



# *Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet*



## **2008 CAPITAL BUDGET Minnesota Forests for the Future (Forest Land Easements) Governor's Recommendation: \$9,000,000**

### **It is needed because**

Forest land ownership in northern Minnesota is a checkerboard of private, state, county, federal and tribal lands. Large forest tracts owned by timber and mining companies have traditionally provided wildlife habitat, public recreation access, and climate change mitigation while also producing timber.

Development in Minnesota's forested region is increasing at rapid rates. Nearly one million acres of large, mostly undeveloped private industrial forest lands are currently at risk of being sold, subdivided, and developed. Since 1999, more than 400,000 acres of Minnesota industrial forest land have been sold to Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). TIMOs and REITs may turn around and sell these larger tracts of intact forests into smaller parcels. Smaller parcels fragment Minnesota's forests, making these lands less valuable for wildlife, less available and more difficult to manage for timber production, and less accessible to the public for recreational uses.

Forest easements are a cost-effective tool for retaining forest lands in private ownership and maintaining important recreational opportunities, wood products production, fish and wildlife habitat, and climate change mitigation by capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This request supports Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group priority AFW-6: Forest Protection – Reduced Clearing and Conversion to Non-Forest Cover.

### **Major project elements**

This funding will provide for easement acquisition or acquisition of interests in lands by fee title, gift, or donation. These efforts will prevent development and conversion of forest land, provide forest values in perpetuity, and allow landowners to continue to manage forests sustainably for timber and other products while retaining land in private ownership.

This funding allows the state to take advantage of key conservation opportunities to conserve the many benefits of working forests, before these opportunities are lost to development.

### **Priority setting**

This proposal will provide state funding to protect private forest lands throughout the state using forest easements or acquisition by fee title, gift, or donation with a focus on the largest, most intact blocks found in northern Minnesota. Opportunities will be pursued with willing land owners to protect contiguous blocks of forest land interspersed with state forest land.

Project selection is based on the following criteria:

- ◆ Project size,
- ◆ Strategic location,
- ◆ Recreational opportunities,
- ◆ Timber and other economic benefits,
- ◆ Ecological and habitat values, and
- ◆ Other considerations.

### **Project locations**

Project locations will be throughout the state wherever larger, intact blocks of forest exist. (Projects using federal funds will be located within Forest Legacy areas according to Minnesota's Forest Legacy Assessment of Need as approved by the U.S. Forest Service.)

### **Key measures and outcomes**

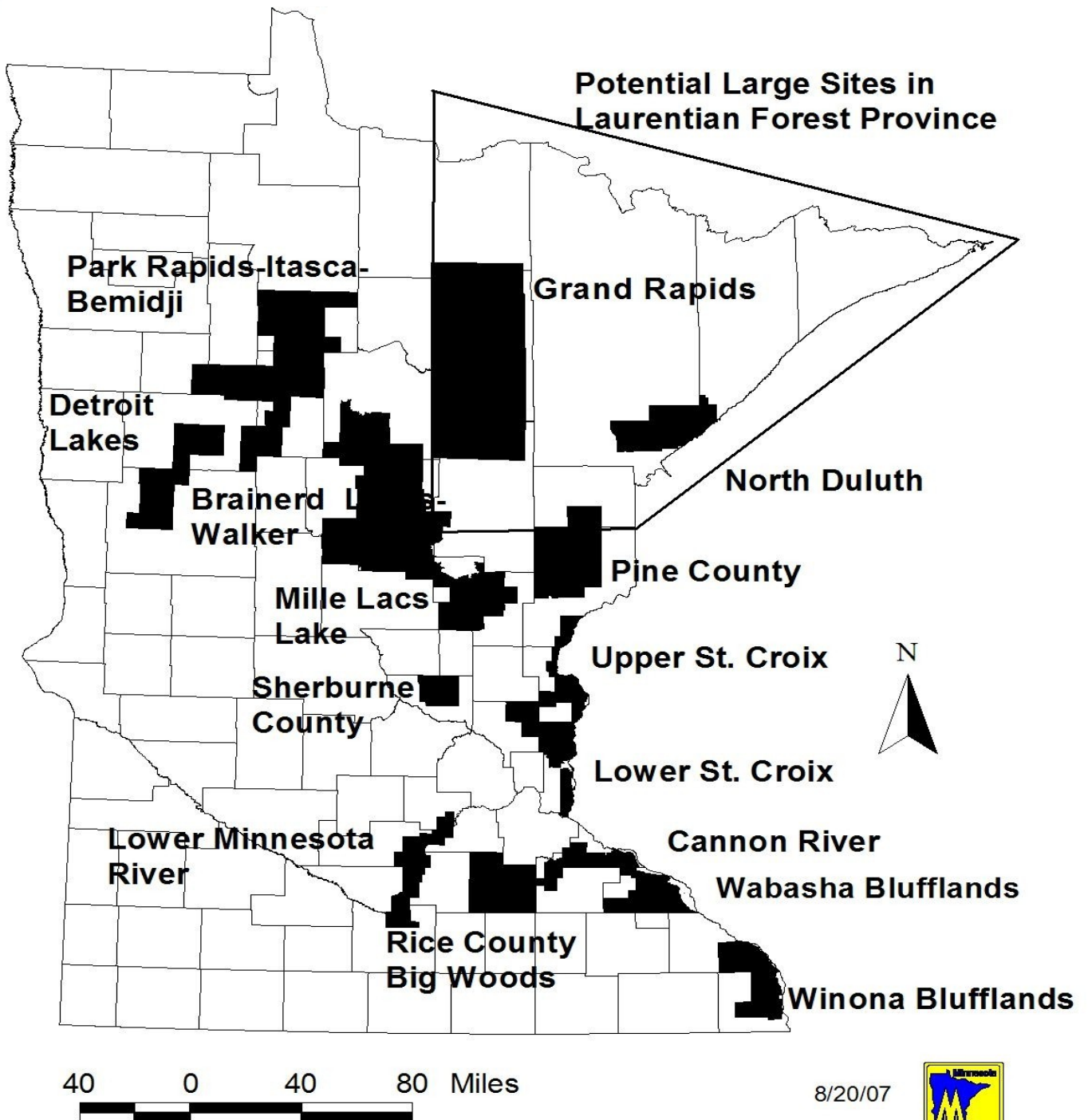
- ◆ Working forests are maintained, ensuring timber supply and forest industry jobs, public access for recreation, and ecological services (habitat, water quality, and long-term carbon storage).
- ◆ Acquisition of permanent easements on 40,000–80,000 acres of private forest lands in priority areas (the target range accommodates varied cost per acre forest land acquired due to amenities such as lakeshore properties).

## Forest Land Easements

DNR PROJECT PRIORITIES AS OF JANUARY 2008

### MINNESOTA FEDERAL FOREST LEGACY AREAS

Minnesota Forests for the Future projects will be located throughout the state wherever larger, intact blocks of forest exist. Federal funds are limited to the areas on this map.



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