

# Dane County Exec. Parisi: Dane County makes history by purchasing 160 acres of property for Pheasant Branch Conservancy

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*Is the Largest Conservation Preservation Investment the County Has Ever Made for a Property Acquisition; Will Prevent Flow of 2.6 Million Gallons of Rainwater Each Year into Lake Mendota*

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi joined County Board and Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy representatives to announce that Dane County will acquire approximately 160 acres of property in the Town of Springfield to become a part of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Costing nearly \$10 million dollars, this is the largest conservation preservation investment for a property acquisition in the county's history.

Restoration of the property will help the Town of Springfield maintain its rural character and reduce sediment and phosphorus runoff, improving water quality within the Pheasant Branch Watershed and positively impacting Lake Mendota. It is estimated that restoring this property to permanent vegetation will reduce more than 550 pounds of phosphorus annually and prevent the runoff of 354,000 cubic feet (or over 2.6 million gallons) of water each year. Roughly one pound of phosphorus can produce up to 500 pounds of algae.

“We are proud to make this historic investment to expand Pheasant Branch

Conservancy and do our part to ensure this outdoor recreation destination can be enjoyed for generations to come,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “This acquisition will further our efforts to improve water quality, mitigate flooding, and preserve outdoor spaces as Dane County continues to grow.”

A farmhouse and outbuildings can be found on the property, along with farmland and some pasture. It is bordered by Pheasant Branch Road to the west, Balzer Road to the north, and the 550-acre Pheasant Branch Conservancy to the south. The parcel sits within the Pheasant Branch and Yahara River Watersheds and contains the headwaters of an intermittent stream. This stream flows into Pheasant Branch Creek, and ultimately Lake Mendota. The 160-acre property is also located within the recharge area of the Frederick Springs, found south of the parcel. Restoration of the land will result in less nutrients and pesticides entering the groundwater recharge area directly adjacent to the springs.

“Not only does this acquisition provide unparalleled recreational and conservation opportunities, but it is also exactly the type of action we need to take to be resilient to flooding,” said Dane County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan. “Protection of this property will buffer Pheasant Branch Creek from storm flashes and erosion during big and small rain storms.”

Dane County will seek partnerships with community organizations on the planning and implementation of restoration projects, including prairie development and habitat improvements. This acquisition will add to the outdoor recreation activities visitors of Pheasant Branch Conservancy participate in, whether it be walking, hiking, biking, or viewing wildlife. One future use of the property could also be as a regional bicycle trail connector to Governor Nelson State Park.

Dane County, the City of Middleton, and WDNR all own land that is collectively managed as the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy is a support organization that has dedicated itself to restoring conservancy habitat and educating the public about the area’s resources. There is a 3.3-mile looped bicycle/pedestrian trail that runs through the conservancy, along with multiple hiking trails. The Frederick Springs are located on existing county property and are a beautiful natural feature that draw in many visitors.

The owners of this 160-acre property have had a long history of working with the county to maintain agricultural use and production while striving to improve and protect environmental resources through conservation implementation. The

purchase price for the parcel is \$9,973,900. A resolution regarding this property acquisition in the Town of Springfield will be introduced at tonight's County Board meeting.