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JESSICA HOLDMAN PHOTOS, TRIBUNE

A portion of Painted Woods Creek snakes through new property being added to the Painted Woods Wildlife Management Area south of Washburn. The expansion was dedicated in a ceremony held at the site Wednesday.

More land to manage

Washburn residents celebrate expansion of Painted Woods

JESSICA HOLDMAN
Bismarck Tribune

Washburn area residents celebrated Wednesday the expansion of a local wildlife management area and the flood control measures that come with it.

When local officials brought forth the proposed expansion of the Painted Woods Wildlife Management Area south of town, North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring said it was “something agriculture could really get behind,” because it would mitigate flooding of nearby cropland.

“We’ve probably never had one that had this much local support,” said Keith Trego, executive director of the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust.

Flood control expected to come with the management area’s expansion brought local officials, farmers and ranchers out in support of the project a little over a year ago.

“Our initial involvement was to protect private property,” said McLean County Commissioner Steve Lee.

The added wildlife habitat is a secondary benefit.

“It’s a wonderful dual-purpose



Local farmer Bob Landgren sold his property for the expansion of the Painted Woods Wildlife Management Area, helping his neighbors by allowing the state to establish flood control measures along with enhancing wildlife habitat.

project,” he said.

Expansion of the wildlife area was just the first step. Next is building that flood control.

For the past six to eight years, backed-up water flowing into Painted Woods Lake has been flooding adjacent farmland. The problem is caused by years of silt build up and 10- to 12-foot-tall cattails restricting drainage into the lake.

McLean County has spent money trying to mitigate damage to neighboring lands but, for a long-term solution, the county and several

state and wildlife advocacy group partners purchased the 255 acres of nearby land to build drainage infrastructure, including a dredge along the eastern part of the property, cattail control and completion of the existing weir system.

North Dakota Game and Fish Director Terry Steinwand, whose department will manage the land, is anxious to tackle the flood control as soon as possible. He said his department will chip in where it can. Money will also be sought from the North Dakota State Water Commission.



PROVIDED

The existing Painted Woods Wildlife Management Area is depicted in red. The orange portion of the map shows the management area’s expansion.

“A lot of it comes down to funding,” he said.

On the wildlife side, Game and Fish plans to backfill the newly incorporated area of Painted Woods Creek with more water to create a community fishery, stocking it with trout and bluegill. Steinwand said the department will also use a portion of a \$10,000 donation for pheasant food plots there.

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Senator requests a special prosecutor

Heitkamp wants to ensure an impartial election investigation

JOHN HAGEMAN
Forum News Service

North Dakota Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp called for the appointment of a special prosecutor to ensure an impartial investigation into Russian meddling in last year’s presidential election following the firing of FBI Director James Comey on Tuesday.

Heitkamp’s statement, issued Wednesday morning, came hours after President Donald Trump abruptly fired Comey. The administration cited Comey’s handling of the investigation into Hillary Clinton’s emails, but the timing of the firing raised eyebrows because the FBI has been investigating whether there was any coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia.

“The president firing Director Comey raises far more questions than it answers,” Heitkamp said in the statement.

Heitkamp said Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ actions were “deeply troubling and unprecedented” because after he had “recused himself from the investigation following public pressure, he then recommended the president fire the person overseeing that same investigation.”

“Extreme partisanship is one of the greatest dangers our country faces, and we cannot let this investigation succumb to partisan division or Russian attempts to take advantage of us,” Heitkamp said.

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Comey was pushing for tougher probe

Former FBI director requested additional resources before firing

JULIE PACE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Days before he was fired by President Donald Trump, FBI Director James Comey requested more resources to pursue his investigation into Russia’s election meddling and the possible involvement of Trump associates, U.S. officials said Wednesday, fueling concerns that Trump was trying to undermine a probe that could threaten his presidency.

It was unclear whether word of the Comey request, put to deputy



Comey

Heitkamp casts key vote in flaring repeal

JESSICA HOLDMAN
Bismarck Tribune

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., citing concerns over waste and tribal sovereignty, cast what many considered a surprise deciding vote against repealing rules that curb flaring of methane on federal and tribal lands.

Heitkamp, joined by Sen. Joe Manchin III, D-W.V., in a letter to U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, expressed favor in pausing enforcement and remanding the rule back for changes rather than repeal.

“This rule is not perfect, which is why I’m encouraging the administration to work with industry,

landowners and tribes to make the changes necessary so the rule is more effective and efficient rather than overturn it,” Heitkamp said in a statement.

Three Affiliated Tribes Tribal Chairman Mark Fox said the tribe has expressed conditional support for the flaring rule to date, but would

like to see changes so tribal lands are not lumped in with federal ones.

“I think we could do it better. Every week, we’re working with (industry.) We know how to take care of it ourselves,” said Fox, adding the the tribe would have favored repeal.

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DISCOVER DIGITAL



■ **By the numbers:** North Dakota’s homeless population
■ **Photos:** Behind the scenes with New York City’s high-rise rescue team

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