

Item 4.G. Land Acquisition for Upper Wolf River
Fishery Area in Langlade County



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

31 JULY 2026

Dear Ms. Bystol,

I'm writing you in advance of a vote before the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on August 13th 2026 for the **Lawton Trust Project**, a land acquisition for the Upper Wolf River Fishery Area in Langlade County, Wisconsin.

As a representative of Northwoods Land Trust, an organization with over 25 years of land conservation experience in the region focused on protecting our increasingly developed forests and waters, I'd like to highlight that the project will provide important conservation benefits to the surrounding area. This project represents an important opportunity to protect a significant natural resource, enhance public conservation investments, and preserve the ecological integrity of the Upper Wolf River corridor for future generations.

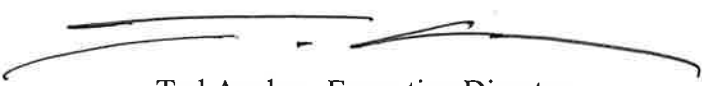
The project includes the acquisition of three "forties" totaling more than 118 acres, including over three-quarters of a mile of frontage on both banks of the Upper Wolf River. This remarkable stretch of river has been designated as a pristine Tier III Outstanding Resource Water, receiving the highest level of protection from degradation under the federal Clean Water Act and Wisconsin law. Protecting these lands will help safeguard the water quality, habitat, and ecological values that make this resource truly exceptional.

Equally important is the connectivity this acquisition will provide. The proposed project will link two large blocks of the Upper Wolf River Fishery Area corridor, strengthening an already significant conservation landscape. By expanding and connecting protected lands along this important water resource, the project will enhance wildlife habitat, protect riparian areas, and maximize the benefits of existing state investments in the Upper Wolf River Fishery Area.

We believe this acquisition is a sound and strategic investment in Wisconsin's natural heritage. Protecting these lands will provide lasting benefits for fish and wildlife, water quality, recreation, and the communities that value the Upper Wolf River as one of the state's most treasured resources.

We respectfully encourage the Natural Resources Board to support funding for this important conservation project. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting Wisconsin's outstanding natural resources.

Sincerely,



Ted Anchor, Executive Director
ted@northwoodslandtrust.org (715) 479-2490

From: [Terry Cummings](#)
To: [DNR NRB Liaison](#)
Subject: Lawton Property Acquisition on the Wolf River
Date: Friday, July 10, 2026 2:27:06 PM

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Good Afternoon:

First of all I hope that this means of contacting the Natural Resources Board is appropriate. If a more formal type of contact is more appropriate, I would be happy to follow that approach.

I am contacting the Board to express my support for the DNR's acquisition of the tract of land along the Wolf River in Langlade County known as the Lawton property. In my opinion, the Wolf River, along with the farsighted management it has received, is a remarkable river corridor, an absolute gem. Acquisition of this property would continue this legacy and preserve the river and its undeveloped shoreline for everyone to enjoy.

I hope that the Board will support this acquisition for all those who cherish the Wolf River. Acquiring this property will add to the gift that our predecessors wisely provided to the public.

Respectfully,
Terry Cummings, Rhinelander

August 5, 2026

Wisconsin Natural Resources Board
Ms Robin Schmidt, Chair

Dear Ms. Schmidt and members of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board,

Fifty years ago, in the summer of our nation's bicentennial celebration, I was winding down my second and final summer working at a scout camp in Langlade County. I was 20 years old, and my whole [and hopefully exciting!] life was ahead of me, waiting to be experienced. My junior year at the UW would start in just a few weeks.

A big part of my job at camp was to drive their big passenger van and assorted trailers around northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, delivering older scouts and their gear on backpacking, mountaineering and canoeing trips to the Porcupine Mountains, the Boundary Waters and various wild rivers in between, and then returning to pick them up a week or two later. It was a great job, if not very lucrative, and I maintain lifelong friendships from camp to this day.

I put a lot of miles on that van over two summers, and saw a lot of beautiful places. We truly live in a wonderful part of the world. Yet I was always struck by the amazing beauty and wildness of the Upper Wolf River, just a few miles down the road from camp. Not only did I frequently drive scout trips to the Wolf, but the river was a favorite escape for staff on our rare days off as well. Sections of the stretch from Lily to Keshena were our favorites, and I still remember a wistful last trip on the Wolf that we took before all heading off in different directions for the fall--and as it turned out, our separate lives.

Fast-forward five decades to 2026. I'm now 70 years old, retired from a long career in natural resources, inspired in considerable part by my experiences at camp and on the Wolf River all those years ago. My white-water canoeing days may be over. But when I heard that the Department of Natural Resources was proposing to purchase the Lawton Trust property, thereby connecting two long sections of the Upper Wolf River Fishery Area, including the Big Slough and Little Slough Gundy rapids, which I so enjoyed running as a young man, I was thrilled.

What a way to close out the long and successful run of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. What a way to demonstrate to the people of Wisconsin the additional treasures that can be protected forever by Stewardship Program reauthorization. What a way to honor the wishes of John and Esther Lawton to see the land and river their family treasured and cared for many years forever dedicated to the wildlife and people of Wisconsin and our visitors.

When I told my fishing and occasional canoeing buddy Joe that the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board would be considering the Lawton acquisition at their August meeting, he took one look at the map and succinctly said, "Invaluable frontage—why **WOULDN'T** they approve this???"

It would warm my septuagenarian heart in our Sesquicentennial year if the Board would clearly answer, "No worries, Joe, we got this."

Respectfully,

Mike Foy
Madison



Wolf River Chapter—TU
PO Box 156
White Lake, WI 54491

July 31, 2026

Chair Robin Schmidt and Members of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board
Madison, WI

RE: Upper Wolf River Acquisition

Good Morning Everyone,

The board has the opportunity to approve the purchase by the state of a unique and important piece of property from the Lawton Family. This property is river frontage on both sides of the Wolf River connecting DNR existing properties along the river south of Lily.

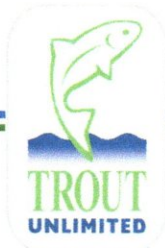
This property has been in the Lawton family for over 70 years, and Lawton's have been great stewards of this property keeping it very natural and undeveloped. We feel it would be a great addition to the other state properties.

The Wolf River is an asset to the state of Wisconsin for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Our organization would very much like to see this purchase go through by the State of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Andy Killoren
President Wolf River TU Chapter
Wisconsin's First TU Chapter



August 3, 2026

Wisconsin DNR Natural Resources Board
Ms. Ashley Bystol – Liaison
dnrnrbliaison@wisconsin.gov

Dear Natural Resources Board Members,

The Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited respectfully asks that you approve the purchase of the “Lawton Property” which includes a portion of the Wolf River and surrounding lands. This is a spectacular section of the Wolf River, and the property would be a wonderful addition to the public lands in Wisconsin.

The stretch of the river on the Lawton property flows north and south through three adjoining forty acre parcels. River length is approximately one mile and includes frontage along both banks. Two named rapids, Big Slough Gundy and Little Slough Gundy, are among the outstanding features of this section of river. Fishing has a seasonal quality to it. For most of the year trout fishing is superb. When the waters warm smallmouth bass take center stage. In addition to the fishing, the river is popular with recreationists who enjoy the paddling sports. The land along the river includes a portion of the Wolf River State Trail, so hikers will also enjoy this acquisition.

The lands on either side of the river consist of old growth cedar and a variety of landforms including wetlands, plateaus, and hills. Plantlife includes trilliums, trout lilies, bluebead lilies and cohosh. Many of the Northern wildlife species including deer, bear wolves, otters, foxes, bald eagles, osprey, turkeys, and grouse are present.

The history of this land is interesting. John and Esther Lawton bought the property in the 1950’s and added to it in the 1960’s. The Lawtons were, and continue to be, conscientious stewards of the property. John Lawton was among Wisconsin’s great trout anglers and conservationists. He was an NRB Board member in the 80’s. It was the intention of John and Esther to enable the public to enjoy their beloved section of the Wolf, and Jack and Bonnie Lawton are honored to fulfill that wish.

The Wolf is also an important part of Trout Unlimited’s history in Wisconsin. The Wolf River Chapter was the first Trout Unlimited chapter to form in the state, and their goal then and now is to preserve the river and its quality recreation. Preservation of the river remains an important goal of the State Council as well, and it is our feeling that state purchase of the Lawton property will help to preserve the Wolf in its current pristine state.

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited deeply appreciates Jack and Bonnie Lawton’s conservation ethic and dedication to the public in offering this beautiful water and land to the DNR and the people of Wisconsin. Please approve this acquisition.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Myk Hranicka – Chair – Wisconsin TU
jdrflooring@gmail.com 920 627-5779

Kim McCarthy – Wisconsin TU Grants Coordinator
kjmccarthy75@gmail.com 920 639-3697

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited is a 501c3 non-profit organization consisting of approximately 5000 volunteer members in 20 chapters working to ensure that future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water. In a typical year WITU and its Chapters report over 50,000 volunteer hours working on conservation projects.

The Wolf River property of Jack and Bonnie Lawton at issue here today is like a rare diamond on a public sidewalk.

The opportunity for the DNR Board to pick up that diamond for public safekeeping is as exciting as a board meeting is likely to get.

(My experience with the DNR Board goes back to its predecessor-- the Conservation Commission and mink farm owner Arthur McArthur arguing with rich brewer Guido Rahr as to whether or not it was justified to fire a personal pilot because he forgot to put the wheels down for a landing. Rahr advised MacArthur not to fire his pilot as he was not likely to forget about the wheels ever again.)

John Lawton, Jack's father, introduced me to the Wolf River and its environs in the very early 1960's. I did not realize it at the time but that introduction and its subsequent evolution was not unlike a religious experience. The unpatrolled beauty of the wild land, the fascinating local history, the ultimate authority of Big and Little Slough Gundy rapids just above the cabin. These and a thousand other things got into my blood and brain on a permanent basis.

Going "up to the Wolf" for a weekend of fishing and misadventure became summer getaways prioritized over family obligations to a risky degree. Bringing a beautiful Indian basket home as a peace offering was insufficient barter for having missed an in-law's weekend wedding.

The solitary nature of trout fishing puts the participant in a particular bond with the stream. And to stand waist-deep in a powerful Wolf River rapids, to take just one more step to reach a rising fish and then to find yourself upended and riding the rushing water like a helpless June bug, that is all part of the special Wolf River game. It

can be played on other rivers but it would be checkers to chess compared to how the Wolf plays it.

Should the board approve the Lawton's very generous and civic-minded offering today, the simple wooden cabin on the property will understandably be dismantled and remove. John had hired a local "Kentuck" to build the cabin and during the roofing process the carpenter severally injured one of his hands that bled profusely and left permanent bloody handprints on many of the cabin's pine roof boards that offered something to think about as you looked at them from your sleeping bag.

Those handprints will survive in my Wolf River memories and I will hear the voice of this special piece of the Earth reminding me what a boundless treat it was to have been befriended by such a classy, wild place as the Lawton's Wolf River environs.

A similar experience is in the cards for countless others in the future when the board picks up the rare Lawton Wolf River diamond on the public sidewalk.

Well done! The wheels are down!

Sincerely

Bill Stokes

From: [Tim Waters](#)
To: [DNR NRB Liaison](#)
Subject: Lawton Acquisition
Date: Tuesday, July 28, 2026 5:55:22 PM

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Chair Robin Schmidt and Members of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board

Dear Board Members,

My name is Tim Waters. I am a past president of the Wolf River Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and a current board member. I am also the owner of the Wolf River Fly Shop, two miles from the Lawton property. I am writing to you today to encourage the acquisition of this undeveloped property along the Wolf River.

Purchase of this land would connect 1.7 miles of DNR frontage up stream, with 2.5 miles of DNR frontage down stream. It would open to the public over five miles of continuous access to the largest free-stone river east of the Mississippi that still holds trout. All of this frontage includes both sides of the river. The Wolf River Trail also runs through the eastern section of this property, connecting the trail to the river.

The Lawton property includes 11 small tributaries on the west side of the river and two on the east side. All of these are small, adding cold water to the Wolf in the summer, and warm water in the winter. Two of these tributaries have documented brook trout as "present" and "abundant" from the DNR's own report "Fishery Resources Of Streams In The Upper Wolf River Watershed" Randolph Steuck, Lloyd M. Andrews & Max Johnson WDNR 1980.

This purchase would support and enhance the DNR Brook Trout Reserves program, initiated by the WDNR in December 2024. Holding these small creeks in the public trust will protect them for future generations

I respectfully ask the Natural Resources Board to acquire this property.

Tim Waters
Wolf River Fly Shop
920-740-9595