

# BOARD MEMO NO. 21-38

**DATE:** August 28, 2021

**FROM:** Kevin Z. Gray  
County Administrator

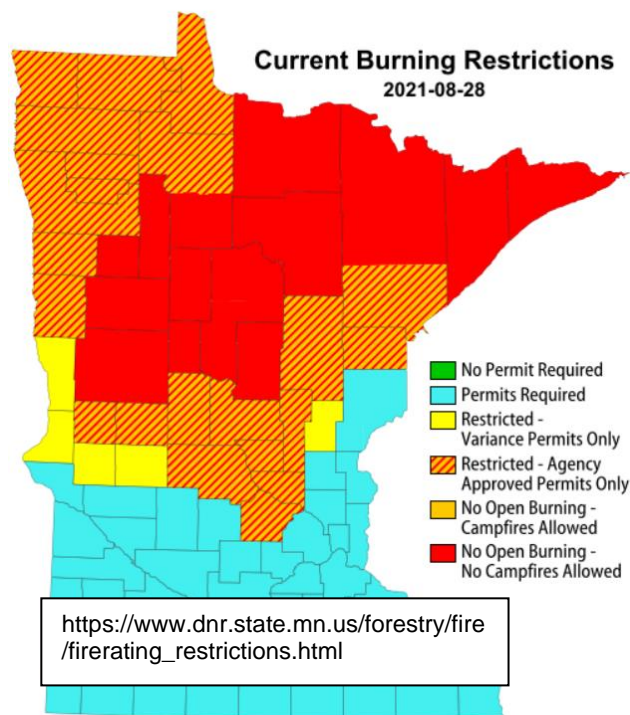
Julie Marinucci, Director  
Land and Minerals

**RE: Restrictions of Timber and Forest Operations on County Administered Lands in Response to Current Risk of Wildfire**

Drought conditions continue to persist throughout regions of Minnesota. Due to the lack of significant precipitation, risk of wildfire has steadily increased over the last few months in northeast Minnesota; especially in the counties of St. Louis, Lake, and Cook. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and United States Forest Service (USFS) have increased burning restrictions in response to the increasing risk. The occurrence of several fires in the northern part of Minnesota have stretched firefighting resources on a state and local level. It is acknowledged that due to current fires across the country, our nations fire and emergency response resources are being stressed for an extended period of time.

The Land and Minerals Department has been in contact with DNR and USFS officials, along with our own emergency management director regarding the status and behavior of current fires, especially the Greenwood Lake fire in neighboring Lake County. In recent weeks, the Department has kept abreast of the increasing fire danger and burning and operation restrictions being enacted and proposed by regulating agencies.

Conditions have reached a point in northeast Minnesota that DNR and USFS officials are restricting high-risk activities in our forested regions including logging and heavy equipment operation. County Board Resolution No. 366 adopted on May 27, 1980 which gives the Land Commissioner authority to "suspend cutting and logging operations on County lands contingent upon the request by the Department of Natural Resources when extreme fire danger exists". In efforts to minimize risk of fire on county administered forest lands, the Land Commissioner is implementing restrictions consistent with DNR and USFS actions and recommendations. These restrictions would apply to St. Louis County contracts administered by the Land and Minerals Department which are currently operating in the northern portion of the county. The restricted area will follow the DNR designated "No Open Burning-No Campfires Allowed" on the Current Burning Restrictions Map.



Effective 12:01 a.m., August 30, 2021, and continuing until revoked or modified by further order of the St. Louis County Board or direction of the Land Commissioner, the following activities are restricted in northern St. Louis County as defined by the DNR designated "No Open Burning-No Campfires Allowed", presently north of Township 55N.

1. The following land management activities are prohibited between the hours of 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on all St. Louis County Timber, Forest Development and Road Contracts administered by the Land and Minerals Department:
  - Harvesting, skidding/forwarding trees, and processing logs on the landing
  - Mowing and clearing grass and brush
  - Road grading
  - Dressing (sharpening) road grader blades on hardtop roads
  - Preparing land for tree, shrub, or grass planting (e.g. roller choppers, anchor chains, and rock rakes)
  - Any other mechanized operation that could create a spark and result in a fire
  - Decorative top harvesting where tools and equipment with internal combustion engines are used
  - Blasting activities outside of a defined mine or pit
  - Welding, using acetylene torches, or other devices with an open flame, to cut metal or rock
  - Grinding metal and rock
  - Operating and parking vehicles and machinery in grass and vegetation
2. Exceptions to these restrictions include:
  - Loading and hauling decked wood from the landing is allowed 24 hours a day
  - Equipment and gravel crushers working in a pit
  - Equipment used for the purposes of emergency response or fire suppression

All equipment used on tax forfeited lands must have fire suppression equipment readily available on site at all times (e.g. fire extinguisher, water tank and pump, backpack pump can, etc.). A fire watch person shall remain on site and monitor for one hour after operations shut down for the day.

1. In addition, the following activities will be restricted to the morning hours before 11 A.M. by Land and Minerals employees and other contractors:
  - Operation of all heavy and mechanized equipment in forested area including forest road work
  - Mowing/brushing of forest roads, seed orchard and other areas within the forest
  - Use of blasting material by our contracted nuisance beaver trapper

These restrictions are established to protect the public, contractors, and permit holders' health and safety and to protect Minnesota's natural resources. The Land and Minerals Department will continue to monitor the forest conditions, coordinate with the DNR and USFS, and will keep the restrictions in place only for the length of time they are warranted to minimize risk of wildfire.

Please refer any questions regarding the restrictions of timber and forest operations on county administered lands to Julie Marinucci or Jason Meyer.