

Monitoring Conducted

Land Purchase

In 2007, the Superior National Forest (SNF) purchased two parcels of land, the Clarke property, a 35.20 acre tract valued at \$176,000 and the Long Island Phase I property, a 12.5 acre tract valued at \$500,000. The Clarke property, with 1,100 feet of lakeshore frontage, was one of four privately owned parcels on Johnson Lake surrounded by SNF land and adjacent to Voyageur's National Park. The Long Island South Phase I tract is the first of a three-phase 43.60 acre island property acquisition. This property provides unique large island habitat for nesting blue heron, osprey and loon with over 1 mile of undeveloped lakeshore on Burntside Lake. Both the Clarke and Long Island tracts are located in St. Louis County, Minnesota. Acquisition of these properties will help maintain the environmental, social and economic benefits of the Superior National Forest by protecting its character.

Land Exchange

There were no exchanges completed in FY 2007 but three cases continued to be worked on.

One of the three ongoing exchanges is with the South Kawishiwi Cabin Group, LLC, where 424 acres of Federal land would be exchanged for 1,254 acres of private land of equal value. This assembled exchange would eliminate administration of the South Kawishiwi River Recreation Residence tract, containing 30 recreation residence permit sites, and result in federal acquisition of key crucial tracts within the Superior National Forest. The private lands are located on the LaCroix, Kawishiwi and Laurentian Ranger Districts in management areas General Forest, Recreation Use, General Forest Longer Rotation, and Wild Scenic and Recreational River. These parcels contain significant amounts of riparian habitat and consolidate federal ownership. The proposed Federal lands for exchange are located in Township 62 North, Range 11 West, Sections 28, 32, and 33 and Township 61 North, Range 11 West, Sections 5 and 6, Lake County, Minnesota. Reservations proposed include a road easement in Township 62 North, Range 11 West, Section 28 and 33 and reservation of all minerals and underground workings on the entire federal tract. The Federal lands are located in the General Forest and Recreation Use management designations and conveyance of federal land underlying recreational residences are specifically allowed by SNF Forest Plan direction.

The second ongoing exchange is with Lake County in which 2,814 acres of Lake County lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) would be exchanged for Federal lands of equal value. The nonfederal lands are scattered throughout the Lake County portion of the BWCAW. There are 40 separate blocks of contiguous nonfederal ownership with an average block size of 70 acres. The Lake County lands are in all four management areas of the BWCAW: pristine, primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized. The proposed Federal lands for exchange are located in Township 56 and 57 North, Range 9 West, and Township 63 North Range 11 West. Lake County would divest itself of all ownership in the BWCAW through this exchange.

Lands Summary Points

- * Two properties totaling 47.70 acres valued at \$676,000 were purchased.
- * No land exchanges were completed.
- * Through the Conveyance program, properties totaling 5.02 acres of land with structures were sold for \$385,517.
- * As part of Thye-Blatnick Act to appraise Federal lands within the BWCAW, an appraisal contract was issued and the BWCAW is currently being appraised. New values are to be determined by October 1, 2008.
- * The Trust for Public Land secured three parcels (Long Island, Wolf Island and Chain Saw Sisters).

The third exchange in process is with the Crane Lake Sustainable Land Corporation to exchange approximately 272 acres of federal land for 265 acres of nonfederal land of equal value. This land exchange would eliminate three special use permits in the Crane Lake area currently managed by the LaCroix Ranger Districts: the Fire Hall, telephone building and Town of Crane Lake sewer line pipes. The vacant Federal parcels will provide for economic development opportunities for Crane Lake. A portion of the lands to be acquired are located in the East Bay of Crane Lake and are adjacent to the BWCAW. The proposed Federal lands for exchange are all located in Township 67 North, Range 17 West, Sections 23 and 26, near the community of Crane Lake in St. Louis County, Minnesota.

Pilot Conveyance

The Interior and Related Appropriations Act, known as Pilot Conveyance, permitted the SNF to sell structures that were no longer needed for present or future management needs. The SNF's pilot conveyance project consisted of 4 sites: a portion of the former Isabella Administration site, two former outfitting businesses (Hibler and Border Lakes) located on Fall Lake, and a former tower site in Ely. The SNF undertook the task of subdividing the Isabella site into 9 lots known as Trappers Landing. During Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, the SNF was successful in selling the Hibler property and six lots within Trappers Landing. In FY 2007, the SNF was successful in selling the tower site, Border Lakes and lots 1 and 7 within Trapper's Landing. With the closing on these properties, the SNF deeded 5.02 acres of land with structures and received \$385,517 in sale proceeds.

BWCAW Appraisal

The Thyre-Blatnick Act (PL80-733) passed by Congress in 1948 requires that every ten years an appraisal be conducted to determine the appraised market value of the Federal lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Section 5 of the Act states that an amount equal to three-quarters of one per centum (0.75%) of the approved appraised value is paid each fiscal year to Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties, State of Minnesota. Payment would be in lieu of the property taxes the counties would have received, if in private ownership, and in lieu of receipts from the 25% fund. The SNF is in the process of completing a new appraisal for the 2008 payment determination. In FY 2007, an appraisal contract was issued. The project will be completed by September, 2008 with new values determined by October 1.

Third Party Partnership

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a non-governmental organization and is a vital partner for the SNF in securing parcels of land that would otherwise have been sold and possibly subdivided and developed.

Parcels purchased by TPL and held for future acquisition by the Forest Service includes:

Long Island located on Burntside Lake. This was a privately owned island that had been surveyed and the south half subdivided and marketed. TPL was successful in purchasing the whole island and is currently holding the land for future transfer to the Forest Service. The SNF acquired a portion of the south half of the island in FY 2007 and will complete acquisition of the entire island in FY 2008, due to TPL's support in securing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding.

Chain Saw Sisters was a well known rest stop providing cold beverages at the famous Chainsaw Sisters Saloon and provided a vehicle parking lot at one of the most popular entry points into the BWCAW. This 27 acre parcel is located 18 miles out of Ely off the Echo Trail on Picket Lake and borders the BWCAW at Mudro Lake.

Wolf Island is a 60-acre island located on Lake Vermilion near Tower Minnesota. The island is rich in Native American sites, including burial mounds. Increases of private ownership and development have been occurring at a high rate on Lake Vermilion. Less than 10% of Lake Vermilion lakeshore is federally owned. The acquisition of this unimproved island would prevent future subdivision and development and preserve the Native American sites and pristine character of the island. TPL is in the process of acquiring the entire island and will hold the land for future transfer to the Forest Service.

Clarke is a 35.2 acre parcel located on Johnson Lake and is adjacent to the Voyageurs National Park. This property is one of four private parcels on Johnson Lake. The SNF acquired this property in FY 2007 due to TPL's support in securing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding.

Another 3rd Party partner is the Friends of the Boundary Waters who assisted the SNF through working with TPL in providing some of the funding necessary for TPL to acquire the Chainsaw Sisters tract of land. Their support lead to the acquisition of the Chainsaw Sisters parcel and preventing it from being further developed and allowing for the land to be returned to a pristine state.

Trends in Forest Land Sale Activity within the Superior National Forest

During April, 2007 University of Minnesota researcher Mike Kilgore prepared a report for the SNF that summarized private land sales within the SNF proclaimed boundary during the period 1989 through 2005 (see [Kilgore 2007](#)). The intent of the report was to provide us land activity trends particularly parcelization. Parcelization is defined as fragmenting land ownership into smaller blocks. While forest parcelization may not appreciably alter the physical integrity of the landscape (i.e., the landscape may still be forested), it has the potential to adversely impact forest land uses in a number of ways. These include the economic viability of managing forests for wood products, impacts to wildlife habitat, and reducing public access to private forest land for outdoor recreation. Such information could be valuable in our cumulative effects analysis, access management, land adjustment program, or other analysis. Key findings of Kilgore's report are as follows:

- Although annual sales activity fluctuated from 1989-2002, only a modest trend of increasing forest land sales occurred. However, during the last three years of the study period (2002-2005), forest land sales within the SNF increased dramatically, nearly doubling during this four year period.
- From a statewide perspective, sales within the SNF accounted for about 7 percent of all forest land sales in Minnesota from 1989-2005. Nearly 44,000 acres of forest land sold in the SNF from 1989-2005.
- From 1996-2005, forest land sales acreage increased an average of 22 percent per year.
- Most of the increase in forest land sales activity within the SNF from 1989-2005 can be attributed to small acreage parcels – those that are from 20-40 acres.
- Taken together, the data provides no evidence that parcelization of forest land within the SNF over the 17 year study period is occurring.
- However, major participation by real estate and development entities in forest land purchases within the SNF in 2005 could be cause for concern, as such purchases often lead to resale of this land in a parcelized state.
- Accumulation of private forest land within the SNF boundaries by individuals accelerated in recent years, with over 13,000 additional acres owned by individuals since 2002. Potential implications of more private forest land within the SNF boundaries being owned by individuals include less intensive management for timber (particularly on the forest land sold by forest industry) and conversion to more intensive land uses (particularly on the land sold by land development and real estate investment firms).

Evaluation and Conclusions

There are no Decade 1 objectives or projected conditions for land adjustments. Instead, the SNF works to secure an ownership pattern that enhances long term resource management objectives. During 2007, land adjustments resulted in a net gain of approximately 85 acres to the Forest. Since 2004 approximately 855 acres have been added. Moreover, completed and pending land adjustments are in fact consolidating SNF lands, particularly within the BWCAW, resulting in ownership patterns that better meet resource management objectives.