

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2012-2013 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 066-D**

Priority Acquisition for Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District

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**Topic Area:** D. Land Acquisition & Restoration

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 680,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 yrs, July 2013 - June 2015

**Other Non-State Funds:** \$ 340,000

**Summary:**

Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will acquire in fee at least 80 acres for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District, expanding wildlife habitat, improving water quality and increasing public recreation access.

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**Name:** Deborah Loon

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

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Bloomington MN 55425

**Telephone Number:** (612) 801-1935

**Email** DebLoon@comcast.net

**Web Address** www.mnvalleytrust.org

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**Location**

**Region:** Central, Metro, SE

**County Name:** Blue Earth, Carver, Dakota, Le Sueur, Rice, Scott, Sibley

**City / Township:** TBD

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<input type="checkbox"/> Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Base
<input type="checkbox"/> Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgency
<input type="checkbox"/> Capacity Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Leverage	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL <input type="checkbox"/> %



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) 2012-2013 Main Proposal

**PROJECT TITLE:** Priority Acquisition for the MN Valley Wetland Management District

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee title acquisition at least 80 acres for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District (MVWMD), as delineated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). MVT will protect through fee title acquisition at least an additional 40 acres in the WMD focus areas with other, non-state funds, for a total addition of 120 acres for the MVWMD.

This project 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. The MVT will acquire land in one of the following focus areas -- Blue Earth Prairie (Blue Earth County), Southern Lakes (Dakota, LeSueur, Rice and Scott Counties), Sibley Transition (Sibley County) and Crow River (Carver County).

The focus areas for the acquisition have been delineated by the USFWS using a strategic land acquisition approach that includes the use of scientific GIS models and local landscape knowledge by FWS biologists and land managers. This is described more fully below.

The MVT is working with willing landowners who are interested in selling their land for the MVWMD.

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.
- Improve water quality in sub-watersheds of the Minnesota River by retiring marginal cropland and restoring the wetland and grassland habitat.
- Expand the public's access to lands in and near the Twin Cities metropolitan area for wildlife-dependent recreational activities, such as birding, photography, hiking, interpretation, hunting and fishing.

Following restoration, the lands acquired will be donated to the USFWS for perpetual management for wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation as part of the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

**Activity 1:** Expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge **Budget:** \$ 680,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Fee title acquisition of 80 acres for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District	June 30, 2015

At least 80 acres will be acquired in fee title with the grant to expand an existing Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) or establish a new WPA for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District (MVWMD). An additional 40 acres will be acquired for the Refuge by the Trust using other, non-state funds. Following acquisition, the MVT and USFWS will develop a restoration and management plan, then restore and enhance the wetlands and prairie. Cropland will be retired and drain tile broken, wetlands restored and grassland / upland seeded with a high diversity mix of local ecotype seed.

The MVWMD focus areas have been delineated by the USFWS using a strategic land acquisition approach that includes the use of scientific GIS models and local landscape knowledge by FWS biologists and land managers. The most productive land for nesting pairs of waterfowl and grassland birds are prioritized using an objective scoring sheet that includes local landscape factors (restorable and historic wetlands per square mile, percentage of grass cover, etc.), combined with site visits.

The priority focus areas are: Blue Earth Prairie (Blue Earth County), Southern Lakes (Dakota, LeSueur, Rice and Scott Counties), Sibley Transition (Sibley County) and Crow River (Carver County).

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.

## III. PROJECT STRATEGY

### A. Project Team/Partners

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. will receive the grant funds to manage and complete this project. MVT will work in close coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Other partners include DNR, the local watershed management organizations (e.g., Cobb River Watershed Organization), local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, state conservation organizations and local conservation clubs.

### B. Timeline Requirements

Activities will begin July 1, 2013 and be completed no later than June 30, 2015.

### C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

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.

## 2012-2013 Proposed Acquisition List

**Project Title:** Priority Acquisition for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District

**Project Manager Name:** Deborah Loon, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request:** \$680,000

#	Parcel Name	Acquisition Type (Fee Title or Conservation Easement)	County	Ecological Significance	Proposed # of Acres	Proposed # of Shoreline Miles (if applicable)	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
1	Blue Earth Prairie	Fee Title	Blue Earth	Wetland and prairie	80	0	See note
2	Southern Lakes Region	Fee Title	Dakota, Rice & Scott	Wetland and prairie	80	0	See note
3	Sibley Transition	Fee Title	Sibley	Wetland and prairie	80	0	See note
4	Crow River	Fee Title	Carver	Wetland and prairie	80	0	See note

NOTES: (1) Parcel search areas were delineated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) using scientific GIS models and local landscape knowledge by FWS biologists. The most productive land for nesting pairs of waterfowl and grassland birds are prioritized using a scoring sheet that includes local landscape factors (restorable and historic wetlands per square mile, percentage of grass cover, etc.), combined with ground-truthing through site visits. Focus will likely be on expanding existing conserved and restored complexes, but new complexes may be created if opportunity arises and we can acquire a large enough holding. (2) The Initial fee title holder will be Minnesota Valley Lands, Inc. (subsidiary of Minnesota Valley Trust), while habitat restoration and enhancement is completed. Eventual fee title holder will be Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District of the USFWS.

## 2012-2013 Detailed Project Budget

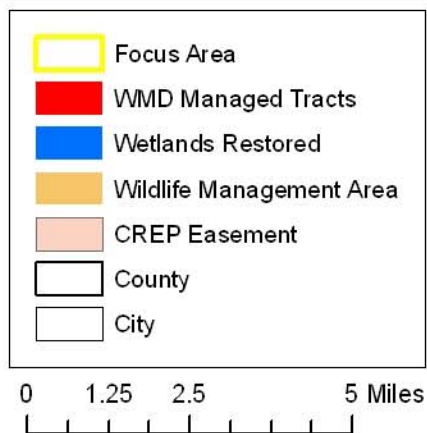
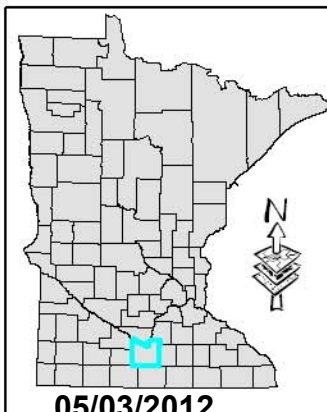
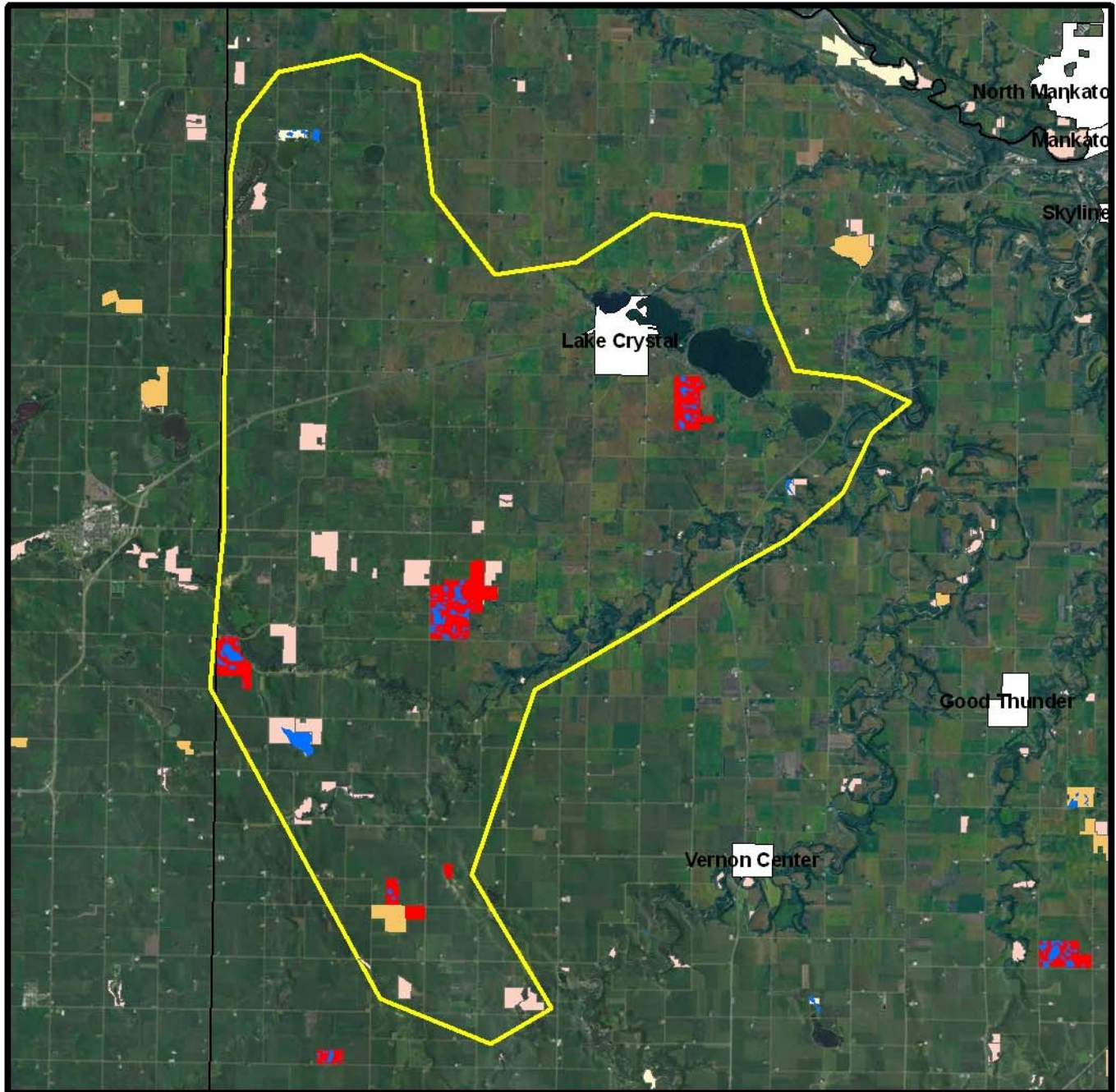
### IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET - 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):</b> Fee title acquisition of 80 acres high priority habitat for the MN Valley Wetland Management District. Land acquired will be restored, then donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.	\$ 680,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST</b>	<b>\$ 680,000</b>

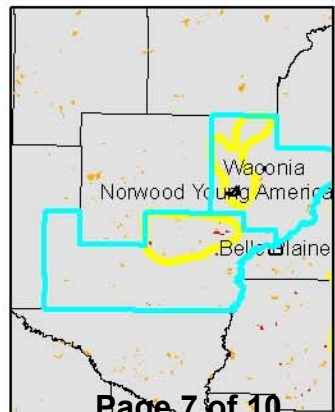
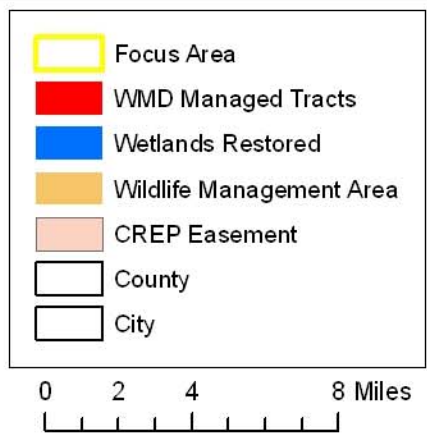
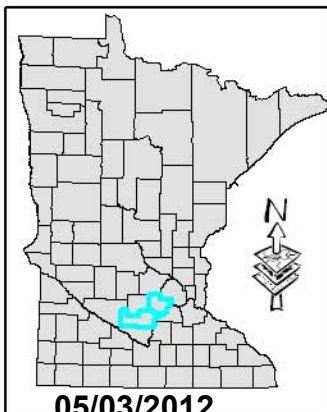
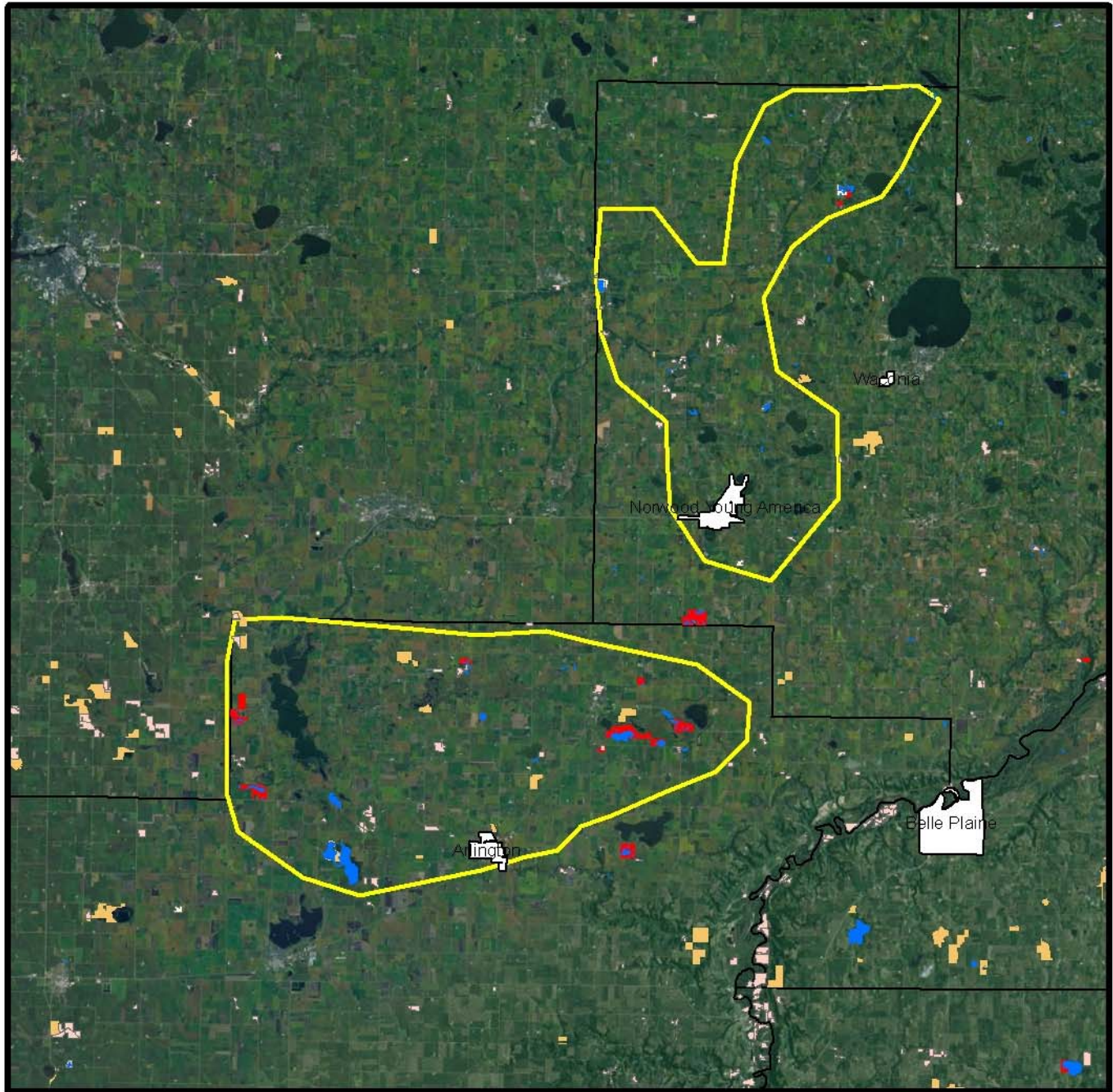
### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Source of funds is the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.	\$ 340,000	<i>Secured</i>
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> <i>None</i>	\$ -	<i>NA</i>
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> 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>
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):</b> MVT is doing landowner outreach to acquire 80 acres with its 2011 appropriation through the Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP VII).	\$400,000	<i>Unspent - 2011 appropriation.</i>
<b>Funding History: Funds received through Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP)</b> 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 \$276,255 other non-state funds Phase VII (2011) - \$400,000 ETF and \$200,000 other non-state funds ** TOTAL \$874,878 ETF and \$3,220,780 other non-state funds	\$ 874,878	

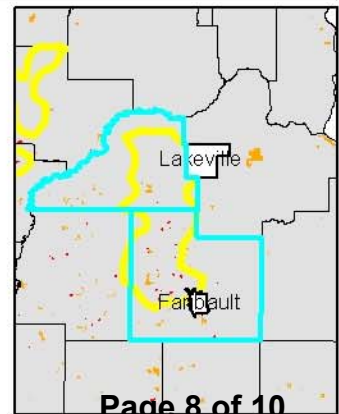
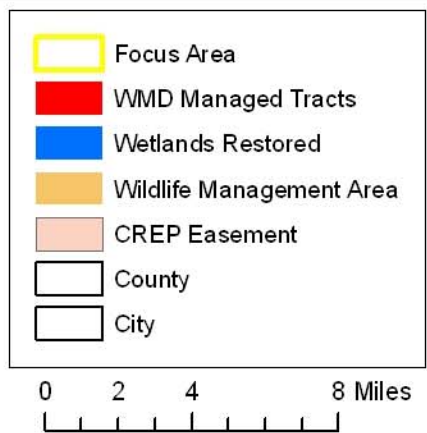
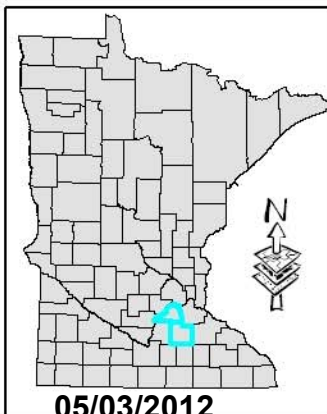
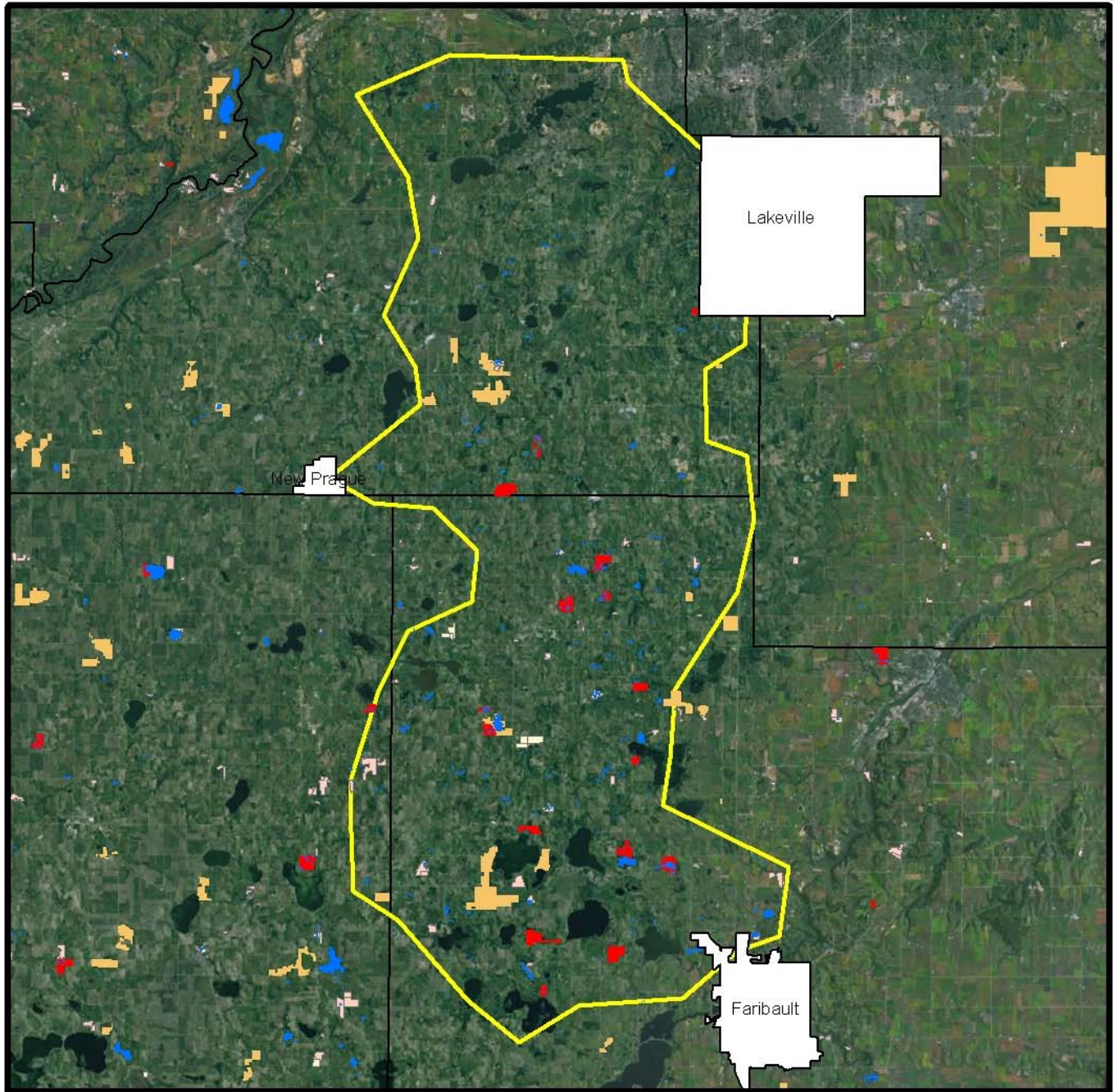
# Minnesota Valley WMD Blue Earth Prairie Focus Area



# Minnesota Valley WMD Sibley and Crow River Focus Area



# Minnesota Valley WMD Southern Lakes Focus Area





## 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 (3,001 acres have been acquired to expand the Refuge and 1,903 acres have been acquired for Waterfowl Production Areas, as of March 31, 2012).
- 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.

Loon 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.

Loon 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.

