

WALZ-FLANAGAN BUDGET TO MOVE MINNESOTA FORWARD

Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan’s Budget to Move Minnesota Forward includes critical one-time investments to advance the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ work on behalf of Minnesotans. The budget invests a total of \$316.8 million in infrastructure, climate adaptation and mitigation, and drought relief.

The budget includes \$221.4 million in capital bonding to address critical issues such as improving access to the outdoors, advancing safety and community wellbeing, and rehabilitating aging – and in some cases failing – infrastructure. The supplemental budget includes \$81.5 for DNR-managed public lands, facilities and infrastructure to reduce carbon in the atmosphere and adapt to current and future climate change impacts. Additionally, \$13.35 million in the supplemental budget is in response to the significant adverse effects of the 2021 drought on two of the state’s critical natural resources: water and trees.

The summary below is presented by investment category to give a holistic picture of these important investments and help illustrate how, regardless of funding source, they will combine to best address Minnesota’s natural resources needs.

Trees (\$25.55M)

An acre of mature evergreen forest can hold as much as 140 tons of carbon per year. That’s why increasing the number of trees in Minnesota and proactively managing forest lands are powerful, commonsense approaches to offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to tree planting and reforestation needs, the 2021 drought had significant negative impacts on some of Minnesota’s tree cover. This investment will help address high seedling mortality and assist communities in replacing shade trees damaged by the drought.

Seedling mortality (Drought: \$5.55M)

Replace seedlings that didn’t survive the drought on DNR-managed lands and develop and implement a pass-through grant program to assist tribal, county, and private forest owners who are also faced with drought-related reforestation needs.

Private forest management support (Climate: \$5.5M)

Provide planning assistance and cost-share funding for private woodland owners, whose lands are powerful resources for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Reforestation (Bonding: \$5M)

Replant and seed trees after timber harvests on established and newly acquired public lands.

Community tree planting (Bonding: \$5M)

Mitigate the loss of shade trees from pests and disease to support climate change mitigation, public health, and water quality.

Community ReLeaf (Drought: \$4.5M)

Provide shade tree grants to communities to replace drought-stressed trees and acquire tree watering bags and equipment to support tree survival in the future.

Land Acquisition (\$26.5M)

The DNR purchases land and interest in lands to protect, conserve, improve, consolidate, and expand recreational and natural resource opportunities throughout the state. Public lands capture and store carbon; increase climate resiliency by increasing water storage and thereby reduce flooding risk; and protect habitat for wildlife, pollinators, and other species, which will help them adapt to future climate conditions.

Acquisition for climate mitigation and adaptation (Climate: \$24M)

Acquire new public lands to support recreation and conservation, with the goal of decreasing the state's net greenhouse gas emissions.

Acquisition and Betterment of Lands (Bonding: \$2.5M)

Acquire high-priority parcels.

Land and Water Restoration (\$26M)

Climate change is already impacting our natural lands and waters. For example, more intense storm events are accelerating streambank erosion and flooding, and those impacts are predicted to increase as the climate continues to change. However, natural lands restoration presents an opportunity to mitigate climate impacts and enhance the resiliency of natural systems by storing additional carbon, retaining more water during storm events, and improving plant and animal diversity and habitat. Similarly, by restoring streams, replacing culverts, and repairing water control structures we can mitigate damage to natural resources during climate-driven flooding events, facilitate fish passage, and protect waterfowl habitat.



Stream restoration (Climate: \$13M)

Restore streams and replace culverts where needed to enhance climate resiliency of Minnesota fisheries and waterfowl production wetlands and lakes.

Grasslands and wetlands restoration (Climate: \$10M)

Enhance grasslands and restore wetlands on existing state-owned wildlife management areas to sequester more carbon and enhance climate resiliency, while also providing better pollinator and wildlife habitat.

Natural Resources Asset Preservation (Bonding: \$2M)

Repair or replace deteriorating water control structures that provide waterfowl habitat and support fisheries on key shallow lakes and wetlands across Minnesota.

State park native plant restoration (Climate: \$1M)

Restore plant communities in state parks to maintain the beauty of these landscapes for current and future visitors to enjoy.

State Lands (\$40M)

Much of Minnesota's camping and related outdoor recreation infrastructure was developed in the 1930s and 1960s and is not designed to meet the needs of today. For example, many of today's campers and outdoor recreationists travel with larger family groups, arrive with multiple vehicles, and have a variety of recreational vehicles and/or boats. Surveys and visitation patterns also suggest many current visitors prefer higher-amenity experiences compared to previous generations and now need access to technological infrastructure to accommodate self-service payment and remote work while vacationing. These changing trends necessitate reconfiguring spaces to allow for more separation between visitor groups and augmenting and refining the variety of experiences the DNR provides in state parks, recreation areas and forest campgrounds.

Lake Vermilion development plan (Bonding: \$12 M)

Construct the visitor center and design future campground and trail additions.

Natural Resources Asset Preservation: Water and Wastewater (Bonding: \$10 million)

Address aging and failing water and wastewater infrastructure statewide, including at Itasca, Myre-Big Island, and Fort Snelling state parks to meet current health and environmental standards.

Trails and roads (Climate: \$8M)

Upgrade state park roads and trails to withstand more intense rainfall to ensure they remain useable into the future.

Accessibility (Bonding: \$5M)

Make comprehensive accessibility improvements to high-use state parks and wildlife management areas.

Betterment of Buildings: New shower buildings (Bonding: \$5M)

Replace campground shower buildings at state parks to enhance their safety, functionality and accessibility while reducing maintenance costs.

Public Water Access (\$20M)

Minnesota is renowned for its abundant water recreation opportunities. Recreational boating is a \$3.1 billion economic engine in Minnesota that relies on public water access infrastructure to serve boaters, paddlers, anglers, and many related industries. There are roughly 820,000 watercraft registered in Minnesota, and this number has held steady for the past decade. Minnesota leads the nation in the number of watercraft per capita with one boat for every six people.

The DNR owns and operates nearly 1,700 public water access sites (PWAs) on Minnesota's lakes and rivers. PWAs are mainly used to launch and retrieve watercraft; however, the sites are also available for many other activities, including angling, swimming, and nature observation.

The DNR and water recreationalists want well maintained, safe and climate-resilient PWAs that have longer launch ramps; more parking spaces; docks to aid in launching; stormwater management; shoreland buffer areas; accessibility improvements; and aquatic invasive species boat cleaning areas.

Boating access (Climate: \$10M)

Rehabilitate PWAs to repair climate-driven flood and ice damage and to reconfigure the sites to ensure they are still functional in the face of future climate change.

Natural Resources Asset Preservation (Bonding: \$10M)

Repair or replace PWAs to address deferred maintenance, enhance safety and accessibility, and meet modern design standards.

Fishing Infrastructure: Piers/ Shorefishing/Hatcheries (\$22M)

Minnesota's renowned fishing heritage is supported by fish hatcheries that are in critical need of renewal and modernization. An investment in these facilities will address the two highest-priority needs (Waterville and Crystal Springs hatcheries) to help ensure quality and sustainable fish populations across Minnesota and support fishing opportunities into the future.

The DNR also manages 360 shorefishing and fishing piers across the state for land-based angling. Many new and occasional anglers, families and children, and Minnesotans with more limited economic resources rely on these facilities. This aging infrastructure requires investment to revitalize sites, increase accessibility and add facilities where communities are currently underserved.

Betterment of Buildings (Bonding: \$10M)

Address critical renewal and replacement needs at the Waterville fish hatchery, which is nearly 70 years old, including replacing the main hatchery building, adding biosecurity measures, constructing a discharge water treatment system.

Hatcheries (Climate: \$10M)

Modernize and adapt fish hatcheries so they are resilient to climate impacts and can support healthy, climate-adapted fisheries.

Betterment of Land: Shorefishing/Piers (Bonding: \$2M)

Revitalize and add shorefishing infrastructure to serve Minnesota anglers.

Drought Relief (\$13.35M)

While drought is a natural process and can provide ecological benefits, it also stresses both natural resources and our systems for managing those resources. This was certainly the case with the 2021 drought. The drought stressed well-established shade trees in communities and caused an extremely high mortality rate for tree seedlings planted in 2021. The DNR took necessary steps to mitigate the drought's impacts, in accordance with the Statewide Drought Plan, but more needs to be done.

Water conservation grants (Drought: \$3M)

Grants for municipal, tribal, and other community water suppliers to implement proactive water conservation measures in their own infrastructure, and to incentivize their residential and business customers to install water-efficient equipment.

Well interference (Drought: \$300,000)

Reimburse or directly pay corrective action costs incurred by domestic well owners and municipalities to resolve DNR-confirmed well interference problems in a rapid, efficient, and equitable manner.

Seedling mortality (Drought: \$5.55M; also noted in trees category above)

Replace seedlings that didn't survive the drought on DNR-managed lands and develop and implement a pass-through grant program to assist tribal, county, and private forest owners who are also faced with drought-related reforestation needs.

Community ReLeaf grants (Drought: \$4.5M; also noted in trees category above)

Provide shade tree grants to communities to replace drought-stressed trees and acquire tree watering bags and equipment to support tree survival in the future.

DNR Investments in Walz-Flanagan Budget to Move Minnesota Forward by Funding Category

	Capital (Bonding)	Drought Package (General Fund)	Supplemental Budget: (General Fund)
Taking care of what we have: Natural Resources Asset Preservation (\$110.8M)			
Building components, site infrastructure, bridges, monitoring wells	65,800		
State Park water and wastewater systems	10,000		
Public Water Accesses	10,000		10,000
Roads and trails	25,000		8,000 (\$5M trails; \$3M park roads)
Betterment of Buildings: Modernizing facilities and meeting future needs (\$36.4M)			
Hatcheries	10,000		10,000
State Park shower buildings	5,000		
Office buildings, natural resources facilities (e.g. state forest nursery, drill core library)	21,400		
Betterment of Lands: Investing in Public Lands (\$15M)			
Acquisition	2,500		24,000
Reforestation \$5M post-harvest \$5.55M replacing drought-damaged seedlings	5,000	5,550 (includes state, county, tribal, and private lands)	
State land improvements: shorefishing (\$2M), Gateway Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, camping/day use	7,500		
Wildfire aviation	7,800		
State land accessibility (State Park/ WMA)	5,000		
Dam safety	8,000		
Flood hazard mitigation	20,000		
Lake Vermilion State Park	12,000		
Local and regional parks and trails grants	1,000		
Community Trees/ReLeaf MN grants	5,000	4,500	
Upper Sioux Agency SP bond defeasance	250		
Grant administration	185		

continued

	Capital (Bonding)	Drought Package (General Fund)	Supplemental Budget: (General Fund)
Water conservation grants		3,000	
Individual and small community well interference		300	
Private forest management			5,500
Grasslands and wetlands enhancement and restoration on wildlife management areas			10,000
State park native plant restoration			1,000
Stream restoration, culvert replacement			13,000
Subtotal	221,435	13,350	81,500

“The Budget to Move Minnesota Forward can address critical issues such as climate change, improving access to the outdoors, and rehabilitating and modernizing aging – and in some cases failing – outdoor infrastructure. These are important investments that will connect Minnesotans to the outdoors and maintain our high quality of life throughout the state.”

–DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen

You can find more information on DNR investments in the Budget to Move Minnesota Forward on the DNR website.