



## AMSTERDAM DUNES PURCHASE COMPLETE

**S**heboygan County along with its partner, the Glacial Lakes Conservancy (GLC), have closed on the Amsterdam Dunes property. The 333 acre purchase will establish a Wetland Mitigation Bank and Preservation Area. The property is located along Lake Michigan in the Town of Holland and is one of the few remaining undeveloped beach shorelines between Sheboygan and Chicago. The property contains a total of seven contiguous parcels and is comprised of rare sand dunes, forest and wetlands of various types, bluffs, farmland, streams and diverse plants and wildlife. There is 1,920 feet of frontage along Lake Michigan, and a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Raptor Research Station is directly contiguous to the property.

The Sheboygan County Board approved the purchase in late July. Since that time, the county, GLC, and the sellers have been working through a number of legal matters surrounding the sale and came to terms in early September. Sheboygan County Board Chairman Roger Te

Stroete noted, “This has been a major initiative and there is still a lot of work ahead. However, the goal of being better prepared for economic development opportunities and enhancing the environment is in our sights. That’s what makes this project so unique; rarely are development and environmental enhancement mentioned in the same sentence.”

County Administrator Adam Payne negotiated the offer to purchase with American Heritage Company, for \$4.2 million. “We’ve had one curve ball thrown at us after another, but our team hung in there, and we delivered.” To be eligible for State Stewardship Funding to help offset some of the costs, the county partnered with Glacial Lakes Conservancy, Sheboygan County’s local land trust. Mary Piehl, GLC’s Executive Director noted, “the Amsterdam Dunes purchase is a great feather in the cap for all those involved; this project fits perfectly with our organization’s mission of creating a legacy of permanently protected lands in northeast Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin.”

# Sheboygan County intends to preserve the property, open it up to the public, and create a wetland mitigation bank.

Payne said with the support of the County Board's Executive Committee, he has worked, along with his team, on the proposal for the past ten months and has received positive feedback from local elected officials, environmentalists and the business community. "This project is really something special and everyone pulled together to help make it happen. I am very thankful for the county board, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Glacial Lakes Conservancy and many others for their support and assistance."

Sheboygan County Planning and Conservation Director Aaron Brault was also instrumental in the project. "We have better positioned ourselves for growth opportunities, we provide a tremendous public open space, and we protect endangered and threatened species," Brault said. "There are not many projects that can accomplish all that in one fell swoop," he added.

During a public or private construction project, the state regulates any impact on wetlands in order to protect the environment and critical habitat. However, sometimes as a practical matter impacting wetlands is necessary and in the public's best interest. In these situations, the WDNR and US Army Corps of Engineers

(Corps) will allow a public or private entity to replace or mitigate the impacted wetland, generally on a ratio of 1 to 1.5. In other words, for every acre of wetland a public or private project disturbs, another acre and one half of wetland must be created or restored to replace it.

If a project sponsor does not have the ability to create or restore a wetland, they can purchase credits on the open market from a wetland mitigation bank. A wetland mitigation bank is an area that at one time was a wetland, likely drained for agricultural use, and is now restored to a wetland per state and federal requirements.

Sheboygan County intends to preserve the property, open it up to the public, and create a wetland mitigation bank. Next steps for the county are to work with the WDNR and Corps to finalize the mitigation bank, continue to work with the WDNR and GLC on stewardship portion of the project, pursue grants to help offset the costs, and establish a local advisory committee to gather input from the public on what they want to see at their new public open space. 📄

*For more information, please contact Roger Te Stroete or Adam Payne at 920.459.3103.*