

M.L. 2011 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2014

PROJECT TITLE: HCP VII - Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District (4h)

PROJECT MANAGER: Deborah Loon

AFFILIATION: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

MAILING ADDRESS: 3815 East American Boulevard

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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. 04j4h

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$400,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

The MN Valley Trust acquired fee title to 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Blue Earth County. The ENRTF grant acquired 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds acquired the remaining 32.98 acres.

This tract is now an integral part of a 600+ acre complex called the Howard Farm WPA of the USFWS / Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District. The acquired property includes degraded prairie and wetland habitat that was drained so that it could be farmed.

Plans for this now-retired cropland include restoration of 62 acres of upland and 18 acres of wetland habitat that will be able to store up to 15 million gallons of water. The prairie seed mix will include the maximum diversity of plant species to benefit waterfowl, grassland birds, and pollinators.

This project will increase habitat quality and nest success for resident and migratory grassland birds, waterfowl, wading birds, resident species, and pollinators. It also will improve water quality to nearby Loon Lake, Lake Crystal, and the Watonwan and Minnesota Rivers through filtration and storage, and will increase wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for the public.

To meet the 1:1 leverage obligation of its work plan, the MN Valley Trust also completed the following during the project period using other private, non-state funds:

- Acquired fee title to 17.39 acres for the Perch Lake WPA on the north end of this state-designated shallow lake that provides critical resting habitat for migrating waterfowl. Habitat work will include retiring the cropland and field road, restoring both to prairie grassland, and removing a shed cabin from the lakeshore.
- Acquired fee title to 160 acres to expand the Lincoln WPA. The tract includes a 152-acre CREP easement and an 8-acre building site. Habitat work will include restoring the building site to native prairie, enhancing 15 wetland acres, restoring 11 wetlands not previously restored, inter-seeding 152 acres with a diverse mix of prairie forbs and applying prescribed fire.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Minnesota Valley Trust will announce the projects via news releases and the Trust website as habitat restoration work gets underway. Once habitat work is complete, the lands will be opened by the USFWS for the public's use for wildlife-dependent recreation.



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

Date of Report: 5/29/2014
Final Report: 5/29/2014
Date of Work Plan Approval: 8/11/2011
Project Completion Date: 6/30/2014

Project Title: HCP VII - Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District (4h)

Project Manager: Deborah Loon

Affiliation: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Inc

Address: 3815 East American Boulevard

City: Bloomington **State:** MN **Zip Code:** 55425

Telephone Number: (612) 801-1935

Email Address: dloon@mnvalleytrust.org

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

Location:

Counties Impacted: Blue Earth, Le Sueur

Ecological Section Impacted: North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

Total ENRTF Project Budget:	ENRTF Appropriation \$:	400,000
	Amount Spent \$:	400,000
	Balance \$:	0

Legal Citation: M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 04j4h

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, \$125,000 the first year and \$125,000 the second year are to the commissioner of natural resources for agency programs and \$3,225,000 is for agreements as follows: \$637,000 the first year and \$638,000 the second year with Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; \$38,000 the first year and \$37,000 the second year with Friends of Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District; \$25,000 the first year and \$25,000 the second year with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; \$225,000 the first year and \$225,000 the second year with Minnesota Land Trust; \$200,000 the first year and \$200,000 the second year with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.; \$242,000 the first year and \$243,000 the second year with Pheasants Forever, Inc.; and \$245,000 the first year and \$245,000 the second year with The Trust for Public Land to plan, restore, and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, is an authorized cooperating partner in the appropriation. Expenditures are limited to the project corridor areas as defined in the work program. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum habitat and facility management standards, as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. 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 who 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: HCP7-4h Priority Acquisition, MN Valley Wetland Management District

II. FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT:

The MN Valley Trust acquired fee title to 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Blue Earth County. The ENRTF grant acquired 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds acquired the remaining 32.98 acres.

This tract is now an integral part of a 600+ acre complex called the Howard Farm WPA of the USFWS / Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District. The acquired property includes degraded prairie and wetland habitat that was drained so that it could be farmed.

Plans for this now-retired cropland include restoration of 62 acres of upland and 18 acres of wetland habitat that will be able to store up to 15 million gallons of water. The prairie seed mix will include the maximum diversity of plant species to benefit waterfowl, grassland birds, and pollinators.

This project will increase habitat quality and nest success for resident and migratory grassland birds, waterfowl, wading birds, resident species, and pollinators. It also will improve water quality to nearby Loon Lake, Lake Crystal, and the Watonwan and Minnesota Rivers through filtration and storage, and will increase wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for the public.

To meet the 1:1 leverage obligation of its work plan, the MN Valley Trust also completed the following during the project period using other private, non-state funds:

- Acquired fee title to 17.39 acres for the Perch Lake WPA on the north end of this state-designated shallow lake that provides critical resting habitat for migrating waterfowl. Habitat work will include retiring the cropland and field road, restoring both to prairie grassland, and removing a shed cabin from the lakeshore.
- Acquired fee title to 160 acres to expand the Lincoln WPA. The tract includes a 152-acre CREP easement and an 8-acre building site. Habitat work will include restoring the building site to native prairie, enhancing 15 wetland acres, restoring 11 wetlands not previously restored, inter-seeding 152 acres with a diverse mix of prairie forbs and applying prescribed fire.

III. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of November 30, 2011: Outreach to landowners is underway.

Project Status as of May 30, 2012: Outreach to landowners continues.

Project Status as of November 30, 2012: Outreach to landowners continues.

Project Status as of May 30, 2013: Outreach to landowners continues. MN Valley Trust is moving forward with two acquisitions to strategically expand existing waterfowl production areas in the target area. These acquisitions will be acquired with other, non-state funds as match to this grant.

Amendment Request as of September 26, 2013: MN Valley Trust wishes to (1) add a parcel to its list of potential acquisition projects and (2) reduce its acreage target from 80 to 40 acres. We have identified a strategic, high priority opportunity to expand the USFWS Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). Land values have risen in the Southern Lakes Region, cutting in half the number of acres we expect to be able to acquire with the ENRTF grant. We have left the leverage amount at 40 acres and \$400,000 of other non-state funds, but will likely exceed those amounts significantly.

Project Status as of November 30, 2013: Purchase agreement has been signed and title work is underway to acquire 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area in Blue Earth

County. The grant will acquire 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds will acquire the remaining 32.98 acres.

Project Status as of May 30, 2014: This project is complete. The MN Valley Trust acquired fee title to 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Blue Earth County. The ENRTF grant acquired 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds acquired the remaining 32.98 acres. In addition, the MN Valley Trust acquired 177.39 acres to expand two other WPAs in Blue Earth County using other, non-state funds.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1:

Description: The MN Valley Trust acquired fee title to 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Blue Earth County. The ENRTF grant acquired 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds acquired the remaining 32.98 acres.

With the acquisition completed, this tract is now an integral part of a 600+ acre complex called the Howard Farm WPA, which is owned and managed by the USFWS / Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District. The acquired property includes degraded prairie and 14 restorable (drained) wetland basins, three of which are shared on the boundary with another tract of the WPA awaiting restoration. This marginal cropland is drained by extensive private tile, county and judicial ditches, all of which may now be abandoned. By removing this WPA from the county and judicial ditches, water quality will be improved to nearby Loon Lake, Lake Crystal and the Watonwan and Minnesota Rivers.

Planning for wetland and grassland restoration of this now-retired cropland is underway. A Conservation Partners Legacy grant and other private funds have been secured to complete the habitat work, which will include restoration of 62 acres of upland and 18 acres of wetland habitat. The wetlands will be able to store up to 15 million gallons of water. The prairie seed mix will include the maximum diversity of plant species to benefit especially waterfowl, grassland birds and pollinators.

To meet the 1:1 leverage obligation of its work plan, the MN Valley Trust also completed the following during the project period using other private, non-state funds:

- Acquired fee title to 17.39 acres for the Perch Lake WPA on the north end of this state-designated shallow lake that provides critical resting habitat for migrating waterfowl. The parcel acquired was an in-holding between previously-acquired and restored WPA property and a DNR-owned parcel that provides walk-in access to the lake. Habitat work will include retiring the cropland and field road, restoring both to prairie grassland, and removing a shed cabin from the lakeshore.
- Acquired fee title to 160 acres to expand the Lincoln WPA. The tract includes a 152-acre CREP easement and an 8-acre building site. Habitat work will include restoring the building site to native prairie, enhancing 15 wetland acres, restoring 11 wetlands not previously restored, inter-seeding 152 acres with a diverse mix of prairie forbs and applying prescribed fire.

These completed projects – at Howard Farm WPA, Lincoln WPA and Perch Lake WPA - will increase habitat quality and nest success for resident and migratory grassland birds, waterfowl, wading birds, resident species and pollinators. It will also provide benefits to water quality through filtration and storage, and will increase wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for the public.

Cost and funding sources summary:

	Fee title acquisition	Transaction costs	Grant and other funds
Howard Farm WPA	\$ 686,952	\$ 8,135	\$400,000 ENRTF \$295,087 other non-state funds
Lincoln WPA	\$ 256,000	\$ 2,466	\$258,466 other non-state funds
Perch Lake WPA	\$ 121,730	\$ 1,069	\$122,799 other non-state funds

Total	\$1,064,682	\$11,670	\$400,000 ENRTF \$676,352 other non-state funds
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Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 400,000
Amount Spent: \$ 400,000
Balance: \$ 0

Activity Completion Date: June 30, 2014

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. Acquire 40 acres of priority lands to expand or establish a USFWS Waterfowl Production Area in the Southern Lakes Region	June 30, 2014	\$ 400,000

Activity Status as of November 30, 2011: Outreach to landowners is underway.

Activity Status as of May 30, 2012: Outreach to landowners continues.

Activity Status as of November 30, 2012: Outreach to landowners continues.

Activity Status as of May 30, 2013: Outreach to landowners continues. MN Valley Trust is moving forward with two acquisitions to strategically expand existing waterfowl production areas in the target area. These acquisitions will be acquired with other, non-state funds as match to this grant.

Amendment Request as of September 26, 2013: MN Valley Trust wishes to (1) add a parcel to its list of potential acquisitions projects and (2) reduce its acreage target from 80 to 40 acres. We have identified a strategic, high priority opportunity to expand the USFWS Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). Land values have risen in the Southern Lakes Region, cutting in half the number of acres we expect to be able to acquire with the ENRTF grant. We have left the leverage amounts at 40 acres and \$400,000 of other non-state funds, but will likely exceed those amounts significantly.

Activity Status as of November 30, 2013: Purchase agreement has been signed and title work is underway to acquire 78.96 acres to expand the Howard Farm Waterfowl Production Area in Blue Earth County. The grant will acquire 45.98 acres and other, non-state private funds will acquire the remaining 32.98 acres.

Activity Status as of May 30, 2014: This project is complete.

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 November 30, 2011: Not applicable.

Status as of May 30, 2012: Not applicable.

Status as of November 30, 2012: Not applicable.

Status as of May 30, 2013: Not applicable.

Status as of November 30, 2013: Not applicable.

Final Report Summary: Minnesota Valley Trust will announce the projects via news releases and the Trust website as habitat restoration work gets underway. Once habitat work is complete, the lands will be opened by the USFWS for the public's use for wildlife-dependent recreation.

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. ENRTF Budget:

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Explanation
Fee Title Acquisition:	\$ 400,000	Fee title acquisition of 45.98 acres to expand a Waterfowl Production Area in the Southern Lakes Region.
TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:	\$ 400,000	

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)	\$ 400,000	\$ 676,352	Fee title acquisition of 210.37 acres to expand Waterfowl Production Areas in the Southern Lakes Region
State	\$ 0	\$ 0	
TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:	\$ 400,000	\$ 676,352	

VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: This project was part of the Habitat Conservation Partnership Phase VII. The Minnesota Valley Trust worked in close partnership with the USFWS to (1) identify properties to strategically acquire 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, Blue Earth County Soil and Water Conservation District, state conservation organizations and local conservation clubs (e.g., MN Pheasants, Inc – Blue Earth County).

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: This project was 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.

This project meets the following recommendations in the Statewide Conservation Plan -- protect priority land habitats; improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation; restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds and 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, as well as Loon Lake and Crystal Lake in Blue Earth County.

Habitat restoration and enhancement work will be completed by the Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc., working in close collaboration with the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District of the USFWS. Upon completion of the habitat work, the properties will be donated to the USFWS for ongoing management as part of the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District.

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 – HCP	\$ 126,878	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 0
Other non-state funds, including MN Valley Trust and private contributions	\$1,688,649	\$ 232,976	\$ 80,196	\$ 276,255	\$ 0

VIII. ACQUISITION/RESTORATION LIST: Attached

IX. MAP(S): Attached

X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: N/A

XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work plan status update reports were submitted not later than November 30, 2011, May 30, 2012, November 30, 2013, May 30, 2013, and November 30, 2013. This is the final report.

Final Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Projects				
Project Title: HCP7-4h Priority Acquisition, Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District				
Legal Citation: M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 04j4h				
Project Manager: Deborah Loon				
M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) ENRTF Appropriation: \$400,000				
Project Length and Completion Date: 3 years - June 30, 2014				
Date of Final Report: May 29, 2014				
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM	<i>Fee acquisition 40 acres</i>			
Fee Title Acquisition	400,000	400,000	400,000	0
COLUMN TOTAL	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$0





