



Where Minnesota School Boards Learn to Lead

November 21, 2017

The Honorable Tony Tooke
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Tooke:

The Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) and The Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD) support a combination of land sale and exchange to transfer School Trust Lands located in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) to the United States Forest Service (USFS) using the Plan B model.

Almost 10% of lands within the BWCAW are School Trust lands that were granted by the United States to Minnesota at statehood, with the intent to provide a source of continued revenue for public schools. Approximately 83,000 acres of the School Trust Lands have been locked up in the BWCAW and unable to generate revenue for the trust for over 50 years. The Superior National Forest, by agreement with the State, manages these lands as interwoven fabric of the BWCAW landscape. Limitations imposed by the Wilderness Act directly conflict with State law that directs School Trust management to "secure the maximum long-term economic return."

Plan B is a three-step proposal to accomplish the purchase component of the Hybrid Model whereby the Conservation Fund would purchase private forest lands in St. Louis County and exchange the parcels for School Trust Lands located in the BWCAW. The USFS will then buy the former School Trust Lands from the Conservation Fund with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The purchase and exchange of the School Trust Lands will proceed on similar timelines. The St. Louis County Board approved a resolution supporting the transactions at its September 26, 2017 meeting. In addition, several other area councils and boards have passed resolutions in support of the sale/exchange.

Together, we support the plan that will ensure the transfer of land to the School Trust Lands and thus the generation of revenue for Minnesota's school trust beneficiaries—850,000 K-12 public school children. The students deserve the benefits from the lands that were granted to Minnesota at statehood for the support of public education.

Sincerely,

Kirk Schneidawind, Executive Director
Minnesota School Boards Association

Steve Adams, Chair
Association of Metropolitan School Districts

cc: Kathleen Atkinson, Regional Forester, Eastern Region, U.S. Forest Service
Connie Cummins, Supervisor, Superior National Forest, U.S. Forest Service
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Al Franken, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Rick Nolan, U.S. Representative

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