

2011 – 07
No Net Gain - Public Lands

Background:

Several Counties have resolved against additional public land additions in their county; and, legislation has been introduced in 2011 MN Legislature described as no net gain in public lands. There is considerable history on the subject of public land ownership in Minnesota over extended periods of time. They touch on ideological desire for control locally, belief by some advocates of no-net gain that land in private ownership inevitably produces more tax revenue, (in spite of solid information provided by MN Legislative Auditor to the contrary for example), debates over management cost and effectiveness by state agencies, and, finally whether payment in lieu of taxes (PILT is equitable).

1. No net gain applied in arbitrary fashion would deny property owners, their rights to convey their property. It would be a taking of property rights.
2. It would deny the “greater community” the opportunity to examine the long term highest and best use of land by denying transactions for only one ownership entity. Why not have a no net gain for shopping malls?
3. If enacting this legislation will require sale of some existing public ownerships. This very likely will result in forcing Minnesota to abdicate promises in the form of covenants in prior transactions that were intended to be honored in perpetuity.
4. State government has no right to deny citizens their right to convey their lands for conservation of our natural resources.
5. This legislation is a gross over-reactions to real and perceived issues around total acres owned, when and why the vast majority was created (school trust lands etc.), and as mentioned in the background comments such issues as PILT, and cost of managing existing lands.

The Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America in convention at Sandstone Minnesota, April 10, 2011, opposes blanket legislation intended to affect no net gain of public lands in Minnesota.

Submitted by: W. J. McCabe Chapter, Duluth