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## more land

### Steve Kuchera Duluth News Tribune Published Thursday, June 28, 2007

The Brule River State Forest is receiving a special 100th birthday present — nearly 6,000 acres.

Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle announced Wednesday that the state is buying 5,889 acres for the forest and a 40-acre easement

for the North County Trail west of the forest. The land deal was the largest of several announced that will protect more than 10,000 acres across the state.

The Natural Resources Board unanimously approved the purchases, totaling \$15 million, Wednesday.



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“This is excellent. It’s a great addition to the Brule River State Forest,” said Dave Schulz, acting forest superintendent.

The Brule purchase increases the amount of property the state owns within the 82,000-acre forest to 47,000 acres. The Conservation Fund bought the land from Wausau Paper Mills in December and held the property until the state could find

\$6.1 million for it.

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Other approved purchases “They were able to move quickly and make a purchase and hold it until we were able to get funding,” Schulz said.

Since its 1985 founding, the Arlington, Va.-based nonprofit has helped protect nearly 6 million acres nationwide. It only becomes involved in projects when asked, said Tom Duffus, the fund’s state director for Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The fund has the dual mission of environmental conservation and sustainable economic development, Duffus said.

“A project like this is very comfortable for us,” he said. “We work a lot with working forest land, as well as historic sites, natural areas and recreational areas. And this one seems to fit all those categories.”

Established in 1907, the forest contains the entire 44 miles of the historic and popular Bois Brule River, five state natural areas, a 16-mile stretch of the North Country National Scenic Trail and eight miles of frontage on Lake Superior. It provides recreational opportunities to canoeists, kayakers, anglers and others while providing timber for wood products industries.

The new property is in two parcels on either side of the river near Lake Superior, although none of it fronts the river or the lake. Much of the property was logged in the past 15 to 20 years and is covered with a young aspen-balsam forest.

“Our long-term goal is to increase the number of conifers in that forest to get more of a boreal mix of forest species while producing forest products,” Schulz said.

Diana Solin, president of the Friends of the Brule River and Forest, said the group supports the purchase, largely because it will save the land from being sold off in small parcels, fragmenting the forest to the detriment of the forest ecosystem.

“The fact that it is under protection from being fragmented is, I believe, more important than any of the land-management issues that will come up after the land is part of the Brule River State Forest,” she said.

Duffus said the purchase was the largest project the fund has been involved with in Wisconsin.

“It’s an exciting deal for us,” he said. “It is particularly exciting because it demonstrates the usefulness of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, which is in discussion for reauthorization.”

About 87 percent of the \$15 million for the purchases approved Wednesday will come from the Knowles-Nelson fund, which sets aside land for public use. Since 1989, stewardship funds have



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helped protect more than

475,000 acres statewide.

“I think that the range of the projects here shows the amazing reach of the stewardship fund and how it affects people across the state,” Doyle told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Tuesday.

The purchases come as Doyle and other Democrats push a state budget plan that would increase spending on the state land purchase program from \$60 million a year to \$105 million starting in 2011.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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