

# NEWS



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## CROW WING COUNTY

BRAINERD, MINNESOTA 56401

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Crow Wing County Commissioners Receive 2012 Government Relations Award**

The Crow Wing County Board of Commissioners has been awarded The Nature Conservancy's 2012 Government Relations Award for outstanding leadership in protecting Minnesota's natural heritage.

The Nature Conservancy stated in the award letter that Crow Wing County showed great leadership by being open to new thinking and new land protection models. The Commissioners opened the door to discussions with DNR and the Commissioner on best alternatives to protecting and managing the Mississippi River Northwoods project long-term. Moving away from receiving Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) from the State of Minnesota, the County Land Services Department developed an acquisition model that promoted local economic returns for the County. Additionally the County emphasized the multiple public benefits of the land ownership, and responded to local citizen support at every step in the process as it moved from a state acquisition to county ownership of the land.

"The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which life depends," said Todd Holman, the Conservancy's Central Minnesota program director. "And Crow Wing County's efforts in protecting the Mississippi River Northwoods and in supporting the establishment of the Mille Lacs Moraine State Natural Area – the first SNA in Crow Wing County – have helped us take a step closer to achieving that mission here in Minnesota." In Minnesota, the Conservancy has helped conserve more than 650,000 acres since 1958. The Conservancy has 23,000 members in Minnesota and offices in Minneapolis, Cushing, Glyndon, Duluth, Karlstad, Mentor, St. Joseph and Preston.

"We all know that there is still a lot of work to be done to protect our forests, lakes and rivers for people and nature," said Peggy Ladner, director of The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota. "Each year, the Conservancy honors a small group of environmental champions that have earned our respect and our gratitude and we're pleased to recognize Crow Wing County for its leadership on these outstanding conservation projects."

The Crow Wing County acquisition of the Mississippi River Northwoods will permanently protect approximately 2,000 acres of contiguous forest land including approximately 2.7 miles of Mississippi River frontage, provide recreational access, and protect ecological functions in the fast-growing Brainerd area dependent on tourism, natural resources, recreation, and forest products for a strong and healthy economy. With the support of The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations including the Trust for Public Land, which played a leading role, the Mississippi River Northwoods project was funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and awarded by the Minnesota Legislature.

Accepting the award on behalf of the Crow Wing County Board, Commissioner Paul Thiede, stated, "The Mississippi River Northwoods project is truly a legacy project that will protect forest land, provide recreational

access, and protect ecological functions in the fast-growing Brainerd area dependent on tourism, natural resources, recreation, and forest products for a strong and healthy economy”.

Crow Wing County Land Services Department manages 105,000 acres of forest land for timber production and diverse recreational opportunities for multiple users. The sale of timber at public auctions during the year funds the County’s management of these lands, while providing revenues to local communities. County forest lands are managed to strict environmental standards established by both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative™ and the Forest Stewardship Council™ certification standards.

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