



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
CENTRAL OFFICE  
500 LAFAYETTE ROAD  
SAINT PAUL, MN 55155  
651-296-6157  
888-646-6367

Date: 12/8/2015

Susan Thornton, Director  
Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Room 65 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Susan,

We request that the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources consider a work plan amendment to M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c "Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition, Restoration, Enhancement and Public Engagement" to allow acquisition of a 42.6-acre addition to the Cannon River Turtle Preserve Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) with this appropriation.

A portion of this property (27.9 acres) has a Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) conservation easement; the landowners donated the easement to MLT, but MLT's costs related to the donation were funded through an ENRTF appropriation. According to the MLT, they acquired the donated conservation easement with up to \$5000 for transaction costs and staff and \$5000 for easement stewardship using M.L. 2008, Chp. 367, Sec. 2, Subd. 03a. Thus, we are requesting the Commission's approval as required by Minnesota Statutes 116P.18.

Acquisition and SNA designation of this property meets the criteria in M.S. 116P.18 because it "creates additional direct benefit to the protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources." The proposed acquisition is:

- Critical habitat protected for the **state-threatened wood turtle** – raised sandbars, grassy meadows, and floodplain forest, and **0.4 miles shoreline** along a channel of the Cannon River,
- 100% Minnesota Biological Survey-mapped flood plain forest native plant community and site of **Outstanding Biodiversity Significance**,
- 100% within the Vermillion Bottoms-Lower Cannon River **Important Bird Area** which provides habitat for the state special concern species of red-shouldered hawk and cerulean warbler, and for other rare species,
- **More protected from logging, motorized use, and recreational development** through state fee ownership and SNA designation – as stated below,
- Essential for effective and efficient **ecological management of habitat** for the wood turtle and other species through proposed state ownership of parcels connecting two portions of the existing SNA and all the lands between the SNA and the Cannon River Trail,
- **Open to appropriate public use** – with improved boundaries for users and enforcement, and
- **Very high priority** to the SNA program – scoring 83 out of a possible 100 points in its evaluation using the SNA Candidate Site Evaluation Guide which puts it among the top 10 highest rated current acquisition projects.

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**Agenda Item: 07**



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This acquisition would be the first permanent protection of the 14.7 acres between the SNA and the Cannon River Trail including the 0.4 miles of shoreline. Additional habitat protection will be achieved through SNA designation on the 27.9 acres under the conservation easement (the northwestern parcel near the main stem of the Cannon River). Specifically, the easement allows logging under a management plan and use of motorized vehicles necessary for that purpose, while SNA designation prohibits logging and associated motorized use. The easement allows for “unpaved paths or foot trails for non-motorized or limited motorized recreational uses” with some conditions and “minor rustic structures such as trail barriers, boardwalks, or benches that do not impair or interfere with the natural habitat or scenic qualities of the Protected Property.” Recreational motorized use is prohibited on SNAs and the SNA program does not construct trails, boardwalks, benches, etc. on SNAs.

A map is attached of the proposed acquisition and the adjoining portion of existing SNA; a map of the entire 909-acre SNA can be viewed at [the site's webpage](#).

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Booth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret (Peggy) Booth  
Scientific and Natural Area Program Supervisor  
Division of Ecological and Water Resources

cc: Luke Skinner, Ann Pierce, Jason Tidemann

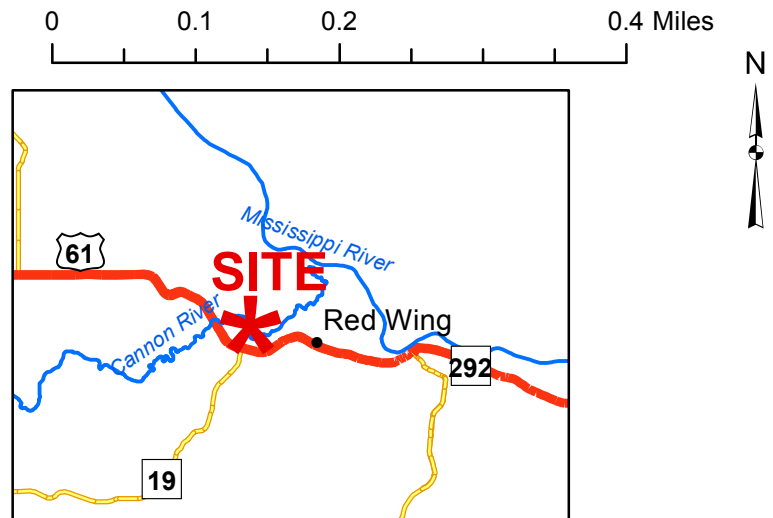
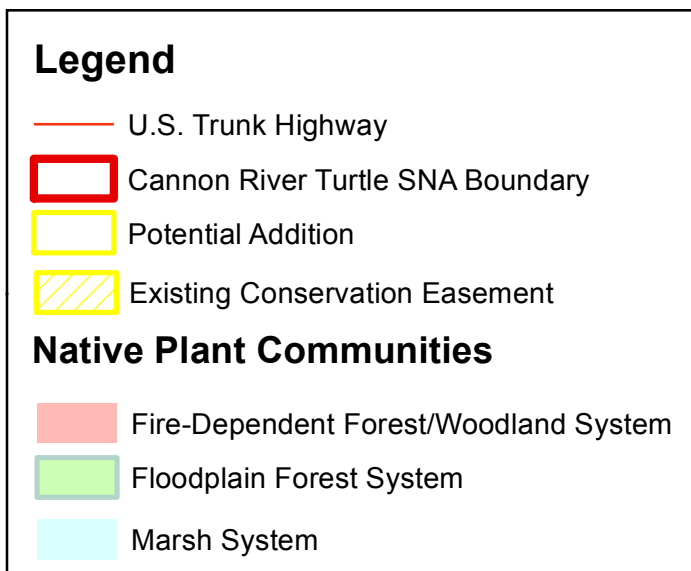
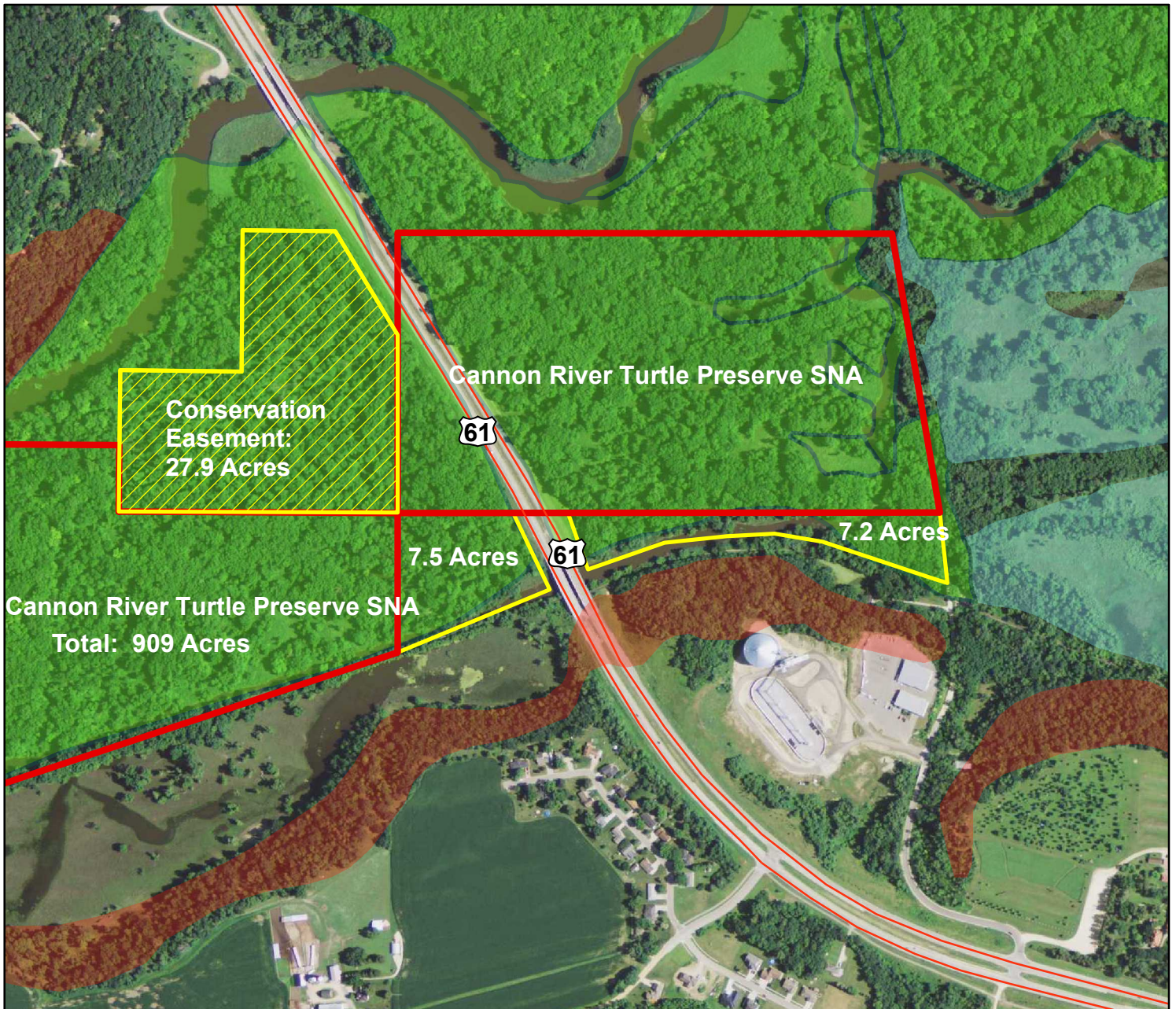
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# Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA (possible addition)



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Map made by Melissa Driscoll MN-DNR 7/6/2015  
 updated by Bill Bleckwenn-DNR 12/7/15