

Reinvest in Minnesota Lakeshore and Forest Conservation Easement Fact Sheet



The Purpose of the Multi-Benefit Watershed Scale Protection for North Central Lakes project is to acquire approximately 600 acres of strategic lands (shoreland and forest lands) for permanent protection within the watersheds of priority “tullibee refuge” lakes in Cass and Crow Wing counties to achieve multiple conservation benefits. Benefits include: water quality and drinking water protection, a sustainable sport fishery, forest fragmentation reduction, wildlife habitat connectivity, economic stability, and a legacy of quality recreational opportunities for Minnesotans.

The watershed of a lake or river is the area of land in which all the water that runs off it flows into one location, a lake or river. By protecting key shorelands and forestlands in the watersheds of high quality lakes, we preserve the filter that protects lakes from increases in nutrients and sediment. Increases in nutrients and sediment into lakes can degrade water quality and fish habitat for species such as tullibee, a major food source for Minnesota’s game fish.

Eligible lands will be primarily forested lands and shorelands located in the Leech Lake and Pine River watersheds in Cass and Crow Wing Counties. Priority lakes include Ten Mile, Roosevelt, Thunder, Washburn, and the Whitefish Chain of Lakes –some of Minnesota’s premier recreational lakes.

This program is a partnership effort between the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, the Cass and Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources with generous funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as administered by the Legislative Citizen’s Commission on Minnesota Resources.

How the Program Works: Landowners send “Letter of Inquiry” applications to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation on the forms provided. The Foundation forwards applications to the Cass or Crow Wing SWCD for review and collection of background information. A program Technical Team then scores and ranks all the applications and the highest scoring applicants will be contacted first. If funds remain or high scoring proposals cannot be completed, the next highest scoring applicants are contacted. This process continues until all available funds are allocated.

Successful applications go back to the SWCDs for completion of a “conservation easement”. Applicants must fill out a formal application to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) which the SWCD then processes. A District representative will work with applicants to collect the necessary parcel and land title information. When completed, a final conservation easement agreement is signed between the applicant and BWSR and the deed is recorded. These agreements are perpetual and run with the land title (i.e., remain with the land regardless of ownership), permanently restricting certain development and land use activities.

Payment Rates: Unlike other programs, the acquisition price of the easement is based on a percent of the county tax assessed value, which takes into consideration variations of ecological suitability. The SWCD representative can tell you what that is for your parcel at the beginning of the process.

A **conservation easement** is a legal agreement between the holder of the easement and a landowner. The easement places permanent restrictions on the land for long-term conservation purposes. Lands with conservation easements remain in private ownership. The easement property may be sold or transferred, but the conservation easement will permanently encumber the land. The following terms are typically part of a forest conservation easement.

- Development and subdivision. This would limit the rights of the landowner to subdivide, construct buildings or have commercial, industrial or residential developments or uses on the easement property.
- Existing houses, barns, or other buildings or developed areas, roads, driveways, trails, and utility easements are not included as part of the easement property.
- The easement would restrict surface disturbances such as mining, drilling or excavation.
- The easement would prohibit the conversion of forest to non-forest uses. Forests must remain as forest.

Deadline for consideration in the priority ranking process is May 31, 2017. More information is available at the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation website ([click here](#)).

Do you have questions?? Contact:

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