

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Hunting on Scientific and Natural Areas**

Status of Hunting on SNAs

State Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) are part of the State Outdoor Recreation System established to protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural state those natural features which possess exceptional scientific or educational value Minnesota (Statute 86A.05, Subd. 5). The SNA system was initially authorized in 1969 (M.S. 84.033) with the first SNA unit acquired in 1974 to preserve a heron rookery.

Hunting is allowed on 54 of the 146 designated SNAs (totaling about 88% of the acres designated as SNA). This includes the 16 peatland SNAs (comprising approximately 146,714 acres) established by the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991. Excluding the peatland SNAs, a total of 36,507 acres in 36 of the 130 SNAs are open to hunting (44% of the acres). Some SNAs are open to all legal hunting, while others are open only to specific types of hunting to help achieve management goals. (The attached list of SNAs open to hunting during the 2009 season provides more detailed information.)

Laws Governing Hunting on SNAs

Minn. Stat., sec. 97A.093 prohibits hunting on SNAs unless the Commissioner's designation order allows hunting. A designation order can allow hunting as follows: 1) for newly acquired SNAs, the Commissioner determines whether hunting should be an allowed activity; and 2) for existing SNAs, the Commissioner may change the designation order to allow hunting after conducting a public hearing as provided by Minn. Stat., sec. 86A.05, subd. 5 (d). Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0550, subp. 6 provides criteria to help determine if otherwise prohibited activities should be allowed on an SNA. Those most relevant to hunting include whether or not hunting occurred prior to designation, if allowing hunting would be consistent with regulations of adjacent public lands, and if hunting would help achieve management objectives.

Current Approach

The DNR is trying to increase interest in SNAs to a broader segment of the outdoor community. Although SNAs are not specifically acquired for hunting, allowing that activity is one way to increase interest and support for the program. For newly acquired SNAs, the DNR is allowing hunting in the designation order if it is compatible with the purpose for which the SNA was acquired and use of the surrounding area. For existing SNAs, the DNR would have to go through the required public hearing process to determine if hunting could be allowed.

The DNR recently changed its rules to allow the use of portable deer stands on SNAs that are open to deer hunting.