

LOCATION

The Van Loon Wildlife Area (McGilvary Bottoms to local residents) is located in the northwest corner of La Crosse County, about twelve miles north of the city of La Crosse. The project extends five miles along the Black River, from Hunter's Bridge on the north to the village of New Amsterdam on the south. It is accessible via U. S. Highway 53 from the north and south.

THE PAST

Scoured by centuries of floods, this project is a typical western Wisconsin bottomland hardwood area, interlaced with wild hay meadows and sloughs. The upper Cambrian sandstone bedrock is covered by deep alluvial deposits of sand and silt carried down by streams and deposited in times of overflow. Even the highest sandbars are inundated when the river is extremely high.

Because of the eccentricities of the Black River, early settlers had little use for the "bottoms", except for lumbering and harvesting wild hay. It was noted at an early date, however, that the timber was fast growing, a trait which benefited the local economy.

During the period from the end of the Civil War to about 1897, approximately 4,664,799,560 feet of logs and lumber were floated through this area from the pine country up-river. It is said that Black River logging had more to do with the prosperity of the city of La Crosse than anything else.

By the early 1900's, the logging boom was just about over and the bottoms no longer echoed the lumberjack's call. Deer had been all but exterminated through relentless hunting and the tinkle of the cowbell became a familiar sound.

In the mid-1940's, as a result of special small game license fee legislation, the McGillvary Bottoms area was leased as a public hunting ground. In 1958, a 2,000-acre acquisition project was set up in the north half of the area and in 1960, an additional 2,000 acres were earmarked for purchase, extending the project to the village of New Amsterdam.

TODAY

Two-thirds of this 4,000-acre wildlife project are under state ownership, with the balance covered by public hunting and fishing ground lease.

The project is used primarily for hunting, with ducks and deer being the most popular targets. Other game species available are squirrels,

raccoon, and ruffed grouse. Fishing (especially catfish) rates next in popularity, followed by trapping, hiking, and bird-and wild flower-study.

A relatively high beaver population is maintained on the project through the use of a flexible closed area program. Impoundments formed by beaver dams are proving to be very beneficial to waterfowl.

Public access is good, with the most popular walk-in entry points being from State Highway 93 and from the so-called seven-bridges road which runs from east to west through the center of the area from County Highway "XX".

A boat launching facility and parking lot is located at the main channel (west channel) bridge on highway 93 and an overnight camping spot for canoeists can be found along the south bank of the river, about two-thirds of a mile downstream from the bridge on U. S. Highway 53.

TOMORROW

Long-range plans call for this area to remain wild and unspoiled forever. No new access roads will be built and habitat improvement (impoundments, ponds, and ditches) will be directed primarily at ducks and furbearers.

A five-mile hiking trail and an improved overnight canoe camping area will be built when acquisition is complete and improved parking lots will be added as needed.

Forestry practices will be aimed at improving ruffed grouse and deer habitat as well as timber.

GENERAL

Camping, other than overnight canoe stops, is discouraged as there are no toilet facilities or drinking water available. Actually only a small part of the project is suitable for this kind of activity.

Van Loon visitors, be they hunters, fishermen, trappers, or hikers, are urged to observe all signs and to respect the rights of others. Litter should be taken home when no container is available and special care should be exercised when building fires or when smoking.

With a sound program of management, the Van Loon Wildlife Area will provide exciting outdoor recreation for years to come.

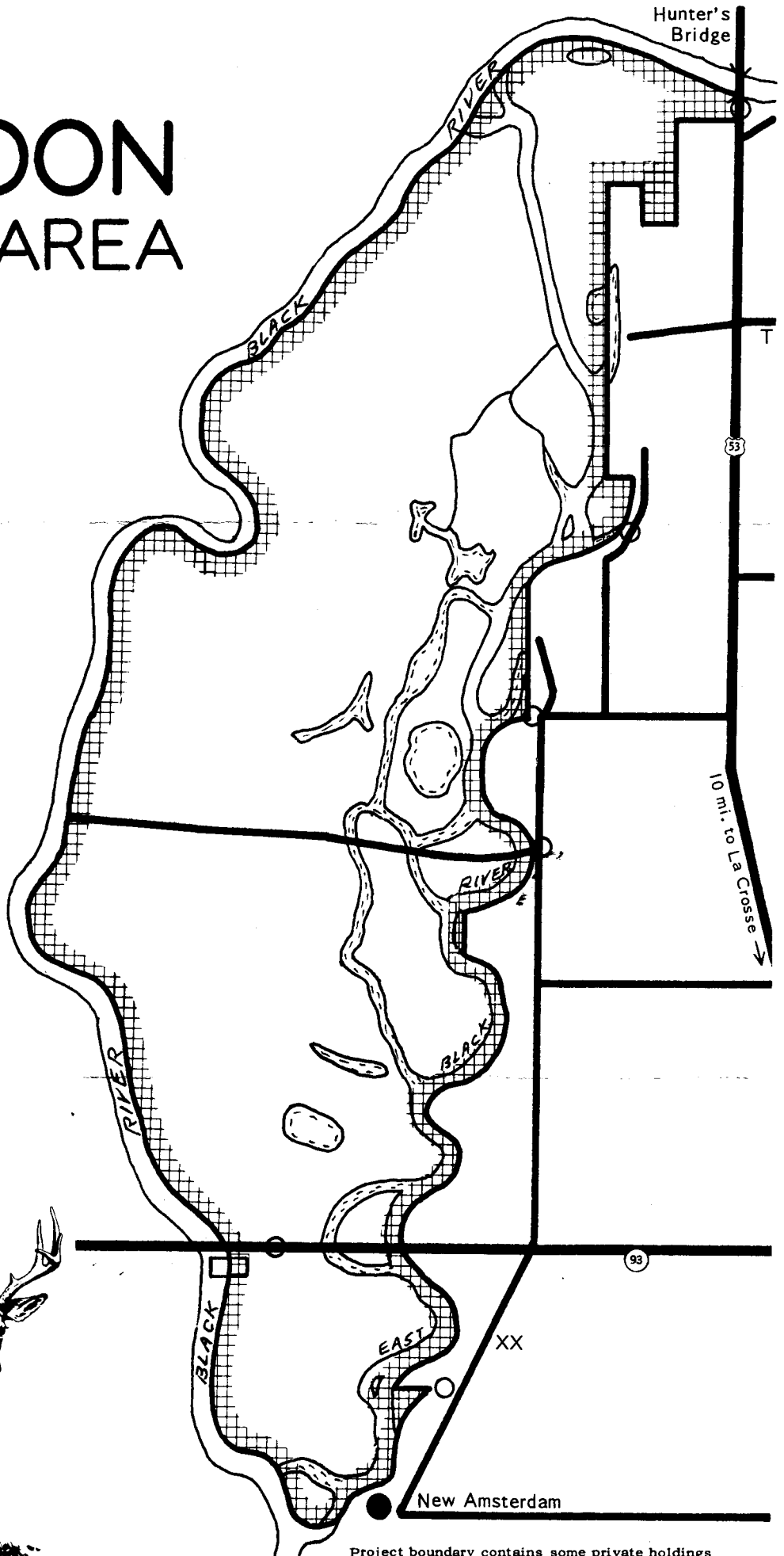
VAN LOON WILDLIFE AREA








STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Folder Gm 16-68

VAN LOON WILDLIFE AREA



LEGEND

-  Project Boundary
-  Ponds and Sloughs
-  Walk-in Access Sites
-  Boat Launching Site
-  Canoeing Overnight Camp

Scale 0 1 Mile



Project boundary contains some private holdings