

**SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION – BIBON SWAMP NATURAL AREA, STATEWIDE NATURAL AREAS AND
NORTHERN HIGHLAND/AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST – BAYFIELD AND ONEIDA COUNTIES**

FOR: FEBRUARY 2009 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has obtained an agreement to purchase 361 acres of land from the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) for \$325,500 for lands in the Bibon Swamp Natural Area, Statewide Natural Areas and Northern Highlands/American Legion State Forest located in Bayfield and Oneida Counties.

Department ownership of these lands will provide opportunities to improve management. The parcel acreages and costs are outlined in the chart below.

<u>Project</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Price</u>
Statewide Natural Area – Bibon Swamp (2 parcels)	Bayfield	120	\$137,000
Statewide Natural Area – Sugar Camp Hemlocks (2 parcels)	Oneida	80	\$ 144,000
Northern Highland/American Legion SF (4 parcels)	Oneida	161	\$ 44,500
	TOTAL	361	\$325,500

Signed into law on April 19, 2006, Wisconsin Act 352 sets aside \$2,000,000 per year from 2007 through 2010 from the Stewardship fund to acquire land from BCPL. This allows the Department to preserve high quality natural area land and consolidate department land ownership for other conservation projects. Further, the legislation provides for BCPL's use of the sale proceeds to acquire working forestland for timber management and public access. The annual allocation was extended in the recent Stewardship authorization for an additional 10 years.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 361 acres of land for \$325,500 for the Bibon swamp Natural Area, Statewide Natural Areas and Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest in Bayfield and Oneida Counties.

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:

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

1-21-09
Date

Laurie Osterndorf
Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf - AD/8

1/27/09
Date

Matthew J. Frank
Secretary, Matthew J. Frank - AD/8

2/12/09
Date

- cc: S. Miller – LF/6
- R. Steffes – LF/6
- L. Ross – AD/8
- R. Mather – FR/4
- S. Holtz – ER/6
- J. Gozdizialski – NOR/Spooner

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: January 21, 2009

IN REPLY REFER TO: NA-20014, NA-20015, NF-30018 & NF-30019

TO: Governor Doyle

FROM: Matthew J. Frank 

SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Board of Commissioners of Public Lands,
Approval Requested by March 30, 2009

I. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

<u>File No.</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Price</u>
NA-20014	SNA - Bibon Swamp (2 parcels)	Bayfield	120	\$137,000
NA-20015	SNA - Sugar Camp Hemlocks (2 parcels)	Oneida	80	\$144,000
NF-30018 & NF-30019	Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest (4 parcels)	Oneida	161	\$ 44,500
		TOTAL	361	\$325,500

Grantor:

Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL)
c/o Ms. Tia Nelson, Executive Secretary
125 South Webster Street, Room 200
P.O. Box 8943
Madison, WI 53708-8943

Acres: 361

Price: \$325,500

Appraised Value: \$325,500

Interest: Fee Title Purchase

Improvements: None

Location:

State Natural Area - Bibon Swamp: The land is located in south-central Bayfield County in two parcels about four miles apart.

State Natural Area - Sugar Camp Hemlocks: The parcel is located about ten miles northeast of Rhinelander.

Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest: The land is 15 miles northwest of Rhinelander. Much of it is in the Rainbow Flowage area.

Land, Water Resources and Covertypes Description:

State Natural Area - Bibon Swamp: The purchase consists of two separate parcels. The 80-acre parcel is upland woodland, with sharply rolling topography. Covertypes are a mixture of deciduous and conifer, with the majority of the property having a cover of poplar, birch and maple. The 80-acre parcel also includes about 1,800 feet of stream thread on the Long Lake Branch of the White River. The stream is narrow and meandering in this area, but does offer recreational opportunities.

The 40-acre parcel consists primarily of lowland woodland, with a gentle slope in topography. Covertypes for this parcel are also a mixture of deciduous and conifer, with the majority of the property having a cover of poplar, birch and maple, with some blow-down areas scattered throughout.



State Natural Area – Sugar Camp Hemlocks: The overall subject property consists of approximately 50% upland and 50% lowland. Upland areas are gently rolling and composed mostly of hemlock and pine forests, with some stands of northern hardwoods. The hemlock is well-stocked and of older growth quality, providing good scenery along with winter deer cover. Scattered large pine, mixed in with the hemlock, add additional character and timber volume. The lowland areas are relatively level and composed mostly of spruce and tamarack, with alder thickets.

Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest:

The purchase consists of four parcels, most of which is on the Rainbow Flowage. One parcel of land includes a small, 2-acre, upland site on a town road. Otherwise, the rest of the property has no road frontage and is accessible only across adjacent department lands. The 2-acre upland parcel includes about 1,000 feet of frontage on the western edge of the Rainbow Flowage. It is mostly level, with a gradual slope down towards the water. Covertype on this small parcel is pine forest.

It is noted that, while much of the 141.5 acres is submerged land, it is seasonably above water. Department ownership is helpful for management and enforcement. At another location, near the south project boundary, BCPL will convey a 19.5-acre parcel with 1,550 feet of Wisconsin River frontage.

Zoning: Forestry, Agriculture and Shoreland.

Present Use: Currently, state-owned and managed for sustained yield timber production and public recreation.

Proposed Use: Resource Protection and Public Recreation

Tenure: The BCPL land was acquired at the beginning of statehood and with some subsequent transfers, from the federal government.

Property Taxes: All parcels are tax exempt.

Stewardship Land Access: The land will be open for public hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, and other nature-based outdoor recreation.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department proposes to acquire 361 acres of land from the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands for the Bibon Swamp Natural Area, the Statewide Natural Areas and the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest located in Bayfield and Oneida Counties. Department ownership of the property will provide opportunities to restore and protect wildlife habitat, provide additional opportunities for public recreation and education, and insure long-term resource protection.

State Natural Area – Bibon Swamp:

The 120-acre subject is entirely within the established project boundary of the Bibon Swamp State Natural Area and is located in central Bayfield County. The subject property consists of two non-contiguous parcels of land, one 80 acres and the other 40 acres in size. Department land borders the 40-acre parcel on all sides, and the 80-acre parcel on three sides, with private land to the south. Both parcels have no road frontage and are accessible only across adjacent department lands.

The largest wetland in Bayfield County, Bibon Swamp is a mosaic of community types lying within a 15-square mile basin. The White River, a hard, coldwater trout stream, meanders through the site and is popular with anglers and canoeists alike. Portions are forested with a rich wet-mesic conifer swamp of medium-sized white cedar, although trunk coring revealed that at least parts of the stand are in excess of 150 years old. North of the river, conditions are very different, with a large complex of peatland communities including open bog, spruce-tamarack muskeg, and black spruce swamp. Birds found in these coniferous peatlands include palm warbler, yellow-bellied flycatcher, boreal chickadee, and sharp-shinned hawk. The site supports a variety of rare plants and animals, including three state-threatened species: wood turtle, sheathed pondweed, and sweet-colt's-foot. Other rarities are great gray owl, bald eagle, osprey, and showy lady's-slipper. In addition to fishing and canoeing, Bibon Swamp offers many other recreational activities including hunting, hiking, bird watching, and snowshoeing.

State Natural Area – Sugar Camp Hemlocks:

The 80-acre subject is a recently established natural area under the Statewide Natural Areas program and is located in northeastern Oneida County. The subject property consists of two, 40-acre parcels, connected at one corner. The southern 40 acres has direct town road access, which terminates in the adjacent private property to the north, prior to reaching the northern 40 acres of the subject. There is no other state land directly adjacent, but the parcel is located within four miles of Thunder Lake Wildlife Area. Acquisition will preserve the overall character of the site and allow for natural area management of the hemlock stands.

Sugar Camp Hemlocks features an old-growth hemlock dominated forest, apparently of fire origin, with scattered super canopy white and red pine. The largest stand features large red pine over dense hemlock adjacent to a conifer swamp of black spruce and tamarack. Several small outlying islands of hemlock and white pine occur in the conifer swamp west of the main hemlock stand. Except for a few pine and yellow birch stumps from a past salvage harvest, there has been very little recent disturbance. This northern forest community type and late successional stage are not well represented on the local landscape. Acquisition will also help fill a gap for this forest type within the SNA Program.

Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest:

The 161 acres to be added to the state forest involves four parcels within the established project boundary of the state forest located in north-central Oneida County. The first parcel consists of 19.5 acres of bottomland hardwood located along the Wisconsin River. Department land borders the property on all sides, including across the river. The property has no road frontage and is accessible only across adjacent department lands.

Established in 1925 to protect the headwaters of the Wisconsin, Flambeau and Manitowish Rivers, the Northern Highland and American Legion (NHAL) State Forests include more than 225,000 acres in Vilas, Oneida and Iron Counties. The nearest cities are Woodruff, Minocqua, Rhinelander and Eagle River. Many visitors are from the population centers of southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The primary use of the forest is for silvicultural practices and the growth of recurring forest crops with scenic values, outdoor recreation, public hunting and stabilization of stream flow as extra benefits. Each year approximately 45,000 cords of pulpwood and 1.5 million board feet of sawlogs are harvested in the forest, which contributes to employment in the woods and mills and provides commodities. Sale of timber products returns \$400,000 to \$500,000 per year to the state.

There are numerous state-operated campgrounds, boat landings, hiking, and ski trails, providing recreational opportunities to 2,000,000 campers and visitors each year. Private facilities offering motel and housekeeping units are found throughout the forest and restaurants and retail businesses are located near population centers throughout the forest. The beautiful lakes, streams, and woods found within the state forest boundaries, together with recreational opportunities and other amenities, make this area one of the leading tourist attractions of northern Wisconsin.

The remaining 141.5 acres consists of three separate parcels of land consisting primarily of submerged lands within the Rainbow Flowage in the NHAL State Forest. However, with summer draw-down and drought conditions, this land is often exposed during part of the year and ownership will allow for consistent management and enforcement of the property at those times. Department land borders the subject property on almost all sides.

Given that the property is fully within the Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest project boundary and blocks well with current ownership, this acquisition would serve well in meeting the Department's acquisition goals.

Summary:

The Department recommends the purchase of the all of the above-described properties totaling 361 acres to allow management for wildlife habitat, to insure public access for recreation, and provide resource protection. All parcels block well with existing department lands and will consolidate department ownership within the project boundaries.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$3,096,706*	\$505,706

*Includes FY08 carryover

4a. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE BIBON SWAMP NATURAL AREA:

Established: 1980
Acres Purchased to Date: 9,362.25
Acquisition Goal: 8,234.00
Percent Complete: 113.70
Cost to Date: \$1,943,521.00

4b. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE STATEWIDE NATURAL AREA:

Established: 1972
Acres Purchased to Date: 16,359.65
Acquisition Goal: 10,500.00
Percent Complete: 155.81
Cost to Date: \$6,373,884.63

4c. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE NORTHERN HIGHLAND AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST:

Established: 1925
Acres Purchased to Date: 227,300
Acquisition Goal: 291,100
Percent Complete: 78.1%
Cost to Date: \$27,939,770

5a. APPRAISAL - Statewide Natural Area - Bibon Swamp parcel:

Appraiser: Craig Solum (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: July 1, 2008
Appraised Value: \$137,000
Highest and Best Use: Forestry and Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 120 acres @ \$1,142 per acre: \$137,000
- b. market data approach used, six comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range:
 - Parcel 1 (80 acres) \$1,226 to \$1,335 per acre
 - Parcel 2 (40 acres) \$823 to \$887 per acre

Reviewed by: Jeff Pennucci - January 13, 2009

5b. APPRAISAL - Statewide Natural Area - Sugar Camp Hemlocks:

Appraiser: Compass Land Consulting, LLC (Private Appraiser)
Valuation Date: October 20, 2008
Appraised Value: \$144,000
Highest and Best Use: Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 80 acres @ \$1,800 per acre: \$144,000
- b. market data approach used, Five comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$1,500 to \$1,900 per acre

Reviewed by: Jeff Pennucci - January 13, 2009

5c. APPRAISAL: - American Legion State Forest:

Appraiser: Jolene Brod (Private Appraiser)

Valuation Date: October 27, 2008

Appraised Value: \$19,500

Highest and Best Use: Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 19.5 acres @ \$1,000 per acre: \$19,500
- b. market data approach used, three comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$925 to \$1,428 per acre

Reviewed by: Jeff Pennucci - January 13, 2009

5d. APPRAISAL - American Legion State Forest - Rainbow Flowage Area:

Appraiser: Jolene Brod (Private Appraiser)

Valuation Date: October 27, 2008

Appraised Value: \$25,000


Highest and Best Use: Recreation

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 141.48 acres @ \$177 per acre: \$25,000
 - 2-acre upland site considered at \$11,052 for the site
 - Submerged land considered at \$100/acre (\$13,948 total)
- b. market data approach used, three comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range \$18,115 to \$35,093 total land value

Reviewed by: Jeff Pennucci - January 13, 2009

RECOMMENDED:



 Richard E. Steffes

1-21-09

 Date



 Bureau of Legal Services

1/22/09

 Date



 Laurie Osterndorf

1/27/09

 Date

RES:dv

