



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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MN Valley Trust Creates Perch Lake Waterfowl Production Area

December 2009 -- The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. (Trust) has recently completed the purchase and habitat restoration of 300 acres on Perch Lake, an important migratory waterfowl lake in Blue Earth County. The property will be donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for management as the Perch Lake Waterfowl Production Area (WPA).

The Trust has retired the agricultural fields and completed major wetland restorations on the 150 acre parcels on the south end of the lake. The entire 300 acres have been planted with a diverse grass and prairie seed mix.

“Almost immediately after restoration was complete, the wetlands filled with water and birds returned to take advantage of the new habitat,” said Deborah Loon, executive director of the Minnesota Valley Trust. “The two very large, connected wetlands will provide long-term high quality habitat for migratory waterfowl, including the Lesser Scaup.”

The Perch Lake WPA will provide a significant core area ensuring excellent waterfowl and wildlife habitat benefits for more than 10,000 migrating waterfowl each year. It is adjacent to the existing Cobb River WPA, 586 acres that have been under USFWS management since 1995.

“These lands on Perch Lake had been identified as top priorities by the USFWS for development as a top-producing Waterfowl Production Area,” said Charlie Blair, manager of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District. “The public will enjoy hunting, wildlife observation and other wildlife-dependent recreation on these lands well into the future.”

Located three miles southeast of the City of Beauford and 13 miles south of Mankato, Perch Lake is one of just a handful of lakes designated by state law for management by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). It is a 480 acre shallow lake that is included in Ducks Unlimited’s “Living Lakes Initiative.”

The 100 acre parcel acquired by the Trust on the northwest side of Perch Lake includes the lake’s outlet, which is important to the ability of the DNR to manage the lake. Ducks Unlimited has

installed a new water control structure on the lake, with funding support from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources) and the North American Wetland Conservation Act.

A 15 acre abandoned dairy site on the west side of the lake was included in the Trust's acquisition. The buildings and concrete pads have been removed and the site graded and seeded with native mixes to promote diversity, prevent site erosion and create additional habitat.

The new Perch Lake WPA will be donated by the Trust to the USFWS for the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District for permanent protection. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will manage the lake in cooperation with the USFWS.

The purchases and restoration have been completed by the Minnesota Valley Trust, a nonprofit corporation that works closely with the USFWS to expand the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District. Partial funding for the acquisitions was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resource.

Funding support for the habitat restoration work was received from the North American Wetland Conservation Act, Blue Earth County Soil and Water Conservation District, Minnesota Pheasants, Inc. – Blue Earth and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

To date, the Trust has acquired 1,465 acres in the Minnesota River Watershed in Blue Earth County. Other projects include adding to the Ikier WPA and creating the Lincoln WPA, Roberts WPA and Watonwan WPA.

“Landowner willingness to sell or donate their marginal cropland to the Minnesota Valley Trust is vital in our initiatives to protect and restore critical habitat for wildlife and the public's enjoyment,” Loon added.

For more information, go to the Trust's website at www.mnvalleytrust.org.

The Minnesota Valley Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation established in 2000 through an agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. The Minnesota Valley Trust works to mitigate the impacts of the north-south runway at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International airport, which sends thousands of inbound and outbound flights every month over popular units of the Refuge near the airport. The Minnesota Valley Trust manages the settlement funds for the purposes of expanding the Minnesota Valley Refuge by at least 4,090 acres, constructing a new visitor and environmental education center and developing other public use facilities, such as trails, parking lots and interpretive kiosks.