



# NEWS

For Immediate Release

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## **The Trust for Public Land Conveys 63 Acres Of Mississippi Riverfront to the City of Baxter, Minnesota**

*The site increases public access to the Mississippi River and protects vital habitats in the Mississippi River corridor*

St. Paul, Minn. – Dec. 11, 2006 – The Mississippi River stretches along the city of Baxter, Minnesota, for more than 7.5 miles, second only in length to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Unfortunately, until now, the residents of this fast-growing city of 7,000 had next-to-no public access to this magnificent river resource in their “backyard.” That is about to change.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) announced today it conveyed 63 acres to the city of Baxter to create a new natural resource-based regional park to serve one of the most rapidly growing communities in the Midwest.

“The City of Baxter is one of the fastest growing cities in the state. That is a good thing,” Darrel Olson, Mayor of Baxter, said. “What we need to do is grow while keeping what makes Baxter so great. Protection of land like this along the Mississippi River will help do that by providing water quality benefits, natural and scenic benefits, and by giving citizens close-to-home access to the outdoors.”

TPL coordinated funding with several private and public organizations, including The City of Baxter (\$240,000), Camp Ripley (\$260,000) using the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program, and the Department of Natural Resource’s Natural and Scenic Area grant program (\$500,000) which was financed, in part, by a matching grant from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). U.S. Senator Norm Coleman (R), Minn. and U.S. Representative Jim Oberstar (D), Minn. supported ACUB and LWCF funding, while Minnesota state Senator Paul Koering (R), Fort Ripley, worked for funding for state grant program.

Additionally, The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land each contributed \$100,000 from the Habitat Corridors Partnership, which was recommended for funding by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

"This is a great example of the importance of conservation partnerships," said DNR deputy commissioner Mark Holsten. "When state, federal, local and nonprofit organizations work together with a common vision and commitment, the people of Minnesota wind up with a healthier environment and greater access to the outdoors. That benefits everyone."

Mississippi River Overlook, as it is known, is home to a variety of species in need of protection, including the Blanding's Turtle, the gray wolf and red-shouldered hawk. Additional species inhabiting the future park include bald eagles, deer, red and gray fox, and mink. The area also hosts significant vegetation and native plants desired for protection by both the Department of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy.

"It is important to recognize that protection of both plant and animal species along river corridors such as this project helps sustain long-term success as part of a natural system. The community recognizes this value and we applaud their action," stated Todd Holman, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy.

The City of Baxter proposes a paved trail along the northern border of the site in an already cleared area to connect with the Brainerd trailhead of the Paul Bunyan State Trail. An unpaved path will extend from that paved trail through jack pine woodlands down to the River. The City cautions people from visiting the property until it has installed signs showing the proper public access route to the site.

"The Trust for Public Land is grateful for all the people and agencies that helped protect this land for public access and use—for wildlife viewing, fishing and as a place to launch canoes on the Mississippi River," said Becca Nash, TPL Project Manager.

Upon successful completion of the project, Pastor Darrell Pedersen of Lord of Life Church and a representative of the seller said, "Congratulations and thanks to all of you for your good and faithful work on this wonderful project to provide a park for use by all people in this beautiful corner of God's creation."

### **About The Trust for Public Land**

Across the nation, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has helped protect more than 2.2 million acres. TPL is creating parks and natural areas in high-growth communities including St. Cloud, Mankato, and the Brainerd Lakes Area, including those at Neenah Creek and on Clearwater Lake. Currently TPL is working on an addition to Crow Wing State Park along the Gull River. The Trust for Public Land depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve our land for people mission.

TPL, established in 1972, is a national nonprofit land conservation organization specializing in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law, to conserve land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.

**Please note: JPG. photos of Mississippi River Overlook are available by contacting Brian Madson at TPL, 651/999-5331 or at [brian.madson@tpl.org](mailto:brian.madson@tpl.org).**

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