



Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet



2012-2013 BIENNIAL BUDGET FACT SHEET

Minnesota Forests for the Future Permanent Conservation Easement Stewardship Account Transfer: \$750,000 FY 2012 (Outdoor Heritage Fund)

It is needed because

This initiative proposes a \$750,000 transfer from the outdoor heritage fund (OHF) into a new account in the natural resources fund for conservation easement monitoring and enforcement of Minnesota Forests for the Future (MFF) easements as required by M.S. 84.66, subd. 11(a).

In northern Minnesota, large tracts of private land, particularly timber company lands, are interwoven with public forest lands. Changing ownership opens the door to parcelization and development, threatening the integrity of unbroken habitat, restricting public recreational access, and limiting management access on public lands.

Over the past 10 years, more than 330,000 acres of working forest conservation easements have been acquired, providing public values in three core areas:

- Public recreational access including hunting, fishing and trail access;
- Sustainable timber production that supports jobs and contributes to an important economic sector in the state; and
- Ecological values, including air and water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

This initiative addresses the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) mission to conserve Minnesota's natural lands and habitats and helps protect the state's investment in forest conservation easements. Protecting the state's investment in forest conservation easements ensures a continuation of the public benefits derived from these easements.

Major program elements

DNR will create an account in the natural resources fund and transfer into the account \$750,000 of the \$36 million appropriation from the Laws of 2009, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec.2, subd.3. Additional revenue deposited into the account would include donations, money

transferred for this purpose according to session laws, and interest accruing from investments of the account. Revenue in the account would be annually appropriated to the commissioner for costs associated with long-term conservation easement monitoring and enforcement. It is anticipated that approximately \$30,000 in interest would be generated annually to sustain the fund perpetually.

Priority-setting

Top priority for monitoring will be the large, landscape-scale conservation easement projects funded in part by the OHF. Projects funded by the OHF were identified as priorities for acquisition based on project size, strategic location of projects, and the recreational, economic, and ecological benefits of the project.

Project locations

Project locations for conservation easement monitoring include Itasca, Koochiching, St. Louis, Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, and Clearwater counties.

Key measures and outcomes

- Monitor a minimum of 188,000 conservation easement acres annually.
- Ensure that the conserved properties continue to provide the state with the intended benefits as detailed in the conservation easement.

Financial Implications (if appropriate)

- \$30,000 annually from the account to be spent on easement monitoring and related easement oversight activities.

For further information contact:

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