



Valley Creek Corridor

Washington County Priority Conservation Area

Land Area

- **Total Area:** 2,092 acres
- **Forest/Woodland:** 905 acres
- **Grassland:** 337 acres
- **Wetland:** 249 acres

Primary Threats

- Groundwater supply
- Water quality
- Land development
- Habitat destruction

Species of Concern

- Red-Shouldered Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Common Snapping Turtle
- Blanding's Turtle
- Louisiana Waterthrush
- Eastern Hognose Snake
- American Brook Lamprey
- Hooded Warbler
- Karner Blue Butterfly

Land and Water Legacy Program

In 2006, a \$20 million bond referendum passed, initiating the creation of the county's Land and Water Legacy Program, which purchases land or land interests to preserve its natural condition. The program is ongoing and has used collaborative partnerships to invest over \$40 million in protection, conserving over 1,300 acres of high-quality natural lands.

Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas

The Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas represent the county's highest priority areas for land protection. They were identified using a ranking system based upon the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System and other available nature-related datasets. These areas serve as a guide for county land protection projects, however land outside of these areas may still be considered.

Priority Area Description

The Valley Creek Corridor Priority Conservation Area is located in Afton and within the Valley Branch Watershed District. The Minnesota Land Trust holds conservation easements over many acres in the corridor and surrounding subwatershed, and a large portion is owned by the Belwin Conservancy. The Valley Creek Protection Partnership is actively working to acquire and restore land in the corridor.

The area includes the main stem of Valley Creek, a major tributary to the St. Croix River. Valley Creek is one of the best trout-producing streams in Minnesota. It is one of only a few with a naturally reproducing population of native Brook Trout and also sustains Brown and Rainbow Trout populations.

The Valley Creek and the surrounding wetlands, grasslands and woodlands are also home to more than 20 endangered, threatened, and special concern species. Valley Creek outlets into the St. Croix River, one of the world's premier mussel habitats.

Conservation Objectives and Benefits

Protecting Water Quality

Working with the Valley Branch Watershed District to protect uplands that infiltrate and filter stormwater runoff will improve the surface water quality of Valley Creek and the St. Croix River, as well as promote aquifer recharge and healthy stream hydrology.

Streambank stabilization projects will also help improve water quality in Lake St. Croix downstream.

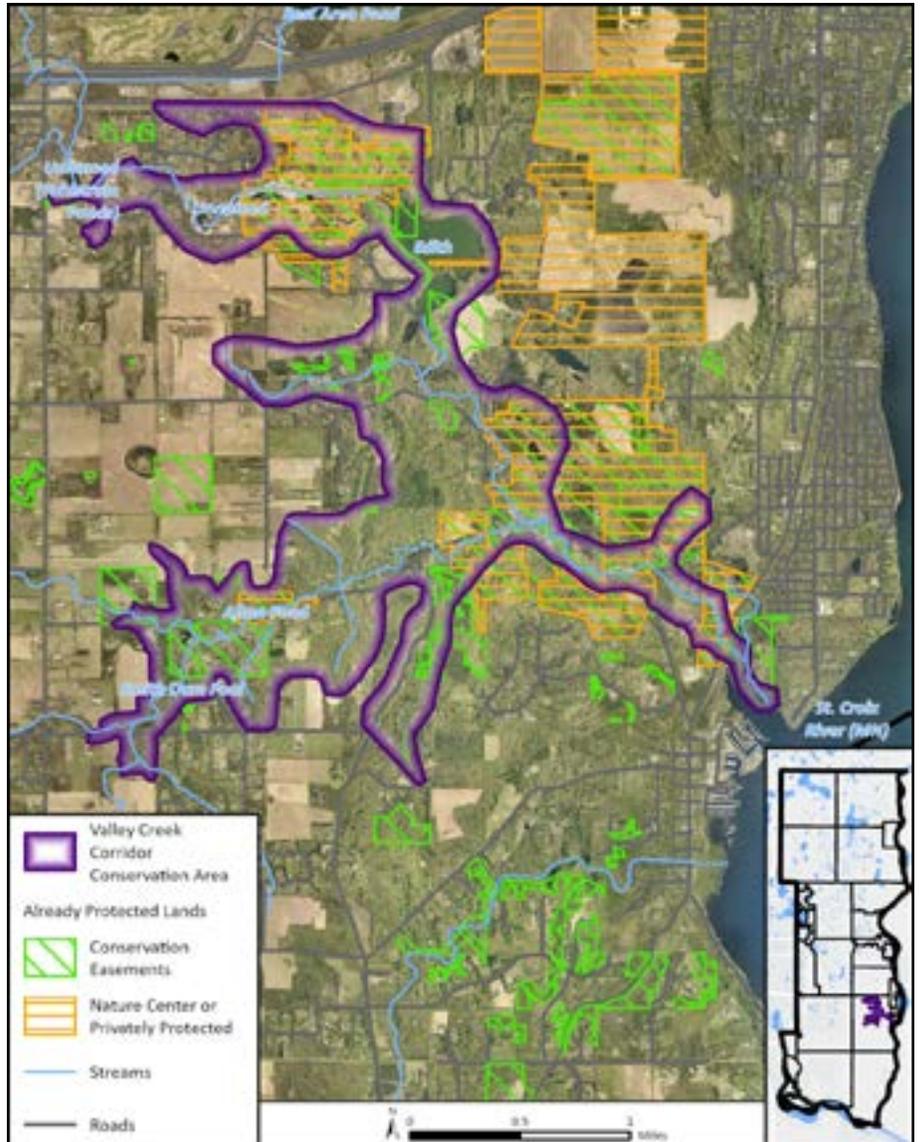


Protecting Habitats

Working with groups like the Belwin Conservancy to protect upland habitats from further development will help maintain connections between existing natural areas to provide corridors for wildlife.

Water quality protections and limiting development will also help maintain a healthy trout stream habitat in Valley Creek.

Past conservation efforts have permanently protected about 1,400 acres of land adjacent to and within the corridor.



For more information:

Washington County
Land and Water Legacy Program
WashingtonCountyMN.gov/LWLP

