

May 8, 2024

Tom Hall, Forest Supervisor
Superior National Forest
8901 Grand Avenue Place
Duluth, MN 55808

Re: *Minnesota School Trust Land Exchange, Case No. 4558*
Agreement to Initiate: OMBS No. 0596-0105
Collection Agreement (OMBS No. 0596-0217, USFS 22-CO-11090900-018)

Dear Mr. Hall:

As you are aware, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has collaborated with the US Forest Service (USFS) on a proposed land exchange involving school trust lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) since August of 2012. The DNR understands that the USFS received considerable input, including from tribal governments, opposing a land exchange and calling for the state to sell school trust lands within the BWCAW to the United States. Consequently, the DNR hereby withdraws its land exchange proposal involving school trust lands within the BWCAW originally submitted to the Superior National Forest on August 22, 2012. The DNR also hereby retracts its letter dated January 29, 2021, which referenced the exchange proposal.

The DNR intends to explore the potential opportunity to condemn school trust lands within the BWCAW, followed by a direct sale to the USFS pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 92.82. The DNR has determined that this action is in the long-term best interest of school trust beneficiaries. The judgment award from any condemnation proceedings would be invested into Minnesota's Permanent School Fund to generate income for K-12 public schools in perpetuity.

As part of this shift in approach, the DNR requests that the USFS cancel the Collection Agreement (OMBS No. 0596-0217, USFS 22-CO-11090900-018)) and refund to the State of Minnesota any remaining balance on deposit for the exchange project. This will allow the DNR to use any remaining funds to initiate condemnation of school trust lands within the BWCAW.

The DNR has appreciated the USFS's collaborative approach on this project and looks forward to coordinating further regarding the potential approach outlined above. Please contact DNR Lands and Minerals Director Joe Henderson (joseph.henderson@state.mn.us) directly if there are any questions related to DNR's decision to withdraw the exchange proposal.

Sincerely,



Sarah Strommen
Commissioner

cc: Tony Dixon, Regional Forester, Eastern Region USFS
Jim Copeland, Deputy Regional Forester, Eastern Region USFS
Shawn Olson, Director of Lands, Eastern Region USFS
Joe Henderson, Director of Lands, Minnesota DNR
Patty Thielen, Director of Forestry, Minnesota DNR
Aaron Vande Linde, Director, Minnesota Office of School Trust Lands

Enclosures:

- August 22, 2012 letter
- January 29, 2021 letter
- Agreement to Initiate, OMBS No. 0596-0105
- Collection Agreement (OMBS No. 0596-0217, USFS 22-CO-11090900-018)