

DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

**Beaches Road Easement Proposal
Beaches Lake Wildlife Management Area
Kittson County, MN**

Submitted to
United States Department of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 3
Wildlife and Sports Fish Restoration Program

September 15, 2011

Submitted by
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Wildlife, Section of Wildlife
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Project Description

DNR will work with local units of government to establish a permanent public access to the northern portions of the Beaches Lake State Wildlife Management Area in Kittson County by granting a 16.5 foot wide county road easement to local road authorities and the establishment of a minimum maintenance township or county road to provide legal access where none currently exists. This road easement will provide legal access for DNR staff to manage and maintain the extensive habitat on the WMA and provide citizen access for hunting, trapping, and other compatible outdoor uses consistent with the purpose of the WMA. Revenue from granting the easement will be deposited in the Game and Fish Fund and the Permanent School Trust Fund (8.95 acres have federal aid, 3.11 acres are School Trust for a total of approximately 12.06 acres).

1. Purpose and Need

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this project is to grant a permanent transportation corridor easement across the northern portions of the Beaches Lake WMA in Kittson County to establish a minimum maintenance public road for access to and through the public land. The alignment of the road easement will follow the centerline of an existing drainage ditch spoil bank that has been leveled and used as a common use access road for over 100 years.

1.2. Need

The Beaches Lake WMA is one of the largest WMAs in the state and includes over 30,617 acres. It is situated mostly in three townships in eastern Kittson County and covers nearly 44% of the land surface area in those townships. To put the size of this unit in perspective, it is nearly 30% larger than the Carlos Avery WMA in Anoka County, one of our "Major Unit" WMAs.

Because of its size, Beaches Lake WMA has had a significant impact on the development of transportation roads within the effected townships. In two of those townships, Peatland and Cannon, there are 72 contiguous square miles where there are no public roads providing residents the ability to traverse across these townships to reach roads and towns on the other side. Most Major Unit WMAs have public roads bisecting them and therefore do not imposes such restrictions on local access. This WMA does however contain several large drainage ditch systems where the spoil banks have been leveled and used as informal roads for the past century.

As we developed access objectives for Beaches Lake WMA, it became clear that because of the lack of a public road system surrounding the WMA, our legal access to the state land from a public road was restricted to only two township roads on the south end and one in the northwest corner of the unit. The roads on the south side provide access to the main part of the unit and the road on the northwest side joins the 72/85 corridor to county road 25 from the north. The vast majority of this unit is currently accessed by the general public from other informal transportation corridors controlled by private landowners. If this access is denied in the future access to most of the WMA would become limited to those who could access the unit from private land or for those capable of crossing water barriers and walking in.

In an effort to ensure long term access to the WMA for the general public and to address the reasonable issues brought forward by residents for some continued use of traditional travel corridors to cross between the two affected townships, we propose to collaborate on the establishment of a minimum maintenance public road along an existing disturbed drainage ditch easement corridor.

1.3. Decisions that Need to be Made

Due to the use of federal funds through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to acquire portions of Beaches Lake WMA included in this proposal, approval by the USFWS is required (Federal Aid Handbook: 522 FW 6.7 E). This document serves to meet the USFWS's NEPA compliance requirement.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Director at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota will select an alternative and will determine, based on the facts and recommendations contained in this document, whether this Environmental Assessment (EA) is adequate to support a Finding of No Significant Impact, or whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will need to be prepared.

1.4. Background

Minnesota Rules governing the use and management of WMA's (MR §6230.0250) limits the use of highway licensed vehicles to public roads or routes designated by signs and generally prohibits the use of OHV's except on designated trails, by special use permit for hunters with disabilities, and for retrieval of big game during the deer season. As the Department acquired WMA lands for the Beaches Lake WMA with these existing informal transportation corridors in Kittson County and began enforcing WMA rules on these lands, the inevitable conflicts arose with residents who have traditionally used these corridors.

Under Minn. Statute §84.63 the Commissioner has the authority to grant easements over state owned, DNR administered lands to townships for town roads. In 1996, the Department entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Minnesota Association of Townships (Attachment 7) to establish a process for townships to obtain easements for town roads that cross state land where there is no written record that an easement exists. Under this process, the Department has collaborated with eight townships in Marshall and Beltrami Counties to review corridors in the context of our access objectives and, where compatible, we have approved easements for township road establishment across state land. At least two of these easements, granted as late as April of 2006, crossed WMA lands where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid program held a 75% interest in the real property and for which they gave their approval to grant the easements.

In an effort to ensure long term access to the WMA for the general public and to address the reasonable issues brought forward by residents for some continued use of traditional travel corridors to cross between the two affected townships, we began a series of meetings with Kittson County and Cannon Township officials to explore the acceptable options.

To date there have been numerous meetings that have been held to explore the situation, review the acceptable options and discuss the procedural requirements for each option.

Through this process a number of issues have been made clear to all parties:

1. The only transportation corridors that the Department will consider as township roads are those portions of the north spoil berm along State Ditch #72 and State Ditch #85 that runs east and west through state land and a small segment of Lateral 1 SD 95 in the southeastern portion of the unit (see map). All other routes discussed are not appropriate as township roads.
2. The only status change that is acceptable for the identified corridors is establishment of a township/county road through an easement from the state and subsequent township/county road order.

3. Easements that cross state land for which the purchase cost was reimbursed by funds from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program and thus have a federal interest in the real property would require approval by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service before an easement could be granted and compensation to the Game & Fish fund or the Permanent School Trust as appropriate.
4. A change in status of a corridor to town/county road would require an environmental review and could lead to a requirement for the completion of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet.
5. Any easement issued by the state to establish a town road across state land would be contingent on the road authority establishing a similar road order on adjoining private lands to complete a continuous road. In the event that the road authority failed to do so in a reasonable length of time the easements across state lands would revert to the state.
6. Any collaboration between the State and road authority to establish a town/county road across state land would be accompanied by a Memorandum of Understanding that would detail expectations for maintenance and law enforcement by the road authority and County.

The location of the proposed road alignment is within the existing drainage ditch construction easement and will be placed on previously disturbed earthen spoil from ditch construction that has been leveled for travel. There will be no direct impact to existing wildlife habitat. The location of the proposed road will be physically separated from the majority of the WMA by a water filled drainage ditch to the south of the easement that will provide a physical and visual barrier to unauthorized off corridor travel. There is no physical barrier to the north of the easement corridor. The road surface will remain a grass and aggregate surface and will be designed as a minimum maintenance road.

Figure 1. Map – Beaches WMA within Kittson County

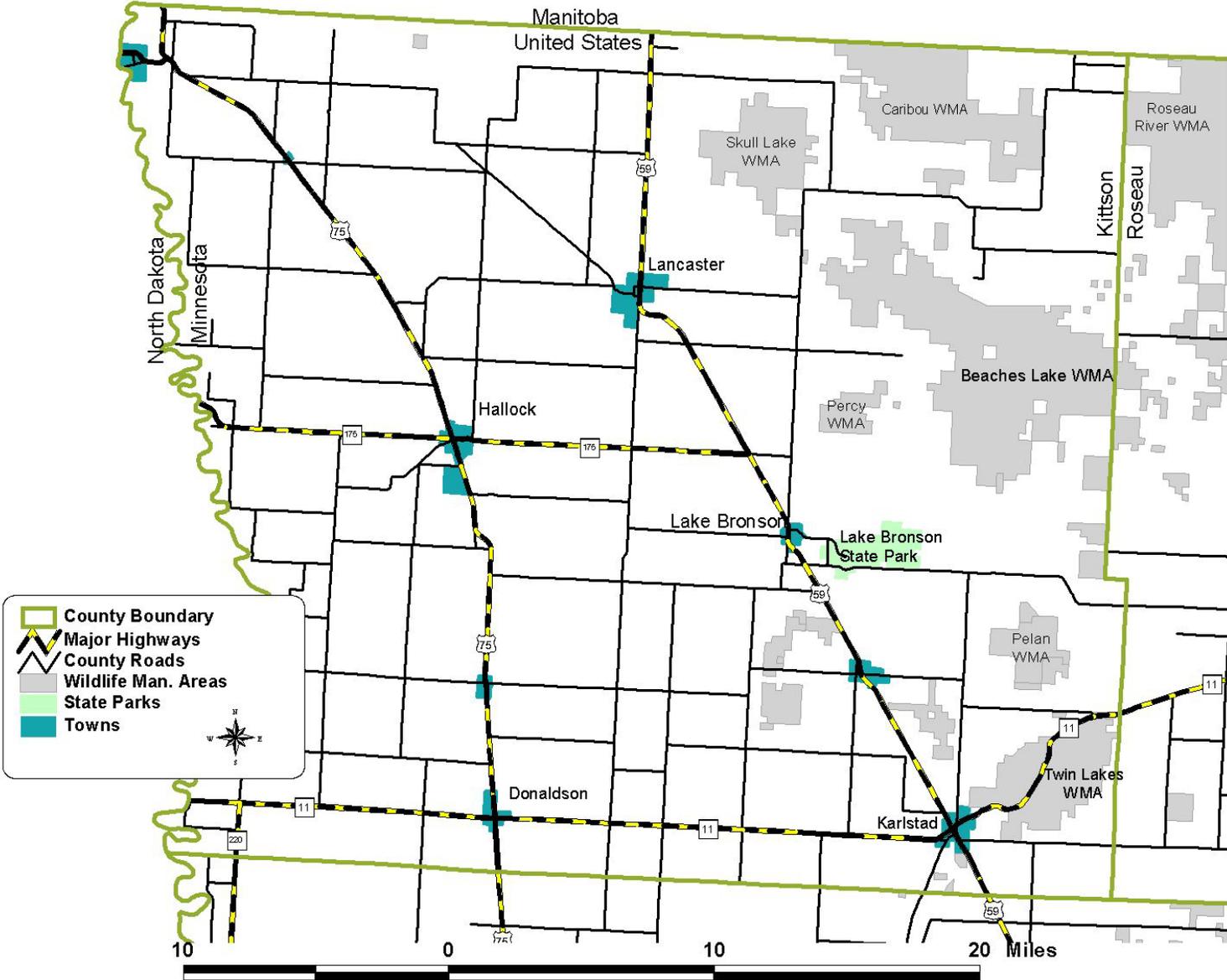
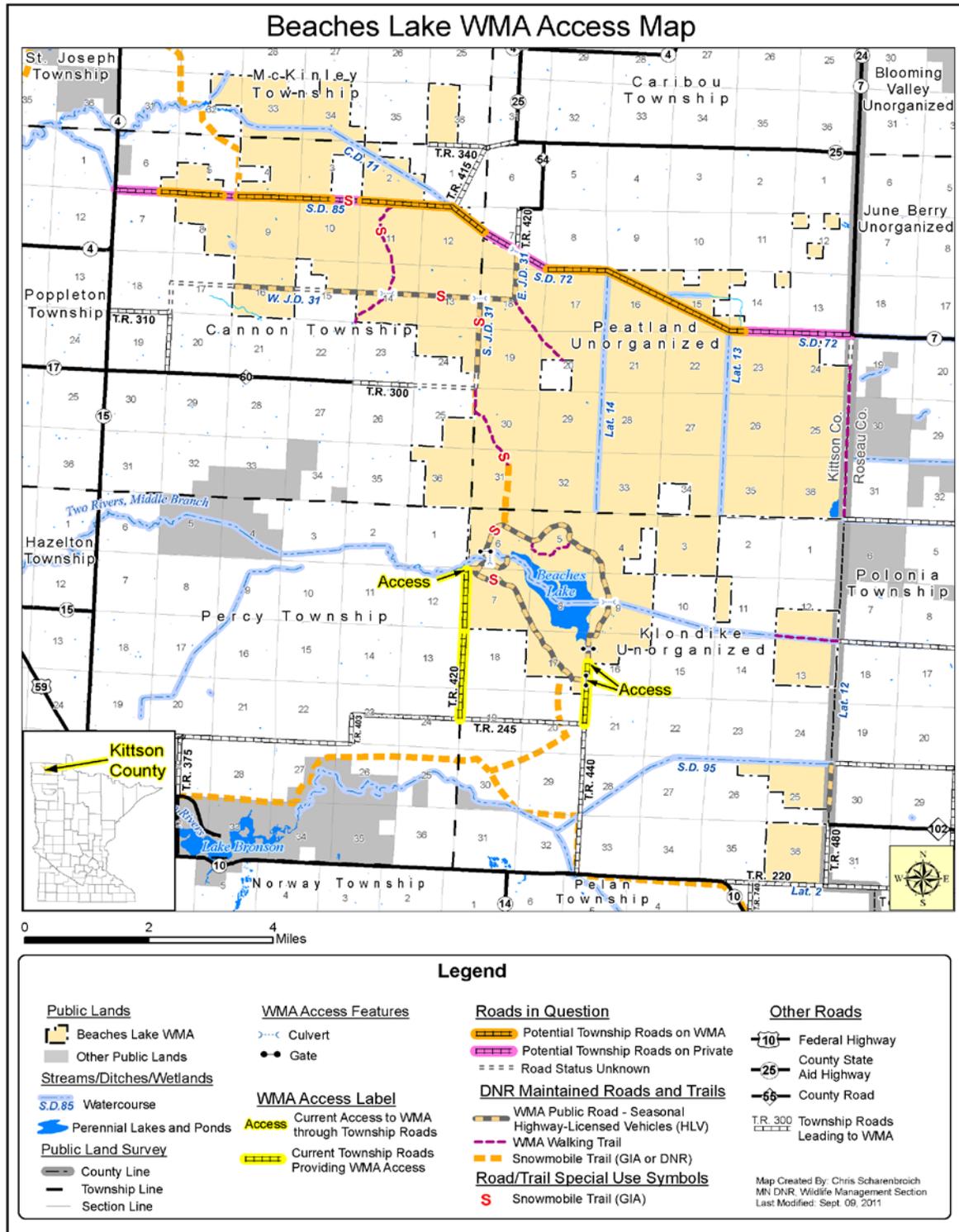


Figure 2. Beaches Lake WMA With Proposed Road Easement



2. Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for the addressing the proposed road easement within Beaches Lake WMA. Included are descriptions of the two alternatives considered: Alternative (A): Approval of the proposed road easement; Alternative (B): the no action alternative. No other alternatives were considered.

2.1. Alternatives Not Considered for Detailed Analysis

No other Alternatives were considered.

2.2. Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis

2.2.1. Alternative A - Proposed Action:

Approving the 16.5 foot easement and allowing all motorized traffic legally allowed on township roads. Currently, township roads permit access to all licensed motor vehicles, farm equipment and some recreational vehicles. Providing this easement for a public township road should ensure public and management access to portions of Beaches Lake WMA adjacent to this easement.

2.2.2. Alternative B - No Action:

The no action alternative would reject the proposed road easement proposed by Kittson County and could limit access by staff and the public within and around Beaches Lake WMA. Current habitat management practices would continue on this unit, but access to perform this work could become restricted.

3. Affected Environment

3.1. Physical Characteristics

The proposed 8.03 mile, 16.5 foot wide easement along its entire length is comprised of leveled spoil from State Ditch 85 and State Ditch 72. This spoil was placed and leveled on the north side of the respective ditches during its original construction or during maintenance by the ditch authorities.

It is currently in a leveled state and is vegetated mainly by cool season grasses. There are segments that have been "spot graveled" by Kittson County although areas of rutting still occur and exist along the corridor.

3.2. Biological Environment

3.2.1. Habitat/vegetation

Habitats adjacent to the easement area are a mosaic of habitats typical of those found in the Aspen Parklands ECS Subsection. Predominately, these habitats are undisturbed (never tilled for farming purposes, some rotational grazing) native habitats found within the Aspen Parklands subsection. The habitats (communities) as indicated in the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) found adjacent to the easement corridor include: Aspen Parkland complex; Aspen Woodland/Forest Complex; Meadow-Marsh-Fen-Swamp Complex; Parkland Brush Prairie; Willow-Dogwood Shrub Swamp; Rich Fen (Peatland); and Meadow-Marsh-Shrub-Swamp-Wet Aspen Complex. There are some small tilled agricultural fields adjacent to the east end of the easement corridor and also Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grass fields on private land adjacent to the central portion of the easement corridor.

3.2.2. Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Species

Federally Listed Species

The proposed road easement is located in Kittson County. According to the USFWS's County Distribution of Federally-Listed Endangered, Threatened, Candidate and Proposed Species list at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/minnesot-cty.html> , the following species are listed in Kittson County: Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), Western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*). The Phase I, Section 7 Evaluation is included as Attachment 3. Based on the Section 7 analysis conducted by the MN DNR's Endangered Species Program Coordinator along with the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Federal Aid Coordinator, approval of this easement would result in a "not likely to adversely affect" recommendation for the gray wolf and a "no effect" for all other listed species.

Minnesota State Listed Species

The following state listed species are noted in the Heritage Elements database within one mile in each direction of the proposed easement corridor. Only Species of Special Concern, or species that are Threatened or Endangered, are listed. Seven occurrences of Twig Rush (*Cladium mariscoides*) and 2 occurrences of Northern Gentian (*Gentiana affinis*) are listed within a mile buffer of the proposed easement corridor. Both species are listed as "Special Concern". Yellow rails (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), Marbled Godwits (*Liimosa fedoa*), and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelson*), all state listed species of special concern, are found within 2 miles of the proposed easement corridor. There are no state listed "Threatened or Endangered" species within one mile of the proposed corridor although Threatened Species are noted within 2 miles.

More information about the rare species can be viewed at the Rare Species Guide on the MNDNR website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsg/index.html> .

3.2.3 Other Wildlife Species

Other wildlife in the area that are common to the aspen parkland habitats to note include; moose, elk, white-tailed deer, black bear, river otter, fisher, bobcat, gray wolf, upland sandpipers, sharp-tailed grouse, sandhill crane, a variety of dabbling ducks and numerous species of song birds.

"The Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – MDNR 2006. *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*, describes key habitats and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Beaches WMA is located within the Aspen Parkland subsection of the Minnesota Ecological Classification System.

The Aspen Parkland subsection is a mix of lacustrine plain and shoreline (beach) ridges formed by Glacial Lake Agassiz, with extensive forested peatlands to the east and tallprass prairie to the west. This subsection, which extends into Canada, is the transition between prairie and forest areas. Considerable flooding occurs along the large rivers in this section. Large complexes of wetlands, aspen and brush prairie are evident with dry prairies along the beach ridges. Habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to species of special concern in this subsection and natural resource management goals focus primarily on maintaining quality habitat and managing invasive species.

A full list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need within the Aspen Parkland subsection can be found through the link below.

http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/nrplanning/bigpicture/cwcs/chapters_appendix/tomorrows_habitat_toc.pdf

3.3. Land Use

Kittson County is in the northwestern part of Minnesota on the North Dakota, Manitoba and Canadian border. The total area of the county is approximately 1,103 square miles, of which, 1,097 square miles of it is land and 6 square miles of it is water. Historically, land cover was predominantly prairie/grassland (45%), wetland (24%), brush (15%) and forest (15%). Currently, land cover is dominated by cultivated land (66%), while prairie/grassland, wetland, brush and forest now only represent 6%, 13%, 2% and 11% of the land cover, respectively. General land use in Kittson County is agricultural. According to the 2006 Minnesota Agricultural Statistics, there were 659 farms in Kittson County in 2002, for a combined total of 555,561 acres. (Extracted from the Kittson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan).

3.4. Cultural/Paleontological Resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. The Division of Fish and Wildlife has contracted with a licensed archeologist, Mike Magner, to administer compliance with Section 106. Mr. Magner has determined that as the easement corridor is confined to an artificial landform and as there are no recorded historic properties along the ditch bank, that the easement does not meet the definition of an "undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties" for the purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and does not require further cultural resource review (Attachment 4). This determination was guided by the 6/29/1998 procedural document agreed upon by the MN SHPO, DNR-Wildlife, and Region 3 USFWS Federal Aid Office.

3.5. Local Socio-economic Conditions

Minnesota has a population of 5,303,925 (2010 census). The economy of Minnesota was estimated at \$239 billion of gross domestic product in 2009. The population in Kittson County in 2010 was 4,552, a decline of 13.9% from the 2000 census. The 2000 census noted the median income for a household in Kittson County was \$32,515. Percent below poverty level in the county was 10.2%.

4. Environmental Consequences

4.1. Alternative A - Proposed Action:

The proposed action would include approving the 16.5 ft. wide easement and allowing all motorized traffic legally allowed on township roads. Providing this easement for a public township road should ensure public and management access to portions of Beaches Lake WMA adjacent to this easement.

4.1.1. Habitat Impacts

There will be no direct impacts to native habitats on the WMA within the easement corridor as the corridor is mainly comprised of tame grasses. Indirect impacts to native habitats adjacent to the easement corridor could include increased noxious weed infestations from the spread of weed species by a possible increase in highway license

vehicle (HLV) travel and new ATV or UTV travel that would be permitted through township road status. Unauthorized off-road travel, if it occurred, could cause direct damage and degradation to native habitats and wetlands. Road maintenance, particularly the application of aggregate, could cause an increase in noxious or invasive weed species establishment if the aggregate were infested with weed seed.

4.1.2. Biological Impacts

There will likely be little to no biological impacts to the easement corridor itself due to its current coverage of tame grasses and past history of HLV travel. There could be indirect impacts to the adjacent native vegetation composition due to possible noxious or invasive weed infestations if increased HLV, ATV or UTV travel occurred as a result of township road designation. Native plant species and the wildlife (including invertebrates) that use these habitats could be displaced from noxious or invasive weed infestations. It is very difficult to control or eradicate noxious weeds with herbicides in native habitats as most herbicides that are effective on noxious weeds also kill or hurt non-target native species.

Wildlife species that utilize the adjacent native habitats could be displaced from increased noise and activity resulting from increased motorized use, particularly by ATVs and UTVs, which would be permitted to use the corridor if the easement is approved.

4.1.3. Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Species

Federally Listed Species

The proposed road easement is located in Kittson County. According to the USFWS's County Distribution of Federally-Listed Endangered, Threatened, Candidate and Proposed Species list at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/minnesot-cty.html>, the following species are listed in Kittson County: Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), Western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*). The Phase I, Section 7 Evaluation is included as Attachment 3. Based on the Section 7 analysis conducted by the MN DNR's Endangered Species Program Coordinator along with the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Federal Aid Coordinator, approval of this easement will result in a "not likely to adversely affect" recommendation for the gray wolf and a "no effect" for all other listed species..

Minnesota State Listed Species

The following state listed species are noted in the Heritage Elements database within one mile in each direction of the proposed easement corridor. Only Species of Special Concern, or species that are Threatened or Endangered, are listed. Seven occurrences of Twig Rush (*Cladium mariscoides*) and 2 occurrences of Northern Gentian (*Gentiana affinis*) are listed within a mile buffer of the proposed easement corridor. Both species are listed as "Special Concern". Yellow rails (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), Marbled Godwits (*Limosa fedoa*), and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelson*), all state listed species of special concern, are found within 2 miles of the proposed easement corridor. There are no state listed "Threatened or Endangered" species within one mile of the proposed corridor although Threatened Species are noted within 2 miles.

More information about the rare species can be viewed at the Rare Species Guide on the MNDNR website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsq/index.html> .

4.14 Cultural Resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. The Division of Fish and Wildlife has contracted with a licensed archeologist, Mike Magner, to administer compliance with Section 106. Mr. Magner has determined that as the easement corridor is confined to an artificial landform and as there are no recorded historic properties along the ditch bank, that the easement does not meet the definition of an “undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties” for the purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and does not require further cultural resource review (Attachment 4). This determination was guided by the 6/29/1998 procedural document agreed upon by the MN SHPO, DNR-Wildlife, and Region 3 USFWS Federal Aid Office. No THPO comments were received.

4.1.5 Environmental Justice

The proposed action is not likely to have an adverse effect on minorities and low income populations and communities. No other issues related to environmental justice are anticipated.

4.1.6 Cumulative Impacts

Minnesota Rule part 4410.1700, subpart 7, item B requires that the responsible government unit (RGU) consider the “cumulative potential effects of related or anticipated future projects” when determining the need for an environmental impact statement. This includes any present or reasonably foreseeable future projects that may interact with the target project in such a way as to cause cumulative impacts. Project proposers are required to document the nature of the cumulative impacts and summarize any other available information relevant to determining whether there is potential for significant environmental effects due to cumulative impacts.

The current proposed easement will result in the corridor being designated as a township road, which in turn, will allow for the permitted travel of ATVs and UTVs over the WMA on the corridor. A township road designation will likely result in an increase of ATV and UTV travel over what has been experienced with that of past unauthorized ATV/UTV travel. The greater the increase in motorized travel, especially by ATVs or UTVs, the greater the possibility that noxious or invasive weed transmission will occur, and the greater the potential for disturbance to wildlife through increases in noise and activity.

MN DNR has consistently opposed the prospect of a GIA ATV trail designation over the proposed easement corridor and does not plan to deviate from this position in the future.

Significant road construction to the easement corridor in the future could result in a temporary displacement of wildlife species or result in a short or long term weed problem in or adjacent the corridor due to the substrate disturbance that would occur. Aggregate that may be used in future road construction could result in weed problems on or adjacent to the corridor if it happen to be infested with weed seed.

4.2 Alternative B - No Action:

The no action alternative would reject the proposed road easement proposed by Kittson County and could limit access by staff and the public within and around Beaches Lake WMA as no through traffic corridor on public land currently exists. Access to much of the WMA by staff requires permission from private landowners. Current habitat management practices would continue on this unit, but access to perform this work could become restricted if access on private land along the ditch spoils was denied.

MN DNR is requiring Kittson County to obtain access easements from affected private landowners along the corridor to ensure that both DNR management access and public access is fully provided. Without these easements, the corridor could become closed to HLV traffic as well as parking and camping during the hunting seasons. If the county fails to obtain these private easements, the county's easement would revert to the State.

4.2.1. Habitat Impacts

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change in current habitat management of Beaches Lake WMA. If a few select landowners along the SD 72/85 corridor opted to close access to the corridor through their property, management access would be impacted. MN DNR's current management access, as well as public access, is currently subject to landowner permission.

4.2.2. Biological Impacts

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change in current habitat management of Beaches Lake WMA and therefore, no change in biological impacts.

4.2.3. Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Species

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change in current habitat management of Kittson Co. WMA. No change to impacts of state species would be anticipated.

4.2.4. Cultural Resources

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change for Beaches Lake WMA.

4.2.5. Environmental Justice

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change for Beaches Lake WMA.

4.2.6. Cumulative Impacts

The "No Action" alternative would result in no change for Beaches Lake WMA.

4.3 Summary of Environmental Consequences by Alternative

Attribute	<u>Alternative A</u>	<u>Alternative B</u>
Habitat	<i>Indirect/direct impacts to adjacent native habitats through possible weed increases.</i>	<i>No Change</i>
Biology	<i>Indirect impacts to habitat composition and wildlife species through weed, noise and activity increases.</i>	<i>No Change</i>
Listed Species	<i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
Cultural Resources	<i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
Environmental Justice	<i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
Cumulative Impacts	<i>Significant weed introduction potential and wildlife disturbance if future road construction were to occur. Changes to the proposed easement would require a modification and additional review before it could be considered however.</i>	<i>No Change</i>

5. List of Preparers

Final document was prepared by:

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Dennis Simon, Wildlife Section Chief, Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155, phone: 651-259-5237, e-mail: dennis.simon@state.mn.us

6. Consultation and Coordination With the Public and Others

This EA was prepared in consultation and coordination with the USFWS Region 3 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program and USFWS Region 3 Environmental Review Coordinator.

December 22, 2010 and January 11, 2011 – Meetings with MN DNR and representatives of Kittson Co. Board and highway department to discuss potential road easement.

January 18, 2011 – County Bd. Resolution (Attachment 5)

April 27, 2011, - Meeting with USFWS – WSFRP staff, Region 3. Review easement application and supporting documentation.

7. Comments should be sent no later than October 14, 2011 to:

Jeanne Daniels, Federal Aid Coordinator
Division of Fish and Wildlife, Section of Wildlife
500 Lafayette Rd
St. Paul, MN 55155-4020

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[\(651\)259-5214](tel:(651)259-5214)

8. References Cited

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. January 2006; State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources.

Kittson County Local Water Management Plan 2010 – 2019.

http://www.nwmnswcd.org/index.pl?id=6381&isa=Item&field_name=item_attachment_file&op=download_file .

2010 US Census Data (Minnesota)
(<http://www.demography.state.mn.us>)

Attachment 1 Original WMA Project Proposal

W-785
W-57-L

GF 207
Rev. Jan. 1, 1960

MINNESOTA CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT
Division of Game & Fish, Section of Game

PROJECT PROPOSAL
(LAND ACQUISITION)

NAME OF PROJECT Beaucher Lake Wildlife Management Area COUNTY Kittson
SECTION General TWP. 161, 162, 163 N. RGE. 45 & 46 W. or E.
AREA OR DIST. Sec. IV, Area II NAME OF FUND _____ FUND NUMBER _____

ACQUISITION

GAME LANDS

- Public Access to Waters
 Wildlife Lands (including wetlands)
 Game Refuge Expansion

FISHERIES LANDS

- Rearing Ponds
 Natural Spawning Areas
 Lake and Stream Improvement
 Fisheries Expansion

TYPE OF INTEREST: Acquisition-Purchase Easement Gift License

PURPOSE OF PROJECT To preserve a major segment of the remaining wildlife lands in eastern Kittson County for wildlife production and hunting.

LAND TYPES	NO. OF ACRES	EST. COST PER ACRE	EST. TOTAL COST
Water	<u>7,251.16</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Marsh	<u>5,741.12</u>	<u>14.00</u>	<u>80,375.68</u>
Marsh-Water	<u>570.00</u>	<u>25.00</u>	<u>14,250.00</u>
Brush	<u>570.00</u>	<u>40.00</u>	<u>22,800.00</u>
Timber	<u>25,215.75</u>	<u>14.00</u>	<u>352,920.52</u>
Hayland (tame)			
Hayland (wild)			
Pasture			
Cropland - Class (1-2-3)			
Other <u>Class = 04853</u>			
TOTAL	<u>40,126.01</u>	<u>13.45</u>	<u>539,547.10</u>

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GAME | <input type="checkbox"/> FISHERIES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dam | <input type="checkbox"/> Dike |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Channel Improvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Level Ditching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish Barrier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> Planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roads & Trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Access & Parking Areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rearing Ponds | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

APPROVAL

FIELD Richard W. Welter 4/3/68 SECTION OFFICE David B. Kendall
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE _____ COMM. OFFICE David B. Kendall

EVALUATION

OWNERS:

1. See project area map.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

ADDRESS:

THE FOLLOWING FACTORS MUST BE CONSIDERED AND THOROUGHLY EVALUATED

1. PRESENT FISH AND WILDLIFE UTILITY (for Waterfowl, Upland Game, Furbearers and other species).

Waterfowl - Approximately 17 per cent of the area consists of marshes. These range from small peat burn-outs less than an acre in size to some approaching a section in size. These provide good production habitat and the larger ones excellent hunting.

Upland Game - This area together with the proposed Caribou Wildlife Management Area just to the north provides the largest single block of continuous sharp-tailed grouse habitat left in Minnesota. Population densities are probably higher than in any other large block of habitat left in the state. The Aspen-Oak woodlands provides good ruffed grouse habitat and they along with the sharptails offer excellent bird hunting opportunities.

Deer - This general area has for a number of years provided some of the highest deer hunter success ratios in the State.

Moose - The project is within the Red Lake Moose Census Area. The one plot sampled in 1968 had 27 moose. The area is in the high density moose range and moose are common.

Furbearers - Muskrat, mink, beaver, raccoon, skunk, weasel, fox, badger and coyote are common to occasional.

Other species - Sand Hill Cranes are known to breed in the area.

2. IMPROVEMENT POSSIBILITIES.

Numerous possibilities exist for some major marsh development and management. Beaches Lake itself (Sec. 8-161-45) offers an excellent opportunity to develop and vastly improve waterfowl habitat for relatively little cost. A short dike and water control structure would impound about 1,000 acres two to four feet deep. Considerable additional opportunity exists for marsh development to the east and to the north of Beaches Lake. Water supplies should be more than adequate.

Food Plots for sharptails would probably benefit this species. Controlled burning would also be necessary to maintain sharptail habitat and would benefit other species as well.

Good winter cover for deer is lacking & the possibilities of planting cover will be studied.

3. ACCESS, PROBLEMS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLIC SENTIMENT.

Enough of the area is accessible to provide good hunting. When major marsh development takes place some additional access will be needed. There is about 5,500 acres of tax forfeited land within the unit that the County Board has agreed to sell to the Section of Game and we have agreed to buy this at our earliest opportunity. About 11,500 acres is trust fund land which was classified as Class I by the Northwest Planning Committee. A large portion of the private lands were just recently purchased from the Great Northern Railway by a few groups and individuals primarily for speculative purposes. Some of this may be difficult to purchase at market price. It is possible that there may be considerable sentiment on the part of the local people to keep these areas open to snowmobiling as they ~~are~~ have become very popular for this use now. It is recommended that we consider zoning these areas for this type of use if it becomes necessary in order to establish them.

A priority rating for acquisition and additional information for the preliminary project statement is attached to this proposal.

Attachments: Project Map, Priority Rating
Added INFO. For Prelim. Project Statement

Submitted by: Robert S. Farnes

Date: 4/1/68

BEACHES LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The proposed Beaches Lake Wildlife Management Area is located in eastern Kittson County approximately seven miles east of the Villages of Lake Bronson and Lancaster. The area provides excellent habitat for all the major game species indigenous to northwestern Minn.

While most of the land within the proposed boundaries of this unit is in a wild state, it can not be expected to remain that way for many more years. Considerable land in northwestern Minnesota is continuing to be developed for agricultural purposes by clearing and draining even though some of it has a low agricultural potential. At the same time the purchase of lands for speculative purposes and for hunting camps has increased tremendously in the past few years.

Much of the area is open in aspect with about 17 per cent marsh and 70 per cent grasses and sedges. A large acreage of the sedge is quite wet and is underlain with a deep layer of peat. Brush and some timber is interspersed throughout the grass-sedge meadows. Brush species are primarily bog birch, hazel, willow, alder, red-osier dogwood, and Prunus spp. Timber stands are primarily aspen with some bur oak and ash. The timber has little or no merchantable value. Percentages of the major cover types are as follows:

Grass - Sedge	70	Per Cent
Marsh	17	" "
Brush - Timber	11	" "
Wild Hay	1	" "
Agriculture	1	" "

This area provides tremendous potential for development of marshland. Beaches Lake itself (Sec. 8-161-45) provides excellent opportunity to improve waterfowl habitat with a relatively small expenditure for development. A short dike and water control structure is all that would be needed to develop a marsh of about 1,000 acres. There are numerous possibilities of further marsh development especially to the east and to the north of Beaches Lake. The water supplies on this unit from the North and Middle Branches of the Two Rivers appears to be more than adequate for marsh management in most years.

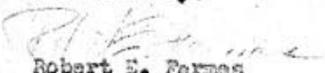
Land ownership is as follows:

Private Lands -	25,038.29	acres (34 ownerships)
Trust Fund	11,553.64	"
Tax Forfeited	5,534.08	"

There are no buildings or other improvements known to exist in the area proposed for purchase.

No refuges are contemplated at this time. If at a later date major marsh development is completed the desirability of establishing a sanctuary for waterfowl will be studied.

Submitted By:


Robert E. Farnes
Area Game Manager
4/1/68

Conservation - Section of Game

James

David B. Vesall

April 1, 1968

Robert E. Farnos *rd*

Beaches Lake Wildlife Management Area
Priority For Land Acquisition

I am recommending the following priority for land acquisition on the above subject unit:

1. Tax Forfeited lands comprise about 5,500 acres. We should acquire these as soon as possible after project approval since we have agreed with the County Board that we would purchase them. Estimated cost is \$27,500. I will have the legal descriptions prepared and sent in just as soon as we have project approval.
2. Trust Fund lands comprise about 11,500 acres. Estimated cost is \$60,000. I recommend that if possible we take this land at the same time as the Trust Fund in the Caribou project; preferably within the year. If this is impossible we should set aside a specific amount each year for condemnation of these lands.
3. Private lands comprise just over 23,000 acres. As in the Caribou project certain parcels are more important than others. Thus I recommend a two priority system the same as Caribou as Follows:

Priority I - These would be those parcels that we believe to be most important to the development and management of the unit. We would actively seek to acquire these.

Priority II - These would be the remaining private parcels not included in Priority I. They are desirable for the efficient management of the unit but are not absolutely essential. These would be acquired as they become available, but we would not actively seek to acquire them until most of the Priority I tracts have been purchased.

I am tentatively suggesting that the following tracts be considered Priority I:

Tracts - 6 (all), 11 (all), All tracts in sections one to 24 except 27a. in T 161 R 45.

cc: Vernon E. Gunvalson ✓

Attachment 2 Property Report



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
 Easement #133-023-0877, Kittson County
Property Report

Date of Inspection:	12 April 2011
Observer(s):	Christine Reisz, Assistant Area Wildlife Manager Karlstad
Location: (legal description, unit name, directions, description of location)	Beaches Lake Wildlife Management Area, 00785 SESE Sec 6, SW Sec 5, SWSE Sec 5, Sec 4, SW Sec 3, Sec 2, NWNE Sec 12 and SENE Sec 12 all in T162N-R46W; SWSW Sec 14, Sec 15, Sec 16, and NENE Sec 17 all in T162N-R45W. Kittson County.
Identification/Documentation: (description of existing road disturbance and notable features along road)	The proposed easement will be 16.5 ft wide following the current leveled surface of the north embankments of State Ditch 85 and State Ditch 72. The general condition of the ditch embankments for all stretches located on state property is a grass surface. There is a highway license vehicle two-track compacted grass or worn dirt surface evident on the corridor. Minor ruts and potholes are common along most of the corridor. Kittson County conducted some spot graveling or depositing of crushed rock in short stretches along reaches of the corridor both on state and adjacent private land in 2005 and 2006. Prior to this work, no road maintenance occurred on the corridor outside of that conducted by the Department for management or hunter access. As evident in the attached photos, portions of the proposed easement surface can be inundated with water during high flows in the ditches. Please note that it appears based on aerial photos and the surveyed boundary lines in Arcview, that the leveled surface of SD 72 in the NENE Sec 17-162-45 is likely located on state property (photo point 20).
Photos taken: Yes/No Comments: (location/storage)	Photos were taken at .25 mile intervals. GPS coordinates were created for each point. Two photos were taken at each point (east and west) when located within the boundaries of the state property. See attached photos.



Photo point 1. Lat 48 52.5498, Long -96 39.0652. East.

Left blank.



Photo point 2. Lat 48 52.5496, Long -96 38.7359. East.



Photo point 2. Lat 48 52.5496, Long -96 38.7359. West.



Photo point 3. Lat 48 52.5428, Long -96 38.4082. East.



Photo point 3. Lat 48 52.5428, Long -96 38.4082. West.



Photo point 4. Lat 48 52.5372, Long -96 38.0815. East.



Photo point 4. Lat 48 52.5372, Long -96 38.0815. West.



Photo point 5. Lat 48 52.5364, Long -96 37.7492. East.



Photo point 5. Lat 48 52.5364, Long -96 37.7492. West.



Photo point 6. Lat 48 52.5350, Long -96 37.4178. East.



Photo point 6. Lat 48 52.5350, Long -96 37.4178. West.



Photo point 7. Lat 48 52.5388, Long -96 37.1049. East.



Photo point 7. Lat 48 52.5388, Long -96 37.1049. West.



Photo point 8. Lat 48 52.5441, Long -96 36.7891. East.



Photo point 8. Lat 48 52.5441, Long -96 36.7891. West.



Photo point 9. Lat 48 52.5474, Long -96 36.4530. East.



Photo point 9. Lat 48 52.5474, Long -96 36.4530. West.



Photo point 10. Lat 48 52.5532, Long -96 36.1181. East.



Photo point 10. Lat 48 52.5532, Long -96 36.1181. West.



Photo point 11. Lat 48 52.5513, Long -96 35.7978. East.



Photo point 11. Lat 48 52.5513, Long -96 35.7978. West.



Photo point 12. Lat 48 52.5507, Long -96 35.4775. East.



Photo point 12. Lat 48 52.5507, Long -96 35.4775. West.



Photo point 13. Lat 48 52.5468, Long -96 34.5186. East.



Photo point 13. Lat 48 52.5468, Long -96 34.5186. West.



Photo point 14. Lat 48 52.5429, Long -96 34.1961. East.



Photo point 14. Lat 48 52.5429, Long -96 34.1961. West.



Photo point 15. Lat 48 52.5363, Long -96 33.8543. East.



Photo point 15. Lat 48 52.5363, Long -96 33.8543. West.



Photo point 16. Lat 48 52.5310, Long -96 33.5096. East.



Photo point 16. Lat 48 52.5310, Long -96 33.5096. West.



Photo point 17. Lat 48 52.5277, Long -96 32.8800. East.

Left blank.



Photo point 18. Lat 48 52.4046, Long -96 32.6250. East.



Photo point 18. Lat 48 52.4046, Long -96 32.6250. West.



Photo point 19. Lat 48 52.2768. Long -96 32.3593. East.



Photo point 19. Lat 48 52.2768, Long -96 32.3593. West.



Photo point 20. Lat 48 51.7095, Long -96 29.6337. East.



Photo point 20. Lat 48 51.7095, Long -96 29.6337. West.



Photo point 21. Lat 48 51.6519, Long -96 29.3241. East.



Photo point 21. Lat 48 51.6519, Long -96 29.3241. West.



Photo point 22. Lat 48 51.5653, Long -96 29.0225. East.



Photo point 22. Lat 48 51.5653, Long -96 29.0225. West.



Photo point 23. Lat 48 51.4757, Long -96 28.7227. East.



Photo point 23. Lat 48 51.4757, Long -96 28.7227. West.



Photo point 24. Lat 48 51.3881, Long -96 28.4215. East.



Photo point 24. Lat 48 51.3881, Long -96 28.4215. West.