

DATE: May 6, 2008
RE: Recreation land lease data from St. Louis County, Minnesota
FROM: Compiled by the Cabin Coalition 2

St. Louis County, Minnesota manages the largest county forest in the nation at just under 900,000 acres. Geographically, St. Louis County reaches from Duluth at the western tip of Lake Superior to the Canadian border, 125 miles north. The topography is as varied as the scope of the land, from Canadian Shield lakes in the north to glacial drift areas and vast wetlands in the southwest. Over 80% of the county is forested. Timber as a raw material is vital to the economy, but tourism and emerging activities such as bird watching are becoming important parts of the economy.



Cabin and Shoreland Recreation Lease Program

In the early years of its management of tax-forfeited lands, St. Louis County established a program whereby the County issued leases to individuals or groups of individuals for the purpose of placing small cabins (traditionally called “hunting shacks”) on county administered tax-forfeited land. Minnesota statutes authorize such leases for temporary use.

Under this program the individuals obtain the right to place a cabin and associated structures not to exceed 564-square feet or, under an alternative lease, 764-square feet, on tax-forfeited land. Leases run for a year and are renewable. Leaseholders can transfer their leases to others. Leaseholders do not receive exclusive use of any tax-forfeited land except that which is actually covered by their structures. All construction must be authorized by the Land Department. Full time residency is not allowed.

Base annual lease payments were set by the County Board in 2005 at \$300 for 564 square foot lease and \$500 for 764 square foot lease; prices to be adjusted annually according to changes in the consumer price index. Currently, there are 660 cabin leases located in the woods. Another 278 are located on lakeshore property. Although most existing leases are renewed annually or allowed to transfer to new leaseholders, no new additional leases have been issued since 1990.