



Friends of Minnesota
Scientific & Natural Areas

Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas - Acquisition Shortfalls

January, 2014 through December 31, 2022

Summary

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources adopted the Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Strategic Land Protection Plan (the “Plan”), which calls for designating “... an average (mean) of 1,600 additional acres of SNA per year.”

Since the adoption of the Plan in 2014 - through December 31, 2022 - SNA acquisitions total approximately 3,031 acres.

The SNA program is **11,369 acres short** of its SNA acquisition goal of averaging 1,600 SNA acres/year. (See attached spreadsheet.)

During the first four years of the Walz/Strommen administration, only **6 acres** were added to the SNA program.

SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan (2014)

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources adopted the Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Strategic Land Protection Plan (the “Plan”).

The Plan states on page 27: “By the end of the 21st century (2099), the state aims to protect, approximately 300 SNAs statewide comprising about 325,000 acres (about 0.6 % of the state). This means designating **136,000 more acres** of SNA **over the next 85 years**, or an average (mean) of **1,600 additional acres of SNA per year**. This is based on establishing SNAs on about **10% of the high priority conservation areas** across the state. This also assumes that the additional SNAs include lands already in state ownership.” [Emphasis added.]

Acquisitions - 2014 through December 31, 2022

A. Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr administration.

Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr's administration extended to two terms (January 3, 2011 through January 6, 2019).

From the beginning of the Plan (2014) through January 6, 2019 (5 years):

1. 3,025 SNA acres were added.
2. The Dayton/Landwehr administration fell **4,975 acres short** of the 1,600 SNA acres/year goal over 5 years = 8,000 acres.

B. Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration.

During the first 4 years of the Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration (January 7, 2019 to December 31, 2022):

1. No new SNAs have been established, via a signed Commissioners SNA Designation Order.
2. Only **one 6-acre parcel** was added to any existing SNA (via signed Commissioner's SNA Designation Order): St. Croix Savannah SNA, on January 13, 2020. (Total acreage of this SNA, including the 6-acre addition, is 154 acres.)
3. Two SNAs are in the process of being reduced in size: Mississippi River Islands SNA (to allow camping) and Whitney Island SNA, although no Commissioner's Orders have been signed.
4. The Walz/Strommen administration is **6,394 acres short** of the SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 acres/year over 4 years = 6,400 acres.
5. Since the Plan was adopted (2014), the SNA Program is **11,369 acres short** of its SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 SNA acres per year.

Questions to the Minnesota DNR and Public

1. Is the current SNA acquisition goal adequate? (1,600 acres per year, through 2099)

a. At the current rate of acquisition, how much land will be lost before 2099?

b. Is the goal high enough - if it protects only 10% of the “high priority conservation areas” as an SNA?

2. How can Minnesotans best work with the DNR and the Minnesota Legislature to maximize SNA acquisitions?

For more information, please contact:

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Attachment:

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas, “Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Acquisitions: 2014 through December 31, 2022.”