



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-435

Proposal Title: Mentoring the Next Generation of Conservation Professionals

Project Manager Information

Name: Deborah Loon

Organization: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Inc

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Internships and apprenticeships on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District will introduce 50 diverse young people over three years to careers in the conservation field.

Funds Requested: \$757,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2024-06-30

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Statewide

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

As one of just 14 urban wildlife refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District is charged with engaging the next generation of youth who, for a variety of reasons, are not connected to outdoors and nature. This is critical to ensuring a future constituency passionate about protecting our public lands, as well as encouraging a diversity of youth to consider conservation careers.

The Refuge offers vast opportunities for Twin Cities residents to connect with wildlife, learn about their habitats and enjoy nature-based recreation. Given its location and varied habitats, the Refuge and District is able to serve as a learning laboratory and training site for future conservationists, natural resource biologists and environmental educators. Currently, this is done through a handful of unpaid internships every year. However, with the rising costs of a college education and intransigent economic disparities, many students cannot afford unpaid internships. This is especially true for young people of color and low-income. Students often must take jobs outside of their chosen field to pay for college or help support their families. Without good internships, they do not gain experience and connections needed to compete for quality jobs.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

We will build an extensive program of summer internships and full-time apprenticeship opportunities on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District. This grant program will attract students with diverse backgrounds, introduce them to the conservation field and provide mentorship and job skills to these future resource professionals. The participants will be given paid positions and the opportunity to work side-by-side with and learn from USFWS professionals and other conservation partners. They will design and deliver environmental education programs, plan and co-lead wildlife interpretive and nature-based activities, assist USFWS personnel with habitat restoration and enhancement projects, conduct biological surveys, develop and maintain visitor use amenities, and explore conservation-related career options. Some of the participants will experience outdoor activities like fishing, paddling, orienteering, birding and hunting for the first time.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This internship and apprenticeship program will introduce 50 young people to careers in the conservation field (18 positions per year). They will explore conservation career options, then be able to compete for post-secondary education and employment opportunities. Through mentorship, we will build a diverse pool of conservationists who will contribute long-term to protecting, restoring and enhancing Minnesota's natural resources. During the project, the 60,000 hours of service will improve the habitat conditions of over 700 acres of prairie, wetland and forest, and introduce thousands of children to the wonders of the natural world through environmental education and nature-based activities.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: 4 Full-Time Apprentices will work alongside USFWS personnel and gain hands-on experience in Biology, Operations, Visitor Services and Community Outreach

Activity Budget: \$318,000

Activity Description:

4 recent college graduates at a time will have full-time paid apprenticeships with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District for 1-2 years each (8-12 apprentices total over 3 years). They will work with and be mentored by USFWS professionals. The Refuge Biology Apprentice will build skills in biological monitoring, habitat restoration and enhancement planning and implementation, visitor engagement, and balancing needs of wildlife and visitors. The District Operations Apprentice will do biological monitoring, plan and implement habitat restoration and enhancement projects, and develop, construct and maintain visitor use amenities. The Visitor Services Apprentice will increase visitor trips to and experiences on the Refuge through strategic communications and marketing, improved visitor experience tools (e.g., interpretation, education, equipment) and enhanced signage. The Community Outreach Apprentice will develop and present engaging outreach programs to urban and suburban youth and families on the Refuge and in the community, develop new partnerships to reach urban youth, and attend community events and festivals to engage urban audiences in nature-based activities. The apprentices will be paid \$15.50/hour as full-time employees (wage will increase \$0.25/hour/year) and will be covered by workers compensation insurance and employment benefits.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
4 Apprentices complete 12 months	2022-06-30
4 Apprentices complete 12 months	2023-06-30
4 Apprentices complete 12 months	2024-06-30

Activity 2: 4 Full-Time Teaching Practicum Interns will broaden their understanding of environmental education and build their teaching skills through program delivery

Activity Budget: \$362,880

Activity Description:

4 recent college graduates at a time will have one-year paid Teaching Practicum experiences on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (12 total interns over 3 years). They will learn from and be mentored by USFWS professionals, design and deliver quality environmental educational programs to over 8,000 children, teachers and families who visit the Refuge from schools throughout the Twin Cities metro area, and lead interpretive programs for the public on the Refuge. The interns will be paid \$15.50/hour as full-time employees (wage will increase \$0.25/hour/year). They will be covered by workers compensation insurance and provided employment benefits.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
4 Teaching Practicum Interns complete year 1	2022-06-30
4 Teaching Practicum Interns complete year 2	2023-06-30
4 Teaching Practicum Interns complete year 3	2024-06-30

Activity 3: 6 Full-Time Summer High School Student Interns and 1 Full-Time Intern Coordinator will work with the Refuge Urban Outreach Program

Activity Budget: \$42,120

Activity Description:

6 high school students from under-represented communities in the Twin Cities will have full-time internships on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for 8 weeks in the summer each year (18 total over 3 years). Interns will be guided by the full-time Intern Coordinator to plan and co-lead nature-based education and recreation programs on the Refuge and in the community, co-staff information booths and activities at community festivals, assist the Refuge's Urban Biologist with habitat restoration projects in the community, and participate in career discovery across the Refuge. Student interns will be recruited by partners, including StepUp Achieve (Minneapolis), Right Track (St. Paul), Hispanic Access Foundation and SEAK / Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. The interns will be paid \$13.25/hour as full-time employees (wage will increase \$0.25/hour/year). They will be covered by workers compensation insurance.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
6 Full-Time Urban Outreach Interns and 1 Full-Time Intern Coordinator complete 8 weeks	2021-08-31
6 Full-Time Urban Outreach Interns and 1 Intern Coordinator complete 8 weeks	2022-08-31
6 Full-Time Urban Outreach Interns and 1 Intern Coordinator complete 8 weeks	2023-08-31

Activity 4: 4 Full-Time Summer Interns will work with the Refuge Biologists

Activity Budget: \$34,000

Activity Description:

4 high school students, college students or recent college graduates pursuing a career in natural resources will have full-time internships on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for 14 weeks in the summer (12 total over 3 years). Interns will work learn from and be mentored by USFWS biologists to do plant and bird surveys, pollinator surveys, invasive species mapping and removal, water level monitoring and management, public education, habitat assessments and restoration, boundary posting, mowing and seeding. The interns will be paid \$13.25/hour as full-time employees (wage will increase \$0.25/hour/year). They will be covered by workers compensation insurance.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
4 Biology Summer Interns complete 14 weeks	2021-08-31
4 Biology Summer Interns complete 14 weeks	2022-08-31
4 Biology Summer Interns complete 14 weeks	2023-08-31

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Sarena Selbo	Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District	Supervise, support and engage the interns and apprentices as they design and deliver environmental education programs, plan and co-lead wildlife interpretive and nature-based activities, assist USFWS personnel with habitat restoration and enhancement projects, conduct biological surveys, improve visitor facilities, and explore conservation-related career options.	No

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District are committed to maintaining this robust internship and apprenticeship program for the long-term. Future funding will be sought through philanthropic efforts with foundations, corporations, civic organizations and individuals by the Trust and Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, as well as through other state and federal sources of funds (e.g., workforce grant programs).

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Priority Expansion of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$500,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Deborah Loon

Job Title: Executive Director

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

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 partners, landowners, local communities and grantmaking organizations. She provides support to the Trust Board of Directors, implements the Strategic Framework and provides overall management of the organization, including grants management. Loon brings extensive experience in project management and organizational leadership for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. She has served on the staff and boards of directors for numerous nonprofit organizations since 1984, including in the executive director role since 1999. Loon holds a BA in political science from St. Olaf College.

Organization: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Inc

Organization Description:

The Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation that assists the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in making the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District a premier urban wildlife refuge that:

- Protects, restores, and enhances large blocks and corridors of habitat to provide sustainable landscapes for people and wildlife and improve water quality in the Minnesota River
- Provides opportunities for Twin Cities residents to access the Refuge and connect with wildlife, plants and the Minnesota River in a diversity of ways meaningful to them
- Increases connections with a diversity of residents in the Twin Cities through outreach programming that meets residents of all ages and backgrounds in their communities, introduces them to the natural world and draws them to visit and experience the Refuge themselves
- Engages a diversity of people as volunteers, interns and employees to improve Refuge habitat, meet Refuge educational objectives and build a conservation ethic throughout the community
- Introduces children to the wonders of the natural outdoors through educational and interpretive programming, thereby building a pool of future conservationists, employees, volunteers, advocates and philanthropists.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Refuge Community Outreach Apprentice		1 Apprentice per year for 3 years (1-2 year position) will work with the Refuge Community Outreach team to connect urban and suburban youth and families with nature through programs on the Refuge and in the community.			0%	3		\$79,500
Refuge Visitor Services Apprentice		1 Apprentice per year for 3 years (1-2 year position) will work with the Refuge Visitor Services team to increase public use and enjoyment of the Refuge through strategic communications and marketing, enhanced public use materials and tools, and improved signage.			0%	3		\$79,500
Refuge Biology Apprentice		1 Apprentice per year for 3 years (1-2 year position) will work with the Refuge Biologist to conduct biological monitoring, assist with designing and implementing habitat restoration and enhancement activities, and engage with volunteers.			0%	3		\$79,500
District Operations Apprentice		1 Apprentice per year for 3 years (1-2 year position) will work with the Wetland Management District Specialist to conduct biological monitoring, assist with designing and implementing habitat restoration and enhancement activities, and develop, construct and maintain visitor use amenities.			0%	3		\$79,500
Teaching Practicum Interns		4 Interns per year for 3 years (48 week positions) will work with the Refuge Environmental Education team to design and deliver environmental education programming to 8,000 students, teachers and parents each year, as well as interpretive programming to the public.			0%	12		\$362,880
Summer Community Outreach High School Interns		6 Interns each summer for 3 years will work with the Refuge Community Outreach and Urban Biology Program to plan and co-lead nature-based education and recreation programs on the Refuge and in the community, co-staff information booths and activities at community festivals, assist with design and implementation of habitat restoration projects in the			0%	3		\$42,120

		community, and participate in career discovery across the Refuge.						
Summer Biology Interns		4 Interns each summer for 3 years will work with USFWS biologists to do plant and bird surveys, pollinator surveys, invasive species mapping and removal, water level monitoring and management, public education, habitat assessments and restoration, boundary posting, mowing and seeding.			0%	3		\$34,000
Summer Urban Intern Coordinator		1 Coordinator will lead the 6 summer Urban Outreach interns through engaging, experiential opportunities to connect with nature in new ways and learn about conservation careers			0%	0.75		-
							Sub Total	\$757,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$757,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3 Division of Refuges Youth Internship Program	We anticipate 3 of the 10 summer internship positions each year will be fully-funded at the Refuge through the USFWS Region 3 Youth Internship Program.	Pending	\$120,000
In-Kind	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District	The Refuge will provide office space, equipment, local travel and supplies for all interns and apprentices. The Refuge will also provide supervision and mentoring of the interns and apprentices (this value is not included in the in-kind estimate).	Secured	\$97,000
Cash	Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.	Minnesota Valley Trust will cover 20% of wages for the 4 apprentices, 50% of wages for 7 summer interns, 100% of wages for the Intern Coordinator and 100% of payroll taxes, workers compensation insurance and other employee benefits for the above.	Secured	\$354,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$571,000
			Funds Total	\$571,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [1a0aef3f-e92.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The attachment is a map showing the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District boundaries and units.

Financial Capacity

File: [c84b0ee9-bdd.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	676f48ad-2bc.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?

No

Does your project include research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

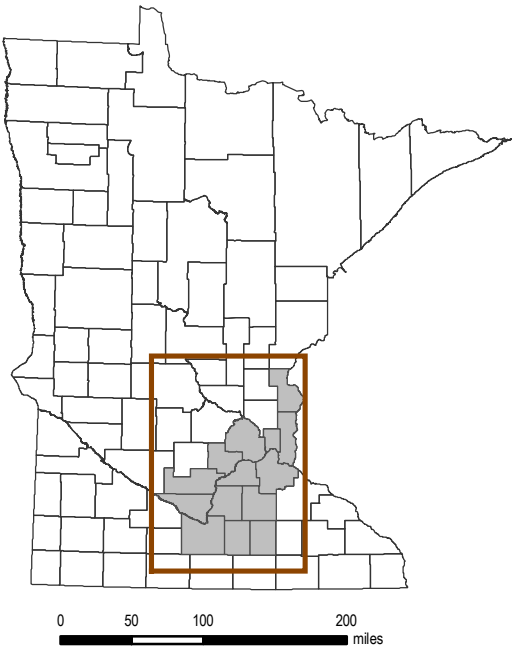
No



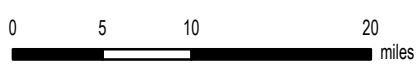
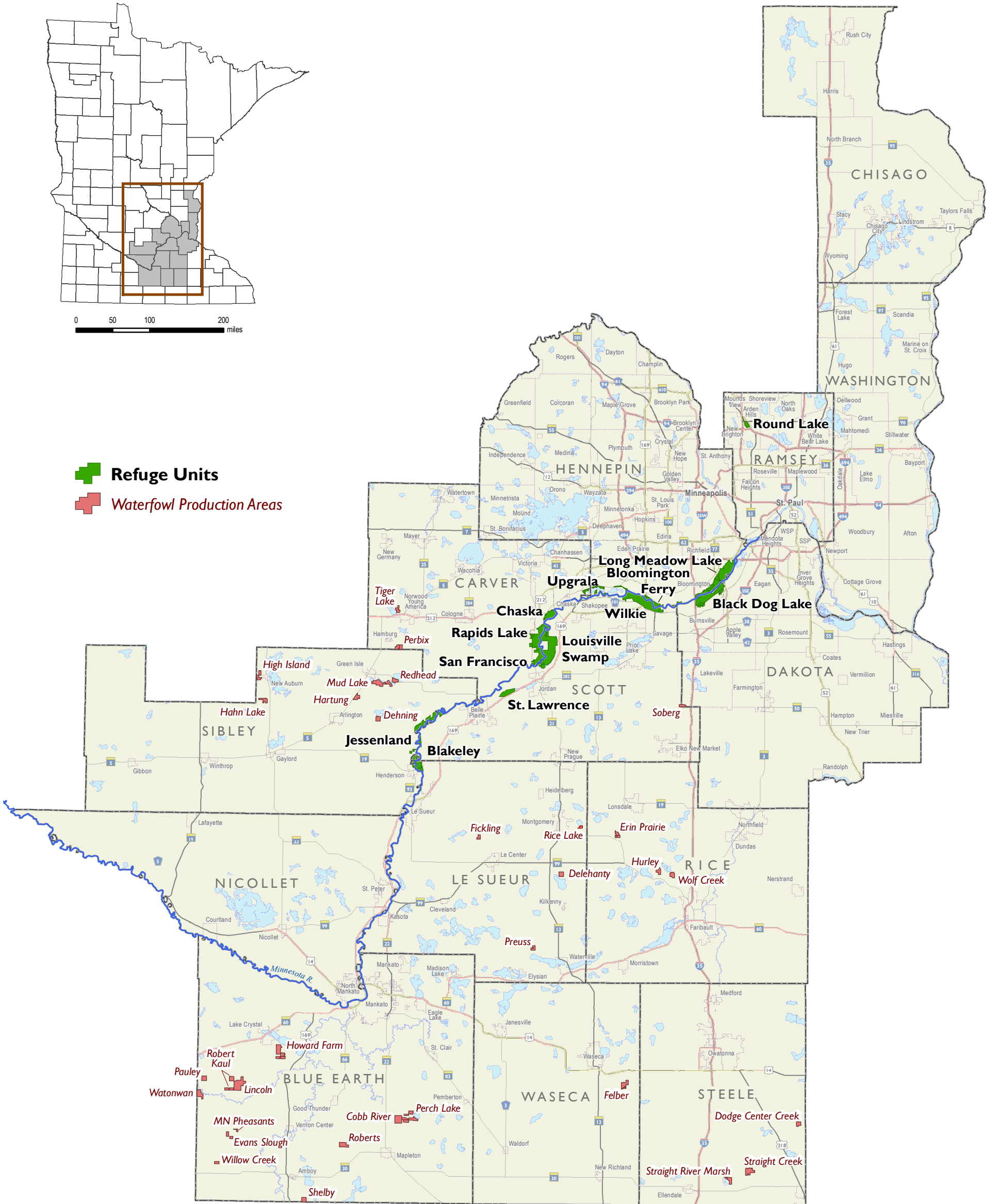
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Bloomington, Minnesota

Wetland Management District



- Refuge Units
- Waterfowl Production Areas



MATT MILLETT
 UPDATED 6/2018
 SOURCES: MVNWR, MVT, MN DNR, USGS, MET COUNCIL
 UTM ZONE 15N (NAD83)



