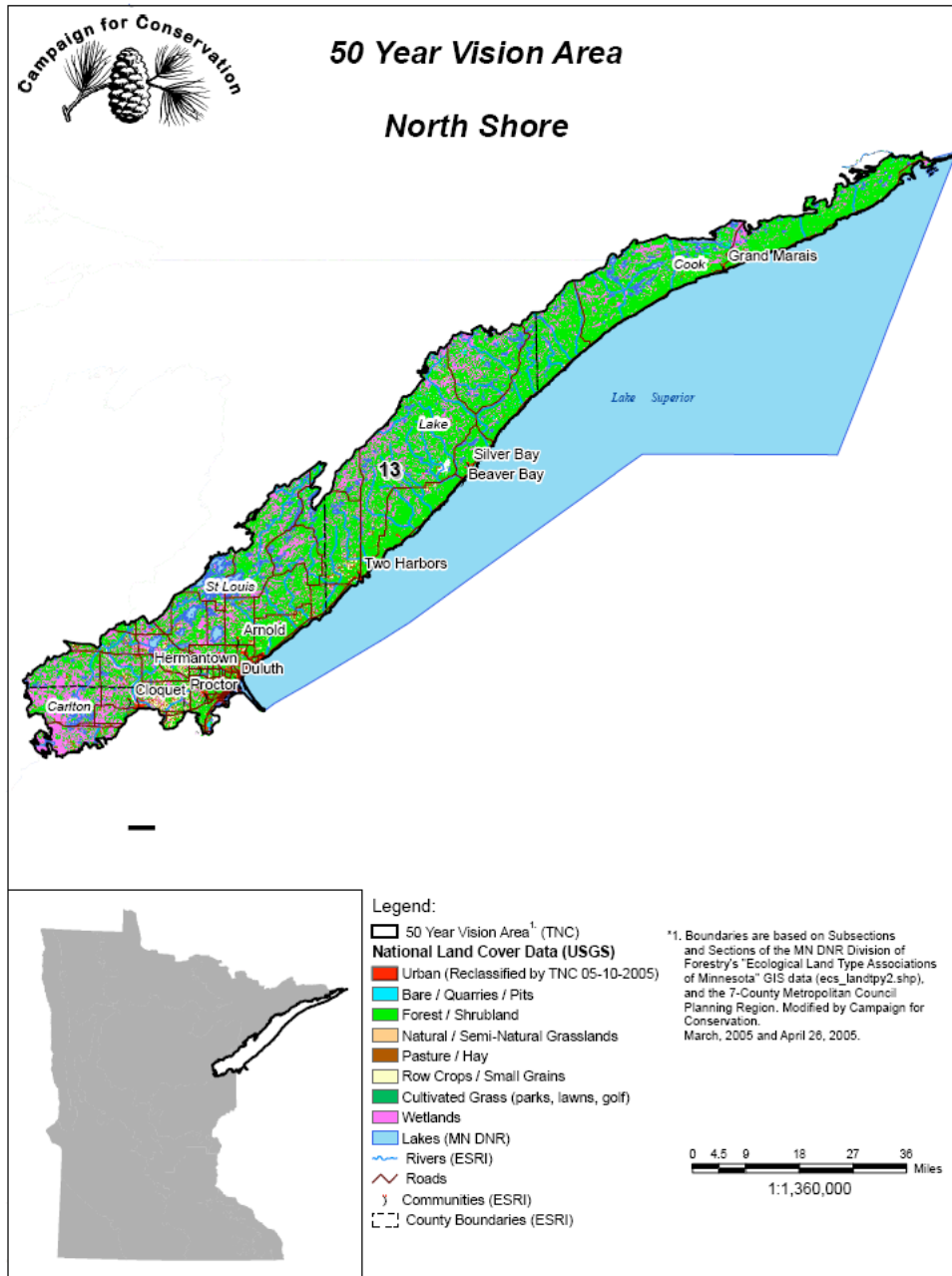


Final Conservation Template

North Shore Conservation Region



February 2007

Acres in Conservation Region

1,481,924

Population 2000 Census

129,665 (total)

100,000+ (employed)

56 (people per square mile)

Population Change in Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties

1980 – 2000 -7.8%

2000 – 2030 +12.2%

2000 – 2030 Individuals over 65 years of age +80.5%

Percent of Land in Federal, State, or Local Public Ownership

53.2%

Counties (All or Part)

Carlton, Cook, Lake and St. Louis

Natural Characteristics

Red-White Pine Forests

Forest-Lowland Coniferous

Shoreline-dunes-cliffs/talus

Deep Lake

River-Headwaters to Large

Ecological Classification System Subsection

North Shore Highlands

I. Why We Live Here

Northeastern Minnesota has always been known for its rugged landscape and hardy inhabitants. Forested and water rich, this landscape is a gift from glaciers that once covered this area 10,000 years ago. To Minnesotans, the "North Shore" means Lake Superior, in all its majesty, its shining waters stretching to the horizon. The North Shore is where Superior's craggy shoreline meets Minnesota's forested wilderness. Miniature mountains blanketed by pine and birch stand watch along the shore. Wilderness streams plunge over waterfalls. Harbor towns are nestled at irregular intervals along the shore. Glacial melt waters formed Lake Superior, as well as the myriad of lakes and wetlands that dot northeastern Minnesota's landscape. These fragile lakes and wetlands

persist in abundance principally because glaciers receded without the development of extensive drainage systems.

This lack of an extensive drainage or plumbing system, coupled with excess precipitation and thin soils underlain by bedrock, has produced a landscape defined and shaped by water. Nearly one-fifth of the state's 15,000 lakes and over 150 trout streams are located in four of the seven counties that make up Minnesota's portion of the Lake Superior Basin. While topography and bedrock make the basin's landscape a mosaic of water bodies, forests are responsible for its generally high quality. Forests that cover approximately 84 percent of the basin's surface slowly filter and release precipitation to groundwater systems, streams, and lakes (Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, 2000).

The basin's streams and lakes are impressive in their own right. However, Lake Superior is in a class by itself. Truly an inland sea, Lake Superior covers a surface area of about 31,700 square miles. Roughly speaking, Lake Superior is about the size of Maine. It holds such an immense volume of water that it could flood all of North and South America under a foot of water (MN Sea Grant, 1999).

It is Lake Superior and the breath-taking vistas that define this region in so many ways. The beauty of the drive along the North Shore rivals any scenic drive in the world. It provides a connection from the urban economic base of Duluth to the Gunflint Trail and the Boundary Waters beyond. This ribbon of land serves as a corridor drawing visitors throughout the year and is the number one tourism destination point for residents of the Twin Cities.

The beauty that has attracted generations of Minnesotans is increasingly threatened. The Minnesota State Demographer's office estimates that the population in the three North Shore counties is expected to rise significantly over the next 25 years. St. Louis County's population is projected to rise by almost 10 percent, Lake County's by nearly 20 percent, and Cook County's by more than 60 percent.

As more residents move in, so do businesses and industry. New roads are built to accommodate increasing traffic and new wastewater treatment options must be made available. All of this development near the lake or in the forests and hills nearby affects both Superior and its tributaries.

The region's abundance of natural resources attracts two million visitors annually. The resulting economic impact is significant: related employment is up 15 percent as are gross receipts due to travel and tourism. In 1996, gross sales at the North Shore's hotels, motels, resorts were \$89,056,641, a 28 percent increase over 1994 sales. Current estimates put the total amount spent by visitors to the North Shore at \$275 million per year. Also in 1996, six North Shore State Park campsites hosted 1,044,235 visitors and overnight guests, a 3.5 percent increase over 1994 figures.

The North Shore has never been more popular and accommodating the growing influx of tourists, part-time and full-time residents is a daunting challenge. Success in this effort is dependent upon the development of a comprehensive long-term conservation vision for the region. This Conservation Template is meant to serve as the foundation for such an effort. The following is the culmination of existing state, regional and local plans refined by a series of locally led workshops.

The North Shore Conservation Region (also called the North Shore Highlands Subsection) was described in the “Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild and Rare” as a narrow strip 20 to 25 miles wide that follows the shoreline of Lake Superior from Duluth to the eastern tip of Minnesota. Lake Superior dominates the area and moderates its climate. The terrain varies from gently rolling hills to steep cliffs. Numerous short streams, 10 to 15 miles in length, run from the highland to the shore of Lake Superior, most ending in waterfalls near the shoreline. A mosaic of forest habitats stretches across this landscape, heavily influenced by aspen-birch, with minor amounts of white and red pine, mixed hardwood-pine, and conifer bogs and swamp. Recreation, tourism, and forestry are the predominant land uses in this subsection. There is tremendous development pressure along the highly environmentally sensitive Lake Superior shoreline, and second-tier development beyond the shoreline looks to be the next significant growth area. The North Shore Highlands is host to the popular North Shore State Trail, which is a major snowmobile destination. Parts of this trail are currently being considered for possible summer season ATV use, as are other areas along the shore. Much of the white pine-red pine forests have been logged and replaced with quaking aspen-paper birch. This subsection contains significant old-growth northern hardwood and upland northern white cedar forest. The subsection also contains the highest density of designated trout streams in Minnesota. The source of water for most of these streams is surface runoff.

II. Current Conditions and Trends

A. Demographics and Economy

Duluth acts as the economic engine for the region in many respects. It serves as the gateway for imports and exports from the region as well as the primary urban center for the area. Access to the natural amenities of the North Shore, in turn, draws people to live and work in Duluth. The success of the Lake and Cook County economies are also dependent upon the services provided by Duluth. However, the Duluth/St. Louis County industries are multifaceted but still revolve around natural resources to a large degree. The four counties lining the North Shore showed a decline in population from 1980-2000 of approximately 7.8% (U.S. Census Bureau), but this decrease occurs primarily in the Iron Range where Lake County has seen a loss of 15.2%. During the same period, Cook County has increased by more than 26% and Carlton County by nearly 6%. However, while the overall population may have decreased, there is a trend toward non-family households, at least in St. Louis County (a “household family” is characterized as household as a married couple with or without children or a head of household) where they saw an increase of 4,247 non-family households from 1999-2000 while a decrease of 529 family households in the same period.

Additionally, the state demographer projects a sizeable increase in population for this area in the next 10-20 years as retirees flock to the North Shore for its breathtaking views and unhurried lifestyle. In fact, it is projected that from 2000-2030, this region will see an 81% increase in people over the age of 65.

Median household income ranges from 10% below the national figure and approximately 25% below the state.

Tourism plays a central role in the region’s economy. A 2001 analysis of the economic conditions in Northern Minnesota performed by the University of Minnesota Duluth showed a diverse economy that is very dependent upon natural resources for the mining and forest products

industries and increasingly for the tourist and services based industries. Employment in this area is especially vulnerable to cycles in the commodities markets. For instance, job growth in St. Louis County was strong from 1999-2000 when more than 15,000 jobs were added, but the county saw a subsequent decline from 2000-2001 of more than 3,000 jobs. These unpredictable oscillations in employment place a unique strain on efforts to plan for the future and place a premium on being conservative in the use of natural resources. It should also be noted that the employment base for a tourist industry dependent upon a young workforce is very thin.

Forest products are an important contributor to the regional economy, although much of the activity is located in the portions of Cook, Lake, St. Louis, and Carlton counties outside of the North Shore Conservation Region. For these four counties as a whole there are over 4.5 million acres of timberland that produce nearly 946,000 cords of pulp and timber a year worth \$30 million. Forest harvest is an important activity in areas away from Lake Superior, especially within five State Forests consisting of 153,600 acres (Cloquet Valley, Pat Bayle, Finland, Fond Du Lac, and Grand Portage).

Casinos are playing an increasingly important role where 5% of the Carlton County and 6% of the Cook County payroll can be attributed to casino employment.

B. Land and Habitat

Most of this region is underlain by rocks of the Canadian Shield that were scoured by continental glaciers within the last 20,000 years. It is a geologically young landscape covered in places by thin deposits of coarse loamy till. This part of Minnesota receives more of its precipitation as snow than any other part of the state and has the longest period of snow cover. As a result of the climate and soils, most of the dominant vegetation is fire-dependent forests and woodlands. Although red and white pine forests were widespread in the past, most of the pine was cut out around the turn of the last century. Forests of aspen, paper birch, and Jack pine were left on the drier and rocky areas, but sugar maple, yellow birch, and regenerated white pine dominate the more mesic sites. On the wettest sites, peatlands and wet forests predominated by white cedar, tamarack and black ash occur.

Recreation, tourism and forestry are the predominant land uses in this subsection. There is tremendous development pressure along the environmentally sensitive Lake Superior shoreline. The breakdown in land area is:

Forest/shrubland	90%
Lakes	02.9
Developed land	02.7
Grasslands	01.8
Wetlands/shallow lakes	01.5
Row crops/small grain	<u>01.1</u>
	100%

Much of the white and red pine forests have been logged and replaced with trembling aspen-paper birch, and older age conifer species have declined over the years with younger age aspen increasing in acres. However, the region also includes significant old-growth northern hardwood and upland northern white cedar forest.

The County Biological Survey identified 71 sites for a total of over 300,000 acres that have high or outstanding biodiversity significance in this region.

While 53% of the land is in public ownership throughout the region, most of the private ownership is concentrated along Lake Superior. The public ownership includes nearly 277,000 acres of federal land (262,000 acres managed by the USFS) and 512,000 in state ownership. While this number for public lands may seem large, less than 2% of the more than 1.4 million acres in this region have been set aside as parks or preserves and many of the important areas for conservation along the shore and elsewhere are privately owned

Much of the development along the North Shore is driven by the presence of sewer treatment infrastructure.

C. Lakes, Rivers, Wetlands & Groundwater

Lake Superior is the dominant natural feature in this area. The challenge for Minnesota is that Lake Superior is increasingly being influenced by forces beyond the direct control of the citizens of the state. From climate change to the introduction of invasive species via ship traffic, the vitality of Lake Superior is threatened.

41 lakes covering approximately 27,360 acres are considered impaired primarily because of mercury contamination. While brimming with stream habitat, 23 streams are designated as impaired, again, primarily for excessive mercury levels – though excessive nutrients are shown in streams near areas of significant development. Of the 23 streams designated as impaired, 12 are designated because of “aquatic life”. Seven of these are in the Duluth urban/rural development zone (St. Louis Bay, Amity Creek, Talmadge River, Sucker River, French River, Lester River, and Miller Creek). The others streams are the Nemadji River and Deer Creek in Carlton County, Knife River and Beaver River in Lake County and Poplar River in Cook County. The inventory of impaired waters in the state, however, is incomplete and additional impaired waters within the North Shore Conservation Region are likely to be identified in the future.

There are more than 22,000 acres of wetlands in this region that support a wide array of plant and animal life. Many of these wetlands have been impacted by exotic species and stormwater runoff.

Obtaining plentiful drinking water from wells is often a challenge on the North Shore. The following is an excerpt from a University of Minnesota publication in *The Seiche*:

Geologists think the pockets of extremely salty water contain Canadian Shield brine. Canadian Shield brine is older than the hills, dating back to Precambrian seas covering the planet two billion years ago; before the supercontinent Pangaea formed; before dinosaurs. Although this water has ties to a distant marine environment, its flavor is born of bedrock's calcium chloride not oceanic sodium chloride. Hyper-saline water typically forms when ordinary water has a chance to sit for a good, long while in bedrock, which is the case around Western Lake Superior.

Swenson suggests that the hefty Laurentide Ice Sheet, during its million-and-a-half year dance, produced a complex distribution of salinity that is most conspicuous near the modern lakeshore.

Most residents in the area derive their drinking water from Lake Superior.

There are 49 lakes in the area over 150 acres in size and many have public access. There are more than 3,000 miles of streams and rivers with nearly 1,900 miles designated as a state trout stream. Lake Superior is the predominant natural resource, tourism attraction and economic engine for the region.

D. Fish and Wildlife

The story of the lake trout and the lamprey is legendary and efforts are focused on maintaining a sustainable fishery for lake trout, anadromous rainbow trout, brook trout, coho salmon, Chinook salmon as well as walleye and brown trout. Lake Superior Tributaries are abundant in trout and herring. Inland lakes are the home of trout, small mouth bass, walleye, northern pike and panfish.

Moose populations in northeastern Minnesota have shown an alarming mortality rate, particularly with cows and calves, in recent years. Scientists are unable to determine the precise cause, but growing evidence seems to indicate that the population may be falling victim to the warming climatic conditions. Moose exist at the southernmost end of the range in Minnesota and can become stressed when temperatures exceed 65⁰F for extended periods of time.

There are approximately 260 non-game and 35 game wildlife species within or adjacent to the region and, of these, 84 wildlife species are considered species of greatest need including 25 that are federally or state listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern. For example, 10 mammal species of concern are known or predicted to occur in the North Shore Region, approximately 46% of all mammal species of conservation need in the state.

The North Shore Region and associated waters of Lake Superior are home to bald eagles, peregrine falcons, common terns, Franklin's ground squirrels, Connecticut warblers, boreal owls, merlins, common ravens, northern myotis, deepwater sculpin, and kiyi.

The North Shore is one of the most important and visible migratory corridors for entire Midwest as raptors and neotropical migrants make their way along the cliffs above Lake Superior and Hawk Ridge every fall.

E. Outdoor Recreation

Scenic Highway 61 extends from Duluth to the Canadian border and offers views of Lake Superior, forests, and waterfalls from the many tributaries flowing into the lake. A string of state parks, resorts, and trail systems attract visitors from throughout the United States and Canada. Opportunities to view wildlife are abundant. The area is renowned for birding opportunities and the greatest likelihood of seeing many rare, majestic animals such as bear, moose and wolf.

There are seven Scientific and Natural Areas within the North Shore Conservation region that are open to public nature observation including Hovland Woods, Butterwort Cliffs, Sugarloaf Point, Moose Mountain, Hemlock Ravine, Lutsen, and Spring Beauty Northern Hardwoods. Together they total 1,757 acres.

The region is also well known for its destination resorts and its celebration of the area's natural wonders through festivals and race events that occur in summer (Grandma's marathon) and winter (Bearthouse).

Several important state parks are located on the North Shore, including Gooseberry Falls, Split Rock, Tettegouche, Crosby Manitou, Temperance River, Cascade River, and Grand Portage. Other state parks within the conservation region are Jay Cooke and Magney. In total State Parks cover over 32,000 acres. The State Park Land Study notes that these parks will see increased recreational demand through 2025, as this region has one of the highest recreational demand projections in the state. State plans do not call for any additional state parks in the region, but 2,200 acres of inholdings within the existing state parks remains to be protected.

The Superior Hiking Trail runs for 235 miles from Two Harbors to the Canadian border traversing the length of the region offering high quality backpacking opportunities. Its entire length is proposed to be part of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) that runs for 237 miles in the region. About 37 miles of the NCNST are currently incomplete. Of the 332 miles of state trails authorized by the Minnesota State Legislature, 170 have been developed. There remains 161 miles of authorized trail that need to be developed when funding is available.

There are approximately 296 miles of designated canoe trails in the North Shore Region including portions of the Cloquet, Kettle, and St. Louis rivers as well as the Lake Superior water trail

An extensive system of snowmobile and cross-county ski trails offer year round recreation activities. For instance, the Gitchi Gami Trail and Willard Munger State Trail are located in this area and the Lutsen ski area provides some of the best downhill skiing in the state.

The City of Duluth offers many recreational opportunities as well with approximately 12,000 acres of parks, opens spaces and natural areas that also serve as important tourist attractions:

- Minnesota Point beach and pines
- Magney-Snively forest park
- Spirit Mountain Recreation Area
- Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve
- Duluth Lakewalk

This region contains some of the most important fishing areas in the state both in the streams that enter Lake Superior and the lake itself. A recently completed Fisheries Management Plan for the Minnesota waters of Lake Superior documents the challenges for Minnesota to maintain a robust fishery when the state only controls 7% of Lake Superior.

Moose populations in northeastern Minnesota have shown an alarming mortality rate, particularly with cows and calves, in recent years. Scientists are unable to determine the precise cause, but growing evidence seems to indicate that the population may be falling victim to the warming climatic conditions. Moose exist at the southernmost end of the range in Minnesota and can become stressed when temperatures exceed 65⁰F for extended periods of time. This region also serves as habitat for white-tail deer, woodcock and ruffed grouse.

Seven Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are in the region comprising nearly 5,000 acres. The state WMA plan calls for an about 660 additional acres to be acquired in this region.

III. Conservation Challenges

Accommodating the increased desire to develop the limited sites along the North Shore is the primary challenge for these residents.

A. *Lack of Coordinated Planning Efforts*

It was stated that the North Shore is “over planned and under implemented”. Not only is there an historic lack of coordination among the various levels of government agencies and community groups, but many of the local ordinances and procedures are outdated and ill-equipped to deal with the added development pressures. Torn between the desire to ensure a strong economy and conservation, the lack of a common and long-term vision for the area leads to fractured planning and a fractured landscape.

B. *Increased Stormwater and Water Pollution*

As the fragile landscape around the shore develops, the natural hydrology is altered and the amount of impervious surface is increased. This leads to increased pollutant loads to the streams, lakes and wetlands in the area and, ultimately, to Lake Superior. This can also be exacerbated by a lack of adequate sewage treatment primarily through inadequate maintenance of existing systems or systems that were inadequate to begin with.

C. *Climate Change & Water Diversion*

Climate change is a daunting challenge. Possible effects include changes in water levels, water quality, stream flow, forests, species survival, and disease transmission. According to a recent state government report, some parts of Minnesota have already experienced significant increases in precipitation since the early 1990s. The same report said that Minnesota’s climate might look like that of Missouri in the future. Another report, produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), said that as the Great Lakes region warms, ice on many lakes and streams would go out sooner, leading to earlier peak stream flows and reduced water levels later in summer. Reduced water levels, as reported by the National Academy of Sciences, will also have economic consequences in the form of lost recreational opportunities and higher transportation costs.

Ideally, the Global warming, or climate change, is in a class by itself when it comes to impacts to water quality and the environment. However, there are a whole series of emerging issues with serious economic and environmental consequences for the Lake Superior Basin. Water diversions and exports are one of the least appreciated and understood issues. The Great Lakes and Lake Superior, in particular, represent one of the largest freshwater systems in the world. With water increasingly becoming a global commodity, it will be extremely difficult to prohibit out-of-basin water transfers from Lake Superior.

4. *Conversion of Private Land & Unprotected Public Land*

Land values continue to escalate and private land with views of Lake Superior becomes more rare. As more retirees migrate to the Shore, they will be more interested in land with a view rather than proximity to employment. However, their presence will put increased and unprecedented pressure on medical and social services. Funding to acquire lands for conservation in advance of this development pressure has been only a fraction of what is needed to keep pace. Beyond the funding issues, land owned by counties, tax-forfeited lands, may also be available for development.

IV. Status of Current Planning Efforts

A wealth of plans has been completed in this region with several attempts to integrate land management goals. The following plans were reviewed in putting this template together:

- Fisheries Management Plan for the Minnesota Waters of Lake Superior, DNR & partners, 2006
- Cook County Land Use Plan, Cook County,
- Cook County Water Management Plan, Cook County SWCD, 2006
- Conservation Biology Institute Protected Area Database, 2006
- Duluth Comprehensive Plan, City of Duluth, 2006
- Lake County Water Management Plan, 2005
- Lake Superior Lakewide Management Plan, U.S. EPA & Canada, 2004
- Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan, St. Louis River Citizen Action Committee, 2002
- Minnesota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, DNR, 2006
- Minnesota Forest Legacy Program, DNR, Potlatch Corp., local government and NGOs, 2006
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, MPCA, 2003
- Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), DNR, 2002
- Minnesota State Park System Land Study, DNR, 2000
- Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan, BWSR, DNR and other MN state agencies, 1997
- Minnesota Wildlife Management Area Acquisition, DNR, 2002
- St. Louis County Economic Report, 2002
- Superior National Forest Plan, USFS, 2003
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2006
- Western Lake Superior Sanitary Sewer District Response Plan, 2004

Future conservation efforts in the region may wish to consult any of the following:

- North Shore Management Plan and update
- Zoning plans Ordinances (County, township, municipalities)
- Lake County Land Use Comp Plan
- Silver Creek Comp Plan
- Castle Danger et. al.
- Grand Portage Reservation Plan
- Fond du Lac
- Great Lakes Comprehensive Plan, The Nature Conservancy
- Northeast Landscape Plan, Forest Resources Council
- MN Forest Legacy Assessment of Needs (1999-2000)
- Lake Superior Plan, MN Pollution Control Agency
- Great Lakes Regional Collaboration
- St. Louis River Remedial Action Plan
- St. Louis Management Plan (Corridor)
- Port Plan – Duluth
- Arrowhead Regional Development Corporation
- Coastal Non-point Plan
- Nemadji River Basin Plan

- North Shore Scenic Byway Plan
- Local Plans: Tofte, Schroeder, etc.
- North Shore Scenic Drive interpretive plans see www.arrowheadplanning.org
- City of Duluth Sensitive Areas plan
- Great Lakes Water Compact – Council of Great Lakes Governors
- Duluth/Superior Harbor Land Use Plan
- North Shore Plans → coastal program contact: Pat Collins (218-834-6612) or Clint Little (218-834-6636)
- DNR Forestry subsection Forestry Management Plan (SFRMP)
- The Nature Conservancy Great Lakes Binational Conservation Blueprint
- The Nature Conservancy Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan
- Lake Superior Basin Plan

IV. Goals

The following goals represent a consolidation of the goals contained in the aforementioned existing plans. These goals represent, as best as can be done, a consensus of goals and strategies targeting conservation challenges identified by the variety of groups.

A. Demographics and Economy

1. Promote industries that sustain the natural resource base.
 - Encourage a dynamic and diverse year-round tourist industry.
 - Maintain forests to provide diverse and viable habitat for the plant and animal species of the region.
 - Protect water supply and management of Lake Superior for consumption and shipping
 - Maintain large blocks of mature forestlands as part of the timberbase that also protect viable populations for forest-interior animal species

B. Land and Habitat

1. Ensure that residential and commercial development along the North Shore does not jeopardize the quality of life unique to this region.
 - Concentrate residential and commercial growth in community centers helping to control public service costs and preserve the valuable wild and undeveloped character of the area.
 - Continue emphasis on public land ownership in the remote, rural areas with most private ownership near roads, community centers and other easier-to-service and develop areas.
2. Identify and protect high priority natural areas

- Complete North Shore natural resource inventory and identify stressors to ecological function.
 - Use the full spectrum of protective tools to ensure critical areas are conserved.
 - Identify restoration targets and acquire rights necessary to restore ecological functions.
3. Control spread and infestation of exotic species (e.g. zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, etc.)
 4. Monitor and prepare for impacts of climatic change on the region's native flora and fauna

C. Lakes, Rivers, Wetlands and Groundwater

1. Reduce pollutants load of streams and rivers entering Lake Superior
 - Decrease sediment loads by use of best management practices on residential and commercial lands
 - Develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for waters of Lake Superior and its tributaries that can be integrated into a comprehensive conservation strategy for the region organized by watersheds.
 - Reduce peak flows in streams that result from excess stormwater runoff
 - Enforce and enhance regulations regarding private septic systems
2. Develop TMDLs for all impaired waters in region
3. Inventory area wetlands and assess ecological function
 - Develop targets for wetland protection and restoration and ensure no net loss of wetland functions is preserved
4. Conduct groundwater assessment and protection plan

D. Recreation

1. Protect and restore "view lands" along Lake Superior shore
2. Complete 161 miles of trails authorized by legislature
3. Ensure protection of 2,200 acres of state park inholdings
4. Promote opportunities for passive recreation in the area
5. Identify key trout habitat and ensure long-term protection

6. Acquire additional 660 acres identified in WMA plan
7. Work with U.S. and Canadian partners toward the development of a sustainable Lake Superior fishery

VI. Opportunities

Example to watch will be the reclamation of the Poplar River in Cook County.

Acquire lands on MN Point for conservation

Acquire land on St. Louis River estuary

CELCP funding for land acquisition (but need a plan)

Identify DOT land holdings and convert to state parks for public access

Conduct key land exchanges and acquisition to consolidate public and private conservation ownership to form a designated network of sites and connections to protect key native aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity

Implement county and township land-use plans and regulations that maintain, or improve water quality standards by increasing funding for local units of government and regulatory agencies

Prevent the distribution of native food webs and indicator species populations from invasive exotic species by reducing the risk (transmission) of infection/establishment

Acquire the open space, scenic bluff and conservation lands that the city of Duluth has mapped and identified that are in a tax forfeit category and are a high priority for Duluth

Acquire and/or protect the MN County Biological Survey sites that were nominated as natural areas in Appendix K in the DNR's North Shore Highlands, Irvine Uplands and Lower tier Uplands subsection Strategic Direction document

Acquire critical segments of the Superior Hiking Trail that are now under threat of development

Permanently protect the North Shore Lake Superior shore lands owned by the Dept of Transportation in Cook County

Acquisition of lands within the region for public access to Lake Superior, MN Point and St. Louis River

Capitol investment for land consolidation including federal, state, and county or city owned lands for conservation and recreation