

Reforestation & Forest Stand Improvement

Minnesota’s iconic forestlands benefit every corner of the state. We share responsibility to keep it that way.

The Nature Conservancy works to protect the land and water on which all life depends for a world where nature and people thrive. As a global, science-driven organization, we leverage science, innovation and collaboration to address threats to biodiversity and respond to a changing climate.

With record significant loss of Minnesota’s forest canopy from spruce budworm infestations coupled with growing wildfire impacts, threats to state forests and the benefits they provide are larger than ever.

The best opportunity in Minnesota to address these threats—while supporting benefits like clean water, habitat, recreation and timber-based economic activity—is to maintain, improve the health of, and expand tree planting across state forests.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Reforestation program ensures crews can replant trees after timber harvest in response to fires, wind events and insect and disease outbreaks, and restore forest in areas that were historically forested.

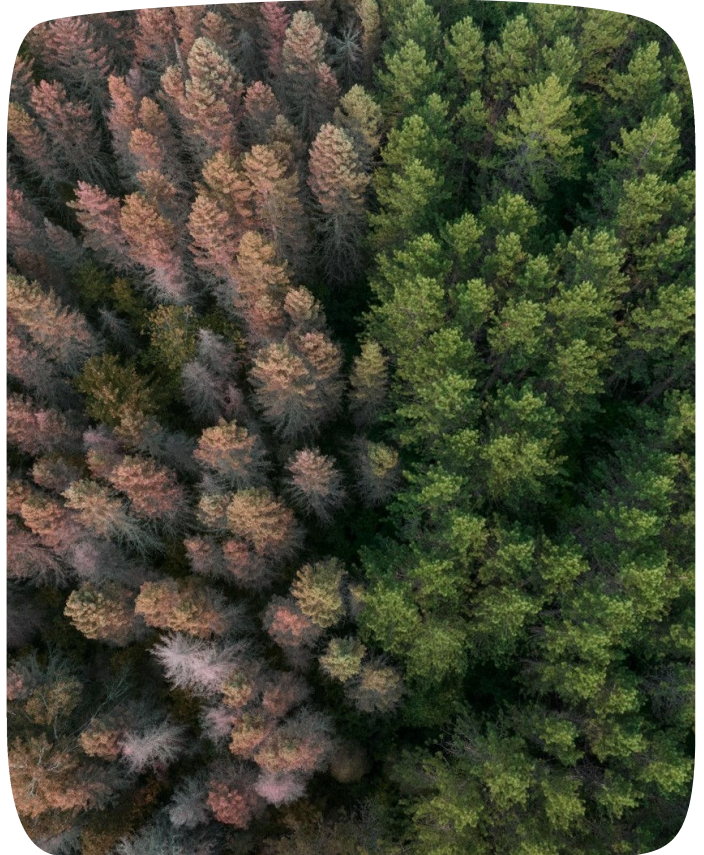
The DNR’s Forest Stand Improvement program helps crews maintain those state assets to ensure forest health and vitality. Both activities are highly dependent on regular state capital investments.



Piling spruce budworm-killed balsam fir to be burned. © Chris Dunham/TNC



Tree planting along a lake after the Camp House Fire © Chris Dunham/TNC



Spruce budworm-killed white spruce next to healthy red pine © Ryan Pennesi

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\$10 million
Recommended for 2 years
of DNR reforestation

+



\$8 million
Recommended for DNR
forest stand improvement

State of Play:

- Due to underinvestment, Minnesota forests are underperforming compared to their potential to provide timber, habitat and carbon storage.
- Markets and policies shape the forest, and have had an impact on preparedness for and response to challenges like forest pests, wildfire, and management outcomes.
- Over 180,000 acres of forest land have seen losses from invasive forests pests like spruce budworm-killed balsam fir trees resulting in significant amounts of dead, highly flammable material, putting people and forests at risk.
- In recent years, DNR has planted ~2 million trees on 3700 acres/year and tending treatments on 9000 acres/year. By comparison, TNC planted 2.5 million trees in 2025 and will tend over

Benefits to Minnesotans from reforestation and stand improvement investments:

- Clean drinking water –both for communities reliant on groundwater and those reliant on surface or Mississippi River water
- Improved water quality in lakes, rivers, streams
- Reduced impacts from flooding in nearby and downstream communities
- Carbon sequestration, climate regulation
- Habitat for fish and wildlife
- Outdoor recreation from hunting to camping, bird watching to mountain biking
- Jobs and economic activity from forest products



Aerial view of Greenwood Fire, left, and TNC crews replanting right. The fire burned 27,000 acres in 2021. @ Laura Slavsky/TNC, Chris Dunham/TNC