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Vol. 19 • Issue 45

Sat., November 10, 2018

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US Congress and Minnesota state legislature split between parties

By ANN SCHWARTZ

As of press time, the election news was hot despite highs in the 20s, a brisk north wind and snow on the ground outside.

The United States Congress is split as Democrats took over the House of Representatives and Republicans hung on to and increased their majority in the United States Senate.

In the eighth district of Minnesota, where locals vote, Democrat Joe Radinovich was defeated by Republican Pete Stauber. This seat has been a DFL stronghold in the past but Rick Nolan, the incumbent, retired and made a brief run for governor. Stauber is a Duluth native who served on the police force there, which probably cancelled out a lot of DFL votes that would have traditionally come out of the Duluth and St. Louis County areas.

In Minnesota, Governor-elect Tim Walz, a democrat, succeeds Mark Dayton who served two terms as a Democratic governor. Minnesota's House of Representatives flipped to Democratic control while the Minnesota Senate maintains a majority of one for Republicans. The Democrats needed to win 11 seats to win back the Minnesota House and they actually won 18 seats.

Dale Lueck and Josh Heitzeman were reelected to the Minnesota House.

Across the border, Wisconsin's incumbent Republican Governor Scott Walker lost his seat to Democrat Tony Evers. Walker had not conceded as of press time but he got a bill passed earlier that the recounts were not mandatory if the difference in votes was more than one percent.

Diversity reigned as incumbents Amy Klobuchar

and Tina Smith return to the United States Senate. Both women and Democrats, they join a female wave across the nation. Peggy Flanagan, a Native American, is Minnesota's lieutenant governor while Ilhan Omar, a Somali American, represents Minnesota in Congress.

In hard-fought local races, Dan Guida and Scott Goddard won sheriff's seats in Aitkin and Crow Wing counties, respectively. Paul Theide, a long-time county commissioner in Crow Wing, was challenged by well-known local Bill Brekken. Brekken led Theide by under 100 votes – which could trigger a mandatory recount.

"Our first precinct, Lee Township, arrived at the courthouse with their ballots at 8:23 p.m.," said Aitkin County Auditor Kirk Peysar, who was re-elected with no opposition. "The last pre-



Election Judge Gretchen Catlin greets voters and helps them place their ballots in the counting machine at the Aitkin City Hall. The law prevents media from taking photos of individual voters.

turnout is expected to exceed 80 percent. Over 2,000 absentee/mail ballots were cast, precinct, Ball Bluff, arrived at 1:25 a.m. Wednesday after driving over 60 miles on icy roads with falling snow. Voter

Continued on Page 5

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Rippleside Elementary students line the halls to honor veterans



Rippleside Elementary in Aitkin honored veterans on November 7. Students lined up throughout the hallways of the school and waved flags and cheered for veterans. Vets of all ages and service branches marched through, along with their spouses and friends. Patriotic music was played over the sound system. Photo above right: Marine Corps veterans Paul Johnson, in his original uniform, and Charlie Wikelius. Photo above center: Sean Speed and his son Ben are welcomed by students.

War stories in Minnesota parks



As Veterans Day approaches, gratitude is offered to past and present members of our military and we reflect on the inspiring history of our nation; a history whose fabric is woven tightly with stories of human conflict and war.

Across Minnesota, our state parks preserve diverse perspectives and stories of people and places involved in battles and wars of America's past. One such site is Fort Ridgely State Park.

From 1855 to 1872, Fort Ridgely was not only a military fort but it was also a

self-sufficient community populated by 300 soldiers and civilians. The military fort played a role in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, a major event in Minnesota's early history.

Today, visitors can tour Historic Fort Ridgely and wander through the ruins of this once thriving outpost. Visit the museum and the cemetery to learn about the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. For recreation, hike or ride the trails on horseback, fish the stocked pond or trout stream, camp (drive-in and walk-in sites are

available), or stay overnight in the renovated farmhouse. In the winter, ski, snowmobile, or stay overnight at the chalet.

Many Minnesota state parks hold powerful stories of past human conflict.

Fort Snelling State Park is located at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers near historic Fort Snelling built in the 1820s. The land within the state park was an important location during the US-Dakota War of 1862 and remains a sacred location to many Dakota.

Whitewater and Flandrau State Parks were once used as summer work camps for Prisoners of War of World War II during 1944 and 1945.

As part of the New Deal programs of the Great Depression era, a Veterans Conservation Corps was established. The Federal government sent the Veterans Conservation Corps to Camden, Fort Ridgely and Sibley State Parks to build roads, buildings, and trails.



Sgt. Garber helps in typhoon relief

Sgt. Joshua Garber, a 22-year-old combat engineer with Combat Logistics Battalion 31, pauses for a drink from a coconut during relief efforts in the wake of Super Typhoon Yutu, Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands on Oct. 31, 2018. Garber, a native of Brainerd, Minnesota, enlisted in June 2014 after graduating from Brainerd High School in May of the same year. Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and CLB-31 arrived on Tinian Oct. 29-30 in the wake of Super Typhoon Yutu, as part of the U.S. Defense Support of Civil Authorities there. The Marines arrived at the request of CNMI officials and the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist relief efforts in the wake of Yutu, the largest typhoon to ever hit a U.S. territory. The 31st MEU, the Marine Corps' only continuously forward-deployed MEU, provides a flexible force ready to perform a wide-range of military operations across the Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. T. T. Parish/Released)

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networking. Meetings are 9 am the second Saturday of each month at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 418 8th Ave. NE, Brainerd. For more information, please contact Sheila York at 218-820-5903 or syork@mofas.org

McGregor, Intercessory prayer Wed 6-7 p.m.; Praise & Worship Services Sat. 2 pm, Sun 10 am.

Recovery Worship Service, Cascade United Methodist Church, Crosby/Deerwood, 1st Sat., 5 pm. Everyone is welcome.

10th - Spirit of Christmas Bazaar, Immanuel Lutheran, Crosby 8:30 am-1:30 pm

raffle ticket. 20th - Minute To Win It game nights at the Aitkin Public Library at 6 p.m. Space is limited and registration is required on the East Central Regional Library events calendar at eclrib.org.

December 1st - Kids Lunch with Santa - The Bay Lake Area Lions are pleased to invite children (infants - 12 years old) and parents/grandparents from the Cuyuna Range Elementary School (CRES), to enjoy a puppet show, face painting, lunch with Santa and a special gift on 11 am - 2 pm at the Deerwood Auditorium. (parents are encouraged to take photos) Reservations must be made by November 21 through CRES or The Deerstand, Deerwood; call or send a text reservation to 218-330-7804.

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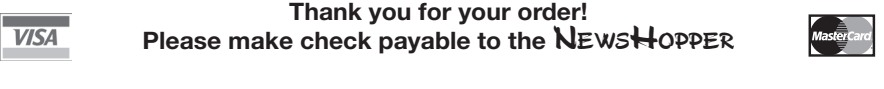
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Mission of ag and forest easements around Camp Ripley benefit habitat



(From left) Dan Steward, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources private forest management program coordinator, and Chris Pence, BWSR board conservationist, stop along the Mississippi River during a July 9 tour of Camp Ripley with Jake Kitzmann, Camp Ripley's natural resources manager. The Mississippi River borders Camp Ripley for about 18 miles. The Army Compatible Use Buffer program minimizes infringement within a 3-mile radius of Camp Ripley by purchasing development rights through permanent conservation easements.

Ann Wessel, BWSR, photo

Morrison SWCD forged partnerships that brought nearly \$38 million to the 3-county area. Agreements allow farming and timber harvest but stop development. The Mississippi River, Northern long-eared bat and the National Guard site that trains 30,000 people a year all benefit.

Conservation easements on Camp Ripley's perimeter are preserving fish and wildlife habitat while protecting the Minnesota National Guard's 52,830-acre regional training center from development that could impede its operations.

A partnership between Morrison Soil & Water Conservation District and Camp Ripley has funneled \$37.9 million into Morrison, Crow Wing and Cass counties over the past 12 years, working with 232 landowners and 27,800 acres.

Thirty-eight more easements are in the works. The Army Compatible Use



Dan Steward, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources private forest management program coordinator

Buffer (ACUB) program minimizes infringement within a 3-mile radius of Camp Ripley by purchasing development rights through permanent conservation easements. Landowners receive a per-acre sum and retain the right to continue current land-use — which may include farming and hunting.

"The corn doesn't complain at 2 o'clock in the morning

when the great big howitzers go off. And the cattle don't complain. And the trees don't complain. And the people do," said Dan Steward, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) private forest management program coordinator.

Camp Ripley operates 24 hours a day, training about 30,000 military personnel and civilians a year — including firefighters, emergency responders, law enforcement officers and snowplow operators.

Housing developments not only bring people closer to the noise of small-arms training, tanks, planes and helicopters, and the dust of convoys on gravel roads — they also consume more wildlife habitat.

"These military installations were becoming islands for threatened and endangered species. So it was really impacting what the military could do on their own lands,"

said Josh Pennington, Camp Ripley's environmental supervisor.



Josh Pennington, Camp Ripley's environmental supervisor

The Mississippi River defines 18 miles of Camp Ripley's eastern border; the Crow Wing River marks about 11 miles of its northern bound-

ary. Its forest, prairie and wetland habitats support wolves, red-shouldered hawks and the threatened Northern long-eared bat. Sixty-five Species of Greatest Conservation Need live within its borders.

"The military goals are to prevent incompatible development. You're starting to see more emphasis on protecting critical habitat so we don't just become an island of diversity," Pennington said.

The U.S. Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program has put nearly \$34 million into ACUB at Camp Ripley.

Nearly 650 landowners have expressed interest since the program started in 2006. A January informational

meeting drew 190 people and garnered 80 new sign-ups.



Longtime Morrison SWCD Manager Helen McLennan

When ACUB was introduced in 2004, suspicion of a state or federal land-grab fueled opposition that nearly

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Benefits of easements around Camp Ripley | Continued from Page 7



derailed the program.

It took a local contact to work with landowners, and a partner agency to execute easements to make ACUB work. Camp Ripley found them in longtime Morrison SWCD Manager Helen McLennan, and in BWSR-administered Reinvest in Minnesota easements (RIM). McLennan retired in late October.

"Helen has been a key to



Jay Brezinka, environmental program manager for the Minnesota Army National Guard

the program. The easement program that we do through BWSR being executed through the local soil and water conservation district has been a massive success — over 25,000 acres to date," said Jay Brezinka, environmental program manager for the Minnesota Army National Guard. "It's a formula-based, very streamlined program. She's just got an amazing relationship with landowners. They trust Helen; they respect her decisions."

Lance Chisholm, Morrison SWCD's ACUB/water plan coordinator, worked directly with landowners to secure

easements.

"Between Helen and Lance, they've been an excellent team and they apparently have the ability to put landowners at ease," Steward said. "The results speak for themselves. That long landowner waiting list speaks volumes about the quality of the service that the district is providing — and they're doing that primarily through Lance and Helen."



Lance Chisholm, Morrison SWCD's ACUB/water plan coordinator

ACUB brought the first working-lands easements to Minnesota.

Originally designed as compensation for retiring marginal farmland, RIM was reworked by BWSR staff and modified by the Legislature to fit ACUB. Because landowners relinquished only development rights, RIM rates were lower — 50 percent of township average land value, compared with 90 percent for farmland.

The money went further.

"It has stayed strong for Camp Ripley even though now there's over 60 military bases with programs. The reason we've stayed strong is our abil-

ity to execute," McLennan said.

Doug John enrolled 278 acres in the program a few years ago.

"I know that if I die tomorrow, it isn't going to be broken down into little homesteads," John said.

While the RIM easement eliminated concerns about paying taxes, John, 72 — a retired clinical psychologist who later managed his parents' restaurant, became a taxidermist, and then a rural mail carrier — said he enrolled primarily to keep intact the Morrison County farm his grandparents had worked to expand over the years.

John moved his family into the house he built on the 360-acre property about 17 years ago. He rented the fields for a few years, and then enrolled the farmland in the Conservation Reserve Program. He's since planted about 80,000 trees.

"I have a little forest. I don't want it destroyed. I don't want to sell it to somebody and have them tear up all the trees and plant corn," John said.

John doesn't expect his two grown children, who live in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, will move back.

"But I do foresee, whenever this comes up for sale, I believe the person who's going to buy it after I die will be a person who hunts and fishes," John said.

Many of those who enrolled through the ACUB program sought a way to pass their land to the next generation. Especially for older landowners with mounting expenses, McLennan said RIM payments could mean the difference between selling or staying.

Since it was modified to fit the ACUB program, RIM has expanded to help protect northern Minnesota wild rice habitat and lands within the 400-mile-long Mississippi River headwaters region.

"It's had a ripple effect in allowing us to broaden the

tool to fit the forested zone better," Steward said. "One of the benefits of taking the RIM program into the trees, so to speak, is land values are so much lower. The money goes much, much further. Land values are about one-fifth to one-sixth what they are in the prairie part of the state."

Protecting the forest surrounding Camp Ripley has brought \$5.7 million in Lessor-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund investments since 2010, buffering about 4,800 acres — including land surrounding the Little Nokasippi Wildlife Management Area and the confluence of the Little Nokasippi River.

"When we take an easement on wooded land with Lessor dollars, we're protecting one of the best small-mouth bass fisheries in the state in the Mississippi River. It's also one of the best muskie fisheries in the state. It's the Mississippi flyway, so it's huge for waterfowl migration. We're protecting that corridor. Also, songbirds follow the Mississippi River in their migrations, so we're protecting that. Perhaps greatest we're also contributing to protection of Minneapolis-St. Paul, St. Cloud drinking water supply," Steward said.

The 480-acre Little Nokasippi River WMA in Crow Wing County was established in 2006 through Camp Ripley's ACUB program, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy.

"Now the wildlife management area is protecting the Nokasippi River, it's a public accessible hunting place, and it's buffered with RIM easements so it's not encroached on. That residential encroachment can have a negative impact on the public resource of a wildlife management area," said Todd Holman of The Nature Conservancy, Camp Ripley's Sentinel Landscape coordinator.

ACUB's success led Camp Ripley in 2016 to become the sixth federally designated

Sentinel Landscape in the U.S. — and the first at a National Guard facility. Sentinel Landscapes sustain compatible land use for military operations while providing conservation and working-land benefits. The ACUB program now operates within that designated landscape.



Todd Holman of The Nature Conservancy, Camp Ripley's Sentinel Landscape coordinator

The designation brought more federal funds, more partnerships and a broader focus within a 10-mile radius of Camp Ripley.

"How do you do Sentinel Landscape? Camp Ripley is the poster child," Holman said. "How do you do RIM is the BWSR book, and that's still being written. BWSR is willing to recraft RIM to fit this big, national objective."

In 2017 the Sentinel Landscape partnership received

\$2.8 million through the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

A Baxter-based NRCS forester has been hired. Partnering with the National Park Service could lead to recreational opportunities or cultural resource protection. Collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management, which owns islands in the Mississippi River, has yet to be explored.

The seventh phase of acquisitions planned for this year would add 440 acres of high-quality habitat through seven easements along the Crow Wing, Gull, Nokasippi and Mississippi river corridors. It also would acquire 117 acres from Tiller Corp. and add that land to the Little Nokasippi River WMA through a fee title transfer.

"Over those 15-some years, they've been able to execute more conservation easements than any ACUB installation in the entire country and in the entire Department of Defense," Pennington said.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. Website: www.bwsr.state.mn.us.

Wildlife, process, rates

Wildlife impacts: Sixty-five species of Greatest Conservation Need — defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as being at risk because they depend upon rare, declining or vulnerable habitat — live at Camp Ripley.

How it works: Morrison SWCD works with Camp Ripley Training Center and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources to secure conservation easements. The CRTC ranks applicants. The SWCD approaches landowners. BWSR requests funds. SWCD staff monitors land enrolled in the perpetual easements.

Rate adjustments: On land surrounding Camp Ripley, RIM rates have twice been adjusted to fit conditions. To encourage enrollment of parcels bordering the Mississippi and Crow Wing rivers, the rate was set at 60 percent of individual parcels' value. It's the first time county assessed value was used for that purpose. A sharp drop in ag land values last year prompted the SWCD to close out existing easements, and then relaunch with a 75 percent rate.



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