

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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Office of the Commissioner

651-259-5555



COPY

September 16, 2008

William Glahn
Director Minnesota Office of Energy Security
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 Seventh Place East – Suite 500
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101

Dear Mr. Glahn,

Please find attached the Minnesota DNR's Assessment of Grant and Loan Programs that have the potential to contribute to the Minnesota Green Economy Goals, as required by Minnesota Laws 2008, Chapter 363 (HF 1812), Article 6, Section 11.

The report identifies a number of DNR grant programs and makes a preliminary assessment of their potential to contribute to the goals outlined in the statute.

Also Minn. Stat. 3.197 requires that reports submitted to the legislature must include administrative costs of preparation. This includes staff time, duplicating costs, facility costs, etc. The principal costs involved were approximately 40 hours of staff time. This time cost approximately \$1,600.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mark Lindquist (507-359-6038).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Holsten'.

Mark Holsten
Commissioner

Assessment of Department of Natural Resources Grant
Programs to Determine Their Potential to Advance or
Promote the Growth of the Green Economy

September 2008

Submitted to the Commissioner of Commerce in Accordance with the Provisions
of Section 11, Article 6 of the 2008 Supplemental Budget

Preface

This report is submitted in conformance with Section 11, Article 6 of the 2008 Supplemental Budget which requires state agencies that administer loan or grant programs to assess those programs to determine their potential to advance or promote the growth of the green economy, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 116J.437. Agencies are required to report on their determinations to the Commissioner of Commerce by September 15, 2008.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers a large number of grant programs. A number of these programs were determined to address one or more of the green economy related activities outlined in Section 116J.437. Individual assessments of these programs are included in the report.

In addition to these grant programs, the DNR also administers several other programs that appear to advance or promote the growth of the green economy. While not specifically required as part of the report, a brief summary of these related programs is included in the appendix as supplemental information.

The DNR does not administer any loan programs.

DNR and the Green Economy

While the specific purpose of this report is to assess the potential of DNR administered grant programs to advance or promote the growth of the green economy, it is worth noting the department's broader impact. In fact, much of what the department does is related in some way to growing a green economy in Minnesota.

The tourism industry of Minnesota, much of which is dependent on high quality natural resources, is a major part of the green economy. The DNR manages a large public land base that includes state forests, state parks, wildlife and aquatic management areas, state trails, scientific and natural areas, water accesses, canoe and boating routes, and wild and scenic rivers.

Charged with protecting and managing millions of acres of public land, the DNR is the caretaker of an enormous amount of carbon that is stored in trees, peat bogs, prairies and other vegetation. Careful management, such as reforestation, fire management, and permanent protection of large natural areas helps prevent the release of huge amounts of carbon to the atmosphere.

The DNR manages one of the largest non-motorized state trail systems in the country, which encourages participation in "green" outdoor recreation activities such as biking, ski touring and walking.

The DNR is also very interested in the possibilities for production of cellulosic ethanol that could be produced from prairie plants, sawdust or other wood products residues as part of an integrated land use approach that could also benefit wildlife and provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

The state shoreland management regulations, which help protect lakes and rivers from over-development and harmful land use practices, are critical for protecting water quality.

New state park buildings are designed to be more energy efficient.

In addition to the grant programs administered by the DNR, several other programs that help promote the green economy are also summarized in this report.

In these and many other ways the DNR contributes to the growth of the green economy in Minnesota.

Assessment of Grant Programs

Several grant programs administered by the DNR were determined to have potential to advance or promote the growth of the green economy as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 116J.437 Coordinating Economic Development and Environmental Policy. Subdivision 1. Definitions states:

"For the purpose of this section, "green economy" means products, processes, methods, technologies, or services intended to do one or more of the following:

- 1) increase the use of energy from renewable sources, including through achieving the renewable energy standard established in section 2166.1691;
- 2) achieve the statewide energy savings goal established in section 2166.2401, including energy saving achieved by the conservation investment program under section 2166.241;
- 3) achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals of section 216H.02, subdivision 1, including through reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as defined in section 216H.01, subdivision 2, or mitigation of the greenhouse gas emissions through, but not limited to, carbon capture, storage, or sequestration;
- 4) monitor, protect, restore, and preserve the quality of surface waters, including actions to further the purposes of the Clean Water legacy Act as provided in section 114D.10, subdivision 1, or;
- 5) expand the use of biofuels, including by expanding the feasibility or reducing the cost of producing biofuels or the types of equipment, machinery, and vehicles that can use biofuels, including activities to achieve the biofuels 25 by 2025 initiative in sections 41A.10, subdivision 2, and 41A.11.

For the purpose of clause (3), "green economy" includes strategies that reduce carbon emissions, such as utilizing existing buildings and other infrastructure, and utilizing mass transit or otherwise reducing commuting for employees."

In particular, DNR grant programs appear to address primarily all or part of two of the five categories outlined in the section:

- (3) ...or mitigation of the greenhouse gas emissions through, but not limited to, carbon capture, storage, or sequestration;
- (4) monitor, protect, restore, and preserve the quality of surface waters...

In addition, the DNR is very interested in issues related to category five

- (5) expand the use of biofuels, including by expanding the feasibility or reducing the cost of producing biofuels ...

Mitigation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through Carbon Capture, Storage, or Sequestration

One of the important "greenhouse gases" is carbon dioxide. Management of carbon can help reduce the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

One of the ways to manage carbon is reflected in category (3) above: carbon capture, storage or sequestration. According to a paper published in the April 2008 issue of "The Forestry Chronicle"¹:

"Carbon sequestration describes processes that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequester it to long-term storage in the terrestrial biosphere, underground or in the oceans to help mitigate the effects of CO₂ on global warming. A variety of natural and synthetic means of capturing and storing carbon is now under exploration. These include enhancing the natural terrestrial cycle – planting and managing forests and other large-scale vegetation growth for maximum carbon absorption (National Energy Technology Laboratory [undated])."

"What this and other methods have in common is that they involve storing CO₂ in what is called a carbon sink. A carbon dioxide sink is a carbon reservoir that increases in size and is the opposite of a carbon dioxide source. Recognized natural sinks are (1) the oceans and (2) plants and other organisms that use photosynthesis to remove carbon from the atmosphere (United States Department of Energy Fossil Energy Office of Communications [undated])."

The Department of Natural Resources administers several grant programs that either help to store carbon in existing vegetation or remove and capture carbon from the atmosphere and sequester it within new vegetation growth.

Preventing Stored Carbon from Being Released:

Grant programs that preserve existing forests and prairies through fee title or easement acquisition, thereby storing existing carbon and preventing it from being released into the atmosphere through removal, include the following (also see Table 1):

- **Regional Park Grant Program:** Provides matching grants to public regional park organizations outside the seven county metropolitan area for up to 60% of the cost of acquisition of regional park land. Land acquired with these grants must remain as public parkland in perpetuity.

¹ St. John Conti, Donna. Carbon Sequestration as Part of the Global Warming Solution – Using Software to Combine Environmental Stewardship with Economic Benefit. The Forestry Chronicle, March/April 2008.

- Natural Area Grant Program: Provides matching grants to local units of government and watershed districts for up to 50% of the cost of acquisition of natural and scenic areas. The maximum grant amount is \$500,000. Land acquired with these grants must remain as public natural areas in perpetuity.
- Metro Greenways Program: Among other strategies, this program provides grants to local governments, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, soil and water conservation districts, special park and conservation districts and non-profit organizations for conservation easements or fee title acquisition for a regional network of natural areas, parks and other open spaces interconnected by ecological corridors in the seven county metropolitan region.

Enhancing the Natural Terrestrial Cycle Through Planting and Managing Forests and Other Large Scale Vegetation Growth:

Grant programs that enhance the storage of carbon in vegetation or remove and capture carbon from the atmosphere and sequester it in new vegetative growth include the following (also see Table 1):

- Minnesota's Landowner Incentive program: This grant program is administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and implemented through state natural resource agencies. It assists eligible, private landowners who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit listed species, with the development of habitat management plans and financial assistance for habitat enhancement and restoration.
- Heritage Enhancement Grants: These grants are available to local outdoors clubs to complete wildlife habitat projects on State Wildlife Management Areas or other lands under control of the DNR Section of Wildlife. The grants cover up to 100% of the eligible costs.
- Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program: Provides cost share grants for up to 75% of eligible costs to landowners for management practices that improve pheasant habitat.
- Environmental Partnerships and Conservation Partners Grant Program: Encourages the protection of fish and wildlife dependent habitats (including restoration and reforestation) through matching grants of up to 50% of total project costs to private organizations, local governments and school districts.
- Metro Greenways Program: In addition to grants for fee title and conservation easement acquisition (see above), this program provides grants for habitat restoration projects.
- Minnesota ReLeaf Program: This grant program assists Minnesota communities with planting and caring for their trees to increase energy conservation, reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide and achieve other

environmental benefits. Matching grants are for up to 50% of the projects costs up to a maximum grant of \$15,000.

- Division of Forestry's Cost Share Program: Landowners who have a registered stewardship plan are eligible to apply for cost share dollars to help them implement the forest management activities that are outlined in their management plan. The cost share programs provide landowners a 50% match for tree planting, timber stand improvement, wildlife habitat projects, and many other forest management activities. In state fiscal year 2008 \$270,000 of cost share dollars were made available to Minnesota's private forest landowners.

Monitoring, Protecting, Restoring and Preserving the Quality of Surface Waters

Surface water quality is tremendously important to Minnesotans. Our lakes, wetlands, rivers and streams supply drinking water; protect native plant and animal species and communities; provide high value residential and seasonal shore land property; support the economically important resort and tourism industry; and provide the setting for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities.

The Department of Natural Resources administers several grant programs that directly or indirectly affect the quality of surface waters (also see Table 2):

- Shoreland Habitat Restoration Grant Program: The purpose of this program is to expand the diversity and abundance of native aquatic and shoreland plants; improve and protect the quality of shoreline habitat; enhance and protect water quality; and raise awareness of the value of native shoreland and aquatic vegetation. Shoreland block grants are to provide cost share funding to counties, cities, watershed districts, other local units of government, conservation groups and lake associations to conduct shoreline restoration projects with native plants to improve fish and wildlife habitat.
- Grants for Management of Eurasian Watermilfoil: These grants are available to counties, cities, townships, and incorporated lake associations that own riparian property on lakes with Eurasian watermilfoil and DNR designation to reduce the adverse affects of Eurasian watermilfoil on recreational opportunities and slow the spread of the exotic species to other lakes.
- Pilot Projects to Control Eurasian Watermilfoil or Curly-Leaf Pondweed on a Lake-Wide (or Bay-Wide) Basis: The purpose of this grant program is to allow a limited number of well-planned and well-monitored lake-wide (or bay-wide) projects to control curly-leaf pondweed and/or milfoil to go forward in order to learn from them and potentially achieve some ecological benefit from them. The purpose of these control projects is to reduce curly-leaf pondweed or Eurasian

watermilfoil lake wide in the year of treatment, to provide long-term reduction in curly-leaf pondweed or Eurasian watermilfoil in the lake, and to provide the ecological benefits to the treated lake. Ecological benefits should include increases in the frequency or abundance of native submersed plants and, in the case of curly-leaf pondweed, may include reductions in levels of phosphorus and algae, which should increase water clarity.

- Heritage Enhancement Grants: This program encourages local outdoors clubs to complete wildlife habitat projects on State Wildlife Management Areas or other lands under control of the DNR Section of Wildlife. Among the eligible project categories are wetland enhancement, wetland habitat maintenance, wetland impoundment/development, wetland restoration, and wetland water controls. Grants cover up to 100% of total eligible costs on a reimbursement basis.
- Minnesota's Land Owner Incentive Program: This grant program, administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and implemented through state natural resources agencies, assists eligible private landowners who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit listed species, with the development of management plans and financial assistance for habitat enhancement and restoration. Projects can include wetlands and shorelands.
- Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Grants and Partnerships: These grants of up to \$10,000 are intended to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels and spiny waterfleas, into Minnesota waters. This is a new opportunity for local entities, such as lake associations, coalitions of lake associations, and counties to receive state funding and/or partner with the DNR on prevention efforts, including public awareness initiatives and watercraft inspections.
- Clean Vessel Act Grants: This grant program provides grants of up to 75% of total eligible costs with a maximum amount of \$10,000 to public and private marina operators to encourage the development or improvement of marina sanitation facilities for boaters in order to maintain and improve water quality in public waters.
- Stream Bank Maintenance Grants: This program provides grants for up to 75% of eligible program costs for removal of brush, dead or downed trees and other debris such as concrete, asphalt or scrap metal from stream channels and flood plains.
- Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance: This program provides a maximum of 50% of total eligible project costs to provide technical and financial assistance to local government units for conducting flood damage reduction studies and for planning and implementing flood damage reduction measures, including flood plain restorations.
- Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program: The purpose of this program is to preserve, protect, develop and, where possible, restore or

enhance coastal resources along Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior through grants to cities, counties, townships, joint powers boards, sanitary sewer districts, non-profit organizations, school districts, and area-wide and regional agencies within the program's coastal boundary. Eligible projects include ecological restoration and land or easement purchases. Grants are for up to \$100,000 and require a 50% match.

- Environmental Partnerships and Conservation Partners Grants: These grants encourage the enhancement of fish, wildlife and native plant habitats, including wetlands and shorelands; research and surveys of fish and wildlife directly related to specific habitat improvement projects; and environmental projects and related education activities through cooperation by private organizations and local governments. Eligible projects include water quality monitoring, restoration and protection of wetlands and shorelands, and clean up of streams, lakes and wetlands. Grants are awarded for up to 50% of total project costs. The maximum award is \$20,000. Over 500 projects have been funded statewide since 1996.
- Regional Park Grants: This grant program provides grants for up to 60% of total project costs to public regional park organizations outside the seven county metropolitan area for regional park projects, including acquisition of lake, stream and river shorelands and wetlands. Several miles of shoreland have been protected from development in perpetuity.
- Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program: This program provides 50% matching grants to cities, counties, townships and school districts for acquisition of natural and scenic areas, including lake, stream and river shorelands and wetlands. Several miles of shoreland have been protected in perpetuity.

Table 1. Assessment of DNR Grant Programs with Potential to Mitigate Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Acquiring forests, prairies, etc., thereby storing carbon and preventing it from being released into the atmosphere through removal :	High	Med	Low	DNR Unit*
Regional Park Grant Program: Contributes to carbon storage in forest and prairie land protected in perpetuity in regional parks. About 2,400 acres acquired since 2002.	X			OMBS
Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program: Contributes to carbon storage in forest and prairie land protected in perpetuity. About 1,740 acres acquired since 1996.		X		OMBS
Metro Greenways Program: Contributes to carbon storage in forest and prairie land protected through fee title or easement acquisition. Over 3,000 acres protected since 1998.	X			Central Region
Enhancing the natural terrestrial cycle through planting and managing forests and other large scale vegetation growth:				
Minnesota's Landowner Incentive Program: Enhances habitat on private land. By 2006, over 1,500 ac. of Prairie Bank easements, over 7,500 ac. habitat enhancement/restoration.	X			Eco Resources
Heritage Enhancement Grants: For wildlife habitat enhancement on State Wildlife Management Areas. Improves habitat on land already owned and managed by the state for conservation purposes.			X	Fish/Wildlife
Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program: Provides cost-sharing to landowners for management practices that improve pheasant habitat. Enhances habitat primarily on undeveloped land.			X	Fish/Wildlife
Environmental Partnerships/Conservation Partners Grants: Encourages enhancement of fish, wildlife and native plant habitats on public and private lands. Over 500 projects funded since 1996.		X		OMBS

	High	Med	Low	DNR Unit*
Metro Greenways Program: Helps fund restoration projects for a regional network of natural areas, parks, etc., interconnected by ecological corridors in the seven county metro area through collaborative public/private partnerships.		X		Central Region
Minnesota ReLeaf Program: Assists communities with planting and caring for their trees to increase energy conservation, reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, etc. The focus is on community forestry projects that achieve energy conservation.	X			Forestry
Division of Forestry's Cost Share Program: Landowners who have a registered stewardship plan can apply for cost share dollars for tree planting and other forest management activities.		X		Forestry

*OMBS – Office of Management and Budget Services
 Central Region – DNR Central Region
 Eco Resources – Division of Ecological Resources
 Fish/Wildlife – Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Forestry – Division of Forestry
 Trails/Waterways – Trails and Waterways Division
 Waters – Division of Waters

Table 2. Assessment of DNR Programs with Potential to Monitor, Protect Restore and Preserve the Quality of Surface Waters

	High	Med	Low	DNR Unit*
Pilot Projects to Control Eurasian Watermilfoil or Curly Leaf Pondweed on a Lake-Wide (or Bay-Wide) Basis: Funds a limited number of control projects to reduce these invasive species and provide ecological benefits to the treated lake and to learn which methods work best.		X		Eco Resources
Shoreland Habitat Restoration Grant Program: Helps enhance and protect water quality, improve and protect shoreline habitat, expand the diversity and abundance of native species, etc. Partners with local governments, lake associations, watershed districts, etc.	X			Fish/Wildlife
Grants for Management of Eurasian Watermilfoil: Helps reduce the adverse affects of this invasive species on recreational opportunities and slows the spread of the exotic to other lakes.		X		Eco Resources
Heritage Enhancement Grants: Encourages local outdoors clubs to complete wildlife habitat projects on State Wildlife Management Areas or other lands under the control of the Section of Wildlife. Can include wetland restoration or enhancement.			X	Fish/Wildlife
Minnesota Landowner Incentive Program: Helps private landowners manage their land to benefit listed species, including restoration and enhancement projects.			X	Eco Resources
Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Grants and Partnerships: Helps prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels and spiny waterfleas, into Minnesota waters through cooperation with local governments, lake associations, citizen groups, etc. A new program initiated in 2008.	X			Fish/Wildlife

	High	Med	Low	DNR Unit*
Clean Vessel Act Grants: Encourages the development or improvement of marina sanitation facilities to maintain or improve water quality. Limited in scope; available only to public and private marinas.			X	Trails/Water ways
Stream Bank Maintenance Grants: Helps remove brush, dead or downed trees, and debris such as concrete, asphalt and scrap metal from stream channels and flood plains. No funding currently available.		X		Waters
Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance: Helps local governments conduct flood damage reduction studies and plan and implement flood damage reduction measures. Includes funding for flood plain restorations.		X		Waters
Environmental Partnerships/Conservation Partners Grants: Encourages enhancement of fish and native plant habitats, including shoreline and wetland restoration, water quality monitoring, stream or lake shore clean-up projects, etc.	X			OMBS
Regional Park Grants: Helps local governments acquire and permanently protect lake, river and stream shorelands. About seven miles of high quality shoreline has been protected since 2002.		X		OMBS
Natural and Scenic Area Grants: Helps local governments acquire and permanently protect lake, river and stream shorelands. About six miles of high quality shoreline has been protected since 1996.		X		OMBS
Metro Greenways Program: Helps local governments acquire and permanently protect fee title or easements on lake, river and stream shorelands.		X		Central Region

*OMBS - Office of Management and Budget Services
Central Region - DNR Central Region
Eco Resources - Division of Ecological Resources
Fish/Wildlife - Division of Fish and Wildlife
Forestry - Division of Forestry
Trails/Waterways - Trails and Waterways Division
Waters - Division of waters

Expand the Use of Biofuels, Including by Expanding the Feasibility or Reducing the Cost of Producing Biofuels

There are no DNR administered grant programs addressing this category at this time.

Appendix

Other DNR programs and efforts related to the "green economy": In addition to grant programs described above, the DNR administers several other programs that address the activities listed in the statutory definition of "green economy":

Native Prairie Bank Program: The purpose of this program is to protect native prairie through the purchase of conservation easements that allow the land to remain in private ownership. The easements are purchased by the DNR.

Native Prairie Tax Exemption: The purpose of this program is to conserve native prairie by providing property tax exemptions to private landowners on eligible native prairie lands. There are approximately 500 landowners and 12,000 acres enrolled in this program statewide.

Wetland Tax Exemption: This program provides a financial incentive to private landowners to maintain wetlands in their natural state and promotes an awareness of wetland values by exempting qualifying areas from property taxes.

Forest Legacy Program: This program protects environmentally important forests throughout the state threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. Federal funds and local matching funds are used to purchase development rights and conservation easements on these forests in targeted areas of Minnesota to keep them intact and continuing to provide forest benefits. All easements are perpetual and any new landowner is bound by the terms of the easement.

Forest Stewardship Program: This program provides technical advice and long range planning to interested private landowners. Plans are designed to meet landowner goals while maintaining the sustainability of the land.

Minnesota Future Forests Fund: This program encourages and enables public and private groups, corporations, and individuals to contribute to tree planting efforts by soliciting tax deductible donations to plant and care for trees on state land throughout Minnesota. Since its beginning, the program has received nearly \$22,000 in donations and has planted nearly 79,000 seedlings.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Critical Habitat Match Program: The purpose of this program is to encourage private citizens and organizations to help fund the acquisition and development of critical fish and wildlife habitat by having their

donations of land or cash matched from a special state fund. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, restoring wetlands, improving forest habitat, planting critical winter cover, protecting undisturbed plant communities, preserving habitat for rare plant and animal species, protecting native prairie and grasslands, and preserving spawning and reproduction areas for fish. Since 1986 the Minnesota Legislature has appropriated \$23 million for this program and the Critical Habitat Conservation License Plate has generated over \$3 million for acquisition and enhancement of critical habitat. Private donors have contributed land and cash totaling over \$26 million.

Trail Grant Programs: State and federal trail acquisition and development grant programs provide grants to local governments for regional trails and trail connection projects. These grants encourage development of trails not only for recreation but also for non-motorized transportation.

Fishing Pier Program: This program provides grants of up to \$25,000 to local governments for development and installation of fishing piers. Many of these fishing piers are located in areas that are within walking or biking distance, thereby reducing reliance on motorized transportation. They also offer a non-motorized fishing alternative.

Land Gifts: The purpose of this program is to conserve and enhance Minnesota resources by encouraging private landowners, nonprofit organizations, clubs and other groups to donate full or partial (easement) interest in property to the DNR or other tax-exempt organizations. The acquisition of land that adjoins existing designated management units, such as a wildlife management area or state forest, is a priority for the program.

Roadsides for Wildlife: This program encourages public road authorities and landowners to use Integrated Roadside Resource Management Techniques so that ecological values (water, soil, wildlife, native plants) are considered. Eligible projects include revegetation of roadsides with native grass and forb seed, demonstration plots on biological weed control, and native seed planting and harvesting equipment. Recipients are reimbursed up to 75% of eligible local ecotype native prairie seed costs, with a maximum cost-share rate of \$300 per acre.

Mineland Reclamation: The DNR and the Iron Range Resources board have worked together to produce 300,000 tree seedlings per year to reforest lands affected by mining. From 1978 through 2006 over 4.4 million tree seedlings, transplants and tree spade trees have been planted

Woodland Stewardship Program: This voluntary program provides private landowners professional forest management assistance. Assistance is provided through an on-the-ground visit by a forester, the preparation of an individualized forest management plan, and the ability to take advantage of cost share and tax incentive programs. Foresters write

Woodland Stewardship Program plans for roughly 70,000 acres of land per year. A goal of program managers is to complete plans for an additional one million acres by 2015. Consulting, industry and Soil and Water Conservation District foresters contract with the Division of Forestry to write stewardship plans. DNR foresters also write stewardship plans. In state fiscal year 2008 \$480,000 worth of contracts were made available to non-DNR foresters around the state.