

2025 Landowner Basics

Minnesota Walk-In Access Program

Thank you for considering enrollment in the Walk-In Access Program. Since 2011, this program has successfully provided public access to private land, while compensating landowners for providing that access. When you enroll land in the Walk-In Access (WIA) program you are providing an easement to the state of Minnesota for the public to hunt, bird watch, photograph nature, etc. Landowners are afforded liability protection through the Recreational Use Statutes.

Individuals who have purchased a WIA Validation can access the land one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset from Sept. 1 to May 31. You and your minor children can hunt, bird-watch, etc. on the enrolled property without a WIA Validation, but everyone else must have the validation in their possession when utilizing land enrolled in the program.

No motorized vehicles are allowed except by the landowner performing normal maintenance or farm operations and the DNR sign crew.

Conservation officers have the authority to enforce violations on WIA areas relating to overnight use, alcoholic beverages, target shooting, hunting stands, abandonment of trash and other activities generally not allowed on public hunting areas.

Prior to giving written permission to an individual for an activity not identified in the agreement, ensure that activity does not impede public use of the land as agreed to in the landowner agreement. An example of an activity that would be considered an impediment is camping. Trapping is not considered to impede public hunting, but the WIA agreement requires that you or anyone you give written permission to trap must adhere to trapping regulations that apply to public land. Trapping regulations for public land can be found in the current year Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook. Please be aware that these areas are used most often by bird hunters and their dogs, and that trapping regulations for public land are designed to reduce the risk of catching non-target animals.

You have agreed to maintain the wildlife habitat that exists on the site from Sept. 1 to May 31 each year. It is in violation of your agreement to perform activities such as haying or grazing if those activities will reduce habitat during the that timeframe. If you need to carry out a management activity that may impact the quality of the habitat, notify your local SWCD or the DNR's Walk-In Access Coordinator in advance of performing those activities.

You will receive your annual payment by June 30, following the agreement year. For example, if your land is enrolled for 2025-2026, you will receive your payment by June 30, 2026.

The WIA agreement may be terminated by either party with a 5-day notice. Landowners must notify Amber Knutson, via email at amber.knutson@state.mn.us, or by mail at WIA Program Coordinator, MN DNR– Fish and Wildlife Division, 500 Lafayette Rd., Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020. If you terminate the agreement, you are responsible for removing the signs and posts, and delivering them to the nearest SWCD or DNR Area Wildlife office. Termination by the landowner after Jan. 1, will result in a pro-rated payment structure. Termination prior to Jan. 1 will result in no payment. Termination by the State resulting from a violation of the agreement will result in forfeiture of any compensation and will not be pro-rated.

If you have other questions, you can contact your local SWCD or DNR's WIA Program Coordinator, Amber Knutson at 507-706-6172 or amber.knutson@state.mn.us.