



*Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation*

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Tax ID # 41-1887906

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Dear Landowner:

We all cherish those special experiences that makes northern Minnesota's lake country such a unique place - fishing, hunting, birding, canoeing, exploring the lakeshore or simply sitting at the end of the dock enjoying a spectacular sunset. Perhaps your experiences in this region have been enriched because they have been shared with several generations of your family and friends. But you also know that things are changing. The impacts of increased development threaten our clean lakes, healthy forests, and abundant fish and wildlife habitats.

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation has an opportunity for landowners **to protect our water quality, preserve critical habitat, and receive compensation for keeping this region unique and special.** In 2014, we launched our Clean Water Critical Habitat program in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust and with funding provided from the Outdoor Heritage Fund as part of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. With this program, landowners are applying conservation easements on lakeshore and forested parcels near cold-water lakes that are **considered some of the best lakes in the region.** See the enclosed fact sheet for a more complete description of this program.

**Your property has been identified as a high priority for protecting the health of one of these cold-water lakes.** Your land can play a vital role in the protection effort.

Researchers have established a direct correlation between development and declining water quality. Once a lake becomes degraded, attempts at lake restoration are extremely expensive and often ineffective. With this program, we have an opportunity to make wise investments today that will **protect your lake and avoid costly challenges** that other regions are facing.

We are eager to meet with interested landowners who want to learn more about conservation easements and how preservation of land can protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. **Here is your opportunity to protect the place you love and receive compensation for doing it.**

Deciding to protect your land is a meaningful and important decision. This is a competitive program and I hope you will review the fact sheet and consider submitting a landowner application. Please contact us with your questions at your earliest convenience. The application deadline is **July 31, 2018.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy DonCarlos".

Kathy DonCarlos  
Land Protection Program

*Preserving Land to Protect Water*

## Desired Conservation Easements

Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation is looking for parcels of land that are at least 20 acres in size. For owners of parcels larger than 20 acres the owner can donate or sell a conservation easement on a portion of the property, while retaining building site(s) or other parcels on portions of the property that are not within the conservation easement.

Parcels that are largely undeveloped help to protect water quality and habitat in sensitive cold-water lakes. Water drains into a lake from land that can stretch miles into the upland landscape. Even if not adjacent to a lake, tracts of undeveloped land protect the health of a lake.

## What are Conservations Easements?

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values. Easements will be held by the Minnesota Land Trust, a nonprofit 501(c) (<http://www.mnland.org/>) in perpetuity. See “Frequently Asked Questions” or FAQ on the Minnesota Land Trust website (<http://www.mnland.org/easement-faq/>).

Across the country, landowners have found that conservation easements offer great flexibility while providing a permanent way to protect the land they love. Conservation easements on private lands provide many public benefits for the protection of water quality, shorelines, scenic views, fish and wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation.

A landowner retains all rights to the property not specifically restricted or relinquished by the easement. The landowners still own the land and has the right to use it for any purpose that is consistent with the easement, to sell, to transfer or to leave it through a will. Landowners also retain the right to restrict public access.

A landowner may either sell or donate a conservation easement. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it may qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the value of the land with the easement and its value without the easement. Contact your tax advisor for specific advice on your situation.

## PROJECT PARTNERS



*Aitkin, Cass, Crow-Wing, and Hubbard Soil and Water Conservation Districts*