

# REVISED MINNESOTA'S



## COVID-19 RECOVERY BUDGET

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR's) mission is to work with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

This proposed FY 22-23 budget furthers the DNR's mission by maintaining critical service delivery and advancing a new initiative to address climate change. More Minnesota families than ever before rely on the mental and physical health benefits of the state's treasured public lands and waters. This proposal will allow DNR staff to continue to serve all Minnesotans with inclusive access to outdoor recreation, robust public engagement opportunities, and proactive management of the state's natural resources for economic and environmental benefit. Key elements of this budget proposal are summarized below.

### CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS



#### Maintain High-Quality Park and Recreation Area Experiences

Minnesota's great outdoor spaces have been invaluable for children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Time outdoors strengthens family bonds and promotes health and wellness. State parks, trails, and recreation areas play an important role in providing access to these benefits for all Minnesotans. To help ensure that Minnesotans continue to receive many of the services they expect at state parks and recreation areas, this proposal recommends increasing state park vehicle permit fees. This will allow an increased investment of \$1.7 million in FY 22-23 for state park and recreation area operations, and would be a considerable help in addressing the structural imbalance in the State Park Account.



#### Invest in Water Recreation

With 2.5 million acres of rivers and lakes, Minnesotans enjoy an exceptional water recreation system. About 820,000 recreational watercraft were registered in 2020. The rising cost of maintaining and improving watercraft access sites, driven by both aging infrastructure and evolving user needs and expectations, exceeds current funding levels. Boaters, paddlers, lake associations, and local governments are increasingly demanding better infrastructure to support the state's water-based tourism and recreational system. This proposal recommends a

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\$3.7 million investment from the Water Recreation Account in FY22-23 through user fees, which were last raised in 2006.

## MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE



### **Accelerate Tree Planting to Capture Carbon**

A mature tree can absorb 48 pounds of carbon per year. That's why increasing the number of trees in Minnesota – by reestablishing forests on open land and improving tree cover on existing forested land – is a powerful, commonsense approach to offsetting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This budget proposes \$2.6 million in general fund investment to expand tree-growing capacity at the State Forest Nursery and provide incentives to establish trees on open land and increase tree density in existing forests. The DNR has established an initial goal to achieve an additional 5 million tons of GHG emissions offset by expanding tree cover in Minnesota. To achieve this goal, an estimated 12 million seedlings must be planted on public and private land in Minnesota by 2025.

## PROACTIVELY MANAGE NATURAL RESOURCES



### **Ensure Full-Use of Critical Habitat License Plate Contributions**

More than 100,000 Minnesota vehicle owners show their support for natural resources by selecting a Critical Habitat License Plate and donating \$30 annually toward critical habitat conservation. As a result of the growing popularity of these plates, this budget proposal modifies the Reinvest in Minnesota program to accelerate investments in land management and other activities to improve habitat for fish and wildlife, rare resources, and native plants. These dollars will result in an increased investment of approximately \$7 million annually over the next four years.

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**Modernize Minnesota's Forest Inventory**

Minnesota's forest inventory provides critical baseline data to inform management decisions on DNR-managed forest lands. The current inventory approach relies on ground surveys of forest cover, which is a labor-intensive and expensive process. This budget recommends a one-time investment of \$1 million from the Natural Resources Fund to modernize our data collection approach to forest inventory. Transitioning to new technology will allow the DNR to collect more accurate, up-to-date, and detailed forest inventory data at a lower cost. Improved data also will enable the DNR to complete advanced analyses of changes in forest land over time to better predict carbon storage and climate change impacts as well as refine management decisions.



**Simplify the Aquatic Invasive Species Surcharge**

The budget proposal recommends increasing the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) watercraft registration surcharge from \$10.60 to \$11. This simplification will address operational challenges that the current non-whole dollar amount presents to deputy registrars and will add approximately \$109,000 annually to the Invasive Species Account in the Natural Resources Fund.



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**Addressing Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)**

This proposal provides a one-time General Fund investment of \$1 million to support DNR's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) response. This funding will support the Adopt a Dumpster program, which allows for proper disposal of deer remains to prevent the spread of the disease, and surveillance activities that benefit deer health and deer management.

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**ADDRESS OPERATIONAL NEEDS**



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**Ensure Public Safety**

With an increase in civil unrest and peaceful demonstrations in 2020 and 2021, this revised proposal for DNR's Enforcement Division now provides \$3.3 million in FY 21 (previously \$2.6 million) and \$2.2 million in FY 22 for conservation officers' public safety response. The FY 21 funds will help address a deficiency in DNR's Enforcement budget due to several events over the last year.



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**Protecting Digital Assets from Cyber Attack**

This funding will help establish an information technology (IT) security and modernization program to protect the DNR's IT systems from cyber attack and migrate to a more secure and efficient cloud-based infrastructure. This proposal provides annual ongoing funding of \$1.1 million.

This budget proposal maintains the DNR's core work of natural resource management, environmental protection, and providing enriching public outdoor spaces and experiences for Minnesotans of all ages and backgrounds. Thriving natural systems are critical for thriving communities. By managing for the sustained health of natural resources, the DNR contributes to community health and economic activity. This budget supports the DNR's work and furthers our commitment to providing equitable access to outdoor spaces and the benefits of a healthy environment for all Minnesotans.

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**Governor's Recommendations for the FY22/23 Biennial Budget**  
**Department of Natural Resources**

*Net fiscal impact*

*Dollars in thousands*

	FY21	FY22/23	FY24/25	FTE
<b>Connect People to the Outdoors</b>	-	64,554	(1,558)	55
Increase Watercraft Registration Fees*	-	(1,401)	(2,162)	2
<i>FY22/23 Expenditures</i>	3,650			
<i>FY22/23 Revenues</i>	(5,051)			
Increase State Park Permit Fees*	-	(4,292)	(4,292)	9
<i>FY22/23 Expenditures</i>	1,674			
<i>FY22/23 Revenues</i>	(5,966)			
Clarifying Allowable Uses for State Park Reservation Fees	-	-	-	-
Increase the State Land and Water Conservation Account Appropriation	-	2,962	4,462	-
Invest in State Forest Campgrounds*	-	380	380	-
Open Access for Tribal Members on State Park Lands*	-	54	54	-
Parks and Trails Legacy – Coordination Among Partners	-	1,107	-	1
Parks and Trails Legacy – DNR Parks and Trails	-	43,829	-	42
Parks and Trails Legacy – Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails	-	21,915	-	1
<b>Mitigate Climate Change</b>	-	2,600	2,600	3
Accelerated Tree Planting to Capture Carbon	-	2,600	2,600	3
<b>Proactively Manage Natural Resources</b>	-	38,252	13,734	64
Addressing Chronic Wasting Disease	-	1,000	-	-
Ensure Full-Use of Critical Habitat License Plate Contributions	-	14,000	14,000	-
Advancing DNR Forest Inventory	-	1,000	-	-
Grant to Red Lake Nation for Aquatic Invasive Species Response	-	3,000	-	-
Authorize State Park Permit Violation Fee*	-	(40)	(40)	-
Clarify Authority for Existing Permits and Licenses	-	-	-	-
Require Permit for Youth Tournaments*	-	(4)	(4)	-
Require Permits for Bowfishing Tournaments*	-	(4)	(4)	-
Round Up Aquatic Invasive Species Surcharge*	-	(191)	(218)	-
DNR Lands Bills*	-	(34)	-	-
Clean Water Legacy	-	19,525	-	64
<b>Address Operational Needs</b>	1,319	10,411	7,454	25
Legal Costs (DNR portion only)	-	2,000	-	-
Public Safety Response	3,327	2,227	-	-
Protect Digital Assets from Cyber Attack	-	2,200	2,200	-
Operating Adjustment	(2,008)	3,984	5,254	25
Reimbursement for Public Safety Costs	-	-	-	-
Lottery-in-Lieu Cost Recovery for Grant Administration	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>115,817</b>	<b>22,230</b>	<b>147</b>
<i>Total Without Legacy Funds</i>	1,319	29,441	22,230	39

\* includes revenue impact