



Interim Forest Management Plan

Property Identifiers

Property Name and Designation: **VOSSE COULEE WILDLIFE AREA**

County(ies): **TREMPEALEAU**

Property Acreage: **123**

Property manager: **Mark Rasmussen**

Forestry Property Code(s): **6207**

Master Plan Date: **None, Estimated state date for NR44 compliant Master Plan: 2014**

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Vosse Coulee Wildlife Area (VCWA) is a state owned property located three miles northeast of the City of Blair in Trempealeau County. The property is located in the North Central US Driftless and Escarpment section as well as the Western Coulees and Ridges Ecological Landscape which are both characterized by rolling to hilly topography. The primary objective of the property is to provide public hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities as well as other outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking and cross-country skiing. Common game species found on the property include: deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, rabbits, and squirrels. Maintaining wildlife diversity and healthy game species populations are achieved through habitat management.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/WildlifeAreas/vosse.html>

LANDSCAPE AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Hydrology: The VCWA lies in the Western Coulee and Ridges Ecological Landscape. Dendritic drainage patterns are well-developed in this mostly unglaciated Ecological Landscape. Natural lakes are restricted to the floodplains of large rivers. Large warm water rivers are especially important here, and include the Wisconsin, Chippewa, and Black. The Mississippi River forms the Ecological Landscapes' western boundary. Numerous spring-fed (coldwater) headwater streams occur here. Cool water streams are also common.

Current Land Cover: The Western Coulee and Ridges Ecological Landscape is a mosaic of forest, cropland and grassland with wetlands mostly in the river valleys. Primary forest cover is oak and hickory. Maple and basswood forests, dominated by sugar maple, basswood and red maple, are common in areas that were not burned frequently. Bottomland hardwoods dominated by silver maple, swamp white oak, river birch, ashes, elms and cottonwood are common within the floodplains of the larger rivers. Relict "northern" mesic conifer forests composed of hemlock, white pine and associated hardwoods such as yellow birch are rare but do occur in areas with cool, moist microclimates. Dry rocky bluffs may support xeric stands of native white pine, sometimes mixed with red or even jack pine. Prairies are now restricted to steep south or west facing bluffs, unplowed outwash terraces along the large rivers, and a few other sites. They



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occupy far less than 1% of the current landscape. Mesic tallgrass prairies are now virtually nonexistent except as very small remnants along rights-of-way or in cemeteries.

HISTORY OF LAND USE AND PAST MANAGEMENT

Acquisition began in 1960 under the Scattered Wetlands Program. The property has since grown to 123 acres in size.

The property has been actively managed through land acquisition, and prescribed fire. The primary objective is to provide hunting and trapping opportunities; common game species include: deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, rabbits, and squirrels. Maintaining wildlife diversity and healthy game species populations are achieved through habitat management.

Forest management has included invasive species control and timber harvesting.

PROPERTY CONTEXT/LANDSCAPE

Contextually, Vosse Coulee Wildlife Area is situated in an area that is heavily dissected and fragmented with agricultural fields and other open areas. Additionally, the property itself contains over 50% open, nearly treeless habitat. Subsequently, opportunities for large block old forest development for area sensitive forest interior species is limited. However, this more fragmented setting offers great opportunities for grassland birds and “edge” game species and early successional “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” as identified within the state’s Wildlife Action Plan. See below for species/opportunities.

WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN/SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED

Although the property is not listed in the Wildlife Action Plan’s Implementation document for the Western Coulee and Ridges Ecological Landscape (WCREL), opportunities do exist to manage for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Species of Greatest Conservation Need associated with Coldwater streams, early successional Southern Dry-mesic forest, shrublands, wetlands, grasslands and fields of the property include; Bells Vireo (shrubs in open grasslands/wetlands), Blue-winged Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite Quail, American Woodcock, Willow Flycatcher and Pickerel Frog (all but American Woodcock area High Priority SCGN’s for WCREL).

CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREA

The property does not fall within a Conservation Opportunity Area as identified within the Wildlife Action Plan.

NATURAL HERITAGE INVENTORY (NHI)/RARE SPECIES

The Natural Heritage Inventory database indicates that 1 state Endangered, 1 state Threatened, and 1 special concern species were identified within the general vicinity of the Wildlife Area.

HIGH VALUE CONSERVATION FORESTS (HVCF) OR OTHER RESOURCES/NATURAL COMMUNITY TYPES LIMITED IN THE LANDSCAPE



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Northern Sedge meadow is limited in the Western Coulees and Ridges Ecological Landscape.

BIOTIC INVENTORY STATUS

Master Plan Biotic Inventory planned for 2015

CULTURAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES (INCLUDING TRIBAL SITES)

The property contains an archeological indicator which is protected by wetland and forested habitat maintained for wildlife.

RECREATIONAL USES

The property receives heavy visitation during the annual gun deer season, other uses include upland bird hunting and hiking. It is especially noted for rabbits, squirrels, deer, waterfowl, turkey, and ruffed grouse. The property contains Class II and IV trout stream.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Moderate levels of buckthorn and honeysuckle are located throughout the property. Reed canary grass could be a concern in the lowland marsh.

SOILS

Most soils in the area are windblown loess of varying thickness, with alluvium in the floodplains. The dominant soils in the uplands are mainly moderate to well-drained silt loams, with the steep slopes containing mostly sandy loams. The lower sedge meadow/swamp areas of the property are dominated by very poorly drained silt loam and muck soils.

CURRENT FOREST COVER

90 acres (72%) of the 123 acre property consists of lowland brush. 17 acres (14%) has been planted to red pine (1965) or white spruce (2000). The red pine average 8 inches in diameter; the younger spruce is still in the sapling size class. Black and white oak sawtimber and poletimber comprise the remaining 17 acres. This sawtimber is over 100 years of age and averages over 15 inches in diameter. The oak poletimber size class averages 8 inches in diameter and 70 years of age. The sandy outwash soil type is not conducive for growing quality oak sawtimber.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Forest Management Objectives:

The primary forest management objective is to provide younger forest for both game species and early successional Species of Greatest Conservation Need. A second objective is to provide some small blocks of old forest and scattered old trees for mast production, cavity trees and snag trees for wildlife benefits. Aspen is somewhat limited on the property, but is an important type for many species of wildlife. Regeneration harvests should focus on to providing new age classes of oak and other early successional species. Scattered pine plantings provide cover for wildlife and offer some aesthetic relief to the hardwood cover types. The pines will be thinned periodically to provide roosting and nesting opportunities. Due to the important wetland habitats on the



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property, all management activities will carefully consider water quality best management practices.

1. Maintain oak cover types where feasible.
 - a. Diversify age classes with emphasis on developing younger stands
 - b. Crop tree release oak in young stands.
 - c. Regenerate oak stands where feasible and promote oak in young mixed hardwood stands.
 - d. Promote/retain some larger diameter trees.
2. Promote other early successional forest types.
 - a. Promote aspen
 - b. Promote stands of central hardwoods.
3. Maintain pine plantations.
 - a. Promote large crowned trees for wildlife and aesthetics.
4. Maintain grass cover type
5. All stands
 - a. Consider planting opportunities for desirable species such as oak.
 - b. Control invasive plant species (e.g., black locust, buckthorn, honeysuckle)

Property Prescriptions (Identify specific and pertinent prescriptions by area or forest type, including passive management areas, extended rotation, and other information that will help achieve the objectives):

OAK - Utilize even-aged rotation age constraints to 100 years to spread oak harvest schedule. Maintain and promote oak through planting, timber stand improvement methods, prescribed fire, thinning, seed tree, shelterwood, clearcut, and other techniques described in the DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook. Promote the growth and retention of large oak through techniques such as thinning, extended rotation, and managed old forest. Stands for retention should be sited on north slopes/richer sites, and reserve/legacy trees should be retained as groups or individuals throughout the property within harvested stands. Prioritize regeneration

harvests on south and west facing stands where oak regeneration success is greater, including some of the mid-age stands in order to diversify oak age classes. Manage for savanna structure where appropriate by treating undesirable species chemically, mechanically or by fire with the goal of maintaining an oak component on the landscape.

CENTRAL HARDWOODS – Manage utilizing both even and uneven aged silvicultural methods such as thinning, seed tree, shelterwood, clearcut, as well as timber stand improvement methods and other techniques described in the DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook to regenerate these stands. Promote tree species for wildlife food sources that produce mast, such as, oaks (red, black, white, bur, and swamp), black cherry, hickory, basswood, maples, and others. Within the degraded central hardwood stands consider harvesting prior to rotation age to improve the quality of this forest cover type. Utilize even aged harvest methods to promote the young forest component on the property.

ASPEN – Clearcut to regenerate these stands. Stagger the harvest of the remaining mature patches of aspen over the next 5 to 10 years to promote age diversity. Excessively wet soil will be the limiting factor in accessing several of the aspen clones.

RED Pine AND WHITE Spruce – Thin plantations every 8 to 10 years (beginning in 2020). Leave dead and dying pines for cavity and nesting birds and for coarse woody debris.



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UPLAND FIELDS – Roughly 75% of the acreage is comprised of grasslands or wetlands. Prescribed fire, as well as mechanical and chemical treatment of undesirable species will be used to maintain these areas.

SHRUB – Where appropriate utilize timber harvesting, mechanical and chemical control, or prescribed fire to create a quality shrub transition between grassland and forested habitats.

WETLANDS – Wetlands will generally be passively managed except for invasive species control utilizing both mechanical and chemical treatment methods. Wet prairie/sedge meadow present on the property will be managed with prescribed fire.

All stands:

- Utilize BMP's for Water Quality to protect streams and wetlands when conducting timber sales.
- Identify invasive plant species and implement control practices such as prescribed fire, hand pulling, chemical and mechanical control to eliminate or reduce negative impacts.
- Utilize BMP's for Invasive Species to help limit the introduction and spread of invasive species when conducting timber sales
- Retain reserve/legacy trees as groups or individuals throughout the property within harvested stands
- Follow DNR's Species Guidance Documents:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/EndangeredResources/guidance.asp>. to protect rare species. In cases where species guidance documents haven't yet been developed, avoidance to rare species will occur via practices such as time of year restrictions, modified harvest boundaries, and/or consultation with rare species experts.
- Identify and protect any Archeological or Historical sites prior to management activities and plan.

Approvals:

Regional Ecologist

Date



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Forester

Date

Property Manager

Date

Area/Team Supervisor

Date