

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

Subd: 4j4h

Project Title: 4h - HCP 7 - Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District

Category: D. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 400,000

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

Other Non-State Funds (secured): \$ 400,000

Summary:

Acquire in fee 80 acres of priority habitat in Southern Lakes Region for Waterfowl Production Area, MN Valley Wetland Management District. Acquire another 40 acres with other, nonstate funds.

Name: Deborah Loon

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

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Web Ad www.mnvalleytrust.org

Location:

Region: SE

Ecological Section: North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

County Name: Blue Earth

City / Township:

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District HCP7-4e

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project will protect, through fee title acquisition, at least 80 acres of priority lands with high quality natural resources and habitat for wildlife and human benefit for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District in the Southern Lakes Region. It will expand an existing USFWS (federal) Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) or create a new WPA, retire heavily-drained, marginal farmland and restore wetlands and grasslands.

This project will meet the following recommendations in the Statewide Conservation Plan -- Recommendation 1 (Protect priority land habitats), 3 (Improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation), 5 (Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds) and 7 (Keep water on the landscape). It also meets the objectives in the LCCMR Strategic Plan, MN DNR Long Range Duck Recovery Plan, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, NAWCA, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

This project will restore the breeding population and migration objectives for waterfowl in the Mississippi Flyway, benefitting a host of species, including mallard, blue-winged teal, lesser scaup, northern pintail, tundra and trumpeter swans, redhead, wood duck and canvasback.

The project also will improve water quality in sub-watersheds of the Middle Minnesota River. The Cobb River, Watonwan River, and the Le Sueur Creek watersheds will gain in water quality by retiring marginal cropland and restoring the wetland and grassland habitat.

After restoration of wetlands and grasslands, the land will be donated to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to be managed as a WPA. The land will be open to the public for wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Acquire 80 acres of wetland and grassland habitat for MN Valley Wetland Management District of USFWS **Budget:** \$ 400,000

The Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will acquire in fee title at least 80 acres of priority habitat to expand an existing USFWS (federal) Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) or create a new WPA in Blue Earth and/or Le Sueur County in the Southern Lakes Region. Using other, non-state funds, MVT will acquire at least 40 additional acres. All lands will then be restored and enhanced using MVT and other non-state funds, which are secure and included in the leveraged funds in this proposal.

Potential projects are identified by the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District of the USFWS, as called for in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District (see Objective 5.3, page 73 of CCP). Lands are acquired under the authority of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, Public Law 85-585 and Wetlands Loan Act of 1961 (see page 8 of CCP).

Potential projects include:

- Acquisition of land to expand the Perch Lake WPA in Beauford Township of Blue Earth County. Perch Lake is an important migratory waterfowl resting lake and a DNR designated shallow lake. The Trust earlier acquired other parcels to establish the Perch Lake WPA, in part with ENRTF funds through HCP Phases 3 and 4, and has completed substantial wetland restoration work. Ducks Unlimited has installed a new water control structure to Perch Lake. A tremendous response by many wildlife species has been observed on the newly restored lands. This project is in the Minnesota River Prairie Ecological Subsection, noted as 251Ba in the Statewide Conservation Plan.
- Acquisition of priority land to create a new WPA parcel in Blue Earth County. The new WPA location will include significant prairie pothole habitat suitable for a host of grassland and wetland birds. The location will be strategically selected by USFWS through a prioritization process that uses the best scientific data available. The WPA will be located in an area with potential to build a 4-square mile habitat complex of public and private restored lands. This project will be in the Minnesota River Prairie Ecological Subsection, noted as 251Ba in the Statewide Conservation Plan.
- Acquisition of an 80 acre parcel to expand the Fickling WPA in Le Sueur County. The area once hosted >40 wetlands/mi² and many large shallow lake basins that provided critical habitat for migratory and nesting birds. The addition of this tract will provide the opportunity to restore and manage a 40+ acre semi-permanent wetland needed to fulfill waterfowl production objectives on this WPA. This project is in the Oak Savannah Ecological Subsection, noted as 222Me in the Statewide Conservation Plan.

After acquisition, the Minnesota Valley Trust, working with the USFWS and other conservation partners, will develop the restoration and management plan, and then restore wetland and grassland habitat. Funding will be provided by the Trust and other sources, including local and federal partners. After restoration, the lands will be donated to the USFWS for management as part of the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District.

Deliverable

1. Acquire 80 acres of priority wetland and grassland habitat

Completion Date

6/30/2013

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This proposal is part of the Habitat Conservation Partnership Phase 7 Proposal. The Minnesota Valley Trust works in close partnership with the USFWS to (1) identify properties for the MN Valley Wetland Management District, then (2) plan and (3) manage the restoration of the lands. Other partners include DNR, the local watershed management organizations (e.g., Cobb River Watershed Organization), Blue Earth and Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, state conservation organizations and local conservation clubs (e.g., MN Pheasants, Inc – Blue Earth County).

B. Timeline Requirements

Proposed project timeline is July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013.

C. Long-Term Strategy

This project is anticipated by the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District of the USFWS. It also is part of a larger strategy involving many other established projects and efforts -- NAWCA grants of more than \$25 million and more than 50 partners, USFWS Challenge Grants and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, EPA Clean

Water grants, CREP, Wetland Reserve Program, Reinvest in Minnesota, local grant programs and more than 20 local sportsman clubs active in the area. Partners have acquired and restored > 10,000 acres of habitat in this part of the Southern Lakes Area through various conservation programs.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): Fee title acquisition of at least 80 acres of priority habitat in the Southern Lakes Region. Following restoration of the wetlands and grasslands, the property will be donated to the USFWS / MN Valley Wetland Management District for management as a Waterfowl Production Area.	\$ 400,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 400,000

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. and/or federal funds.	\$ 400,000	<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 complete the acquisitions and subsequent restoration by MN Valley Trust and USFWS, but are not estimated here.	\$ -	<i>NA</i>
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): Funds are remaining from the 2009 appropriation.	\$ 100,000	<i>Unspent</i>
Funding History: Phase II (2003) - \$98,000 ETF and \$741,700 other non-state funds - complete Phase III (2005) - \$126,878 ETF and \$1,688,649 other non-state funds - complete Phase IV (2007) - \$100,000 ETF and \$232,976 other non-state funds - complete Phase V (2008) - \$50,000 ETF and \$81,200 other non-state funds - complete Phase VI (2009) - \$100,000 ETF and at least \$100,000 other non-state funds ** TOTAL \$474,878 ETF and \$2,813,325 other non-state funds	\$ 474,878	

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

Project Title: Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District HCP7-4e

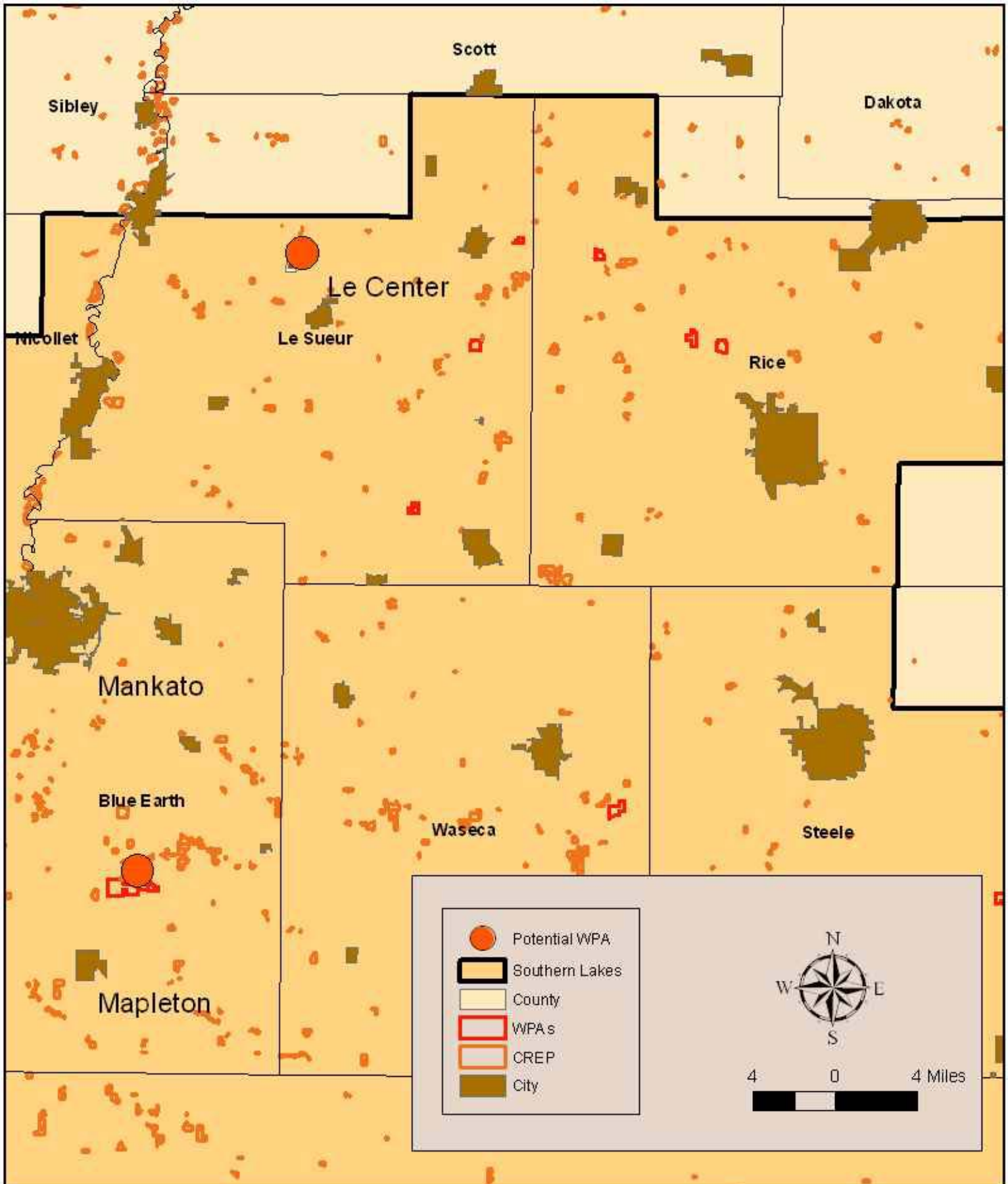
Project Manager Name: Deborah Loon

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request: \$400,000

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	Perch Lake WPA Expansion	Fee Title	Blue Earth	80	Outreach underway			427288E	4870676N
3	Fickling WPA Expansion	Fee Title	LeSueur	80	Outreach underway			439080E	4919376N
5	New WPA, to be identified	Fee Title	Blue Earth	80	FWS planning underway				
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

NOTES: The Minnesota Valley Trust is working with willing landowners to expand existing Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) and establish new WPAs, as prioritized by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The 80 acres (grant) and 40 acres (non-state match) to be acquired will either expand one of the existing WPAs or create a new WPA in the areas noted above. After acquisition, the Trust and USFWS will develop a restoration and management plan. Restoration of wetlands and grassland complexes will be completed using MN Valley Trust funds that are part of the leveraged funds proposed for this project. The land will be donated to the USFWS for perpetual management as a WPA.



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.