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Comments: I am in favor of the federal government purchasing 80K acres of school trust lands for the following reasons:

The current proposed purchase of these 80,000 acres by the Federal Government aims to resolve this long-standing issue by providing a one-time payment to the School Trust while keeping the lands under federal protection within the BWCA. This benefits all parties involved, particularly those who care about the Boundary Waters and protected, public lands surrounding the Wilderness. Here's why.

Preserving Public Lands: This purchase avoids a potential land swap that could have shrunk the Superior National Forest and opened up vast swaths of area to extractive industries like logging and mining. Keeping these lands under federal protection ensures their preservation for future generations.

Expanding Public Access: As part of this agreement, an additional 17,000 acres of land outside of the Boundary Waters, held by The Conservation Fund, will also be purchased. This expansion of public land within the Superior National Forest will increase access for everyone, providing more opportunities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment of Minnesota's natural beauty.

Resolving Historical Conflicts: This purchase addresses long-standing concerns about School Trust Lands within the BWCAW. These lands, set aside in the 19th century to generate funding for public schools, have been barred from economic use due to the passage of Wilderness legislation. The purchase will provide a one-time payment to the School Trust, resolving this economic dilemma while maintaining the integrity of the Wilderness area.

This agreement represents a balanced approach that honors both the educational mission of the School Trust Lands and the environmental importance of the Boundary Waters. It's a reminder that with cooperation and creative problem-solving, we can find solutions that benefit both our communities and our natural heritage.