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Comments: I have followed this issue for many years. I was on a task forces, both as a citizen member of the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources, in the late 1990s and early 2000s that sought a resolution. Both sides have valid points. The land was intended to support schools and is barred from use by the Wilderness Act. At the same time, the state has had a major economic benefit from the BWCAW, a benefit that would be lost if cabins, logging and mining created a crazy quilt of non-wilderness uses in the area. And, of course, the estimates of value frequently expressed are quite inflated. Most of these lands are inaccessible or would have very high costs for development and consequently have relatively little economic value for sale. Several ideas were suggested for a resolution. One with merit, to charge a surcharge on BWCAW permits to buy out the land was determined not administratively feasible. Finally, a mixed plan, was adopted. This called for a modest land exchange to consolidate state parcels and not adversely impact the overall Superior National Forest, and have most acquired by at a fair appraised value, was adopted by representatives of all groups: the recreational industry, wilderness advocates, state and federal officials, and the timber industry. I believe a small land exchange giving the greatest benefit of this proposal to the timber industry did occur, but the larger effort for a major School Trust Fund economic infusion by the purchase of these inholdings was stymied, due to a small group in who thought they could "get a better deal" for more logging. The State actively sought this compromise, but it was never funded and adopted by Congress. Stalemate or, more aptly, stagnation resulted.

I think this is a fabulous outcome for the School Trust and for the Wilderness. I strongly support its adoption and implementation. It resolves the issue and gives the Trust Fund fair value; it protects the Wilderness and prevents wholesale checkerboarding of the Superior NF. This is a great time to make this finally happen. The full funding of LAWCON (from off-shore lease revenues for drilling) is in place and Minnesota's delegation is well positioned to accomplish this result. I hope the process proceeds as proposed.