

# BRUSHLAND HABITAT CONSERVATION

**INDICATOR:** Number of landscapes designated as priority open landscape areas

## WHY IS THIS INDICATOR IMPORTANT?

Brushlands, which provide critical wildlife habitat, were once a conspicuous feature of Minnesota. At the time of European settlement, up to 11.3 million acres of the state's forest and transition areas were vegetated with brushy prairie, oak openings and barrens, jack pine barrens and openings, conifer bogs and swamps, and open muskeg. During settlement, agriculture and logging created additional brushland habitats. Since then, however, brushlands have declined in quantity and quality, and wildlife populations that depend on them have declined as well. For example, hunter harvest of sharp-tailed grouse decreased from more than 15,000 in 1949 to some 5,000 in 1995; in 1999, the Minnesota population of sharp-tailed grouse was 70 percent below 1980 levels.

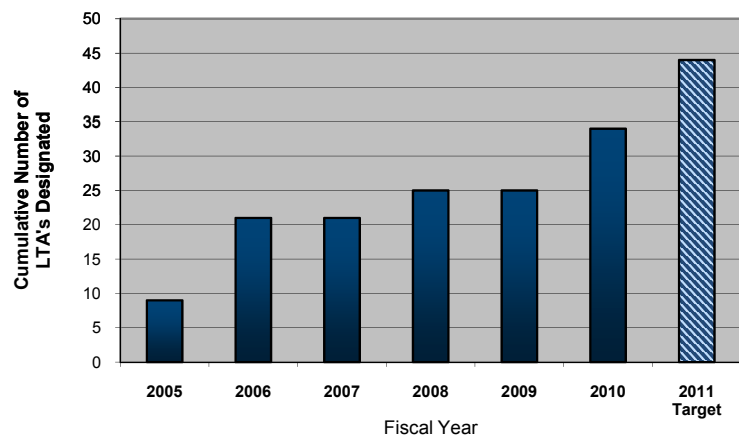
## WHAT IS DNR DOING?

DNR has completed a wildlife assessment of open landscapes in the transition and forested regions of northern and central Minnesota using the Ecological Classification System as a framework and land type associations (LTAs) as the unit for assessment. This assessment is now being used in our Subsection Forest Resources Management Plan development process. In addition to nine LTAs already designated as priority open landscape areas in the Mille Lacs subsection plan, in 2006 DNR designated three LTAs as part of the Chippewa Plains/ Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains subsection planning process. In 2011 we anticipate five LTA designations for the Anoka Sandplains and five for the Hardwood Hills SFRMPs. DNR will focus brushland management and funding within these LTAs to maintain them as open landscape areas. DNR will also use forest management activities to enhance brushland within these areas.

**TARGET:** Designate 44 LTAs across the forest and transition zones of Minnesota as priority open landscape areas during DNR's Subsection Forest Resources Management Plan development process.

This target will help enhance conservation of brushland habitat and associated wildlife populations.

Land Type Associations (LTAs) Designated as Open Landscapes



Land Type Associations (LTAs) designated as open landscapes. DNR's target is to designate 44 LTAs across the forest and transition zones of Minnesota as priority open landscape areas.



The once-thriving sharp-tailed grouse population has declined sharply in the last 50 years. The reason for this has been the loss of grassland and brushland habitats. Designating priority open landscape areas helps enhance brushland habitat conservation and wildlife populations.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan process at: [www.mndnr.gov/forestry/subsection/index.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/forestry/subsection/index.html)
- Sharp-tailed grouse at: [www.mndnr.gov/snapshots/birds/sharptailedgrouse.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/snapshots/birds/sharptailedgrouse.html)