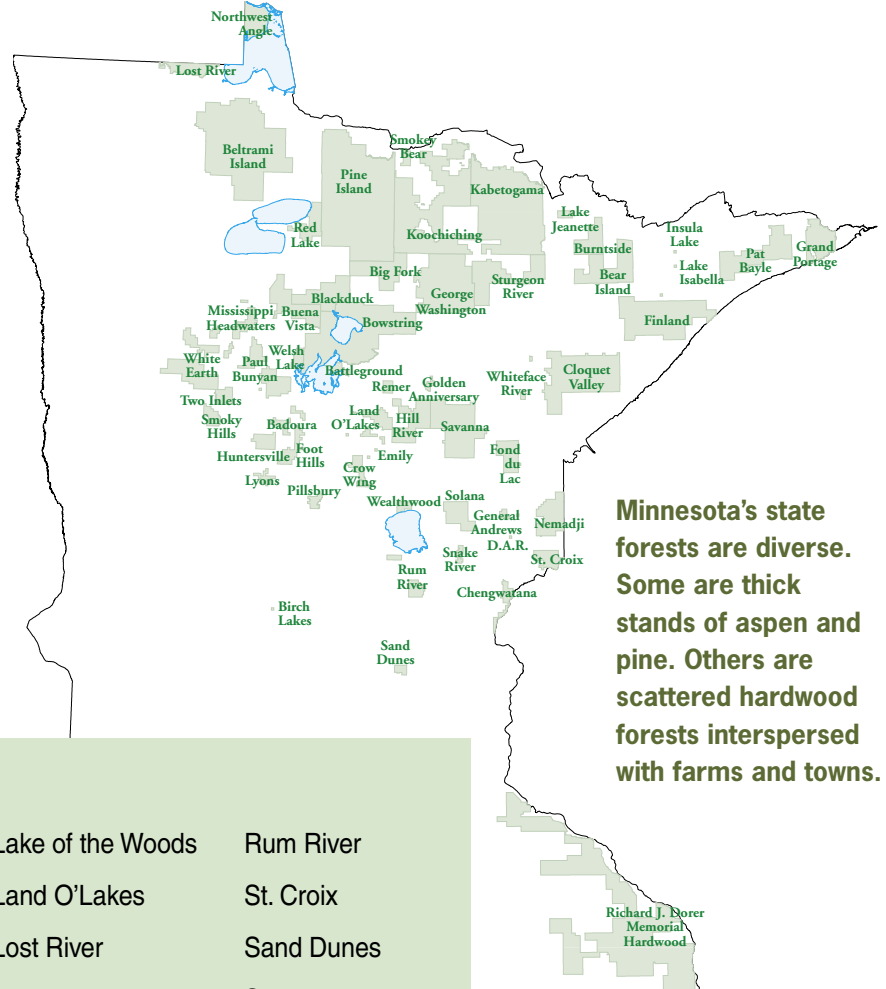


Chapter 3: Managing State Lands

According to 2002 survey data, Minnesota has 16.3 million acres of forest land. DNR administers 5.6 million acres of land, 4.5 million acres of which is considered forest land. Much of this land is located within the boundaries of Minnesota's 58 state forests.

The first state forest was established in 1900 when Governor John Pillsbury donated 1,000 acres of land in Cass County to the state, and the land was designated Pillsbury State Forest. Our newest state forest, the 15,000-acre Waukenabo State Forest in north-central Minnesota, was established by the Legislature in 2000.

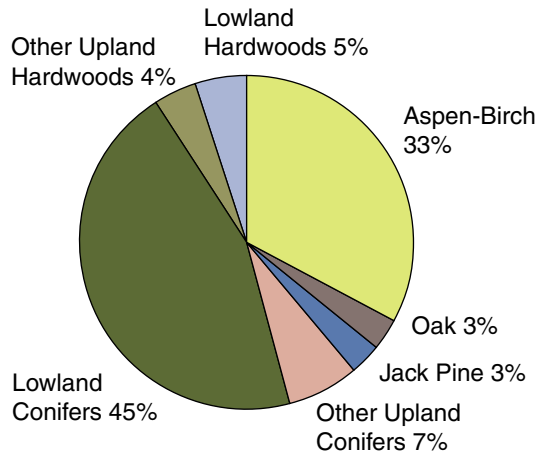


Minnesota's state forests are diverse. Some are thick stands of aspen and pine. Others are scattered hardwood forests interspersed with farms and towns.

Minnesota's State Forests			
Badoura	Emily	Lake of the Woods	Rum River
Battleground	Finland	Land O'Lakes	St. Croix
Bear Island	Fond du Lac	Lost River	Sand Dunes
Beltrami Island	Foot Hills	Lyons	Savanna
Big Fork	General C.C. Andrews	Mississippi Headwaters	Smokey Bear
Birch Lakes	George Washington	Nemadji	Smoky Hills
Blackduck	Golden Anniversary	Northwest Angle	Snake River
Bowstring	Grand Portage	Pat Bayle	Solana
Buena Vista	Hill River	Paul Bunyan	Sturgeon River
Burntside	Huntersville	Pillsbury	Two Inlets
Chengwatana	Insula Lake	Pine Island	Waukenabo
Cloquet Valley	Kabetogama	Red Lake	Wealthwood
Crow Wing	Koochiching	Remer	Welsh Lake
D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution)	Lake Isabella	Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood	White Earth
	Lake Jeanette		Whiteface River

Lake of the Woods and Waukenabo state forests are still being digitized and are not shown on the map.

Composition of DNR Forest Lands



Source: *A Strategic Conservation Agenda, 2003–2007*, Minnesota DNR

Aspen, birch, oak, and jack pine currently comprise nearly 40 percent of DNR forest lands. These types make up over 50 percent of all forest land in Minnesota.

Lands for Many Uses

As diverse as the forests themselves are the benefits and values they provide. State forest lands produce timber. They also provide a spectrum of tangible and intangible benefits, including wildlife habitat, nontimber crops, recreational opportunities, beauty, clean water, and biological diversity. They provide opportunities for hunting, birding, skiing, snowmobiling, camping, and other outdoor activities. They help protect waterways and water quality by reducing erosion, filtering runoff, and shading streams. They provide rich habitat for native plants and animals.

DNR Forestry works to make sure multiple benefits are sustained on state forest land. As a consequence, state forest managers have many jobs:

Improving Habitat. We work with DNR Fish and Wildlife staff to maintain

and improve habitat for game and nongame species. The primary activity is the joint planning of timber harvesting and other forest management activities. Other joint efforts include managing shrub and grassland habitat, carrying out prescribed burns, and building hunter/walking trails.

Protecting Biological Diversity and Cultural Resources. We work with the Division of Ecological Services to conserve biological diversity and sustain healthy forest ecosystems. A key effort is the joint development of forest management plans (see page 13) that includes addressing old-growth forests, extended rotation forests, areas of high and outstanding biological diversity significance, rare native plant communities, use of the natural heritage database, and ecologically important lowland conifers. Archaeologists review DNR timber sales and road projects to identify and protect important cultural or historic resources.

Keeping Forests Healthy. We monitor the condition of forest lands. We plan timber harvests and plant trees to help keep forests healthy and productive. We are required to reforest an amount of land equal to land harvested each year. We also improve existing forests with activities such as thinning; removing damaged, sick, and poor-quality trees; and monitoring and treating forest pest outbreaks.

Maintaining Forest Roads. We maintain more than 2,000 miles of forest roads. These roads support two of the state’s major industries, forest products and tourism. More than 95 percent of state forest road use is for recreation.

Providing Recreational Opportunities. State forest lands and the state forest road

and trail system provide diverse recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, birding, berry picking, camping, cross-country skiing, and off-highway vehicle use.

FORIST. The Forestry Information System (FORIST), currently under development, is an integrated set of computer databases and programs for use by DNR Forestry staff. FORIST is expected to dramatically enhance DNR Forestry’s ability to do its many jobs, including managing state forests, by making it easier for various programs to share information and coordinate efforts. Two components of FORIST that have been completed are already helping to streamline state forest management.



Future Forests. You can help keep Minnesota’s forests growing strong and honor or commemorate a loved one, too, through DNR Forestry’s Future Forests Fund. Tax-deductible contributions are used to plant trees on state lands. For information call 651-296-5958.

Land Acquisition, Sales

We occasionally purchase and sell state forest land. Land purchases tend to focus on tracts within or adjacent to existing state forest land, or land that would serve as access to state forest land.

New Tools, New Information... Better-Managed Forests

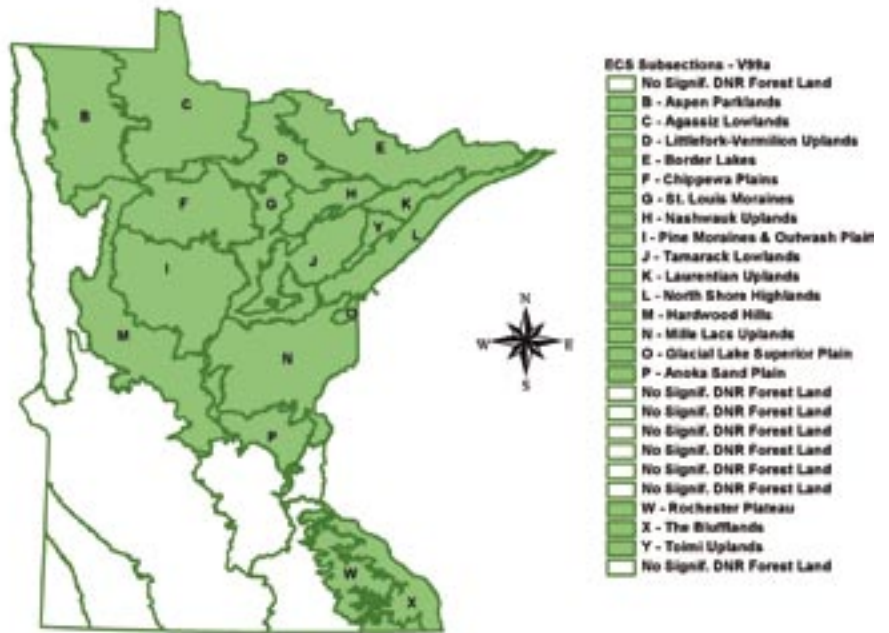
The complexity and considerations in forest management have grown as new information, management tools, and management approaches have become available. We are increasingly trying to build back certain forest conditions that will make our forests more diverse, resilient, and sustainable. For example, through timber harvesting and subsequent reforestation, we are attempting to restore certain forest types and tree species that are far less common today than in the past. We also plan our management to maintain habitat corridors and patches of forest land in a mix of sizes and stages of growth. Management plans are developed to maintain and enhance areas of particular biodiversity significance.

To help forest managers do these things in the most suitable locations, DNR has developed the Ecological Classification System (ECS) for Minnesota, a means of categorizing forests according to a variety of characteristics such as climate, geology, topography, hydrology, soils, and vegetation. The ECS provides valuable information on the types of ecological communities that are native to or best suited to a particular site. By using this information to plan the next generation of trees, we work with rather than against nature. This not only enhances the health of the state forests, but reduces the cost of managing them, too.

Subsection Planning

DNR Forestry used to manage state forest lands by DNR administrative unit. But that's not how nature divides itself. To more closely align our efforts with natural systems, we have begun managing forests instead based on ECS landscapes.

ECS Subsections With DNR Forest Land



DNR Forestry is developing subsection management plans for the state's forested ECS subsections.

Within Minnesota, the ECS has divided land into (from largest to smallest) provinces, sections, subsections, and land-type associations. Our forest management planning efforts currently are organized around the subsection level (see map).

DNR Forestry is in the process of creating a Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP) for each forested subsection with input from the public. Currently plans have been developed or are under development for nine of the 18 subsections in Minnesota that contain a substantial amount of state forest land.

The plans provide long-term direction and a 10-year operational plan for vegetation management on DNR-administered forest lands (excluding state parks and Scientific and Natural Areas) to provide the appropriate mix of wildlife habitat, rare feature protection, and timber harvesting. This includes identifying the types and amount of desired changes in the characteristics of DNR forest lands, and the types and timing of forest management activities needed to make those changes happen. DNR anticipates plans for all 18 forested subsections will be completed by the end of 2007.

Old Forests. DNR old-growth forests, forests that have not seen logging or other major disturbance for 120 years or more, provide unique habitat for plants and animals. DNR has identified and is committed to protecting 40,000 acres of remaining old-growth forests on state land. In addition, DNR is working to link old-growth forests and provide a certain amount of older forests by establishing areas and corridors of old (but not necessarily old-growth) trees, known as extended rotation forests, to create complexes of old forest habitat.

A World of Recreation

State forests provide a rich venue for recreation. Popular activities on state forest land include:

Hunting, Fishing, Bird-Watching, Berry Picking—State forests provide rich habitat for numerous species of animals and plants.

Touring—More than 2,000 miles of forest roads offer access to the forests and provide opportunities for enjoying their natural beauty.

Hiking and Skiing—Hikers and cross-country skiers enjoy more than 150 miles of nonmotorized trails that stretch through state forest land.

OHV Riding—Off-highway vehicles are allowed on trails specifically signed for OHV use.

Horseback Riding—A number of camps and trails are designated specifically for horseback riding.

Snowmobiling—State forests provide many miles of groomed snowmobile trails that tie into other trail systems.

Mountain Biking—Mountain bikes are allowed on all state forests roads unless they are posted otherwise. (In Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest, mountain bikes are allowed only on designated trails.)

Following the Guidelines. Forest management on state-owned land follows a set of voluntary guidelines established by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council in 1998 to protect cultural resources, soils, riparian areas, visual quality, water quality, and wetland quality. The guidelines, known as the Voluntary Site-Level Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines, establish a recommended set of forest management practices aimed at maintaining forest ecosystem health while harvesting and carrying out other management activities.

Camping—More than 1,000 campsites and day-use areas are available as a home base for outdoor adventurers.

For more information on state forest recreation, contact the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367.



Photo: Minnesota DNR

Riparian Areas: Areas of moisture-loving vegetation that border streams, lakes, and other bodies of water.

Biological Diversity: The variation in living things and in the ecosystem in which they live.