



# Executive Summary

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*Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan  
Preliminary Plan – Phase I  
July 17, 2007  
Revised Sept. 20, 2007*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive Summary

Minnesota's quality of life and economic vitality depend on clean air and water, abundant fish and wildlife, healthy forests, and access to quality outdoor recreation. Complex and rapid changes affecting our landscapes and watersheds are leading to degradation and loss of these resources across a broad front, and these changes can no longer be addressed in a piecemeal fashion: there is an overarching need to forge a more interconnected understanding of the state's environment, economy and natural resources, and to build this understanding into a strategic plan for managing those resources going forward.

To achieve this goal, the LCCMR has funded a partnership of leading natural resource scholars, practitioners and planners to create a Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan. This partnership involves more than 40 research scientists from the University of Minnesota, and natural resource experts from the consulting firms of Bonestroo and CR Planning.

The plan's objective is to provide a blueprint for ensuring that healthy and abundant natural resources are available for future generations of Minnesotans.

During the first half of this year, the project's team of experts has worked diligently to summarize past and current status of Minnesota's resources. More importantly, the project team identified and prioritized the drivers of change affecting Minnesota's resources. Both proximate and higher order drivers were considered. Proximate drivers affect the resource more directly, such as nutrient loading, but tend to be harder to manage. Higher order drivers, such as agricultural policy, tend to

have indirect but significant effects on the resources. The result of this analysis is this report.

This first phase of planning focused on compiling information on the statutory resource areas separately, but at the end of the phase the team began looking at how some higher order drivers of change affect multiple resources. Three of the most important of these are:

- Demographic Changes, including an aging and increasingly diverse and urban population, which result in changing perspectives on conservation, preservation and resource use;
- Land use decisions, which are often the "driver behind the driver" since the consequences of these decisions tend to propagate throughout the system; and
- Climate change, which will have broad and varied effects on Minnesota's natural resources, and will tend to exacerbate the negative effects of other drivers.

The project team's recommendations for key issues to investigate in the next phase of this project focus on those higher order drivers of change that have the broadest influence on multiple resources and are most amenable to management through policy and investment decisions. These drivers are:

- land and water habitat fragmentation, degradation, loss and conversion;
- land use practices;
- impacts of resource consumption;
- transportation;
- energy production and use;
- invasive species;
- and toxic contaminants.