STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

November 10, 2014

TO:	Keith Creagh, Director
INFORMATION:	Natural Resources Commission
Transaction:	Wildlife Land Acquisition and Boundary Dedication Cornish State Game Area – Van Buren County Cornish Tract Land Transaction Case #20140155
Purchase:	386 acres, more or less. $1,540,000.00
PA 240 of 2012:	PILT Estimate: $20,600.00 This parcel is south of the Mason-Arenac County line and will result in an increase of 386 counted acres. There are no excluded acres as a part of this transaction.
Description:	Van Buren County, Porter Township, T4S, R13W, Sections 21, 22, and 28: As more completely described in the case file.
Seller(s):	Sharon S. Cornish Trust, Lawton, Michigan
Authority:	Natural Resources and Environment Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended.
Notice:	This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources (Department) December 2, 2014, calendar, and is eligible for approval on December 9, 2014.

Comments: The acquisition of this southern Michigan 386-acre parcel is a targeted, strategic investment that strongly supports the Department's mission of enhancing, restoring, and conserving the State's wildlife resources, natural communities, and ecosystems for the benefit to Michigan's citizens, visitors and future generations. This property contains the following characteristics:

- Adjacent to public land - the property is bordered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Kinney Waterfowl Production Area, a property that has been managed cooperatively for the past 33 years under a memorandum of understanding agreement between the USFWS and the Department in order to maintain and increase waterfowl populations.
- Proximity to population centers – this acquisition is 12 miles from the City of Portage and 18 miles from Kalamazoo. This proximity provides for easy access for residents of these communities.
- Access – the parcel has excellent frontage on four, paved county-maintained roads and is adjacent to a small grass strip airport.

- Topography and cover – this level to rolling property provides a wide variety of uplands, lowlands, woodlots, agricultural, hedgerow, waterfront, island, and grassland habitats.
- Water – 9,800 feet of waterfront on Grass Lake, a shallow lake that provides excellent open water/marshland habitat.
- Wildlife – this parcel provides quality wildlife habitat for a variety of wildlife species including mallards, wood ducks, pheasant, deer, sandhill crane, turkey, squirrel, and rabbit.
- Improvements – there are several barns and two residential structures on the property that will either be used for the management of the property or removed, following acquisition.
- Occupants – the property caretaker was residing on the property at the time the offer to purchase was made and is in the process of moving to another location. The Department will follow all applicable statutes regarding relocation benefits to the caretaker. Based on communications with the Attorney General's Office, the anticipated relocation benefits range between $3,500 and $5,250.

As a result, this property will provide quality opportunities for dispersed public recreation in southern Michigan and will support Michigan's $1.3 billion hunting industry by increasing the amount of public hunting land.

The seller will convey mineral rights relative to this tract, if owned.

Acquisition of this parcel will contribute to the Department's goals of securing wildlife habitat and increasing public recreation opportunities.

When the Department submitted the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) application to purchase this property, it anticipated the need to dedicate a new State Game Area (SGA) and used the name of the township within which the property is located as a place-holder (Porter Township SGA). While the seller has not made this a term of the sale, staff recommend naming this new project the 'Cornish State Game Area' since area residents already know and refer to this property as the "Cornish Farm" and to change the name would lead to confusion and reduced name recognition amongst area residents. The proposed name also recognizes the 155-year history that the Cornish family has had in taking care of this property; such stewardship should be recognized whenever possible.

Engagement: The Porter Township Trustees and the Van Buren County Commissioners passed resolutions supporting this MNRTF line item purchase.

Recommendation:

1. That the acquisition be approved, with payment to be made from the MNRTF, Porter State Game Area Land Initiative project, TF 13-128.

2. That the boundaries of the Cornish State Game Area be dedicated as shown on the attached map.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief for
Wildlife Division

Scott Heather for
William O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division

James L. Dexter, Chief for
Fisheries Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

Mark H. Hoffman
Chief Administrative Officer

I approve the staff recommendations.

Keith Creagh
Director

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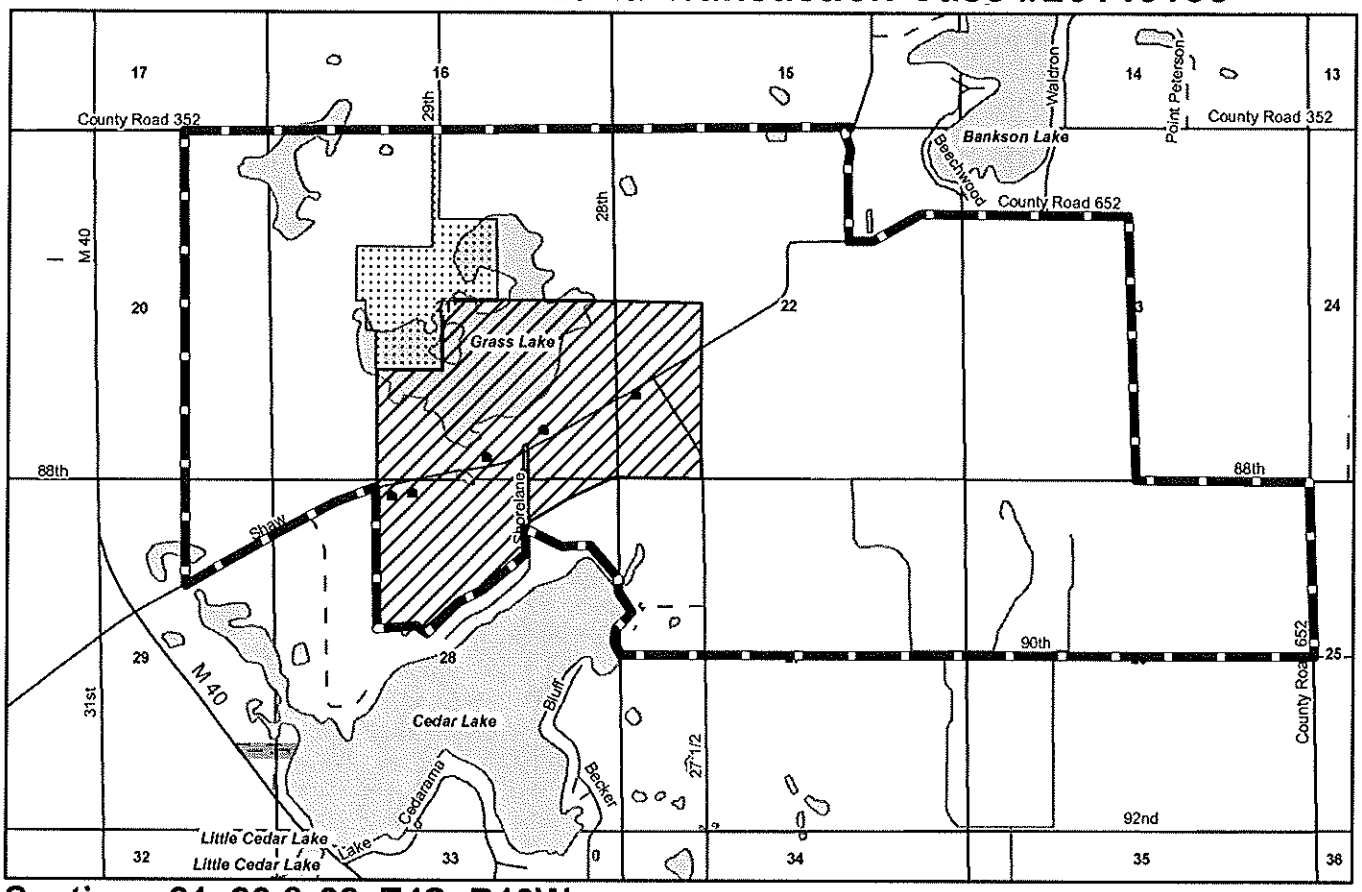
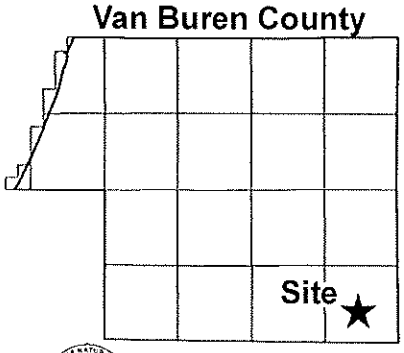
Date Approved

WILDLIFE LAND ACQUISITION
Cornish State Game Area -- Van Buren County
The Cornish Tract -- Land Transaction Case #20140155

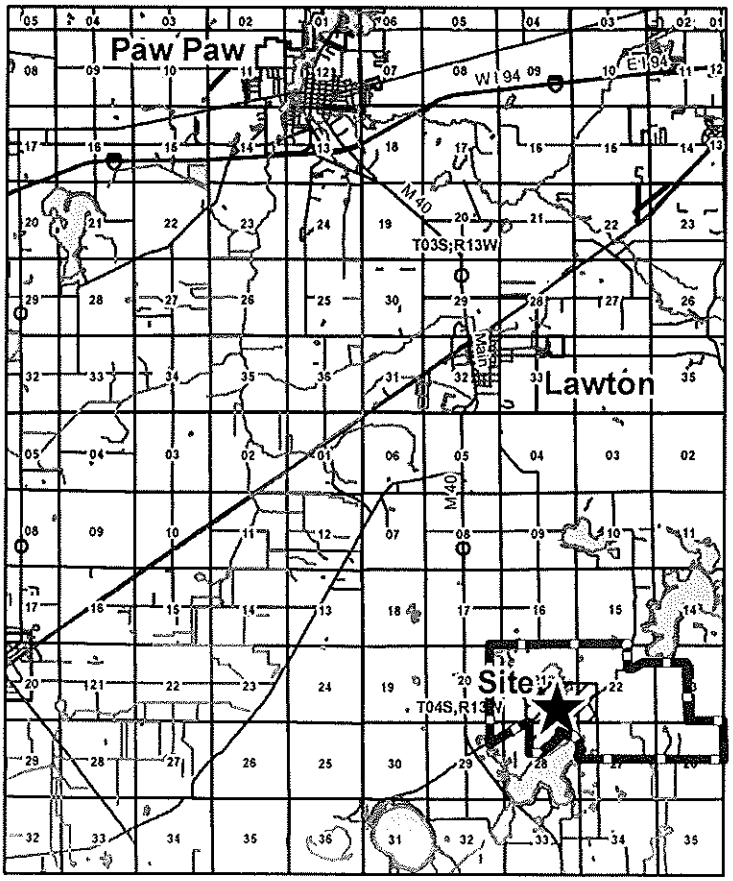


Sections 21, 22 & 28, T4S, R13W
Porter Township

- Proposed State Game Area Boundary
- Land Offered to DNR for Purchase (386 acres)
- Structures
- Kinney Federal Waterfowl Production Area
- State Land
- Private Land



DNR -- Finance & Operations Division
Real Estate Services Section
10/23/2014



Regional Location