

## Camp Ripley

Located along the northern stretch of the Mississippi River, Camp Ripley is the primary National Guard Training Center for units from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Ohio, and Illinois. The agricultural and forested lands surrounding Camp Ripley have enabled the installation to conduct aircraft, live fire, artillery, IED, and winter training with limited restrictions. The large unfragmented landscape protects water quality of the upper Mississippi River and its four major tributaries. However, the rural character of the area is threatened by development that could significantly affect Camp Ripley's ability to fulfill its mission; convert historic farms, ranches, and forested lands into other uses; and adversely affect one of the most ecologically rich environments and important source water areas in the Midwest.

Recognizing the need to protect this landscape, the Minnesota legislature passed state law 190.33, which was signed into law by Governor Mark Dayton in May 2015. Under the law, the adjutant general convened a Sentinel Landscape Coordinating Committee to identify the boundaries of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape and develop a suite of tools and programs that could provide technical and financial assistance to interested landowners within the Sentinel Landscape. With input from local government, stakeholders, and Federal agency partners, the Coordinating Committee identified the desired outcomes of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape partnership: protecting the installation's military training mission and the landscape's wildlife management areas, watersheds, and agricultural resources.



*Over 50 miles of the Mississippi River headwaters flow through the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape, and are fed by 34 minor watersheds in a 10-mile radius of the installation. (Photo courtesy of Camp Ripley)*

### BENEFITING WORKING LANDS

Restoring, managing, and protecting the viability of historic agricultural and forest lands within the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape is a top priority for the local community, with 180 landowners already expressing interest in enrolling over 16,000 acres of private working ranches, croplands, and timberlands into established assistance tools and programs. This enthusiastic participation will more than double the number of private landowners already participating in efforts buffering Camp Ripley and managing natural resources within the Sentinel Landscape.

Local partners like the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources and the Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District will work with willing landowners to provide technical assistance that will strengthen prime working lands, using programs such as the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Landowners will have the opportunity to access conservation education and enhance their land management practices while maintaining their right to continue agricultural production and protect their lands from development as appropriate within the Sentinel Landscape.

## CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape includes 34 minor watersheds grouped into 7 sub-watersheds, 50 miles of the Mississippi River, and the Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Thousands of acres of public and private conservation lands converge on the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape, which is also one of the state's most important source water protection areas for drinking water.

While coordination across county and city boundaries has long been necessary to protect the quality of cross-border watersheds, the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Partnership is leveraging broader support to protect and improve the quality of the region's soil and water resources. The Minnesota Forest Resource Council is working with landowners to implement forest stewardship plans within the Sentinel Landscape, while Partners for Fish and Wildlife will work with private landowners to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, and pollinator habitat.

These efforts are also resulting in additional opportunities for the community, including expanded trail, water, and natural area access for hunting, fishing, and recreation.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The Sentinel Landscape Partnership at Camp Ripley will continue to coordinate and leverage the resources of the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service with state and local partners to advance the goals of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape. Together, these actions will sustain area agriculture, protect the Mississippi River headwaters, and preserve a unique landscape that will allow Camp Ripley to continue to effectively train National Guard members for decades to come.

## PARTNERS

### FEDERAL

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Department of Defense
  - Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program
  - Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program
- U.S. Department of the Interior
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  - National Park Service

### STATE

- Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Department of Military Affairs
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Forest Resources Council

### LOCAL

- Mississippi Headwaters Board
- Cass County
- City of Baxter
- Crow Wing County
- Morrison County
- Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District

### NGOS

- The Nature Conservancy
- The Conservation Fund

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