



MINNESOTA VALLEY TRUST

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

NEWS RELEASE

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Recent land purchases along the Minnesota River in Faxon and Jessenland Townships of Sibley County has expanded the recently-created Jessenland Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The purchases have been completed by the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc., a nonprofit corporation that works closely with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on expansion of the Refuge. To date, the Trust has acquired 512 acres in the Minnesota River floodplain for the Jessenland Unit in Sibley County.

“The Trust and USFWS are pleased that landowners along the Minnesota River want to see their property become part of the Minnesota Valley Refuge,” explained Deborah Loon, executive director of the Minnesota Valley Trust. “This means we can protect critical habitat for wildlife and natural places for the public’s enjoyment forever.”

All lands will be donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for permanent protection and management as part of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Habitat restoration work on the former croplands that flooded frequently is underway. Agricultural fields have been retired and tile that drained the fields broken, allowing for restoration of about 25 acres of wetlands. Native grasses and seeds have been planted to restore the oak savannah and prairie.

The lands are open to public hunting, as posted, as well as wildlife observation and photography. In keeping with federal law that allows only wildlife-dependent recreation on

Refuge lands, motorized vehicles will not be allowed on Refuge lands.

“This land is an integral part of the restoration of a 7,000-acre block of floodplain forest, wetland and bluff habitat along the Minnesota River,” said Charlie Blair, manager of the Minnesota Valley Refuge. “Many bird species, including warblers, wood ducks, mallards, bald eagles, herons, turkeys and owls will benefit from the acquisition of this land.”

Partial funding for the purchases was provided through a grant to the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. Metropolitan Conservation Corridors is a partnership of public and nonprofit conservation agencies that is accelerating and enhancing habitat protection by targeting limited funds toward high-priority focus areas and better coordinating the efforts of conservation organizations.

Additional funding was provided by the Schmidt Foundation.

The Minnesota Valley Trust is working with additional landowners willing to sell their property in targeted areas in the Minnesota River Valley, as prioritized by the Refuge. The priority areas were identified through a habitat assessment conducted along the river by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information, go to the Trust’s website at www.mnvalleytrust.org.

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The Minnesota Valley Trust is a private, nonprofit corporation established in 2000 through a settlement between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. The Minnesota Valley Trust works to mitigate the impacts of the north-south runway under construction at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, which will send thousands of inbound and outbound flights every month over popular units of the Refuge near the airport. The Minnesota Valley Trust manages the settlement funds for the purposes of expanding the Minnesota Valley Refuge by at least 4,090 acres, constructing a new visitor and environmental education center and developing other public use facilities, such as trails, parking lots and interpretive kiosks.