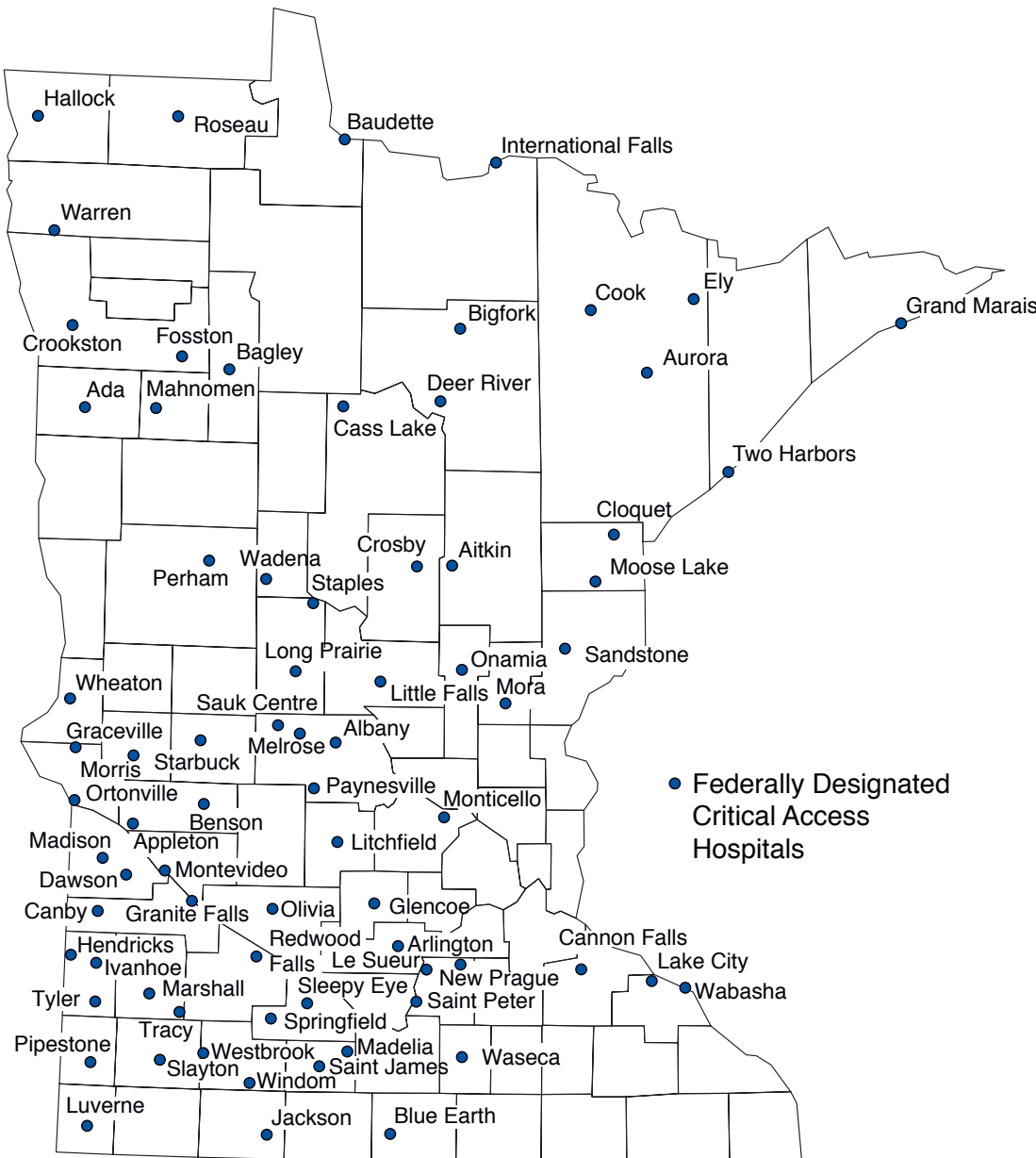


Critical Access Hospitals, 2005

"Critical access hospital" is a federal designation given to hospitals in rural regions that serve a very low volume of patients. While government rules require hospitals to maintain certain levels of staffing and certain types of staff on hand, many remote hospitals with very low patient numbers cannot adhere to these requirements without serious financial loss. But in places where the next closest hospital may be 40 or 50 miles away, these facilities are crucial to health care access in the region. Being designated a critical access hospital helps these health care centers remain open by allowing them to operate under more flexible guidelines. While they cannot perform some procedures, they do provide many important services such as care for those who require hospitalization (but not necessarily intensive care) and stabilization for those who need transportation to a larger hospital.



Data source: Minnesota Department of Health
 © 2006 Center for Rural Policy and Development