

Natural Resources Acquisition and Betterment of Public Lands

AT A GLANCE

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| 2022 Request Amount: | \$91,000 |
| Priority Ranking: | 3 |
| Project Summary: | \$91 million to acquire and better state lands in order to conserve Minnesota's natural resources, enrich outdoor recreational opportunities, and provide for sustainable commercial uses of natural resources. |

Project Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$71 million to acquire and improve DNR-managed public lands under M.S. 86A.12, and \$20 million to compensate the Permanent School Trust Fund under M.S. 84.027, subd. 18.

Acquisition: \$32 million is requested to acquire (either in fee or through easements):

- New and expanded Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) that reflect Pheasant Action Plan and Duck Action Plan priorities and provide match for Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) funding.
- High-priority parcels for Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs), focusing on in-holdings and adjacent parcels to existing SNAs, parcels already in public ownership, and those that may provide match for RIM funding.
- Strategic in-holdings for state parks and recreation areas, state trails, and public water accesses.
- Forested parcels, to protect important private forest lands threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.

Betterment of Public Lands: \$39 million is requested to improve public lands, including:

- Reforestation after timber harvests, forest pest outbreaks, and storms/wildfires.
- Forest stand improvement projects to enhance species diversity, resilience, wildlife habitat, water quality benefits, and economic value.
- Major safety projects at Pine Bend Bluffs SNA, as well as enhancing access (e.g. adding parking) at other SNAs.
- Renewal and replacement of campgrounds, recreation areas, and day-use areas to meet the needs of current users. This includes construction of a campground with off-highway vehicle access in the Beltrami Island State Forest.
- Renewal and replacement of public water accesses to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design standards; help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by adding boat-

cleaning areas; and protect water quality and enhance habitat for pollinators and other wildlife by incorporating native vegetation and best practices for stormwater runoff management, erosion control, and shoreline buffers.

- Priority stream restoration projects across the state, including the Whetstone Channel reconnection project.
- WMA Gateway development projects to create a more inclusive experience at select WMAs. Projects at the entry point and specific points of interest will facilitate learning, build confidence in outdoor settings and introduce visitors to a network of public lands that may otherwise be unknown to them.
- Adding more shore fishing opportunities across the state to enable and encourage anglers of all incomes, ages and abilities to enjoy fishing.

School Trust Land: \$20 million to compensate the Permanent School Trust Fund for designations that restrict the state's ability to maximize the long-term economic return from the land while maintaining sound natural resource conservation and management principles, consistent with M.S. 84.027, subd. 18.

Project Rationale

Minnesota's public lands are vital to the health and wellbeing of the state. They provide opportunities for those of all incomes and abilities to connect with and enjoy the benefits of the outdoors, and contribute to the health of local economies. The existing system of state lands is a legacy of generations of past investments. Continued investment is needed both to maintain the rich outdoor resources Minnesotans currently enjoy, and to ensure the state's public lands meet the needs of a growing and changing population. Investment is also needed to help ensure Minnesota's natural systems are resilient to the effects of climate change and other large-scale landscape impacts.

The projects identified above directly support the DNR's strategic conservation and resource management goals, as well as the wellbeing of local communities and economies. In addition, the projects further connect people to the outdoors, enhance the DNR's ability to serve all Minnesotans, and help the state mitigate and adapt to climate change. This funding is needed to improve the management and conservation of the natural resources of the state as provided for in M.S. 86A.12. Additionally, this funding will allow the DNR to make progress addressing the requirements under M.S. 84.027, subd. 18 regarding the School Trust Fund.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

In-holdings are the highest priority for acquisition.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This will have a minimal impact on operating budgets.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2020 (5th SS), Ch. 3 - Bond, Forests for the Future (i.e. easement acquisitions), \$1,000,000

L2018, Ch. 214 - Bond, Reforestation, \$3,000,000

L2017 (1st SS), Ch. 8 - Bond, Reforestation, \$1,000,000

L2017 (1st SS), Ch. 8 - Bond, Parks and Trails, \$14,548,000

L2017 (1st SS), Ch. 8 - Bond, St. Paul Invasive Tree Pests, \$1,500,000

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