

FA 01: Minnesota Heritage Forest – Transition to Public Ownership Program

Northern Waters Land Trust and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, A joint Outdoor Heritage Fund grant proposal



County	NWLT	DNR	Totals
Aitkin	320 acres	686 acres	1,006 acres
Becker	80 acres	200 acres	280 acres
Beltrami	286 acres	0 acres	286 acres
Carlton	0 acres	495 acres	495 acres
Cass	120 acres	2,974 acres	3,094 acres
Crow Wing	110 acres	585 acres	695 acres
Hubbard	1,849 acres	2,690 acres	4,539 acres
Itasca	0 acres	1,330 acres	1,330 acres
Koochiching	560 acres	1,608 acres	2,168 acres
Saint Louis	1,000 acres	0 acres	1,000 acres
Wadena	3,355 acres	120 acres	3,475 acres
Totals	7,680 acres	10,688 acres	18,368 acres

Why one proposal now and not a phased approach?

This is a unique opportunity to permanently protect 18,368 acres of forested land in an efficient and cost-effective way. Land protected at this large scale has extraordinary benefits for habitat, wildlife, and water quality. In addition, this project is supported by the community at large.

Why is NWLT working on behalf of the Counties?

NWLT is a trusted environmental nonprofit who specializes in fee title acquisitions that benefit habitat and water quality. NWLT has a history of partnering successfully with counties to protect land. NWLT is working with all 9 Counties simultaneously, which will result in one transaction, high efficiency, and lower costs overall.

How was the purchase price determined?

This estimate was received from The Conservation Fund and was based on their purchase price in 2020 plus their holding costs up to the anticipated closing date.

Describe the working relationship with Counties and Tribal Nations.

MN DNR and NWLT have worked closely with all Counties and Tribal Nations where these lands are located. Through project engagement and collaboration, parcels were systematically prioritized, selected and overwhelmingly supported. The Tribal Nations and Counties that opted not to participate are proceeding with protection efforts through other means.

Why are there different timelines for MN DNR and NWLT?

MN DNR is using existing bonding dollars to pay for the appraisal, which will begin in the fall 2023. This will potentially allow DNR to close on the purchase by June 30, 2025. NWLT has budgeted for appraisal costs in this OHF proposal. The appraisal would begin July 1, 2024 and plans are to purchase the property by December 31, 2025.

Submitted Letters of Support

- Aitkin County
- **Backcountry Hunters and Anglers***
- Bearville Township, Itasca County
- Becker County
- Beltrami County
- **Bemidji Area Forestry Affairs Council***
- Bigfork Township, Itasca County
- Carlton County
- Carpenter Township, Itasca County
- Cass County
- Center Township, Crow Wing County
- Crow Wing County
- Holyoke Township, Carlton County
- Hubbard County
- Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations
- Itasca County
- Jennifer O’Neill, Cass County landowner
- Koochiching County
- Leech Lake Association
- **MN Conservation Federation***
- MN Deer Hunters Association
- **MN Timber Producers Association***
- National Wild Turkey Federation, MN Chapter
- Saint Louis County
- The Conservation Fund
- Wadena County
- Whitefish Area Property Owners Association

*Newly submitted letters

How will these lands expand habitat complexes?

Keeping *forested land, forested* will allow **forest habitat complexes to expand**. The example of Hubbard County to the right clearly illustrates how these prioritized parcels adjoin existing protected land, contributing to habitat connectivity in northern Minnesota.

Habitat Benefits Include:

- Enhanced Connectivity
- Migratory Pathways Maintained
- Biodiversity Conservation
- Ecosystem Services Safeguarded
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Watershed Protection
- Long-Term Sustainability

*The Hubbard County highlight is one of **many** examples of habitat complex expansion throughout this project.

What is the assurance these lands will be managed for habitat?

Both DNR and County administered lands will be managed according to these practices:

- Integrated natural resource management processes.
- Land management plans that are based on ecosystem principles.
- Site-level protection and monitoring.
- Managed in accordance with Outdoor Heritage Fund standards and statute requirements.

Master Map, Minnesota Heritage Forest Project

Focus Area: Northwest Corner of Hubbard County

