring to watch sharp-tailed grouse dance in April, view song birds and wildflowers in May and June, then pick blueberries in July and August, and hike the scenic vistas along the North Country Trail throughout the year. Other visitors come to the area to attend dog trials and for horseback riding on the Douglas County Wildlife Area (DCWA). DCWA is unique among wildlife properties in Wisconsin in that it offers horseback riding opportunities for individuals and groups, including on-site boarding and camping opportunities, managed by the county. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing the Totogatic Wild River provides a rare opportunity to enjoy a natural and free-flowing river.

The table below indicates the projected costs for the new management activities described in this plan. Some costs may be pursued in partnership with nonprofit partners such as the Friends Groups. However, implementation is dependent on staffing and funding allocations set outside of this master plan. Operational funding is established by the state legislature. Work may be phased over several state biennial budget cycles to avoid a disproportionate budget load. Costs for infrastructure will vary based on parameters such as soil conditions, infrastructure requirement, labor cost, inflation and competitive bidding.

Proposed Developments with Estimated Costs

Management Activity	Cost
Revise/Create visitor property maps for each property (printing not included)	\$1,000
Auto Trail Update/Design/Publish (includes each property in new regional effort)	\$12,000
Information Displays; 3 at Totogatic (materials, laminate map, GIS staff time)	\$1,000
County Line Rd habitat restoration (Totogatic)	\$1,000
Parking areas (primitive); 3 at Totogatic	\$3,000
Sharp-tailed grouse reporting station (NBWA)	\$1,000
Wildlife observation and lookout area benches (NBWA South Unit & Totogatic)	\$2,000
Storage building (Namekagon Barrens WA Special Events area)	\$10,000
Picnic shelter (Namekagon Barrens WA Special Events Area)	\$10,000
Total	\$41,000



Proposed Boundary Modifications

Invasive Species

Invasive species are a significant threat to our native plant and animal communities.

To address this growing concern, this master plan recommends that invasive species inventory, monitoring and control actions be included in annual planning on each property.

Guidance is provided in the *Property Managers Handbook* www.dnr.gov key words: invasives, control.

See also:

- Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin
www.ipaw.org

- Forestry BMPs
www.council.wisconsinforestry.org

Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area: A net reduction by 25 acres to the project boundary and to the acquisition goal (from 9,312 to 9,287 acres) is proposed (boundary contraction is on the South Unit). This change is a house-keeping item carried over from a 2015 department land exchange with Burnett County; a previous action that occurred outside this planning process.

Totogatic Wild River Lands: A gain of 6 acres to the department acquisition will result from proposed changes and create a small shift in the project boundary as follows:

- **Re-designation** is proposed for an 80-acre parcel already owned by DNR (30 ac land; 50 ac water) that will change it from 'Statewide Habitat' to Totogatic Wild River. This parcel is sandwiched between two 80-acre parcels of Totogatic Wild River lands in Douglas County.
- **Boundary contraction/shift/expansion** to acquire key parcels of river corridor. Remove 54 ac from current project boundary through sale under authority of s. 23.15 Wis. Statutes. Proceeds from the sale may be used to acquire two areas (84 acres and 1 acre), that would improve management ability and provide access from public roads. Properties would be acquired from willing sellers only.

Community Involvement and Management Partners

- Nonprofit organizations, such as Friends of Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, Friends of the Bird Sanctuary, WI Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, North Country Trail Association and Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association, provide volunteer labor and financial support for property management activities, wildlife education programs, community outreach, and ecotourism.
- Regional County Forestry Departments (Washburn, Burnett, Douglas, Bayfield) along with the Lyme St. Croix Forest Company, US Forest Service, DNR and others in the Namekagon-Moquah Barrens Partner Corridor, collaborate using principles of sustainable forestry and ecosystem management to produce healthy oak/pine barrens wildlife habitat and abundant recreation opportunities.

Visit the DNR web site for a complete set of planning documents:
<http://dnr.wi.gov> keyword search "NWB master plan"
Comments may be submitted using the on-line form or mailed.

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***SUBMIT COMMENTS BY SEPT 10, 2016.
PLEASE CONTACT US FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION!***

