

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/17/2024 2:39:13 AM

First name: Jordan

Last name: Vaughan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I wholeheartedly support the proposal to use money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to purchase Minnesota school trust and St. Louis County tax-forefeited land within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and transfer them to the federal government, adding them to the existing Wilderness. This is superior to a land exchange for numerous reasons:

First, administering a sale would be cheaper and easier than exchanging titles.

Second, purchasing the lands, including their mineral rights, would ease administering them and the rest of the BWCAW as Wilderness. The Minnesota Constitution and supplementary law forbid the transfer of mineral rights in land exchanges, according to the Timberjay, a newspaper from St. Louis County ("Sale of trust lands would yield far more than an exchange," published August 15, 2024, <<https://www.timberjay.com/stories/sale-of-trust-lands-would-yield-far-more-than-an-exchange,21838>>, accessed September 16, 2024). Purchasing the land and its rights would reduce future administrative complexities because the Forest Service would not have to consider lingering mineral rights in its plans.

Third, the same article in the Timberjay details estimates from Minnesota's Office of the School Trust Lands (OSTL) that show that purchasing the lands would probably provide far more revenue for the state's school trust than leasing lands acquired in an exchanged. The state could immediately invest revenues from the sale in numerous, diversified investments, both local and abroad, whereas leasing the lands for timber sales (the most likely use of exchange lands) would yield far less far slower. Department of Natural Resources administrative costs would also eat into timber sale revenues. Considering the administrative savings for the Forest Service, this creates a win-win for the Forest Service and Minnesota's children.

Federal law permits purchasing state-owned inholdings inside designated Wildernesses (per the Weeks Act and the Wilderness Act of 1964). Congress specifically created the Land and Water Conservation Fund for such purchases. Please ignore the ill-informed naysayers who argue that the federal government cannot purchase such state lands.

Thank you for your consideration and for proposing the best deal for our children and the lands, waters, and wild creatures within the Wilderness.