

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources permanently protects nearly 16,000 acres

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the DNR acquire land?

In collaboration with conservation partners and local governments, the DNR acquires land to protect critical wildlife habitat and other natural resources from development. Strategic land acquisitions also help provide a variety of recreational, economic, and environmental opportunities for the state. Our website has more information about [how and why the DNR acquires land](#).

What makes this particular land acquisition historic for Minnesota?

After completing two related transactions, the DNR has acquired nearly 16,000 acres of forest land in northern Minnesota, marking the agency's largest land protection effort in recent history. The historic acquisition ensures long-term habitat conservation, prevents forest fragmentation, and improves public recreation opportunities across ten counties.

How was this land acquisition achieved through collaboration?

In 2020, The Conservation Fund (TCF) purchased 72,000 acres from PotlatchDeltic Corporation to prevent fragmentation of large forest blocks, conserve habitat, and maintain forest diversity. TCF collaborated with the DNR, Northern Waters Land Trust (NWLT), and county partners to strategically plan the acquisition of these lands among the state, NWLT, and several northern counties. Alongside conservation partners and local governments, the DNR submitted a joint proposal to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, which recommended funding to enable the state and counties to purchase and permanently protect more than 18,000 acres of forest land in northern Minnesota.

Who can access the land now that it has been acquired by the DNR?

This newly protected public land belongs to Minnesotans and is open now for people to explore and enjoy. Thanks to TCF's leadership and the strong collaboration between the DNR, Northern Waters Land Trust, and county partners, generations of Minnesotans and

visitors will benefit from clean water, healthy forests, diverse wildlife habitat, and outdoor experiences that define northern Minnesota.

Where is the acquired land located?

Through this multi-agency partnership, in the first transaction, DNR purchased nearly 10,675 acres across Aitkin, Becker, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, and Wadena counties. In the second transaction, the DNR acquired 5,120 acres in St. Louis County. An [interactive map provides more details about the newly acquired parcels](#) in relation to DNR's existing public land portfolio.

How will this land be managed by the DNR?

The lands acquired by the DNR will become state forests, wildlife management areas, and a new scientific and natural area. Each designated area will be managed to accomplish the objectives of its land classification, including increasing recreational opportunities, protecting wildlife habitat and rare species, and promoting sustainable forest management. The new acres expand access to public lands.

What happened to the mineral rights of the acquired lands?

Through this acquisition, DNR purchased the surface rights to nearly 16,000 acres. These surface rights were acquired using conservation funds, and as a result, these parcels will be managed for sustainable conservation and outdoor recreation. The majority of acquired parcels have low mineral potential. For any questions about the mineral rights of the 16,000 acres of DNR-acquired lands, please contact the DNR Lands and Minerals Division [assistant director](#).

What will be the direct implications of this land acquisition on local government?

Payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) will be made on the parcels acquired by the DNR. PILT is a local government assistance program designed to compensate counties and other local government units for the loss of tax revenue resulting from state ownership of land. It was established to address the disproportionate impact of state land ownership in counties with large public land bases. The payment for lands purchased or donated by private parties is the greater of \$5.133 per acre or three-quarters of 1 percent of the appraised value of all such lands within the county. DNR's website has more information about the state's [PILT program](#).

Who can answer questions about this land acquisition?

Anyone can contact the DNR's Information Center by emailing info.dnr@state.mn.us or calling 651-296-6157. Our experienced representatives will connect you with DNR staff who have worked on this acquisition project and can provide you with more information.