

# Lands Bill



## Related Facts

- The DNR manages 5.6 million acres of state land behalf of Minnesotans and continually strives to improve the state's land portfolio through strategic purchases, sales and exchanges.
- About 24 percent of Minnesota's lands are public lands — more than 12 million acres of state, federal and county lands managed on behalf of citizens.

## Summary

Every year, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposes a lands bill that includes amendments to statutes that govern DNR's land transactions, changes to statutory boundaries of state parks, state recreation areas or state forests, and legislative authorization for select land sales. State parks and forests lands are established by legislation so the legislature must authorize changes to the borders. Land sales require legislative approval in some circumstances where lands will be sold by private sale, where certain lands border public waters, or where land is to be sold for less than market value.

The 2026 Lands Bill proposes amendments to several statutes, provides for changes to certain state park boundaries, and grants the DNR authority to sell certain riparian lands that would otherwise be withdrawn from sale. The bill authorizes the DNR to sell some lands by private sale and for less than market value. The DNR determined that the lands proposed for sale either no longer meet conservation or recreation needs, or that sales are needed to resolve land management issues.



## Proposal

The 2026 Lands Bill proposes amending existing statutes to clarify appraisal requirements for property interests acquired by the DNR.

Under current practice, appraisals are required when the DNR acquires an interest in property. The bill would specify that appraisals are not required when the DNR leases property as a tenant from a landowner. Requiring an appraisal in these cases is impractical due to the time and expense involved, particularly when the DNR is paying rent for a defined lease term rather than acquiring a permanent interest.

The bill clarifies that:

- The DNR must pay appraised value when acquiring fee title or a permanent easement interest.
- An appraisal is not required when the DNR acquires a leasehold interest.

In addition, the bill would amend two statutes to establish clear pricing standards for easements acquired by the DNR to provide access to:

- Stream easement areas
- Native prairie banks

These amendments are intended to improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary costs, and provide clearer statutory direction regarding compensation for different types of property interests.

The bill adds to the boundaries of Frontenac and Great River Bluffs State Parks. The bill removes approximately 19.2 acres from the boundary of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park for a cemetery expansion with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

The bill authorizes the DNR Commissioner to sell certain state lands in Becker, Mille Lacs, Otter Tail, Pine, and Wabasha counties. These sales require legislative authorization because either the lands will be sold by private sale rather than by auction, or they border public waters, or both. The bill authorizes the sale of the Pine County parcel to an adjacent landowner for no cost for the land. The bill also authorizes the sale of the Wabasha County parcel to the city of Elgin for no cost for the land, with a requirement that the land be used for non-motorized public recreation use and public fishing access.



*Frontenac State Park bluff overlook*

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