

School Board Meeting/Workshop:

December 11, 2017

Subject:

Resolution supporting the sale of School Trust Lands

Presenter:

**Scott Thielman,
Superintendent**

SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOARD ACTION:

Recommend approval of School Trust Land Resolution

DESCRIPTION:

The following information is provided by the Minnesota School Boards Association:

MSBA has long supported the issue of School Trust Lands. Significant strides have been made in the last five years, beginning with the appointment of a School Trust Lands director. MSBA is recommending districts pass a resolution to support the purchase and exchange (proceeding in tandem) of School Trust Lands in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

Nearly 10 percent of lands within the BWCAW are School Trust Lands that were granted by the United States to Minnesota during statehood, with the intent to provide a source of continued revenue for public schools. The Superior National Forest, by agreement with the state, manages these lands. Limitations imposed by the Wilderness Act directly conflict with state law that directs School Trust management to "secure the maximum long-term economic return."

The 83,000 acres of School Trust Lands within the BWCAW have been prohibited from providing any economic support since 1964. Minnesota, the Superior National Forest, and interested stakeholders devised a strategy to address this in 2010. The strategy is a "Hybrid Model," combining the Forest Service's purchase of 53,000 acres with an exchange of 30,000 acres.

Recently, a three-step Plan B has been proposed to accomplish the purchase component of the Hybrid Model. (1) The Conservation Fund would purchase private forest lands in St. Louis County. (2) The Conservation Fund would exchange the parcels for School Trust Lands located in the BWCAW. (3) The United States Forest Service (USFS) would buy the former School Trust Lands from the Conservation Fund with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

MSBA supports a combination of land sale and exchange to transfer School Trust Lands located in the BWCAW to the USFS, using the Plan B model to ensure that thousands of acres of private forest land in northern Minnesota will be transferred to the School Trust. Plan B is an alternative that provides for a continued source of revenue for

Minnesota schools, allowing for a sustained yield and stable employment for industries, and providing thousands of acres of land for public recreation.

ATTACHMENT(S):

School Trust Lands Resolution