WE'RE ALL CONNECTED TO THE FOREST
Message: How forests affect our daily lives

IN ITASCA COUNTY, WE’RE ALL CONNECTED TO THE FOREST
The Forest is Essential to Our History, Culture, and Sense of Home

Standing in the forest you can hear its chatter, feel its tranquility, smell its earthy scent, touch its different textures and behold its majestic beauty. It’s humbling to experience a forest and know so much of the active and passive activity happening around you will influence your life, your family, your community and your world.

Because Itasca County ranks third in total forested area out of 87 Minnesota counties, its environmental significance is well known: vast areas of wild forest, vital habitat for plants and animals, and the headwaters of rivers including the mighty Mississippi. But wooded areas are more than an important renewable resource. They are also home to a people whose culture, livelihood, family, aspirations and dreams are deeply affected by the forest’s existence.

Laura Tam, author of At Home in the Northern Forest states, “The connections residents feel to the land and to the physical environment of their communities is an important, defining characteristic of regional identity. For many, the beauty of the forest landscape, as well as the variety of recreational opportunities serve as an anchor for sense of place. The proximity to forest and water resources and the nature of the land are essential to their quality of life. People identify specific aspects of natural and cultural heritage that leave imprints on the landscape and define their sense of place, such as the built environment of the town, the land use histories of the area, and the climate and weather of the region.”

She continues, “The history of the working forest is an important ingredient in many people’s sense of place. While the management and stewardship of the forests, the rivers, and the overall environment is important to residents, it is a subject of strongly-held, often divergent (differing) opinions. Many people express personal values of sustainable and productive forestry, protection of water and wildlife resources, wild areas, and access to recreational opportunities – but there are many different ideas about how to incorporate these values and management goals in the Northern Forest.”

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Itasca County working forests provide continuous resources throughout the entire course of their life cycle – from saplings to harvested or fallen trees – that support their woodland neighborhoods as well as improve the quality of life of residents, visitors and the rest of world every single day. Whether you’re using forest products like paper, furniture or firewood, enjoying forest recreation like hunting or snowmobiling, or drinking pure water and breathing clean air because of healthy forests, the benefits experienced from working forests connect us to nature and to each other. Our forest experiences become valuable stories that share strength, commitment and yes, love for the land of water and woods. After all...there’s no place like home. For more information, visit www.FEAPMN.com.