

2019 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2022

PROJECT TITLE: Forest and Bioeconomy Research - Subproject 2: Expanding the Interactive Natural Resource Atlas for Minnesota

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APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$500,000

AMOUNT SPENT: \$500,000

AMOUNT REMAINING: \$0

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

The Minnesota Natural Resource Atlas is an easy to use interactive mapping tool and spatial database that is freely available to all Minnesotans. It lowers or removes the barriers that prevent spatial data from informing the decisions that impact our state's natural resources.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Organizations and natural resources managers in Minnesota are often required to make decisions that impact our natural resources while using incomplete information. Spatial data contains valuable information that can improve decision making and outcomes. However, accessing it typically requires specialized software and advanced technical skills. The Minnesota Natural Resource Atlas was designed to be a statewide resource that improves access to spatial data and the information and insights that it contains.

The Atlas project was a statewide expansion and enhancement of an earlier version that served 27 counties in northeast and north central Minnesota. We worked closely with our original Atlas users, target users in the expanded geographic area, and our advisory committee to identify data and functionality needs. More than 500 additional data sets, with an emphasis on agriculture, forestry, and water resources, were developed or acquired. Functionality that allowed users to more easily visualize, analyze, and share data was developed, tested, and deployed. Improvements were also made to make the Atlas more robust, responsive, and reliable.

Training, outreach, and education were used to raise awareness of the project and expand Atlas users. Google analytics on the site indicate a growing user base with typical daily weekday unique visitors ranging from 60 to 100 and their locations distributed throughout the state, with the highest concentration in the Twin Cities metro area and Duluth. Internal software was developed that allows us to monitor which data is being requested and for which geographical area. This software indicates that water, natural and administrative boundaries, and biological data are the most frequently accessed and that users are viewing data for locations throughout the state.

The Minnesota Natural Resource Atlas is a valuable resource for the state. Ultimately, it is making spatial data more accessible for all Minnesotans.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The [Minnesota Natural Resource Atlas](#) is freely and publicly available online. Dissemination through training, outreach, and education were key components of the project. Articles were contributed to relevant newsletters

and publications to raise awareness, and free training sessions were offered to organizations throughout the state. Eight 15 to 30 minute project overview presentations that included Atlas demonstrations were also conducted. In total, 38 training or demonstration events were conducted with over 1000 individuals participating from conservation organizations, K-12 or post-secondary education, academia, and tribal, local, state, and federal governments.