

**SUBJECT: LAND TRANSFER AND PROJECT BOUNDARY MODIFICATION – NEW MUNSTER WILDLIFE AREA - KENOSHA COUNTY**

**FOR: JANUARY 2008 BOARD MEETING**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Richard Steffes

**SUMMARY:** The WI Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed to transfer 177.4 acres of land to the Department for the New Munster Wildlife Area in Kenosha County. The item is being submitted for approval to modify the project boundary needs to be amended to include the 177.4 acres.

DOT purchased the property in 1987 for a wetland mitigation site for its STH 50 reconstruction project. As part of this transfer, DOT will place some restrictive covenants on the property to ensure recognition of the goals of the Federal Wetland Mitigation Program in perpetuity. The property lies outside of the project boundary, but because of its excellent habitat and recreational opportunities, department ownership and management is sought.

In 1947, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission created the New Munster Wildlife Area. This wildlife area provides important pheasant and upland game habitat in a more rapidly developing area of Wisconsin. In addition, the project protects water quality, improves fish habitat, and provides public access for fishing and hunting the ownership along Palmer Creek. The New Munster Wildlife Area also encompasses one of the first Natural Areas, New Munster Bog Island, designated in 1967.

The DOT wetland mitigation site encompasses more than 6,100 linear feet or 3,050 feet of both bank frontages on the Fox River. The property contains emergent wetlands, shallow wetlands, open water ponds, a stream corridor, planted prairie areas and scattered large oak tree groves. The mitigation plan included extensive habitat work to include several plant restorations to include an 18-acre prairie field, 12-acre prairie/emergent wetland field as well as the restoration of three wetland complexes.

The addition of the DOT property to the Wildlife Area will create a larger block of habitat and add diversity, particularly riverine and emergent/open water wetland habitat to an area which is predominately forested wetland, streams, and mixed agricultural and oak forest cover types. Two perennial streams, Palmer Creek and New Munster Creek, flow through this property into the Fox River. Palmer Creek is a Class III Trout Stream stocked with Brown and Rainbow Trout in portions of the New Munster Wildlife Area.


Acceptance of this transfer will provide wildlife management, protect the water quality, provide opportunities for public recreation in a heavily populated and rapidly urbanizing area of the state as well as protect the natural values of the property from the impacts of development incompatible with the goals of the project.

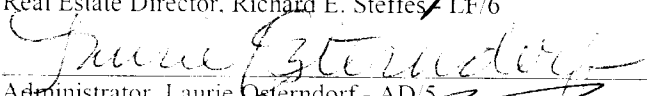
**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board approve the transfer of 177.4 acres of land for the New Munster Wildlife Area in Kenosha County as well as approve an expansion to the boundary of the project to include this parcel.


**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

  
Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD 5

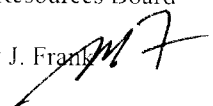
  
Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD 5

12-28-07  
Date

12/28/07  
Date

1/3/08  
Date

- cc: S. Miller – LF/6                      T. Hauge – WM 6  
R. Steffes – LF/6                      G. McCutcheon – SER/Milwaukee  
L. Ross - AD 5

DATE: December 28, 2007 FILE REF: W-1736  
 TO: Natural Resources Board  
 FROM: Matthew J. Frank   
 SUBJECT: Proposed Land Transfer, WI Department of Transportation Tract, File # W-1736,

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

New Munster Wildlife Area  
 Kenosha County

Grantor:

WI Department of Transportation  
 c/o Brett Vreeke  
 141 NW Barstow Street  
 Kenosha, WI 53187

Acres: 177.4Price: \$1.00Interest: Transfer in fee, subject to restrictive covenants protecting it as a wetland mitigation site.Improvements: NoneLocation: The tract is located in Kenosha County in the Town of Wheatland.Land Description: The subject area is low, level floodplain and wetland.Water: There are 6,100 feet of frontage on the Fox River as well as several hundred feet of frontage along two perennial streams, Palmer Creek and New Munster Creek.

<u>Covertypes Breakdown:</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
	Wooded Lowland	8.0
	Wooded Upland	3.0
	Wetland	87.0
	Grassland	52.0
	Brush	16.0
	Water	11.4
	TOTAL	177.4

Zoning: Agriculture/RecreationPresent Use: Wetland MitigationProposed Use: Resource protection and public recreationProperty Taxes: exemptTransfer Commitment Date: November 26, 2007Tenure: DOT acquired the land in 1987 for a Wetland Mitigation Site.2. JUSTIFICATION:

The WI Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed to transfer 177.4 acres of land to the Department for the New Munster Wildlife Area in Kenosha County. DOT purchased the property in 1987 for a wetland mitigation site for its STH 50 reconstruction project. As part of this transfer, DOT will place some restrictive covenants on the property to ensure recognition of the goals of the Federal Wetland Mitigation Program in perpetuity. The property lies outside of the project boundary, but because of its



excellent habitat and recreational opportunities, the Department recommends expanding the project boundary to accommodate this land transfer.

In 1947, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission created the New Munster Wildlife Area. This wildlife area provides important pheasant and upland game habitat in a more rapidly developing area of Wisconsin. In addition, the project protects water quality, improves fish habitat, and provides public access for fishing and hunting the ownership along Palmer Creek. The New Munster Wildlife Area also encompasses one of the first natural areas, New Munster Bog Island, designated in 1967. The natural area is characterized by a sandy knoll of hardwoods surrounded by tamarack and a shrub-carr bog. On the east side of the knoll is a 200 foot-wide strip of northern hardwoods with a unique association of yellow birch, paper birch, birch hybrids, June berry, and alternate-leaved dogwood. The remainder of the knoll includes wild geranium, sweet cicely, honewort, may apple, and golden alexanders. The island is home to many mammals as well as has recorded accounts of numerous nesting birds including northern waterthrush, here at its southern limit in Wisconsin.

The DOT wetland mitigation site encompasses more than 6,100 linear feet or 3.050 feet of both bank frontages on the Fox River, that is adjacent to the 1,048-acre New Munster Wildlife Area. The subject property contains emergent wetlands, shallow wetlands, open water ponds, a stream corridor, planted prairie areas and scattered large oak tree groves. The mitigation plan included extensive habitat work to include several plant restorations to include an 18-acre prairie field, 12-acre prairie emergent wetland field as well as the restoration of three wetland complexes.

The addition of the DOT property to the wildlife area will create a larger block of habitat and add diversity, particularly riverine and emergent/open water wetland habitat to an area which is predominately forested wetland, streams, and mixed agricultural and oak forest cover types. Two perennial streams, Palmer Creek and New Munster Creek, flow through this property into the Fox River. Palmer Creek is a Class III trout stream stocked with brown and rainbow trout in portions of the New Munster Wildlife Area.

Kenosha County has less than five percent public open space, and is rapidly urbanizing; therefore, the demand for recreational area is high. This diverse property will provide recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing and canoeing. The varying cover types will provide hunting for small game, waterfowl, goose, turkey and deer hunting. The several streams and water bodies associated with this property provide extensive fishing opportunities as well.

The Department recommends the acceptance of this transfer to provide wildlife management, protect water quality, provide opportunities for public recreation in a heavily populated and rapidly urbanizing area of the state as well as protect the natural values of the property from the impacts of development incompatible with the goals of the project. Additionally, the Department recommends that with the approval of this parcel that the project boundary be modified to include this parcel.

3. FINANCING:

No funding is needed for this transfer.

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE NEW MUNSTER WILDLIFE AREA:

Established: 1947

Acres Purchased to Date: 1,048.58


Acquisition Goal: 1,386.68 Acres\*

Percent Complete: 75.6%

Cost to Date: \$ 163,480.00

Comments: The acreage goal will be increased to include this parcel upon acceptance by the Natural Resources Board.

RECOMMENDED:

  
Richard E. Steffes

12-28-07  
Date

  
Bureau of Legal Services

10/28/07  
Date

  
Laurie Osterndorf

12/38/07  
Date

RES:ch



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