

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INVESTMENT ACT (SFIA)

Public access to timber industry lands has historically played a large part in our Minnesota hunting heritage. Previous property tax programs under the Tree Growth Tax law and the Auxiliary Forest law contained a requirement that enrolled lands be kept open to the public for recreational use, creating this public access tradition.

The Sustainable Forestry Investment Act (SFIA) replaced the Tree Growth and Auxiliary Forest programs as the only property tax program available for timber industry lands and contains a similar requirement for public access. The SFIA program is one of only two programs aimed at helping privately owned forest acreages, both large and small, stay undeveloped, and available for forestry activities and wildlife habitat. The SFIA program does not reduce taxes, but instead makes a payment to the landowner of more than \$7.50/acre each year the land is enrolled.

Forest Capital Partners LLC has enrolled 267,123 acres (lands purchased from Boise Cascade) in the SFIA program to keep these lands undeveloped and actively involved in forest management, and subsequently open to public recreation.

Governor Pawlenty's budget balancing unallotment process is proposing to cap SFIA payments at \$100,000 per landowner.

Forest Capital Partners has stated that the annual SFIA payment is the primary reason they are able to allow the public unrestricted access to their lands. Roads control access to significant acreage of state and county lands. Forest Capital's land sales of scattered parcels and Potlatch Corp. leasing policy for their lands have already blocked significant public access and were drivers for the Lessard-Sams Heritage Council funding a large conservation easement for 187,000 acres of Blandin Company lands.

Therefore be it resolved the Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America in Convention April 11, 2010 opposes the Governor's funding cap for the SFIA program as a threat to Minnesota's hunting and outdoor recreation heritage, due to the likelihood of losing access to significant public and timber industry lands in Koochiching and west St. Louis Counties.

Submitted by: Prairie Woods Chapter