



# Value and Benefits of Public Lands

Minnesota's lands and waterways support healthy environments, outdoor traditions and land uses.

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## Environmental benefits

Minnesota's natural lands provide clean air and water, provide wildlife habitat, protect watersheds, and provide aesthetic and cultural benefits.

Acquiring lands at the state and local level can:

- Provide space for rare plants, animals, and geologic features
- Absorb and store carbon to help human, plant, and animal communities adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Protect and grow forestlands, grasslands and wetlands
- Help mitigate hazards like fire and flooding
- Protect wellheads for communities

### ***Biological protection***

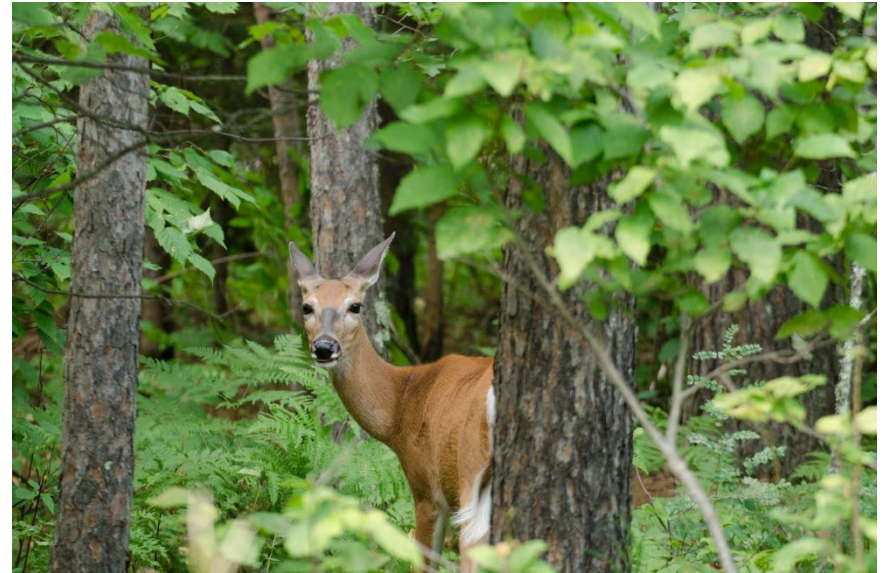
- Many remaining large natural landscapes are publicly owned and protected.
- Many of the state's best examples of rare and significant natural features (i.e. biodiversity hot spots) occur on public lands.
- 30 percent (or 75,000 acres) of the state's native prairie are protected on state-managed public land.
- 69 percent (or 2.1 million acres) of the state's mapped native plant communities are on public land.





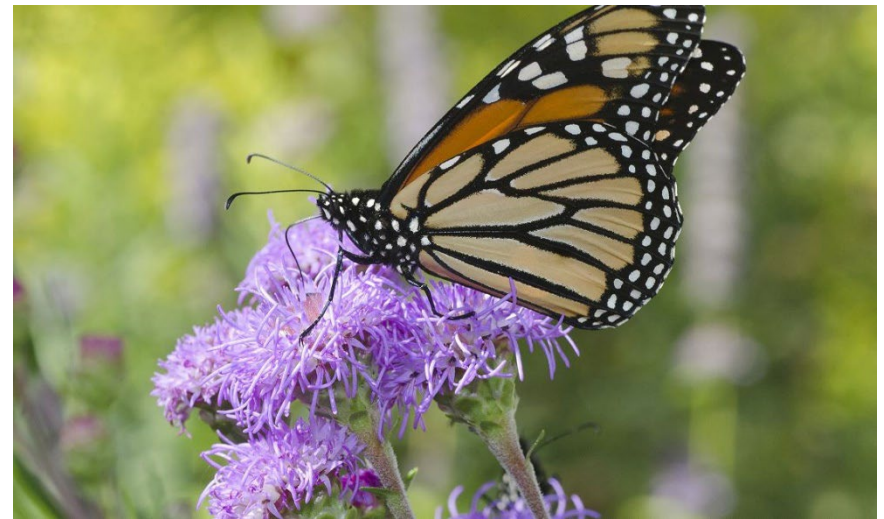
## ***Wildlife habitat, including rare species***

- Minnesota's public forests provide habitat for approximately 289 wildlife species and more than 20 game species.
- Minnesota's public prairies and grasslands provide habitat for approximately 128 wildlife species.
- Public lands provide important habitat for species that are facing serious threats that may cause them to become rare or to decline.
- 49 rare species (of 577 rare species statewide) are known to occur only on state and federal lands.
- Minnesota has the highest nesting population of bald eagles and loons in the continental United States.



## ***Pollinators***

- Public lands provide critical habitat for pollinators, including 33 species of butterflies, 400 species of native bees, moths and bumblebees with greatest conservation need.
- Public lands provide Minnesota researchers access to bee habitats throughout the state. Researchers are now working to complete the first update since 1919 of a state native bee species list.



## ***Resilient habitats***

- Intact natural lands help buffer extreme weather impacts associated with changing climate, such as slowing water flow during floods.
- Protected natural lands ensures that habitats aren't cleared and biodiversity is not displaced, keeping critical ecosystems intact.



## ***Climate change mitigation (biological carbon storage)***

- Minnesota peatlands, forestlands, grasslands, and wetlands are all important reservoirs of carbon. Minnesota peatlands – which are of global conservation significance – store approximately 745 metric tons of carbon per acre.
- Protecting and managing habitats stores carbon in these systems. Restoring these habitats will increase the amount of carbon the landscape can absorb.





## ***Research on public lands***

- Public lands, including wildlife management areas (WMAs), scientific and natural areas (SNAs) and state forests, provide areas for research that advance our understanding of natural systems.
- Research conducted on public lands includes plant and animal surveys, rare species habitat requirements, and investigations into the effects of natural land management. For example, DNR researchers have used public lands to survey native bees. Since 2014, 82 percent of bee surveys have occurred on public lands.



## ***Water quality, flood, and groundwater protection***

- 49 percent of the state's wetlands, lakes and rivers are on public land.
- Watersheds with abundant public land provide quality water for drinking, swimming, and fishing.
- Public lands buffer the impacts of floods and help replenish groundwater supplies.
- Sound management of forested public lands surrounding the Mississippi River ensures clean drinking water for more than one million Minnesotans.
- Grassland and wetland restoration reduces nitrates in water, decreasing harmful algal blooms in lakes, and increasing safe drinking water.
- Grassland, wetland, and forest restoration helps protect groundwater located on wellhead protection areas and drinking water supply management areas.



# Recreational impacts

Most Minnesotans (82 percent) consider outdoor recreation to be important to their lives.

Public lands provide space and access to a wide variety of outdoor experiences including recreational trails for snowmobiling, hiking, biking, skiing and off-road motorized use. Hunters and anglers have access to millions of acres of state hunting lands and waters. For others, state lands offer solitude and beautiful spaces for camping, wildlife watching and photography. Land acquisitions help to manage, protect, and grow the state's public land base for outdoor enthusiasts.



## ***Participation***

- Public lands provide spaces for 1.7 million anglers, hunters, and trappers.
- Public waterways welcome 826,000 registered boats every summer.
- Public trails grant access for 192,000 registered snowmobiles and 300,000 registered all-terrain vehicles (ATV's).
- State Park and Recreation Areas see 10 million visitors.
- 509,000 people per year travel to Minnesota's public lands to watch birds and other wildlife.



## ***Recreational economic impact***

- Hunting generates \$725 million dollars per year through direct expenditures in the state.
  - In the forested areas of northern Minnesota, 27 percent hunt only public land. In southwestern and southeastern Minnesota, more *than* 6 percent of deer hunters hunt only public land; more than half (54 percent) spend some time on public land.
  - Wildlife watching generates \$621 million dollars per year through direct expenditures in the state.
  - Trail users have spent \$3.3 billion dollars and contributed \$2.8 million dollars in local taxes which accounted for 43,000 jobs.
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- State Park visitors spend \$231 million dollars annually on trip-related expenses, such as food, lodging, and transportation.
  - State Park campers spend approximately \$40 dollars per person per day on average, nearly \$28 dollars of which is on expenses beyond payments in state parks.
  - Fishing generates \$2.4 billion dollars per year through direct expenditures in the state.



# Contributing to Minnesota's economy

Public land access is essential to supporting Minnesota's outdoor industry and billion-dollar economy.

Managing Minnesota's forestlands is important for the state's environment, economy, and communities. Minnesota's 59 state forests, school trust acres, and other forestlands make up 4.2 million acres of land managed by the DNR. State forests provide about 30 percent of the state's wood supply for an industry that employs 64,000 people.

In the last 10 years, mineral mining and exploration activities on public lands have contributed \$357 million to Minnesota's schools and economy.

## ***Timber production***

Each year, the DNR offers 870,000 cords of wood plus an additional 30,000 cords of ash and tamarack for sale from DNR-administered forest lands. This provides 30 percent of Minnesota's wood fiber for the forest industry. The gross revenue of timber harvested from School Trust Lands was \$11.8 million dollars in fiscal year 2020. Total gross timber revenue from all DNR-administered lands was \$20.5 million dollars in fiscal year 2020.

The forest products industry is Minnesota's fifth largest manufacturing sector by employment. It generates \$17.6 billion dollars in economic impact, 64,000 jobs and \$458 million dollars in state and local taxes. DNR-managed forest lands produced \$1.6 billion dollars in primary forest products and related sales in 2016. This is \$62 dollars in product sales value for every \$1 dollar spent on state land forest management.





About 5 million acres of state administered forest lands are certified “well managed” by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, including 2.5 million acres of school trust lands.

### ***Funding Minnesota schools and universities***

DNR-administered school trust lands generate income and funding for every K through 12 public school districts in the state. The Permanent School Fund’s revenue comes from activities on school trust lands, including forestry, iron mining, aggregate mining, peat mining, and leasing for mineral exploration. In fiscal year 2022, the Permanent School Fund is valued at over \$1.9 billion dollars and distributed \$36 million dollars to Minnesota’s K-12 school districts on a per- pupil basis.

Each year, mining on state-managed university trust lands supports about 3,000 Iron Range Scholarships, awarded to Minnesota resident undergraduates at the four campuses of the University of Minnesota system. These scholarships were worth \$4.6 million dollars in the 2019-20 school year.

