



## MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proud of all that we've accomplished this year to advance our mission 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.

Highlighted below are a number of our high-level accomplishments in 2024, which are categorized under the four goals outlined in the [DNR's Conservation Agenda](#), a plan that sets the long-term strategic direction for natural resources and measures conservation results. These goals are: Natural Resources Conservation, Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Economy, and Operational Excellence. Accomplishments that relate closely to more than one of these four goals are grouped in a Multiple Goals category. This list of accomplishments is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather some examples that illustrate the scope, breadth and depth of the DNR's work over the last year.

We are particularly excited about the progress we've made implementing the \$150 million Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) initiative launched in 2023. These transformative investments are already helping ensure Minnesotans of all abilities enjoy a world-class recreation system, regardless of the outdoor experience they choose. Below you will see examples of the projects that have been completed so far in this multi-year effort.

We invite you to stay up to date on Get Out MORE and other DNR work by signing up for one of our [topic-specific email lists](#), exploring opportunities on our [Engage with DNR platform](#), or following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#).

## **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION: MINNESOTA'S WATERS, NATURAL LANDS, AND DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITATS ARE CONSERVED AND ENHANCED**

### **RESTORING AQUATIC HABITAT IN WETLANDS, STREAMS AND RIVERS ACROSS THE STATE**

Aquatic habitat projects across Minnesota successfully restored 26,000 acres of lake habitat; more than 3,800 feet of shoreline along lakes, rivers and streams; and 175 wetlands in wildlife management areas (WMA) alone. In addition, the DNR reconnected 120 miles of stream habitat throughout the state.

Among other benefits, projects will contribute to the future delisting of the St. Louis River Area of Concern, reduced flooding risk while improving fish habitat and supporting waterfowl production and migration, and improved water quality while adding habitat for a variety of wildlife. Projects to improve fish habitat and restore wetlands on WMAs were made possible by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

### **PRESERVING AND DESIGNATING LANDS FOR CONSERVATION.**

Engaging with public and private partners is a key component of the DNR's work managing public land to provide multiple benefits for all Minnesotans, including clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities. One example of a successful collaboration from the past year is the designation of the state's newest WMA. Keystone Woods, located in Washington County, sits on more than 1,800 acres of land originally acquired by the Trust for Public Land, with support from the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, and then conveyed to the state of Minnesota. As a result, one of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts of land in the Twin Cities metro area is now preserved for wildlife conservation, public use and outdoor enjoyment. Also in 2024, the DNR designated 25 acres in Cook County as the new Icelandite Coastal Fen Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). Located 11 miles northeast of Grand Marais, this new SNA has one of only two known fens on coastal wetlands on Lake Superior's north shore and provides a unique experience for visitors. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Reinvest in Minnesota assisted in the acquisition.

### **ENSURING THE HEALTH AND VITALITY OF PLANTS AND WILDLIFE**

2024 marked the discovery of 15 plant and animal species not previously known to occur in Minnesota, including six lichen species, four other plant species, four bee species and one moth species. These discoveries resulted from work by the DNR and 350 expert partners to develop and/or update the conservation status ranking for more than 7,000 native animals and plants in Minnesota. These updated status rankings support the DNR's efforts to update the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), a partnership-based conservation plan to ensure the long-term health and viability of Minnesota's wildlife. The SWAP focuses on species that are rare, declining or vulnerable to decline. The updated status rankings also inform potential updates to Minnesota's endangered and threatened species list, which provides additional protections to the state's most vulnerable species.

### **UPDATING MASTER PLANS FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS**

Of the more than 1,500 WMAs in Minnesota that provide 1.37 million acres of habitat, eight are classified as “major units.” The DNR is undertaking a multi-year effort to update our major unit master plans, many of which were written or last updated decades ago. The Lac qui Parle WMA master plan was completed in June 2024, and the Carlos Avery WMA master plan is set to be completed by the end of this year. These updated plans reflect the DNR’s greater emphasis on restoring and enhancing native plant communities, documenting changes in wildlife and public use of the area, and identifying more recent considerations like invasive species, changing user groups, and changing climate. These updated master plans will be used to guide management of the units and include management goals, objectives and strategies for the next 10 years

### **ENGAGING MINNESOTANS IN REVISING FISH MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR LAKES**

Minnesotans care deeply about Minnesota’s lakes and the fish that live in them. As part of the DNR’s efforts to manage the state’s fisheries, it established lake-specific fish management plans with goals and guide its work on many lakes. This year we increased the opportunities for people to weigh in on these plans, and thus on the health and quality of Minnesota’s fisheries, no matter where they live. In February, a statewide public comment period sought comments on 112 lakes in 34 counties. This unified approach also increased transparency and efficiency in the public comment process. Information about the open comment period was posted on a DNR web page, shared with local media outlets and published as a statewide news release. This enhanced engagement approach will be continued in 2025 and beyond.

### **TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT, MANAGE AND DETER INVASIVE CARP**

The DNR released an updated 10-year Invasive Carp Action Plan in January 2024 and began implementing the plan’s recommendations. These recommendations, or actions, describe the focus of the DNR’s intensive efforts to prevent, monitor, control and respond to invasive carp. To support the state’s efforts, the Minnesota Legislature approved funding recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to design and install an invasive carp deterrent at Lock and Dam 5 on the Mississippi River. The DNR is partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and non-government groups on this work, which includes assessing feasibility, determining design, and obtaining necessary approvals prior to implementation. If permitted, the barrier is expected to be complete in the summer of 2029.

### **ELEVATING THE STATUS OF NATIVE ROUGH FISH**

What do native fish like the longnose gar, bigmouth buffalo, and burbot all have in common? Known historically as “rough fish”, which referred to the way they were sold when harvested commercially, they did not receive the same kinds of protection and management accorded to game fish. This led to over-harvesting and potential impacts to the health of Minnesota’s aquatic ecosystems. The DNR worked with the legislature in 2024 to formally recognize native rough fish in statute and extend to them many protections that had previously only applied to game fish. Consistent with these statutory changes, the DNR has increased its focus on native rough fish management, including new outreach and education efforts, and initiated a rulemaking process to implement bag limits for these species in 2027.

### **RAMPING UP TREE PLANTING**

Whether it's building a greener economy, climate-smart working lands, resilient communities or cleaner transportation, trees are a part of the answer. So, the DNR is ramping up tree planting to support Minnesota's future. In 2024 alone, more than 600,000 seedlings were planted on private woodlands supported by DNR cost-share funding, along with another 6,792 larger trees in Minnesota cities and towns. In addition, more than 2.2 million seedlings were planted in Minnesota's state forests, parks and recreation areas, and WMAs. These seedlings, in combination with an additional 1,850 acres of direct seeded state forest land, add up to more than 8,500 acres of healthy, regenerated forest that will capture carbon, provide habitat, protect water quality and deliver numerous other benefits for decades to come.

### **ADVANCING MINNESOTANS' FOREST HEALTH KNOWLEDGE**

Over the last year, the DNR helped advance Minnesotans' understanding of oak wilt, emerald ash borer, spruce budworm, climate change impacts, drought, increased leaf diseases and more. Through presentations, emails and phone calls, media interviews, newsletters, social media, and web visits, the DNR's forestry staff engaged with more than 445,000 people. Examples of the year's outreach include presenting to the Menahga City Council about the health of oaks in their community, a training at the Morrison County Landowner Workshop, and teaching high school students about forestry and invasive insects at a Minnesota Envirothon (an outdoor environmental academic competition). The DNR's staff also investigated tips and inquiries from natural resource professionals, including county and city foresters, concerned about the trees and forest lands they manage. This level of engagement shows Minnesotans are passionate about the health of their forests and want to care for our trees.

### **INVESTING IN THE CARBON CAPTURE POWER OF PEATLANDS**

The world's peatlands store large amounts of carbon and hold an estimated one-third of the carbon stored on land globally. At over 6 million acres, Minnesota has more peatlands than any other state in the U.S. except Alaska. Thanks to a one-time, \$1.6 million investment from the state, the DNR is piloting an approach to manage and restore degraded peatlands to maximize carbon storage. Additionally, Minnesota was awarded a nearly \$200 million Climate Pollution Reduction Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2024 that includes \$20 million for peatland restoration. With that federal funding, the DNR and Board of Water and Soil Resources will facilitate programs to protect and restore more than 10,000 acres of peatlands in Minnesota.

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION: MINNESOTA'S OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES MEET THE NEEDS OF NEW AND EXISTING PARTICIPANTS SO ALL BENEFIT FROM NATURE**

### **IMPLEMENTING STATE-WIDE INVESTMENTS TO HELP MINNESOTANS GET OUT MORE**

The DNR made major strides in advancing the \$150 million Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) initiative launched in 2023. This transformative investment is enabling the DNR to develop more modern and inclusive outdoor recreation experiences across Minnesota. Funding addresses needs in five categories: enhancing access and welcoming new users, modernizing camping and related infrastructure, enhancing fisheries and fishing infrastructure, modernizing boating access, and restoring streams and modernizing water-related infrastructure. Full details on the initiative can be found on the [Get Out MORE website](#).

Highlights from 2024 include engaging with partners and the public to identify specific projects within the five investment categories; working on a range of planning, design and contracting efforts; and completing several initial projects. Given the scope of the initiative, it will take several years to complete the full range of Get Out MORE projects. You can read a detailed report about progress in 2024 in the Get Out MORE annual report: [2024-annual-report-on-get-out-more-expenditures](#).

#### *ENHANCING ACCESS AND WELCOMING NEW USERS*

With Get Out MORE investments the DNR will be able to complete more than 100 access and accessibility projects throughout the state. In 2024, construction started at William O'Brien State Park to upgrade trails to better accommodate mobility devices, add accessible campsites and an accessible canoe and kayak launch, and build new restrooms and shower facilities that are both accessible and more accommodating to the needs of families.

#### *MODERNIZING CAMPING AND RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE*

This investment will fund major projects in two state parks, Minneopa and Myre-Big Island. The comprehensive project at Minneopa is in the planning phase and includes a campground designed with larger, accessible sites, modernized facilities, and improved wayfinding and trails. The design for the replacement system wastewater infrastructure at Myre-Big Island State Park was completed in 2024 and construction will begin in 2025.

#### *ENHANCING FISHERIES AND FISHING INFRASTRUCTURE*

In coordination with local partners, field staff evaluated nearly 100 potential shore fishing projects to determine the highest priority for Get Out MORE funds. Of these, discussions with local partners resulted in six projects kicking off in 2024. The Get Out MORE initiative also includes funding for improvements to the state's hatcheries. In 2024, the DNR was able to address a backlog of deferred maintenance that affects the safety, usability and effectiveness of the state's hatcheries in New London, Glenwood, Pike River and Spire Valley.

### *MODERNIZING BOATING ACCESS*

With this investment, the DNR will update at least 115 of Minnesota's 1,700 state-managed public water access sites. The DNR initiated engineering, design and environmental review for 29 large-scale and 18 small-scale projects. Four large-scale projects, involving more extensive and comprehensive improvements, were completed at German, Madison, Sturgeon and Sugar lakes and 15 small-scale projects were completed in 2024.

### *RESTORING STREAMS AND MODERNIZING WATER-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE*

This investment includes 10 dam removal or modification projects and five culvert replacements to reconnect an estimated 158 miles of streams. Fourteen projects reached the design stage in 2024, with seven of those projects far enough along in the process that construction is expected to begin in 2025. The Ramstad/Moosewalk Bridge, which was partially funded with Get Out MORE funds, was completed in fall of 2024. The project replaced an undersized culvert with a bridge allowing trout access to an additional 14 miles of cold-water habitat.

### **CREATING INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING EXHIBITS**

Working with partners from the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, the DNR created new interpretive exhibits at Soudan Underground Mine, located within Lake Vermilion Soudan Underground Mine State Park. Bois Forte partners were integral to creating the cultural and language content, including audio messages from tribal elders. The exhibits also include multisensory engagement opportunities with tactiles, mechanical interactives, a three-dimensional mine model, braille translation, and audio description. In addition, DNR staff from Jay Cooke State Park collaborated with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa on a set of interpretive signs along the St. Louis River. The panels describe the significance of the river from an indigenous perspective, incorporating Ojibwe language throughout the panels. Each panel represents one of four cardinal directions and seasons, describing what each represents in Anishinaabe culture.

### **CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

In collaboration with the Autism Society of Minnesota, the DNR worked to identify ways to better serve state park and recreation area visitors with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As a result, DNR interpretive staff developed sensory kits for use at state parks and recreation areas with visitor centers. The kits are intended to reduce the overstimulation that can occur for people with ASD when they enter a busy public environment with people they don't know, thereby facilitating a positive experience for visitors with ASD and their accompanying family and friends.

### **ENHANCED OUTREACH TO HMONG AND KAREN COMMUNITIES**

Minnesota's outdoors is meant for everyone to enjoy. However, for people without much outdoors experience or familiarity with Minnesota's rules governing activities such as fishing and hunting, enjoying the outdoors legally and safely can seem like a daunting task. To help address this, the DNR's community liaisons are dedicated to forging connections and building relationships with immigrant communities. The Hmong community in the Twin Cities Metro now has a dedicated community liaison officer who works to foster strong connections, help people understand Minnesota's hunting and angling laws, and recruit potential new firearms safety instructors. The Hmong community and the Karen community also have access to new community outreach coordinators in the Fish and Wildlife Division to help people connect to fishing, hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **RECOGNIZING THE DNR'S VOLUNTEER SAFETY INSTRUCTORS**

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people head out to hunt, ride an off-highway vehicle or snowmobile, enjoy their time outdoors, and return home safe and well. Volunteer safety instructors are integral to why outdoor recreation is as safe as it is in Minnesota. The DNR continues working to grow the volunteer instructor base to meet increasing public demand for safety education. This year, the DNR certified 394 new firearms safety instructors, 97 new ATV safety instructors, and 86 new snowmobile safety instructors. The DNR also recertified 75 firearms safety instructors, 22 snowmobile safety instructors, and 18 ATV safety instructors. These volunteers, some of whom have served for 40 years or more and many of whom belong to multi-generational safety instructor traditions, are an extraordinary gift to all Minnesotans.

### **SAFETY IN THE OUTDOORS**

People in Minnesota connect with the outdoors in many ways, whether it's where they work, live or recreate. While outdoor activities are generally safe, and benefit people in a range of important ways, sometimes Minnesotans find themselves in dangerous situations. In those instances, they can rely on the DNR's conservation officers' strong commitment to public service. During 2024, 12 conservation officers received lifesaving awards for their efforts to rescue people in life-threatening situations, including on the ice, in the water, and on the land.



## **NATURAL RESOURCES ECONOMY: MINNESOTA'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONTRIBUTE TO STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE JOB MARKETS, ECONOMIES, AND COMMUNITIES**

### **DESIGNING A REGULATORY STRUCTURE FOR NEWLY DISCOVERED GAS DEPOSITS**

While Minnesota has a 140-year history of iron ore mining, the state has no history of oil and gas production. When a company identified a significant helium deposit in Minnesota in 2024 and announced that it could potentially start commercial production within twelve to eighteen months, questions quickly arose regarding how to protect the environment, public health and the interests of communities and landowners. In response to direction from the Minnesota legislature, the DNR created the Gas Resources Technical Advisory Committee (GTAC), composed of staff experts from the DNR, Pollution Control Agency, Environmental Quality Board, Department of Health, and Department of Revenue. Within four months, GTAC developed and released a draft set of recommendations and statutory language for the creation of a temporary framework for regulating gas resource development in Minnesota. GTAC will consider input from Tribal partners, interested parties and members of the public as it finalizes recommendations and proposed statutory language by January 15, 2025. If enacted into law, the temporary regulatory framework would be in place while state agencies write permanent rules and regulations.

### **LAUNCHING A NEW ONLINE UTILITY LICENSE APPLICATION**

The DNR has seen a large increase in requests by broadband and electrical companies that wish to cross Minnesota's public lands and waters with their infrastructure projects. Companies seeking such permission require a utility license from the DNR. The increase in requests have been driven by significant state and federal investment to expand broadband to rural areas along with the ever increasing need to improve connectivity and reliability of Minnesota's electrical grid. To manage the increasing requests and to streamline the process, this year the DNR implemented a browser-based Utility License Application System. This system features a user-friendly interactive web map that allows applicants to digitally map their proposed state land and water crossings, along with a mechanism for companies to pay application fees online. The goal of this new system is to better serve customers and improve the timeliness of the review and decision-making process for the higher volume of utility license applications coming to the DNR.

### **INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY AT THE DRILL CORE LIBRARY**

The Drill Core Library in Hibbing is a globally recognized facility that holds an extensive collection that geologists from around the world rely on as a source for scientific research, geological mapping and mineral management. In 2022, the DNR was forced to close portions of the library due to safety concerns with the racking system used to store core samples. In 2024, the DNR removed 38,000 boxes of drill core from the library's shelves in the first phase of a project to address the aging and structurally deficient racking system. That amount is equivalent to moving over one million pounds of rock! The DNR will next install new racking, place materials on the new racking and re-inventory the core with the goal of reopening this portion of the library by the summer of 2026. Updates will improve safety for visitors and staff, ensuring the continued accessibility and preservation of Minnesota's invaluable geological data and materials.



## **OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: THE DNR DEMONSTRATES OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICE TO MINNESOTANS**

### **IMPLEMENTING A NEW EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

In June of 2024, the DNR applied a continuous improvement approach to its emergency management team. Benefits of the resulting changes were immediately realized when portions of the state experienced historic flooding shortly thereafter. The emergency response team was able to quickly apply National Incident Management System standards to mobilize resources, coordinate among the DNR's divisions and regions and other state partners while representing the DNR in the State Emergency Operations Center. The DNR's staff provided a wide range of flood-related services, including data to support weather forecasters; guidance and assistance from the DNR Dam Safety Program; public safety response; field inspections by hydrologists; authorization of emergency permits for repair or replacement of structures damaged by floods; and assistance with preliminary damage assessments.

### **REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT THROUGH RESPONSIBLE FLEET MANAGEMENT**

The DNR's Fleet Program was ranked among the 100 Best Public Fleets in America by the National Association of Fleet Administrators (NAFA) Fleet Management Association in 2024. The "Best Fleets" program recognizes peak-performing public and commercial fleet operations, which are evaluated on 12 different criteria, including resource stewardship. A highlight of the DNR's award-winning fleet program is the 21 percent reduction in fossil fuel use we achieved from 2017 to 2023.

### **EXPANDING THE DNR'S TRIBAL RELATIONS OFFICE**

The DNR is deeply committed to a collaborative and respectful approach to stewardship of natural resources with the 11 federally recognized Tribes that share geography with Minnesota. As part of that commitment, the DNR expanded our Office of Tribal Relations in 2024, hiring a Dakota relations liaison and an Ojibwe relations liaison. This is a milestone that will help the DNR continue to strengthen our government-to-government relationships with Tribes and deepen engagement. It also exemplifies the DNR's commitment to honoring tribal sovereignty, culture and collaborative natural resource stewardship.

## **MULTIPLE GOALS: ITEMS IN THIS CATEGORY RELATE CLOSELY TO MORE THAN ONE OF THE DNR'S CONSERVATION AGENDA GOALS**

### **WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC TO PREVENT WILDFIRES**

Prevention is the first step to addressing wildfire risk, and in 2024 the DNR found creative ways to engage with the public to stop wildfires before they start. A Fire Tower Club celebrating Smokey Bear's 80th birthday featured six climbable DNR fire towers throughout the state. After finding a code word, participants received a stamp in their fire tower booklet and a unique Smokey Bear item at each location.

To support safe open burning, the DNR updated and promoted the online burning permit system. New this year was the ability for system users to activate their burning permits and receive burning restriction updates via text. Nearly 26,000 people obtained online burning permits and received immediate updates on burning restrictions changes through phone call, emails, or texts in 2024 – an increase of 12 percent from previous years. Public awareness and willingness to follow wildfire prevention tips and burning restrictions contributed significantly to wildfire prevention during dry spring and fall wildfire seasons in 2024.

### **PROVIDING CRITICAL CLIMATE DATA FOR SCIENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING AND EDUCATION**

The DNR's State Climatology Office manages, analyzes and disseminates data and resources related to Minnesota's historical climate conditions. The office provides vital information, context and perspective to other scientists, government agencies, media and the general public about one of the leading questions of our time. In 2024, climatologists gave more than 70 public presentations and did approximately 150 media interviews on topics including record winter warmth, ice out conditions, floods, drought, severe thunderstorms, and climate change. Climate staff wrote more than 25 separate stories on their online [Climate Journal](#), sent out 11 monthly HydroClim newsletters to more than 6,500 subscribers, and shared 70 social media posts. By collaborating with others in the DNR and with the National Weather Service, the State Climatology Office also helped Minnesota recruit more new volunteer precipitation observers than any other state for the fifth consecutive year.

### **75 YEARS OF LEARNING IN THE WOODS**

The Minnesota School Forest Program celebrated 75 years of connecting students with nature through outdoor classrooms. There are now more than 160 school forests in urban, suburban, and rural settings across Minnesota where hands-on, outdoor lessons spark curiosity for 50,000 students annually. Teachers and students use their school forest as the context for learning core subjects such as math, science, reading, writing, geography, Indigenous studies, physical education, art, and more. The DNR assists schools in developing related curriculum and managing their forests. In recent years, school forests have been increasingly recognized for the benefits they provide for student learning, physical and mental health, and behavior.

### **RETURNING SACRED LAND TO THE UPPER SIOUX COMMUNITY**

The Upper Sioux Community (Pezihutazizi) had a longstanding request to the State of Minnesota that the land at Upper Sioux Agency State Park (USASP) be returned to the Upper Sioux Community, given the extraordinary significance of this land to the tribal community. Legislation passed in 2023 directed the DNR and the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) to convey all state-owned land within USASP to the Upper Sioux Community. The DNR's staff worked closely with the Upper Sioux Community and MHS to complete the land transfer, and in March 2024 a deed was signed and recorded finalizing the transfer of approximately 1,060 acres of DNR-managed land and 19 acres of land managed by MHS to the Upper Sioux Community. The DNR remains engaged with local communities and individuals to identify and implement new and/or enhanced alternative outdoor recreational opportunities in the Minnesota River Valley.

### **THE MINNESOTA MINERALS EDUCATION WORKSHOP CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

For 25 years, the DNR has helped organize the Minnesota Minerals Education Workshop (MMEW) to help K-12 earth science teachers gain a better understanding of Minnesota's geologic history and mineral resources. Since its inception, MMEW has established a strong tradition of connecting teachers with the state's leading geologists and experts through various short courses, field trips and guest speakers. MMEW also provides teachers with access to free teaching materials, rock and mineral kits, lesson plan ideas, and classroom lab supplies, paving the way for teachers and their students to explore Minnesota's geologic past, present and future. [Watch this DNR-produced video](#) to experience the workshop's substantial impact on science educators as they make lasting connections between their students and natural resources.

### **MINIMIZING WILDFIRE DAMAGE AND PUBLIC SAFETY RISKS**

With a historically warm and dry winter, and a fall with drought and record warmth, the DNR's staff responded to intense spring and fall wildfire seasons while still supporting routine work. In an abnormally early fire season, the DNR responded to 61 fires in February, almost five times the average annual number from 2011-2021. The unusually early fire season was interrupted by heavy rains through the growing season, but the pendulum reversed into drought conditions this fall, with the DNR responding to 135 fires in October, up from the 2011-2021 October average of 69. The DNR's staff and our mutual aid partners successfully managed and suppressed these fires protecting the public, infrastructure and natural resources.

## REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The DNR received a 2024 Sustainability Award from the State of Minnesota's Enterprise Sustainability Steering Team for work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations. The award reflects over a decade of investment in renewable energy installations in general, and specifically new solar arrays installed in 2023 at Camden State Park and the Iron Range Off Highway Vehicle State Recreation Area.

The DNR currently owns and operates 34 grid-tied solar arrays that produced more than 587,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity in fiscal year 2024, equaling 4.5 percent of the DNR's electricity consumption during the same period. Together, these solar arrays reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to those produced by 568 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year, or 6.1 million miles driven by an average gasoline-powered passenger vehicle. Looking forward, the DNR is primarily focused on how and where solar installations can improve operational sustainability. These investments contribute to the State of Minnesota's goal of 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2040.

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