



THE CONSERVATION FUND

*America's Partner in Conservation*

## Upper Mississippi Forest Project

### Fact Sheet

**Size:**

- Conservation Easement: 187,876 acres
- Additional Acres Purchased by DNR: 1,300

**Total Purchase Price:** \$44 million

**Location:** North-central Minnesota, specifically Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Itasca, Koochiching, and Saint Louis counties

**Partners:**

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- The Conservation Fund
- Blandin Paper Company (UPM)

**Funding Sources:**

- Clean Water, Land and Legacy constitutional amendment (\$34.25 million)
- Blandin Foundation (\$7 million)
- Richard King Mellon Foundation (\$2 million)
- Walmart Acres for America program (\$750,000)

**Significance:** The Upper Mississippi Forest project is the largest conservation project ever undertaken by the state of Minnesota.

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### **Environmental Benefits:**

- **Intact forest:** The property connects with existing public forest lands to create more than 4,000 square miles of uninterrupted forest habitat, providing shelter for wildlife today and potential resiliency to climate change over time.
- **Wildlife habitat:** A colorful collection of wildlife lives or travels across this forestland, including wolves, black bear, eagles, great gray owls, osprey, ruffed grouse, woodcock and neotropical migratory songbirds. Rare plants such as triangle moonwort, hidden-fruit bladderwort, white adder's mouth and dragon's mouth also call this land home. The property's value is recognized in the State Conservation and Preservation Plan.
- **Clean water:** This property includes parts of rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands that feed into or affect the Upper Mississippi River, which provides drinking water to millions of people, including residents of Minneapolis and St. Paul. More than 60,000 acres of wetlands and 280 miles of shoreline exist on the property.

### **Recreational Benefits:**

- **Public Access:** The project keeps this land open for outdoor recreation, including hiking, birding, hunting and fishing. The property is adjacent to hundreds of thousands of acres of existing public lands, including Chippewa National Forest, county tax-forfeit lands, Big Fork, Hill River, Golden Anniversary, Remer, Savanna and George Washington State Forests and the Sugar Hills and Koochiching conservation easement lands.
- **Hunting/trapping/fishing:** The project protects and provides access to 30 miles of state-designated trout streams, including spring-fed Smith Creek, 121 miles of other streams and 133 miles of lake and pond shoreline.
- **Hiking:** The project creates a new segment for the North Country National Scenic Trail, a congressionally-designated walking trail that crosses 10 states.
- **Snowmobiling:** The property includes more than 82 miles of trails for snowmobiles as well as ATV use on 32 miles of state-designated trails and over 200 miles of other routes, with safeguards to protect the environment and forest resources.

### **Economic Benefits**

- **Economic security:** This property will remain a working forest that produces pulp, paper and high value forest products. The property supplies 17 manufacturing facilities in Minnesota, supporting more than 3,200 working families and hundreds more in related businesses.
- **Property tax revenue:** The landowner will continue to pay property taxes on the land, maintaining this local revenue stream.