



# COUNTY OF ANOKA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**350 Acres in North Metro Area Protected for Hunting and Conservation**

Nearly 350 acres of land have been permanently protected for conservation purposes in the eastern part of Anoka County. Two tracts of natural habitat at the headwaters of Rice Creek will connect several existing public conservation lands in a growing part of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Trust for Public Land finalized the acquisition and conveyance of the land to Anoka County on January 3, 2013.

“This new conservation area will be a legacy for generations to come, providing access to pristine and diverse wildlife lands that are best suited to hunting and conservation,” said Anoka County Board Chair Rhonda Sivarajah.

The protection of this headwaters creek corridor just south of the state-owned Lamprey Pass Wildlife Management Area (WMA) provides multiple water quality benefits, protecting nearly all of the shoreline of Columbus Lake and half a mile of Rice Creek. It also helps complete public ownership of a 20+ -mile conservation corridor extending from the WMA and along Rice Creek to the Mississippi River. Currently there is no connection between the WMA and these other large tracts of publicly owned habitat.

**-more-**

## **350 Acres in North Metro Area Protected for Hunting and Conservation – Add 1**

The land has a rich mixture of wetland habitat, including some of the last remaining high quality natural communities in the Twin Cities, which provide critical habitat for many species in conservation need. It also provides excellent hunting opportunities for waterfowl, pheasant, turkey, and deer within 20 minutes of downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. The project had broad support from many sportsmen's groups including the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, and Pheasants Forever.

Anoka County will manage 258 acres of the land as a new public hunting area called Columbus Lake Conservation Area. This portion of the land protection project was funded with money from the state's Outdoor Heritage Fund, which is recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Additional funding was provided by the state Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). The conservation area will be open to the public following the development of parking and access areas.

The remaining 85 acres will be added to Anoka County's Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve to connect existing parcels and provide improved public access for nature observation and hiking. Funding for this portion of the acquisition was provided by the Metropolitan Council's Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant Program.

"The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources have led efforts to ensure that we protect important natural lands for wildlife, public hunting and fishing, and parks and trail corridors in the metropolitan area," said Bob McGillivray, Trust for Public Land senior project manager. "Conserving Columbus Lake is another terrific close-to-home example."

**-more-**

## **350 Acres in North Metro Area Protected for Hunting and Conservation – Add 2**

The purchase of the new conservation and park areas was a model of cooperation, according to John VonDeLinde, Anoka County Director of Parks and Recreation. “The State of Minnesota, The Trust for Public Land, Metropolitan Council, City of Columbus, the landowner, and Anoka County were all significant partners in this conservation land purchase.”

Anoka County is part of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and has a population of more than 330,000 people. The county owns and operates a park and open space system of more than 10,000 acres with an estimated 3.8 million visitors per year.

The Trust for Public Land, established in 1972, specializes in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public and private funding, and law to protect strategic land for people to enjoy as parks, greenways, hunting and fishing areas, community gardens, urban playgrounds, and wilderness. Since 1986, The Trust for Public Land has helped to protect more than 90,000 acres of some of Minnesota’s most special land and water resources.