

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Subd: 04i2.6/3.3

Project Title: 2.6 / 3.3 - MeCC 6 - Priority Expansion and Restoration MN Valley NW Refuge

Category: D. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 600,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 yrs, July 2011 - June 2014

Other Non-State Funds (secured): \$ 500,000

Summary:

Acquire 125 priority acres to expand the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge and another 125 acres with other non-state funds. Continue restoring savanna and prairie on 405 Refuge acres.

Name: Deborah Loon

Sponsoring Organization: MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

Address: 2312 Seabury Ave
Minneapolis MN 55406

Telephone Number: 612-801-1935

Email: DebLoon@comcast.net

Web Ad: www.mnvalleytrust.org

Location:

Region: Metro

Ecological Section: Minnesota and NE Iowa Morainal (222M)

County Name: Scott

City / Township:

2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Priority Expansion & Restoration - MN Valley NW Refuge MeCC6-4f3-3

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project will reduce fragmentation, combat habitat loss, protect native plant and animal species, improve water quality of the Minnesota River and increase public access to natural lands through (1) fee title acquisition of 125 high priority acres to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in the floodplain of the Minnesota River between Chaska and LeSueur and (2) restoration and enhancement of 405 acres of oak savanna and remnant native prairie communities on Refuge units near Jordan and Belle Plaine.

The Refuge expansion units have been prioritized by the USFWS 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. Following acquisition, the Trust and USFWS will develop a restoration and management plan, then restore and enhance the floodplain forest, wetlands and prairie. Cropland will be retired and drain tile broken.

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).

This project will provide quality habitat for migrant and resident wildlife species, protect the diversity of native ecosystems, and continue to improve ecosystem connectivity and resilience. It will increase breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, neotropical migrants, and other species including non-migratory resident species. This project also will improve water quality by retiring and restoring croplands in the Minnesota River Valley to the natural habitats of floodplain forest, wetlands and prairie. And it will expand the public's access to lands in and near the Twin Cities for wildlife-dependent recreational activities, such as birding, photography, hiking, interpretation, hunting and fishing.

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. The lands to be restored and enhanced are already in the ownership of the USFWS.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge **Budget:** \$ 500,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Fee title acquisition of 125 acres for priority expansion of the MN Valley NW Refuge	June 30, 2013

At least 125 acres will be acquired with the grant to expand one or more of the following units of the Refuge – Blakely Unit (Scott County), Jessenland Unit (Sibley County), Rapids Lake Unit

(Carver County), St. Lawrence Unit (Scott County) and San Francisco Unit (Carver County). The expansion lands have been prioritized by the USFWS and the Trust is working with willing landowners. An additional 125 or more acres will be acquired for the Refuge by the Trust using other, non-state funds.

Activity 2: Restore & Enhance Remnant Oak Savannas and Native Prairie Budget: \$100,000

Restoration and enhancement 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, 190 acre oak savanna on Louisville Swamp Unit (Scott County) and a 200 acre mesic prairie on the Jessenland Unit (Sibley County) of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The work will be completed using mechanical, chemical and prescribed fire methods. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota will be contracted when appropriate. 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.

Outcome	Completion Date
1.Remove and treat non-native and invasive species on 205 acres savanna	June 30, 2013
2.Apply prescribed fire to 405 acres savanna and prairie communities	June 30, 2013

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. will manage and complete this project, with the cooperation and support of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The MN Valley Trust is part of the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors Partnership.

B. Timeline Requirements

All activities will begin July 1, 2011 and be completed no later than June 30, 2013.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

The fee title acquisition activities are part of a larger strategy to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge according to an expansion plan developed by the USFWS. To-date, the Minnesota Valley Trust has acquired 2,134 acres to expand the Refuge. Acquisition of 10,700 additional acres over time will complete the expansion units. The partners will continue working to complete these units and will pursue funding through federal, state and private sources. We will leverage the Minnesota Valley Trust’s funds to accomplish this work.

The restoration and enhancement of prairie and oak savanna remnants requires several years (ca. 6 – 20), as persistent invasive and non-native species are treated or removed over time. Work to restore and enhance the lands identified in this project are in the early stages of treatment. This project will further the restoration and enhancement work, but ongoing maintenance and enhancement beyond the scope of this grant will be required. The partners will seek funding for the future phases through a variety of federal, state and private sources.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET - 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Contracts: Contracts with Conservation Corps of Minnesota and/or other qualified private restoration organizations to perform prescribed fire operations, herbicide application and mechanical invasive tree and other woody species removal.	\$ 90,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Herbicide for treatment of invasive trees and other woody species after removal to prevent resprouting.	\$ 10,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): Fee title acquisition of 250 acres to expand the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Land acquired will be donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.	\$ 500,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 600,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Source of funds is the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.	\$ 550,000	<i>Secured</i>
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: <i>None</i>	\$ -	<i>NA</i>
In-kind Services During Project Period: In-kind services will include professional staff services to manage and complete the acquisitions and restoration work by MN Valley Trust and USFWS, but are not estimated here.	\$ -	<i>NA</i>
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): MN Valley Trust has completed Phases I - V of the MeCC projects and has been awarded a 2010 appropriation of \$325,000. Final report on 2009 appropriation of \$225,000 has not yet been filed, but the funds have been spent.	\$575,000	<i>Unspent - 2010 appropriation.</i>
Funding History: Phase I (2003) - \$290,000 ETF and \$1,137,030 other non-state funds Phase II (2005) - \$230,000 ETF and \$428,000 other non-state funds Phase III (2007) - \$210,000 ETF and \$376,473 other non-state funds Phase IV (2008) - \$225,000 ETF and \$198,985 other non-state funds Phase V (2009) - \$225,000 ETF and at least \$225,00 other non-state funds Phase V Supplemental (2010) - \$325,000 ETF and at least \$325,000 other non-state funds TOTALS: \$1,505,000 ETF and at least \$2,487,988 other non-state funds	\$ 1,505,000	

2011-2012 Acquisition List for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Proposal

Project Title: Priority Expansion & Restoration - MN Valley NWRefuge MeCC6-4f3-3

Project Manager Name: Deborah Loon

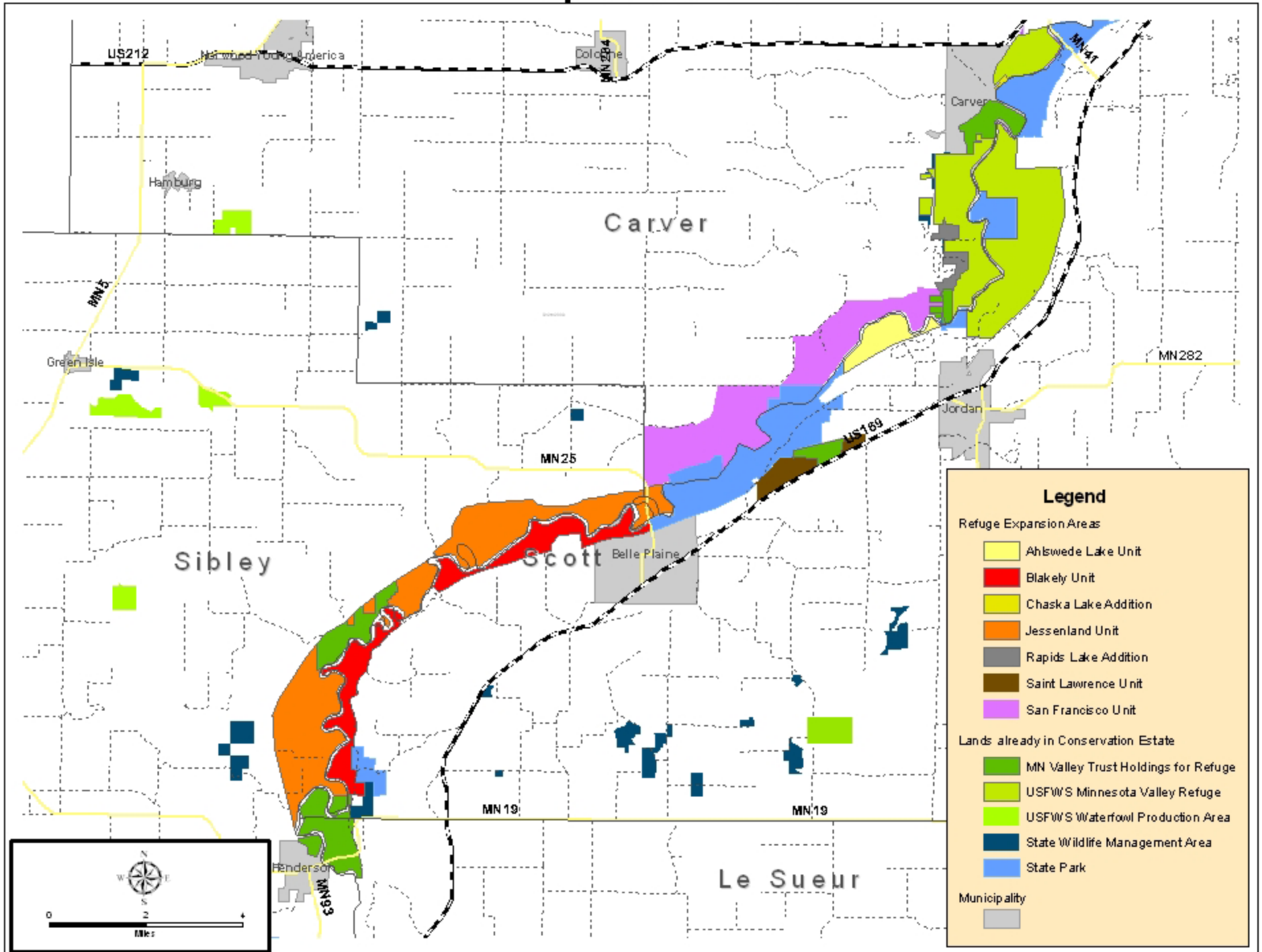
Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request: \$500,000

Final Title Holder(s): US Fish and Wildlife Service

#	Parcel Name	Acquisition Type (Fee-Title OR Conservation Easement)	County	Estimated # of Acres	Status	Geographical Coordinates (Provide Latitude/Longitude OR UTM-X/UTM-Y)			
						Latitude	Longitude	UTM-X	UTM-Y
1	Blakely Unit Expansion	Fee Title	Scott	125	Outreach and negotiations underway	44°34'40"N	93°52'29"W		
2	Jessenland Unit Expansion	Fee Title	Sibley	125	Outreach and negotiations underway	44°34'28"N	93°54'20"W		
3	St. Lawrence Unit Expansion	Fee Title	Scott	125	Outreach and negotiations underway	44°39'01"N	93°42'13"W		
4	San Francisco Unit Expansion	Fee Title	Carver	125	Outreach underway	44°41'34"N	93°40'50"W		
5	Rapids Lake Unit Expansion	Fee Title	Carver	125	Outreach underway	44°42'38"N	93°38'9"W		
7									
8									
9									
10									

NOTES: The Minnesota Valley Trust is working with willing landowners within the expansion units of the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge listed above, as prioritized and delineated by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The 125 acres (grant) and 125 acres (non-state match) may be acquired within one of the units noted or in more than one unit. In all cases, the land acquired will add onto existing public lands to expand the Refuge unit(s).

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Units



PROJECT MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

The mission and activities of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust is to:

- Expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District (2,134 acres have been acquired to expand the Refuge and 1,543 acres have been acquired for Waterfowl Production Areas, as of March 31, 2010).
- Construct an environmental education and visitor center on the Minnesota Valley Refuge (completed in Fall 2007 on the Rapids Lake Unit near Carver and Jordan).
- Complete habitat restoration of lands acquired, following plans developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (work is ongoing).
- Construct new visitor access, education and interpretive facilities on the Minnesota Valley Refuge, including trails and parking lots (work is ongoing).

The Minnesota Valley Trust was established in 2001 to mitigate the impact of the thousands of flights sent over the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge from the new north-south runway at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

A 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization, the Minnesota Valley Trust works in cooperation with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District. All properties acquired and constructed are donated by the Trust to the USFWS.

Deborah Loon, Project Manager

Deborah Loon has served as the executive director of the Minnesota Valley Trust almost since its inception in 2001. In that role, she is the liaison with the USFWS and is the primary contact with all landowners and local communities. She also provides support to the Trust Board of Directors.

Deb also serves as the executive director of Minnesota Valley Lands, Inc., the subsidiary to the Trust that holds title to the acquired lands and oversees all management and restoration of the lands.

Deb brings extensive experience in project management and organizational leadership for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. She has a BA in political science from St. Olaf College.

