



Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation

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Dear Landowner,

We all cherish that special experience that makes Northern Minnesota's lake country such a unique place, whether it's fishing, hunting, birding, or simply sitting at the end of the dock and enjoying a spectacular sunset. Perhaps you are among the fortunate enough to have shared this experience with several generations of your family and friends. But you also know things are changing. The impacts of increased development and use threaten our clean lakes, healthy forest, and abundant fish and wildlife habitats.

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation has a very unique opportunity to offer landowners - **the ability 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 with funding provided by the Outdoor Heritage Fund. This program will acquire conservation easements on lakeshore and forested parcels in the watersheds of selected high quality lakes that are **consider some of the best lakes in the region.** See the enclosed fact sheet for a more complete description.

I have sent you this letter because your property has been identified as high priority for protection in one of these selected watersheds. Your land can play a vital role in the protection effort.

Researchers have established a direct correlation between development and declining water quality. We only have to look at the lakes in other parts of the country to see the impacts poor water quality can have. 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 mistakes** that other regions are facing.

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

Since this is a competitive program, I urge you to review the fact sheet and landowner application, and contact us with your questions at your earliest convenience. The application deadline is **May 12, 2017.**

Sincerely,

Lindsey Ketchel
Executive Director



Conservation Easements

Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation are 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.

A landowner retains all rights to the property not specifically restricted or relinquished by the easement. The landowner still owns 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.

What are Conservation 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 in order to protect its conservation values. Easements would be held by the Minnesota Land Trust, a nonprofit 501(c) (<http://www.mnland.org>) in perpetuity.

There is a very good "Frequently Asked Questions" or FAQ on the Minnesota Land Trust website at: <http://www.mnland.org/easement-faq/>

Landowners have found that conservation easements offer great flexibility, yet provide a permanent guarantee that allow landowners to protect the land they love. They are the number one tool available for protecting privately owned land. Conservation easements provide public benefits, such as protection of water quality and shoreline, scenic views, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, education, or historic preservation.

A landowner may sell a conservation easement, but often easements are donated. 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 land's value with the easement and its value without the easement. Your tax advisor can give you advice on this.

PROJECT PARTNERS



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