

# Rajala Woods Foundation

**2025 Annual Report**  
*A Year of Growth*



## Good things and time...

It was one of those brilliant late October days that we all cherish in the north country. The aspen leaves were down, and the last of summer's clouds were giving way to darker "cold clouds". Winter was on its way, and I was feeling the crush of looming work deadlines, a smattering of home projects not quite complete, and a distinct sense I was spending too many hours behind a computer screen.

My work brought me to the North Shore of Lake Superior, and I found myself with a few hours of free time between meetings. In a half-hour I was driving up the forest road on RWF's Moose Creek Project, ruffed grouse picking gravel in front of me. I parked and hiked up a hillside to a white pine planting RWF had conducted years before, right in the middle of a global pandemic.

A few cedars and yellow birches poked into that calm blue sky. Underneath these scruffy old-timers lay a blanket of young white pines, well over six feet tall, their terminal buds finally safe from hungry deer. As I stood there, white pines stretching to the north, I was filled with a deep sense of appreciation for all of RWF's supporters, our incredible volunteer Board of Directors, and our fantastic staff. While progress sometimes feels slow in the conservation world, I realized how far we've come in our mission of bringing back the white pine and other long-lived species.

Thousands of acres open to the public. Restored biodiversity. Strong community engagement. Wildlife habitat that provides food and shelter for moose, wolves, and bears.

We may never be able to say "mission accomplished" at RWF. There is much more work to do, and our challenges are real. However, as 2025 rolls into 2026, we can say with confidence that at RWF, our mission is affirmed.

My sincere thanks to all of you, and I hope we meet up on one of those white pine ridges someday soon.

-Kurt Anderson, Board Chair



# Our Conservation Partners

*At the Rajala Woods Foundation, we are blessed to share the passion for protecting and restoring our wild places with talented and hardworking people outside of our organization. Here are just a few of our 2025 Conservation Partners.*

## 01

### Pines in the City

For the second year, RWF partnered with the City of Duluth and Loll Designs to help restore white pines within the city limits. This volunteer effort resulted in hundreds of white pines planted along the Lester River, a designated trout stream.

## 02

### Amity Creek

Another fantastic crew of tree planters from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and Boys Scouts of America planted long-lived tree species along Amity Creek.



## 03

### Knife River Conservation

One of our fellow non-profits, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association (LSSA), is doing incredible work along the Knife River to restore stream channels and stabilize banks. RWF acted as the fiscal agent for Phase VII of this work, and is looking forward to helping support LSSA in future years.

## 04

### CCC Trailhead Launch

In 2025, ALLETE/Minnesota Power made a generous donation of land to the RWF, expanding the Hodnik Family Forest. This land also includes an arson-damaged Civilian Conservation Corps structure. RWF is working with partners from St. Louis County, Hoyt Lakes, and community leaders to restore this structure and seek funding for formal trailhead designation.

# 2025 Project Highlights

*RWF land ownership includes two main tracts, the 1200-acre Moose creek Project near Schroder, Minnesota, and the Hodnik Family Forest between Aurora and Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota. We are actively working to restore long-lived species on both sites.*

01

## White Cedar Revival at Moose Creek Project

While surveying the Moose Creek Project late one fall day a few years back, RWF made an interesting discovery: With low deer densities, northern white cedar recruitment was far higher than in many northern forests. Through Conservation Partners Legacy funding from the state of Minnesota, RWF built on the existing progress by clearing more areas, then planting and protecting thousands of white cedar.

02

## Hodnik Family Forest Phase I Reboot

This beautiful piece of land, nestled along the shores of the Partridge River and Whitewater Reservoir, was donated to RWF by ALLETE and named after former ALLETE CEO, Alan Hodnik, and his family. As RWF seeks to establish a conservation easement on this land with the Minnesota DNR, we are also augmenting the existing long-lived species present at HFF through clearing, planting, and maintenance activities.



# What's in (Y)our Woods

*The benefits of the forestry work you support at RWF isn't limited to "just" trees. By establishing more biological diversity, there are cascading benefits to other vegetation, wildlife, and the people who visit these special places. Meet some of our RWF hosts below; for more cool footage, check out the "What's in our Woods" page at [rajalawoodfoundation.org](http://rajalawoodfoundation.org).*



## Francisco Waagosh

This red fox actively cruises the Moose Creek Project (MCP), and seems to particularly enjoy hunting along the cleared pockets of brush where new white pine have been planted



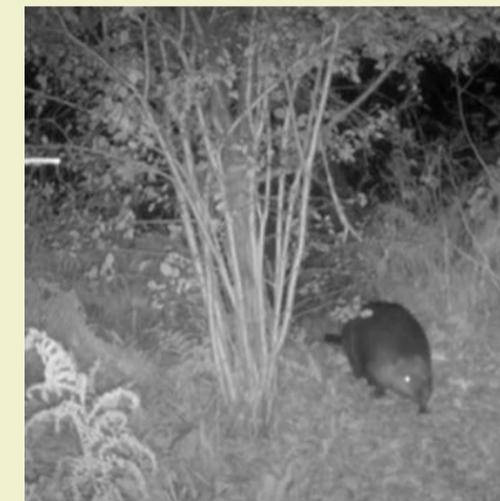
## Allison Mooz

It took a while to get this mooz over its camera shyness, but our Executive Director, Blake Francis, finally captured several moose browsing during a snowstorm at Moose Creek Project.



## Jamie Ma'iingan

Also affectionately referred to as "Shoulders" by some RWF members, this hefty timber wolf and its kin are frequent visitors to RWF's undeveloped project lands.



## Adora Amik

Sometimes, our tree harvest crews are true volunteers. This beaver, *amik*, changes the structure and function of riparian zones through its own voracious appetite and water management goals.



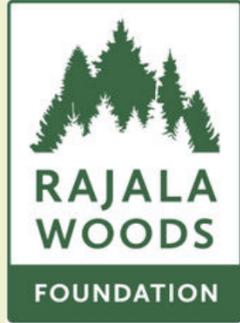
## Our 2026 Vision..

Thousands of long-lived native tree species, re-established on ground that haven't seen their kind for decades. New resilient forests growing toward the sunshine, carefully budcapped and cleared of competing vegetation. Large tracts of wild places, open to the public for their responsible use and enjoyment.

Diverse forests. Clean water. The joy of wild places, available for all to enjoy.

In 2026, RWF's work will continue alongside our partners and supporters. It is wonderful work, but it is not easy, and it is not free. Whether its dedicated support for projects, or the less glamorous but invaluable support that helps us with real estate taxes, insurance, and overhead costs, our non-profit needs your continued support.

Interested in supporting RWF? Please contact us or visit our website at [rajalawoodsfoundation.org](http://rajalawoodsfoundation.org).



# Contact Us

Looking to learn more? Want to volunteer at one of our planting or budcapping events? Interested in investing in our forests or projects for the benefit of current and future generations? Rajala Woods Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation, and has ample experience tailoring supporter's desire to help with the right opportunities – creating tangible progress in our wild places that will endure for centuries. It doesn't matter if you're an individual who want to plant a few trees, or a large corporation looking to make a sizeable financial donation: RWF will find ways to work with you to achieve our shared desire to ***make our woods a better place for all.***



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