

Department of Natural Resources Land Acquisition

Program Evaluation
Released April 25, 2025

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Key Findings

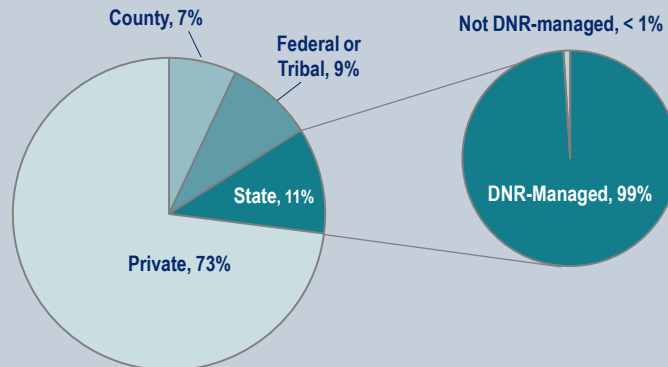
- DNR complied with acquisition *process* requirements
- DNR did not fully comply with *reporting* requirements
- Stakeholders reported that:
 - DNR does a good job selecting land to acquire
 - The process takes too long

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State of Minnesota
2

Overview of State Land

Minnesota has 51 million acres of land (p. 4)



Land Acquisition Overview

- Purposes (p. 4)
 - Conservation
 - Recreation
 - Sustainable economic use of natural resources
- Outdoor recreation system
- Land selection based on “strategic land asset management” goals (SLAM) (p. 31)

Land Acquisition Participants (p. 9)

- DNR divisions
 - Lands and Minerals
 - Land-acquiring divisions
- Partner organizations
- Landowners
- Local and Tribal governments

Land-Acquiring Divisions

- Ecological and Water Resources
- Fish and Wildlife
- Forestry
- Parks and Trails

Scope of Evaluation

- Fee title acquisitions (full ownership interest)
- Acquired through:
 - Purchase
 - Donation > **(110 acquisitions)**
 - Conveyance from partner organization **(124 acquisitions)**

Requirements for Acquisition Process (p. 18)

Statutes lack requirements for partner organizations

- Leaves standards to DNR's discretion

Topic	Required for DNR	Required for Partners
Ensure land is appraised	Yes, by statute	Yes, by DNR
Obtain county board <i>approval</i>	Yes, by statute	No; statutes require county board <i>notification</i>

Compliance with Process Requirements (pp. 19-26)

- DNR has:
 - Complied with requirements for DNR-led purchases
 - Ensured partner organizations meet same standards for partner-led purchases

Recommendation: Acquisition Requirements

- ❑ The Legislature should consider whether statutes should establish the same requirements for DNR- and partner-led acquisitions

DNR Reporting Requirements

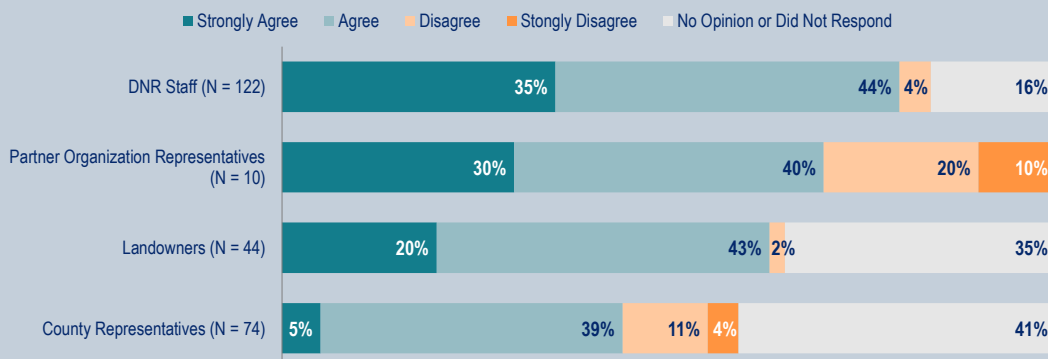
- Inventory of DNR-managed land (biennial)
 - ✗ DNR has never produced this report
- Land Acquisition Account Report (annual)
 - ✗ DNR did not produce reports for FY 2023 or FY 2024
 - ✗ FY 2022 report did not indicate “all purchases and sales”

Recommendation: Legislative Reporting

- ❑ DNR should regularly produce reports identifying:
 1. Its inventory of DNR-managed land and
 2. Transactions from the Land Acquisition Account

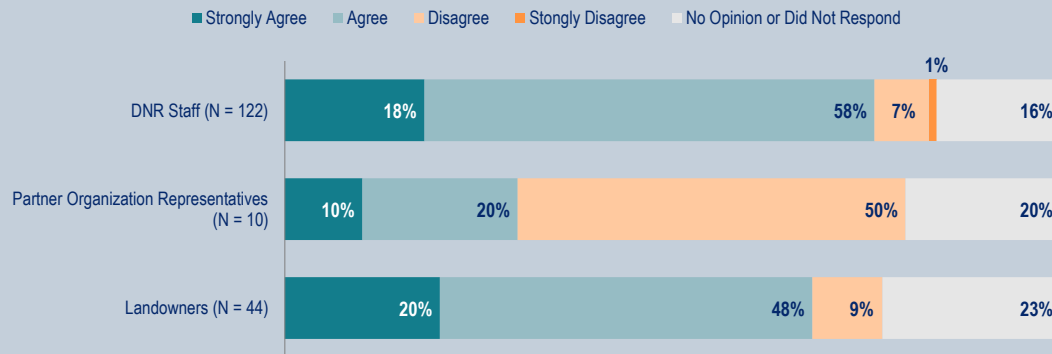
Stakeholder Opinions: Land Selection (p. 35)

Survey Results: DNR does a good job selecting/determining land to acquire.



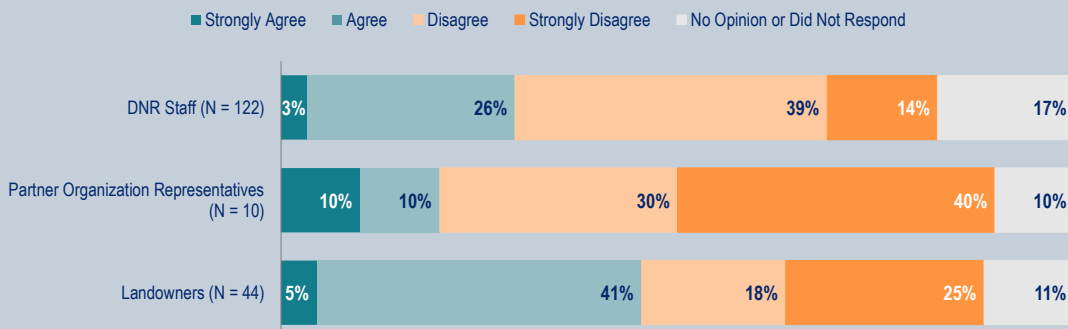
Stakeholder Opinions: Acquisition Process (p. 40)

Survey Results: Overall, DNR does a good job acquiring the land it selects for acquisition.



Stakeholder Opinions: Length of Process (p. 45)

Survey Results: DNR's process for acquiring land concludes within a reasonable time frame.



Timeliness (pp. 42-44)

- Median length of acquisition: 21 months
- More complex than many real estate transactions
 - County board approval
 - Appraisal review
 - Title review

Continuous Improvement Project (pp. 48-51)

- Participants: DNR, partner organizations, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
- Focus: appraisals and title review
- Progress toward solutions (examples):
 - Facilitated easier communication between partner organization attorneys and DNR attorneys
 - Pilot testing completing title review earlier in the process

Recommendation: Continuous Improvement

- ☐ To the extent that proposed solutions also apply to DNR-led acquisitions, the department should implement them to reduce the length of these acquisitions.

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