



Outdoor Heritage Fund at Work in the Little Nokasippi Watershed

August 2015 Snapshots



The Lower Nokasippi Minor Watershed is one of Minnesota’s gems. Rich with waters, forests, world-class smallmouth bass fisheries, and wildlife, the area is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts. The watershed is also home to Camp Ripley, a Minnesota National Guard training facility that serves federal, state, and local communities. To minimize the impact their training might have on the surrounding area, in 2001 the Guard started working on a new initiative to protect the land around the facility.

What resulted was the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program. The program minimizes residential and commercial development within a three-mile buffer around the perimeter of Camp Ripley’s 53,000 acres. The end result is mutually beneficial: the Guard has adequate buffers for troop training activities and environmentally important land is permanently protected.

From the beginning, protecting these resources has been a multi-agency effort. The Guard, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Department of Natural Resources, Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and The Nature Conservancy have played key roles in fostering the program, with additional assistance from Crow Wing County and Crow Wing SWCD. The support of private landowners is what makes many of these easements possible.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) has played a key role in habitat protection in the program. Thanks to its support, hundreds of acres of wetlands, prairies, and forests have been protected, providing lasting habitat for fish, game and other wildlife, and water quality benefits. The project also expanded by 252 acres the Little Nokasippi Wildlife Management Area, providing more opportunities for public outdoor recreation.

Conservation easements put land in permanent protection, preserving these important resources for generations to come. They work for fisheries, plants, and wildlife. The presence of easements demonstrably reduces habitat fragmentation risk, in this case along water bodies like the Mississippi River that are nationally significant.

Fiscal Year	OHF funds	Acres protected
2011	\$ 843,000	972
2013	\$ 480,000	450
2014	\$1,450,000	TBD
2015	\$1,200,000	TBD



An aerial view of the Little Nokasippi Wildlife Management Area.

Partnerships have been the foundation of the program’s success, now considered a national model by the U.S. Department of Defense. From the Guard, to state agencies, to counties and private landowners who have committed their land to resource protection, it’s a powerful demonstration of what partnerships can

accomplish.

Outdoor Heritage Fund support has provided permanent habitat protection for wildlife, delivered aquatic habitat benefits, and opened up more land for public use, including recreation. 2,268 acres on 31 easements are funded through the OHF, accelerating protection and bringing totals for the ACUB program to 17,486 acres on 148 easements. That keeps this land protected for generations of Minnesotans to come.