



# Shoreland Protection Initiative

## Vilas County — Focusing on the Northern Highland

The Northern Highland is a special area that is located across most of Vilas and Oneida Counties, and part of Iron County. It is a part of the 'Northern Highland Ecological Landscape' as defined by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It's notable for its large number of lakes, extensive forests and wetlands. Approximately 50% of this region is forested, 35% is wetlands and 13% is open water. Forested watersheds keep soils in place, lessening sedimentation and nutrient loading into our waters. The rate of development has



Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources "The Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin"

increased dramatically over the past few decades in Vilas County. Shoreland and woodland areas are

becoming more 'urbanized,' negatively impacting the very waters and woods that draw people here. This pattern will continue as our planet warms and populations increase. It is vital that we act today to ensure there's a balance between development and conservation so that future generations have the chance to experience the northwoods as we do today. With the presence of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, there's an opportunity for private landowners to protect their land to provide linkages to public land so animals and plants can adapt.

## The Northern Highland — Why It Deserves Our Protection

- ⇒ Globally significant concentration of glacial lakes, many with attractive sandy bottoms and shorelines.
- ⇒ Species including the iconic bald eagle, osprey and common loon depend on our pristine water.
- ⇒ Abundant forests (the majority being in private ownership) keep our surface and ground water clean and provide refuge for wildlife.
- ⇒ An economy that depends on our amazing recreational opportunities and natural resources (e.g. fisheries).
- ⇒ In an era of changing climate, the north will see an influx of new residents and development that will forever change the northwoods' character and health.



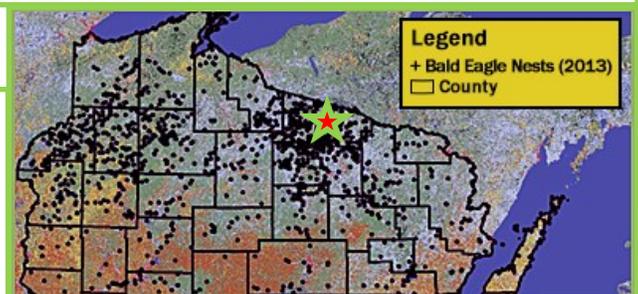
Photos by (top left, clockwise): Mark Bugnaski, Ron Eckstein (2); Bev Engstrom



**The Northern Highland has one of the highest freshwater lake densities in the world, rivaled only by parts of northern Minnesota, Ontario and Finland.**  
This alone makes it globally distinctive. Let's protect what we can while we still can!

A Program of the Northwoods Land Trust

Bald eagle nest count, highest in Vilas County.  
Source: WDNR



Legend  
+ Bald Eagle Nests (2013)  
□ County