

Balsam Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District Conservation Land
Guiding Principles for Management, Sustainability, and Public Access Use

Approved: 02/10/2024

Balsam Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (BLPRD) has been entrusted to preserve, protect, manage, and sustain the Balsam Lake resource through stewardship and conservation efforts for current and future generations to enjoy.

Three Conservation properties owned by BLPRD are “Rice Creek”, “Stump Bay”, and “Park Drive/Bass Bay” and are there to primarily protect Balsam Lake through managed runoff. Rice Creek is 4 parcels for ~87 acres, Stump Bay is 2 parcels for ~ 39 acres, and Park Drive/Bass Bay is 2 parcels for ~3 acres. All were obtained through purchase and/or DNR Lake Protection grants and/or donation(s). Together they represent 129 acres of conservation protection for Balsam Lake and area watershed(s).

This document provides a brief history, property locations, purpose, and guiding principles on the ownership, management, and use of the conservation land.

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Background

BLPRD Conservation properties provide the controls needed for conservation practices, and they promote preservation of critical wildlife habitat and watershed areas. The goal is for good, long term water quality of Balsam Lake for lake sustainability, wildlife/fisheries habitat, and recreational use. The three conservation properties of BLPRD were obtained to improve areas of historic pollution concern that impacts Balsam Lake.

The three conservation properties are typically referred to as: “Rice Creek”, Stump Bay”, and Park Drive or Bass Bay”.¹ The actual properties and historical ownership are provided in Chart 1.

#	Location	PID ²	Acres ²	Former Name/Owner ²	Obtained ³	Grant ³
1	Rice Creek	040-00933-0000	39.74	Balsam Acres Glenna Farms	1994 Purchase & DNR Grant	DNR Lake Protection
2	Rice Creek	040-00937-0002	6.83	Balsam Acres Glenna Farms	1994 Purchase & DNR Grant	DNR Lake Protection
3	Rice Creek	040-00939-0000	37.21	Balsam Acres Glenna Farms	1994 Purchase & DNR Grant	DNR Lake Protection
4	Rice Creek	040-00943-0100	2.93	Balsam Acres Glenna Farms	1994 Purchase & DNR Grant	DNR Lake Protection
5	Stump Bay	040-01291-0000	20.45	Soltau	2011 Purchase	DNR Lake Protection
6	Stump Bay	040-01326-0000	18.8	Peterson	2005 Purchase and Grant	DNR Lake Protection
7	Park Drive Bass Bay	106-00386-0000	1.25	Deaver	2002 Donation	
8	Park Drive Bass Bay	106-00119-0000	1.77	Lot 77	2004 Purchase and Grant	DNR Lake Protection

Chart 1

These three conservation areas are depicted in Map A.



Map A

Rice Creek



Location: 45°29'36"N 92°28'43"W (45.494463, -92.478628)
On 155th Street 0.2 Miles North of 195th Ave Intersection



Example neighboring property



Rice Creek



Rice Creek



Google Earth

Pollution via runoff (known as **agricultural nonpoint source pollution**) is the leading source of harm to water quality for surveyed rivers and streams, the third-largest for lakes, and the second-largest for wetlands.⁴ In 2002, in the National Water Quality Inventory report to U.S. Congress, the states reported that **agricultural nonpoint source (NPS) pollution** is the leading cause of river and stream impairment and the second leading cause of impairment in lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.⁵

The Rice Creek property was obtained due to runoff pollution, including agricultural runoff, impacting Balsam Lake – and specifically entry into Little Balsam. Significant watershed restoration and protection work has been completed on the Rice Creek properties over the years following the original purchase. As examples:

- i. Restored 30 acres of crop fields to native prairie grasses. The deep roots of the prairie grasses help to stabilize soil and prevent erosion of sediment and attached nutrients to Rice Creek and ultimately to Balsam Lake. It is important that these grasses thrive and are not trampled.
- ii. The silo and barn were removed as they were no longer used. This avoids future deterioration that introduce pollutants into the soil and stream.
- iii. A sedimentation basin was constructed in 1999 to remove phosphorus directly from Rice Creek. It is an important feature that needs to be protected.

There are 15 adjacent properties to the Rice Creek conservation property with close proximity to family housing, buildings, and animals. Some buildings and homes abut the conservation property.

Stump Bay

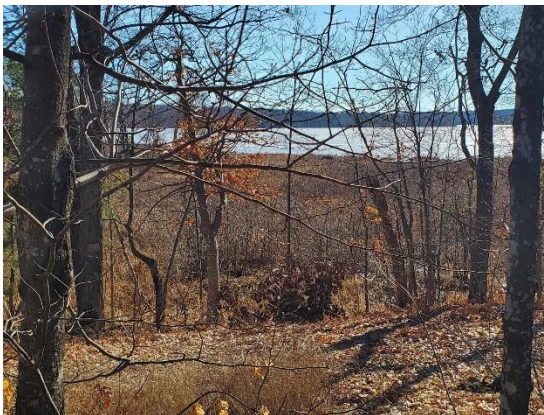


Location: 45°28'30"N 92°25'10W
(45.475173, -91.419311)
East-most location

0.3 miles north of 183rd Ave
on 127th Street

42o28'27"N 92o26'00"N
(45.4756.89, -92.432771)
West-most location

0.5 miles south of 190th Ave
on Pine Island Park Street



Google Earth

This property was viewed at the time of purchase as the best opportunity for conservation on the lake. This large bay provides great aesthetic, fish, and wildlife value to the Balsam Lake ecosystem. It is the most biologically diverse area on Balsam Lake and is a critical fish spawning area. It is home to abundant wildlife including shorebirds, birds of prey and migratory waterfowl.³ It is comprised of submerged and semi-submerged stumps, wetlands, marshes, grasses, reeds, aquatic vegetation, and trees.

There are 9 adjacent properties to Stump Bay, and close proximity to homes, cabins, and buildings. In addition, this land abuts to lake recreation.

Park Drive/Bass Bay (Deaver Property)



Location: 42°27'23"N 92°26'18"W

(45.456675, -92.438709)

0.3 miles north of HWY 8 on Park Avenue (east-most entrance of Park Avenue off HWY 8)



Google Earth

The Deaver property and Lot 77 (AKA Park Drive or Bass Bay) help to preserve an important natural habitat area identified in the DNR Sensitive Area Study. The shoreline adjacent to these properties is described as “a very unique ecosystem with an extremely diverse plant and animal community.”⁶ The properties contain one of the few areas around the lake of native forested habitat.

There are 6 adjacent properties to Park Drive/Bass Bay property and many homes, cabins, and buildings in close proximity to this small conservation property. The land abuts Balsam Lake.

Enduring Guiding Principles

This section memorializes guiding principles for the long-term management, protection, and use of these conservation lands. It is an opportunity to preserve this land in its natural state for generations, and to provide natural buffers for Balsam Lake. The guiding principles for the use of the land thoughtfully considers factors such as land and natural filtration protection, preservation of wildlife and habitat, maintaining the natural beauty, protection of important vegetation, the intent of original donor/sellers and current close-proximity property owners, and adherence to DNR and State requirements for conservancies.

Conservation Property Purpose

The primary purpose of these lands is for the generational, environmental protection of Balsam Lake. It includes defense from runoff to Balsam Lake from impervious surfaces for the protection of water quality, fisheries, wildlife, spawning, migratory habitat, ecologically sensitive areas, and the natural landscape.

Enduring Guiding Principles - BLPRD Management

Ownership and Land Care

- These are private lands owned by BLPRD, and BLPRD reserves the rights afforded to private landowners.
- Vegetation, wetlands and marshes, shoreline, terrane, natural structures, etc. should not be disturbed.
- Wildlife should be protected and treated according to Wisconsin State Law.
- There is no maintenance of the land (e.g., no trails, clearing, removal/repair of potentially dangerous conditions, etc.) for any of the properties as the intent is to leave all areas natural. As such, there are inherent risks and dangers in entering the natural landscape^{7,8}.
- BLPRD may conduct restoration from time-to-time as necessary to manage runoff to the lake.
- Land use will comply with WI state, county and local laws and ordinances.
- BLPRD complies with the DNR grant process (also see “Land Use Restrictions”).

Neighboring Properties

- There are 30 neighboring properties that are adjacent to the conservation land:
 - Rice Creek properties - 15 properties are adjacent (share a property line) to Rice Creek properties. Some of these properties have permanent homes and agricultural buildings and are inhabited year-around.
 - Stump Bay properties - 9 properties are adjacent Stump Bay with additional neighbors in close proximity with homes, cabins, and recreational buildings.
 - Park Drive - 6 properties are adjacent to Park Drive with additional neighbors in close proximity including developments with homes, cabins, and other recreational structures.

- BLPRD considers how actions will impact being a “good neighbor” when making decisions on recreational land use.
- Any users of a conservation property must also be a “good neighbor”.

Enduring Guiding Principles – Public Access and Use

It is the intent of BLPRD to provide public access to everyone (“users”) for recreational use⁸.

- Users should not take actions that prevent others from enjoying their use of the lands. Envisioned uses are nature-based outdoor recreation that does not disturb the land, such as activities where the primary purpose is the appreciation and enjoyment of nature, including hiking, wildlife viewing, and similar. Exceptions for hunting (archery only) are covered in the “Hunting Provisions” section in this document.
- Use of the land is at the sole risk of any person on the properties. It is understood that BLPRD does not maintain the land and terrane is left natural and without disturbance. BLPRD does not monitor the properties for potentially dangerous conditions or “clean up” or clear trees, rocks/boulders, brush, stumps, or any other land element.^{7,8}
- There is also risk to users from others who may be using the land. Bow/Archery hunting is permitted and BLPRD recommends that all users wear “hunter orange” apparel when using the properties.

Land Recreational Use Restrictions

- Nothing is brought onto the properties except what is carried (by walking). This includes but is not limited to a prohibition against campfires, overnight tent/camping, motorized vehicles, sled/wagons on the properties.
- When visiting the properties, nothing should be left or removed. Leave it as you found it, and only leave footprints.
- Users may not start fires or make open flames on the properties.
- Properties can only be used between dawn to dusk. There is no use before dawn, after dusk, and no “overnight” use.
- Care must be taken for wildlife if dogs are accompanying users of the land in order to protect wildlife, habitat, etc.
- Users should take extra care when accessing the Park Drive/Bass Bay property. It is a small property, steep grade, and ecologically sensitive area with many nearby homes. Ecological experts have advised BLPRD of the uniqueness on this small forested habitat.⁶
- Public Access is by foot. Therefore, no motorized vehicles of any kind are permitted, including but not limited to ATV’s, UTV’s, “dirt-bikes”, motorized equipment, and automobiles/trucks, or similar. Additionally, no biking is permitted on the properties as biking also risks natural resource damage.
- No power generators are permitted on the property.
- Except for Bow/Archery hunting as set out in section “Hunting Provisions”, no hunting, including but not limited to firearms hunting or trapping is allowed on the properties.

Land Use Exceptions

Snowmobile Path



Location: 45°29'36"W 92°28'43"W
(45.494463, -92.478628)
On 155th Street 0.2 Miles North of 195th Ave Intersection

BLPRD has granted a narrow snowmobile path (marked by the snowmobile club) on the Rice Creek property for access between Balsam Lake and the Polk County Gandy Dancer trail and local establishments. It is granted for use according to the Polk County Snowmobile Trail usage regulations. It is only for use by snowmobiles when Polk County snowmobile trails are open. It is understood that this narrow path may be open beyond dawn-to-dusk during official trail open periods.

Hunting Provisions

It is the intent of BLPRD to preserve the land, habitat, and wildlife in its natural state and ensure a quality buffer for Balsam Lake is maintained for generations. It is also the intent to provide a safe environment for public access use at all times. Finally, as a “good neighbor” to neighboring properties, consideration is given to adjacent and nearby property safety and property care. Therefore, BLPRD allows Bow/Archery hunting only with the following provisions:

- Bow/Archery hunting is allowed, as permitted, regulated, and licensed by the State of Wisconsin.
- No Firearms hunting is allowed. History has shown that homes, farms, and buildings that are close to and abut these properties have sustained damage when firearms have been used on the properties in the past.
- No trapping is allowed.
- Bow hunting is allowed with the understanding of the inherent risks to self and others as this land provides general public access dawn-to-dusk.⁸ There is likely to be recreational non-hunters using the land at the same time as hunters. BLPRD takes no responsibility for risks to hunters or other public access “non-hunting” users as this land is specifically “use at your own risk”.
- Users need to protect wildlife, as defined by Wisconsin and Federal regulations.
- Users cannot damage neighboring properties, animals, pets, livestock, persons.
- Users may not erect or leave anything on the property, including but not limited to permanent or overnight deer stands, permanent duck blinds, overnight tents, and overnight camping.
- Temporary deer stands may be used with the following restrictions:
 - Must be carried in and out of the property.
 - Cannot be left overnight.
- No motorized vehicles may be used on the properties.
- BLPRD recommends that all users wear “hunter orange” apparel when using the properties.
- All the other Guiding Principles in this document apply, including that nothing may be brought onto the property except for what is carried (by walking), and nothing should be left behind except footprints.

References

¹There was a farm on the west side of County Road I, at the SE corner of East Balsam, known as the Holin Farm which also has two ponds. This farm had cattle that grazed the farm property pond areas near East Balsam, and at the SE shoreline of East Balsam causing harmful runoff and shoreline pollution issues to East Balsam. The DNR came to an agreement with the Holin Farm owner to remove the cattle and the issue was resolved. This land was subsequently sold to CPC Development LLC. BLPRD was not involved in any of the agreements or property sales. This is not BLPRD conservation land, but is noted here to preserve history. It is an example of the diverse initiatives to protect the health of Balsam Lake for future generations to enjoy.

² Source: Polk Country WI Property Search - <https://polkcowi.wgxtreme.com/>

³ Source: Harmony Environmental BLPRD Historical Documents

⁴<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/industrial-agricultural-pollution-101#whatis>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/other/agricultural/>

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Sensitive Area Study. 1989.

⁷ My Wisconsin Woods - <https://mywisconsinwoods.org/questions/new-owners/your-liability/>

⁸ BLPRD generally permits any member of the public on its lands without individual permission granted or fees charged, and, in doing so, is protected from liability under Wis Stat. 895.52