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## **Governor Doyle Announces Stewardship Purchases Across the State**

### ***More Than 10,000 Acres Preserved in Douglas, Kewaunee, La Crosse, Marathon, Outagamie, Portage, Rock, and Waukesha Counties***

Governor Doyle declared today "Stewardship Day" in Wisconsin and announced the purchase of eight parcels of land totaling 10,700 acres across the state worth nearly \$15 million. Seven purchases were made possible by acquisition or grants from the Stewardship Fund totaling \$9.97 million.

"The Stewardship fund not only protects thousands of acres of land across the state, it protects who we are in Wisconsin," Governor Doyle said. "From the bluffs of La Crosse to the forests of the north to the more urban setting of Big Muskego Lake, these purchases will serve the needs of all citizens throughout the state. The future of our state is closely linked to our natural resources, and I'm pleased that, today, that future is looking even brighter with the protection of these great natural areas."

All 10,700 acres are open to a variety of recreational opportunities – from hiking and canoeing to hunting and fishing. The purchases will also help to protect vital habitat for fish and wildlife throughout the state such as herons and the state-protected prairie chicken.

Governor Doyle has made the Stewardship program a top priority since taking office, protecting more than 170,000 acres of land in 71 out of 72 counties. Stewardship lands anchor a good portion of the state's economy – from the \$11 billion tourism industry, to the \$22 billion forestry industry, and the state's \$4 billion hunting and fishing industry – and are a main reason why businesses want to relocate and expand in Wisconsin.

In his 2007-2009 biennial budget proposal, Governor Doyle called for reauthorizing the Stewardship fund at the level of \$105 million per year. The Governor urged the Legislature to approve his proposal.

Five of the seven Stewardship-funded properties were on the Natural Resources Board's agenda for this morning, and were approved by the board. The Governor will approve them promptly upon reaching his desk.

Governor Doyle announced purchases in Muskego, La Crosse, and Brule today. Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton and Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Hassett echoed the Governor's Stewardship announcement in visits to Wausau, Green Bay, and Janesville to announce acquisitions in those areas.

Following are specific details on each purchase:

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**Big Muskego Wildlife Area  
Waukesha County**

The Governor announced the purchase of 47.4 acres that is part of the Big Muskego Lake Wildlife Area in the City of Muskego for \$445,000. The City is donating \$111,250, with the state providing the additional \$333,750 in funding. The parcel includes nearly 1,200 feet of lake frontage and encompasses wetlands, upland grasslands, woodlands, and agricultural areas. The parcel and encompassing Wildlife Area provides important habitat for several state-endangered and state-threatened wildlife species.

**Brule River State Forest  
Douglas County**

This purchase from Wausau Paper Mills in collaboration with The Conservation Fund for \$6,111,358 will protect 5,889 acres in fee for the Brule River State Forest and 40 acres in easement for the North Country Trail. The acreage of this purchase is both east and west of the Brule River and backs up to Lake Superior frontage already owned by the state. It also includes the premier trout fishery in the region and home to stretches ranging from Class I to Class III classifications for canoeing and kayaking. In addition, the purchase contains a boreal forest – the only one of its kind in the state forestry program – which hosts a greater diversity of birds and mammals than any other area of the same size in the state. More than 200 species of birds, as well as white-tail deer, geese, bald eagles, osprey, beaver, otter, fishers, mink, bobcats, timber wolves, and ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse call this area home.

In addition, the 40-acre easement will add a four-mile trail segment to the North Country National Scenic Trail, an attempt to link public lands across the northwestern part of Wisconsin to those in Minnesota and Michigan.

**La Crosse Bluff Lands Protection Program  
La Crosse County**

The Governor announced a Stewardship Grant of \$257,000 to the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) to support the purchase of 452 acres for the La Crosse Bluff Lands Protection Program. Located on the scenic bluffs that overlook the City of La Crosse and the Mississippi River, the parcel contains a combination of wooded bluffs, rock outcrops, and native dry prairie that host biologically-significant plant habitat, and is on the site of a restored quarry. The land will be managed by MVC for sustainable outdoor recreation such as hiking, bird watching, and hunting and eventually conveyed to the City for continued preservation and public use.

**Mead Wildlife Area  
Marathon and Portage Counties**

This purchase of 2,804 acres from Consolidated Water and Paper Company / Stora Enso for \$2,524,000 in Marathon and Portage Counties will protect part of a larger wildlife area that encompasses more than 30,000 acres of wetlands, forests, and grassland containing more than 260 species of birds, an education and visitor center, and 70 miles of hiking trails. The purchase of this particular parcel also protects 11 miles of frontage on the Little Eau Pleine River and flowage.

**Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Area  
Outagamie County**

The Governor also announced the purchase of 974 acres of land from the Wilderness Conservation

Club for \$2,800,000 for the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area in northwest Outagamie County. The property includes more than a mile of frontage on the Wolf River and several marshes valued as excellent walleye spawning habitat. This parcel has been managed by the current owners for its excellent wildlife habitat and now will be available to the public.

The funding source for this purchase is through the Natural Resources Damage Assessment program. Because of PCB contamination in the Fox River and waters of Green Bay, several paper mills have agreed to fund natural resources preservation and restoration projects as a way to make up for environmental damages caused in the paper making business years ago. The funding for this land purchase is from this effort by the paper mills of the Fox River Valley.

#### **C.D. Besadny Fish and Wildlife Area Kewaunee County**

This 160-acre purchase for \$480,000 in Kewaunee County abuts nearly 300 acres of state-owned land along the eastern edge of a wetland formed by the Little Scarboro Creek and Kewaunee River. The property is composed of forest and wetlands varying from upland woods to swamp hardwoods to conifer-covered lowlands. The C.D. Besadny Fish and Wildlife Area was established to manage fish and wildlife resources associated with the Kewaunee River, and includes a Class I brook trout stream with a self-sustaining fishery, as well as native populations of smallmouth bass and northern pike. The area also receives seasonal migration of trout and salmon from Lake Michigan.

#### **Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area Rock County**

The Governor announced the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) will give the state 351 acres of land adjoining the Avon Bottoms Wildlife area in southwest Rock County. The property was obtained by the trust with a \$227,000 Stewardship grant that leveraged an additional \$633,000 in federal funds through the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The 351 acres, originally farmed, are being restored to their natural state. The land will support prairie, sedge meadow, emergent wetland and shore bird habitat. The parcel's wetland restoration will improve water quality for the nearby Sugar River. After restoration is completed at the end of this summer, NHLT has indicated the land will be donated to the state and managed by the Department of Natural Resources for public outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat.

Read the Governor's Proclamation:

[http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal\\_media\\_detail.asp?locid=19&prid=2751](http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media_detail.asp?locid=19&prid=2751).

View the 10,000 Acre Day Stewardship map: <http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=11484>.