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THE CONSERVATION FUND, ST. LOUIS COUNTY EXPAND PUBLIC FORESTS IN LANDMARK EFFORT

Over 4,600 acres now protected

DULUTH, Minn. (Aug. 5, 2025) — Thousands of acres of northern Minnesota forestland are now publicly owned and protected under an initiative by The Conservation Fund and St. Louis County.

As part of The Conservation Fund's Northern Minnesota Working Forests Initiative, the St. Louis County Land and Minerals Department has acquired 4,643 acres of valuable timberlands from The Conservation Fund for integration into county managed forest lands. The land sale agreement, which was first announced earlier this year, was finalized Aug. 4.

These acres were earlier part of an industrial timberland portfolio held by PotlatchDeltic Corporation. Recognizing the threat of fragmentation when PotlatchDeltic began to sell its holdings, The Conservation Fund acquired these tracts starting in 2018 to safeguard the acres and create a path for public ownership.

"The Conservation Fund exists to take on exactly these kinds of complex, high-impact projects," said Kim Berns-Melhus, Minnesota state director at The Conservation Fund. "By acting quickly and strategically, we were able to secure these working forests and partner with St. Louis County to the benefit of so many Minnesotans."

Under county oversight, the acres will be managed at the local level for wildlife habitat, public recreation and sustainable forestry.

"These are productive, ecologically significant forests that will now remain in public hands," said Jason Meyer, Land Commissioner for St. Louis County. "This is a smart investment in long-term forest health, local jobs, and the public's ability to access and enjoy these lands."

The parcels involved were selected for their ecological value, proximity to existing county-managed public forests, and potential to improve habitat connectivity and forest management efficiency. The acres will be open for public uses including hunting, hiking, and other recreational activities, while supporting wildlife and sustainable timber production.

"St. Louis County has a strong tradition of balancing smart forest stewardship with meaningful public access, and we're proud to support them in that work," said Berns-Melhus. "This is conservation at its best — local, collaborative and built to last."



About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America's natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit www.conservationfund.org.

About St. Louis County

Spanning 7,000 square miles, St. Louis County is the largest county east of the Mississippi River. It is home to 200,000 people and an abundance of natural resources including lakes, forests, wetlands and minerals. The county, through its Land and Minerals Department, manages nearly 900,000 acres of Tax-Forfeited Trust Lands on behalf of the state, establishing practical resource management programs based on responsible stewardship and sustainability.

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