

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Office of the Commissioner

[Note: This letter was sent to all three counties involved in the 1991 Order review (Beltrami, Marshall, and Roseau).]

September 29, 2000

Mr. Steve Booth
Beltrami County Board Chair
Beltrami County Courthouse
619 Beltrami Avenue NW
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601

Dear Chairman Booth:

This letter is to relay to you the Department of Natural Resources draft recommendations related to the Consolidated Conservation (Con-Con) lands under review as described in Chapter No. 485 (H.F. 3213) Section 25 of the 2000 Legislative Session. The lands under review are commonly referred to as the 1991 Order lands. This letter is in response to Section 25(e) of the law which requires me to report my draft recommendations to the respective county boards by October 1, 2000. This recommendation is based on the oral and written comments received at the open house events, through U.S. mail, e-mail, fax, and hand delivery.

Please let it be known that my draft recommendation for the lands under review is that all the lands under review be formally designated as Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) by the Minnesota State Legislature.

Three issues came through as key in the comments received: 1) payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) is very important to each county; 2) sustainable timber harvest must continue; and 3) all terrain vehicle (ATV) access to and through these lands needs to be addressed. I feel this recommendation can address all of these issues.

Formal WMA designation will allow for protection of the valuable natural resources found on these lands. This was a concern expressed by many of the groups providing comments.

In addition, WMA designation will maximize the PILT payment to each county as adjusted by the 2000 legislative session. Sustainable timber harvest will continue in order to create and enhance habitat to meet long term management objectives. WMA designation will not significantly impact the level of timber harvest into the future. The existing revenue sharing formula will not change.

I am also fully committing this department to work with the appropriate groups in developing an ATV corridor trail plan for the Con-Con lands as described in Section 16 (97A Subd. 3) of this law. An initial meeting is being scheduled in Thief River Falls to begin concept development of the plan. This meeting will take place no later than the week of November 13, 2000. The intent of the plan is to connect existing corridors and communities. The date specified in the law for which a plan is due is January 15, 2003.

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Regional Director, Paul Swenson has scheduled a meeting with your county board during the month of October to help answer any questions you may have and provide more in depth information. You should feel free to contact him at his office at (218)755-3623, or Wayne Edgerton at (651)297-8341 if you have any questions or concerns in the mean time.

I want to thank you and your board for your continued interest in this effort. I look forward to your response to my draft recommendation for these lands.

Sincerely,

Allen Garber
Commissioner

cc: Paul Swenson, Region 1 Director
Wayne Edgerton, Con-Con Project Coordinator
Senator Moe
Senator Stumpf
Senator Lessard
Representative Tunheim
Representative Skoe
Representative Ozment
DelRay Larson, Marshall County Commissioner
Ben Kleinwachter, Marshall County Commissioner
Russell Walker, Roseau County Commissioner
Ron Ottersted, Beltrami County Commissioner
Jim Heltzer, Beltrami County Commissioner
Bob Milne, Beltrami County Land Commissioner