

Southeast Minnesota Forest Bank

A Private - Non-Profit Partnership for Sustainable Forestry in Minnesota's Scenic Blufflands

What is it?

An innovative private forest conservation program, where landowners permanently protect their woods as working forestland through conservation easements.

How it works:

Landowners sell a conservation easement on forested land they own to the Forest Bank, preserving it as a working forest and giving the Forest Bank affirmative rights to manage it sustainably, according to an agreed upon management plan.

Outcomes:

- ❖ Forests are protected through permanent working forest easements
- ❖ Landowners receive a steady annual income from the management of their forests
- ❖ Preserves and increases the amount of forests being sustainably managed for high quality forest products in the regional "woodshed"
- ❖ Improved timber quality in the managed stands
- ❖ Ensures that examples of sustainable forest management will remain present in the landscape
- ❖ Allows a larger volume of wood to be managed collectively, for a steadier flow of high quality timber

Sustainable management of all enrolled lands provides the forest products industry with a stable supply of well managed timber for harvest, keeping high quality, local timber available to mills.

Proceeds from that management are available as a potential source for additional conservation actions, including restoration, pre-commercial timber operations, further easement purchases, or new incentive payments to landowners.



Benefits to landowners:

- ❖ Financial compensation from the easement purchase
- ❖ Management plan eligible for 2c classification
- ❖ Woods are managed sustainably by a professional forester

Benefits to the public:

- ❖ Prevents conversion and parcellization of forestland
- ❖ Increased use of BMPs in timber harvests
- ❖ Protected forests provide clean water, sequester carbon, and maintain the region's scenic beauty

Benefits to Industry:

- ❖ Protected forests remain a source of local timber
- ❖ Quality of available timber increases
- ❖ Concentrated planning keeps a consistent harvest rate for a steady flow of timber to mills

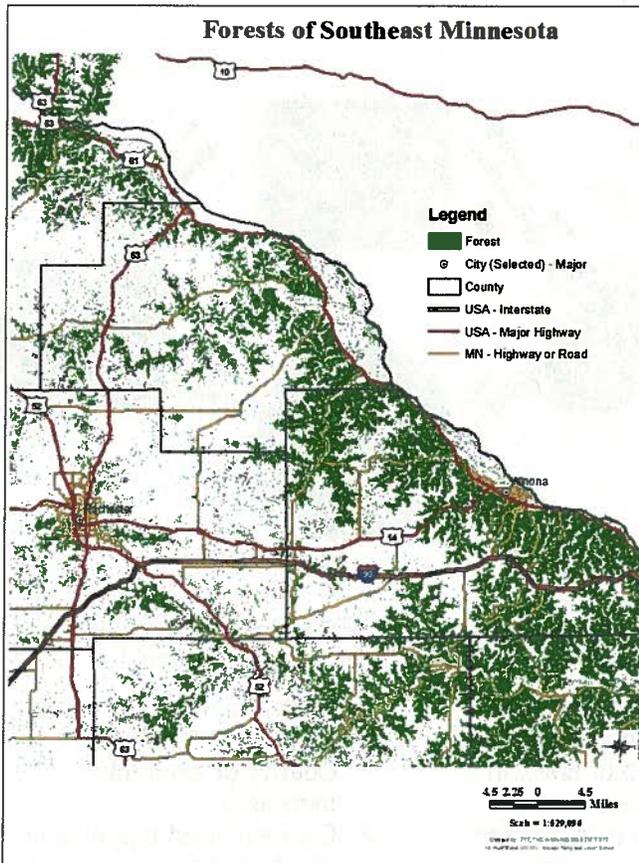
How can we make it happen?

Steps to launch the program-

- ❖ Gain cooperation of a land trust with an established easement monitoring and enforcement program to provide organizational support.
- ❖ Secure funding to purchase the first easements and timber rights for pilot properties.
- ❖ Work with the first group of enrolled landowners to develop long-term forest management plans for their properties that will satisfy their objectives and protect the conservation values of the property while providing needed revenue for the Forest Bank
- ❖ Use current work in the area (e.g. healthy forests for healthy waters) to build relationships with landowners and find opportunities for expansion.
- ❖ Find donors, investors, and/or other sources of early credit to finance the project until harvests are sufficient to cover all expenses

After the first forests are enrolled-

- ❖ Help landowners enroll in desired tax incentive programs
- ❖ Work with industry to increase logger training and education, ensuring proper BMPs and harvest techniques are carried out on Forest Bank managed land, while also raising the skill level of operators in the region
- ❖ Use managed properties as demonstrations of the benefit of long term forest management, and to attract potential new landowners to the program



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Southeast Minnesota Forest Bank Project

This project will result in the permanent protection and sustainable management of working forests in Southeast Minnesota's scenic Blufflands, providing cleaner waters, enhanced habitat, and higher quality timber for the people, wildlife, and industry of the region.

Objective: Creation of a working forest protection program to enhance Southeast Minnesota's forest products economies through increased private forestland management

Project Summary

The Southeast Minnesota Forest Bank is an innovative conservation program being developed by citizens and forestry professionals (MFRC's SE Committee) committed to stewardship of the land. The project aims to promote healthy forests, improve and protect water quality, and produce a full range of forest products in a sustainable manner.

What Do We Have? The Bluffland forests of Southeastern Minnesota suffer from a lack of management, placing the quality of the forest resource at risk. This decline in forest management is impairing forest ecosystems; allowing rapid spread of invasive plants, increasing the incidence of forest fragmentation and conversion, and deteriorating the public and private benefits of a healthy forest.

What Do We Want?

- Healthy and productive private forests that produce quality forest products, while also providing ecosystem services, recreation opportunities, and scenic value to the region
- Forest management activities emphasizing sustainable management and best management practices (BMPs).
- Viable landowner incentives that provide economically viable options to promote forest management for landowners.
- Permanent conservation and management of healthy, natural communities.

How Do We Get There?

- Use completed feasibility studies to attract partner organization to hold and manage easements.
- Build off past and ongoing landowner outreach and assistance to find initial members.
- Use public and private funding sources to purchase working forest easements.
- Pursue other possible public or private funds to finance early operating and management costs and landowner payments.

For more information: See www.frc.mn.gov

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Forests of Southeast Minnesota

