

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

INDICATOR: Acres and number of conservation easements held by DNR and regularly monitored

WHY IS THIS INDICATOR IMPORTANT?

DNR uses conservation easements to protect natural lands, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and conserve resources for current and future generations. Conservation easements preserve private ownership and compatible private uses of the land while helping DNR achieve specific conservation goals.

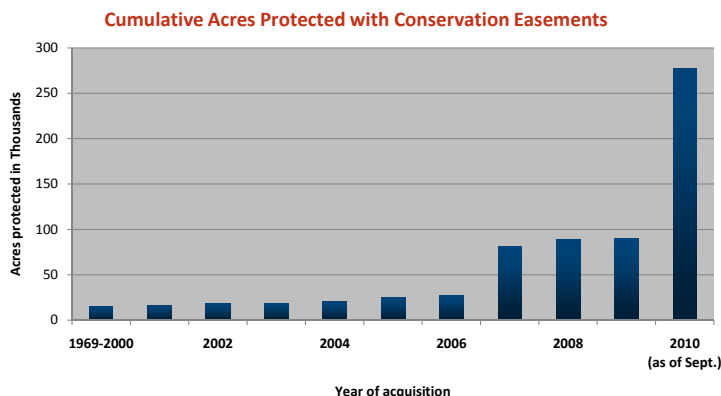
DNR has used conservation easements for more than 30 years. Some easements protect rare natural communities or provide access to trout streams. Others protect working forests. Development of baseline property reports, monitoring of compliance with easement terms, and regular communication with landowners are essential to ensure that conservation values remain protected.

WHAT IS DNR DOING?

DNR continues to acquire conservation easements on working forests. These easements help insure that forest products and public recreation are available in the future. In 2008, DNR began an agencywide inventory and review of all DNR conservation easements. Computer records for each easement are being updated and a land records system will help us document and track conservation easements.

DNR is developing agencywide standards for conservation easement monitoring. In FY 2008, DNR monitored approximately 4.5% of its easements for compliance with easement terms according to the new agencywide standards. This increased to approximately 8.6% in FY 2009 and will again increase in FY 2010. A clear standard for issue resolution and enforcement will be developed to protect the conservation values of, and the public's investment in, DNR easements.

TARGET: Set schedules to regularly monitor all DNR-held conservation easements for compliance with easement terms by June 30, 2011. Baseline property reports, a precondition for effective easement monitoring, are currently prepared for all new easements at the time of acquisition. We will collect baseline report data for older easements during upcoming monitoring visits.



Conservation easements are one tool DNR uses to achieve conservation goals without purchasing the property outright. The completion of the Upper Mississippi Forest Project accounts for the large increase in 2010. Data displayed here were compiled from DNR Land Records as of Sept. 2010 and are subject to change.



The 51,000 acre Koochiching-Washington forest conservation easement protects the economic, recreational, and ecological benefits of a large working forest. It is responsible for the large 2007 increase in conservation easement acres shown in the graph above.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Minnesota Forests for the Future Program: mndnr.gov/forestlegacy/mff
- Minimum Standards for Conservation Easements Report: http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/lands_minerals/conservation_easements_minimum_standards.pdf