

State of Wisconsin

SENATE CHAIR
Howard Marklein

316 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Phone: (608) 266-0703



ASSEMBLY CHAIR
Mark Born

308 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8592
Madison, WI 53708-8953
Phone: (608) 266-2540

Joint Committee on Finance

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Howard Marklein
Representative Mark Born

Date: December 18, 2023

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 December 18, 2023.

Please review the material and notify **Senator Marklein** or **Representative Born** no later than **Monday, January 8, 2024**, 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

HM:MB:jm

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

DEC 1 8 2023

Tony Evers, Governor
Adam N. Payne, Secretary
Telephone 608-266-2621
Toll Free 1-888-936-7463
TTY Access via relay - 711



November 15, 2023

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

The Honorable Mark Born, Co-Chair
Committee on Joint Finance
Room 308 East
State Capitol
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53707

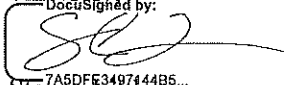
Dear Senator Marklein and Representative Born:

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m), Wis. Stats., the Department is notifying you as co-chairs of the Committee on Joint Finance of a proposed grant of \$1,491,280 from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to the Badgerland Bird Alliance (formerly Madison Audubon Society) for land acquisition.

The acquisition is located in the Town of Christiana, Dane County. The proposed project will protect 330 acres of endangered grassland bird and monarch habitat in the historic Koshkonong Prairie of southeast Dane County. The property has been in the Gunnulson family since 1841 and has significant cultural history. The Town of Christiana passed a resolution in support of this project. The property will be open to nature-based outdoor activities as defined in s. 23.0916(1)(b), Wis. Stats.

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 submission of this letter, the Department will award this grant.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
DocuSigned by:

7A5DFE3497144B5...
Steven Little
Deputy Secretary

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 15, 2023

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Steven Little, Deputy Secretary

SUBJECT: Request for approval of a Stewardship grant exceeding \$250,000

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m), Wis. Stats., the Department of Natural Resources is notifying you of a proposed Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant of \$1,491,280 to the Badgerland Bird Alliance (formerly Madison Audubon Society) for the acquisition of approximately 330 acres in Dane County. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is funded under s. 20.866(2)(ta), Wis. Stats.

I. PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Sponsor: Badgerland Bird Alliance (BBA)

Grant sub-program: Habitat Areas

Location: The subject property is located in the Town of Christiana, southeast Dane County. Project maps are attached as Appendix A.

Project Description: The property has gently rolling hills with several elevated scenic views. Of the 330 acres, 240 acres are cool season grasses which provide habitat for endangered species, including grassland wildlife, birds and breeding/migrating monarch butterflies. The remainder of the property has 18 acres of planted prairie with BBA assistance, as well as pasture for cattle grazing and woodland. The property has not been planted to row crops or had use of herbicide in over 30 years.

BBA will construct a gravel parking lot on the south side of the existing driveway with a kiosk and interpretive signage. An observation area is planned for the high point on the west end of the property. Approximately 5.5 miles of trails will be available for the public to hike and ski. Historic and cultural information will be provided by the landowner, BBA and the Historical Society. This property is part of the original 16,000-acre Koshkonong prairie.

Key benefits: This acquisition will protect habitat for endangered grassland birds, monarch migration, and other pollinator species. Threatened and endangered birds on the Department's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need will benefit from the acquisition. The acquisition will also provide public nature-based outdoor recreation and education in a high population area of the state and will preserve the scenic views and rural character of the property according to Town planning and landowner wishes.

Partnerships:

- Dane County Conservation Fund (\$745,640 pending contribution).
- Town of Christiana passed a resolution in favor of protection of the Gunnulson property (attached as Appendix B).
- Groundswell Conservancy, The Prairie Enthusiasts, and Driftless Area Land Conservancy provided letters in support of this acquisition (attached as Appendix C).
- Groundswell Conservancy and The Prairie Enthusiasts will provide prairie seed from nearby Smith Reiner State Natural Area.

Project Goals: The Gunnulson Koshkonong Prairie acquisition advances objectives of several conservation and recreational plans:

- BBA will continue to re-establish high diversity native prairie in the 16,000-acre original Koshkonong Prairie.
- Provides breeding monarch habitat per the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative Plan.
- Preserves cultural history of the Gunnulson family as original settlers in 1841 from Norway in the Town of Christiana.
- Links an additional preserve within the Department’s Glacial Heritage Area to nearby population centers for outdoor recreation and nature-based activities on restored habitat.
- Consistent with the goals of the Town of Christiana Comprehensive Plan to preserve natural resources and protect the environment and to encourage land uses that are consistent with and contribute to the Town’s rural character.
- Protects mapped wetlands on-site, ensuring the continued retention of floodwaters moving downslope to Koshkonong Creek.
- Provides opportunities for research projects, career-training internship programs, and education for local schools, nonprofits and the public.

Public Uses: The property will be open to the public for nature-based outdoor activities including hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The property will also be open for snowshoeing, nature study, bird watching, research and youth education.

Property Management: The property will be managed by BBA according to a Land Management Plan approved by the Department.

Timetable: Pending grant approval, BBA plans to close on this property no later than March 2024.

II. PROJECT FINANCES

A. Appraisals

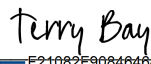
As required by s. 23.0917(7)(e)1., Wis. Stats., two appraisals were used to determine the fair market value of the land.

Appraisal 1	\$2,977,000
Appraisal 2	\$3,145,000
Value approved by Department	\$2,977,000

B: Grant Calculation:


Approved land value	\$2,977,000
Eligible related transaction costs	<u>\$5,560</u>
Total eligible project costs	\$2,982,560
Dane County Conservation Fund (pending)	\$745,640
Badgerland Bird Alliance match	<u>\$745,640</u>
Proposed Stewardship grant amount 50%	\$1,491,280

III. RECOMMENDED:

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Terry Bay, Director, Bureau of Facilities and Lands

12/11/2023 | 12:17 PM CST

Date

DocuSigned by:

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Tim Cooke, Administrator, Internal Services Division

12/12/2023 | 8:35 AM CST

Date

Appendix A. Project Maps.

Koshkonong Prairie (Gunnulson Property)

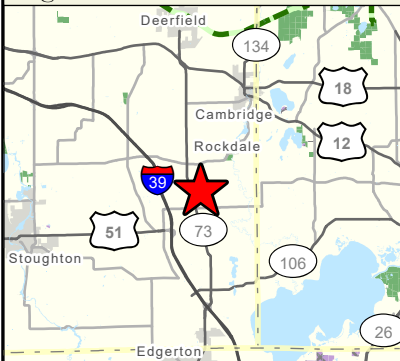
Sponsor:
Madison Audubon Society


T06N R12E, Sec. 26, 34 & 35
Town of Christiana
Dane County

 **Subject**

-  Current DNR Project Boundary
-  Section Boundary
-  State Natural Area
-  DNR Fee Title
-  NRCS - WRP (Wetland Reserve Program - Closed to public access)
-  U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
-  City or Village

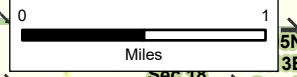
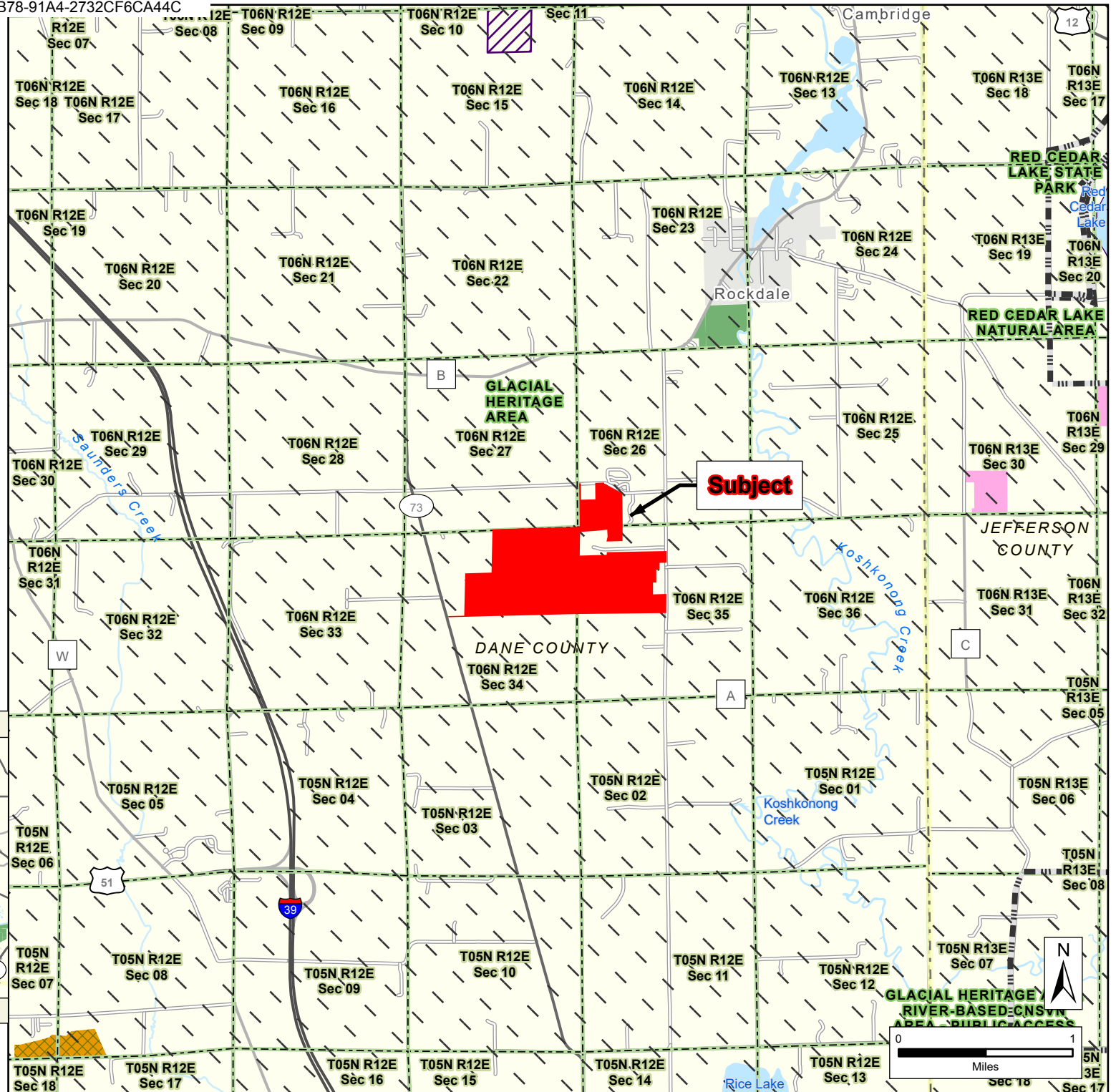
Regional View



 Location of Property



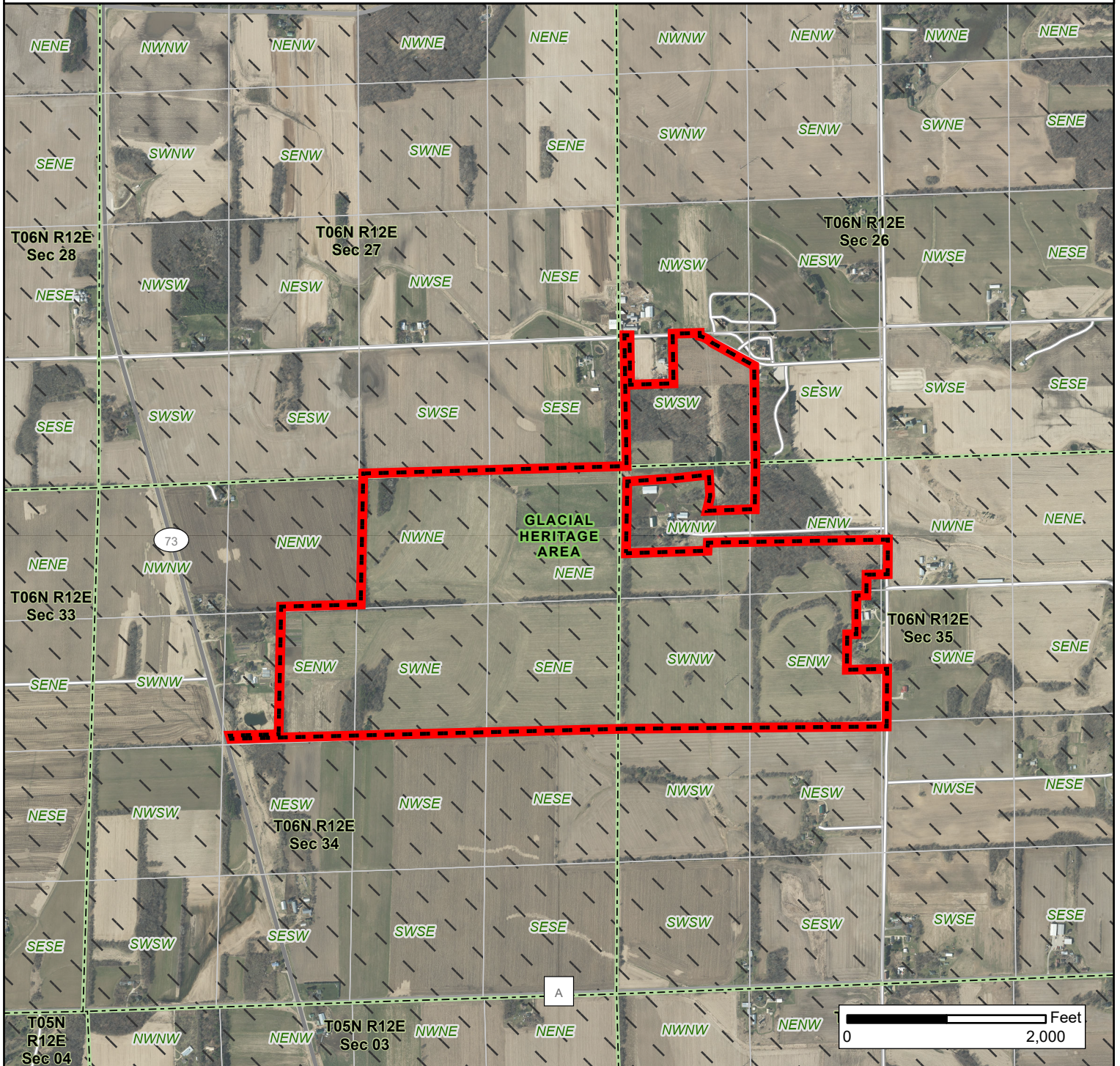
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Facilities of Lands
Map Created: Sep 08, 2023 | lcc






Koshkonong Prairie (Gunnulson Property)

Proposed Stewardship Grant
Sponsor: Madison Audubon Society
Approximate Total Acreage: 330.29

T06N R12E Sec. 26, 34 & 35
Town of Christiana
County: Dane



 Subject

-  Section Boundary
-  QQ Section Boundary
-  DNR Project Boundary



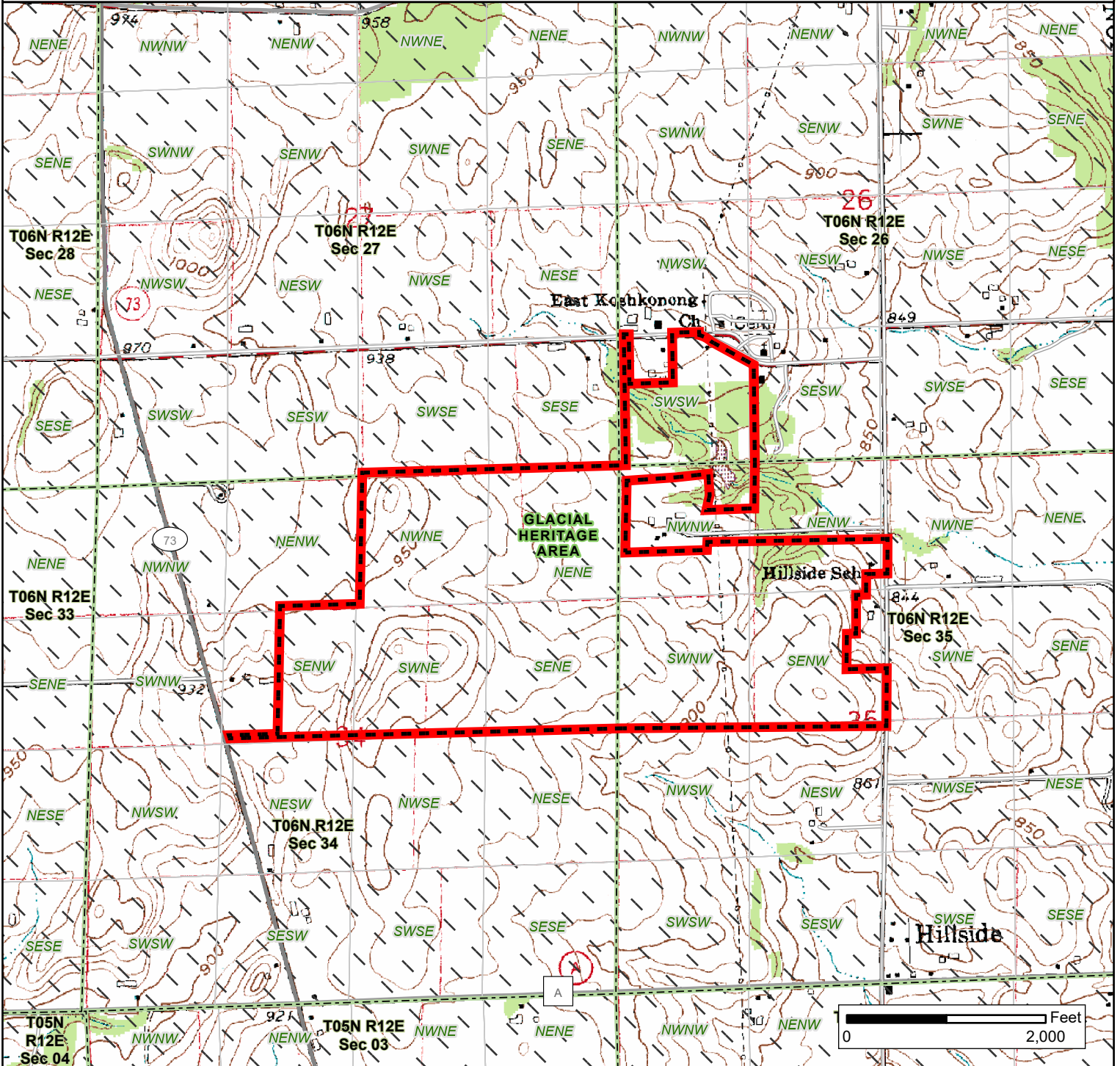
Sep 08, 2023 *lec*

Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands




Koshkonong Prairie (Gunnulson Property)

Proposed Stewardship Grant
Sponsor: Madison Audubon Society
Approximate Total Acreage: 330.29

T06N R12E Sec. 26, 34 & 35
Town of Christiana
County: Dane



 Subject

-  Section Boundary
-  QQ Section Boundary
-  DNR Project Boundary



Sep 08, 2023 lcc

Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands

Appendix B. Local Resolution.

**RESOLUTION BY THE TOWN OF CHRISTIANA BOARD IN SUPPORT OF
KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP-FUNDED LAND ACQUISITION BY
MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY, FOR CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC USE**

**TOWN OF CHRISTIANA, DANE COUNTY, WISCONSIN
RESOLUTION #23-3**

WHEREAS, The Town Board encourages and supports the preservation and conservation of lands located in the Town of Christiana;


WHEREAS, 330 acres of land located in the Town of Christiana has been proposed to be acquired by the Madison Audubon Society, for conservation and public recreational purposes;

WHEREAS, WIS. Stats. 23.0917(5t) allows for the adoption of a nonbinding resolution in support or opposition to land acquisitions funded by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program;

THEREFORE, the Town Board of Christiana does hereby resolve the support of the Town of Christiana in the use of Stewardship grant funds for the acquisition of 330 acres located in the Town of Christiana by Madison Audubon Society, for conservation and public recreational purposes.

Adopted this 11 day of September, 2023.

Signature of (Town Chair): 

Attested by Clerk: 

Appendix C. Letters of Support.



GROUNDSWELL
CONSERVANCY

Conservation where you live

211 S. Paterson St., Suite 250 | Madison WI 53703
608.258.9797 | www.groundswellconservancy.org

October 18, 2023

Matt Reetz
Executive Director
Badgerland Bird Alliance
211 S. Paterson Street, Ste 340
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Stewardship Program Application

Dear Matt,

Groundswell Conservancy supports your grant application to the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to acquire 330 acres of land three miles south of Smith Reiner Drumlin within the Koshkonong Prairie.

Wisconsin's prairie heritage has been greatly diminished since European Settlement. This is especially true of mesic prairie. Your goals to provide important wildlife habitat for grassland-associated species, wildlife recreation, and research and educational programming for the greater public are key to helping the larger community understand and appreciate our natural heritage. The property, which lies within the Southeast Glacial Plains Ecological Landscape and Glacial Heritage Area as described in the Wisconsin DNR's Glacial Heritage Area Plan, is a crucial addition to Wisconsin's natural landscape.

Groundswell supports this important project wholeheartedly and wishes you all the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela West Blank". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Angela West Blank
Executive Director
angela@groundswellconservancy.org





PO Box 824 ■ Viroqua, WI 54601 ■ (608) 676-0985 ■ Info@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org



October 26, 2023

Matt Reetz
Executive Director, Badgerland Bird Alliance
1400 East Washington Ave., Suite #170
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Letter of support for Badgerland Bird Alliance (Madison Audubon Society) stewardship grant

Dear Matt,

The Prairie Enthusiasts is devoted to protecting and stewarding threatened fire-dependent ecosystems. Intact prairie and savanna are increasingly difficult to find, and as such, the multitude of animals, insects, plants and more are experiencing population declines. Because of how few prairies exist today, it is imperative that these rare places be protected.

The Prairie Enthusiasts have been the grateful recipients of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant for land protection in the Madison area. This area is now home to rare species such as Henslow's sparrows, pickerel frogs, regal fritillaries and more. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is an important resource for the life that the land supports and for the people looking to connect with that land.

That's why we are supportive of a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant being awarded to the Badgerland Bird Alliance for the protection of 348 acres in southeast Dane County. We are grateful to Badgerland Bird Alliance for their ambition and efforts to protect such rare habitat.

We are passionate about igniting relationships with the land, and this project aligns with that passion. Protecting this ecosystem will provide opportunities for research projects and educational programming, as well as be a place for people to connect with the land through hunting, hiking and more.

We hope the Joint Committee on Finance agrees with the benefits of this project and supports the grant application.

With all best wishes,

Debra Behrens
Executive Director
The Prairie Enthusiasts



DRIFTLESS

AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

October 23, 2023

Mary Rothenmaier
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
3911 Fish Hatchery Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711

Re: Support for Acquisition of the Koshkonong Prairie

Dear Mary,

I write on behalf of Driftless Area Land Conservancy and our members to share our strong support for the acquisition of the Gunnulson Tract at Koshkonong Prairie for public nature-based outdoor recreation and long-term conservation. The Madison Audubon Society (MAS) has long been a leader in area land protection, restoration and stewardship and is well-suited to own and manage this property for the benefit of the public, but MAS won't be able to take on that role without funding from the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program.

As poll after poll shows, the Citizens of Wisconsin value our public lands for hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, birdwatching and other endeavors that bring millions of dollars to Wisconsin businesses who benefit from tourism and the patronage of outdoor enthusiasts. Unfortunately, southern Wisconsin lacks sufficient land for public outdoor recreation given our large population centers including Madison, which is just northwest of this site.

The proximity of this 348-acre property to Madison helps to meet the public need for open conservation land and increases its value for research projects, career training internship programs, and regular use by schools, non-profits and the general public who are interested in learning from the site and its natural habitats that were once part of the great 16,000-acre Koshkonong Prairie.

We hope the Joint Finance Committee of the Legislature will see fit to fully fund a Stewardship Grant that can be used to secure this land for current and future generations of the public to enjoy. Thank you for your support of this project.

Sincerely

Jennifer Filipiak
Executive Director

