

MEMORANDUM:

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

From: Minnesota Land Trust

Date: July 27, 2016

Re: Questions on Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor Project (FA01)

Below please find responses to a number of questions which have been raised by LSOHC members regarding the Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor Project (FA01). The Minnesota Land Trust and Washington County appreciate an opportunity to respond to these questions and would welcome any other questions or comments you may have. Because of the great importance of this habitat complex to the Metro area, we want to ensure our design for the project addresses the Council's concerns from the onset, is fully transparent and has the support of all the parties involved. The responses below are as we understand the project today; please note however that a final easement has yet to be negotiated.

1. What area will actually be covered by this phase and what will subsequent phases cover (e.g.: what is the scope of the overall project)?

Washington County has identified the Carnelian Creek Corridor as one of its top conservation priorities due its uniquely large and intact blocks of wildlife habitat. This phase anticipates protecting 735 acres at the juncture of the Tanglewood and Carnelian Creek Corridor priority areas (see attached map). The overall extent of wildlife habitat (primarily forests, lakes/wetlands and grasslands) within the corridor is approximately 3500 acres. Subsequent phases will depend on landowner readiness and available funding. Due to the large scale of the project, the map of the easement area provided in the proposal is a generalization of the area to be covered by the easement. We will provide a refined map showing more detailed boundaries if we are selected for a hearing.

2. Who will own the land and who will hold the easement?

Warner Nature Center will own the property subject to a perpetual conservation easement co-held between the Minnesota Land Trust and Washington County who have a long history of co-holding easements within the county. The Minnesota Land Trust will be responsible for annual monitoring of the easement.

3. What is the quality of the habitat and the quality of the lakes which will be protected?

As seen in the proposal, both the extent and quality of the wildlife habitat is exceptional, especially for the Twin Cities Metro area. The mesic oak-maple forest which covers the property is characterized as “high-quality” by the MN DNR for its biodiversity. Three significant plant communities and three rare animal species have been identified on the property and are recorded in the MNDNR’s Natural Heritage Database. This project has the unprecedented opportunity to protect more than 10 miles of shoreline habitat on three different lakes. These lakes are clear, high-quality (ranked A-quality by the Met Council), and invasive-free lakes, making them a very unique fishery resource in the region.

4. What uses will be allowed and/or prohibited by the easement?

While the easement will be drafted once funding decisions are known, the Land Trust and County will approach the easement terms with the following goals:

USES: The goal will be to prohibit industrial, residential or commercial uses of the property and to prohibit subdivision of the property for any of these purposes. The easement would allow low impact nature education activities to continue.

BUILDINGS: The Land Trust and County’s approach to this project will be to exclude as much infrastructure (buildings, roads, etc.) from the easement area as possible. Both the Nature Center headquarters on the west side and the old Concordia Language Village on the east will be excluded from the easement area. A small number of buildings that are difficult to exclude from the easement area due to location (such as remote maintenance sheds, etc.) will likely remain in the easement area; expansion of these structures will be restricted by the terms of the easement. New buildings will also be restricted by the terms of the easement.

ROADS AND PARKING: The easement area contains only two principal driveways within the easement area, one that connects from the County Highway on the west perimeter of the property to Warner Nature Center (with a modestly-used extension eastward to a boat house and docks on the lakes), and a driveway to the May farmsite on the east edge of the property. The goal will be to restrict any new roads or rights of way from crossing the easement area in the future. Existing parking areas will be excluded from the easement and the easement will prohibit any future parking lots.

TRAILS: The easement area does not include the Gateway Trail. A network of unpaved forest paths used for nature education and property management exists on the property (see attached map). These existing trails are low-maintenance, natural surface trails which are compatible with the habitat conservation goals of the property.

LAND MANAGEMENT: Land management will be the responsibility of Warner Nature Center. The property will be required to be managed in accordance with a

habitat management plan approved by the easement holders. The plan will include goals for maintaining and enhancing the high quality habitat which exists today.

OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE: Other infrastructure related to the nature center uses include a small board walk and small docks. These will be limited in number and location by the easement.

5. What are the extent and character of existing trails on the property?

As described above, the existing trails are used for nature education, observation and management. They are generally natural surface, low impact forest trails which are compatible with the goals of wildlife conservation. There are approximately 11 miles of trails which traverse the easement area. These trails will aid in the monitoring of the easement and in the management of the habitat. Higher impact trails such as the Gateway Trail are excluded from the easement area.

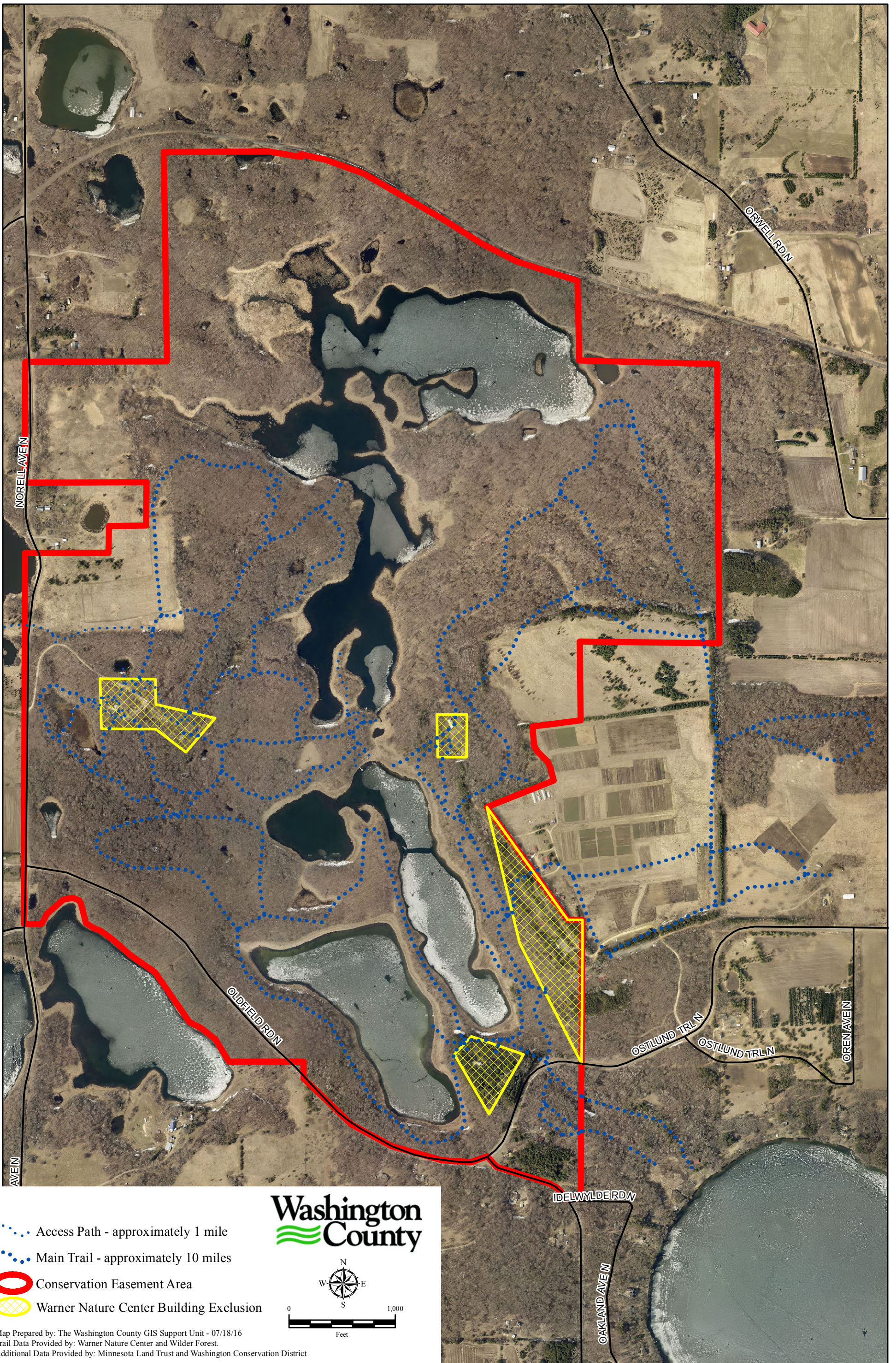
6. Are there any existing legal restrictions on the property?

There are no existing legal restrictions on the area proposed to be subject to the conservation easement. As such, the property could currently be sold, subdivided, logged or farmed according to local zoning. Moreover, this property is highly desirable for residential development due to its extensive lakeshore. An existing conservation easement held by Washington County and the State of Minnesota is located on 40 acres of Warner Nature Center land which is adjacent to the area which will be subject to the new easement.

7. How will the permanency of the easement be ensured?

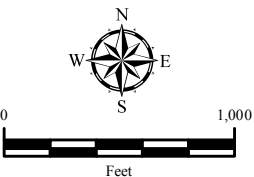
As with all easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust, the easement will be monitored annually according to national Land Trust Accreditation Standards to ensure compliance with the easement. In the unlikely event of a violation, the Land Trust and County will jointly enforce the terms of the easement.

Proposed Wilder Forest/Warner Nature Center Conservation Easement Area



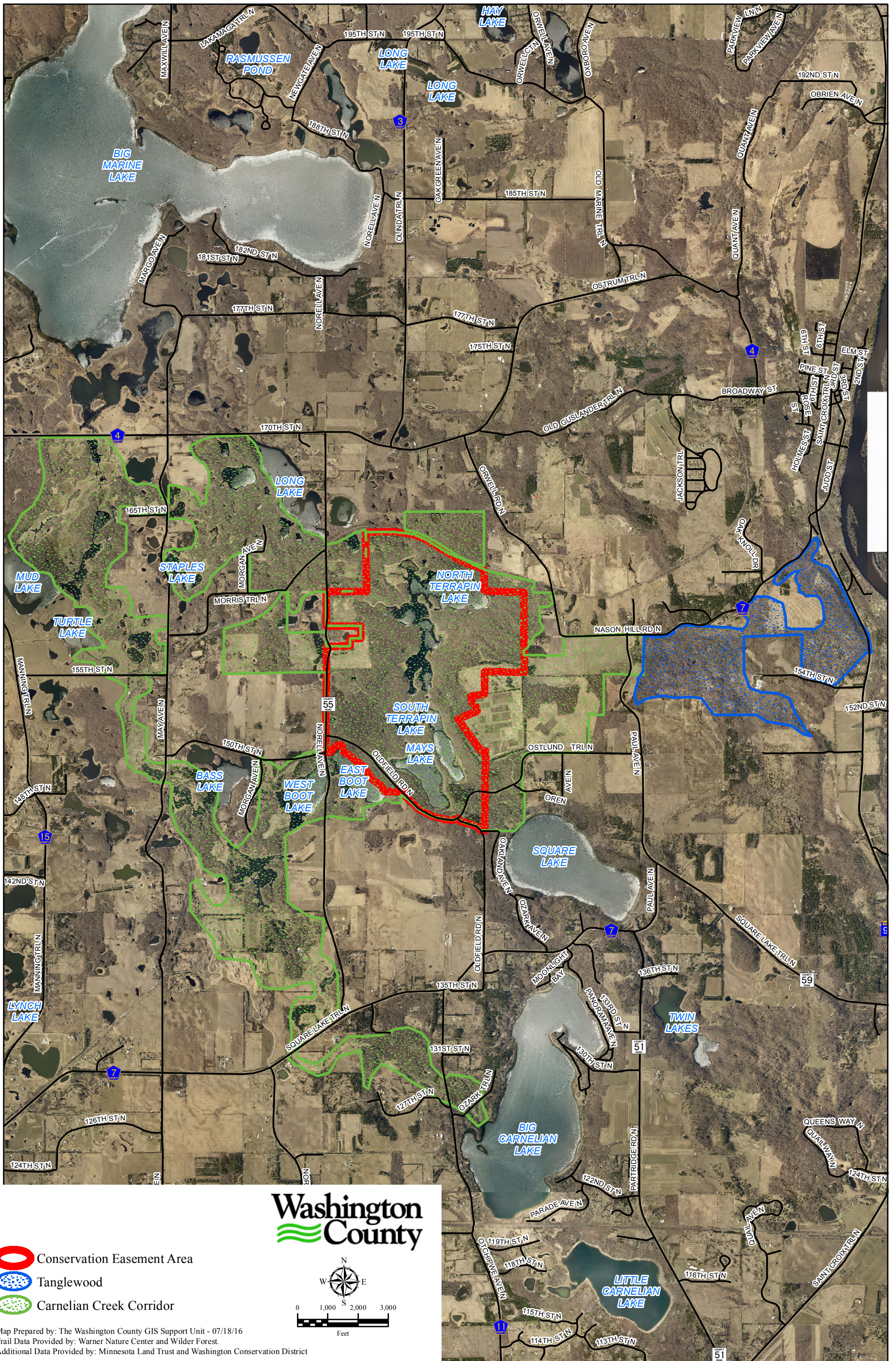
- ⋯⋯⋯ Access Path - approximately 1 mile
- ⋯⋯⋯ Main Trail - approximately 10 miles
- Conservation Easement Area
- Warner Nature Center Building Exclusion

**Washington
County**






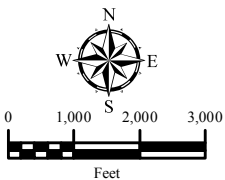
Map Prepared by: The Washington County GIS Support Unit - 07/18/16
 Trail Data Provided by: Warner Nature Center and Wilder Forest.
 Additional Data Provided by: Minnesota Land Trust and Washington Conservation District

Proposed Wilder Forest/Warner Nature Center Conservation Easement Area



Washington County

-  Conservation Easement Area
-  Tanglewood
-  Carnelian Creek Corridor



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