



# The Economic Impact of Land Use Protection

**LITTLE FALLS, MN, UNITED STATES**

**03.01.2022**

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**Camp Ripley Training Center**  

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In 2004, an Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program was established at Camp Ripley. The “Central Minnesota Prairie to Pines Partnership,” the ACUB program at Ripley, maximizes compatible land use by permanently protecting private properties in Cass, Crow Wing, and Morrison Counties that sustain the military mission. Land use protections play a critical role in the State of Minnesota’s efforts to improve water quality by reducing soil erosion and nutrient loading with the added benefit of improving wildlife habitat. Investing in land use protections now offsets higher costs of future environmental restoration.

Two years after Camp Ripley received its ACUB designation, the National Guard Bureau and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) entered into a special military cooperative agreement to transact Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements that limit incompatible development around the training installation while allowing activities such as agricultural practices, hunting, and recreation to continue. RIM easements compensate landowners with a one-time per acre sum administered locally by the Morrison Soil Water Conservation District.

Since the inception of Camp Ripley’s ACUB program, the U.S. Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program and Army National Guard have contributed \$43,480,810, and the State of Minnesota’s Outdoor Heritage Fund has awarded \$15,705,000 to protect Camp Ripley from potential encroachment. These funds benefit private landowners and retain robust tax bases for local governments.

For 2022 ACUB has received 500K in REPI funding, which will be used for conservation easements with already enrolled interested landowners; this will be combined with the \$2.2 Million in funding the State is already providing over 200 interested landowners.

In 2016, Camp Ripley was federally designated as a Sentinel Landscape, representing a formal partnership

between the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Interior to further advance sustainable land management practices around the military installation and ranges. “The mission of the Sentinel Landscape is to safeguard current and future military training, protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, and preserve the rural character and economies of local communities anchored by Camp Ripley.” said Director of Environmental Services Katherine Retka.

Camp Ripley’s Sentinel Landscape (CRSL) partners focus on meeting the common interests of conservation needs within a defined geographical nexus. The success of CRSL’s stewardship collaboratively builds agency, organizational, and community capacity increases landowner trust through streamlined delivery of services, motivates landowners using key communication and actions tailored to their needs, and supports applied science through well-informed policies and practices.

CRSL partners accomplish conservation objectives by connecting private landowners with voluntary state and federal assistance programs that fund conservation easements, offer financial and technical assistance, and provide educational opportunities.

One such partnership is with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which has a presence in almost all communities. Camp Ripley has a direct agreement for \$400K to be used to hire local and private land foresters to write forest stewardship plans, conduct prescribed fire workshops, and develop burn plans for private lands within the Sentinel Landscape.

Through CRSL collaboration, federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program has been awarded to address agricultural and watershed-based natural resource concerns and advance forestry practices on private lands through a new cooperative agreement. In 2022, the CRSL partnership was awarded \$200K from the REPI program to assess and inform climate resiliency and mitigation strategies that will be used to implement objectives within the Sentinel Landscape Strategic Plan in the future.

Throughout these efforts with many different organizations, Camp Ripley, ACUB, and the Sentinel Landscape program has utilized grants, awards, and funding from state and federal levels to best champion conservation efforts. These efforts are used directly toward the community to preserve their lands and the public lands around them so we can continue the natural harmony that our county and installation have achieved for 90 years.

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