

## Camp Ripley Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Talking Points

*“Central Minnesota Prairie to Pines Partnership...preserving our heritage”*

Talking points prepared by Marty Skoglund, Camp Ripley Environmental Supervisor  
15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 (320) 616-2722, marty.Skoglund@mn.ngb.army.mil

### **Background information**

Camp Ripley is located in central Minnesota approximately 100 miles northwest of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area (See Figure No. 1). The Camp was opened to Minnesota Guard units on June 14, 1931. The State Legislature appropriated funds for construction because the Guard out-grew its 200-acre site at Camp Lakeview, located on Lake Pepin. The initial Camp Ripley site was about 2,000 acres in size occupying the southern tip of the installation what is now known as the cantonment area. Over the years, it grew and became a mobilization station for troops during World War II and the Korean Conflict. The Camp reached its current 52,831-acre size in the early 1960's.

Camp Ripley is one of the largest National Guard Training Sites located within the United States and, without a doubt, the most modern training facility in the reserve component. With over 350,000 military man-days per year, Camp Ripley is a major training asset to the entire military community. In addition, Camp Ripley offers excellent training opportunities for civilian organizations that invest about 100,000 civilian man-days per year at Camp Ripley.

Camp Ripley has three primary missions. First, to train soldiers and units that support National Security objectives; second, provide resources that assist in the protection of life, property and preserve peace, order and public safety for the State of Minnesota; third, participate in local, state and national programs that add value to our community.

Camp Ripley has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to conserving and preserving its natural and cultural resources. This commitment has given national recognition to Camp Ripley and the Minnesota National Guard for their role as environmental stewards. The Minnesota National Guard is proud of their accomplishments knowing that their conscientious management of its natural and cultural resources will ensure that they are available for future generations to use.

Camp Ripley abounds with plant and animal life unique to central Minnesota. The high diversity of life forms (over 600 plant specimens, 201 bird species, 107 types of aquatic invertebrates, 71 species of butterflies, 50 mammal species, 41 species of fish, 24 species of reptiles and amphibians, and eight mussel species) is a result of Camp Ripley's location along the forest transition zone in central Minnesota. Wildlife species of particular interest include the white-tailed deer, black bear and timber wolf.

In addition to serving as a premier training site for military and civilian exercises, Camp Ripley has a significant economic impact on central Minnesota. With over 580 fulltime employees, Camp Ripley is the largest employer in the area. The annual economic impact based on salaries, projects and local purchases through Camp Ripley exceeds \$185 million.

Frequently asked questions about the Camp Ripley ACUB also known as  
"Central Minnesota Prairie to Pines Partnership"

**1. What is the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB)?**

ACUB is a federal program regulated by the fiscal year 2003 Department of Defense Authorization Act, passed on December 2, 2002. The Act authorizes a military installation to enter into an agreement with a state, local government, or private conservation organization to limit encroachment on lands neighboring the installation. The Minnesota National Guard has prepared an ACUB proposal for Camp Ripley known locally as "*Central Minnesota Prairie to Pines Partnership...preserving our heritage.*" This title was selected since the proposal will involve partners that share a common goal in terms the military mission and from a natural resource management perspective.

**2. Why is the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal necessary?**

With increased military activity around the globe, it's important now more than ever to ensure adequate training capabilities for our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. Noise, dust, and smoke are inherent to training exercises that must be carried out round the clock. As development increases near and around military installations such as Camp Ripley, land-use conflicts arise between military exercises and development activities that are sensitive to the impacts of training (e.g. residential development, schools, churches, hospitals, etc.).

**3. Who is the proponent of the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

The Minnesota Army National Guard is the proponent of the proposal and has invited the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil resources (BWSR), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and other conservation organizations to assist in implementing the proposal. To date, over 20 organizations have expressed an interest in participating in the partnership. Members of the Camp Ripley Citizens Committee will serve in an advisory capacity to oversee the implementation. The citizens committee is comprised of local officials, business leaders, and interest groups that represent the three counties surrounding Camp Ripley.

**4. What is the purpose of the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

The purpose of the proposal is twofold. First and foremost, the proposal is intended to secure the viability of Camp Ripley as a military training site in the interest of ensuring that our soldiers are given the highest level of training that is possible. Secondly, the proposal will compliment the ecological integrity of the unique landscape that Camp Ripley is an integral part of.

**5. What area is included in the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

The proposal encompasses about 110,000 acres of land within a 3-mile buffer of Camp Ripley. Based on an analysis of potential growth and subsequent encroachment, four priority areas have been identified. The priority areas will aid in prioritizing the implementation of the proposal with willing landowners (See Figure No. 2). Further refinement of the priority areas has been conducted based on noise zones (zone 2 and zone 3) that extend beyond the boundary of Camp Ripley. These noise zones, which encompass about 25,000 acres, were delineated by computer simulation based on the noise generated from military exercises (See Figure No. 3).

**6. Will the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal increase the size of Camp Ripley?**

The proposal will not result in an expansion of Camp Ripley. The Camp currently encompasses about 53,000 acres and the proposal will not increase the landholdings of the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs. In fact, if land is acquired to implement the proposal or if conservation easements are purchased, the Minnesota National Guard will not hold title to the property or interests in the property.

**7. What is the Minnesota National Guard's strategy for the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

The Minnesota National Guard's strategy consists of 8 objectives that serve as the foundation for developing and implementing the Camp Ripley ACUB proposal. The objectives are as follows:

- 1) Soldier readiness is first and foremost.
- 2) Maintain Camp Ripley's existing military mission.
- 3) Accommodate future missions of Camp Ripley without expanding its boundary.
- 4) Maintain the integrity of the natural environment by promoting biological diversity.
- 5) Preserve current land use, particularly agriculture, recreation, and forestry while maintaining the rural character of the area.
- 6) Promote opportunities for public recreational use.
- 7) Maintain strong community relations.
- 8) **Willing landowners only and respect all property rights.**

**8. Who can participate in the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

Only willing landowners with property lying within a 3-mile buffer of Camp Ripley are eligible to participate. In fact, section (d) of subsection 2684a of fiscal year 2003 Department of Defense Authorization Act specifically states:

*“Property or interests may not be acquired pursuant to the agreement unless the owner of the property or interest consents to the acquisition”*

In other words, participation is strictly voluntary. If a landowner within the 3-mile buffer decides not to participate that is their right and it will be respected.

**9. What mechanisms will be used to implement the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal?**

A cooperative agreement has been approved between National Guard Bureau and DNR and BWSR who in turn are responsible for negotiating land protection options on behalf of the Minnesota National Guard. Various land protection options will be available for consideration and negotiation by the willing landowners. The most common option for consideration will be an easement whereby the willing landowner is compensated for restrictions on developing or changing the current land use of their property. Regardless which land protection option is used, all options are long-term. Because this is a long-term decision on the part of each willing landowner, it is imperative that they seek legal review before executing any documents.

**10. Will the implementation result in more public land?**

The preference is to maintain private ownership of the property within the area. However, some willing landowners may prefer to sell or donate their property in the interest of conservation. Newly acquired lands will become state managed lands that will be open to public recreation and subject to the resource management policies of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Similar to other state managed lands, newly acquired state land will generate county tax revenue in the form of Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT).

**11. If a landowner participates in the project by granting an easement can the rules change that alter the conditions of the easement?**

The condition of each easement will be negotiated between the landowner and DNR or BWSR depending on who handles the transaction. The conditions of the easement are legally binding and therefore not subject to change. The easements are long-term so it is very important that the conditions of the easement are negotiated to the liking of the landowner. If a landowner does not desire a permanent conservation easement, the easement can have a reverter clause that is predicated on the continued operation of Camp Ripley as a military training site or a wildlife refuge. Since this is long-term, the easements will be transferred upon sale of the property from the original landowner to future landowners.

**12. If taxpayer dollars are used to implement the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal, including the purchase of conservation easements, can the taxpayers later petition the government to open private lands to public use?**

The easements are legally binding documents that are negotiated to the liking of the private landowner that willing participated in the project. The condition of “no public access” will be one of many conditions that could be written into the easement to prevent this issue from occurring. Furthermore, each willing landowner should ensure that they have legal counsel during their negotiations and before they sign a binding document (e.g. conservation easement).

**13. Will landowners be forced to participate if more than 50% of the landowners in the area voluntarily agree to participate?**

The Department of Defense Authorization Act is very clear on the issue of “willing landowners only”. What’s more, Major General Shellito, The Adjutant General of the Minnesota National Guard, has made it very clear in his strategy that the premise of the entire proposal is willing landowners. It cannot be overstated that participation by all landowners is voluntary and in all cases their property rights will be respected.

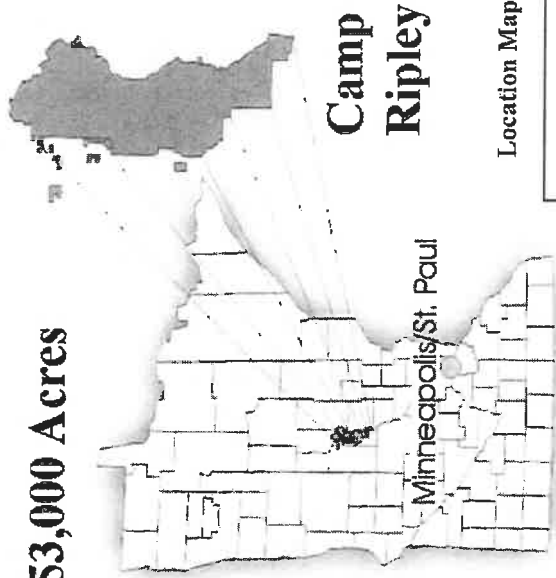
**14. Is the Prairie to Pines Partnership proposal intended to de-privatize the area?**

While the proposal may result in additional public lands through outright acquisition this will be more of the exception than the rule. Not only is cost a significant factor but also a primary objective of the proposal is to protect the current land use and thereby maintain the rural character of the area that residents enjoy. Emphasis will be given to land protection measures that maintain private ownership and private control. A conservation easement is a good example of one land protection instrument that will maintain private control and respect for private property rights.

**15. How will the ACUB be funded?**

The Minnesota National Guard will seek federal funding to initiate implementation and eventually leverage funding from other sources including the State of Minnesota, private donations, and non-governmental organizations.

**53,000 Acres**



**Camp  
Ripley**

Location Map

**Figure No. 1**

**Figure No. 2**

Priority Areas

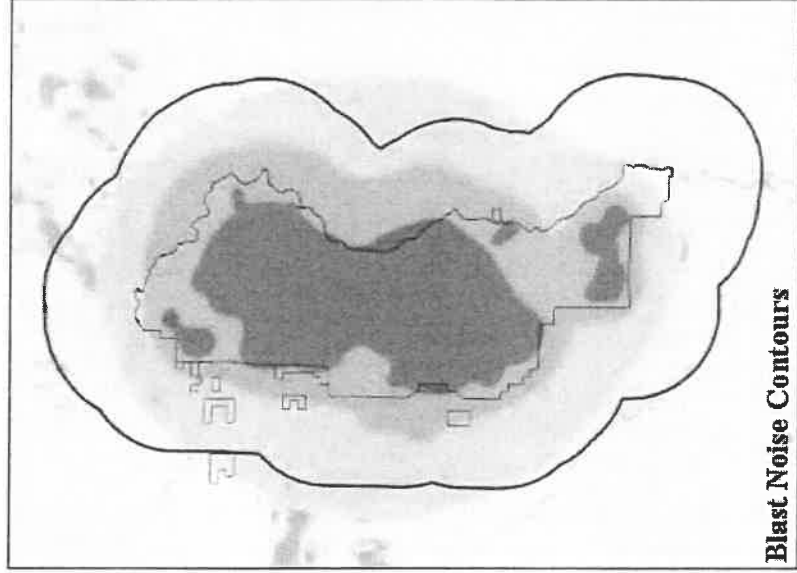


**Figure No. 3**

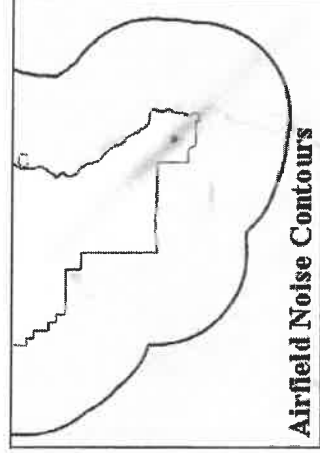
**Noise Sensitive Areas**

Noise Zone

- Land Use Planning Zone (60-65 dB)
- Zone 2 (66-75 dB)
- Zone 3 (>75 dB)
- 3 Mile Buffer



**Blast Noise Contours**



**Airfield Noise Contours**