

**For Immediate Release**



**BELWIN  
CONSERVANCY**  
*Inspiring through Nature*



Contacts:

Steve Hobbs, Executive Director  
Belwin Conservancy  
(651) 436-5189 x101  
steve.hobbs@belwin.org

Walter Abramson, Dir. of Devel. and Communications  
Minnesota Land Trust  
(651) 647-9590  
wabramson@mnland.org

**New Legacy Amendment Dollars Preserve Critical Metro-area Land**

**Afton, MN January 4, 2011** -- An exceptional and disappearing slice of Minnesota's outdoor heritage is now protected for future generations thanks to the voters who approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment in 2008.

The Belwin Conservancy and Minnesota Land Trust recently acquired 17-acres of trout stream and forest habitat located on Valley Creek near Afton, Minnesota. This property was one of the few remaining unprotected stretches along this historic trout stream, which is unique in the metropolitan region for its wild undeveloped character and outstanding fish habitat. Valley Creek has been an important conservation focus for numerous organizations and local governments over the past several years and ranks high among the State's conservation priorities.

This focus led to the creation of the Valley Creek Protection Partnership comprised of the Belwin Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, Trout Unlimited, Valley Branch Watershed District and Washington County. Collectively, the Partnership is engaged in a complete range of land protection, restoration and education projects.

"It's great to see this innovative partnership achieve protection of and offer access to one of the metro area's most unique natural treasures" said Representative Denny McNamara, who represents the Afton area and is the incoming chair of the Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee.

One of the best of the few remaining healthy trout streams left in this region, the creek contains three species of trout—brook, brown and rainbow—which all spawn naturally in self-sustaining populations. The larger Valley Creek area is also home to more than 20 endangered, threatened and special concern species, including the American brook lamprey, the Hooded Warbler and Blanding's turtle.

"Valley Creek is unique as a stream with exceptional water quality and habitat diversity all within minutes of the Twin Cities," said Steve Hobbs, Executive Director of the Belwin Conservancy. "By pooling our distinctive skills we're making a greater impact for Valley Creek than any one of our organizations could alone."

## *Legacy funds protect metro land*

### *Page 2*

The former landowners were grateful for the opportunity to sell the land for conservation, knowing that it would be protected by a conservation easement in addition to serving as a controlled access point for local anglers. The property is now owned by the Belwin Conservancy. As a new addition to their existing 1,300-acre preserve, the organization will manage and restore the property. The Minnesota Land Trust, which holds conservation easements on several properties in the area, will conduct annual monitoring visits to ensure that the land remains protected in its natural state.

“Safeguarding the public’s investment in this project is our number one goal,” according to Kris Larson, executive director of the non-profit Minnesota Land Trust. “We visit 100% of all our protected properties annually to ensure that these lands continue to be preserved for conservation, just as the public intended. Thanks to the wisdom of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, we will have the resources required to protect this remarkable piece of Minnesota.”

This project, which adds to a network of protected lands along Valley Creek, was funded in part through the State’s new Outdoor Heritage Fund. The project partners were also able to leverage this state investment with significant national funding from The Conservation Fund in partnership with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

“The Conservation Fund is thrilled to be able to participate in this important project in such a remarkable natural area. We are grateful to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for making the opportunity possible,” commented Tom Duffus, Upper Midwest Director for The Conservation Fund. “We look forward to other opportunities to stretch the public’s investment further and take advantage of this unique window of time in Minnesota’s conservation legacy.”

The Belwin Conservancy has been a leader in conservation and environmental education in Washington County for nearly 40 years, hosting over 10,000 urban students from the St. Paul Public Schools on its property annually. In the spring of each year, the Belwin Conservancy ignites imaginations by releasing a herd of bison on its property to help restore the prairie. For more information, please visit their website: [www.belwin.org](http://www.belwin.org).

The Minnesota Land Trust is a member-supported, non-profit conservation organization working state-wide to preserve Minnesota’s natural and scenic heritage. The Land Trust has completed 415 land-protection projects that preserve over 37,000 acres of land and more than 750,000 feet of fragile shoreline, primarily through the use of perpetual conservation easements with willing landowners. With offices in Duluth, Ely, Red Wing and St. Paul, the organization also provides assistance to local communities to achieve their own conservation goals. More information can be found online at [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org).

###