



BHA MN Position on Ownership Transfer of Public Lands

As the voice for public lands, waters, and wildlife, the Minnesota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA MN) believes our shared public resources are vital to equitable access and opportunity for all hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists. BHA MN recognizes and respects the sovereignty and rights of Tribal Nations, as well as the historical injustices they have endured in MN and across North America. Recently, several bills have been proposed in Minnesota that would transfer state-owned lands to Tribal Nations. MN BHA supports collaborative solutions that would integrate the transfer of land to Tribal Nations with a guarantee of continued public access for all to those lands for hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreation.

BHA MN believes that a key part of these conversations should be the **continuation of current recreational access to these lands for all Minnesotans and a commitment to conservation now and in the future**. One bill introduced in the legislature includes a provision that secures this access. The language reads, “[lands] will remain open to all recreational activities for Tribal and non-Tribal citizens,” a cooperative approach that can build consensus among various interests and is supported by BHA MN.

However, BHA MN will oppose any action that would include the loss of public lands or public land access, regardless of which entity takes possession of the land in question. Several bills in the 2024 session would transfer approximately 5% of state-owned public lands in Minnesota. These bills, as currently written, DO NOT include continued public access for hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreation guaranteed.

As advocates for public resources, wild places, and the responsible management of our natural resources, BHA MN maintains a steadfast commitment to retaining and expanding public land access for all. As policies around public land transfers continue to be considered, BHA MN requests the opportunity to engage in a transparent and inclusive dialogue that would foster a broader sense of community. We seek to build consensus around shared values and provide opportunities working toward constructive solutions that respect the interests of all stakeholders. The goal of BHA MN is to ensure quality experiences on our public lands continue to be available to all Minnesotans.

Effective April 2nd, 2024

