

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

External Affairs Office

**Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, MN 55111-4056
612/713-5360 Fax: 612/713-5280 <http://midwest.fws.gov>**

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Contacts:

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Chuck Traxler, 612-713-5313 (office),
612-868-9482 (mobile), charles_traxler@fws.gov

The Nature Conservancy

Chris Anderson, 612-331-0747 (office),
612-845-2744 (mobile), canderson@tnc.org

Restored Prairie and Wetlands Added to Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota today announced the addition of more than 3,500 acres of restored wetlands and prairies to Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge. The addition brings the total acres of wildlife habitat on the Refuge, located in northwestern Minnesota's Polk County, to just more than 6,300.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased the land from the Conservancy as the first of several acquisitions recently approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The Commission – comprised of members of Congress and federal cabinet secretaries – recently authorized the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase a total of 18,118 acres for Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge.

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge Manager Dave Bennett thanked the Conservancy for its efforts to preserve and restore this land prior to selling it to the Service. "The Nature Conservancy, and the many other partners in this project, were able to convert this land into highly productive wildlife habitat suitable for the National Wildlife Refuge System," said Bennett. "Adding these acres to the Refuge will insure that these tallgrass prairie habitats, the most imperiled ecosystem in North America, will be managed for future generations to enjoy and appreciate."

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Bennett also mentioned the value this addition to the Refuge will bring to the local community. “We’ll continue working with local officials, residents and other partners to develop public use plans designed to protect wildlife habitat while also supporting Polk County tourism. These additional acres will hopefully encourage more people to visit Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge and see what all the excitement is about.”

Peggy Ladner, director of The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota, said the Refuge’s expansion shows the success of the Glacial Ridge Project, the largest prairie-wetland restoration effort in the United States.

“We’re excited to see the Refuge grow and we look forward to restoring more tallgrass prairie and wetlands,” Ladner said. “Returning this land to its natural condition provides exceptional wildlife habitat and public access for outdoor recreation.”

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge provides important wetland and grassland habitat for mallards, northern pintails, blue-winged teal, tundra swans, sandhill cranes, prairie chickens and many other waterfowl and grassland bird species. In addition, the Refuge provides numerous public recreational opportunities, such as hunting, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education.

The Conservancy still owns more than 18,000 acres at Glacial Ridge that it plans to restore. Most of the property is open to the public for compatible outdoor recreation including hiking, hunting and birding.

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, part of the 96-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System, will include nearly 38,000 acres of wetland and grassland habitat once it is completed.

For more information on this or other National Wildlife Refuges in the Midwest Region visit: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Refuges/>

More information on The Nature Conservancy Minnesota’s Glacial Ridge Project can be found at:
<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/minnesota/preserves/art6943.html>