



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

Joe Parisi
County Executive

August 15, 2023
Contact: Ariana Vruwink
608-267-8823

Dane County to Purchase 625 Acres Near Verona for the Sugar River Wildlife Area

County's Largest Conservation Acquisition to Date Will Provide Restoration Opportunities, Create More Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Today, County Executive Joe Parisi joined Land and Water Resources Department staff to announce Dane County will purchase approximately 625 acres of property in the Towns of Verona and Montrose for the Sugar River Wildlife Area. This is the largest conservation acquisition Dane County has made to date. Acquisition of this property will provide restoration opportunities for woodland and savanna and also wetland restoration along the northern streams. Future conversion of croplands to prairie will reduce runoff, providing groundwater protection and improved water quality while also providing improved fish and wildlife habitat.

"This is the largest conservation acquisition Dane County has made to date. We are thrilled to preserve and restore this land along the popular Sugar River corridor for the public's future use and enjoyment," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "The Sugar River corridor is a natural resource gem for the Dane County community. Many thanks to the Duerst family for allowing Dane County to acquire this land and carry out these important conservation efforts."

The property extends from Riverside Road south to Schaller Road and would connect the former Rhiner property to the Sugar River Wildlife Area Davidson Unit, providing a contiguous block of approximately 840 acres of county-owned land for wildlife habitat and public recreation. Lands owned by Madison Metropolitan School District Forest and Wisconsin DNR lie west of Speedway Road near the property's southwest side, and the County's Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area is approximately a half mile east of the property.

The purchase will create more continuity between public lands and provide safe parking and access for water-based recreation within the already popular Sugar River corridor, as well as hunting, trapping, foraging, snowshoeing, fishing, and un-groomed cross country skiing. A graveled farm road runs from Riverside Road to Schaller Road and will provide good public access through the property. There is an existing 2.5-mile snowmobile trail that also runs through the property and will remain in place.

The topography is varied, with high spots providing panoramic views of the area. The northern portion of the property contains approximately 2,000 feet of the Sugar River, with an additional 3,000 feet of intermittent stream frontage and 1,700 feet of intermittent stream on the southern end. The majority of the property is active croplands, with approximately 90 acres of woods and two acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Many of the property purchases that create the Sugar River corridor are fairly recent acquisitions by Dane County, including 156 acres for the Sugar River Wildlife Area Rhiner Unit, 60 acres for the Sugar River Wildlife Area Davidson Unit, 102 acres of Public Hunting Easement next to Davidson, 378 acres for the Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area, and 95 acres for the Conservation Easement next to Falk Wells.

A resolution for Dane County to purchase this 625.1-acre property for \$12,139,250 will be introduced at Thursday night's County Board meeting. It is expected to be approved in the coming weeks.

###