

The Brule-St. Croix Legacy Forest Easement

DNR is proposing the largest conservation purchase in state history, an easement on 67,300 acres in Douglas, Bayfield, Burnett and Washburn counties. Using the state's Stewardship Fund and the federal Forest Legacy Fund, the purchase would support tourism and keep the land open for public recreation in perpetuity. It would stay in private ownership and be sustainably managed for forestry, generating property taxes, maintaining the character of the north and supporting 60,000 jobs in the state's \$18 billion forest products industry. The state Natural Resources Board will review the proposed purchase at its May 23 meeting. If approved, the department will forward the proposal to lawmakers and the Governor for final approval.

LOCATION:

The Lyme St. Croix Forest Company (LSCFC) land located in Douglas, Bayfield, Burnett and Washburn counties within the headwaters of the St. Croix and the Bois-Brule Rivers in Wisconsin's Northwest Sands area.



TRANSACTION DETAILS:

- In the largest conservation project in state history, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would purchase a conservation easement on approximately 67,300 acres of forestland from LSCFC. The Company will continue to own the land and sustainably manage the forest for timber production, while the conservation easement will permanently protect the area and keep it open for public use and nature based outdoor activities. The recreation and forest product drivers of the regional economy will be sustained.
- The transaction is based on two phases. Phase I is anticipated for action at the May 2012 Natural Resources Board meeting, is for a working forest easement on 44,679.09 acres at a price of \$252 per acre, or \$11,260,000. Phase II, also an easement, covers 22,667.71 acres at a cost of \$6,007,000. Phase II is proposed as a 2014 transaction. DNR will apply for federal forest legacy funds and use Stewardship. Phase I is funded by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Taken together, the project will protect 67,346.8 acres as sustainable, working forest land permanently open to the public for outdoor recreation.
- The easement keeps this significant forest area in productive forest use under private ownership. The long term forestry use will help support the timber industry and related jobs and also provides a very large area for permanent public access for hunting, fishing, trapping, cross country skiing, bird-watching and hiking. The land will remain in undeveloped condition and will be managed by the private landowner to insure productive pine forests while benefiting globally significant Pine Barrens habitat found in the area.

CONSERVATION VALUES:

- Comprised of working timberland, the area includes approximately 80 small lakes and ponds, 14 miles of streams, and globally significant Pine Barrens habitat.
- Adjacent to more than 950,000 acres of existing public lands; will provide permanent public access for many outdoor activities. More than 20,000 acres of the easement area are within the Brule River State Forest.
- Includes a segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail.
- Provides access to miles of trails for snowmobiling and ATV use. Approximately 47 miles of snowmobile trails in the easement area will be maintained.
- Prevents forest fragmentation and conserves habitat for the area's sharp-tailed grouse, gray wolf, white-tailed deer, black bear, woodcock, and migratory songbirds.
- Includes suitable habitat for the Karner blue butterfly, Kirtland's warbler, and Canada lynx – all federally listed endangered/threatened species. Karner blue butterfly and Kirtland's warblers have been sighted in these counties recently.
- Safeguards drinking water supply for many northern communities including Solon Springs, Minong, and Webb Lake.
- Walk-in access points on 12 lakes. Many of the streams support brook trout.
- An important benefit of the easement is that it will keep this fire-prone area free from scattered development, which reduces fire starts and makes it easier to protect lives and property when fires do start.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

- The property provides wood products to 12 pulp, saw timber and telephone pole processing mills and other supporting industries in the region. The forest products industry employs 60,000 workers and provides \$18 billion in economic value in wood and paper products. Wisconsin leads the nation in employment and the value of shipments in the forest products industry.
- The easement insures permanent management of the land as a sustainable, working forest, which will safeguard the livelihoods for regional and statewide workers.
- Property remains in private hands generating property taxes.
- In 2010, tourism expenditures in this 4-county area totaled \$346,578,723 and supported 8,791 jobs. Statewide, tourism has more than \$12 billion in economic impact each year and supports many jobs.



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