

Forest Committee News

Timber Harvest on Wildlife Mgt. Areas (WMAs)

In early October of this year MNTWS submitted a letter to the Commissioner, Governor and others pertaining to proposed excessive timber harvest on WMAs resulting from the DNR's Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis (STHA) and subsequent Determination (STHD). Our letter was prompted after reviewing recent public and internal letters/editorials that expressed opposition to proposed excessive timber harvest within forested WMAs.

Our primary concerns outlined in the letter included:

1. Potential noncompliance with laws and policies regarding WMAs.
2. Negative impacts on wildlife habitats and populations, especially rare and federally listed species.
3. Inadequate respect for Wildlife Managers' expertise in DNR processes and with the public

Following this, MNTWS was a signatory to a letter prepared and submitted by the MN Isaak Walton League (IKES) to the DNR Commissioner that recommend a halt to implementation of DNR's STHD until the concerns of sportsmen and women are addressed, and WMAs and AMAs are managed for their intended purpose of habitat first and foremost. In this letter.

Then in Mid-November 2019 MNTWS was one of 14 organizations that signed on to a letter sent to the Governor and Commissioner by the Isaak Walton League (IKES). This letter in part stated:

"We recommend a halt to implementation of DNR's STHI until the concerns of sportsmen and women are addressed, and WMAs and AMAs are managed for their intended purpose of habitat first and foremost. This purpose is clearly stated in the enabling language for creation of our WMA, found in Minnesota law (Minn.Stat. §86.A05 Subd. 8, "...for the production of wildlife, for public hunting, fishing, and trapping, and for other compatible outdoor recreational uses."), and their management plans (Minn.Stat. §84.941-84.942). Short-sighted pressure to increase timber harvest under the plan may place Federal Aid (Pittman-Robertson Act funds), forest certification, critical habitats, and fish and wildlife diversity at risk. It ignores the investment citizens have made, and continue to make, in protecting and stewarding many of these public lands through Legacy Amendment expenditures for habitat protections and improvements."

"In light of these developments, we would like to suggest the establishment of a permanent advisory group for WMAs and AMAs, so outdoor interests can stay current and influence decisions early on in these types of issues."

As a result the Commissioner has agreed to meet with the IKES and other in the near future to discuss and hopefully resolve this issue. MNTWS members will be informed when this meeting occurs and the outcome of the meeting.

Bruce D. Anderson
MNTWS Forest Committee Chair