



May 11, 2022

Dane County Park Commission Renaming Waakikižu Natural Resource Area

In 2007, Dane County purchased 172 acres in the town of Westport for the North Mendota Natural Resource Area (NRA). More than a mile of Six-Mile Creek runs through the property and restoring the property along the creek helps to reduce sedimentation and erosion and enhance the water quality of creek, which flows south into Lake Mendota. Along with protecting the natural habitat, the property will provide a future link for the proposed North Mendota Bicycle Trail, connecting Schumacher Farm County Park, Governor Nelson State Park and the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

The area's County Board Supervisor Timothy Kiefer attended a Park Commission meeting in 2021 with a request to work with the Waunakee Community Middle School to have students come up with names for North Mendota NRA. The Park Commission supported this project, which was incorporated in the student's curriculum for the 2021-2022 school year.

Through the project, the students learned about the history of the property, took field trips on-site and eventually narrowed down to a list of five naming options, all Ho-Chunk language words. The students worked with representatives of the Ho-Chunk Nation. Names were subject to veto by the Parks Director and none were vetoed.

The five options are listed below with the meaning of each word is in parenthesis behind the name.

- Wažookj or Honjhe Natural Resource Area (family)
- Woogųs Natural Resource Area (nature)
- Wažoowe Natural Resource Area (adventure)
- Waakikižu Natural Resource Area (community - literally means togetherness)
- Caaxšepn Natural Resource Area (eagle)

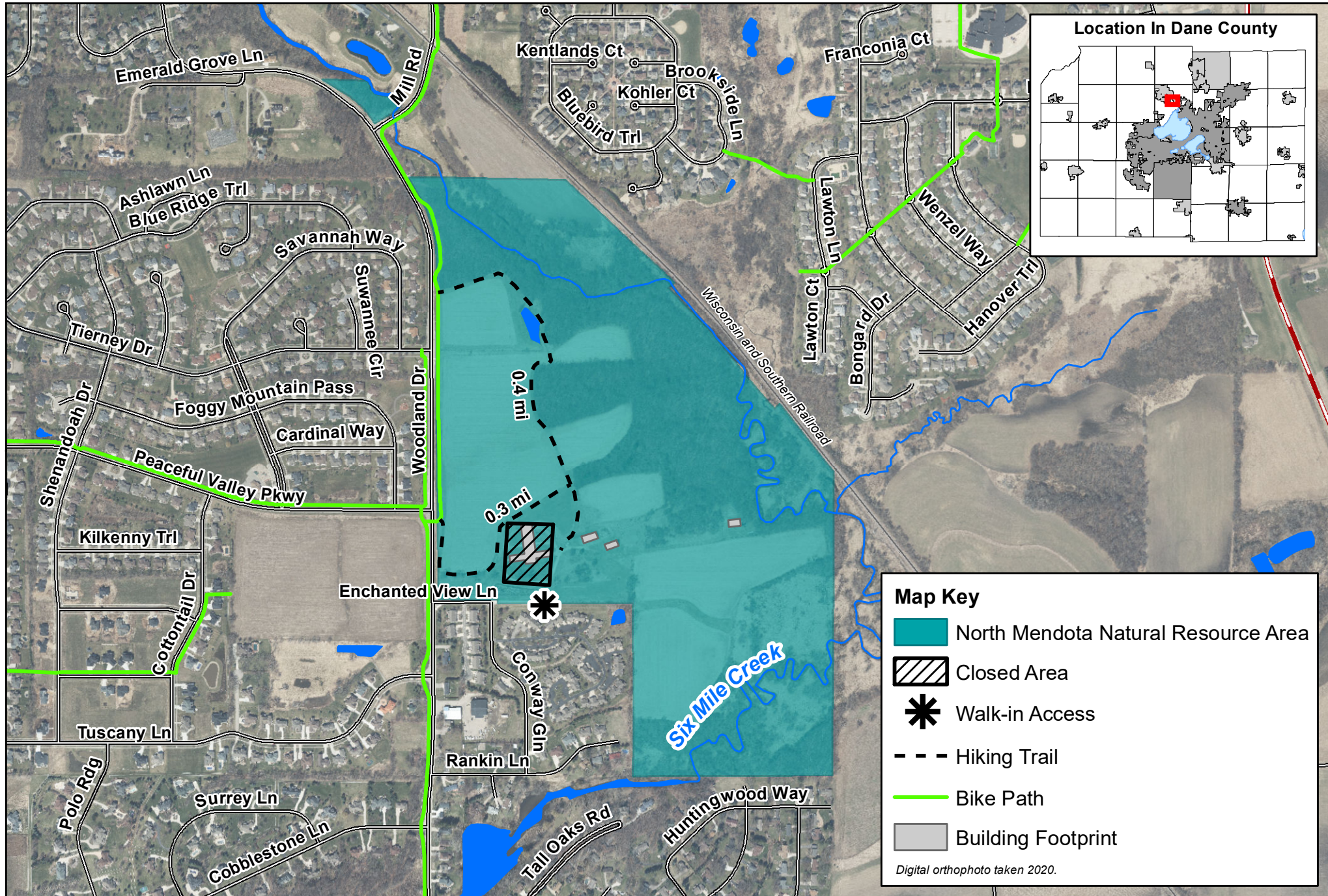
Finally, the names were voted on by the middle school students. The winner of the middle school election was Waakikižu. So the official new name will be Waakikižu Natural Resource Area, pending formal approval by the Park Commission and County Board of Supervisors.

The Park Commission would like to thank the teachers and students at the Waunakee Community Middle School for their time and commitment to this unique civics project.

North Mendota Natural Resource Area - 170 Acres

5656 Enchanted View Ln.
Waunakee WI 53597

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Map Key

- North Mendota Natural Resource Area
- Closed Area
- Walk-in Access
- Hiking Trail
- Bike Path
- Building Footprint

Digital orthophoto taken 2020.