

# State of Wisconsin

SENATE CHAIR  
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## Joint Committee on Finance

### MEMORANDUM

To: Members  
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Alberta Darling  
Representative John Nygren

Date: June 1, 2018

Re: 14-Day Passive Review Approval – DNR

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m), Stats., attached is a 14-day passive review request from the Department of Natural Resources, received on June 1, 2018.

Please review the material and notify **Senator Darling** or **Representative Nygren** no later than **Wednesday, June 20, 2018**, if you have any concerns about the request or if you would like the Committee to meet formally to consider it.

Also, please contact us if you need further information.

Attachments

AD:JN:jm

State of Wisconsin  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
101 S. Webster Street  
Box 7921  
Madison WI 53707-7921

Scott Walker, Governor  
Daniel L. Meyer, Secretary  
Telephone 608-266-2621  
FAX 608-267-3579  
TTY Access via relay - 711



May 25, 2018

The Honorable Alberta Darling, Co-Chair  
Committee on Joint Finance  
Room 317 East  
State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison WI 53707-7882

The Honorable John Nygren, Co-Chair  
Committee on Joint Finance  
Room 309 East  
State Capitol  
PO Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53707-53708

JUN 01 2018  
St. Finance

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Nygren:

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m)(a), Wis. Stats., the Department is notifying you of paired, proposed Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grants exceeding \$250,000 to the West Wisconsin Land Trust for land purchases in Buffalo and Dunn Counties.

These two projects are tied to each other by seller – they are being offered to the land trust by Xcel Energy - and by federal match funding secured for the combined purchase.

The grants proposed are:

\$460,545.00 for 461.84 in Towns of Maxville and Nelson, Buffalo County  
\$706,045.00 for 561.95 acres in the Town of Peru, Dunn County

Both properties lie adjacent to DNR lands along the Chippewa River. As Xcel Energy divests of land holdings the area, Land Trust purchase of these parcels will ensure permanent public access to high quality conservation lands along the Chippewa corridor. These lands will be open to the public for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross-county skiing, and wildlife viewing.

As provided in s. 23.0917(6m)(a), Wis. Stats., if the Department does not receive notification of the scheduling of a hearing from either of the Joint Committee on Finance co-chairpersons within 14 working days from today, the Department will award these grants.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Daniel L. Meyer  
Secretary

C: Doug Haag, Administrator, Internal Services Division  
Terry Bay, Director, Bureau of Facilities and Lands  
Pamela Foster Felt, Stewardship Grant Manager

**DATE:** May 25, 2018

**TO:** Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

**FROM:** Daniel L. Meyer, Secretary

**SUBJECT: Request for approval of a Stewardship grant exceeding \$250,000.00 – West Wisconsin Land Trust, Meridean Barrens purchase.**

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m)(a) and (c), Wis. Stats., the Department of Natural Resources is notifying you of a proposed Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant of \$706,045.00 to West Wisconsin Land Trust for the acquisition of 562 acres. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is funded under s. 20.866(2)(ta), Wis. Stats.

**I. PROJECT DETAILS:**

**Project Sponsor:** West Wisconsin Land Trust

**Grant sub-program:** Natural Areas

**Location:** This property is in the Town of Peru, Dunn County, and shares a border with land purchased last year by DNR in the Chippewa River bottoms. The proposed Land Trust acquisition will connect DNR land to a small parking area off 650<sup>th</sup> street. Project maps are attached as Appendix A.

**Project Description:** West Wisconsin Land Trust seeks to purchase this parcels from Xcel Energy to keep key tracts of conservation land open to the public as Xcel divests of significant acreage in the region. This 562-acre parcel is part of a wetland and barrens complex lying near and within the lower Chippewa River floodplain. Within DNR's Lower Chippewa State Natural Area boundary and adjacent to state lands, conservation of this parcel will ensure a large, viable and diverse riparian and upland barrens complex for conservation and public recreation purposes.

This tract hosts several community-types including forested, emergent and oxbow wetlands, grassland and shrubland, hardwood forest, pine plantation and scattered sections of agricultural land. A high-quality sand prairie remnant on the parcel supports several state-identified Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The tract contains over 10,000 feet of frontage on Duscham Creek, a cold-water tributary to the Chippewa River.

**Key benefits:**

- Land Trust purchase will ensure this tract will continue to be a public asset, to be managed in coordination with adjacent state land and
- This acquisition will enhance public investment in adjacent DNR property by adding important upland habitat to a stretch of conserved floodplain habitat.
- This will add public parking and access to upland barrens and Duscham Creek.
- Protection of Duscham Creek will benefit state-listed fish and mussel species and the federally endangered Bullhead.

**Partnerships:**

- The West Wisconsin Land Trust has secured federal North American Wetland Conservation (NAWCA) funding for a portion of the purchase price. Matching partners to the federal grant include Beaver Creek Reserve and Xcel Energy. Other local partners have contributed cash match for the project: Lower Chippewa River Alliance, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Alma Rod and Gun Club, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.
- Letters of support for this project were received from Alliance of Dunn County Conservation & Sports Clubs, Dunn County Fish & Game Association, Inc., the Lower Chippewa River Alliance, the Chippewa Savannas Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts, and the Lower Chippewa Invasives Partnership.

**Consistency with planning:** This property has been identified as conservation priority by several regional conservation plans:

- Wisconsin's Land Legacy report
- WI Wildlife Action Plan's Lower Chippewa River Bluffs and Floodplain Conservation Opportunity Area
- Lower Chippewa River Important Bird Area, the focus of the North American Wetland Conservation Act grant awarded for these acquisitions
- The Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture plan

The Meridean Barrens acquisition is consistent with local comprehensive planning priorities:

- Dunn County Outdoor Recreation Plan states a goal "to provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation facilities."
- Dunn County Land and Water Resource Management Plan includes a goal, to "support acquisition and restoration of natural areas, wetlands, trout streams, fish and wildlife areas, ... and recreational lands."
- The Town of Peru's Comprehensive Plan includes objectives to "Preserve and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat," and to "protect/preserve the rural character of the town."

**Local support.** The Dunn County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution supporting the proposed purchase by West Wisconsin Land Trust and encouraging DNR to award the grant funds to facilitate the acquisition.

**Public Uses:** The land is frequently used by the public: portions of this property are enrolled in "open" Managed Forest Law and small sections are open via temporary public hunting leases. This purchase will ensure permanent public access for low-impact recreational activities including hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

The Department's analysis of the permitted nature-based outdoor activities is attached as Appendix B.

**Property Management:** The property will be held and managed by West Wisconsin Land Trust in cooperation with DNR management of adjacent state lands.

**PROJECT FINANCES**

**A. Appraisals**

As required by s. 23.0917(7)(e)1., Wis. Stats., two appraisals were used to determine the fair market value of the land.

Appraisal 1	\$1,405,000.00
Appraisal 2	\$1,685,000.00

**B: Grant Calculation:**

Accepted land value	\$1,405,000.00
Eligible related transaction costs	\$7090.00
Total eligible project costs	\$1,412,090.00

**Requested Stewardship grant amount** **\$706,045.00**

**III. RECOMMENDED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Terry Bay, Director, Bureau of Facilities and Lands

5/29/18  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Doug Haag, Administrator, Division of Internal Services

5-29-18  
Date

**DATE:** May 25, 2018

**TO:** Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

**FROM:** Daniel L. Meyer, Secretary

**SUBJECT: Request for approval of a Stewardship grant exceeding \$250,000 – West Wisconsin Land Trust, Stump Lake tracts**

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m)(a) and (c), Wis. Stats., the Department of Natural Resources is notifying you of a proposed Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant of \$460,545.00 to the West Wisconsin Land Trust for the acquisition of 462.16 acres. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is funded under s. 20.866(2)(ta), Wis. Stats.

#### **I. PROJECT DETAILS:**

**Project Sponsor:** West Wisconsin Land Trust  
**Grant sub-program:** Habitat Areas

**Location:** This grant is proposed for two separate parcels. The larger, 397.53 acres in the Town of Maxville, includes much of Stump Lake, and fills a gap in Tiffany Wildlife Area between the Chippewa River and Hwy. 25. The smaller, 64.31 acres in the Town of Nelson, also adjacent to the State Wildlife Area, fronts Hwy. 25. Project maps are attached as Appendix A.

#### **Project Description:**

West Wisconsin Land Trust seeks to purchase these parcels from Xcel Energy to keep key tracts of conservation land open to the public as Xcel divests of significant acreage in the region.

These properties are surrounded by Tiffany State Wildlife Area. The prominent feature of this proposed purchase is a large portion of Stump lake; this purchase would bring the entire lake into public conservation ownership. The parcels also contain several priority wetland communities and savanna and prairie conservation opportunities.

Numerous game and non-game species use the property including tundra swan, wood duck, blue-winged teal, prothonotary warbler, blue-winged warbler and American woodcock. This section of Tiffany Wildlife Area currently hosts the last remaining viable population of the eastern massasauga rattlesnake in Wisconsin, a state endangered species.

A portion of the property is currently managed by DNR via an MOU with Xcel. DNR crews maintain grassland via prescribed fire on a portion of Xcel's property and use it to access burn units on adjacent DNR land. While not open to the public through any formal means, this property is used regularly by the public, primarily hunters, as an extension of the contiguous public land.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Will fill in the largest remaining section of WI DNR's Tiffany Bottoms project area and bring all of Stump Lake in to public conservation ownership.
- Will permanently conserve high quality wildlife habitat around the largest deep-water marsh in the Tiffany Wildlife Area complex.

- This sale will preserve DNR management access to the adjacent state lands, and keep Stump Lake open to public recreators. If not sold to the Land Trust, a private sale will likely eliminate both.
- Will permanently secure access to a section of Tiffany WA where parking and access points along the eastern boundary are currently ~3.5 miles apart.

**Partnerships:**

- The West Wisconsin Land Trust has secured federal NAWCA funding for a portion of the purchase price. Matching partners to the federal grant include Beaver Creek Reserve and Xcel Energy. Other local partners have contributed cash match for the project: Lower Chippewa River Alliance, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Alma Rod and Gun Club, and Buffalo County.
- Letters of support for this project were received from Alma Rod & Gun Club, Chippewa Valley Motor Car Association, and the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

**Consistency with planning:** These 462 acres lie in a landscape identified as conservation priority by several regional and conservation plans:

- Wisconsin’s Land Legacy report
- Wisconsin Statewide Wildlife Action Plan
- Lower Chippewa River Important Bird Area (the focus of the NAWCA grant).
- The Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Plan
- DNR’s Lower Chippewa River Properties Master Plan

The Stump Lake acquisition will also address priorities listed in the Buffalo County Outdoor Recreation Plan. Specifically, it will:

- Provide public fishing opportunities, a “high priority.” Stump Lake contains largemouth bass and northern pike.
- Allow for promotion of a birding and wildlife opportunity; a “medium priority.” The property is accessible from a narrow-gauge rail line maintained by the Chippewa Valley Motor Car Association, and used regularly for birding and wildlife-viewing field trips.

**Local engagement:** Land Trust, Xcel Energy and DNR staff have been in ongoing communication with Town and County officials regarding pending sales and proposed public grants for purchase of these properties.

- Buffalo County’s Board passed resolution supporting a Stewardship grant to West Wisconsin Land Trust for this acquisition.
- In response to DNR’s notification of this proposed grant, the Town of Nelson initially opposed the project, citing concerns about the Town’s property tax revenue. Staff from DNR, the Land Trust and Xcel met with the Town Board, who explained their objection was not to the Land Trust’s purchase per se, but that the Town took the opportunity to call DNR’s attention to concerns about revenue from public land, and how the Managed Forest Law has notably reduced Town tax revenue. Acknowledging that Xcel’s sale of this property will likely mean reduced tax payment for the Town from any buyer, the Board reversed their objection and is supporting the project with a request that DNR help share their concerns with elected officials.
- The Town of Maxville has opposed Stewardship-funded acquisition by the Land Trust. This resolution, after discussion with DNR, Xcel and Land Trust staff, is also based on concern about the loss of property tax revenue paid by Xcel to date.

**Public Uses:** The property will be open to the public for low-impact recreational activities including hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The Department's analysis of the permitted nature-based outdoor activities is attached as Appendix B.

**Property Management:** The property is already managed in partnership with DNR Wildlife Management; that cooperative management would continue under West Wisconsin Land Trust ownership.

**II. PROJECT FINANCES**

**A. Appraisals**

As required by s. 23.0917(7)(e)1., Wis. Stats., two appraisals were reviewed to determine the fair market value of the land.

Appraisal 1	\$914,000.00
Appraisal 2	\$1,016,000.00

**B: Grant Calculation:**

Accepted land value	\$914,000.00
Eligible related costs	\$7,090.00
Total eligible project costs	\$921,090.00
<b>Proposed Stewardship grant (50%)</b>	<b>\$460,545.00</b>

**III. RECOMMENDED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Terry Bay, Director, Bureau of Facilities and Lands

5/29/18  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Doug Haag, Administrator, Division of Internal Services

5-29-18  
Date

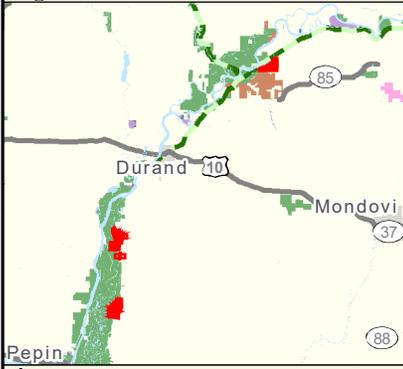
# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Stump Lake & Meridean Barrens

Proposed Stewardship Grant

Buffalo and Dunn County

- Subject Property
- DNR Fee Title Lands Open to Public Access
- DNR Easement Lands Open to Public Access
- DNR Easement Lands Closed to Public Access
- State Natural Area
- Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
- Voluntary Public Access Land
- NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
- NRCS - EWPP-FPE (Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program - closed to public access)
- State Recreation Trail

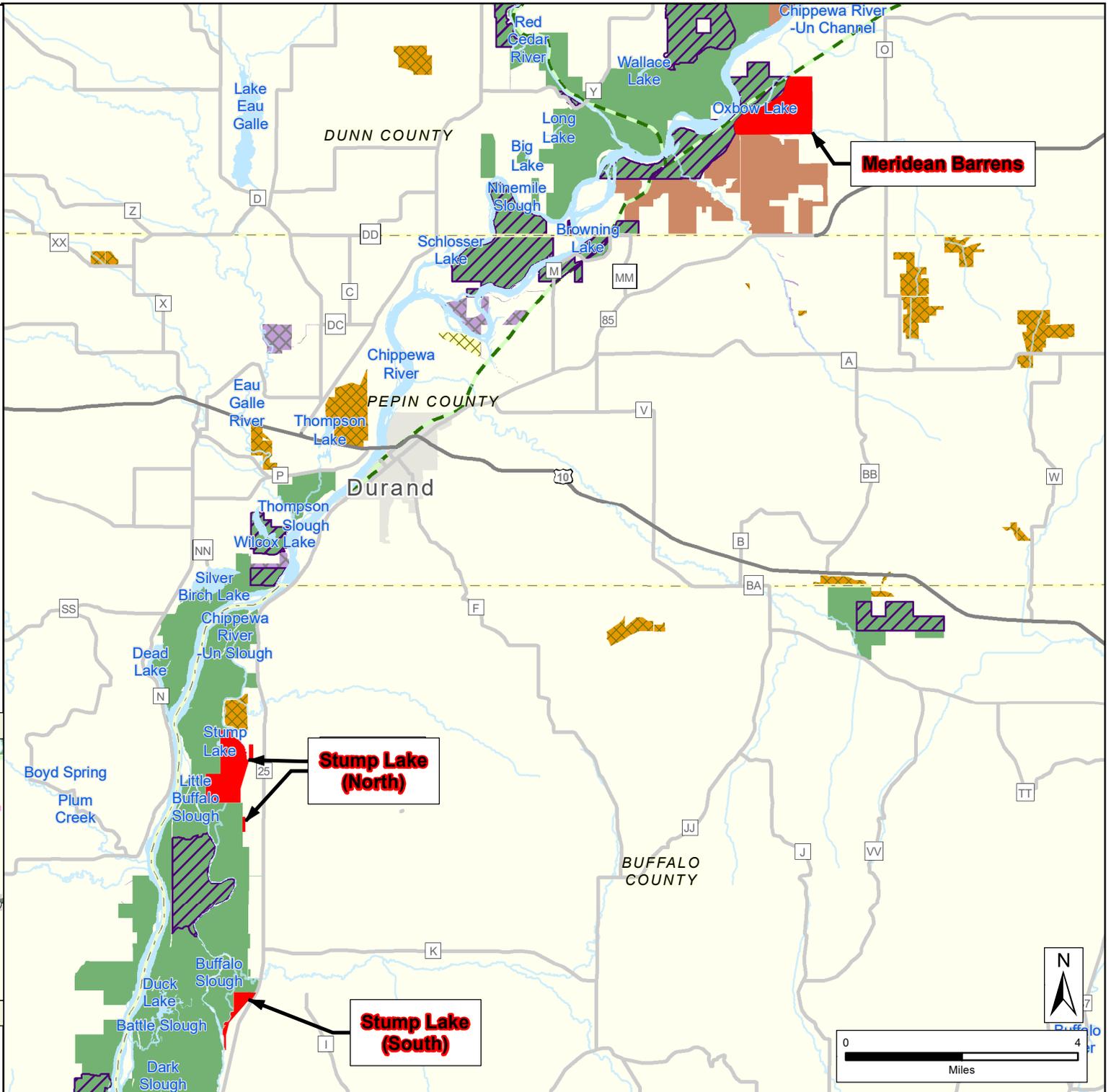
## Regional View



★ Location of Property



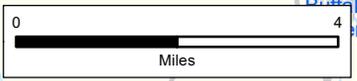
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Bureau of Facilities of Lands  
Map Created: May 17, 2018 .jpk



**Stump Lake (North)**

**Stump Lake (South)**

**Meridean Barrens**



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# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Meridean Barrens Lake

Proposed Stewardship Grant

T26N R12W  
Sec 21, 22, 27, & 28  
Town of Peru  
Dunn County

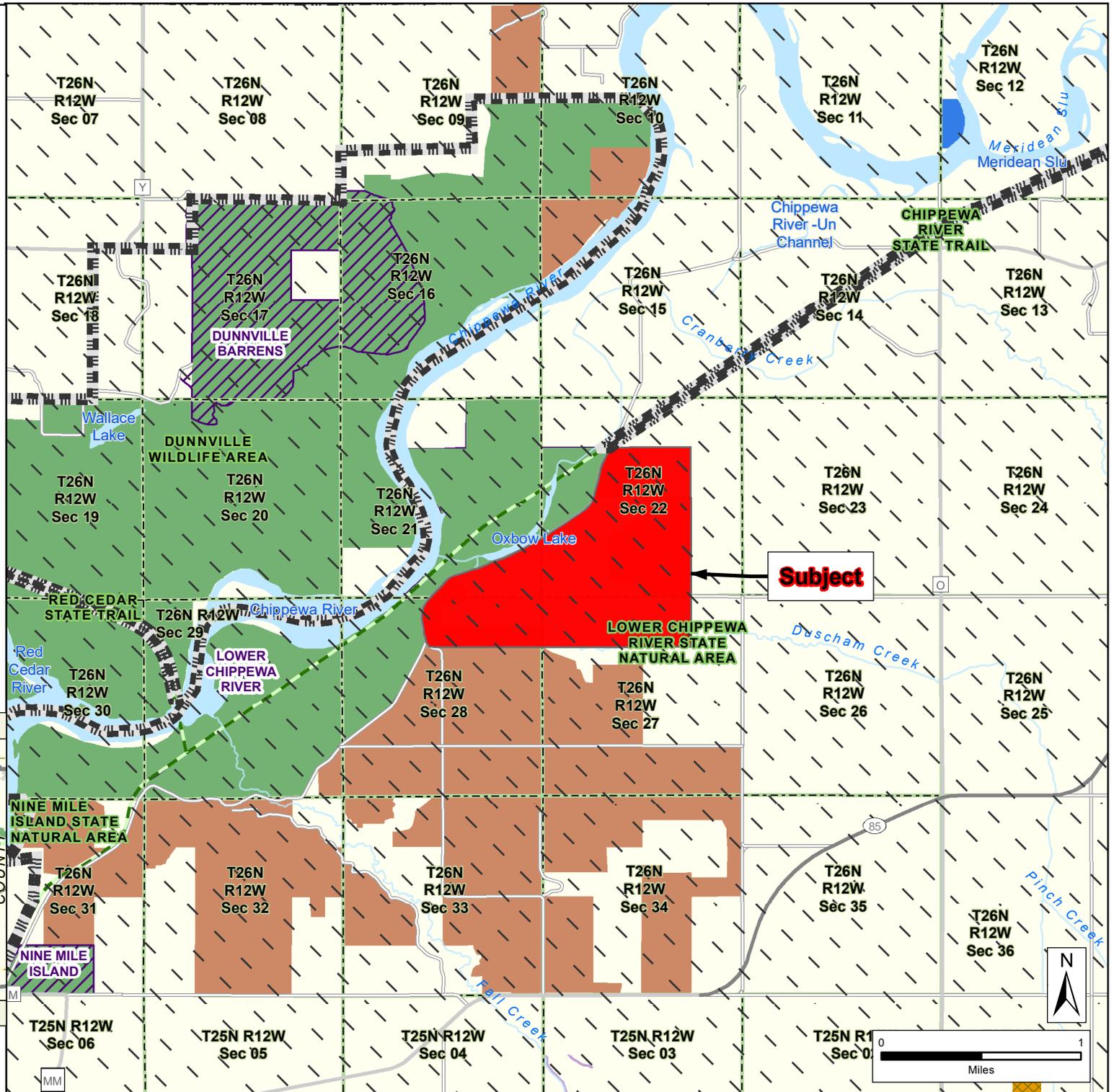
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  DNR Fee Title Lands Open to Public Access
-  DNR Easement Lands Open to Public Access
-  State Natural Area
-  Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
-  Voluntary Public Access Land
-  NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
-  State Recreation Trail
-  PLSS Section Lines

## Regional View

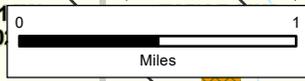


★ Location of Property


**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**  
 Bureau of Facilities of Lands  
 Map Created: May 17, 2018 jpk



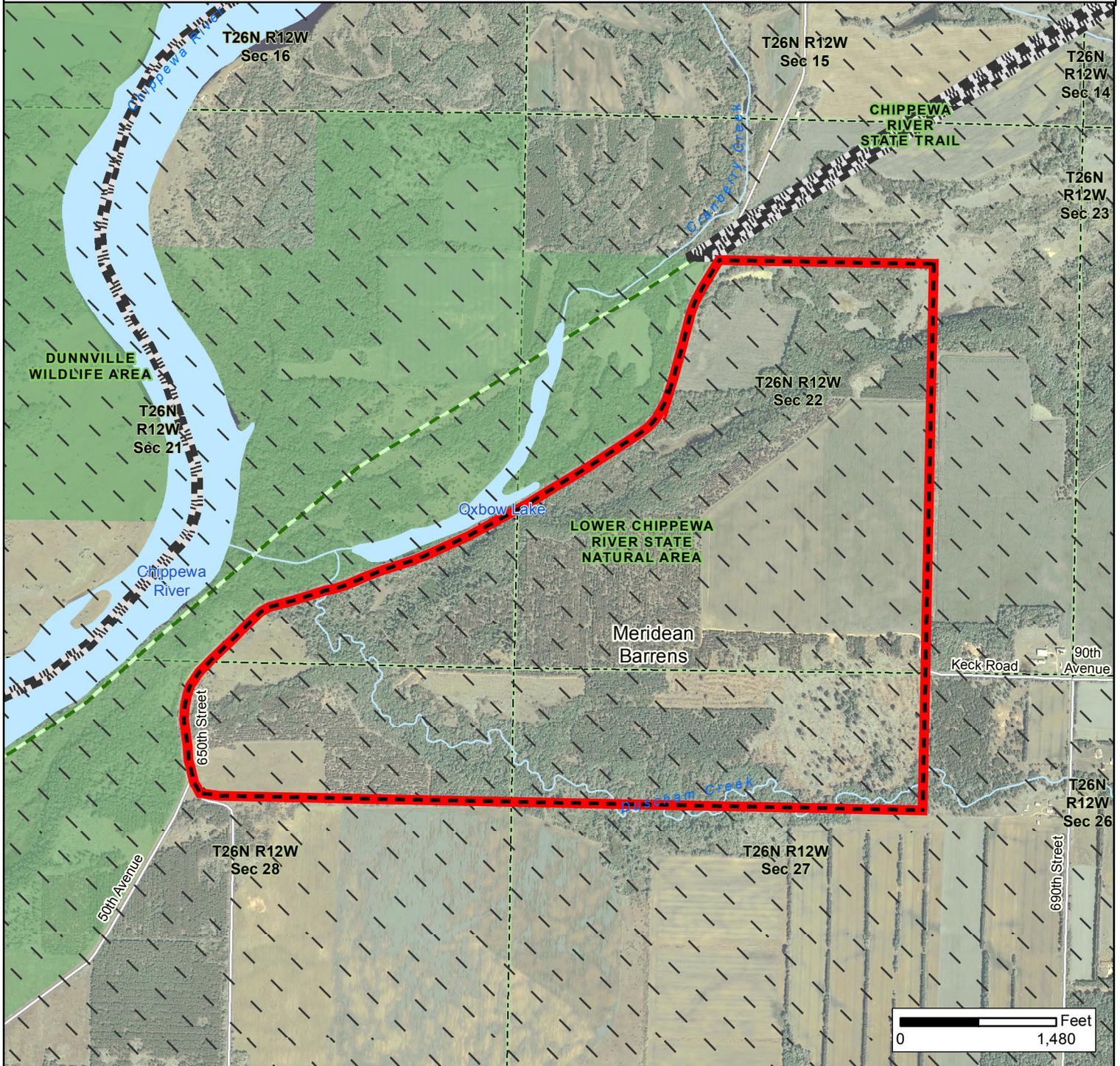
**Subject**



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# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Meridean Barrens

Proposed Grant Sponsor: West Wisconsin Land Trust T26N R12W Sec 21, 22, 27 & 28, Town of Peru  
 Approximate Total Acreage: 561.95 County: Dunn



**Proposed Stewardship Grant**

 **Subject**

-  DNR Project Boundary
-  DNR Fee Title Lands
-  State Recreation Trail
-  PLSS Section Lines



Aug 02, 2017 jpk

Real Estate Section  
 Bureau of Facilities and Lands

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# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Stump Lake

Proposed Stewardship Grant

T24N R14W Sec 13, 24

T24N R13W Sec 18

T24N R14W Sec 25

T23N R14W Sec 12

T23N R13W Sec 07

Towns of Maxville, Nelson

Buffalo County

-  DNR Project Boundary
-  DNR Fee Title Lands Open to Public Access
-  DNR Easement Lands Open to Public Access
-  NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
-  PLSS Section Lines

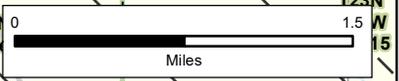
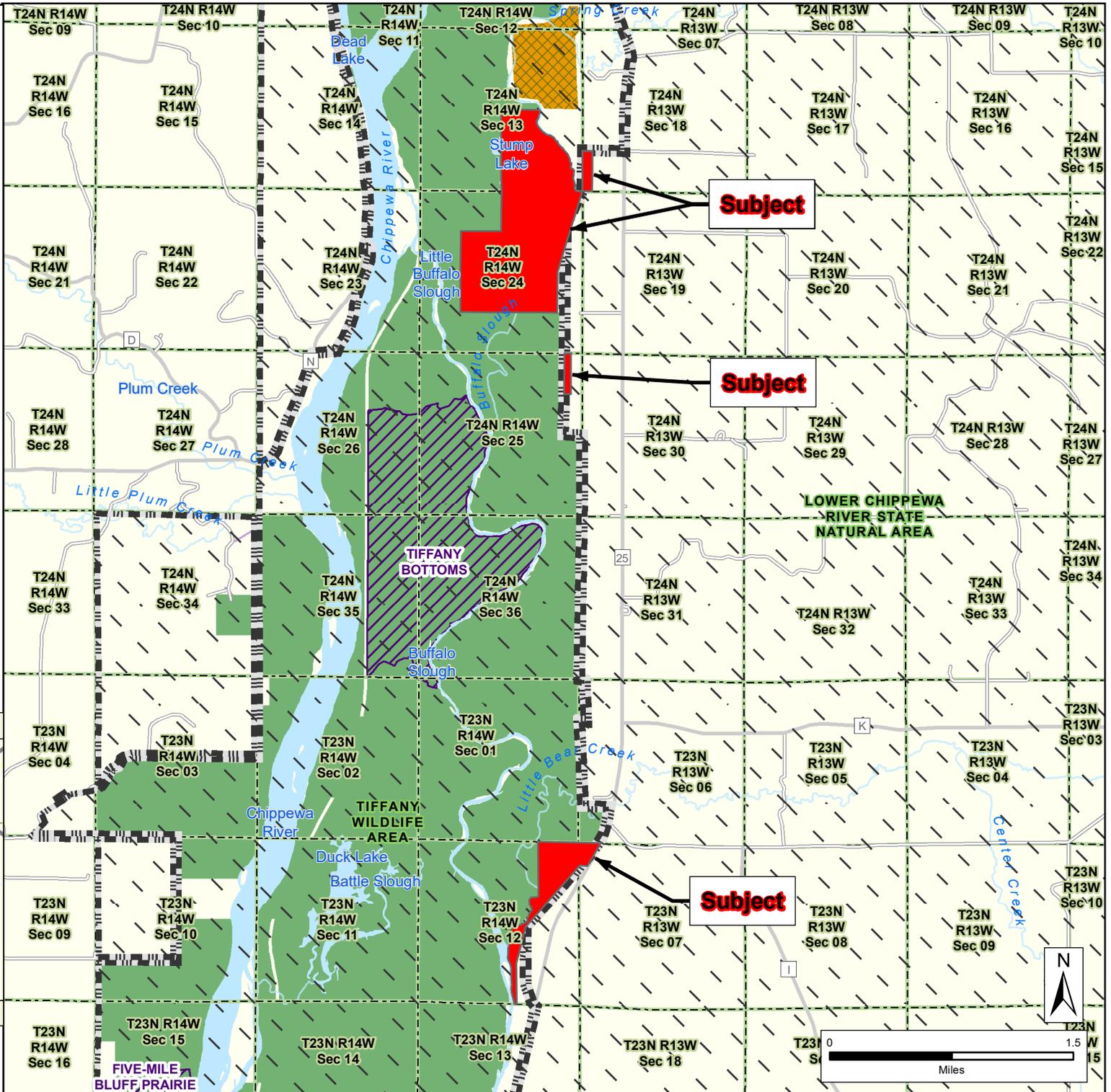
## Regional View



 Location of Property



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Bureau of Facilities of Lands  
Map Created: May 17, 2018 jpk



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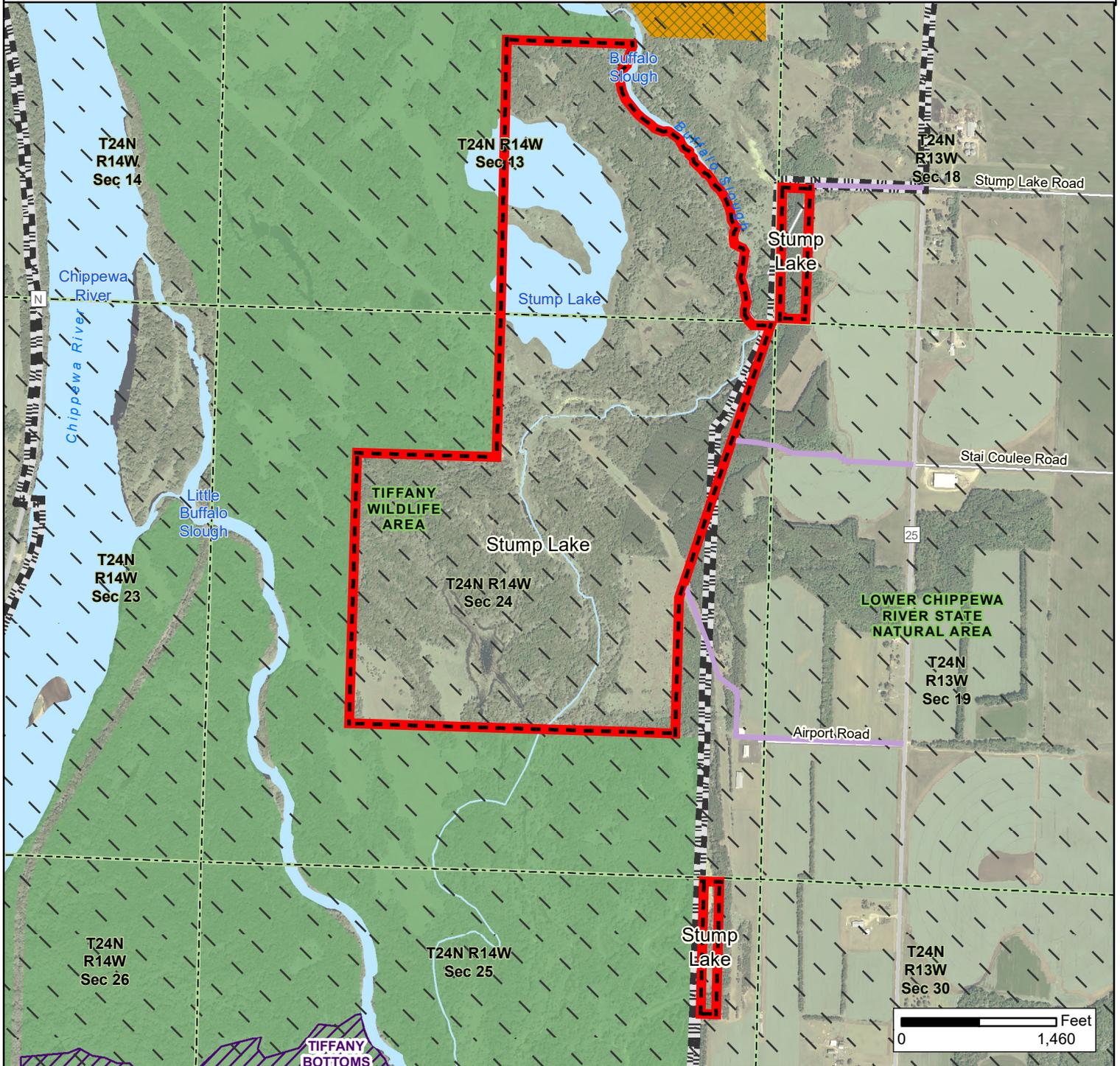
# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Stump Lake (North)

Proposed Grant Sponsor: West Wisconsin Land Trust

T24N R14W Sec 13,24,25 & T24N R13W Sec 18, Town of Maxville

Approximate Total Acreage: 400.51

County: Buffalo



## Proposed Stewardship Grant

 Subject

-  Access Easements
-  DNR Project Boundary
-  DNR Fee Title Lands
-  State Natural Area
-  NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
-  PLSS Section Lines



May 17, 2018 jpk

Real Estate Section  
Bureau of Facilities and Lands

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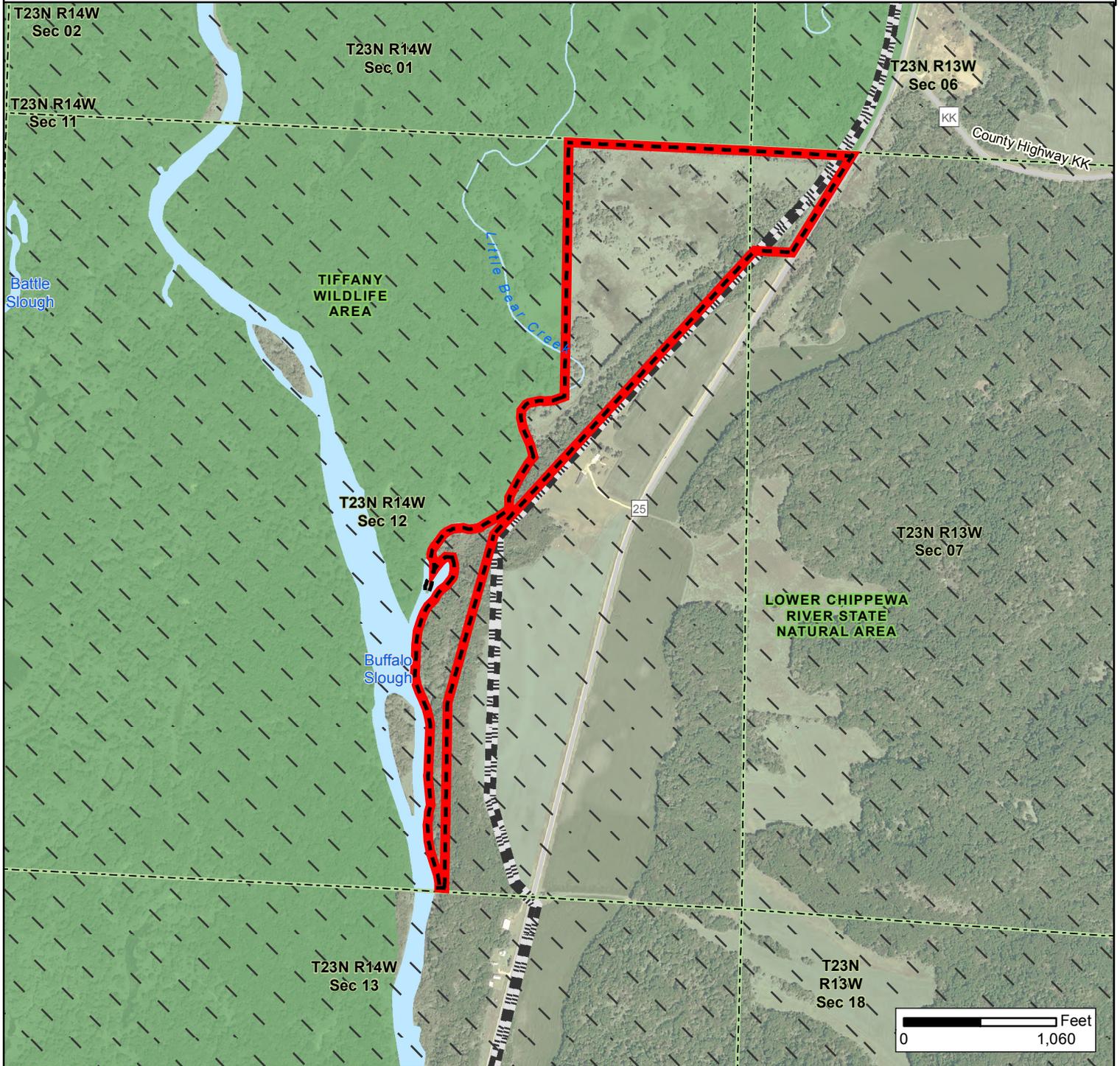
# Xcel Phase II Partner Acquisitions: Stump Lake (South)

Proposed Grant Sponsor: West Wisconsin Land Trust

T23N R14W Sec 12 & T23N R13W Sec 07, Town of Nelson

Approximate Total Acreage: 64.31

County: Buffalo



**Proposed  
Stewardship Grant**

 **Subject**

-  DNR Project Boundary
-  DNR Fee Title Lands
-  PLSS Section Lines



Aug 02, 2017 jpk

Real Estate Section  
Bureau of Facilities and Lands

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