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OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND DOLLARS TO PROTECT ARROWHEAD LAKESHORE

January 4, 2011, Duluth, Minnesota – Thanks to Minnesota voters who approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment in 2008, new Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars have found their way to Cook County where they will keep a key stretch of McFarland Lake shoreline in its natural state.

The 37-acre privately owned property has over 1,200 feet of shoreline and straddles the Arrowhead Trail on the east side of this popular gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The landowner donated a conservation easement to the non-profit Minnesota Land Trust in December. The property's natural shoreline, steep bluffs and undeveloped forest provide outstanding views from the popular Arrowhead Trail and from McFarland Lake.

“McFarland is representative of Minnesota's rich legacy of beautiful, productive and accessible lakes”, said Kris Larson, executive director of the Land Trust. “This lake is a high-quality gem of great importance to anglers, paddlers and others and the conservation easement will help protect the region's outdoor heritage while keeping the land in private ownership.”

The property is adjacent to a small, County-owned beach and boat access and is in close proximity to other public lands. According to Larson, projects that are nearby other county, state or federally protected properties makes the protection of nearby private lands all the more urgent so as to not diminish the prior investments made in the existing habitat complex. “One of the Minnesota Land Trust's goals is to fill in the gaps in protection”, says Larson. “The shoreline zone is important for numerous species, especially as spawning and nesting areas for fish.

Because much of these critical shoreline zones are found on private lands, conservation easements represent one of the most strategic tools available to permanently protect these resources while keeping the property on the tax rolls which is important to Northeast Minnesota.”

Land Trust protects shoreline

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While the landowner voluntarily donated the conservation easement, Outdoor Heritage Funds helped complete the transaction and ensure that the easement will be enforced in perpetuity.

“Safeguarding the public’s investment in this project is a priority,” according to Larson. “We visit all our protected properties annually to ensure that these lands continue to be preserved for conservation, just as the public intended. Thanks to the wisdom of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC), the state legislature and to the generosity of the landowners, we will have the resources required to protect this remarkable piece of Minnesota.”

This is the first project to be completed through the Minnesota Land Trust’s Critical Shoreline Habitat Protection Program which was recommended for funding by the LSOHC through the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF). The overall goal of the program is to protect over 100 miles of sensitive shoreline habitat throughout the state over the next 10 years, thereby complementing the goals of county comprehensive plans, the DNR’s Aquatic Management Area program, the State Conservation and Preservation Plan and many others. The current focus of the program is to permanently protect shoreline habitat with an emphasis on the priority trout streams, lakes and wetlands in northeast Minnesota’s Arrowhead region.

The Minnesota Land Trust is a member-supported, non-profit conservation organization working state-wide to preserve Minnesota’s natural and scenic heritage. The Land Trust has completed 415 land-protection projects that preserve over 37,000 acres of land and more than 750,000 feet of fragile shoreline, primarily through the use of perpetual conservation easements with willing landowners. With offices in Ely, Duluth, Red Wing and St. Paul, the organization also provides assistance to local communities to achieve their own conservation goals. More information can be found online at www.mnland.org.

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