

Private Forest Growth and Retention

CASE STUDY

Wisconsin’s working forests provide numerous public benefits including wildlife habitat, jobs, recreation opportunities for hiking, hunting and fishing, carbon storage, and clean abundant drinking water for thousands of residents. Located in northwestern Wisconsin, the Brule-St. Croix Forest Legacy Project permanently protects over 21,000 acres of private forest land through a conservation easement held by the State of Wisconsin and funded in part by the Forest Legacy Program. Under the terms of the easement, this stretch of sustainably managed forestland will help to filter and clean drinking water, provide a steady flow of wood products to local mills and protect a shifting mosaic of forest bird habitat. The St. Croix Forest Company will continue to own the land and manage the forest for timber production while ensuring the forest provides vital public benefits for generations to come.

With miles of streams and acres of lakes, ponds, and wetlands, this project protects valuable water resources. Located along the St. Lawrence Continental Divide, the project contains the headwaters of both the St. Croix National Scenic River and the Bois Brule River. These rivers serve as sources of drinking water to nearby towns. The project represents one of the few remaining tracts of private forestland that can be managed to maintain and expand the globally imperiled Pine Barrens forest community. Pine Barrens support an exceptional number of species, including Sharp-Tailed Grouse and 28 species found on the State list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Pine Barren habitat is also critical for migratory species such as the federally endangered Kirtland’s Warbler; Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ontario, Canada, have the only documented nesting pairs in the world.

The project secures public access and enhances public recreation opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, and cross-country skiing. Centrally located within a complex of protected lands, this property’s road and trail networks provide critical links to recreational opportunities on adjoining Forest Service, State, and county land, enhancing recreational opportunities to over 3.5 million people within a 3-hour drive.

Part of a larger conservation initiative, this project ensures the entire Brule-St. Croix Legacy Forest—totaling over 66,000 acres of globally significant Pine Barrens that spans four counties—is now protected under a working forest conservation easement. Large landscape-level conservation initiatives such as the Brule St. Croix Legacy Forest contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation by keeping forests as forests so they continue to provide benefits such as carbon storage, habitat connectivity, and drinking water protection in the face of a changing climate.

More information on the Brule-St. Croix Legacy Forest can be found at:
<http://www.conservationfund.org/projects/brule-st-croix-legacy-forest>.