

Douglas County Land--NCTA Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation Report

Solon Springs, Douglas County, Wisconsin
Prepared December 12, 2025 by NCTA



Prepared for: North Country Trail Association (NCTA)
229 E. Main Street,
Lowell, MI 49331

Prepared by: Paul Gagnon
Director of Trail Protection,
North Country Trail Association

Site Visit & Photos by:
Matthew Davis,
Regional Trail Coordinator for Wisconsin
North Country Trail Association

Site visit and photos collected on: 9/28/2025
Maps and completed report: 12/15/2025

Landscape Conservation Software was used in assembling the photo report attachment of this document.

Original electronic photos taken during the site visit are stored within the permanent files of the North Country Trail Association

Note: Baseline Documentation Report was not created at the time of the conservation easement creation (2016). This report shows current conditions as of 2025.

Grantee:

The North Country Trail Association
229 E. Main Street,
Lowell, MI 49331
(866)-445-3628

Grantor:

Douglas County, WI
Douglas County Courthouse
1313 Belknap Street
Superior, WI 54880
(715)-395-1341

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- B. Aerial Image Map of Easement Area
- C. Map of Topography and Wetlands
- D. Photo Report (includes photos, photo point map, and descriptions)

I. Background

On April 14 of 2016, Douglas County, Wisconsin granted NCTA a 200-foot-wide (running with the land) **“trail right of way and conservation easement”** on a forested block of County land located in Solon Springs, Wisconsin (Parcel #'s SO-0260085200 and SO-0260085300), to permanently protect and buffer a future segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail. The County land block is located directly to the south of land purchased by the National Park Service for the North Country National Scenic Trail and approximately 0.25 miles west of South Sjoberg Road.

The deeded interest was created as a conservation easement (instead of a simple right of way) to make it exempt from Wisconsin law that requires right of ways to be re-recorded every 40 years, and also to buffer the trail against certain use impacts. In addition to the conservation easement label in the first paragraph of the deed, the deed also references Wisconsin's conservation easement enabling statute. Per state statute and the description of this conservation easement, the deeded rights contained therein are perpetual and cannot be extinguished.

National and state standards for holding and stewarding conservation easements require a baseline documentation report and annual monitoring visits. However, no baseline documentation report or annual monitoring of the conservation easement was conducted until 2025. As such, this document is the first baseline documentation report for this conservation easement and reflects the current conditions of the property as they exist in 2025. Since no human-made features or disturbances were noted during this visit (other than legacy traces of logging older than 20 years), it is assumed that the condition of the property has not likely changed since 2016, except with regard to non-catastrophic active natural processes.

The September 2025 site visit conducted for this report also stands as the first conservation easement monitoring visit. Subsequent annual monitoring visits will be conducted by NCTA in the future.

The Conservation Easement, signed effective as of April 1, 2016, was recorded with the Douglas

County Recorder on August 8, 2016, Document # 883085. A map was recorded as Exhibit A of the conservation easement and shows the approximate location of the area of Douglas County land subject to the restrictions. The metes and bounds of the conservation easement area are also described in the first recital of page 1 of the conservation easement.

II. Conservation Easement Description and Purpose

“WHEREAS, the trail [North County National Scenic Trail] is intended to enhance local, regional, and national hiking and recreational opportunities for the general public as a section of the North Country National Scenic Trail, authorized by act of Congress in 1980 through Public Law 96-199 and to protect the natural, open space and environmentally significant areas associated with the trail; and

WHEREAS, the common law and Section 700.40 of the Wisconsin Statutes recognize conservation easements for the purpose of protecting recreational and scenic values for public enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, the Grantor desires and intends to provide for a right-of-way for the use by the public over and across the Property and to permit the maintenance and improvement of the trail corridor by the Grantee and/or Assigns and to restrict other uses of the Property which would be inconsistent with the purposes of this Easement.”

(Recitals on page 1 of the conservation easement)

“The Easement is established for non-motorized, passive recreational trail purposes, such as walking, hiking, jogging, running, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.” (Section 1.1 of the conservation easement).

Restrictions and affirmative rights include:

- Right of Grantee to build and maintain a non-motorized foot trail through the length of the conservation easement and make it available for public use;
- Right of Grantee (and its agents) to access the conservation easement area across contiguous land of the Grantor (the remainder of the County land not subject to the conservation easement);
- Right of Grantee to suspend public use of the trail within the easement area, including uses not compatible with a non-motorized footway;
- The use of the area subject to the conservation easement is limited to the trail footway, the Grantor’s production of agricultural crops (presumably forest products), hunting by the public, and other conservation purposes.
- A range of activities and structures are forbidden or restricted within the easement area. Buildings, signage unrelated to the permitted use of the conservation easement area, excavation or mining, the alteration of terrain or water courses, and dumping are forbidden. Grantor timber harvests are allowed only per Wisconsin laws pertaining to sustainable forestry.

See the conservation easement language for details.

(Sections II and III of the conservation easement)

III. Site Visit and Current Conditions

Review of GIS Imagery:

Evaluation of the property through current and historic aerial and/or satellite imagery available through Google Earth showed no significant observable change in the forested condition of the property in the last 20 years. Imagery does not show any observable human-made structures or disturbances within the conservation easement area.

2025 Site Visit:

A thorough site visit was conducted by Matthew Davis, NCTA's Regional Trail Coordinator for the State of Wisconsin, on September 28, 2025. Matthew took 24 photographs, GPS points, and GPS lines, and reported the following conditions in response to a set of prompts provided by NCTA's Director of Trail Protection:

- Was there any evidence of recent (<10 years) timber management in the conservation easement? If so, describe (ex. stumps, slash, skidder trails etc). If you have a sense of the timeframe of the management, provide that information.

I did not observe any evidence of recent timber management within the CE. There were several patches of recent blowdown in old aspen.

- Was there any evidence of recreational uses on the conservation easement? Describe (ex. ATV trails, hunting blinds, mountain bike trails, etc).

I did not observe any evidence of recreational use on the CE. The neighboring landowner (Davey) did have a recreational trail on his property along the border, but I did not observe any incursion onto the County parcel. There was also an existing road/trail at the south edge of the County parcel [but not within it] that appears to be used by the neighbors to the south and west (Theien & Davey).

- Were any other human-made disturbances noted? Describe (ex. dumping of debris, bulldozing, structures).

I did not observe any evidence of human-made disturbances.

- Are there any disturbances near the conservation easement boundary?

Mr. Davey had his boundary flagged and signed with No Trespassing signs. There was a trail along part of his eastern boundary.

- Describe the forest and natural aspects of the property.

The forest was a mix of oak, aspen, and pine with more conifers (spruce and fir) located to the east of the CE atop the ridge overlooking the wetland. Portions had a very thick understory of hazel brush. There was a stream channel flowing from NW to SE across the CE.

- Describe any evidence of animals that you notice.

I did not observe any animals besides squirrels, but did see numerous deer trails.

- Did you notice anything else interesting or unusual?

No. I was surprised to not see any sign of motorized recreation [within the conservation easement] by surrounding neighbors.

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the conservation easement within the County land are not marked, but a corner monument was noted at the southwest corner of the County land and private property signs indicate the presumed location of the western boundary of the County land which in part coincides with the western conservation easement boundary. No encroachments into the conservation easement from abutting private land were noted.

IV. Conclusions


As of the date of the 2025 field visit conducted for this report, no evidence of past or current deviations from the terms and purposes of the conservation easement was observed. Evidence suggests that the property has remained in a relatively unchanged natural forested state for at least the last 20 years, with only trace evidence of past logging and no other evidence of direct human impacts. Peripheral impacts and disturbances (beyond the boundaries of the conservation easement) include a private recreational trail and private property signs, but there are no substantial structures or human-made disturbances near the boundary lines and no immediate concerns of encroachment.

No trail has been built within the conservation easement. NCTA is working to secure access to land to the south of the property before constructing trail in the County land but has not abandoned its intentions to build trail within the conservation easement area. There is no time limit for NCTA to build or designate a public footway within the conservation easement area, and the conservation easement explicitly states that Grantee does not surrender any rights through inaction (*Section II.1.c of the conservation easement*).

V. Signatures and Certification

The following signatories acknowledge and certify that this Baseline Documentation Report, and all of its attachments and inclusions, is an accurate representation of the 2025 current conditions of the portion of Douglas County land subject to the 2016 Conservation Easement granted to the North Country Trail Association, as described in this report.

For Grantee:



Paul Gagnon, Director of Trail Protection

12/15/2025

Date



Matthew Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator

12/17/2025

Date

For Grantor:

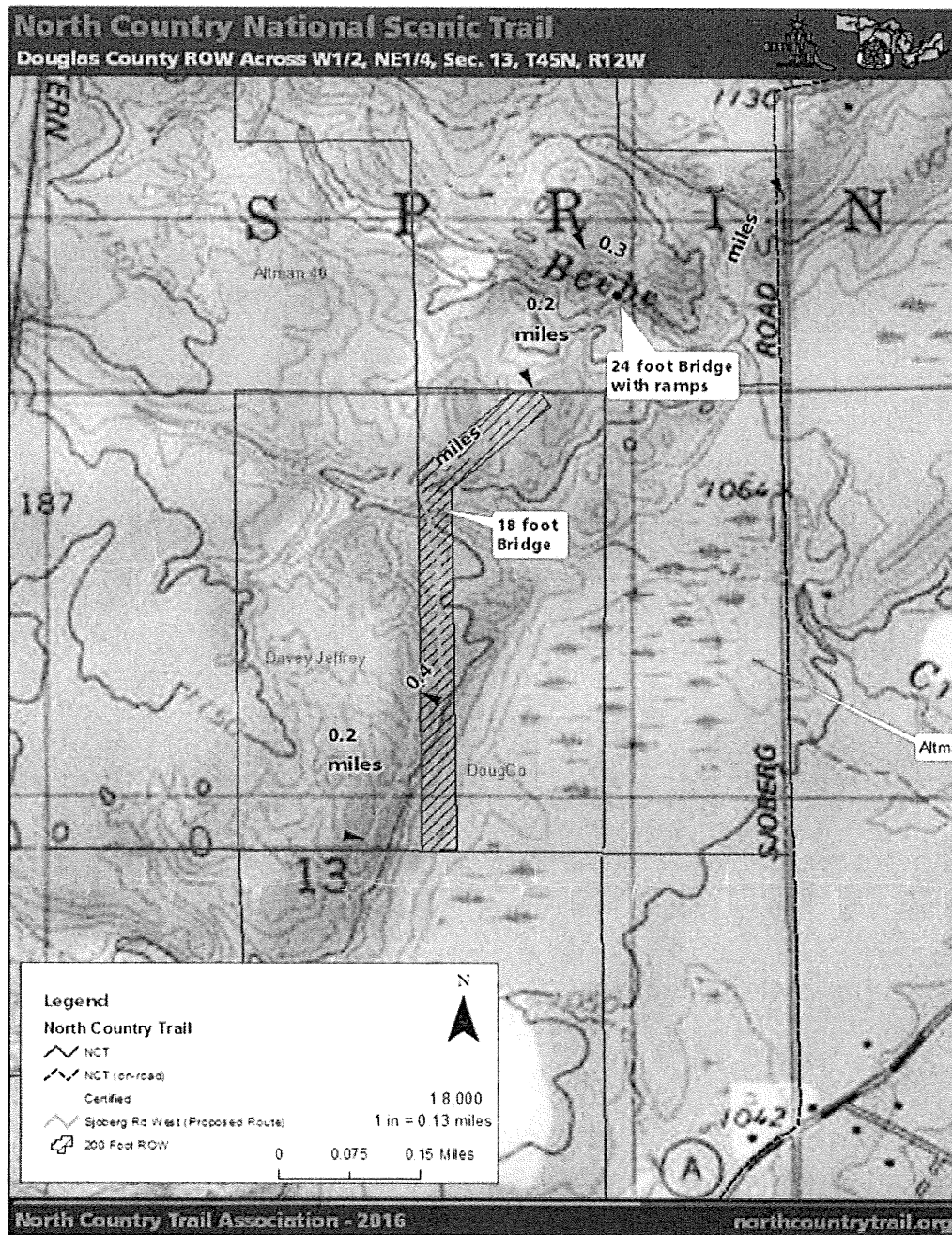
Print name & title:

Date

Print name & title:

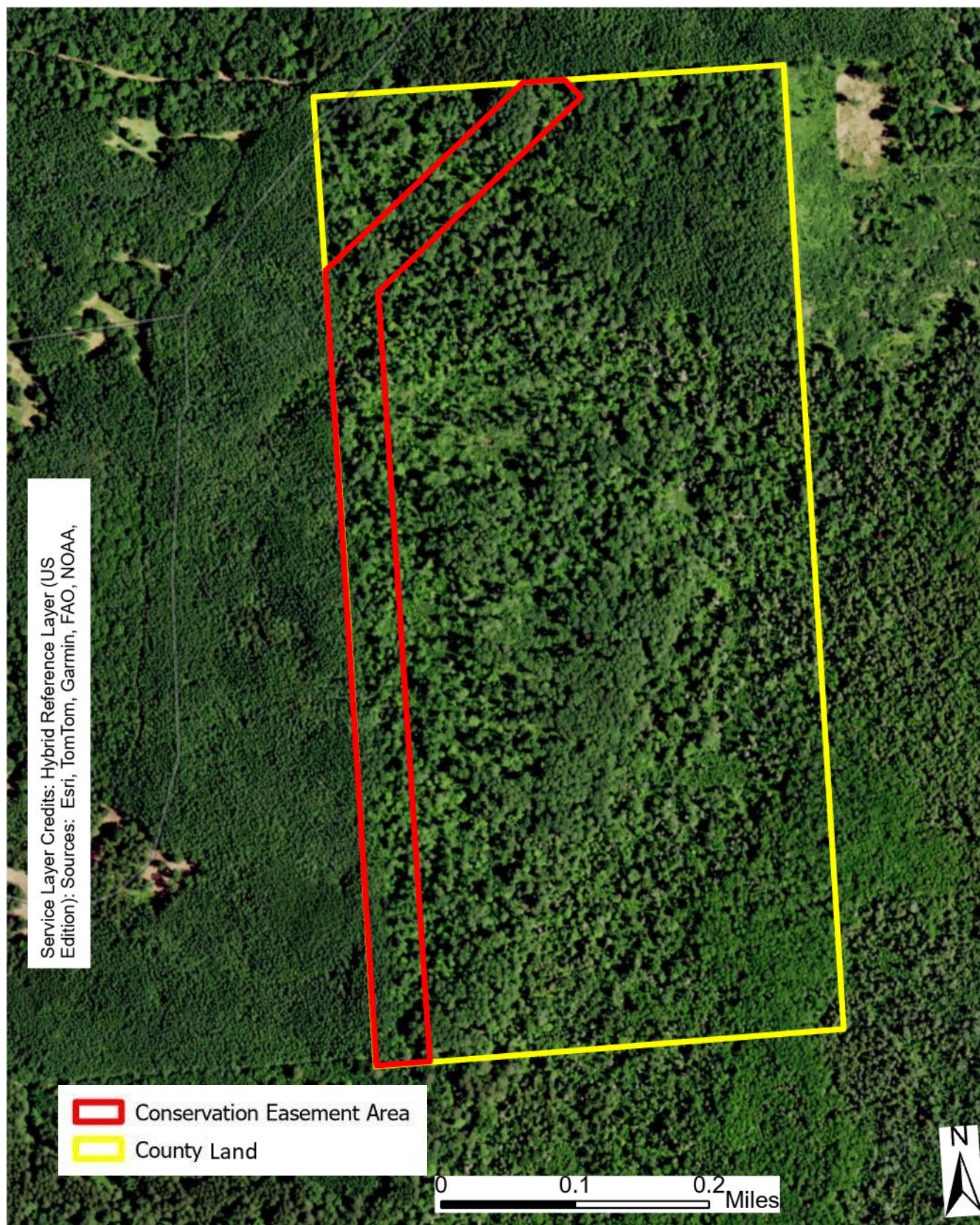
Date

ATTACHMENT A
MAP OF EASEMENT AREA



ATTACHMENT B

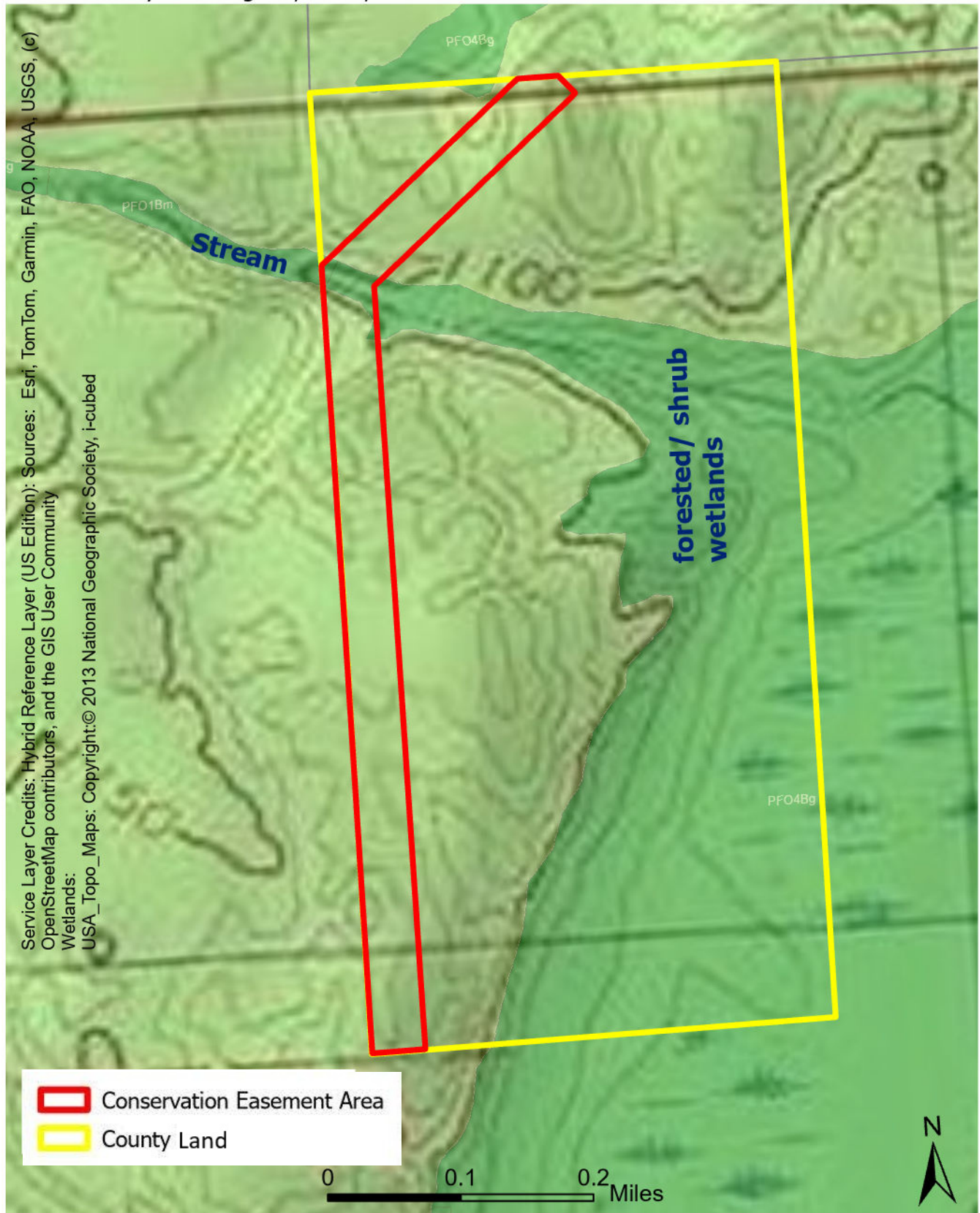
Aerial Image



ATTACHMENT C

Topography & Wetlands

Annotation by Paul Gagnon, NCTA, 2025.





Baseline Photos and Photo Map





Photopoint Table

Photopoint Name	Location	Photographer	Photo Description	Cardinal Direction	Date
Photopoint 1	46.38843, -91.80827	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Undisturbed forest	NE	9/28/2025
Photopoint 1	46.38843, -91.80827	Matthew Davis	-Photo 2: Undisturbed forest	SW	9/28/2025
Photopoint 10	46.38157, -91.81023	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Property corner post	N	9/28/2025
Photopoint 2	46.38758, -91.80942	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Undisturbed forest	S	9/28/2025
Photopoint 2	46.38758, -91.80942	Matthew Davis	-Photo 2: Undisturbed forest	NE	9/28/2025
Photopoint 2	46.38758, -91.80942	Matthew Davis	-Photo 3: Undisturbed forest	N	9/28/2025
Photopoint 2	46.38758, -91.80942	Matthew Davis	-Photo 4: Undisturbed forest	SW	9/28/2025
Photopoint 3	46.38684, -91.81042	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Forest taken from near property boundary	SE	9/28/2025
Photopoint 3	46.38684, -91.81042	Matthew Davis	-Photo 2: Looking across the boundary into private land (Private property sign at boundary)	SW	9/28/2025
Photopoint 3	46.38684, -91.81042	Matthew Davis	-Photo 3: Looking across the boundary into private land (Private property sign at boundary)	W	9/28/2025

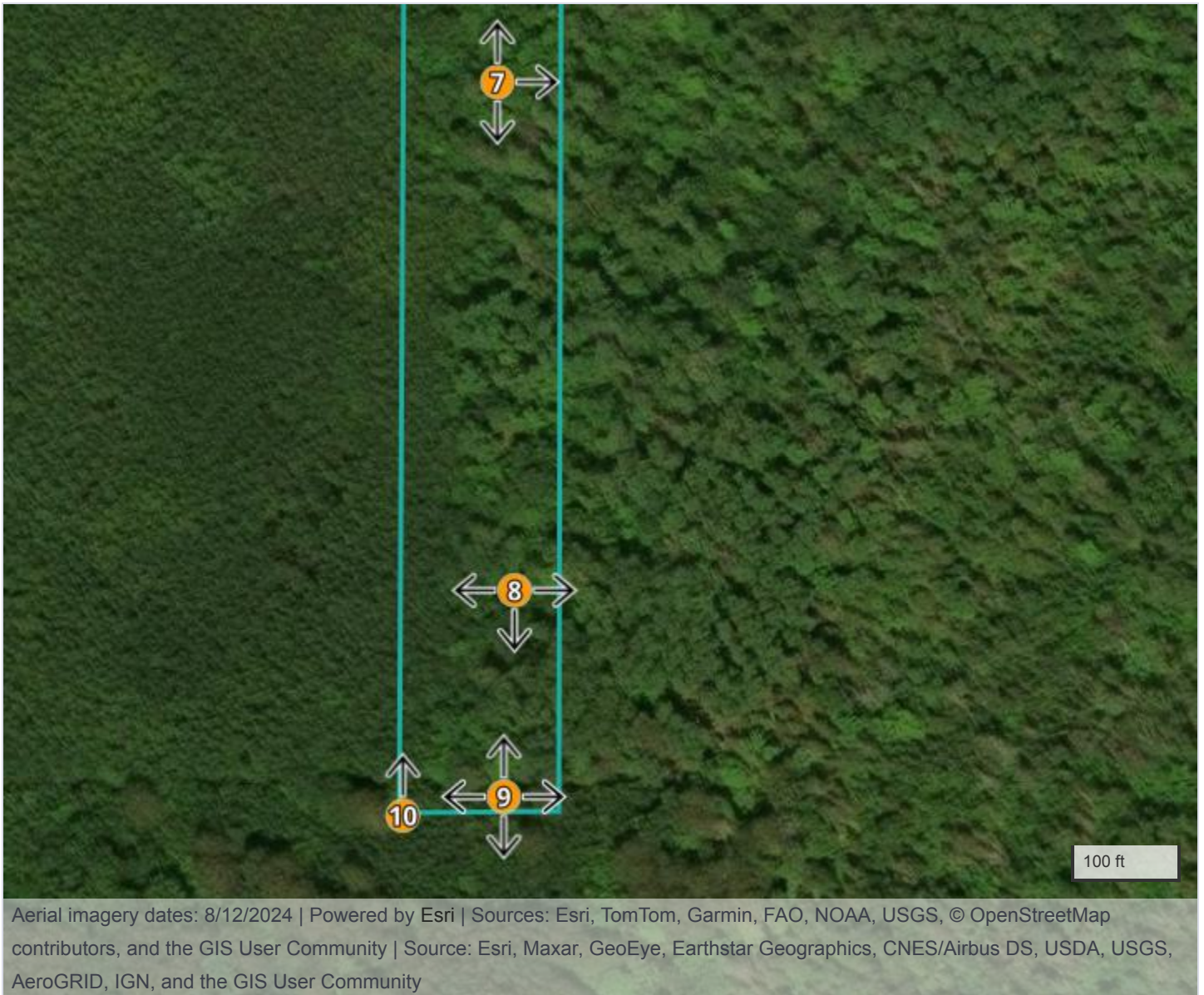
Photopoint 4	46.38649, -91.80995	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Small pocket of aspen regenerative growth in blowdown area near boundary.	E	9/28/2025
Photopoint 5	46.38619, -91.81029	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Undisturbed forest	S	9/28/2025
Photopoint 6	46.38493, -91.81028	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Old trail leading to private land	SW	9/28/2025
Photopoint 7	46.38329, -91.81012	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Undisturbed forest	N	9/28/2025
Photopoint 7	46.38329, -91.81012	Matt Davis	-Photo 2: Undisturbed forest	E	9/28/2025
Photopoint 7	46.38329, -91.81012	Matthew Davis	-Photo 3: Undisturbed forest	S	9/28/2025
Photopoint 8	46.38202, -91.81006	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Undisturbed forest	E	9/28/2025
Photopoint 8	46.38202, -91.81006	Matthew Davis	-Photo 2: Undisturbed forest	W	9/28/2025
Photopoint 8	46.38202, -91.81006	Matthew Davis	-Photo 3: Undisturbed forest	S	9/28/2025
Photopoint 9	46.3815, -91.8101	Matthew Davis	-Photo 1: Trail leading East into blowdown	E	9/28/2025
Photopoint 9	46.3815, -91.8101	Matthew Davis	-Photo 2: Trail leading West	W	9/28/2025
Photopoint 9	46.3815, -91.8101	Matthew Davis	-Photo 3: Undisturbed forest	N	9/28/2025
Photopoint 9	46.3815, -91.8101	Matthew Davis	-Photo 4: Undisturbed forest	S	9/28/2025





Photopoint Map



-  Record Boundary
-  Baseline Areas
-  Baseline Lines
-  Baseline Points

Photopoint Map



-  Record Boundary
-  Baseline Areas
-  Baseline Lines
-  Baseline Points

Site Visit Photos



Photopoint 1 - Photo 1
46.38843, -91.80827.
 IMG_0344.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing NE.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 1 - Photo 2
46.38843, -91.80827.
 IMG_0343.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing SW.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 10 - Photo 1
46.38146, -91.81046.
 IMG_0366.JPG.JPG
 Property corner post.
 Facing N.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 2 - Photo 1
46.38758, -91.80942.
 IMG_0348.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing S.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 2 - Photo 2
46.38758, -91.80942.
IMG_0347.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing NE.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 2 - Photo 3
46.38758, -91.80942.
IMG_0346.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing N.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 2 - Photo 4
46.38758, -91.80942.
 IMG_0345.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing SW.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 3 - Photo 1
46.38684, -91.81042.
 IMG_0349.JPG.JPG
 Forest taken from near property boundary.
 Facing SE.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 3 - Photo 2

46.38684, -91.81042.

IMG_0351.JPG.JPG

Looking across the boundary into private land (Private property sign at boundary).

Facing SW.

Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 3 - Photo 3

46.38684, -91.81042.

IMG_0350.JPG.JPG

Looking across the boundary into private land (Private property sign at boundary).

Facing W.

Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 4 - Photo 1

46.38649, -91.80995.

IMG_0352.JPG.JPG

Small pocket of aspen regenerative growth in blowdown area near boundary..

Facing E.

Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 5 - Photo 1

46.38619, -91.81029.

IMG_0353.JPG.JPG

Undisturbed forest.

Facing S.

Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 6 - Photo 1
46.38493, -91.81028.
IMG_0354.JPG.JPG
Old trail leading to private land.
Facing SW.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 7 - Photo 1
46.38329, -91.81012.
IMG_0357.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing N.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 7 - Photo 2
46.38329, -91.81012.
 IMG_0356.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing E.
 Taken by Matt Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 7 - Photo 3
46.38329, -91.81012.
 IMG_0355.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing S.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 8 - Photo 1
46.38202, -91.81006.
IMG_0361.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing E.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 8 - Photo 2
46.38202, -91.81006.
IMG_0359.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing W.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 8 - Photo 3
46.38202, -91.81006.
 IMG_0358.JPG.JPG
 Undisturbed forest.
 Facing S.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 9 - Photo 1
46.3815, -91.8101.
 IMG_0364.JPG.JPG
 Trail leading East into blowdown.
 Facing E.
 Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 9 - Photo 2
46.3815, -91.8101.
IMG_0362.JPG.JPG
Trail leading West.
Facing W.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 9 - Photo 3
46.3815, -91.8101.
IMG_0365.JPG.JPG
Undisturbed forest.
Facing N.
Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025



Photopoint 9 - Photo 4

46.3815, -91.8101.

IMG_0363.JPG.JPG

Undisturbed forest.

Facing S.

Taken by Matthew Davis. 9/28/2025

12/16/2025