



Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet



2008 POLICY FACT SHEET Minnesota Forests for the Future Program

It is needed because

Development pressures are increasing and impacting the state's ability to sustain its working forest landscape and the diversity of benefits that landscape provides. Between 1999 and 2005, Minnesota used Federal Forest Legacy Program funds to protect 8,368 forest acres from development. However, this effort has not matched the scale of the challenge. More than 400,000 acres of Minnesota industrial forest land have changed ownership since 1998.

Nearly 1 million acres of large, mostly undeveloped private forest is at risk of being sold and converted into smaller parcels. Forest land prices are increasing, which in turn is increasing both the likelihood of parcelization and the price of land protection efforts. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its partners have the opportunity to conserve the state's intact forests on a large scale by protecting critical private lands that connect to public lands.

Major elements

This initiative establishes the Minnesota Forests for the Future Program to protect private forest lands throughout the state that provide exceptional value in three core areas: timber productivity, public recreational access, and ecological and wildlife values. The program will protect such forested areas primarily through the use of easements that will prevent development and conversion of forest land, while allowing landowners to manage the forest sustainably for timber and other forest products. Public recreation and other forest uses compatible with protecting the conservation values of the property will also be allowed. Besides easement acquisition, interests in lands under the program may be acquired by fee title, gift, or donation.

An advisory team of DNR senior managers and stakeholders met monthly between August 2007 and

January 2008 to develop goals and strategies, project selection criteria, and implementation guidelines for the Minnesota Forests for the Future Program. The team's report forms the framework for the program statute being proposed.

Priority-setting

Statewide, priority will be given to lands providing the greatest public benefits for timber productivity, public recreational access, and ecological and wildlife values.

- ◆ In northern Minnesota, priority will be given to protecting very large tracts of forest land (5,000 acres or larger).
- ◆ In central and southern Minnesota, priority will be given to protecting large tracts of forest land (100 acres or larger).

Key measures and outcomes

The following outcomes will be targeted for the program's long-term success:

- ◆ Strategic conservation of forests with exceptional public benefits—a goal is to acquire 75,000 acres of additional forest easements by the end of 2009
- ◆ Sustainable forestry and maintenance of productive forest lands
- ◆ Implementation of sound business practices
- ◆ Implementation of a long-term program for easement monitoring and enforcement
- ◆ Development of diverse partnerships.

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