



MINNESOTA VALLEY TRUST
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

NEWS RELEASE

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The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. recently purchased 281 acres in Ceresco Township and 320 acres in Lincoln Township for the creation of new Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs). The WPAs will be donated by the Trust to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for permanent protection and management as conservation lands.

The Ceresco Township property, known as the Watonwan WPA, is in the Watonwan River Watershed of the Minnesota River. It includes 80 acres of unbroken native prairie and eleven restorable wetlands totaling 80 acres, including a 50-acre basin. It also has a restorable oak savannah.

The Lincoln Township property, named the Lincoln WPA, is also in the Watonwan River Watershed and includes 100 acres of wetland habitat that will be restored. It is located at the head of Judicial Ditch 15.

The tracts are close to more than 1,000 other acres of permanently restored habitat. “The restoration of these tracts will provide excellent prairie and wetland habitat for a host of wildlife species,” said Charlie Blair, manager of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District.

Blair continued, “The benefits of retiring and restoring these marginal croplands are many. In addition to providing habitat for wildlife, these lands will help improve the water quality in the Watonwan and Minnesota Rivers. These lands also will provide recreational opportunities for the public.”

The purchases have been completed by the Minnesota Valley Trust, a nonprofit corporation that works closely with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on expansion of the Refuge and Wetland Management District. To date, the Trust has acquired 1,270 acres in the Minnesota River Watershed in Blue Earth County.

“The Trust and USFWS are pleased that landowners in this area want to see their marginal cropland be restored and protected for conservation purposes,” said Deborah Loon, executive director of the Minnesota Valley Trust. “This means we can protect and restore critical habitat for wildlife and the public’s enjoyment.”

Partial funding for the purchases was provided through a grant to the Habitat Corridors Partnership (HCP) through the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. HCP 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.

For more information, go to the Trust’s website at www.mnvalleytrust.org.

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.