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Comments: I support the purchase of all private lands included in #66600 by the US Forest Service using Land and Water Conservation Fund money. The BWCAW deserves to have these lands permanently protected to enhance the value of the area and to fulfill its real purpose in being designated Wilderness.

The 80,000 acres of state school trust lands inside the BWCAW, and the 3,200 acres of St. Louis County land included in the land purchase package will increase the efficiency of administering and protecting the BWCAW as a Wilderness, and prevent future state or county governments from developing these lands.

These lands must be purchased by the US Forest Service as a federal purchase will provide far more income to Minnesota's Permanent School Fund than would a land exchange, according to analyses by the local Timberjay newspaper and others. These lands must be purchased as a land exchange with the Forest Service for Superior National Forest lands outside the BWCAW for some of the school trust lands inside the BWCAW has been tried in the past but was abandoned as prohibitively costly and too cumbersome to implement. Also, the demand for recreational public land is huge and increasing, so the loss of any public land for public use only exacerbates the increasing pressures on the remaining public lands. Any public lands outside the BWCAW gained by the state will be immediately lost to any future public use as, has been stated by pro-development legislators in the past, the state would "log and mine the hell out of those lands" once an exchange had occurred.

Unlike the assertions of the local legislators, a federal purchase is perfectly legal under the Weeks Act. Furthermore, Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund for just such purposes. Again, as a public land owner, I fully support the purchase of the lands as proposed under #66600 because public land should always be open to the public - never locked shut and controlled by private interests.