

ML2011 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2015

PROJECT TITLE: MeCC VI - MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. (2.6/3.3)

PROJECT MANAGER: Deborah Loon

AFFILIATION: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. (MVT)

MAILING ADDRESS: 3815 East American Boulevard

CITY/STATE/ZIP: Bloomington, MN 55425

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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 04i2.6/3.3

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$600,000

Overall Project Outcomes and Results

Activity 1: The Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. (MVT) acquired 154.6 acres of priority habitat to expand the St. Lawrence Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on January 14, 2015. Of that, 95.1 acres were acquired with the ENRTF grant and 59.5 acres were acquired with other, non-state funds. This property joins two prior acquisitions for this unit, one of which was acquired in part with a prior ENRTF grant (ML2010 - MeCC V Supplemental). The total land acquired for this unit now stands at 445 acres.

About 60 acres of the acquired lands that had been actively-farmed cropland are being restored to its historic alluvial plain and slope wetland habitat with a 2015 Metro Conservation Partners Legacy Grant. This will restore the native wetland habitat with local ecotype vegetation, promote plant diversity to provide a suite of pollinator habitat, prime nesting cover and expanded forage options, and reclaim a unique ecosystem lost to agricultural practices. The project will increase sediment and nutrient entrainment to the Minnesota River, increase water storage and create additional habitat for wildlife, including game species.

Another 3.5 acres were acquired in July 2012 for the nearby Louisville Swamp Unit of the Refuge as leverage, and 176.5 acres were received in donation in December 2011 to create a new Waterfowl Production Area associated with the Refuge. The latter property was just 1 mile outside the corridors of the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors, so does not technically qualify as leverage acres, but was a priority for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District and is reported here for information purposes.

Activity 2:

The following work was completed for this activity:

- Oak savanna remnant at Long Meadow Lake Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on the 15 acres.
- Oak savanna remnant at Louisville Swamp Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres.
- Mesic prairie at the Jessenland Unit – Prescribed fire on 300 acres.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Upon completion of the restoration activities, the St. Lawrence Unit property will be posted open for public use and announced through news releases and the MVT website. Signage at the unit will include reference to the ENRTF.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2011 Work Plan Final Report

Date of Status Update: 8/1/2015
Final Report: 8/1/2015
Date of Work Plan Approval: 4/24/2014
Project Completion Date: 6/30/2015

Project Title: MeCC VI - MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. (2.6/3.3)

Project Manager: Deborah Loon

Affiliation: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Inc

Address: 3815 East American Boulevard

City: Bloomington **State:** MN **Zipcode:** 55425

Telephone Number: (612) 801-1935

Email Address: dloon@mnvalleytrust.org

Web Address: <http://www.mnvalleytrust.org>

Location:

Counties Impacted: Hennepin and Scott

Ecological Section Impacted: Minnesota and Northeast Iowa Morainal (222M)

Total ENRTF Project Budget:	ENRTF Appropriation \$:	600,000
	Amount Spent \$:	599,630
	Balance \$:	370

Legal Citation: M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 04i2.6/3.3

Appropriation Language:

\$1,737,000 the first year and \$1,738,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements. Of this appropriation, \$150,000 the first year and \$150,000 the second year are to the commissioner of natural resources for agency programs and \$3,175,000 is for the agreements as follows: \$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year with Friends of the Mississippi River; \$517,000 the first year and \$518,000 the second year with Dakota County; \$200,000 the first year and \$200,000 the second year with Great River Greening; \$220,000 the first year and \$220,000 the second year with Minnesota Land Trust; \$300,000 the first year and \$300,000 the second year with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.; and \$250,000 the first year and \$250,000 the second year with The Trust for Public Land for planning, restoring, and protecting priority natural areas in the metropolitan area, as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and portions of the surrounding counties, through contracted services, technical assistance, conservation easements, and fee title acquisition. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards, as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Expenditures are limited to the identified project corridor areas as defined in the work program. This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of habitable residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work program. All conservation easements must be perpetual and have a natural resource management plan. Any land acquired in fee title by the commissioner of natural resources with money from this appropriation must be designated as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07. The commissioner may similarly designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. A list of proposed restorations and fee title and easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work program. An entity that acquires a conservation easement with appropriations from the trust fund must have a long-term stewardship plan for the easement and a fund established for monitoring and enforcing the agreement. Money appropriated from the trust fund for easement acquisition may be used to establish a monitoring, management, and enforcement fund as approved in the work program. An annual financial report is required for any monitoring, management, and enforcement fund established, including expenditures from the fund. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2014, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

I. PROJECT TITLE: MeCC 6 - 2.6/3.3 Priority Expansion and Restoration - Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

II. PROJECT SUMMARY: The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. will improve habitat connectivity, combat habitat loss, protect native plant and animal species, improve water quality of the Minnesota River and increase public access to natural lands through the following activities:

(1) Fee title acquisition of 125 acres for one or more of the following units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge – Blakely Unit (Scott County), Bloomington Ferry Unit (Hennepin County), Jessenland Unit (Sibley County), Louisville Swamp Unit (Scott County), Rapids Lake Unit (Carver County), St. Lawrence Unit (Scott County), San Francisco Unit (Carver County) and a prospective new unit between Henderson and LeSueur (LeSueur and Sibley Counties). The expansion lands have been prioritized by the USFWS and the Trust is working with willing landowners. At least 125 additional acres will be acquired for the Refuge by the MN Valley Trust using other, non-state funds. The lands acquired will be donated to the USFWS for perpetual management for wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation as part of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

(2) Restoration and enhancement of 405 acres of oak savanna and remnant native prairie communities on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge units near Jordan and Belle Plaine. Work has been designed by the USFWS and will include removal of invasive and non-native species on a 15 acre oak savanna on Long Meadow Lake Unit (Hennepin County) and 190 acre oak savanna on Louisville Swamp Unit (Scott County), as well as prescribed fire on those two units and a 200 acre mesic prairie on the Jessenland Unit (Sibley County) of the Refuge. The work will be completed using mechanical, chemical and prescribed fire methods.

III. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of February 1, 2012:

(1) Minnesota Valley Trust is in discussions with multiple landowners who are interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units. Appraisals and surveys are being ordered for some parcels.

(2) Planning is underway to restore and enhance remnant oak savannas and native prairie on 405 acres of existing units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This work will begin in 2012.

Project Status as of August 1, 2012:

(1) Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.

(2) A request for proposals has been issued to qualified contractors. Work is expected to commence in fall 2012.

Project Status as of February 1, 2013:

(1) Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.

(2) Work commenced in fall 2012 with some hand-cutting by FWS crews of invasive species (FWS work is in-kind). A contract is being developed with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for the bulk of the mechanical cutting and herbicide application. Qualified contractors are being sought and interviewed for the prescribed fire work.

As indicated by the ~~strikeout~~ and underline in the Reporting Requirements section below and in the Work Plan Attachment A, Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. is requesting Work Plan amendments to (1) change the reporting schedule to reflect the project completion date of June 30, 2014 as consistent with the appropriation language and (2) allow for equipment rental and/or seed purchase using the \$10,000 allocated to Equipment / Tools / Supplies.

Project Status as of August 1, 2013:

- (1) Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.
- (2) Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

CCM will be contracted for additional mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. Qualifications of possible prescribed fire contractors are being reviewed. A request for proposals will be sent to a short list of contractors with goal of completing the prescribed fire in fall 2013 or spring 2014.

USFWS crews will complete prescribed fire on the USFWS-owned tracts in the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts on an in-kind basis.

Project Status as of February 1, 2014:

- (1) Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.
- (2) Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

MN Valley Trust has contracted again with CCM for additional mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. We were not able to find any prescribed fire contractors who could meet the USFWS qualifications, so all prescribed fire will be completed by USFWS crews on an in-kind basis. MN Valley Trust will reimburse the USFWS with non-grant funds for fire personnel to supplement USFWS crews, so that the work may be completed.

Amendment Request 2/1/2014:

- (1) The Minnesota Valley Trust may need additional time to complete the fee acquisition and requests an amendment to extend this grant one additional year to June 30, 2015.

(2) All grant funds will be expended for the habitat enhancement project and, weather-permitting, all work should be complete by June 30, 2014. However, given that weather may not allow the prescribed fire during the spring of 2014, the Minnesota Valley Trust hereby requests an amendment to extend the grant period by one additional year to June 30, 2015.

Project Status as of April 21, 2014:

(1) Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, several opportunities to acquire in-holdings to complete the Refuge within the Bloomington Ferry Unit and Louisville Swamp Unit have been identified. Acquisition of these lands for the Refuge is a high priority. They all include Minnesota River frontage, floodplain forest and the following: (a) Two of the parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit will allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail by the DNR. (b) One Bloomington Ferry Unit parcel contains a south facing slope goat prairie remnant, a rare and disappearing habitat within the metropolitan area. (c) The Louisville Swamp Unit includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge.

(2) Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

MN Valley Trust has contracted again with CCM for additional mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts. This work is underway.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. We were not able to find any prescribed fire contractors who could meet the USFWS qualifications, so all prescribed fire will be completed by USFWS crews on an in-kind basis. MN Valley Trust will reimburse the USFWS with non-grant funds for fire personnel to supplement USFWS crews, so that the work may be completed.

Amendment Request April 21, 2014:

(1) The Minnesota Valley Trust seeks an amendment to this Work Program and the related Acquisition-Restoration Parcel List to allow for use of the grant funds to acquire lands for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on the Bloomington Ferry Unit and Louisville Swamp Unit.

Project Status as of August 1, 2014:

(1) Appraisals, surveys and negotiations are underway with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within its Bloomington Ferry and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, outreach continues with landowner within other Refuge Units. Acquisition of these lands for the Refuge is a high priority. The properties under active negotiation include the following: (a) two parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit will allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail by the DNR, (b) one Bloomington Ferry Unit parcel contains a south facing slope goat prairie remnant, a rare and disappearing habitat within the metropolitan area, (c) a parcel in the Louisville Swamp Unit includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge.

(2) Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. During this reporting period, CCM completed mechanical and chemical removal of invasive and non-native species on Long Meadow Lake Unit and Louisville Swamp Unit. In addition, USFWS burn crews conducted a prescribed burn on the Jessenland Unit and a portion of the Louisville Swamp Unit. Unfavorable weather conditions prevented prescribed fire operations on a portion of the Louisville Swamp Unit and on the Long Meadow Lake Unit, so these will be attempted in the future.

Project Status as of February 1, 2015:

(1) Appraisals, surveys and negotiations are underway with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within its Bloomington Ferry and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, outreach continues with landowner within other Refuge Units. The properties under active negotiation include the following: (a) two parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit that will allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail by the DNR and (b) a parcel in the Louisville Swamp Unit that includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge. MVT was not able to complete acquisition of a parcel previously reported for the Bloomington Ferry Unit.

(2) Since this grant's inception in February 2012, the following work has been completed for this activity:

- Oak savanna remnant at Long Meadow Lake Unit: Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 7 acres; additional prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on 7 acres.
- Oak savanna remnant at Louisville Swamp Unit: Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres.
- Mesic prairie at the Jessenland Unit: prescribed fire on 300 acres.

During the upcoming (final) reporting period, we will be providing a supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species to another 8 acres of oak savanna remnant at the Long Meadow Lake Unit.

Final Project Status Update as of August 1, 2015:

Activity 1: The Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. (MVT) acquired 154.6 acres of priority habitat to expand the St. Lawrence Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on January 14, 2015. Of that, 95.1 acres were acquired with the ENRTF grant and 59.5 acres were acquired with other, non-state funds. This property joins two prior acquisitions for this unit, one of which was acquired in part with a prior ENRTF grant (ML2010 - MeCC V Supplemental). The total land acquired for this unit now stands at 445 acres.

It was necessary to pay 10% above the appraised value for this property, as it was assessed by the county at a rate much higher than it appraised (and still above the agreed-upon purchase price). The signed offer letter discussing this is attached for information.

About 60 acres of this acquisition that had been actively-farmed cropland are being restored to its historic alluvial plain and slope wetland habitat with a 2015 Metro Conservation Partners Legacy Grant. This will restore the native wetland habitat with local ecotype vegetation, promote plant diversity to provide a suite of pollinator habitat, prime nesting cover and expanded forage options, and reclaim a unique ecosystem lost to agricultural practices. The project will increase sediment and nutrient entrainment to the Minnesota River, increase water storage and create additional habitat for wildlife, including game species.

Another 3.5 acres were acquired in July 2012 for the nearby Louisville Swamp Unit of the Refuge as leverage, and 176.5 acres were received in donation in December 2011 to create a new Waterfowl Production Area associated with the Refuge. The latter property was just 1 mile outside the corridors of the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors, so does not technically qualify as leverage acres, but was a priority for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District and is reported here for information purposes.

Activity 2:

The following work was completed for this activity:

- Oak savanna remnant at Long Meadow Lake Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on the 15 acres.
- Oak savanna remnant at Louisville Swamp Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres.
- Mesic prairie at the Jessenland Unit – Prescribed fire on 300 acres.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1: Expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Description: The Minnesota Valley Trust will complete fee title acquisition of at least 125 acres to expand one or more of the following units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge –

- Blakely Unit (Scott County)
- Bloomington Ferry Unit (Hennepin County)
- Jessenland Unit (Sibley County)
- Louisville Swamp Unit (Scott County)
- Rapids Lake Unit (Carver County)
- St. Lawrence Unit (Scott County)
- San Francisco Unit (Carver County)
- A prospective new unit between Henderson and LeSueur as delineated by USFWS (LeSueur and Sibley Counties).

At least 125 additional acres will be acquired for the Refuge by the MN Valley Trust using other, non-state funds.

The Refuge units have been prioritized and delineated by the USFWS in its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) through a public planning process as having strong potential to provide high quality habitat for wildlife and opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation. The lands are along the Minnesota River and include river frontage, floodplain and cropland. The CCP was updated in 2011.

The prospective lands offer significant habitat for wildlife and opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation. The lands run along the Minnesota River and include river frontage, floodplain, cropland and bluffs. Some are adjacent to lands already in public ownership (USFWS, DNR) or previously acquired by the MN Valley Trust for the Refuge expansion.

These acquisitions will connect the river, floodplain forest and prairie habitat in the Minnesota River bottoms, benefiting many species of wildlife including wood ducks, mallards, bald eagles, grassland nesting birds as well as numerous resident game species such as turkeys and deer.

This project will improve water quality by retiring cropland in the Minnesota River Valley and restoring lands to the natural habitats of floodplain forest, wetlands and prairie. Some of these lands include

property on which the Minnesota State Trail currently is (Louisville Swamp parcel) or prospectively will be located (two Bloomington Ferry Unit parcels).

When donated to the USFWS, the public will be given access to the lands for wildlife-dependent recreational activities, such as birding, photography, hiking, interpretation, hunting and fishing.

Following acquisition, the MN Valley Trust (MVT) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will develop a restoration and management plan, then restore and enhance the floodplain forest, wetlands and prairie, as appropriate to the parcel. Cropland will be retired and drain tile broken. The MVT is the source of funds for this restoration and management work; the funds are secure.

The lands acquired will be donated to the USFWS for perpetual management for wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation as part of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Increased operations and maintenance costs will be the responsibility of the MVT and USFWS.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 500,000
Amount Spent: \$ 500,000
Balance: \$ 0

Activity Completion Date: June 30, 2015

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. <i>Acquire fee title to 125 acres for priority expansion of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge</i>	June 30, 2015	\$ 500,000

Activity Status as of February 1, 2012: Minnesota Valley Trust is in discussions with multiple landowners who are interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units. Appraisals and surveys are being ordered for some parcels.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2012: Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units

Activity Status as of February 1, 2013: Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2013: Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2014: Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units. The Minnesota Valley Trust may need additional time to complete this work and requests an amendment to extend this grant one additional year to June 30, 2015.

Activity Status as of April 21, 2014: Outreach and discussions continue with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within the Blakely, Jessenland and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, several opportunities to acquire in-holdings to complete the Refuge within the Bloomington Ferry Unit and Louisville Swamp Unit have been identified. Acquisition of these lands for the Refuge is a high priority. They all include Minnesota River frontage, floodplain forest and the following: (a) Two of the parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit will allow for completion of the

Minnesota State Trail by the DNR. (b) One Bloomington Ferry Unit parcel contains a south facing slope goat prairie remnant, a rare and disappearing habitat within the metropolitan area. (c) The Louisville Swamp Unit includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2014: Appraisals, surveys and negotiations are underway with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within its Bloomington Ferry and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, outreach continues with landowner within other Refuge Units. Acquisition of these lands for the Refuge is a high priority. The properties under active negotiation include the following: (a) two parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit will allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail by the DNR, (b) one Bloomington Ferry Unit parcel contains a south facing slope goat prairie remnant, a rare and disappearing habitat within the metropolitan area, (c) a parcel in the Louisville Swamp Unit includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2015: Appraisals, surveys and negotiations are underway with landowners interested in selling their land for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge within its Bloomington Ferry and St. Lawrence Units. In addition, outreach continues with landowners within other Refuge Units. The properties under active negotiation include the following: (a) two parcels in the Bloomington Ferry Unit that will allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail by the DNR and (b) a parcel in the Louisville Swamp Unit that includes the State Trail and will enable the FWS to manage a large wetland complex that is not partially in private and public ownership. All lands are within the delineated boundaries of the Refuge and will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Refuge. MVT was not able to complete acquisition of a parcel previously reported for the Bloomington Ferry Unit.

Final Report Summary:

Activity 1: The Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. (MVT) acquired 154.6 acres of priority habitat to expand the St. Lawrence Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on January 14, 2015. Of that, 95.1 acres were acquired with the ENRTF grant and 59.5 acres were acquired with other, non-state funds. This property joins two prior acquisitions for this unit, one of which was acquired in part with a prior ENRTF grant (ML2010 - MeCC V Supplemental). The total land acquired for this unit now stands at 445 acres.

It was necessary to pay 10% above the appraised value for this property, as it was assessed by the county at a rate much higher than it appraised (and still above the agreed-upon purchase price). The signed offer letter discussing this is attached for information.

About 60 acres of the acquired lands that had been actively-farmed cropland are being restored to its historic alluvial plain and slope wetland habitat with a 2015 Metro Conservation Partners Legacy Grant. This will restore the native wetland habitat with local ecotype vegetation, promote plant diversity to provide a suite of pollinator habitat, prime nesting cover and expanded forage options, and reclaim a unique ecosystem lost to agricultural practices. The project will increase sediment and nutrient entrainment to the Minnesota River, increase water storage and create additional habitat for wildlife, including game species.

Another 3.5 acres were acquired in July 2012 for the nearby Louisville Swamp Unit of the Refuge as leverage, and 176.5 acres were received in donation in December 2011 to create a new Waterfowl Production Area associated with the Refuge. The latter property was just 1 mile outside the corridors of the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors, so does not technically qualify as leverage acres, but was a

priority for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District and is reported here for information purposes.

ACTIVITY 2: Restore & Enhance Remnant Oak Savannas and Native Prairie

Description: Restoration and enhancement of 405 acres of oak savanna and remnant native prairie communities on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge units near Jordan and Belle Plain. Work has been designed by the USFWS and will include removal of invasive and non-native species on a 15 acre oak savanna on Long Meadow Lake Unit (Hennepin County) and 190 acre oak savanna on Louisville Swamp Unit (Scott County), as well as prescribed fire on those two units and a 200 acre mesic prairie on the Jessenland Unit (Sibley County) of the Refuge.

Ecological restoration plans have been developed or will be developed by the USFWS consistent with the highest quality conservation and ecological goals for these sites. An initial restoration evaluation will be provided at completion of this grant appropriation as part of the final report, and a second evaluation will be completed three years after completion of the project.

The restoration and enhancement work in this project will be completed using mechanical, chemical and prescribed fire methods. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota will be contracted for chemical and mechanical removal, when available. Other qualified contractors will be used for prescribed fire and for chemical and mechanical removal, when needed.

Restoration and enhancement of native grassland and oak savanna communities requires multiple treatment phases over several years. Work to be accomplished with this proposal represents several restoration phases, depending on the specific project area. Long-term maintenance and management will be accomplished as part of the Refuge budget (federal funds), although other funds may be sought as needs are identified.

The savanna and native prairie remnants targeted for restoration in this project are recognized as rare ecosystems in the Minnesota State Action Plan, *"Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare"* (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2006). They support several species occurrences documented in the DNR's *Minnesota County Biological Survey Heritage Database*, and are listed as critical habitat types in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District (2004).

Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 100,000
Amount Spent: \$ 99,630
Balance: \$ 370

Activity Completion Date: June 30, 2015

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
2. Restore and enhance remnant oak savannas and native prairie on 405 acres of existing units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	June 30, 2015	\$ 100,000

Activity Status as of February 1, 2012: Planning is underway to restore and enhance remnant oak savannas and native prairie on 405 acres of existing units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This work will begin in 2012.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2012: A request for proposals has been issued to qualified contractors. Work is expected to commence in fall 2012.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2013: (1) Mechanical removal and treatment of woody species for habitat restoration has started using FWS-directed volunteer crews (this is non-grant funded work). A contract is being developed with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for the bulk of the mechanical cutting and herbicide application, which is funded by the grant. (2) Requests for proposals were issued to self-certified prescribed fire contractors for work to begin fall 2012. Respondents to the initial RFP were unable to meet requirements of the USFWS, so additional contractors being prequalified by USFWS. Working on having prescribed fire plans complete and contractor(s) selected for work in spring 2013. Actual ability to complete the work in 2013 will be dependent on contractor availability and qualifications, as well as weather.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2013: Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

CCM will be contracted for additional mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. Qualifications of possible prescribed fire contractors are being reviewed. If a qualified contractor cannot be identified, we will increase the amount of mechanical invasive species removal by contractors on the three tracts and supplement USFWS crews with qualified individuals to complete all prescribed burns in fall 2013 or spring 2014.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2014: Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

MN Valley Trust has contracted again with CCM for additional hand and mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. We were not able to find any prescribed fire contractors who could meet the USFWS qualifications, so all prescribed fire will be completed by USFWS crews on an in-kind basis. MN Valley Trust will reimburse the USFWS with non-grant funds for fire department personnel to supplement USFWS crews, so that the work may be completed.

All grant funds will be expended and, weather-permitting, all work should be complete by June 30, 2014. However, given that weather may not allow the prescribed fire during the spring of 2014, the Minnesota Valley Trust hereby requests an amendment to extend the grant period by one additional year to June 30, 2015.

Activity Status as of April 21, 2014: Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. Work consisted of mechanical removal of invasive and aggressive woody species, stump treatment with herbicides, and supplemental seeding with native savanna grass and wildflower species. Woody material removed was chipped and eight dump truck loads (64 cubic yards total) were used as biofuel by District Energy of St. Paul, Minnesota.

MN Valley Trust has contracted again with CCM for additional hand and mechanical removal and herbicide application on the Long Meadow Lake and Louisville Swamp Unit tracts. This work is underway.

A prescribed fire plan for the 200-acre Jessenland Unit tract has been prepared by a private contractor. We were not able to find any prescribed fire contractors who could meet the USFWS qualifications, so all prescribed fire will be completed by USFWS crews on an in-kind basis. MN Valley Trust will reimburse the USFWS with non-grant funds for fire department personnel to supplement USFWS crews, so that the work may be completed.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2014: Previously, Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) completed habitat work on 7 acres of oak savanna at Long Meadow Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge under a contract. During this reporting period, CCM completed mechanical and chemical removal of invasive and non-native species on Long Meadow Lake Unit and Louisville Swamp Unit. In addition, USFWS burn crews conducted a prescribed burn on the Jessenland Unit and a portion of the Louisville Swamp Unit. Unfavorable weather conditions prevented prescribed fire operations on a portion of the Louisville Swamp Unit and on the Long Meadow Lake Unit, so these will be attempted in the future.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2015: Since this grant's inception in February 2012, the following work has been completed for this activity:

- Oak savanna remnant at Long Meadow Lake Unit: Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on 7 acres.
- Oak savanna remnant at Louisville Swamp Unit: Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres.
- Mesic prairie at the Jessenland Unit: prescribed fire on 300 acres.

During the upcoming (final) reporting period, we will be providing a supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species to another 8 acres of oak savanna remnant at the Long Meadow Lake Unit.

Final Report Summary:

The following work was completed for this activity:

- Oak savanna remnant at Long Meadow Lake Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 7 acres; additional prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on the 15 acres.
- Oak savanna remnant at Louisville Swamp Unit -- Mechanical removal and chemical treatment of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres.
- Mesic prairie at the Jessenland Unit – Prescribed fire on 300 acres.

V. DISSEMINATION:

Description: As projects are completed, the Minnesota Valley Trust will announce the accomplishments through press releases and the Trust website.

Status as of February 1, 2012: NA

Status as of August 1, 2012: NA

Status as of February 1, 2013: NA

Final Report Summary: Upon completion of the restoration activities, the St. Lawrence Unit property will be posted open for public use and announced through news releases and the MVT website. Signage at the unit will include reference to the ENRTF.

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. ENRTF Budget:

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Explanation
Service Contracts	\$ 90,000	Contracts with Minnesota Conservation Corps and other qualified private restoration organizations, as appropriate to perform prescribed fire operations, herbicide application and mechanical invasive tree and other woody species removal.
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$ 10,000	Herbicide and equipment rental for treatment of invasive trees and other woody species after removal to prevent re-sprouting. Seed for areas where invasive species have smothered native species, if needed.
Fee Title Acquisition:	\$ 500,000	Fee title acquisition of 125 acres to expand the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:	\$ 600,000	

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: N/A

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: N/A

Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) funded with this ENRTF appropriation: N/A

B. Other Funds:

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
Non-state			
MN Valley Trust funds, other non-state funds	\$ 500,000	\$ 318,428	Fee title acquisition of 125 acres to expand the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
State	\$ 0	\$ 0	
TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:	\$ 500,000	\$ 0	

VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS), all Metro Conservation Corridors Partners, Friends of the Minnesota Valley, local communities

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:

This project is part of a long-term strategy to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge by up to 10,000 acres and restore and enhance the Refuge's forest, wetland and prairie habitat for wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation. The expansion and restoration strategy was developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge, completed September 2004 after a thorough public input process. The CCP was updated by the USFWS in 2011.

This project will further acquisition work completed previously by the Minnesota Valley Trust with support from the ENRTF. The benefits of the project include the following:

- Connect the river, floodplain forest and prairie habitat in the Minnesota River bottoms, benefiting many species of wildlife. It will increase the breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrants and other species, including non-migratory resident species.
- Improve water quality of the Minnesota River by retiring cropland and restoring lands to the natural habitats of floodplain forest, wetlands and prairie.
- Expand the public's access to and enjoyment of public lands in and near the Twin Cities metropolitan area for wildlife-dependent recreational activities of birding, photography, hiking, interpretation, hunting and fishing. Allow for completion of the Minnesota State Trail.

C. Spending History:

Funding Source	M.L. 2005 or FY 2006-07	M.L. 2007 or FY 2008	M.L. 2008 or FY 2009	M.L. 2009 or FY 2010	M.L. 2010 or FY 2011
ENRTF – MeCC	\$ 230,000	\$ 210,000	\$ 225,000	\$ 225,000	\$ 325,000
Other non-state funds, including MN Valley Trust and private contributions	\$ 428,000	\$ 376,473	\$ 197,019	\$ 225,000	\$ 325,000

VIII. ACQUISITION / RESTORATION LIST: Attached

IX. MAP(S): Attached

X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: N/A

XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted not later than February 1, 2012, August 1, 2012, February 1, 2013, August 1, 2013 and February 1, 2014. A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 1, 2014 as requested by the LCCMR.

Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Projects

Project Title: 2.6/3.3 - MeCC 6 Priority Expansion and Restoration MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Legal Citation: M.L. 2011, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 3, Section 2, Subd. 4(i) Metropolitan Conservation Corridors (MeCC) - Phase VI
Project Manager: Deborah Loon
M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 600,000
Project Length and Completion Date: June 30, 2015
Date of Update: August 1, 2015

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Activity 2 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM	Acquisition			Restoration				
Service contracts <i>Contracts with Conservation Corps of Minnesota and other qualified private restoration organizations to perform prescribed fire operations, herbicide application and mechanical invasive tree and other woody species removal.</i>				90,000	89,989	11	90,000	11
Equipment/Tools/Supplies <i>Herbicide and equipment rental for treatment of invasive trees and other woody species after removal to prevent re-sprouting. Seed for areas where invasive species have smothered native species.</i>				10,000	9,641	359	10,000	359
Fee Title Acquisition <i>Fee title acquisition of 154.6 acres to expand the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge (95.1 acres with ENRTF grant and 59.5 acres with other, non-state funds). Land acquired will be donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.</i>	500,000	500,000	0				500,000	0
COLUMN TOTAL	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$0	\$100,000	\$99,630	\$370	\$600,000	\$370

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2011 Acquisition/Restoration List

Project Title: 2.6/3.3 MeCC 6 Priority Expansion and Restoration MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Project Manager Name: Deborah Loon

M.L. 2011 ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 600,000

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographical Coordinates (Provide Latitude/Longitude OR UTM-X/UTM-Y)		Ecosystem Description	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles (if applicable)	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status
		Latitude or UTM-X	Longitude or UTM-Y							
1	Blakely Unit of MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR)	44°34'40"N	93°52'29"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
2	Jessenland Unit of MVNWR	44°34'28"N	93°54'20"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
3	St. Lawrence Unit of MVNWR	44°38'53"N	93°42'40"W	Sedge Meadow	Rare ecosystem (MCBS)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Completed acquisition of 154.6 acres with grant (95.1 acres) and other private non-state funds (59.5 acres)
4	San Francisco Unit of MVNWR	44°41'34"N	93°40'50"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
5	Rapids Lake Unit of MVNWR	44°42'38"N	93°38'9"W	Oak Savanna	Rare ecosystem (MCBS)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
6	Prospective new unit of MVNWR between Henderson & LeSueur	44°30'2"N	93°53'25"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	125		USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
7	Bloomington Ferry Unit of MVNWR (bankruptcy)	44°48'49"N	93°26'13"W	Goat Prairie, Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	16.4	0.30	USFWS	Another party acquired this property
8	Bloomington Ferry Unit of MVNWR (Anderson)	44°47'52"N	93°23'01"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	0.5	0.03	USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
9	Bloomington Ferry Unit of MVNWR (Ikes)	44°47'24"N	93°22'09"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	21	0.21	USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
10	Louisville Swamp Unit of MVNWR (Barnd)	44°41'38"N	93°37'48"W	Floodplain Forest	Critical Habitat Type (MNV)	Fee title acquisition	80	0.70	USFWS	Not acquired with this grant
10	Long Meadow Lake Unit of MVNWR	44°51'34"N	93°12'58"W	Oak Savanna	Rare ecosystem (MCBS)	Removal of non-native, invasive species and prescribed fire	15		USFWS	Completed removal of woody invasive plant species on 15 acres; prescribed fire on 15 acres; supplemental seeding of native grass and wildflower species on the 15 acres
11	Louisville Swamp Unit of MVNWR	44°44'14"N	93°36'3"W	Oak Savanna	Rare ecosystem (MCBS)	Removal of non-native, invasive species and prescribed fire	190		USFWS	Completed removal of woody invasive plant species on 149 acres; prescribed fire on 155 acres
12	Jessenland Unit of MVNWR	44°35'44"N	93°54'10"W	Tallgrass Prairie	Rare ecosystem (MCBS)	Prescribed fire	200		USFWS	Completed prescribed fire on 300 acres.

NOTES: Acquisition will be completed from within this prospective parcel list (#1-9), as delineated by the USFWS for the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge expansion.

R 7 W R 6 W

93°43'0"W

93°42'0"W

93°41'0"W

T 9 N

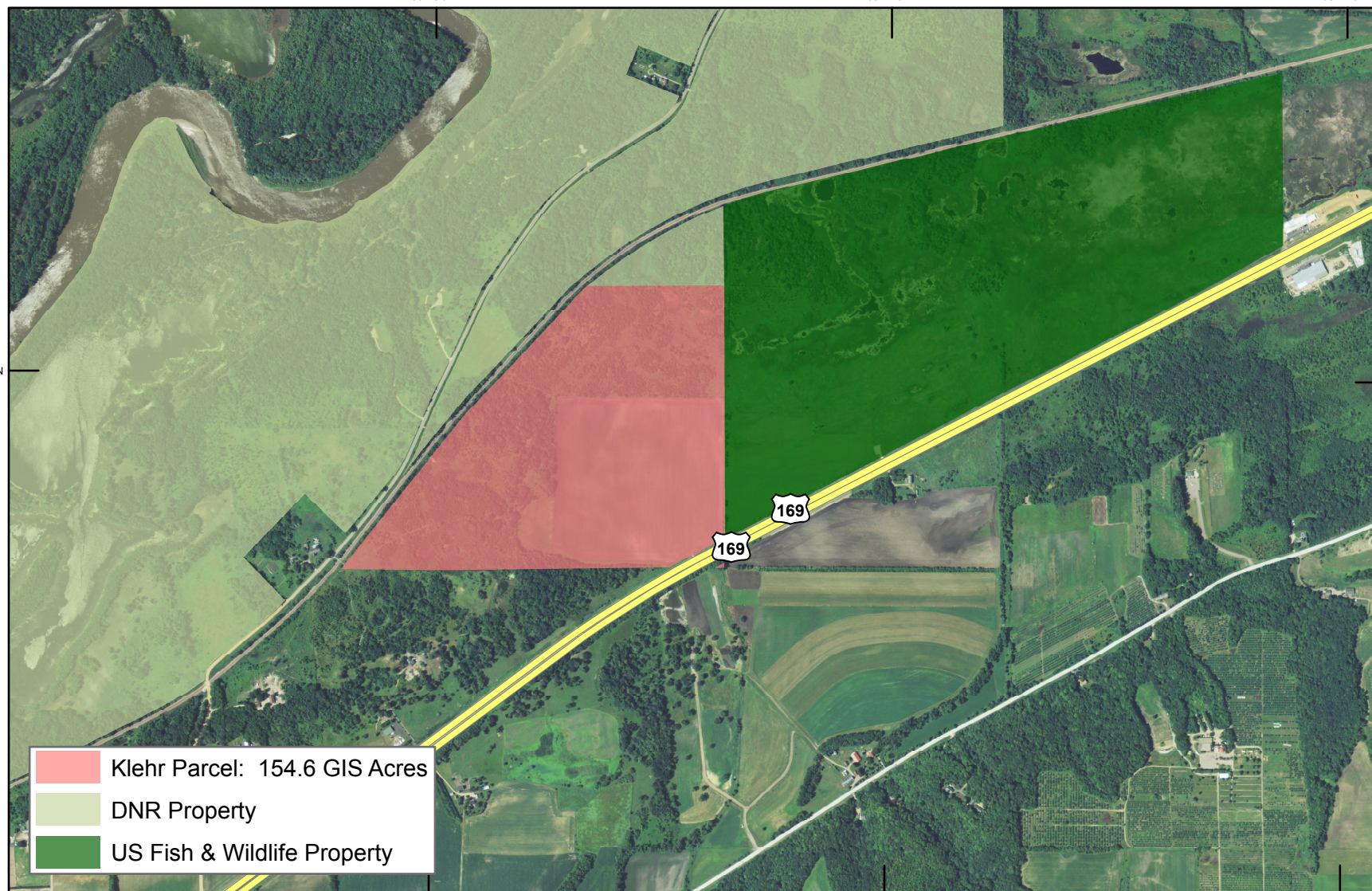
T 8 N

44°39'0"N

T 9 N

T 8 N

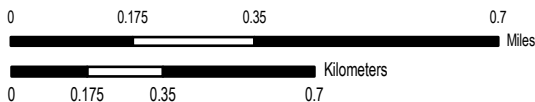
44°39'0"N



- Klehr Parcel: 154.6 GIS Acres
- DNR Property
- US Fish & Wildlife Property

R 7 W R 6 W

PRODUCED BY MINNESOTA VALLEY NWR
BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA
5/29/2014
J. Miller



UTM ZONE 15
NAD 83