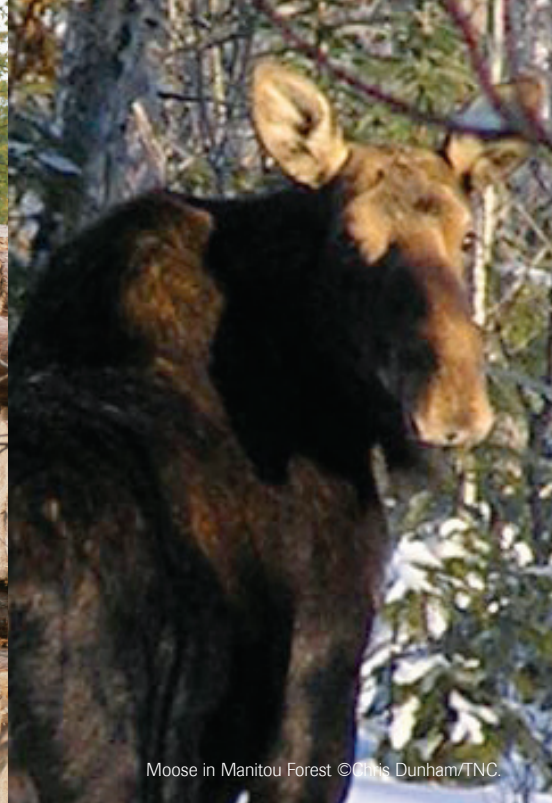




Logger in Itasca County © John Gregor/Coldsnap Photography



Moose in Manitou Forest ©Chris Dunham/TNC.

Minnesota Forest Legacy

Habitat, Jobs and Recreation for Future Generations

Minnesota has an urgent window of opportunity to conserve our northwoods way of life—to protect wildlife habitat, forest industry jobs and public recreation access.

The Risk: Permanent Loss of Minnesota Forests

Traditionally, timber companies owned and managed lands for a century or more and were committed to stewardship. Across the United States, and now in Minnesota, the shifting economics of the forest products industry and escalating real estate prices have forced unprecedented changes in forestland ownership.

- Forestland is now far more valuable as a short-term development investment than as a long-term source of timber to industrial owners.

- Northern Minnesota forestland prices have jumped a staggering 10 to 25 percent annually since 2000.
- From 1980 to 2000, housing density in the state increased 605 percent for seasonal homes.
- Since 1999, more than 400,000 acres (30 percent) of Minnesota's industrial forestland have been sold. Much of this land is being subdivided and developed. These losses are permanent.
- Another 120,000 acres have been identified as potentially up for sale.
- One million acres of Minnesota industrial forestland are at risk.

The Impact: Loss of Habitat, Jobs and Recreation

The fragmentation of industrial forestland ownership is among the greatest threats faced by Minnesota wildlife and it further threatens timber-related jobs and public access.

- More than 120 species of birds rely on the northern forest for habitat, and wide-ranging species such as moose, wolf and lynx are dependent on large tracts of unfragmented forestland.
- 42,000 people have jobs that depend on Minnesota forest industries, which generate \$2 billion in annual wages.
- Industrial forestland has traditionally been open to a variety of public recreation uses such as snowmobiling, hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, skiing and berry picking. Now, more than ever, it is important to protect these lands for Minnesotans to enjoy.





Superior Hiking Trail © Tom Duffus

**The Solution:
Forestland Conservation**

In 2006, the state legislature appropriated \$75 million for forest conservation easements that will protect about 50,000 acres from development. This initial funding is significant, but only the beginning of a long-term effort to conserve roughly half of the 1 million acres of industrial forestland that are at risk in our state.

More than \$50 million in potential projects covering more than 200,000 acres are likely to develop in the next two to three years. Significant state funds are needed to complete these conservation projects.

Minnesota needs to act now or lose a considerable part of its forest heritage forever. With rapid subdivision and escalating land prices, these forestlands may be lost for conservation purposes in as little as 10 years.

Forest Legacy

- Established in 1990 as part of the Farm Bill.
- Works in partnership with states and private landowners to identify and protect ecologically important forests that are threatened by development.
- Since limited federal and private funding is available for forest conservation easements, the State of Minnesota has developed its own Forest Legacy program and is taking the lead on funding most projects.

The working forest easements:

- Are voluntary land protection agreements that restrict development while ensuring ecological diversity, sustainable timber management and public access.
- Keep forestlands working to produce wood and fiber to benefit state and local economies.
- Keep the property in private hands and generating property taxes.
- Have protected millions of acres of wildlife habitat, working lands and open space throughout the United States.

**Example:
Lake County Manitou Project**

In 2006, more than 6,200 acres of forestland north of Silver Bay in Lake County were conserved through an agreement between Lake County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy.

- This project is an outstanding example of how state and local governments can partner with private conservation organizations to achieve win-win accomplishments.
- The Conservation Fund sold the land to Lake County, which now manages it for wildlife habitat, forest products and public recreation.
- The state will hold the conservation easement that was partially funded by The Nature Conservancy.



Hunter at Sugar Hills © John Gregor/Coldsnap Photography

Minnesota Forest Legacy Partnership: Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Forest Industries, Inc., The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, The Trust for Public Land and Minnesota Deer Hunters Association.