

WADENA COUNTY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

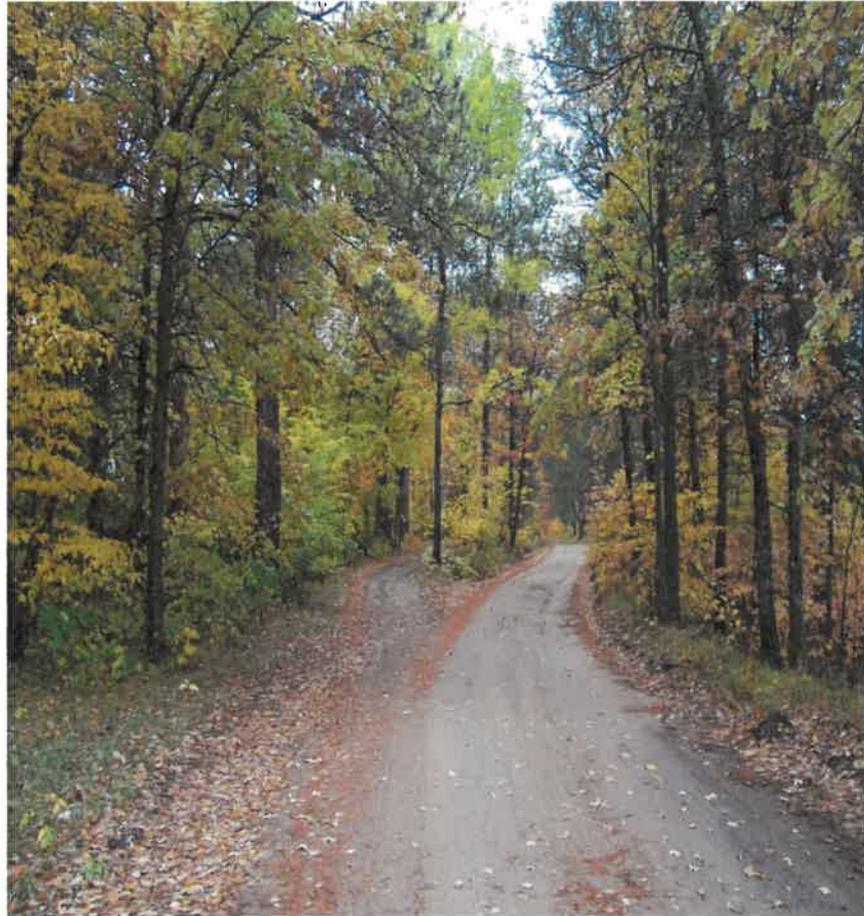
Providing for the Future through the
Responsible Management of Public
Lands and Resources

2024

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WADENA COUNTY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024



These lands will be managed sustainably for their many values including: good forestry, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and the enjoyment of the public for perpetuity...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wadena County appreciates and acknowledges the efforts of the many who were helpful in providing information and assistance in the drafting and ultimate adoption of this plan.

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

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District 3: Bill Stearns
District 4: Murlyn Kreklau
District 5: Jon Kangas

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

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Maps by Mitch: Mitch Brinks

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

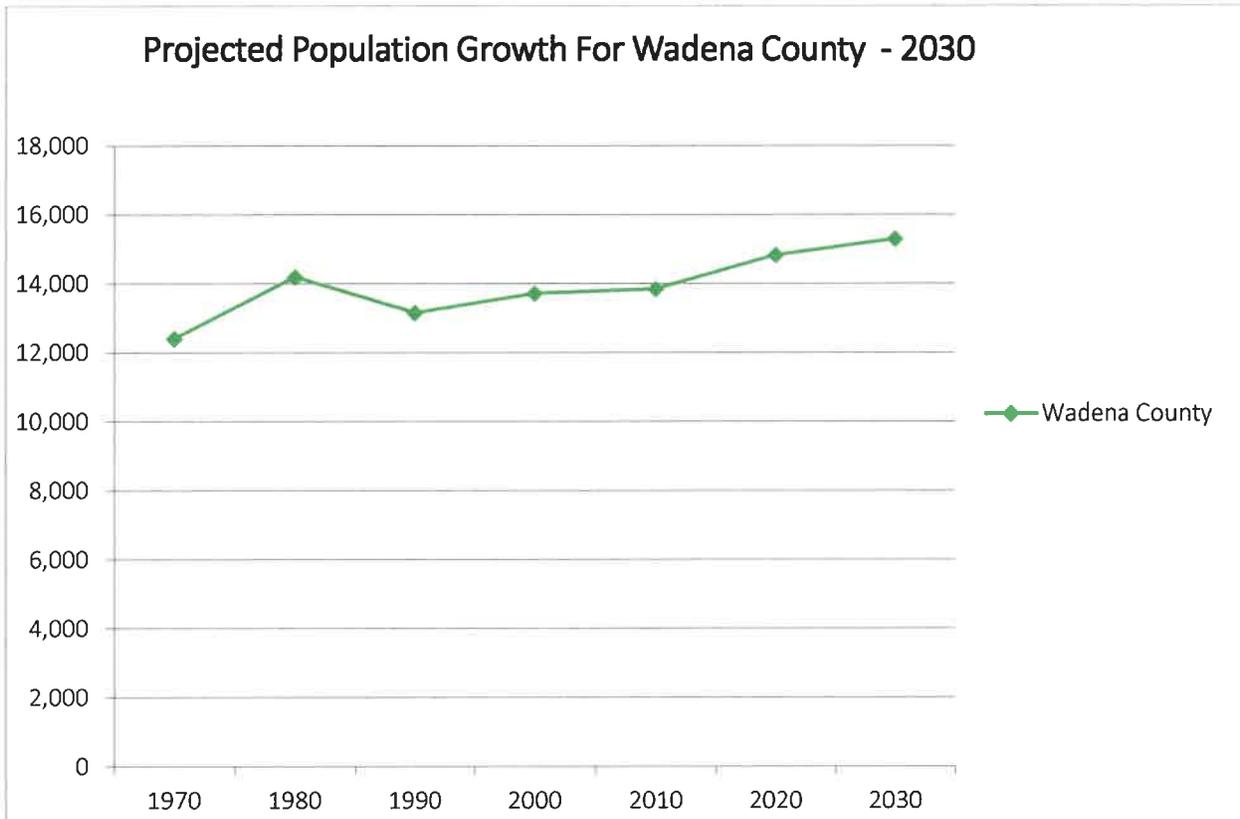
The management of land administered by the County of Wadena is, and has been, a unique situation. In the past, tax forfeited land, although administered by the County, was managed, for the purpose of sustainable forestry, by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Forestry under MN Statute 282.131 which allows the DNR to do this work for Counties without a Land Management Department.

The number of acres administered by the County after 2014 were fewer and included a County Parks System consisting of 10 parks & campgrounds along the Crow Wing River. There are only a few larger tracts associated with these campgrounds that are tax forfeit parcels, so there was neither a need, nor a desire, to develop a Land Management Department separate from the County Parks Department and the County Auditor-Treasurer's Office.

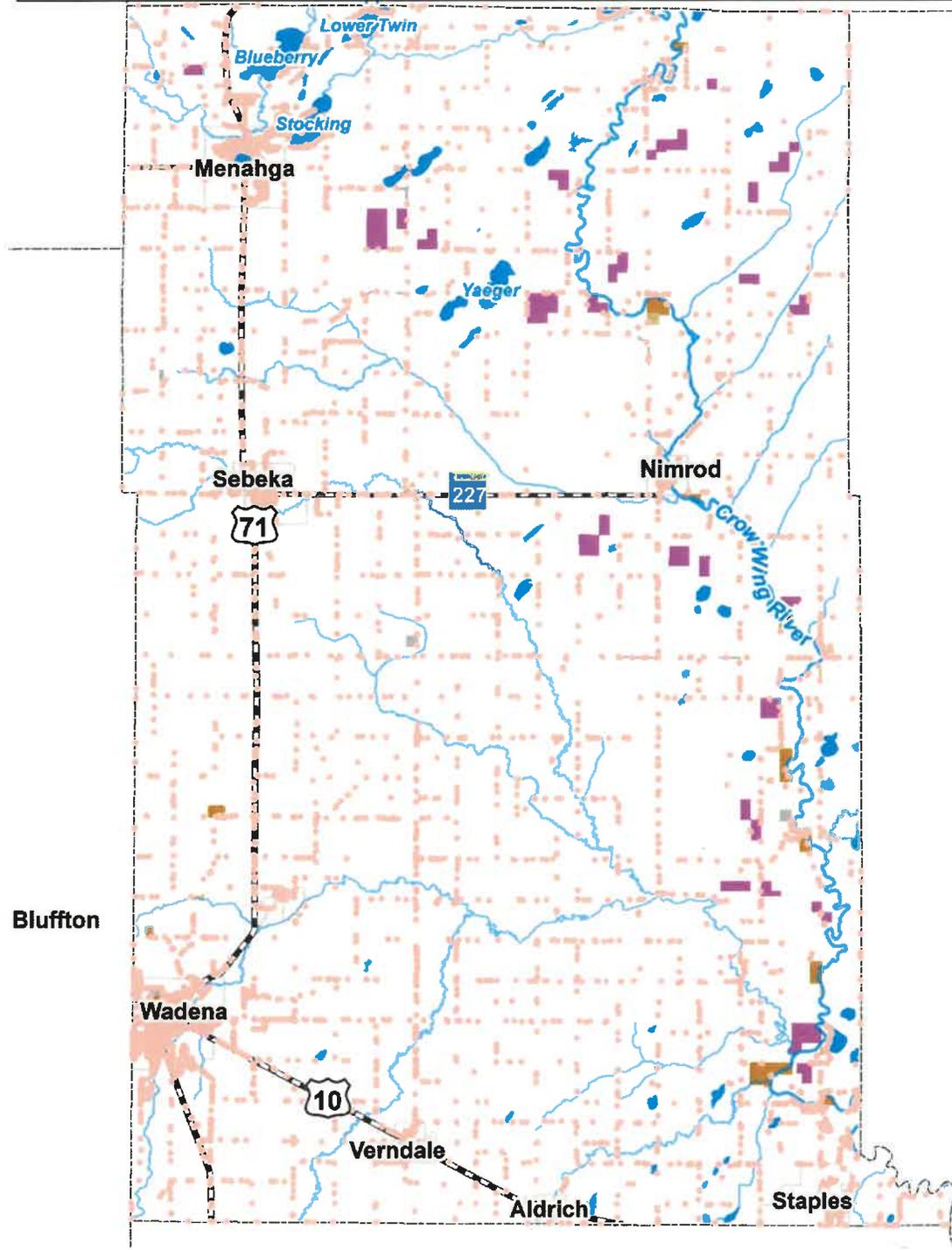
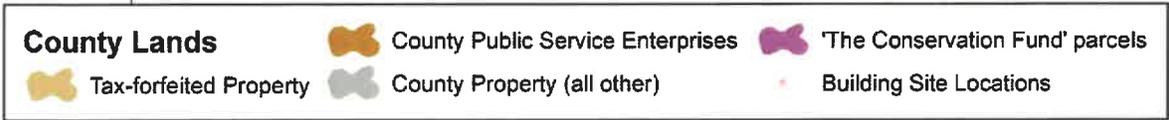
In December of 2020, the County was approached by The Conservation Fund, who had purchased the remaining Potlach acres in the County, and asked if there would be interest in the County obtaining these parcels. Later, Northern Waters Land Trust, NWLT, approached the County with an opportunity to apply for an Outdoor Heritage Grant with eight other Counties and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to try and acquire these lands in fee title ownership. Several meetings were held with stakeholders in 2021 and 2022 and information gathered to make an informed decision. On April 18, 2023, the Wadena County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to move forward with NWLT, the other Counties, and the DNR to get the project funded and the development of this Forest Management Plan is a direct result of that decision.

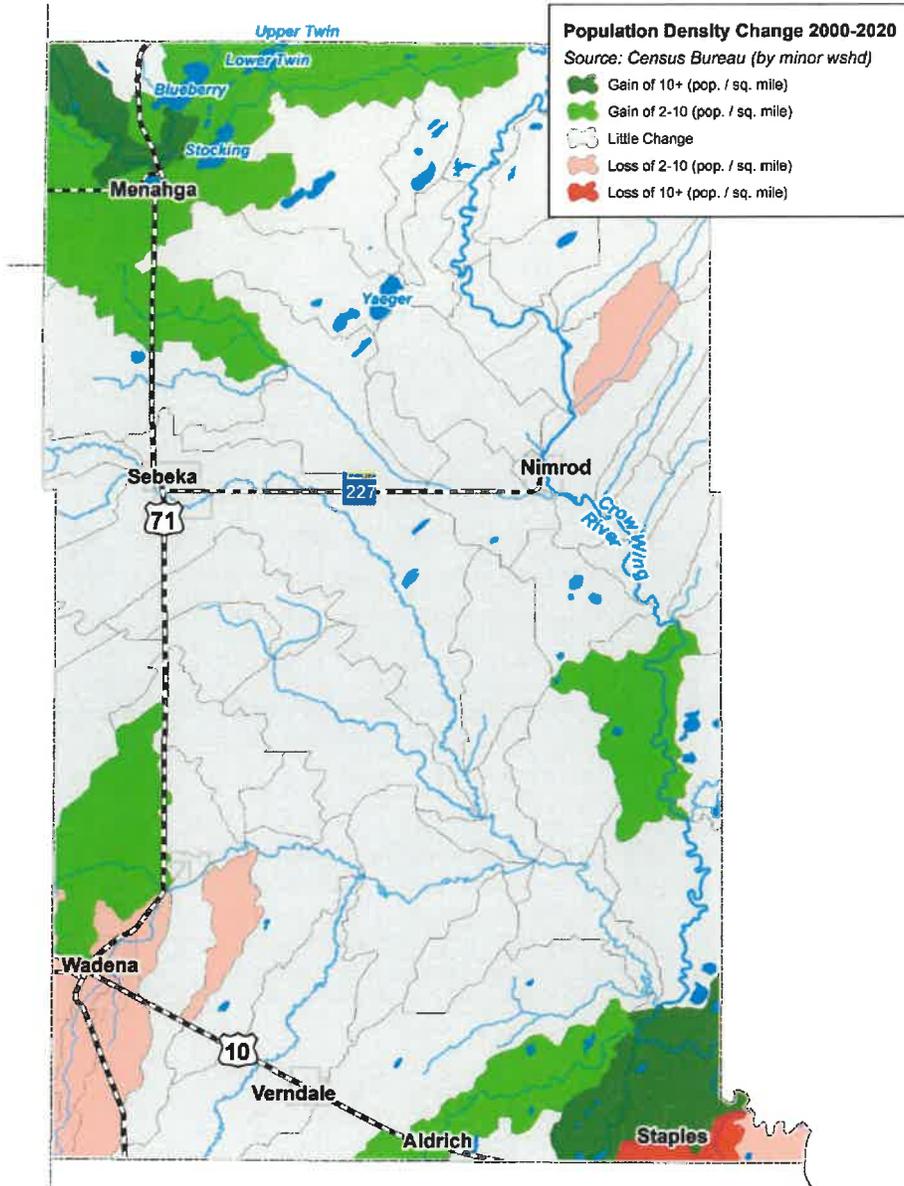
Wadena County acknowledges the purposes of acquiring land through the Outdoor Heritage Grant that relate directly to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, to preventing forest fragmentation, to encourage forest consolidation, and to expand restored native prairie. These are also the goals of Wadena County while also ensuring the benefits to the County from sustainable forest management and public access to these areas for the enjoyment of the outdoors. Timber harvest is one of the most important and effective tools for managing forests and wildlife when done correctly. These lands will be managed sustainably for their many values including: good forestry, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and enjoyment of the public for perpetuity. The purpose of this plan is to establish a framework for forest management activities on lands administered or owned by the County to ensure these goals are met.

According to the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the population of Wadena County is 14,307 which is an increase of 464 people since 2010, an increase of 3.4% and is projected to continue to increase through 2030.

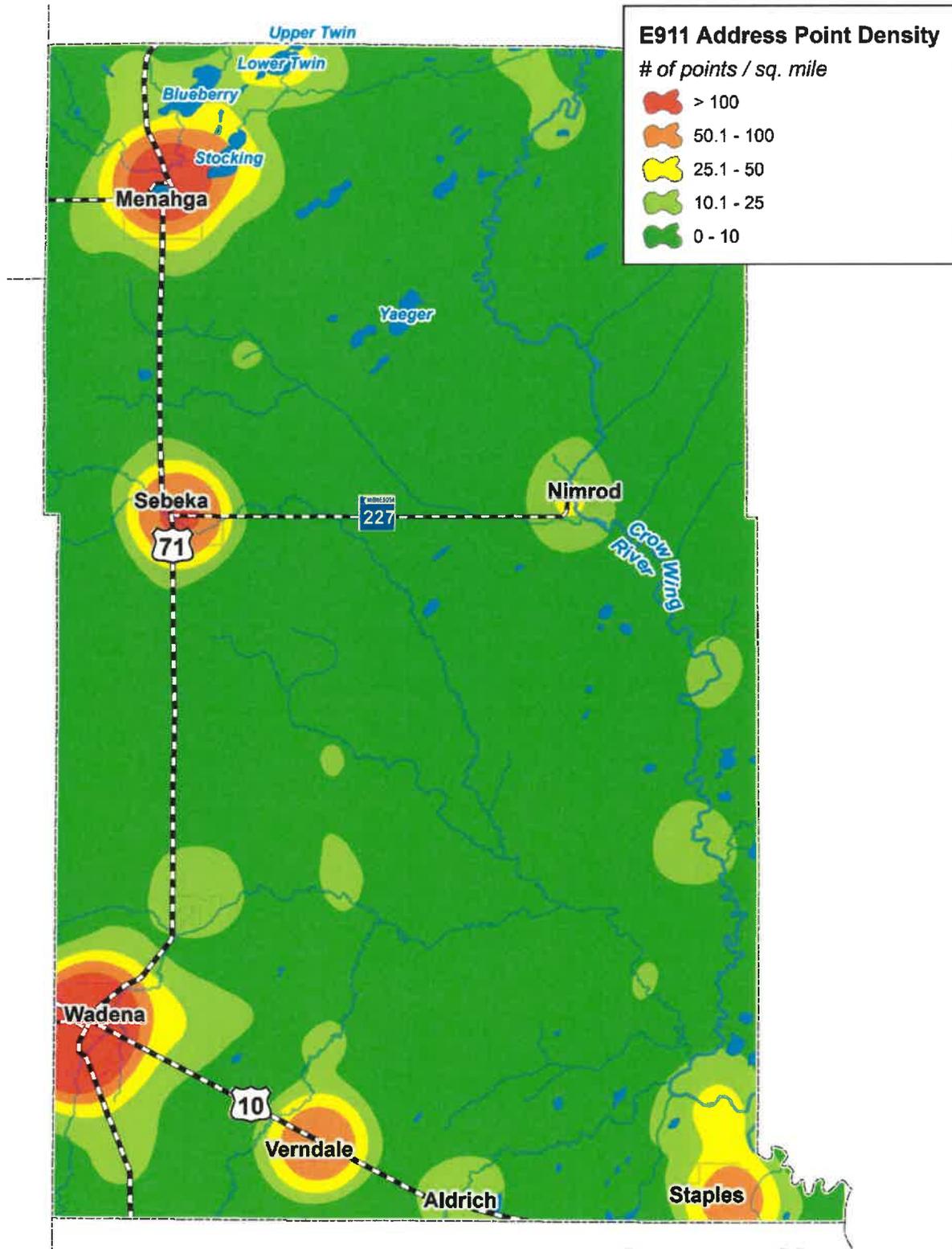


The population in Wadena County is fairly evenly distributed except in the Northeast corner of the County which is predominantly State Forest Lands. Areas of higher density will be around the few lakes in the County to the Northwest as well as along paved roads such as County and State Highways and in the 7 municipalities in the County. The maps on the following pages indicate the distribution of the population of Wadena County in relation to publicly owned or administered parcels within the county, where population has increased or decreased, as well as population density.





*The population of Wadena County
 has increased 3.4% since 2010.*



LAND COVER & USE

Wadena County is rural in nature. The scenic beauty of Wadena County's approximate 563 square miles can be seen in its abundant forests and its farm fields, across its open wetlands, and along the banks of the beautiful Crow Wing River. These also offer a variety of recreational opportunities like tubing and canoeing, hunting and fishing, snowmobiling, and horseback riding, to name a few. The combination of these elements makes Wadena County an attractive place to live. This is evidenced by the fact that, although Wadena County has a considerably lesser land mass than its surrounding Counties, its population density is nearly as great as Todd and Ottertail County.

A review of land mass that makes up Wadena County was included in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan for the County. This review indicated a strong agricultural presence exists in the County with total cropland, pastureland, native pastures, hayland, irrigated land, barn lots, and farmsteads making up approximately 42% of the total acreage in the County. The influence of total acres determined to be coniferous forest, natural coniferous areas, mixed woodlot forest, natural mixed areas, natural deciduous forest, and deciduous is greater still, with a total acres of 150,240, or about 44%, of the total land mass.

Wadena County has a total of 454 privately owned parcels associated with an actual Forest Management classification, and with a total of about 27,845.76 acres attached to them. This is an increase of 294 parcels and 18,773.76 acres since 2013. Numerous acres associated with agriculture also contain forest or woodlot land use, as well as several thousands of acres of forest administered by the Department of Natural Resources for the State of Minnesota. Although the forestry industry has seen some decreases in recent history, it continues to be a strong part of the land use and economy of Wadena County, as well as a practice for conservationist on many different levels.

Wadena County is home to the Huntersville and Lyons State Forests, 10 county campgrounds with adjoining lands for hiking and hunting, and a number of state administered wildlife management areas and parks. There are also several hundred acres associated with the public school systems in Wadena County, churches, and townships.

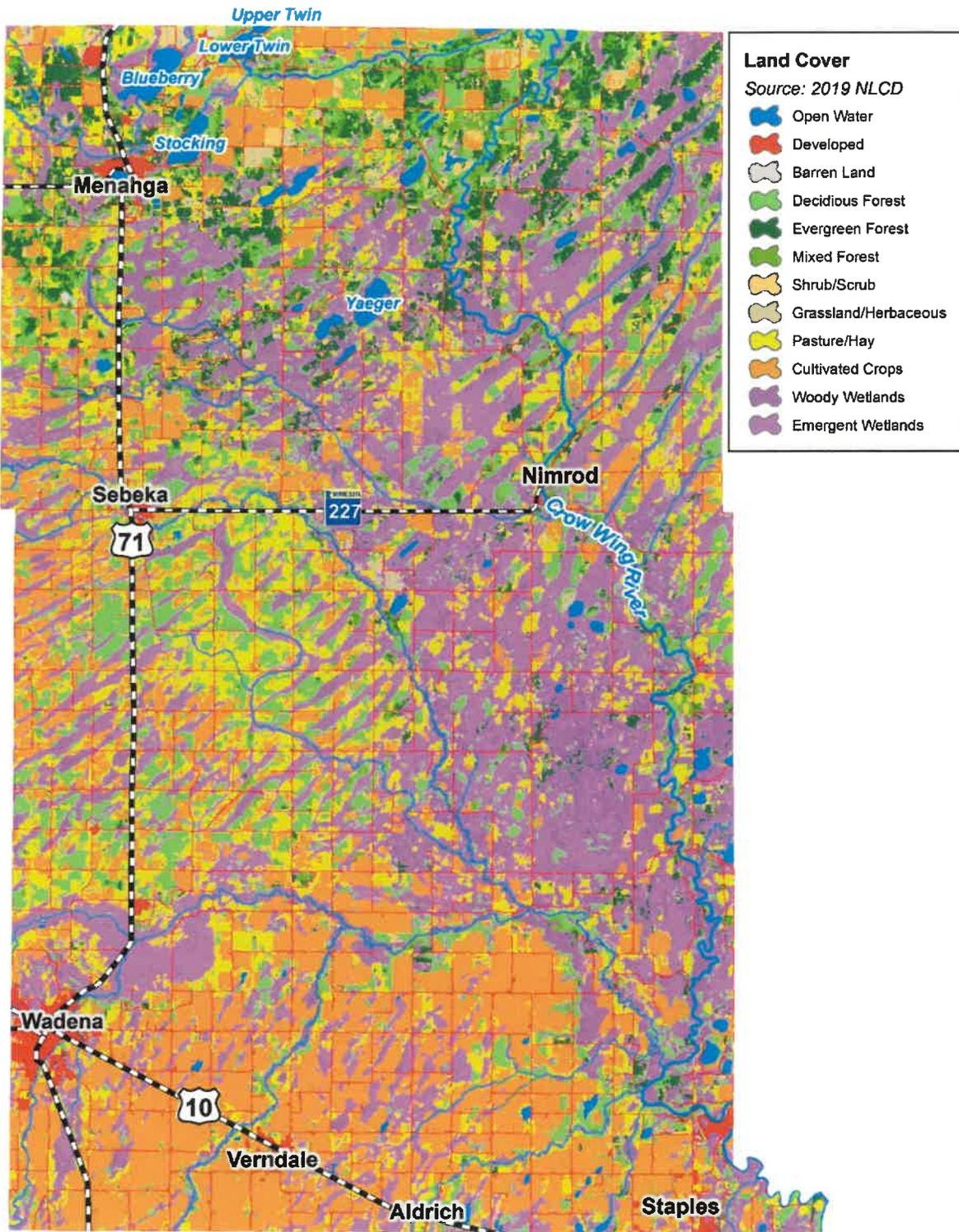
The Wadena County Comprehensive Plan states, as an objective under Natural Resources, to: "Protect, conserve, and preserve the natural resources of the County in an effort to create an environmentally healthy and vibrant place for current and future residents." This is a focus in multiple ways through the County Zoning Ordinance, the programs offered through the Wadena County Soil & Water Conservation Office, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and other state or federal agencies.

This table shows a breakdown of the land use within the County according to the 2007-2012 Wadena County Hazardous Mitigation Plan – Community Profile.

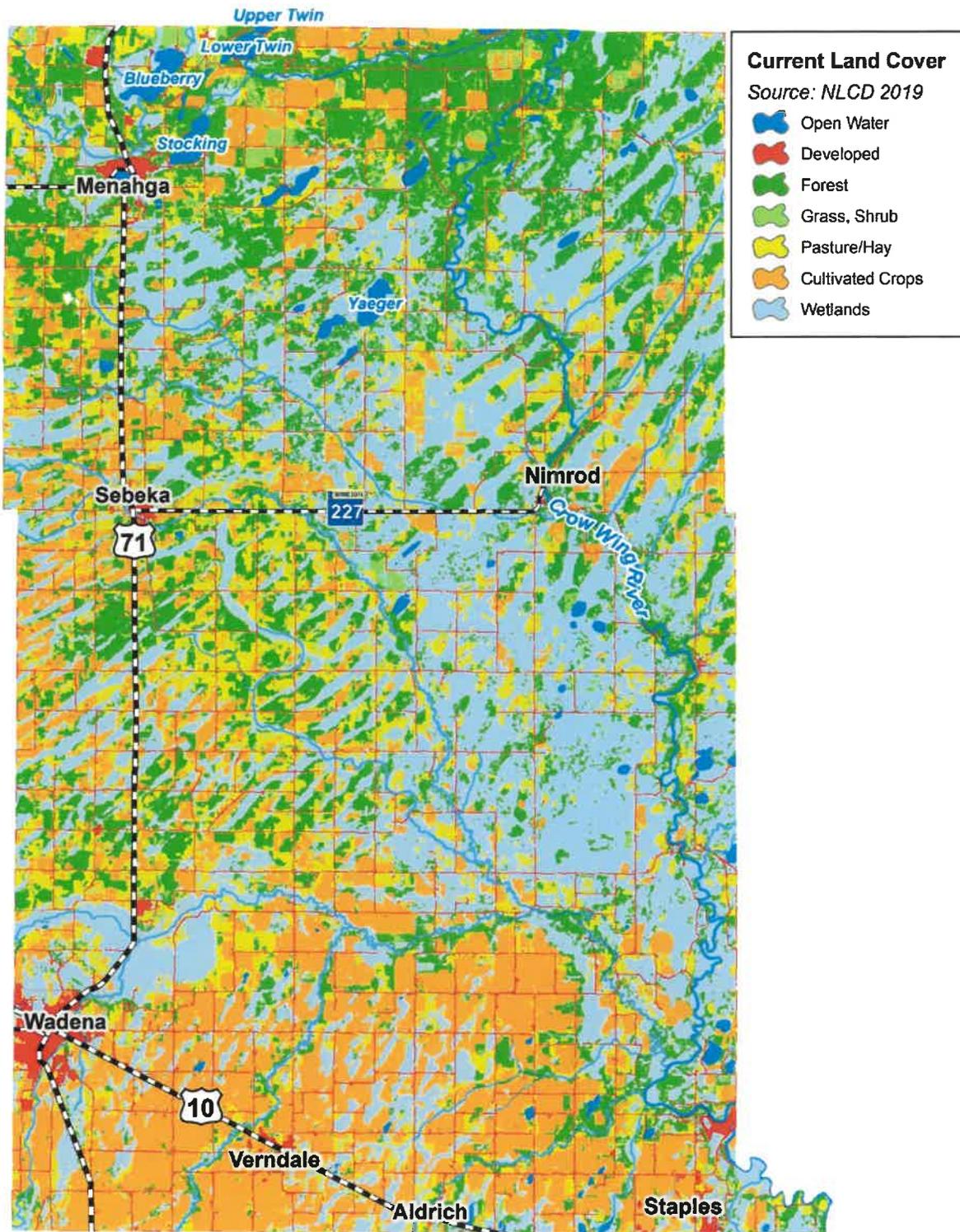
Wadena County Land Use Summary		
	Acreage	% of County
Abandoned Farmstead	156.8	0.05%
Gravel Pits	165.2	0.05%
RIM (Reinvest in MN)	349.9	0.10%
Altered Water	570.7	0.16%
Commercial / Industrial	1,017.1	0.29%
Recreation Land	1,159.8	0.33%
Community Service	1,197.7	0.34%
Barn Lots	1,727.5	0.50%
Wildlife Land	3,674.9	1.06%
Farmstead	3,715.8	1.07%
Natural Areas – Coniferous	4,627.5	1.33%
Residential Land	4,933.8	1.42%
Water	5,558.8	1.60%
CRP	5,943.0	1.71%
Transportation Services	9,670.6	2.78%
Native Pastures	12,356.1	3.56%
Hay Land	15,991.7	4.60%
Deciduous Forest	17,340.4	4.99%
Irrigated Land	17,659.8	5.08%
Natural Areas - Grass	18,549.5	5.34%
Pasture Land	19,717.4	5.67%
Natural Areas - Deciduous	22,070.4	6.35%
Natural Areas - Mixed	23,980.8	6.90%
Mixed-Woodlot Forest	26,169.7	7.53%
Coniferous Forest	56,051.5	16.13%
Cropland	73,162.7	21.05%
Total	347,520.05	100.00%

About 44% of the land mass of Wadena County is made up of forested and woodlot acres.

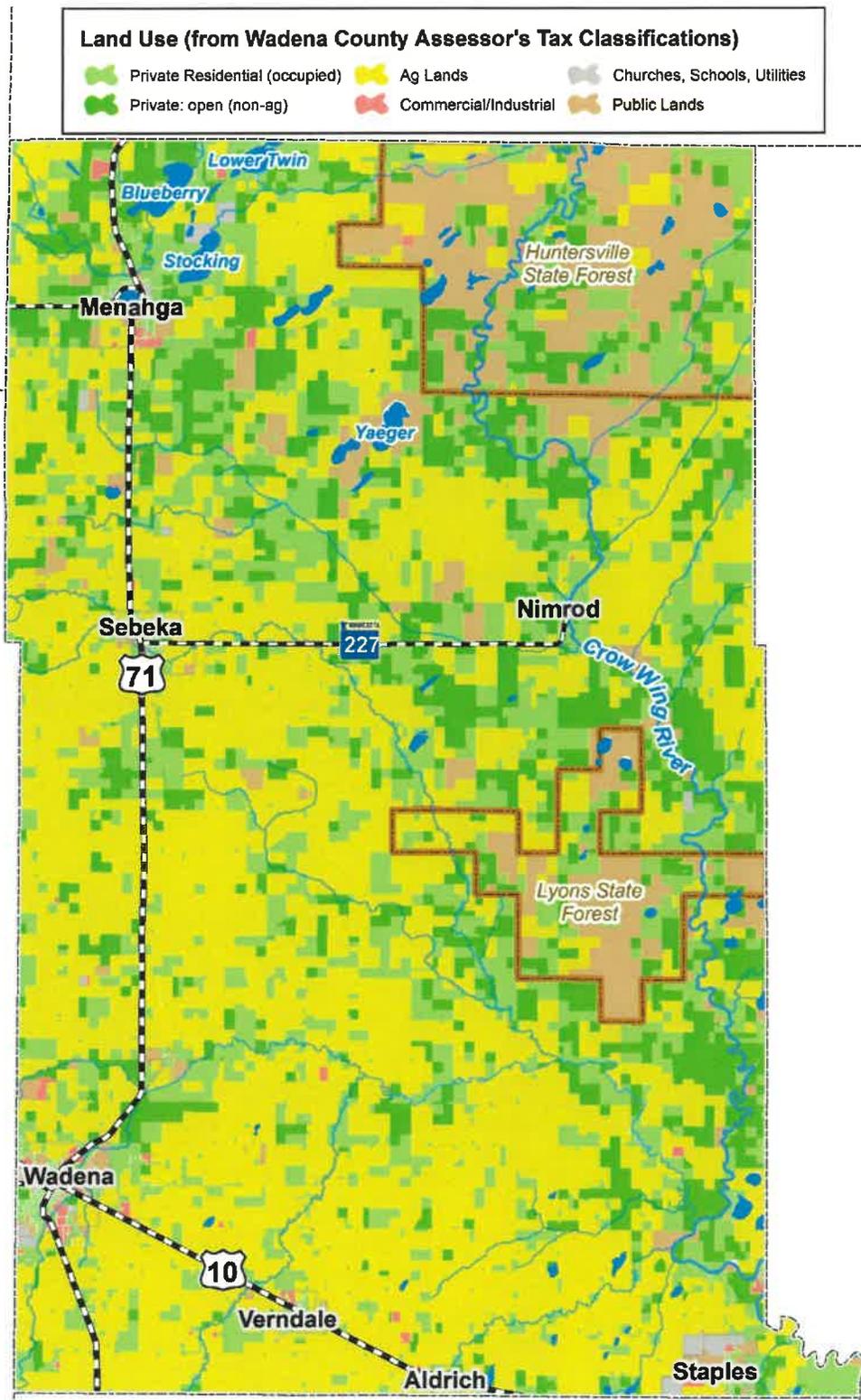
The map below depicts the detailed land cover for Wadena County.



The map below simplifies the land cover for Wadena County.



This map shows the land use in Wadena County based on the tax classification of each parcel:



LAND OWNERSHIP

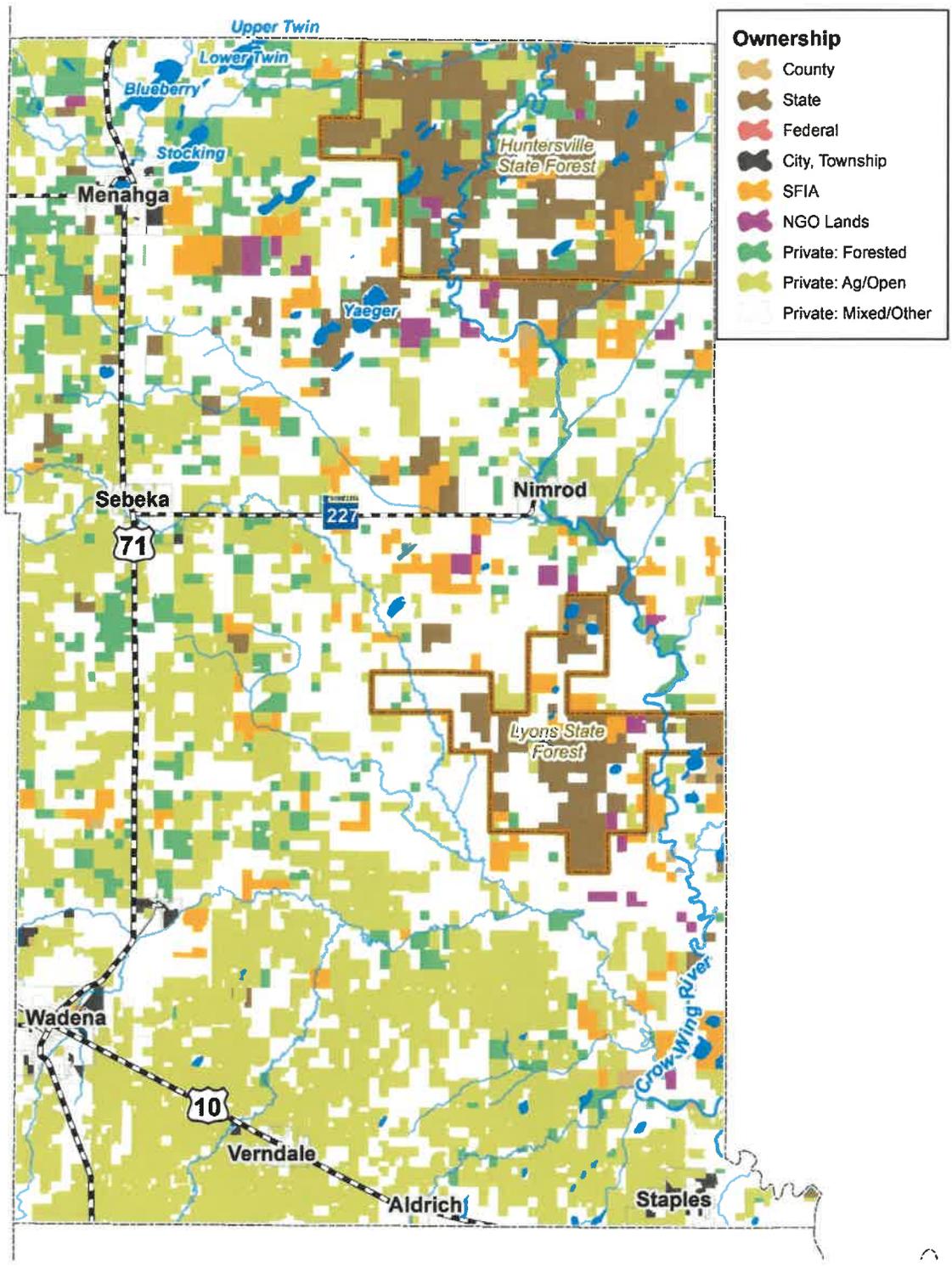
The distribution of land ownership in Wadena County is split between private land owners, the County, and the State of Minnesota. Private land owners account for about 89%. The table below breaks down the ownership county-wide:

Land Ownership in Wadena County

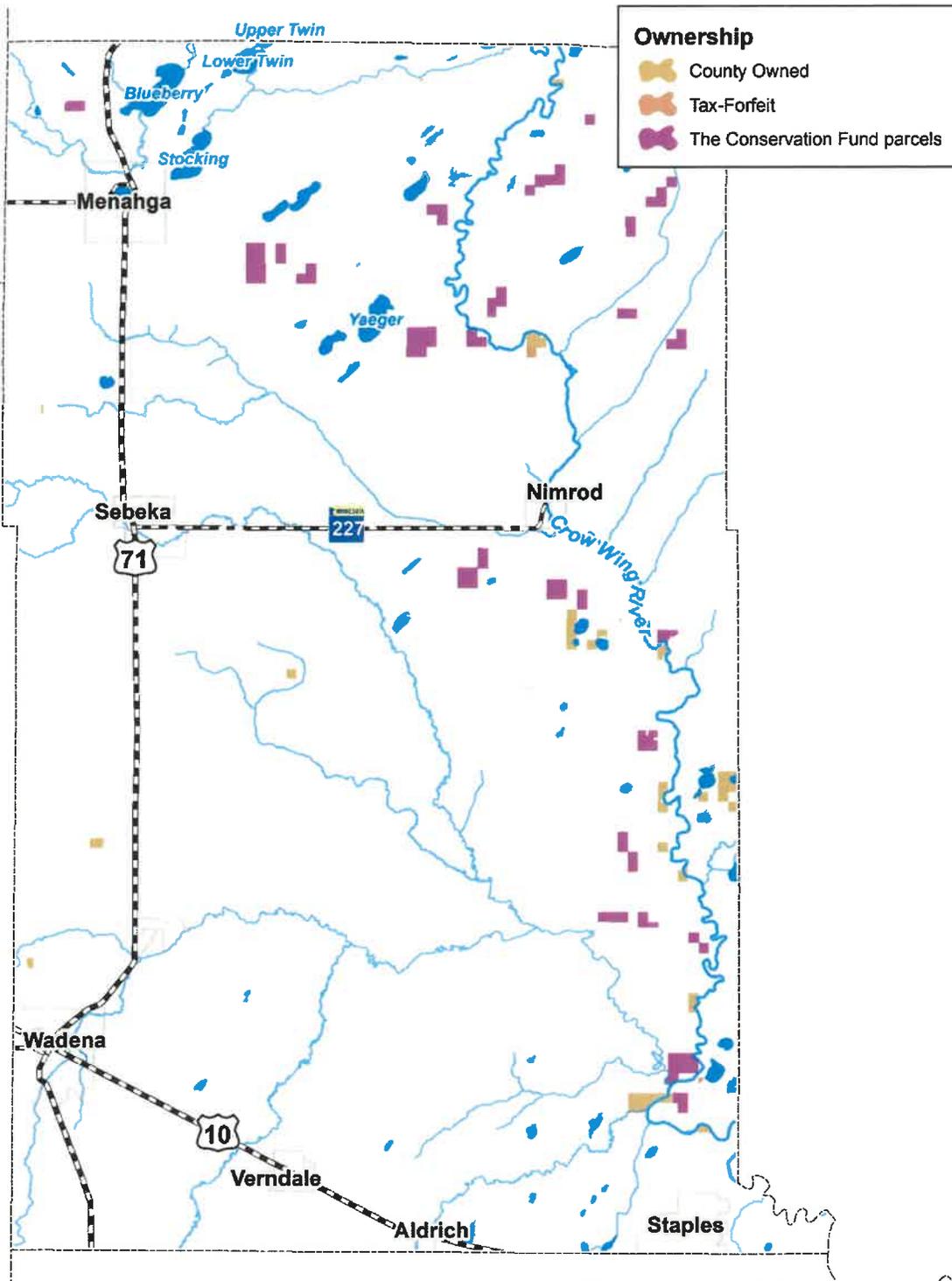
Manager	Total Acres	Percentage
Private	298,728.19	89.5
County	4591.95	1.4
Tax Forfeit	170.25	
Fee Title Ownership	4421.70	
State	30,611.62	9.1

Private land ownership in Wadena County accounts for 89% of the total acres in Wadena County.

This map provides a visual of the distribution of ownership within the County.



This map locates existing County Administered Lands as well as The Conservation Fund parcels acquired as a result of the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant, which will also be administered by the County.



BENEFITS OF THE FOREST

ECONOMIC

Timber sales, whether public or private, are an important factor in the economics in Wadena County, especially considering that approximately 44% of the land mass of the County is forested. Until recently, with the acquisition of parcels from the Conservation Fund through the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant, land administered by Wadena County was minimal and there was no real need for a Land Management Department. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Forestry Office managed these lands in-line with the practices of the State of MN for the purpose of timber development and harvest. Because of the minimal number of acres in Tax Forfeit and other County Administered Lands, they were able to provide this service to the County at no charge in accordance with **MN Statute 282.131**.

Below is a table showing revenue generated from timber on Wadena County Tax Forfeit and other County Administered lands in the past 5 years:

Wadena County Revenue Generated from Timber on Tax Forfeit Land					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Timber Sales	\$8737	0	0	\$40,302	\$2453

Wadena County generated \$51,492.00 in revenue from County Administered Lands since 2019.

The following table shows revenue from the sale of Tax Forfeited or other County Administered Lands and how it has been apportioned in the past 5 years.

Wadena County Apportionment of Revenue Generated Over the Past 5 Years					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Timber Development	\$9252	\$2,309	\$41,487	\$1765	0
General Revenue	\$25,905	\$6,465	\$116,165	\$4942	0
County Parks	\$18,503	\$4618	\$82,975	\$3530	0
Schools	\$25,905	\$6465	\$116,165	\$4942	0
Townships/Cities	\$12952	\$3233	\$58,082	\$2471	0
Total:	\$92,517	\$23,090	\$414,874	\$17650	0

Wadena County has generated revenue from County Tax Forfeited, and other County Administered Lands, in other ways as well. Over the course of the years, 9 County Parks & Campgrounds located along the Crow Wing River have been developed and each generates revenue through camping fees which help to fund the Parks system. These provide outdoor experiences including: canoeing, tubing, fishing, hiking, hunting, berry picking, and multiple other outdoor activities. This is also a part of the economics in Wadena County, drawing visitors here from across the State, as well as adjacent states of North and South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. These lands are managed by the Wadena County Parks Department.

SOCIAL

The social benefits of public forest land are also important to recognize. Current recreational activities in the forest include: hunting, hiking and walking, cross country skiing, bird watching, berry picking, as well as ATV & snowmobile use. Open spaces associated with the forests also provide wildlife viewing, which is another social benefit. All of these, and more, are important aspects of the forests to the citizens of Wadena County.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Wadena County is located in areas of glacial till, in material sorted out of glacial meltwater, and in organic matter. About 60% of the soils were formed in sandy and gravelly outwash, 25% in glacial till, and 15% in organic matter. In these erosion prone soils, forests provide the benefit of slowing soil erosion from wind and rain, protection from erosion and run off along the rivers and streams, as well as helping with air quality through carbon sequestration and oxygen emission, to name a few. Wadena County has adopted the One Watershed One Plan for the Redeye Watershed and is actively participating and plans to adopt the One Watershed One Plan for the Crow Wing Watershed as well. Each of these plans contains initiatives to promote healthy

forests, clean drinking and surface water, soil health and stabilization, among other things, within the watershed.

HABITAT

Several hundred acres of shallow and deep freshwater marshes and wetlands exist in Wadena County. These areas provide habitats for furbearers, such as muskrat, mink, and beaver.

Wadena County is also home to big game animals like deer and bear. Bobcat, fox, coyote, and timberwolves are also prevalent in the forested areas of the County. These forested areas also provide habitat for smaller animals such as rabbits, squirrels, skunks, raccoon, badgers and other furbearing mammals. A wide variety of songbirds and game type birds like pheasant and grouse occupy these areas as well as the rural farm areas.

Wadena County has adopted the One Watershed One Plan for the Redeye Watershed and is actively participating, and plans to adopt, the One Watershed One Plan for the Crow Wing Watershed as well. Each of these plans contains initiatives to promote healthy forests and habitat within the watershed.

TRENDS:

Economic

Historically, Wadena County's economy, like many counties, has been dependent on the natural resources of the County, whether agriculture or forestry related. In many ways this is still a true statement. With the sale of Potlach owned land in the County over the past 20 years, the larger timber harvests on private land has dwindled some. The State of MN continues to be a leader in timber management in the County presently. However, with multiple programs available to assist landowners in practicing conservation and good forestry, the number of smaller privately owned forests and woodlots under a stewardship or other forest management plan has increased considerably.

The number of smaller privately owned forests and woodlots under a stewardship or other forest management plan has increased in the County considerably.

Social:

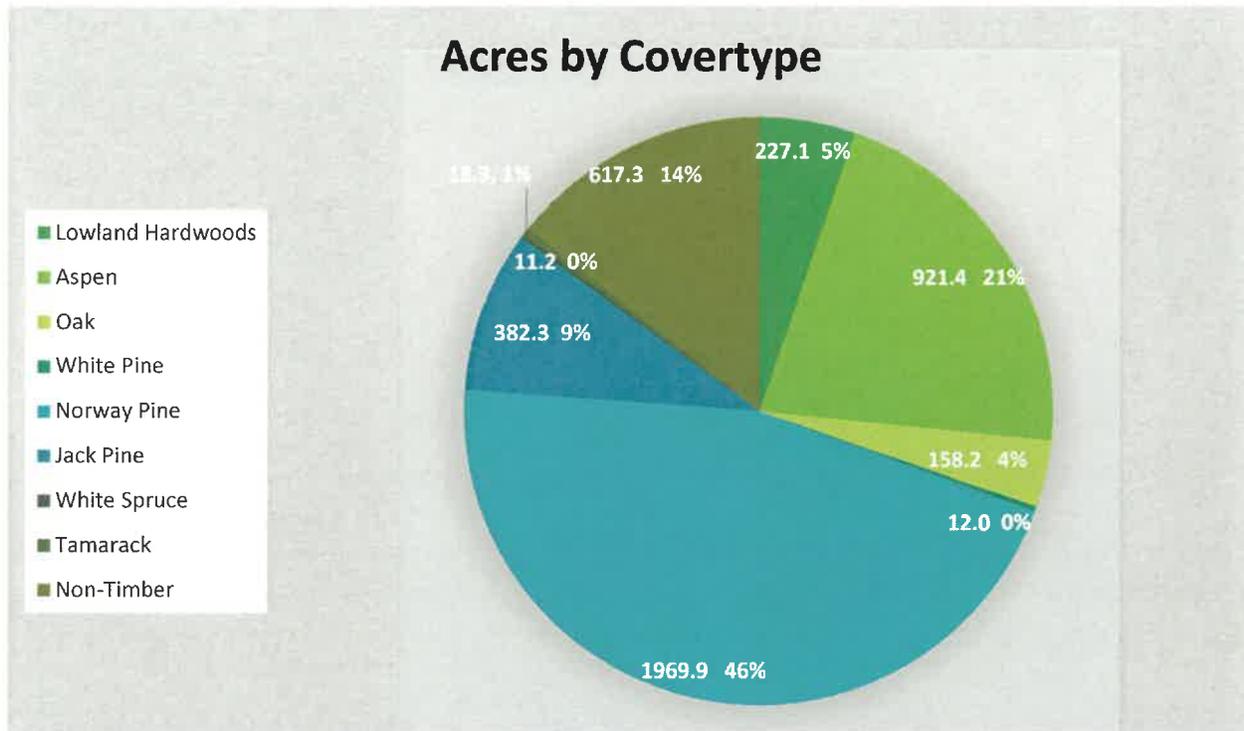
It is anticipated that County Parks and other County Administered lands will become increasingly used in ways to take advantage of the outdoor experience opportunities they will be able to provide.

FOREST DESCRIPTIONS

Wadena County manages 4318 acres of forested land, on which there are approximately 3700 acres of commercial forest. Wadena County is committed to providing residents and visitors of the county with healthy, productive, and diverse forests. Proper forest management on these lands helps contribute to their long-term sustainability by considering the resource needs, site capabilities, public priorities, and economics. The forests of Wadena County provide a source of income to area loggers and mill operators, as well as providing the raw materials needed for growing communities. These lands also provide a wide range of public recreation opportunities and wildlife habitats.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service have developed an Ecological Classification System (ECS) for ecological mapping and landscape classification in Minnesota. Wadena County lies within the Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains subsection. The Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains Subsection, named for its mix of end moraines and outwash and till plains, is a resource-rich, heavily forested area. The subsection contains the headwaters of the Mississippi River along with hundreds of lakes. Other larger rivers include the Crow Wing River and Pine River. Prior to European settlement, forests of jack pine mixed with northern pin oak were most common on outwash plains, and aspen-birch and mixed white pine-Norway pine forests were the most common on end moraines.

The vast majority of the forest lands managed by Wadena County lie on outwash plains. These areas are characterized by level to gently rolling topography with sandy soils that are well to excessively drained. Currently, the major forest types by acreage on the County lands are Norway pine, aspen, and jack pine but there are several other smaller cover types also.



SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PLAN

Wadena County manages its forest land on a commercial basis with a goal of ensuring that an optimal financial return is attained. At the same time Wadena County also has a duty to maintain the recreational and other social values of the forest resource and to protect the long-term sustainability of the resource for the people of the County. Sustainable forest management is about striking a balance between economic, social, and environmental values in a manner that protects all of these values over time.

Wadena County is committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and will manage their lands in accordance with those principles. Through sustainable forest management Wadena County strives to:

- Protect the integrity and longevity of County owned forest lands.
- Comply with all applicable laws and voluntary forest management guidelines developed by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council.
- Plan and conduct forest management activities in a manner that:
 - protects and maintains diversity across the forest ecosystem;
 - prevents damage and protects forest health and productivity;
 - minimizes chemical use;

- protects the integrity of riparian areas;
 - minimizes aesthetic impacts;
 - protects threatened and endangered species and their habitat;
 - conserve areas with special attributes such as cultural, ecological, geological, economic, or social attributes; and
 - promote efficient utilization of forest products.
- Enhance public recreation values by providing opportunities for dispersed recreation on County lands.

RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Wadena County relies on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Database for information on rare species in and near its forest lands. The Minnesota DNR natural heritage database lists the approximate locations of known rare vertebrates, invertebrates, and plant species, and also identifies areas of significant biological diversity that may be affected during forest management activities. All forest stands that are scheduled for management will be reviewed by the Department of Natural Resources for the presence of rare species and for management strategies to minimize impacts to any identified species.

FOREST MANAGEMENT WITHIN WADENA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

Wadena County manages 9 County Parks encompassing 840 acres, all located along the Crow Wing River. These parks vary from 24 acres to 226 acres in size and outside of the main camping areas are mostly forested. Recreation will be the main priority in managing these lands, at times using timber harvesting as a tool. Without forest management, natural tree mortality and disturbances such as blow down events may require major efforts to clear camping areas and trails. With harvesting, forest management can be a planned event and will generate revenue to continue managing and improving the recreational opportunities in these areas. Stand prescriptions between County Park lands and other County Forest lands will differ and take into consideration the priority of recreation as the management emphasis using timber harvest as a tool to accomplish that objective. Considerable efforts will be made to maintain the scenic and aesthetic quality near the camping areas and to protect the integrity of the riparian zone along the Crow Wing River.

ANNUAL HARVEST PLAN

The annual harvest plan includes stand by stand information regarding planned harvest activities for a particular year. Identified forest stands are evaluated in the field for potential harvest and follow-up forest management activities. The stands included in the annual harvest plan will be selected from a pool of stands that have been identified for management during a given ten year period. Changes to the annual harvest plan can occur due to accessibility issues, disease or insect damage, wildfire, or other unforeseen circumstances.

SUSTAINABLE HARVEST CALCULATIONS

Sustainable harvest calculations are determined by considering the long term objectives for each forest cover type rather than looking at short-term budgetary needs. Forestry staff look at the total number of acres of each cover type, the age class distribution, the health and productivity of the cover type, and any significant conditions that may affect the overall management of the cover type. This information is contained in Wadena County’s Forest Inventory Database and as observed knowledge from forestry field staff. The information contained in the forest inventory database was collected as part of a field inventory project in the winter of 2022-2023 and through continual updates to the database as changes occur through management activities. The procedures used to determine sustainable harvest levels for Wadena County are appropriate for a forest land base of this size. Estimated harvest levels may vary annually during a 10 year period due to differences in individual stand size and the efficiencies gained in managing adjacent cover types together. The rotation ages and general silvicultural systems to be used for each forest cover type are listed in the following table.

GENERAL FOREST MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES BY FOREST COVER TYPE

Forest Cover Type	Rotation Age	Silviculture System	General Management Objectives for the Cover type
Aspen	40	Even age	Clearcut harvest to favor prompt and full regeneration to a new aspen stand. Clear cuts with variable tree and clump retention to promote other species within the stand, to favor wildlife species, and to protect aesthetics.
Jack Pine	50	Even age	Clearcut harvest at rotation age to regenerate jack pine by planting, seeding, or through natural regeneration.
Lowland Hardwoods	100	Uneven age	Most of these stands are located along the Crow Wing River. Any harvesting in these stands would be a selective harvest to improve tree/stand health, to promote growth on desirable trees, and to increase tree species diversity.
Norway Pine Planted	60	Even age	Perform first selective harvest on 25-30 year old stands to reduce basal area, promote growth, and provide future access. Thin at 10-year intervals thereafter until rotation age. At rotation age, clearcut harvest and plant Norway pine or seed tree harvest to promote natural regeneration of Norway pine stand.

Norway-White Pine Natural Origin	100	Even and Uneven age	Perform first selective harvest as stand density dictates to reduce basal area and promote growth. Thin at 10-20 year intervals thereafter to improve stand health until rotation age. At rotation age, utilize seed tree or shelterwood harvest to promote natural regeneration.
Oak	80	Even age	Clearcut harvest at rotation age. Consider conversion to higher value pine or mixed pine/oak stands.
White Spruce	80	Even age	Selective harvest as stand density dictates to reduce basal area, promote growth, and improve stand health. Clearcut harvest at rotation age and reforest to white spruce and/or pine.

FOREST DEVELOPMENT

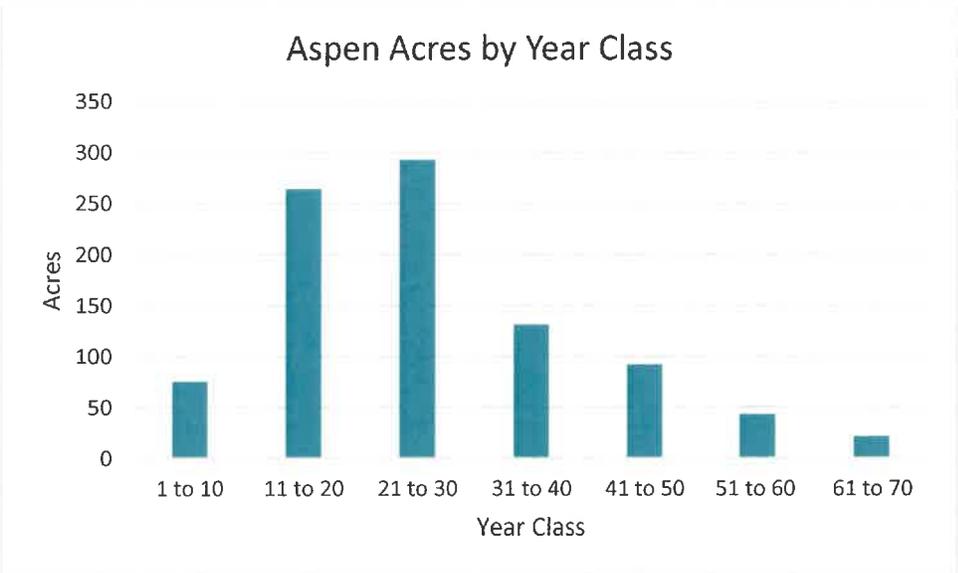
Stands that receive a final regeneration harvest at rotation age will be reforested in a timely manner. Where forest development is needed, Minnesota DNR foresters will provide technical assistance to Wadena County in the form of project recommendations, forest development contractors, and project supervision. Forest development projects may include site preparation, tree planting, seeding, browse protection, and other stand improvement practices to make sure a site is successfully reforested. Regenerated sites will be monitored for at least 10 years after the initial establishment to ensure that they are adequately stocked with desirable trees that are free to grow.

Where forest development is needed, MN DNR foresters will provide technical assistance to Wadena County in the form of project recommendations, forest development contractors, and project supervision.

COVER TYPE DESCRIPTIONS

Aspen

Current Acres: 921



Description: The objectives for aspen are to shorten the age class structure and to level out the age class imbalance. Aspen is an early successional species, matures quickly, and begins to decline in health and productivity shortly after reaching its biological maturity at age 40. Currently, about 156 acres of the total aspen acreage is considered mature or over-mature. In addition, another 174 acres will reach maturity within the next 10 years. Of these 174 acres, 50% will be harvested in the next 10 years to help balance the age classes.

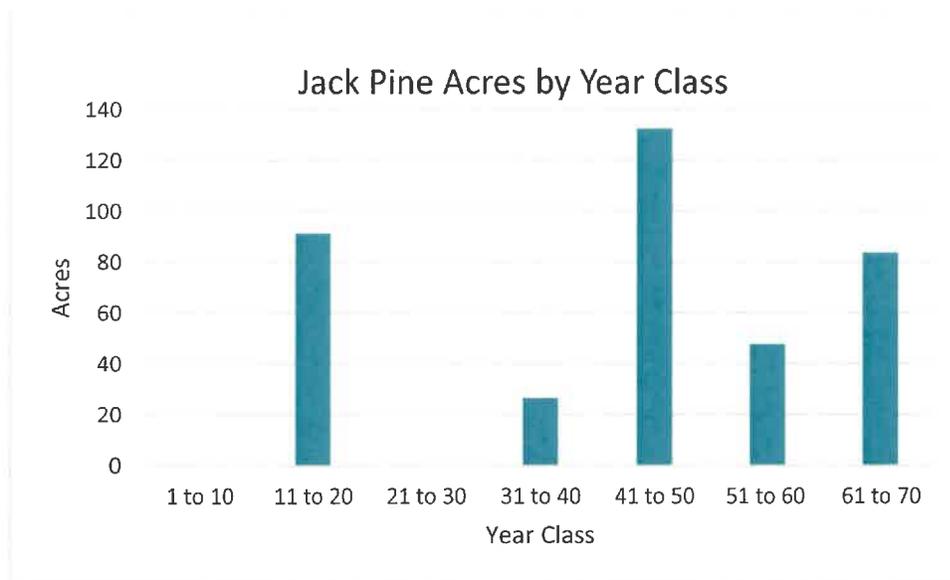
10 year Harvest Formula: 243 acres / 10 years= 24 acres/year

This harvest calculation assumes that all aspen is harvestable. There may be instances where harvesting certain stands of aspen is not economically feasible (small islands or isolated areas) or aesthetically sensitive (near a County Park). As these stands are identified they will be noted on the forest inventory database and removed from the available harvest pool.

Aspen is an important cover type for a variety of wildlife species, especially deer and ruffed grouse. Harvesting is a valuable tool for creating age class diversity in the aspen cover type. Aspen stands regenerate by sprouting a dense new stand of trees from the root systems of the harvested trees. Improving wildlife habitat by creating aspen age diversity is accomplished by implementing periodic timber harvests with a long-term goal of creating multiple age classes of aspen with at least 25% of the aspen stands from 1-10 years old.

Jack Pine

Current Acres: 382



Description: The objectives for jack pine are to maintain the current acreage base, reduce the number of mature and over-mature stands, and to consider conversion of higher quality sites to a Norway pine cover type by replanting after harvest to a mixture of Norway and jack pine. Currently, 69% of the jack pine cover type (264 acres) is mature or will reach maturity within the next 10 years. Forestry staff will evaluate and schedule harvests of these acres over the next 10 years based on current stand condition and age. Unless selected for conversion to Norway pine, all harvested stands will be regenerated back to jack pine. Any jack pine acreage converted to other species will be offset through converting other cover types to jack pine, primarily low site index white spruce and oak stands.

10 Year Harvest Formula: 264 acres / 10 years= 26 acres/year

Jack pine acreage has been reduced County-wide on all ownerships over the last 40 years, primarily due to conversion to other forest cover types including Norway pine, aspen and northern red/pin oak. Jack pine is a challenge to regenerate in Wadena County due to several factors including deer browse damage, gall rust disease, and competition from grasses and other woody tree and brush species on harvested sites. Successful reforestation of jack pine will be a priority on harvested sites.

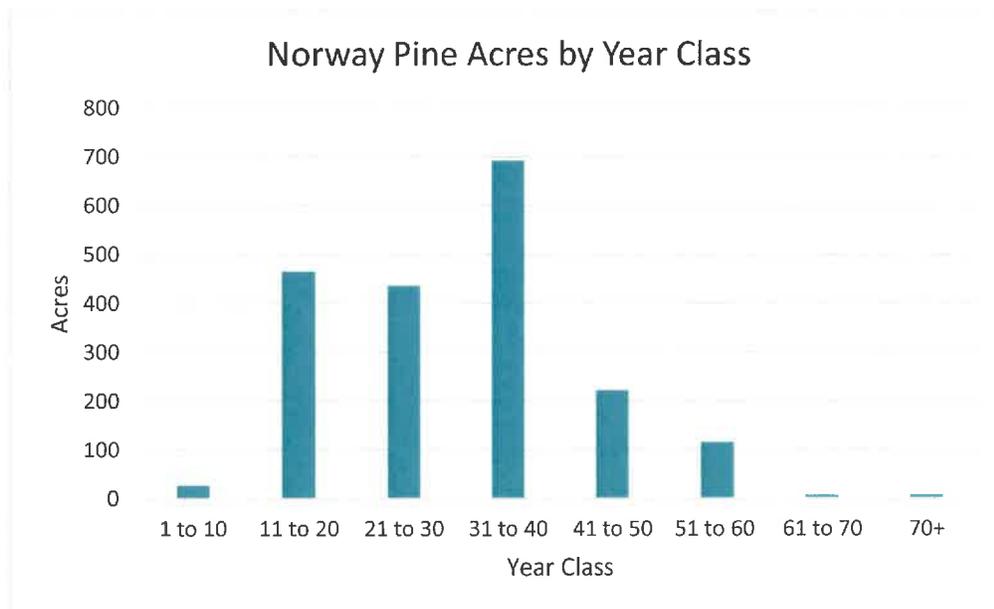
Lowland Hardwoods

Current Acres: 227

Description: All of the lowland hardwood stands are located in the riparian area along the Crow Wing River. These stands grow within the floodplain of the river, are on poorly drained sites, and have site indexes between 40-50. The primary management objectives for stands of this site quality are to provide wildlife habitat and to protect the watershed values. However, some small saw logs and wood fiber can be selectively harvested without sacrificing these objectives. Any harvesting in these stands should promote both tree species and age diversity to make them more resilient to pest infestations, particularly the emerald ash borer. Because any harvests in these stands would tend to be small selective harvests, they should be evaluated as part of adjacent stand management, keeping in mind the overall goals.

Norway Pine Plantations

Current Acres: 1970



Description: This Norway pine cover type encompasses the most acres of any forest cover type on Wadena County managed lands. These stands were established by tree planting, and many have been intensively managed in the past. The objective for this cover type is to manage for quality forest products to achieve a high economic return. All stands are evaluated at about age 25 for a first selective harvest. Stands requiring treatment will be selectively thinned based on recommendations found in the *Manager's Handbook for Norway Pine in the North Central States*. Stands will be thinned up to three times before a final regeneration harvest at about age 60.

Based on age and basal area, there are 518 acres of Norway pine plantations that will need to be thinned and 115 acres that will be ready for a final harvest in the next 10 years.

10 Year Harvest Formulas:

Selective Harvest: 518 acres / 10 years= 52 acres/year

Final Harvest: 115 acres / 10 years= 11 acres/year

Norway and White Pine Natural Origin

Current Acres: 23

Description: This cover type includes a few small stands located within County Parks. The main objective for these stands is to provide aesthetics and enhance the recreational experience within the park. Light selective harvests will be conducted as needed to maintain healthy, productive stands. Uneven aged management will be used where appropriate to perpetuate a stand with a minimum amount of visual change or disturbance.

Oak

Current Acres: 158

Description: Most of the oak stands on Wadena County lands grow on nutrient poor sandy soils and have site indexes below 50. These stands can be left unmanaged until rotation age. The main products from harvests on these stands will be fuelwood and pulpwood. After harvest, these sites should be reforested to a pine/oak mix to add higher value tree species more suitable to the site while maintaining an oak component for wildlife habitat.

White Spruce

Current Acres: 11

Description: White spruce stands will be evaluated for an initial selective harvest at age 30. Stands will be thinned as needed to promote growth and maintain stand health. A final regeneration harvest will be conducted at rotation age and the sites will be reforested to mixture of white spruce and other conifers.

TIMBER SALE PROCESS

Stand Selection. Based on data contained in the forest inventory database, a pool of stands will be created that need to be managed over the following ten year period. Each year, an annual stand exam list will be selected from this pool for field inspection by a forester. The field inspection will verify the forest inventory data and analyze the stand to determine forest management objectives and harvest opportunities. The stands on this annual exam list are reviewed by DNR personnel from the Division of Forestry for the presence of rare or endangered species, cultural resources, and potential impacts to wildlife habitat.

Timber Sale Preparation. On those stands ready for harvest, a forester will perform the following activities:

- Locate any nearby corner monuments and estimate property line locations;
- Determine forest management and silvicultural objectives;
- Mark harvest boundaries. Either the entire stand, a portion of the stand, or a combination with portions of adjacent stands;
- Mark special features of the site such as riparian zones, filter strips, and trees to be reserved;
- Perform a timber appraisal to determine each species timber volumes and values;
- Note specific features such as historical and cultural sites and rare species.

Harvest/Management Prescription: After fieldwork is complete, a written timber appraisal and harvest prescription for the stand/harvest area is prepared. The harvest prescription reflects the forester's assessment of the stand and includes management objectives and harvest specifications and regulations. It also lists features of the stand and identifies actions related to best management practices, water quality, riparian zones, and forest regeneration plans for the site.

Timber Auction. Once the timber appraisal is approved, it is offered for sale on a public timber sale auction. Auction tract information includes detailed harvesting regulations, harvest dates, sale volumes and prices, legal description, and map. Harvest tracts are offered through oral bidding. Bidders must be on the Minnesota DNR Approved Purchaser list in order to purchase auction tracts. The winning bidder provides a 15% down payment the day of the auction.

Timber Harvest Administration. Logging contractors must inform forestry staff when they intend to begin harvest activities. Loggers meet with the forester at the harvest site prior to beginning logging operations for a pre-sale meeting. This meeting discusses the harvest plan and regulations, road and landing locations, property boundaries, and other contract provisions. Proof of insurance and payment for the balance of the appraised value of the timber are required

before any logging activities begin. Foresters inspect the site during harvest operations on a regular basis to determine if the prescription and contract provisions are being followed and complete written timber sale inspection reports. Foresters have full authority to halt operations if the provisions of the timber sale contract are not adhered to.

Post Sale Inspection/Forest Inventory Update. Once harvesting is complete, the forester completes a final inspection to determine if all terms of the timber sale were satisfied. Following timber sale closure, the forester updates the forest inventory database and submits a project proposal for any forest development that is needed.

MANAGEMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTERED LANDS

STRUCTURE:

As it has in the past, the County will manage Tax Forfeit and land in Fee Title Ownership of the County for the benefit of the residents of Wadena County. Management will focus on forest commodities, wildlife habitat, and outdoor enjoyment of the public. Without the creation of a Land Department, the responsibility for administering the Wadena County Forest Management Plan will actually be divided into 4 roles and will be managed in much the same manner as it has been managed in the past:

1) County Board of Commissioners

- a. Responsible for policy setting in matters of Forest Management, and in accordance with MN Statute 282 as it pertains to Tax Forfeited lands;
- b. Responsible for decision making on matters of Forest Management which are not delegated as outlined below, and in accordance with MN Statute 282 as it pertains to Tax Forfeited Lands.

2) County Auditor-Treasurer

- a. Responsible for the administration of the Forest Management Plan;
- b. Responsible for the accounting of revenue and expenditures related to the management of County Administered Lands, including Tax Forfeit lands, in accordance with MN Statute 282, and Fee Title Ownership Lands;
- c. Acts as the direct contact for the MN DNR Forestry Office or other Forest Consultant for proposed or scheduled timber harvests and sales, and in accordance with MN Statute 282 as it pertains to Tax Forfeited lands;
- d. Responsible for the administration of all Fee Title Ownership Lands.
- e. Responsible for the administration and process of all tax forfeited land in accordance with MN Statute 282.

3) **County Parks Department**

- a. Responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Parks Ordinance #2 as it pertains to those County Administered lands wherein County Parks and Campgrounds are situated;
- b. Responsible for the continued maintenance and development of the County's Park System on lands already established for this purpose;
- c. Responsible for review of proposed or scheduled harvest that will take place on or around County Parks & Campgrounds lands.

4) **MN DNR Forestry or Forest Consultant:**

- a. Provide all aspects of the management of forests and timber harvests on County Administered Land, whether Tax Forfeited or Fee Title Ownership, in accordance with the Wadena County Forest Management Plan, and all other applicable Federal, State, and Local regulations. This is allowed under MN Statute 89.018.

RETENTION:

The County shall retain all parcels purchased from The Conservation Fund through Northern Waters Land Trust and the Outdoor Heritage Grant. These parcels will remain in fee title ownership of the County for perpetuity.

The County may, at its discretion, retain tax forfeit lands that provide a continuous flow of timber, recreational opportunities, protection of significant ecological and cultural features, and one that helps to minimize the cost of infrastructure to tax payers.

ACQUISITION:

The County may, at its discretion, acquire land through tax forfeiture that is better suited for retention as conservation lands. The County may consider the purchase of lands that help to reduce the fragmentation of natural land base and to improve the ability to manage the land base.

The County may, at its discretion, enter into land exchanges, excluding those parcels purchased from The Conservation Fund through Northern Waters Land Trust and the Outdoor Heritage Grant. Such exchanges may be with both public and private entities in order to consolidate its land holdings. Parcels for consideration of exchange would include parcels that:

- are small in nature and not adjacent to other County holdings
- lack good access or legal access
- have little to no timber value
- have little to no recreational value to the public

DISPOSITION:

The County may, at its discretion, dispose of lands of low value, excluding those parcels purchased from The Conservation Fund through Northern Waters Land Trust and the Outdoor Heritage Grant. Parcels for consideration of sale would include parcels that:

- are small in nature and not adjacent to other County holdings
- lack good access or legal access
- have little to no timber value
- have little to no recreational value to the public

The County will manage Tax Forfeit and land in Fee Title Ownership of the County for the benefit of the residents of Wadena County.

RECREATION

PARKS:

The County manages 9 County Parks/Campgrounds along the Crow Wing River and 1 picnic area in the City of Nimrod, also situated on the Crow Wing River. These parks and campgrounds will continue to be managed and maintained to provide primitive camping experiences for the public into the future. The County will consider expansion of park/campground areas, and other opportunities to other areas of the County, as opportunities arise.

ATV/OHV/Snowmobile

Access to the public on other County Administered Lands will be provided through the network of roads (trails) that it maintains for logging purposes. Besides the primary use for logging, they will provide access to the forest lands for the purpose of walking, hunting, fishing, and traditional use activities, as well as ATV/OHV use. Addressing the use of motorized vehicles on County Administered Lands will be challenging. There will be areas the County will promote motorized use and areas where it will be discouraged or restricted.

Roads and trails that access County owned or managed land will be managed according to this Forest Management Plan. Notwithstanding current practice, or future policy, there will be no

designated ATV/OHV trails developed on lands acquired through NWLT and the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

HUNTING:

Hunting is allowed on County Administered Land or land that is held in Fee Title Ownership. This privilege is allowed with the following regulations:

- 1) Hunters may not build permanent stands or blinds on public lands;
- 2) Stands or blinds must be portable in nature and must be removed after each use;
- 3) A portable stand left on public lands unoccupied is considered open for others to use as they please;
- 4) The cutting or felling of live trees, regardless of size, for the purpose of creating shooting lanes is considered timber trespass and is strictly prohibited;
- 5) Target practice shooting is prohibited at all times of the year;
- 6) Hunters are responsible to know where public land ends and where private land begins;
- 7) Hunters may not have in their possession, out of doors or within a motor vehicles, within the boundaries of, or on the premises known and designated as a Wadena County Park, any kind of firearm or muzzle loading gun, during the period from May 1st until the day after Labor Day, unless it is completely unloaded and contained in gun case specifically designed for that purpose and is fully zipped, snapped, buckled, tied or otherwise fastened, with no portion of the contents showing; or, unloaded and contained in the trunk of a motor vehicle and the trunk door is closed and locked; and
- 8) Hunters need to be aware of their proximity to the designated camping areas at all times and need to exercise extreme caution in the direction they are firing.

*Hunting is allowed on County Administered Lands
and lands held in Fee Title Ownership.*

ROADS/TRAILS:

This plan covers all County Administered Lands, Fee Title Ownership Lands, and County Park/Campground Lands. These lands will be managed to produce timber, protect watersheds, provide outdoor recreation, and perpetuate rare and distinctive species of native flora and fauna. These forests will be managed in a sustainable manner, in order to ensure that they remain healthy, vital, and productive for present and future generations. Within these areas are existing

roads and trails created primarily for the management of timber; however, they may also serve as a form of outdoor recreation to the public as well.

There are 26.7 miles of existing forest roads and trails that provide access to County Forest Lands. The main purpose of these trails is for the forest management and to provide access to County Parks. They are not officially public roads, meaning that these roads are not regularly maintained with the expectation of daily public travel, nor do they provide legal access, without a legal easement, to any private lands that may be intermingled with County owned or administered parcels. However, the public may use these roads for access to County owned or managed lands for outdoor recreation activities. Other than those used for access to County Parks, no maintenance is done on these roads by the County. Users travel on these roads and trails at their own risk.

There are 26.7 miles of existing forest roads & trails that provide access to County Forest Lands, and 4.5 miles of existing Grant-In-Aid Snowmobile Trails that serve as a form of outdoor recreation to the public.

Included within the County forest road system are about 4.5 miles of existing Grant-In-Aid snowmobile trails. These trails are part of the larger Grant-In-Aid snowmobile trail system in the County and are maintained by several different snowmobile clubs. These trails would typically not be open to other motorized vehicular traffic and would be closed after the snowmobile season has ended or during times when there is not enough snow to make the trails feasible to use. Wadena County anticipates these trails will remain in the Grant-In-Aid snowmobile trail system in the future.

Wadena County forest roads and trails will be managed by the same rules as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources State Forest lands in the County, which are classified as Limited for Motor Vehicle Use. On Wadena County owned or administered lands, highway licensed vehicles and off-highway vehicles may operate on signed roads and trails. Motorized travel off of signed trails or forest roads is prohibited except when the Department of Natural Resources Hunter/trapper Exception applies.

New road/trail construction would primarily occur to facilitate timber management activities. These roads could be closed following an activity and even permanently incapacitated if the need to re-enter an area is deemed to be no sooner than a rotation of timber or it is determined no further access is needed.



The purpose of this plan is to establish a framework for forest management activities on lands administered or owned by the County to ensure the goals herein are met.

APPENDIX - TRAILS

BLUEBERRY

BULLARD

HUNTERSVILLE

LYONS

MEADOW

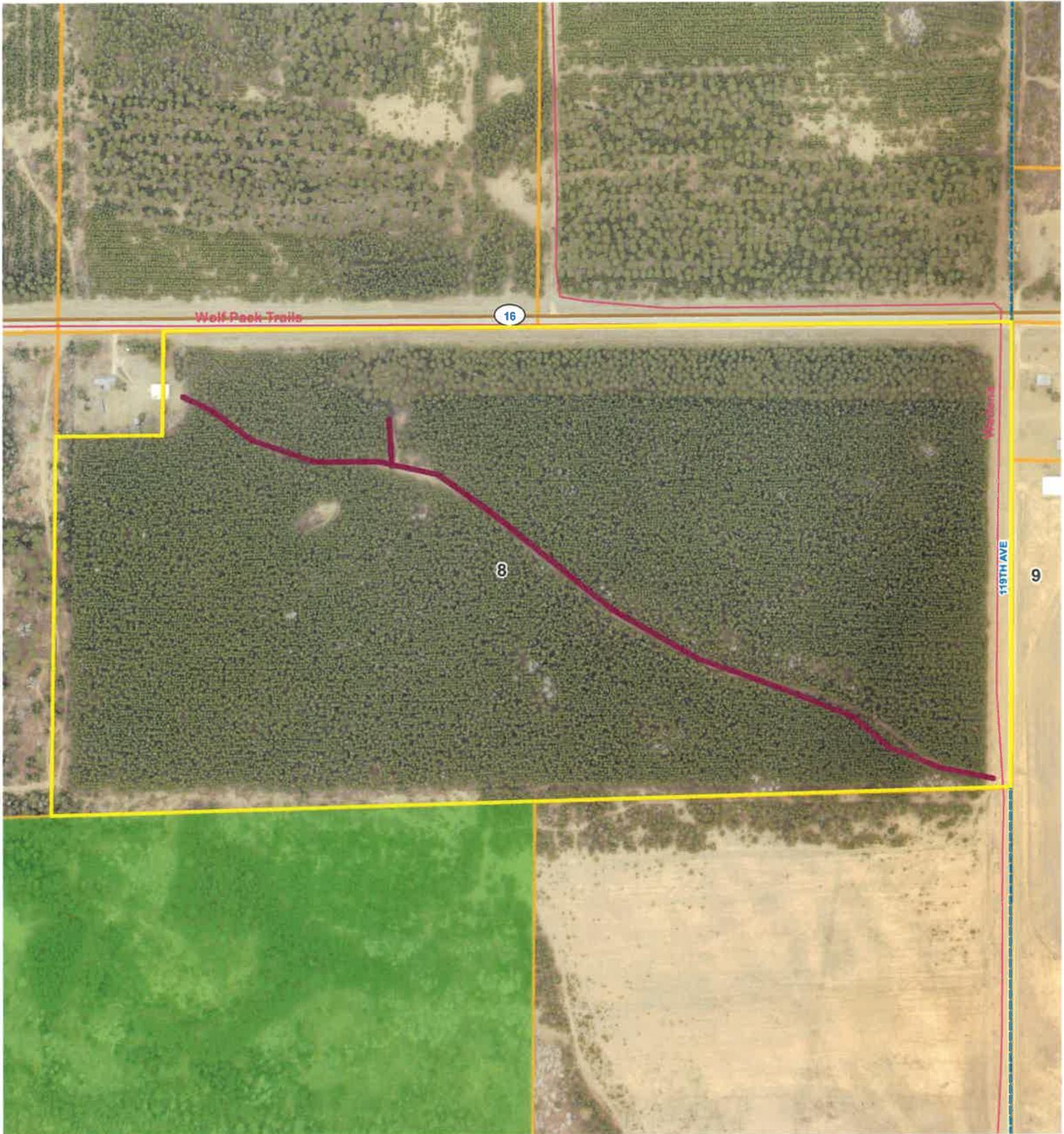
NORTH GERMANY

ORTON

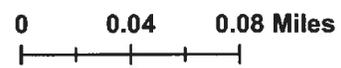
SHELL RIVER

THOMASTOWN

BLUEBERRY TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

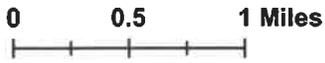
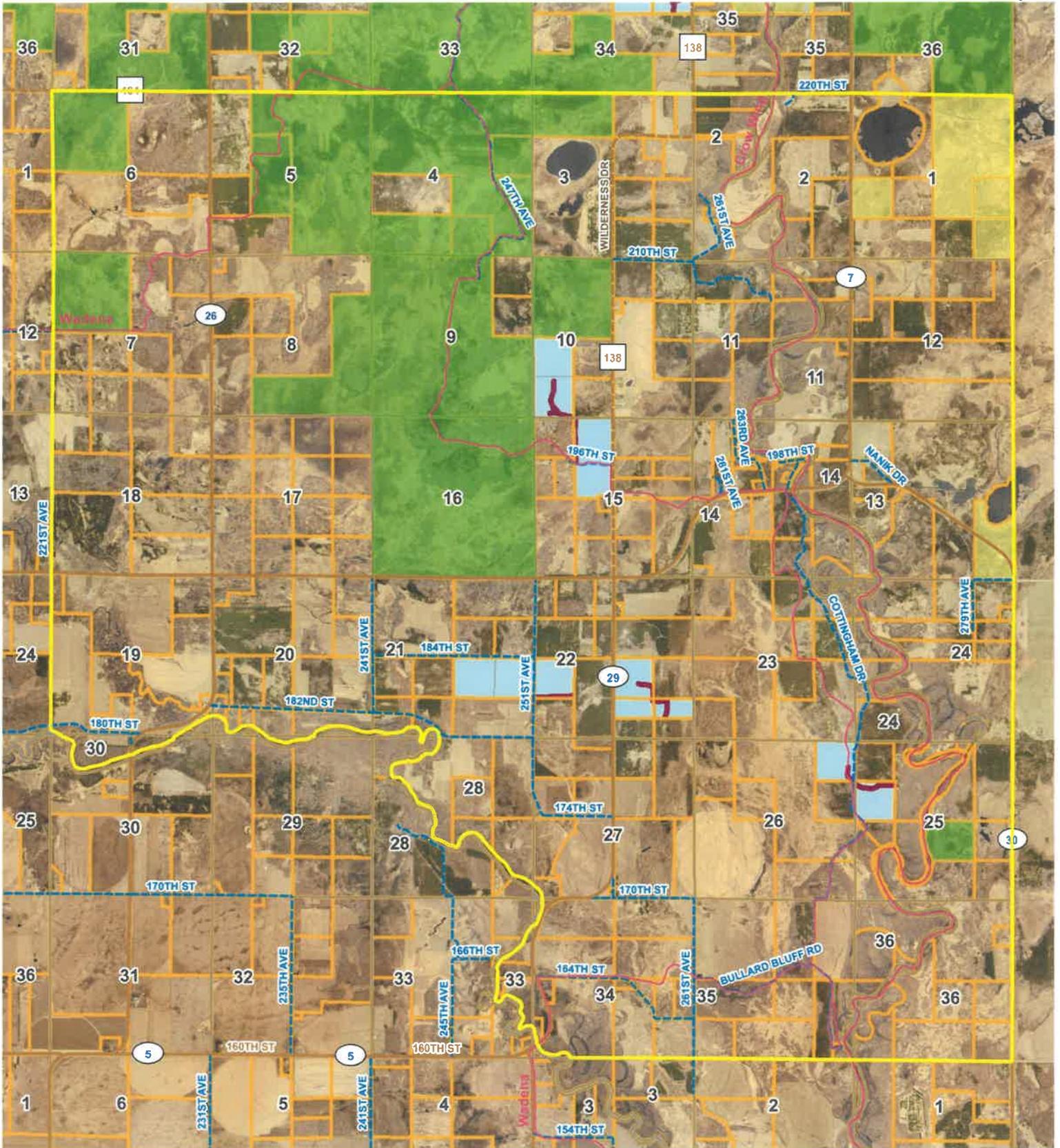


	Conservation Fund Parcels		Snowmobile Trail
	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails



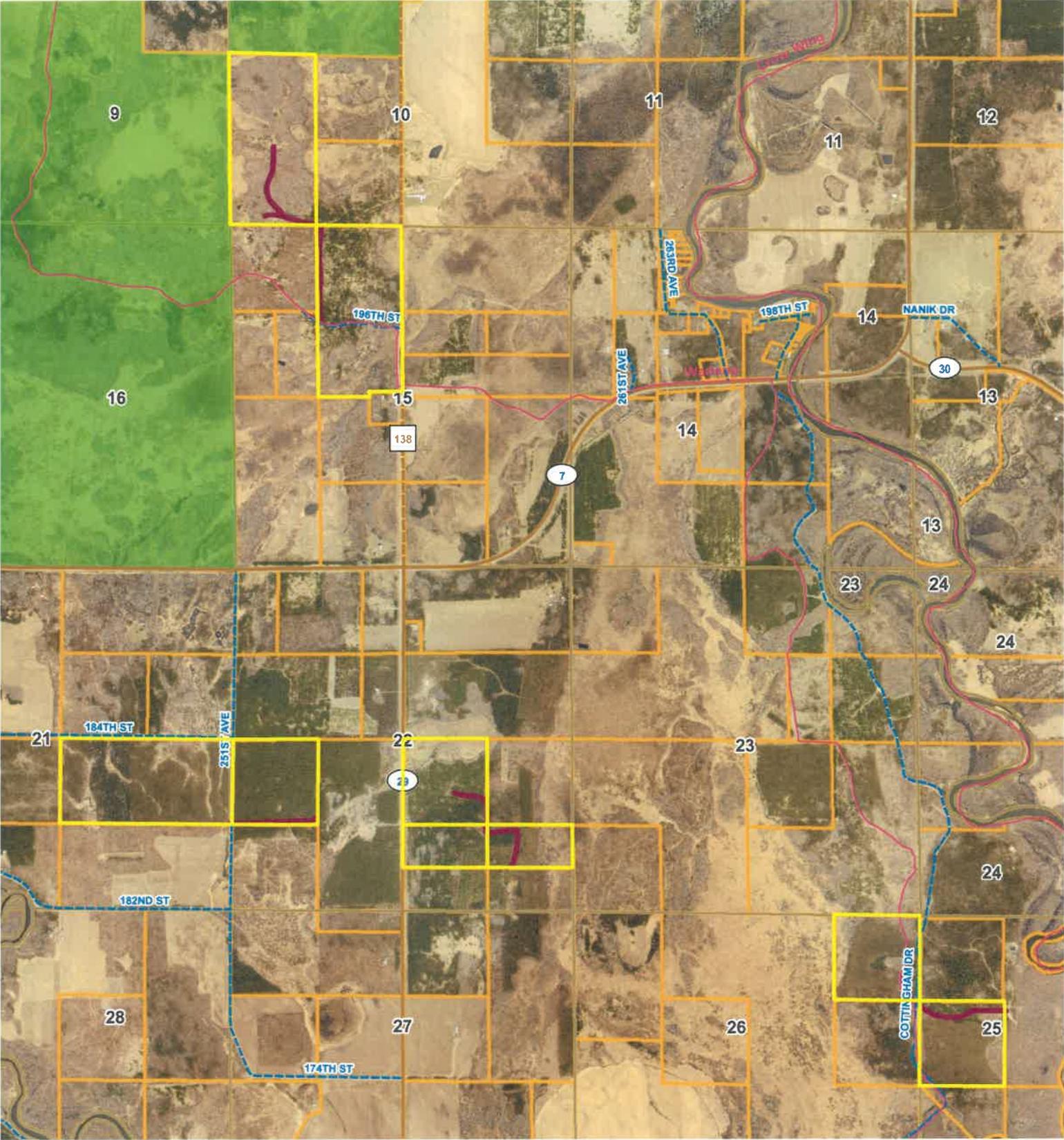
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Gina Dahms
GIS Coordinator
Wadena County

BULLARD TOWNSHIP

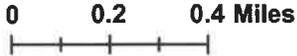


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BULLARD TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

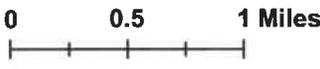
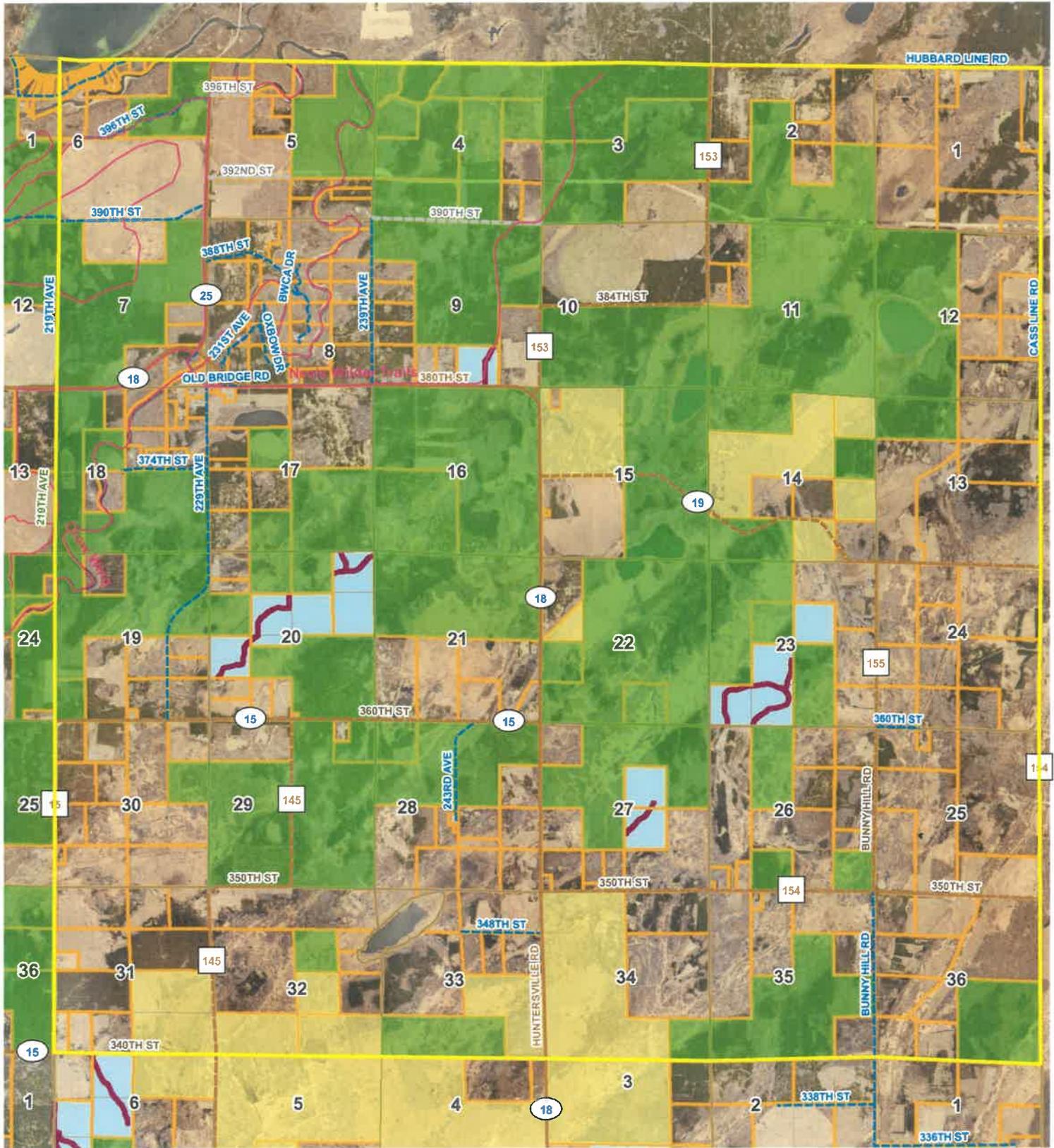


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	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails



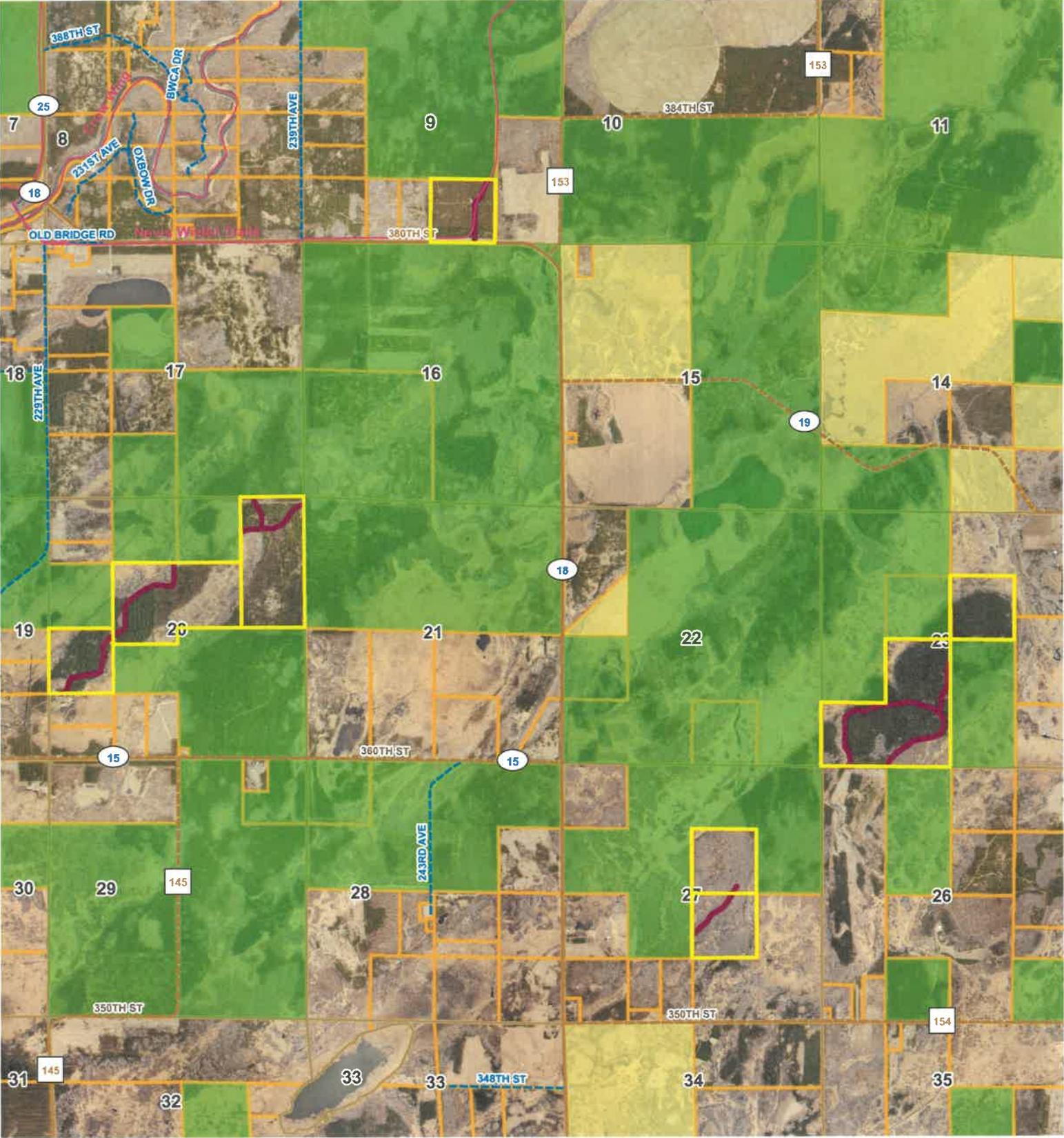
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HUNTERSVILLE TOWNSHIP

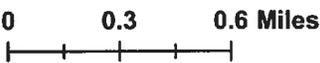


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HUNTERSVILLE TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

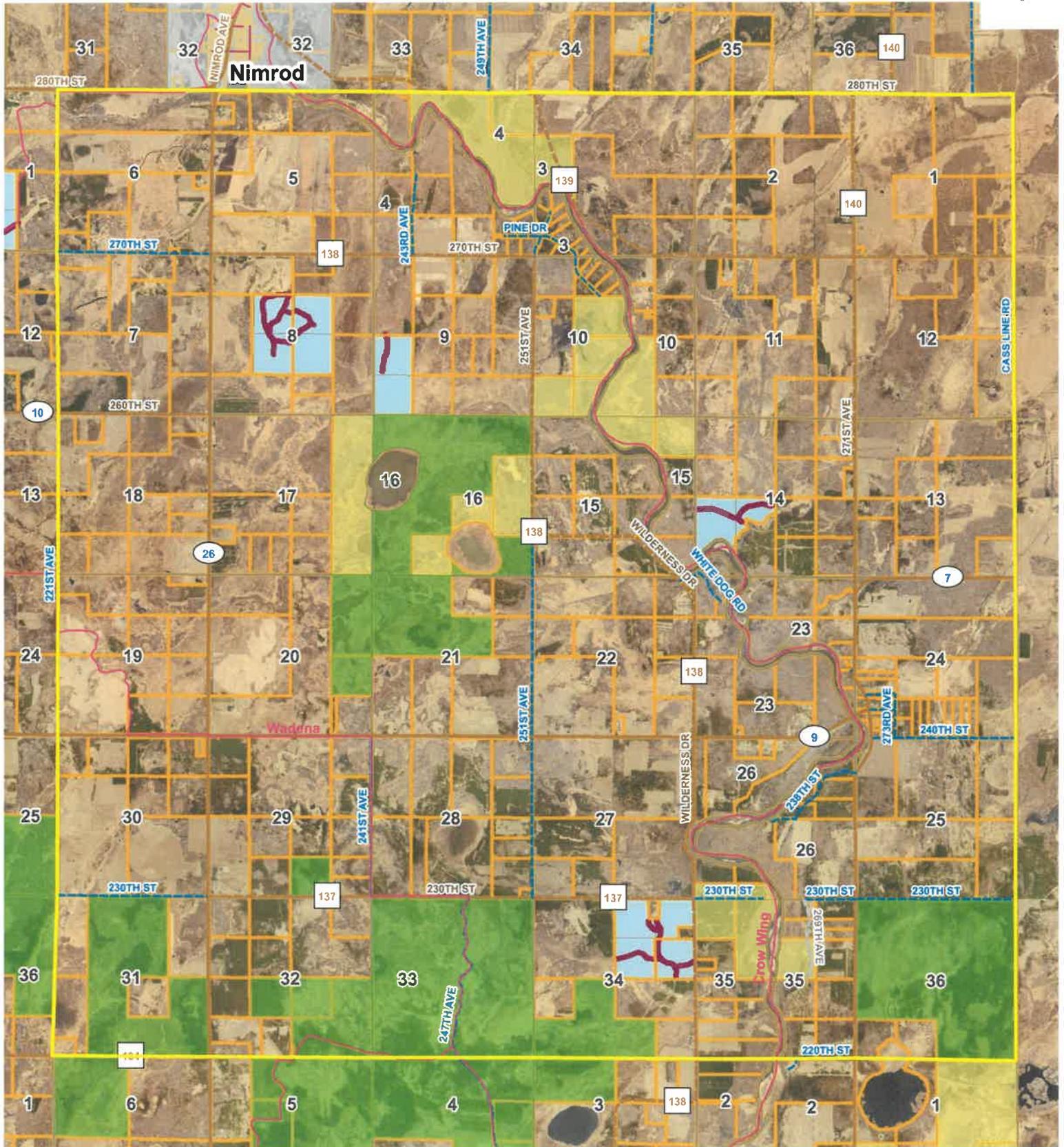


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	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

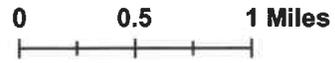


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LYONS TOWNSHIP

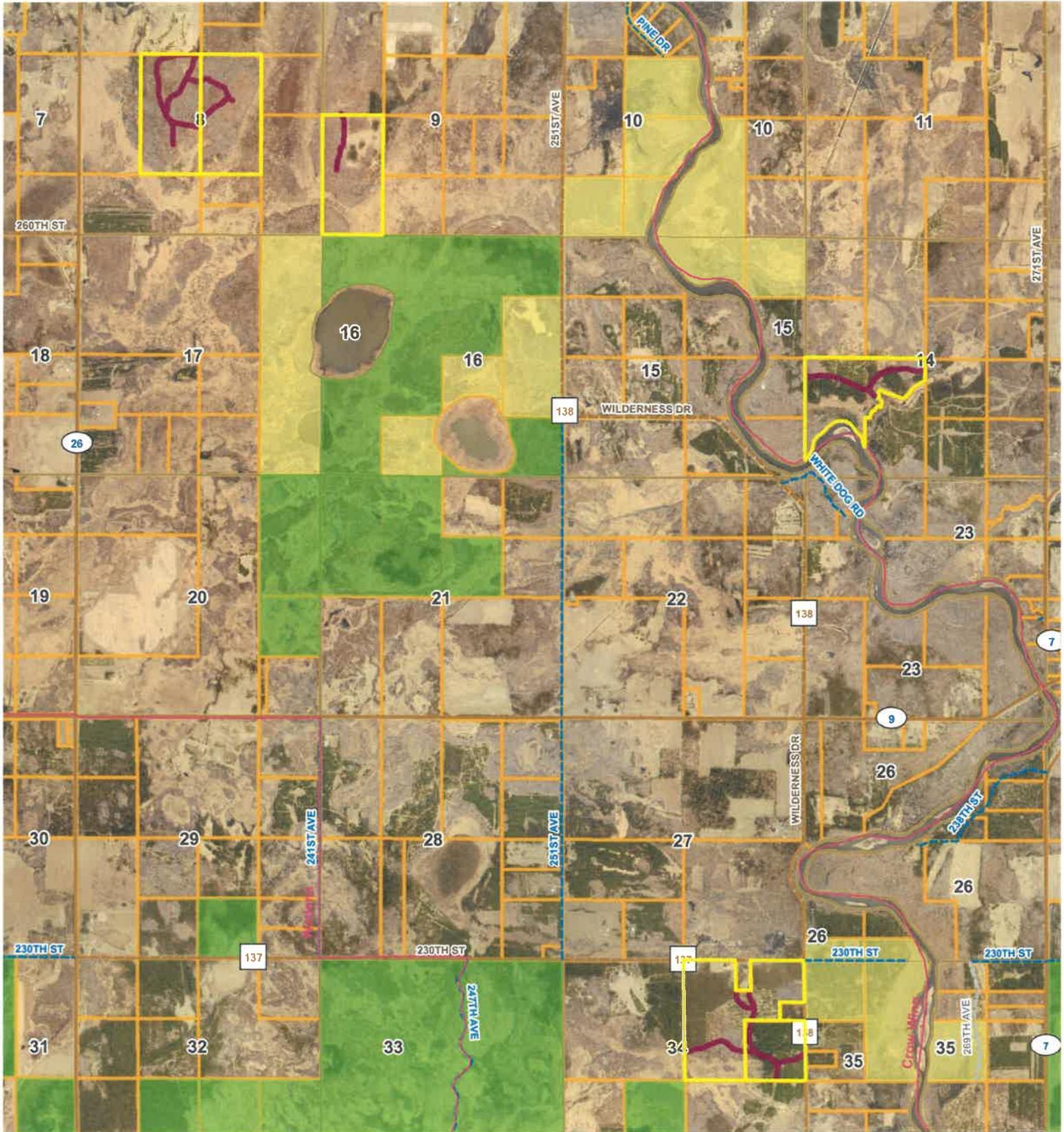


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	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

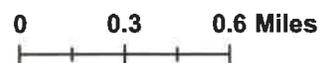


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LYONS TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

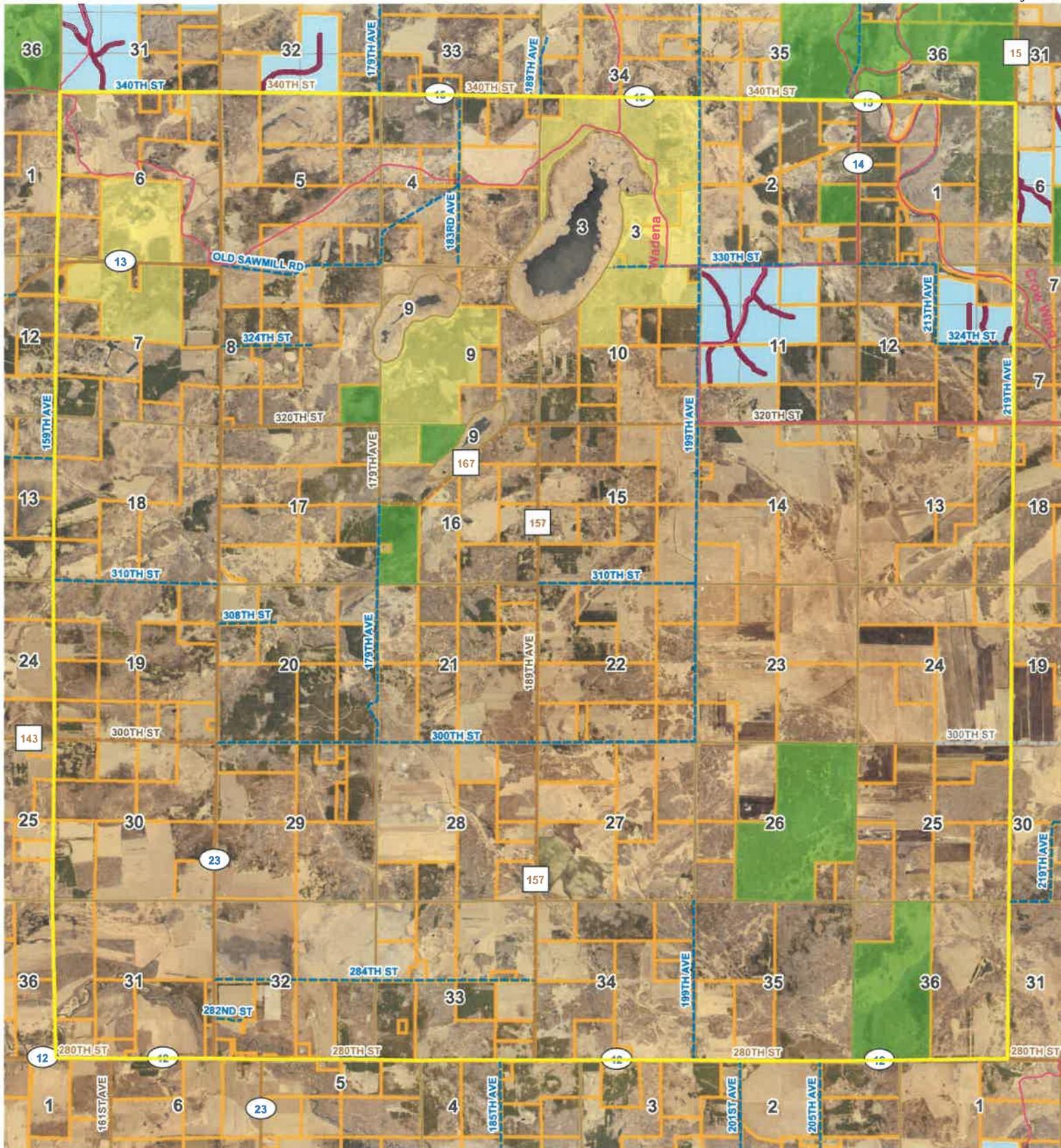


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	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

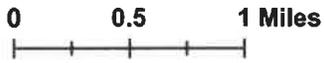


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MEADOW TOWNSHIP

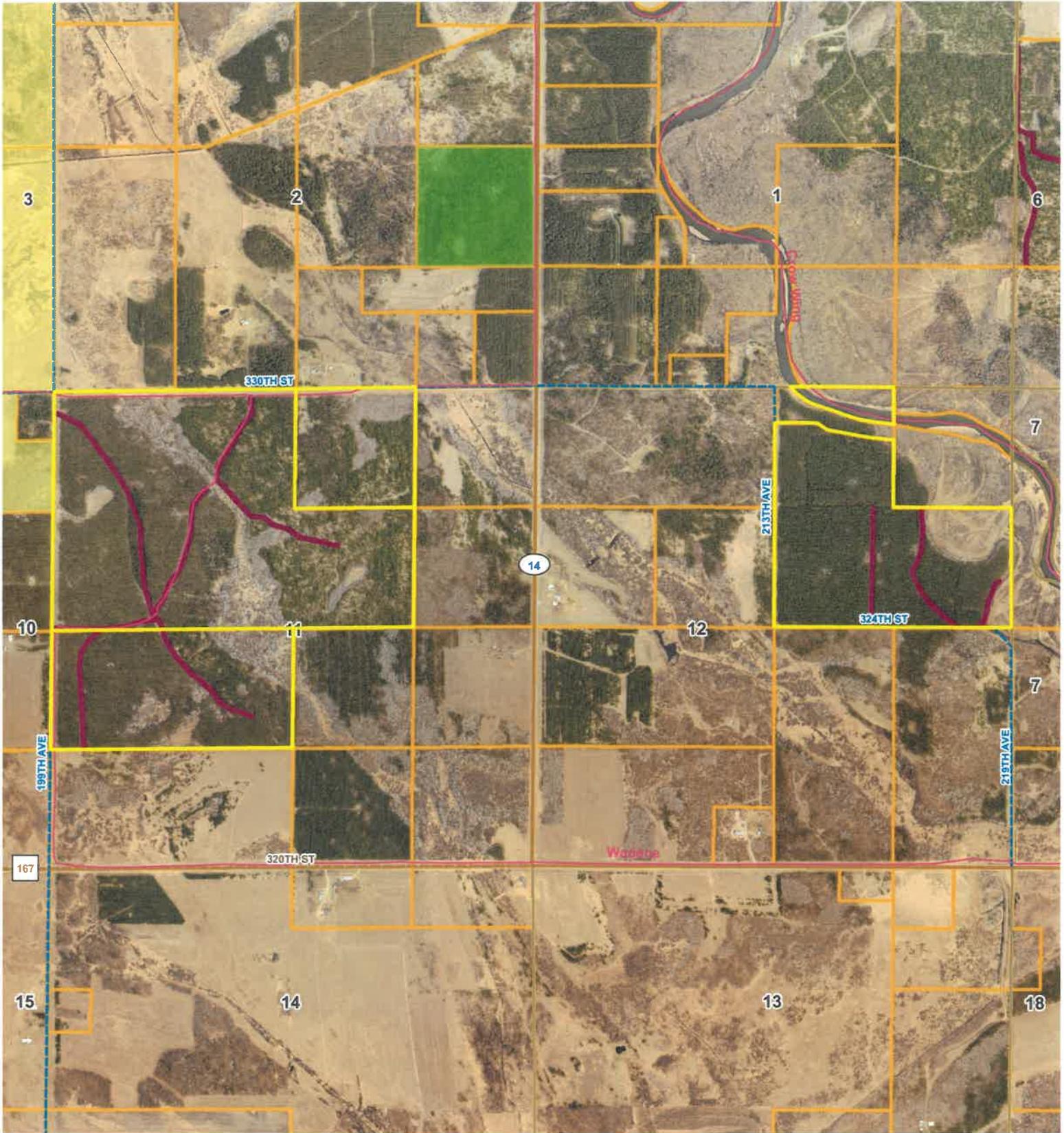


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	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

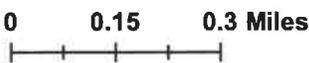


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MEADOW TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

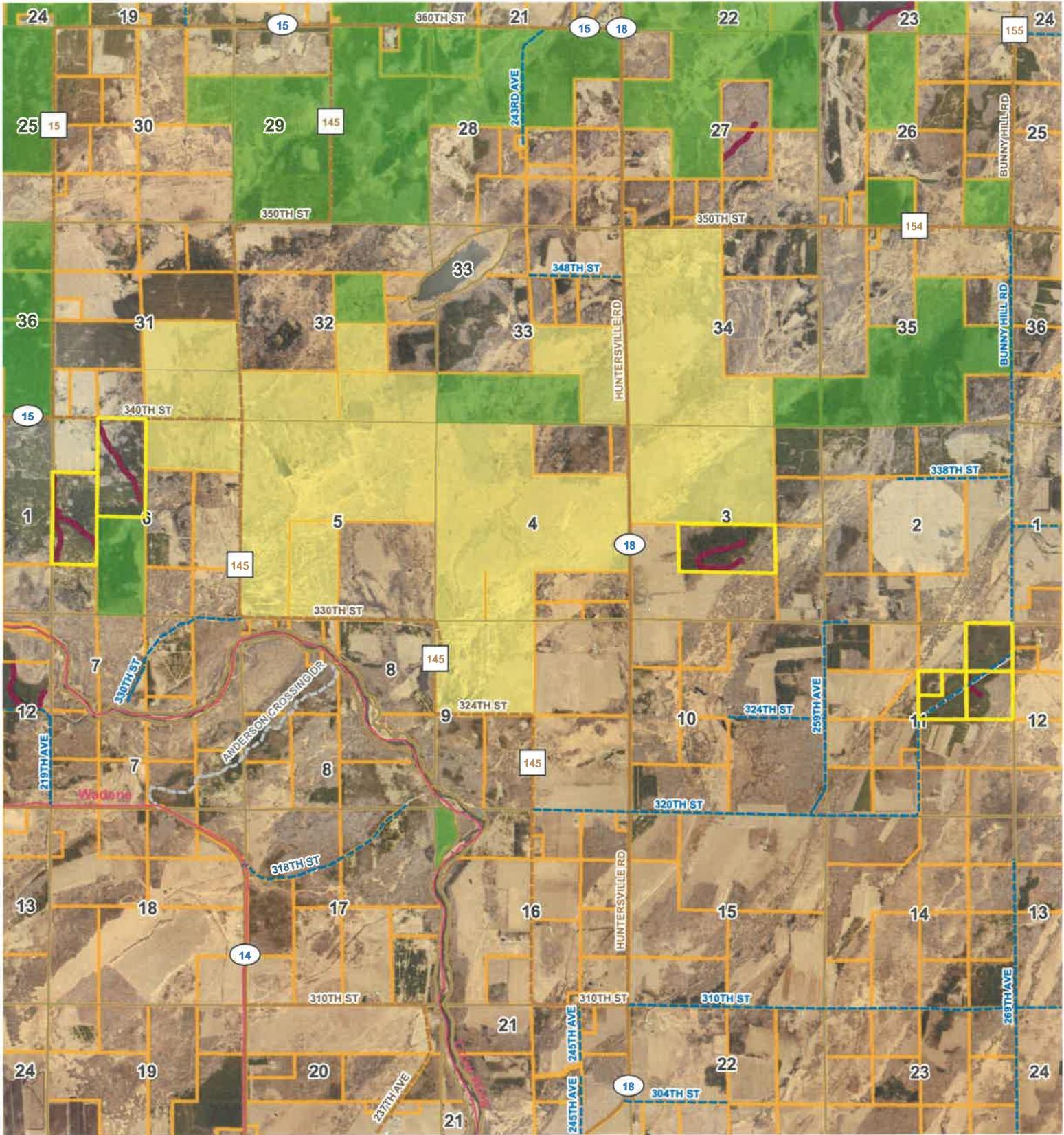


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	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

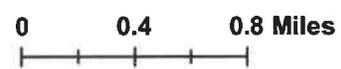


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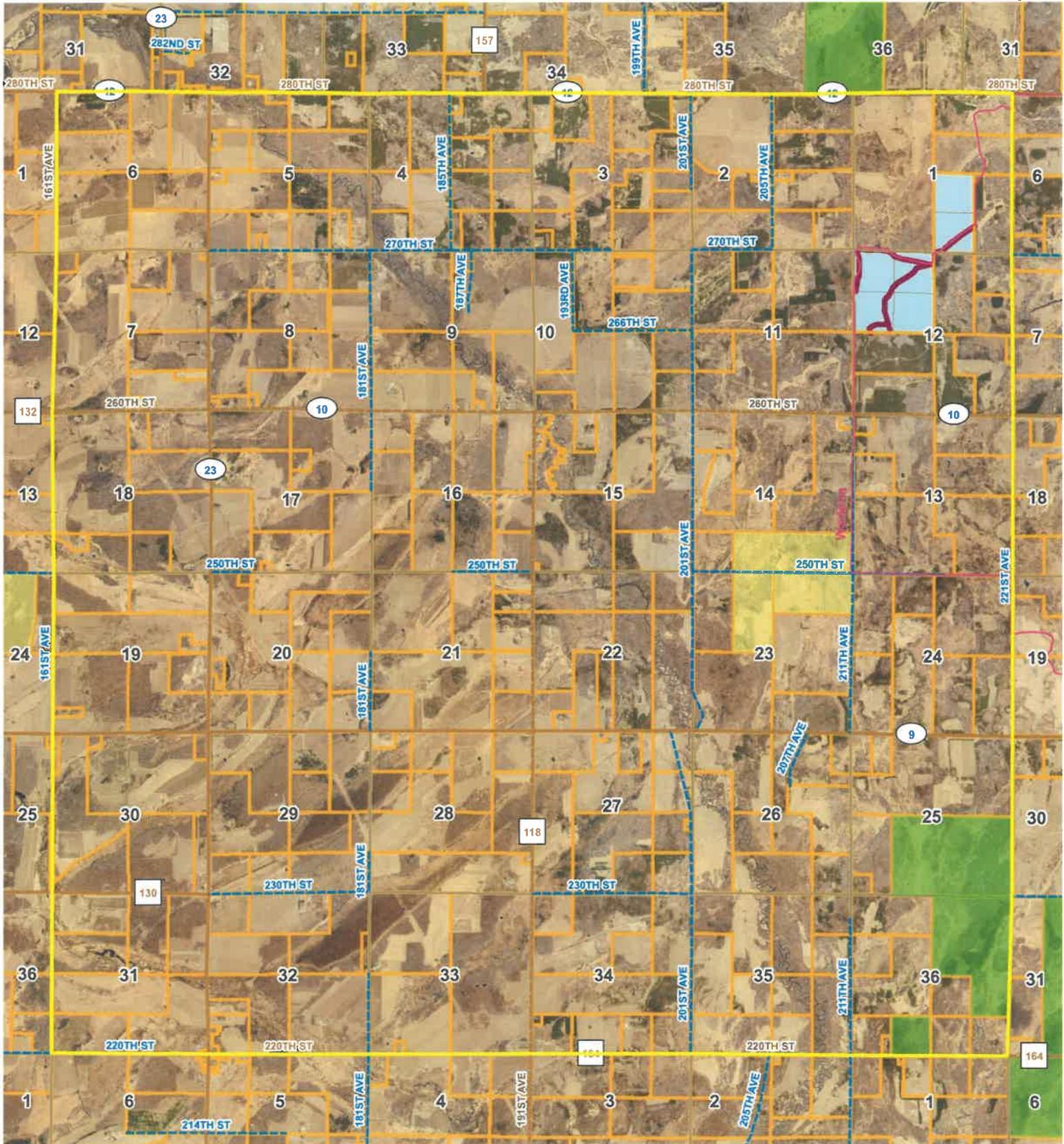


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	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

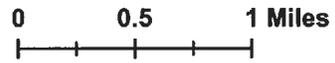


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NORTH GERMANY TOWNSHIP

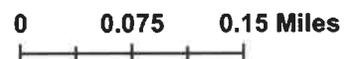
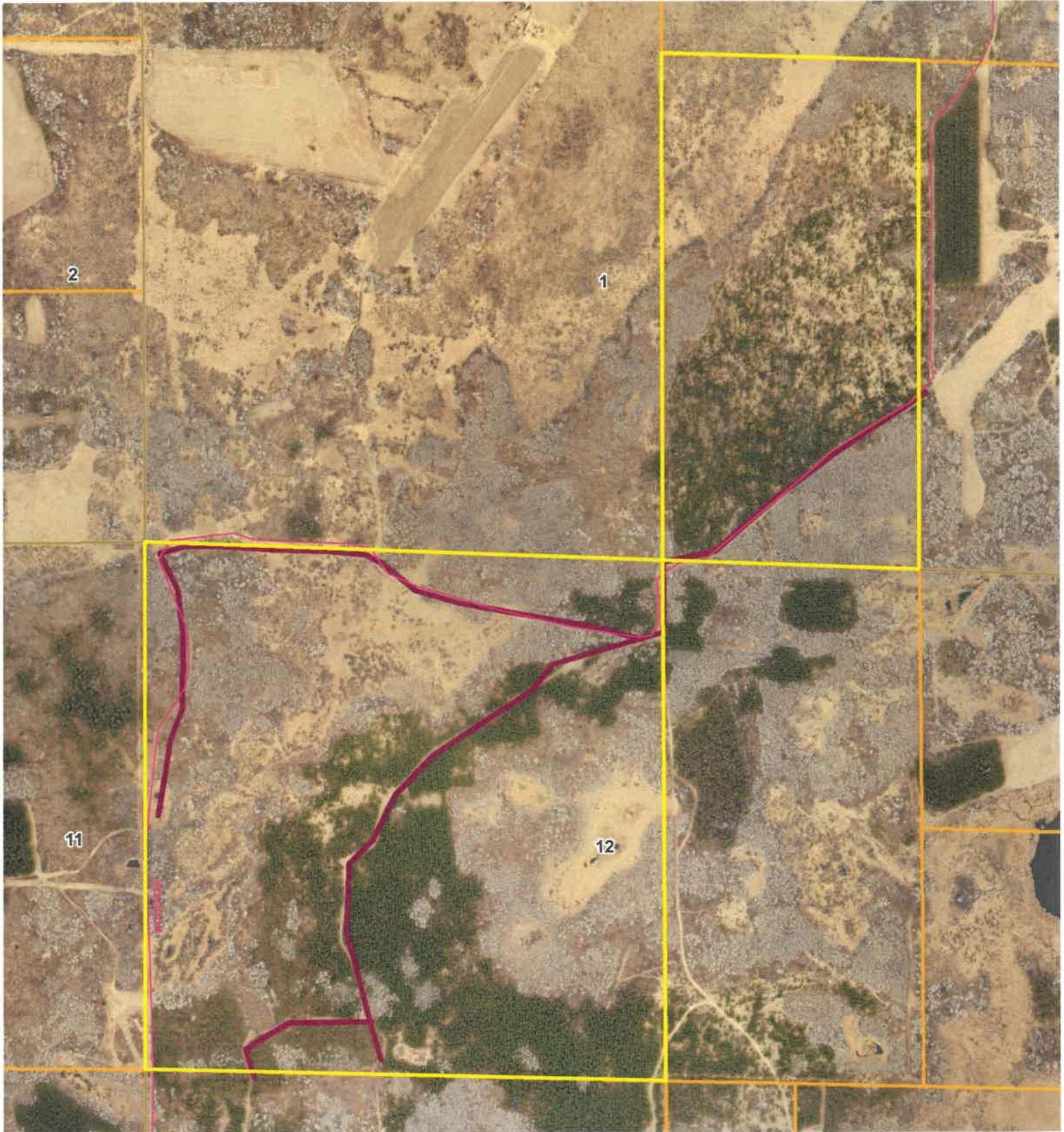


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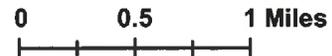
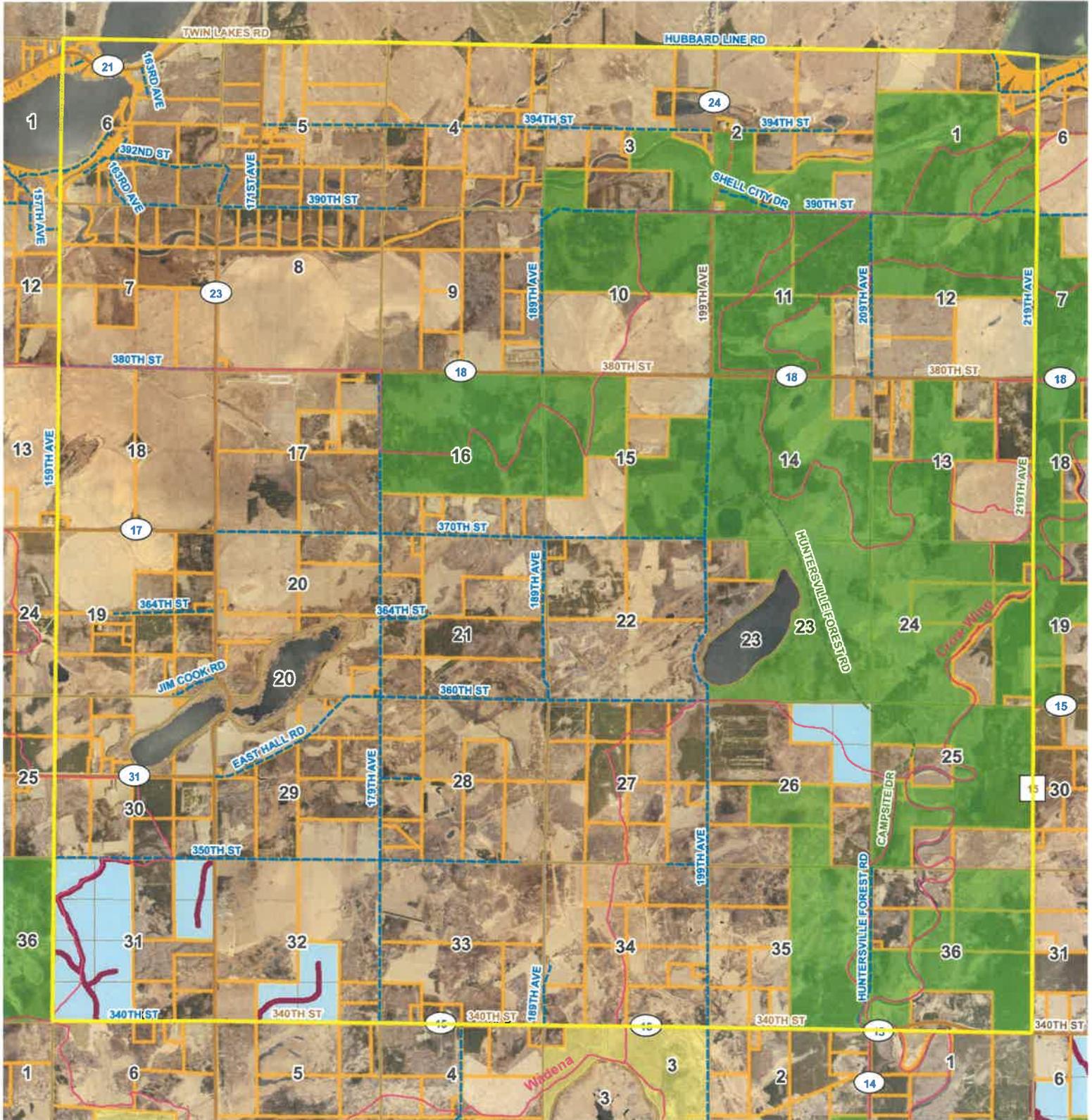
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NORTH GERMANY TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS



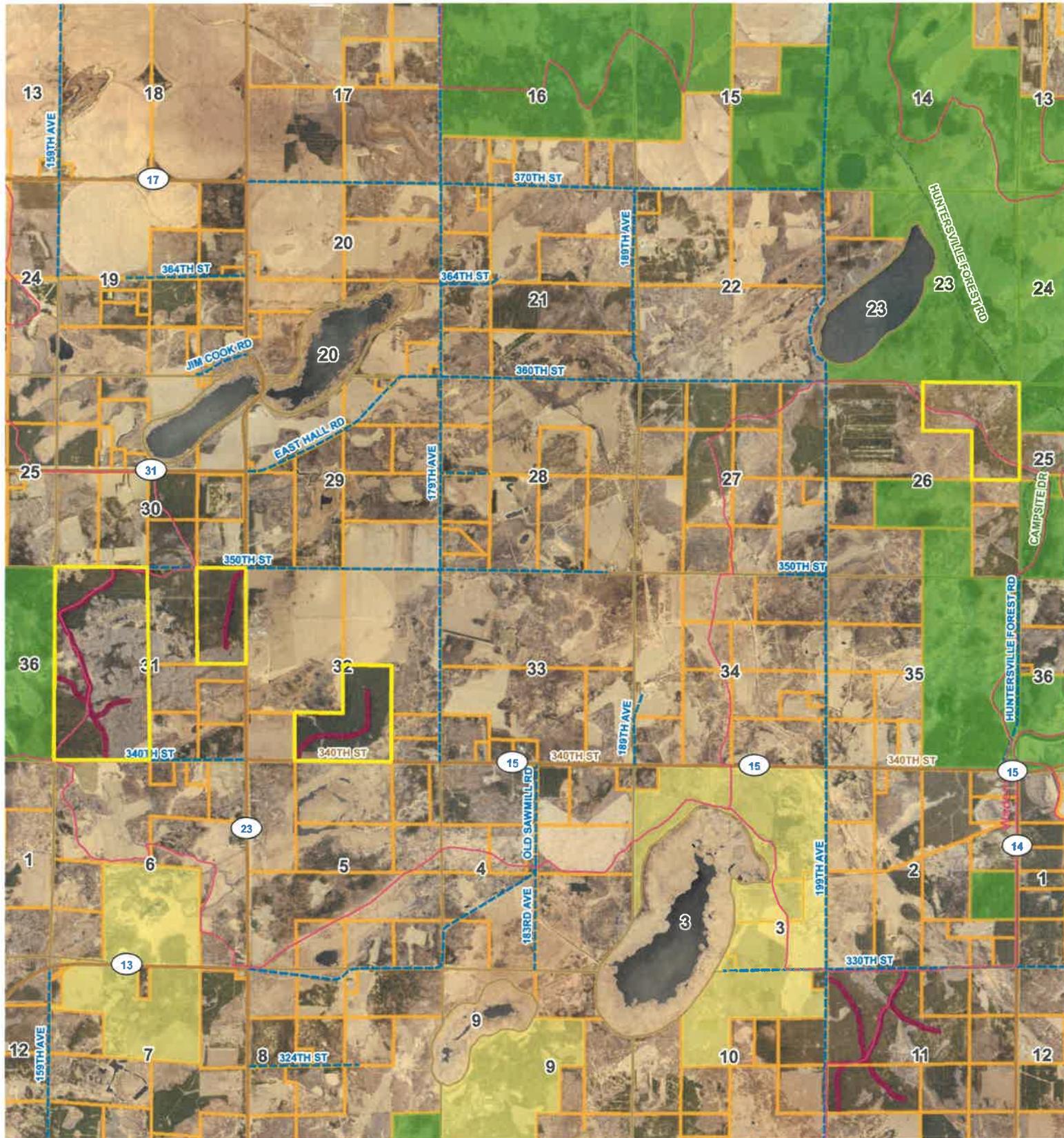
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SHELL RIVER TOWNSHIP

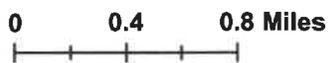


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SHELL RIVER TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS

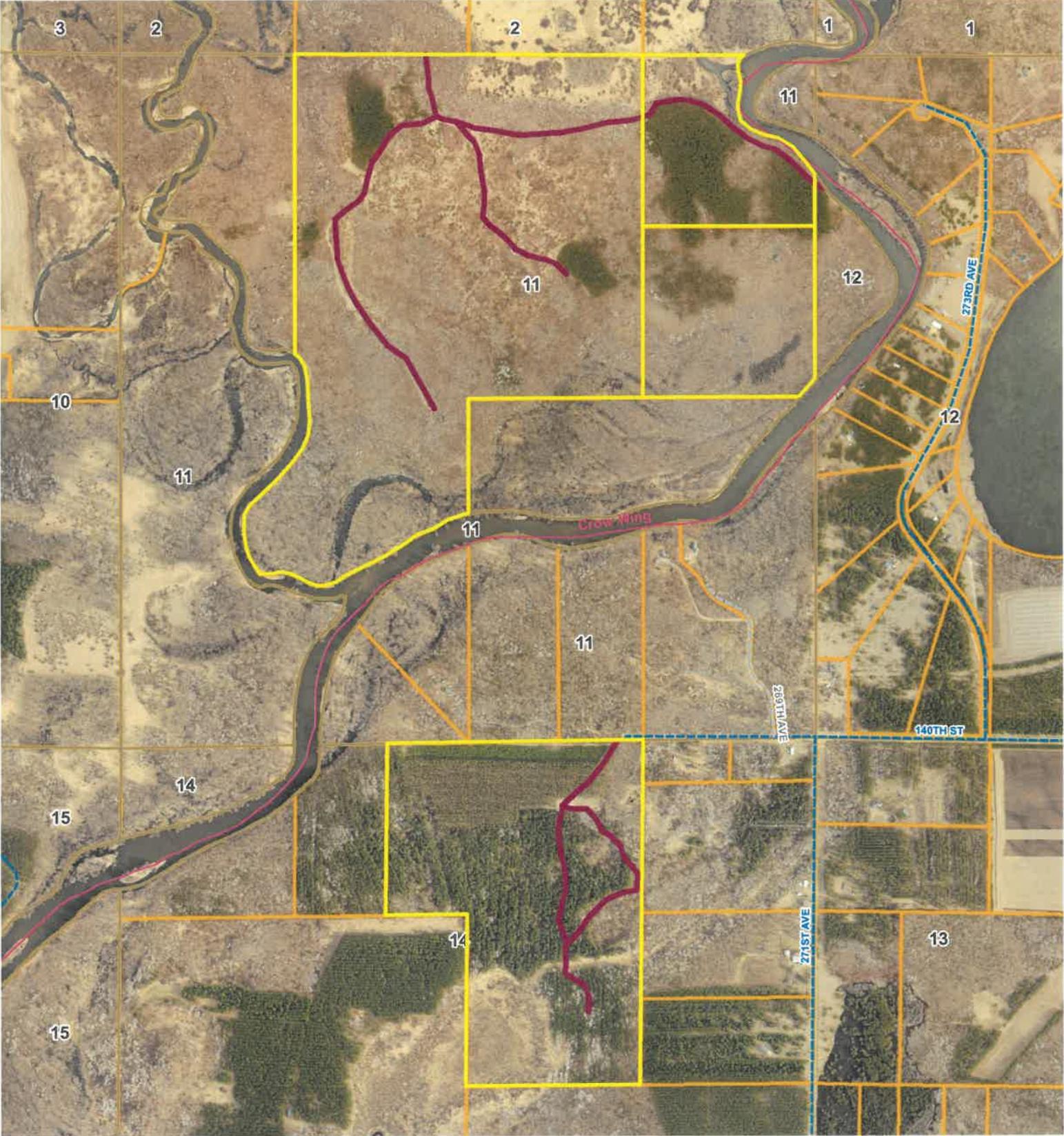


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	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails

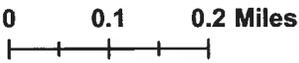


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Wadena County

THOMASTOWN TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION FUND PARCELS



	Conservation Fund Parcels		Snowmobile Trail
	State Forest		Parcel Boundary
	Wildlife Management Area		Existing Trails



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GIS Coordinator
Wadena County

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO ADOPT A COUNTY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

Notice is hereby given that on Tuesday the 9th day of July at _____ a.m. the Wadena County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing in the Commissioners Board Room/Small Court Room of the Wadena County Courthouse at 415 Jefferson Street South, Wadena, MN, to consider the adoption of a County Forest Management Plan.

The full draft of the proposed County Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the County website calendar for July 9, 2024, at www.co.wadena.mn.us .

All persons interested are invited to attend said hearing and be heard on this matter. All written correspondence must be received by the Wadena County Administrator, 415 Jefferson St. S., Wadena, MN, 56482, before close of business the day before the hearing in order to be accepted and must include the **full name and address of the person sending the correspondence in order to be accepted for presentation to the County Board at the public hearing.** The correspondence may be submitted in person, by U.S. Mail, or by e-mail to the Office of the County Administrator but it MUST include the required information

BY: CJ Holl
Wadena County Administrator

Date: _____

Cc: Sebeka/Menahga Review Messenger, Wadena Pioneer Journal, Verndale Sun, Staples World, Aldrich Township, Blueberry Township, Bullard Township, Huntersville Township, Leaf River Township, Lyons Township, Meadow Township, North Germany Township, Orton Township, Red Eye Township, Rockwood Township, Shell River Township, Thomastown Township, Wadena Township, Wing River Township, Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division – Mike Lichter