

# CAMP RIPLEY SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Minnesota | est. 2016



Located along the northern stretch of the Mississippi River, Camp Ripley is the primary winter training site for the U.S. National Guard, supporting units from Minnesota and six neighboring states. Camp Ripley provides the largest block of controlled airspace in the Midwest, which services active and reserve components from every branch of the Armed Services and many state and federal agencies.

As a premier U.S. National Guard post, Camp Ripley supports ground vehicle maneuver training, as well as live-fire artillery and bombing training that ranges from small arms to large-caliber weaponry. About a third of land surrounding the base is in small private holdings of 60 to 100 acres. These properties, which are mainly used for agriculture or recreation, protect the quality of water entering the Mississippi River for local communities and downstream cities. They also contribute to the longevity of Camp Ripley by allowing the installation to conduct winter training activities with limited restrictions. However, development pressure from population growth is increasing. The goal of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape—which Minnesota state law first recognized in 2015—is to combine conservation easements with sustainable management practices to protect Camp Ripley’s mission and enhance natural resources in the region.

## Sustainable Forestry Enhances Water Quality

Water health is a top priority for the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape. The landscape straddles 50 miles of the Mississippi River and encompasses the watersheds of four major tributary rivers. One way that partners enhance water quality is by ensuring that private landowners have the financial and technical means necessary to manage their woodlands sustainably. For Minnesotans, forests and water security are

Figure 1: Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Map

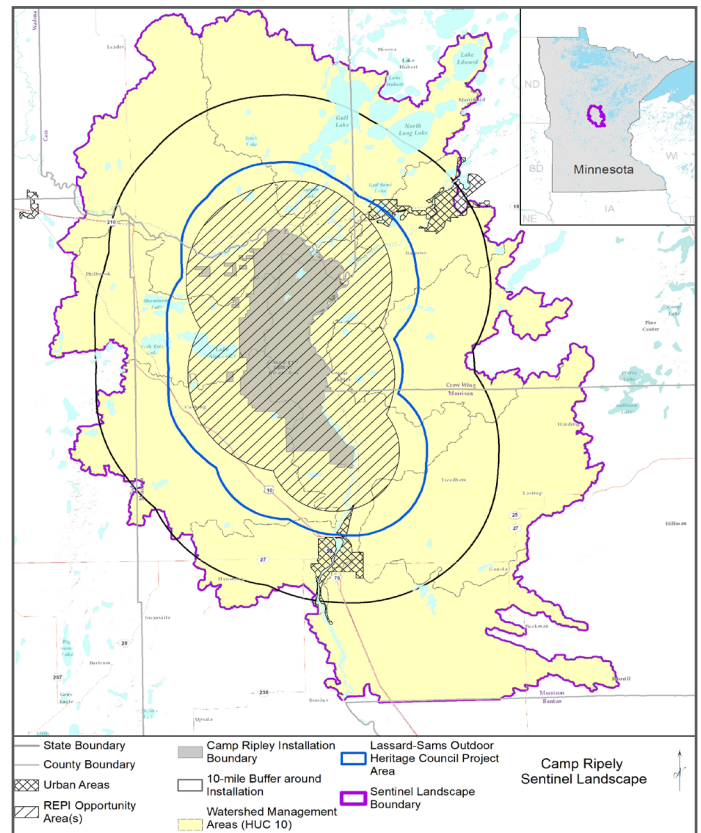






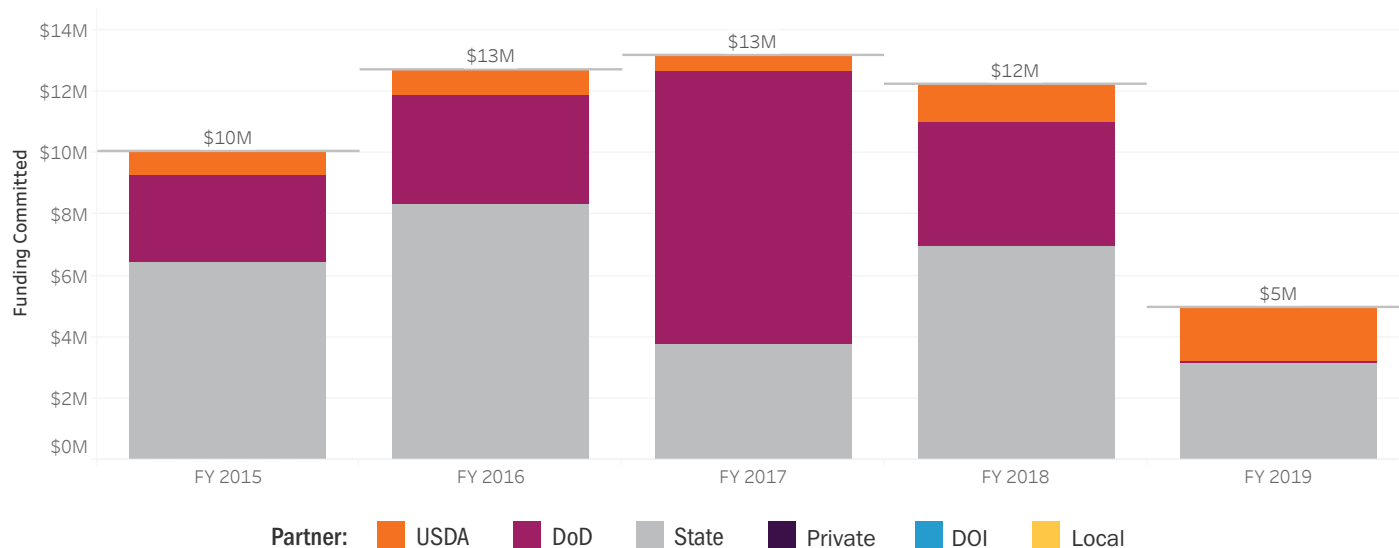
Table 1: Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (acres)

	Total Protected Acres: <sup>1</sup>	15,766
	Total Enrolled Acres: <sup>2</sup>	57,973
	Active Base Area:	52,758
	Total Sentinel Landscape Area:	719,829

<sup>1</sup> Represents total acres protected by projects administered by sentinel landscape partners since FY 2015

<sup>2</sup> Represents total acres enrolled in technical assistance programs administered by sentinel landscape partners since FY 2015

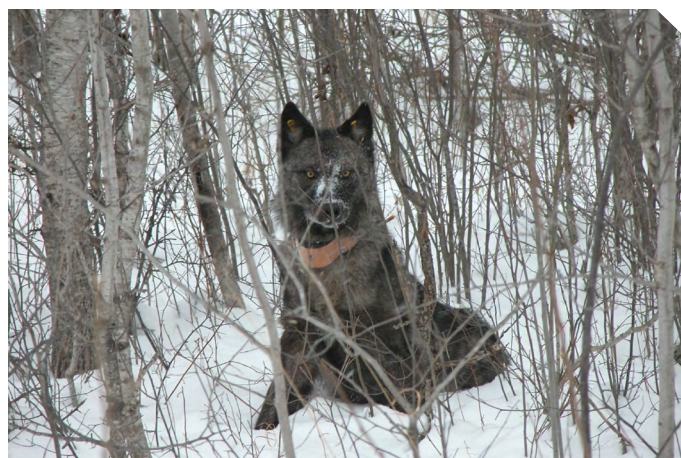
**Figure 2:** Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



inextricably linked—75 percent of residents get their drinking water from forested parts of the State. Using funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District developed forest management plans for 70 private landowners across the sentinel landscape whose properties total 1,600 acres. Forest management plans are roadmaps that outline parcel-specific practices that help individuals meet restoration objectives. By creating these management plans, the conservation district enabled the landowners to qualify for incentive payments from the Minnesota Department of Revenue’s Sustainable Forest Incentive Act Program. Over its 19-year lifespan, the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act Program has had considerable success. More than 90 percent of participants decide to extend their contract with the State or place a conservation easement on their property. As a result, this effort will contribute to the longevity of working forests, enhance water quality for the Mississippi River, and increase the likelihood that the land surrounding Camp Ripley will be managed in a way that is compatible with the installation’s military mission.

### Partners Increase Protected Land Along the Mississippi River

The Mississippi River originates in northern Minnesota and flows south for over 2,000 miles. For decades, the Mississippi Headwaters Board has worked to preserve the first 400 miles of the river, stretching from Lake Itasca to the southern border of Morrison County. Representatives from eight Minnesota counties formed the Mississippi Headwaters Board in 1980 to



*As the primary winter training site for the U.S. National Guard, Camp Ripley provides habitat to many important species, including the gray wolf. Credit: Minnesota Department of Military Affairs*

protect the remarkable recreational, ecological, and scenic value of the river’s headwaters. The Board carries out its mission by administering an ordinance that restricts land use in the river corridor. In 2019, the Mississippi Headwaters Board voted to expand its geographic focus area within the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape. As a result, the Board approved three conservation easements along the Platte River—a tributary to the Mississippi—and within the Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. This project will not only support water quality in the Mississippi River, but also safeguard habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, sandhill cranes, and other species.