

# **Dane County Exec. Parisi: Announces Land Acquisition for Cherokee Marsh Which Will Increase Conservation Efforts and Recreational Opportunities**

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Today Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced a grant to Groundswell Conservancy for over 100 acres of land that will add to the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource area. The 2 separate parcels, 95.5 acres in the Village of DeForest and 10.9 acres in the Village of Waunakee, will protect lake quality for Lake Mendota and will connect public ownership making land management of the wetland easier and more efficient. It will also vastly increase recreational opportunities for year round hiking, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching and natural appreciation.

“I am proud to partner with Groundswell Conservancy to increase access to recreational activities, clean up our lakes and manage our natural resources more efficiently,” said Dane County Executive Parisi. “The addition of these properties to our conservation efforts will ensure their enjoyment for years to come.”

**Village of DeForest Property:**

The larger property connects County land to the west and Department of Natural Resources' land to the southeast. A portion of its southern boundary is made up of 2750 feet of Yahara River frontage. The property is level, open wetland and is part of the largest remaining wetlands in the County.

The property will provide migration and nesting habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds while also providing river bank protection for spawning northern pike and water quality protection of Lake Mendota. The connection will also provide continuity for public recreation.

Groundswell Conservancy will partner with the County, Department of Natural Resources and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh to restore the wetland and manage habitat. Acquisition of this parcel will protect additional wetland within the Cherokee Marsh wetland complex, provide wetland habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for the public.

The project costs for the acquisition total \$214,640. The acquisition costs will be provided by funds from Dane County, the Department of Natural Resources' Knowles Nelson Stewardship Grant Program, a small North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant and funds from Groundswell Conservancy.

### **Village of Waunakee Property:**

Groundswell Conservancy will purchase approximately 10.9 acres in the Village of Waunakee. The property is located on a plateau that overlooks the Cherokee Marsh, Yahara River valley and is located within the boundary of the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resources Area. Acquisition of the land would fill a gap in conservation ownership between the Westport Drumlin Preserve/State Natural Area and conservation lands on the west side of Cherokee Marsh. The property would also provide land for local food production, which falls under the Agriculture, Gardening and Foraging initiative .

The landowner currently leases the land to local farmers and Groundswell would continue this practice, making the land available to immigrant farmers for subsistence and market growing. Community GroundWorks, a non-profit that manages 26 acres of community farms and agricultural programming at Troy Gardens on the north side of Madison, has committed to partnering with Groundswell to manage the leases and the infrastructure on the property.

The landowner is donating half of the value of the land to Groundswell Conservancy as well as a perpetual conservation easement on the remainder of her farm. The land and the easement will allow a pedestrian trail linking the Westport Drumlin Preserve with County owned land east of River Road.

The project costs for the acquisition total \$107,590, Dane County will fund \$26,897.00 in County matching funds.