



The Minnesota Land Trust and Boys Scouts of America permanently protect over 200 acres of Camp Wilderness and 3,600 feet of natural shoreline on Bad Axe Lake in northern Minnesota.

Preserving this ecologically significant lake and watershed in northern Minnesota helps ensure the survival of large gamefish and a way of life for Minnesota anglers. For families and youth in Minnesota and North Dakota, a portion of a beloved wilderness camp is protected forever.

SAINT PAUL, Minn, April 26, 2023 — Together, the [Minnesota Land Trust](#) and the [Northern Lights Council of the Boy Scouts of America](#) have permanently protected a portion of [Boy Scout Camp Wilderness](#), including over 3,600 feet of natural shoreline on Bad Axe Lake and 219 acres of land and water near Park Rapids, Minnesota.

Conserving this important landscape preserves high-quality habitat that supports a diverse population of plant and animal species including the ecologically critical tullibee (aka "cisco") in Bad Axe Lake and downstream Tullibee Refuge Lakes.

Permanently protecting this portion of Camp Wilderness, situated on the shores of Bad Axe Lake, also ensures that immersive nature adventures remain accessible to youth for years to come, critical in a region of Minnesota that is losing more of its undeveloped and sensitive shorelands to the construction of vacation homes.

Protecting nature experiences for future generations of kids

To date, the Minnesota Land Trust has helped legally and permanently protect 37 camps, nature centers and environmental learning centers (ELCs) across Minnesota, preserving 4,856 acres of natural land and over 37 miles of undeveloped shoreline.

Nestled in the heart of the Paul Bunyan State Forest in central Minnesota, Camp Wilderness is one of America's premier camps. Since 1946 this 2,400-acre camp has been an important resource for delivering a vibrant outdoor program which is critical to the Scouting experience.

Richard McCartney, Scout Executive of the Northern Lights Council, is proud of the accomplishment. "Environmental conservation has always been a part of the Scouting Program; it's embedded in the Scout Oath and Law and codified in the Outdoor Code. We feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to demonstrate this value by protecting Camp Wilderness, an important resource the Council has used to teach outdoor ethics for over 75 years." McCartney also stressed the importance of key partnerships, "Our partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust ensures that this space will be protected in perpetuity." he said.

Conservation partnerships amplify impact and reach

Private landowners like the Boy Scouts of America play a crucial role in helping ensure Minnesota's important lakes and waterways remain cold and clear. And when national, state, local, and tribal entities add their support, it enhances the conservation scope and value to natural habitat and nearby communities.

The Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), a local government organization, provided critical support to complete this multi-year protection project. The county typically partners with landowners using easements and long-term forest stewardship plans (FSPs) which help ensure that both the landowner's vision and conservation best practices are leveraged to realize the long-term vitality of shared local resources, community, and economy.

According to Crystal Mathisrud, Hubbard County SWCD District Manager, "We are grateful to have the Boy Scouts of America and Minnesota Land Trust as committed long-term partners in the ongoing management of these high-quality forests that enhance and protect our high-quality Mantrap Chain of Lakes. Protecting Camp Wilderness and Bad Axe Lake, which is the headwaters of the Mantrap Chain of Lakes, is an important accomplishment that will ensure The Boy Scouts of America leave a visible local legacy of conservation."

For Hubbard County, protecting clean water and vital tullibee lakes

Bad Axe Lake is home to a diverse population of fish species, including black crappie, largemouth bass, muskie, northern pike, smallmouth bass and walleye as well as tullibee, a smaller fish species that supports Minnesota's large gamefish populations.

Unfortunately, lakes like Bad Axe are increasingly threatened by subdivision and development on and near their shores. This process reduces mature tree cover that helps cool the water below, fragments and weakens natural habitat and increases localized flooding and the flow of pollutants into waterways. Climate change also contributes to deteriorating water quality and rising water temperatures that threaten northern Minnesota fisheries. According to the Minnesota DNR, tullibee numbers have declined about 60% over the last 30 years.

"Seventy-five percent is the magic number," said Ruurd Schoolderman, Minnesota Land Trust Program Manager for this project. "Protecting at least seventy-five percent of the surrounding lands that direct water into Big Sand Lake ensures that the water will remain clean and cold enough for tullibee to survive even in a warming climate." That's important for critical aquatic habitat and Minnesota anglers.

About the Northern Lights Council, BSA

Since 1910, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has provided a comprehensive youth development program for communities across America. [The Northern Lights Council, Boy Scouts of America](#), based in Fargo, ND, is chartered by the National Council, BSA to administer the programs of Scouting throughout the State of North Dakota, 18 counties in northwestern Minnesota and two counties each in South Dakota and Montana. The mission of the Northern Lights Council, BSA is to teach practical life skills and instill the values found in the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

About the Minnesota Land Trust

[The Minnesota Land Trust](#) is a conservation non-profit organization based in St. Paul, MN, whose mission is to protect and restore Minnesota's most vital natural lands to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences, and scenic beauty for generations to come. To date, the organization has protected more than 76,000 acres of natural and scenic land and more than 465 miles of fragile shoreline.

This conservation easement was made possible by the members of the Minnesota Land Trust and with funding from Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund, as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature and recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC).



Contact:

For the Minnesota Land Trust: Sarah Sullivan—Communications & Marketing Manager, ssullivan@mnland.org

For the Northern Lights Council of the Boy Scouts of America: Richard McCartney—Scout Executive, richard.mccartney@scouting.org, 701-499-0640

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