File# NA 888 – Iowa County 40.12 Acres

The Department purchased this property from in December of 2006 with Stewardship funds under the Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area project authority. Only 3 acres of this parcel are located outside of the project. However, at the time of purchase the Natural Resources Board designated the entire parcel to be sold or exchanged in the future . The parcel abuts other Department lands and has road frontage along Ridgevue Road. Since the original purchase there has been a significant investment restoring the land to native prairie species. Nearly $7,500 has been spent on seeds and planting. Additional funds were spent in subsequent years mowing and controlling invasive species in the prairie plantings. Financial resources were also spent posting the property boundaries. A parking lot was also developed in 2013 within walking distance from this parcel.

Ridgeway Pine Relict SNA is identified within the Driftless Area Features Conservation Opportunity Area (Continental Significance) within the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WWAP; 2005). Management (and continued ownership and protection) of this property is consistent with many conservations actions from the WWAP including the preservation of large grassland sites wherever they exist. The 80 acres of restored prairie on state owned property, plus approximately 170 acres of prairie and old field on neighboring private property (including a large acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) provide a large 250 acre block of grassland ideal for several grassland bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Grassland birds including Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, and several species of sparrow have been documented in these grasslands (SNA files). Researchers from WI DNR have recommended restoring and protecting large blocks of grassland such as this, to provide habitat for area sensitive grassland birds: "Blocks of 80-250 acres are preferable to smaller blocks, and blocks 250-1,000 acres are the most desirable" (Sample and Mossman, WDNR, 1997).

Additionally, the DNR is working with two private landowners within the project boundary by providing funding and consultation for habitat restoration through the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). As many as five private landowners within the project boundary are enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL), and several neighbors have been in contact with DNR staff from both Forestry and Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC, formerly Endangered Resources) in recent years for guidance/ advice on managing their property.

All of the cropland within the SNA boundary, including this parcel, is designated as Highly Erodible Land (Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area Feasibility Study/Environmental Analysis, 1996). Neighboring landowners have commented to Department staff that the restored prairie was noticeably reducing the amount of runoff they were receiving on their property. They were complimentary of the work DNR had completed since acquiring the property. The public has access to the property and it is open for all nature based outdoor activities. All but three acres of the property are in a project boundary.

The Department recommends retaining this parcel.