

## Conservation Challenges:

- \*Conversion to agricultural uses
- \*Changes in agricultural practices
- \*Deforestation/logging
- \*Increased draitiling makes stream flow more flashy, reduces groundwater
- \*Fluctuating/declining river evels
- \*Invasive spp.: spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, EAB
- \*Habitat fragmentation
- \*Gravel mining
- \*Bedrock mining
- \*Fire-dependent communities are likely to decline due to difficulty in restoring natural fire regimes

## Conservation Opportunities:

- \* Watershed is engaged in natural resource management planning
- \* Minnesota Prairie Plan

## Existing Conservation Network:

State Parks:

State Forests:

SNAs: Prairie Coteau

Wildlife Management Areas:

- Buffalo Ridge
- Gromer's Draw
- Holland

Aquatic Management Areas:

## Rare Species:

- Burrowing Owl
- Dakota Skipper
- Few-flowered Spike-rush
- Hair-like Beak-rush
- Iowa Skipper
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Marsh Arrow-grass
- Northern Grasshopper Mouse
- Ottoo Skipper
- Pawnee Skipper
- Phlox Moth
- Plains Topminnow
- Powesheik Skipper
- Prairie Moonwort
- Red Three-awn
- Regal Fritillary
- Small White Lady's-slipper
- Topeka Shiner
- Upland Sandpiper
- Western White Prairie-clover



# Upper Minnesota River Valley Opportunity Area

## Ecological Significance:

The Upper Minnesota River Valley contains a variety of habitats including floodplain forest and wet meadows, Big Woods along its bluffs, rock outcrop and sand terrace prairies, calcareous fens, and river channel and sandbar habitats. The valley is increasingly subject to human-induced impacts from intensive agriculture, draitiling, and urbanization. While the much of the river's source is from the drier western part of the state, and hence flows are subject to the vagaries of prairie precipitation, the river's flows are becoming even more variable, and filled with sediment and agricultural chemicals. In spite of these factors, some of the highest concentrations of rare species reports for birds, reptiles, amphibians, mussels, and plants are within the valley. *Therefore, it is critical to preserve rare habitats to improve the resilience of the valley ecosystem as it faces increasing disturbance from more intensive land use practices.* An extensive network of public lands has been initiated in other parts of the valley, and preservation of native landscapes will contribute to the corridor within the valley greatly. This river valley as the largest concentration of native habitats remaining in southwestern Minnesota.



## Counties:

- Blue Earth
- Brown
- Chippewa
- Nicollet
- Redwood
- Renville
- Yellow Medicine

## Rare Native Plant Communities:

- Basswood - Bur Oak - (Green Ash) Forest
- Calcareous Fen (Southeastern)
- Calcareous Fen (Southwestern)
- Crystalline Bedrock Outcrop (Prairie);  
Minnesota River Subtype
- Dry Hill Oak Savanna (Southern)
- Dry Hill Prairie (Southern)
- Dry Sand - Gravel Prairie (Southern)
- Elm - Ash - Basswood Terrace Forest
- Mesic Prairie (Southern)
- Pin Oak - Bur Oak Woodland
- Red Oak - Sugar Maple -  
Basswood - (Bitternut Hickory)  
Forest
- Seepage Meadow/Carr
- Seepage Meadow/Carr, Tussock  
Sedge Subtype
- Silver Maple - (Virginia Creeper)  
Floodplain Forest
- Southern Bedrock Outcrop
- Southern Dry Prairie
- Sugar Maple - Basswood -  
(Bitternut Hickory) Forest
- Wet Prairie (Southern)
- Willow - Dogwood Shrub Swamp

## Ecological Evaluations:

- Beaver Falls Outcrops
- Boiling Springs
- Cactus Rock
- Camp 35 Prairie
- Cedar Mountain
- Delhi Rock Outcrops
- Gneiss Outcrops SNA
- Grantie Falls Skink
- Minnesota Falls Outcrops
- Morton Outcrop
- Ottoo Skipper Meadow
- Ridgely 5 Prairie
- Swede's Forest 24,27 Fen/Skink
- Vicksburg County Park Addition

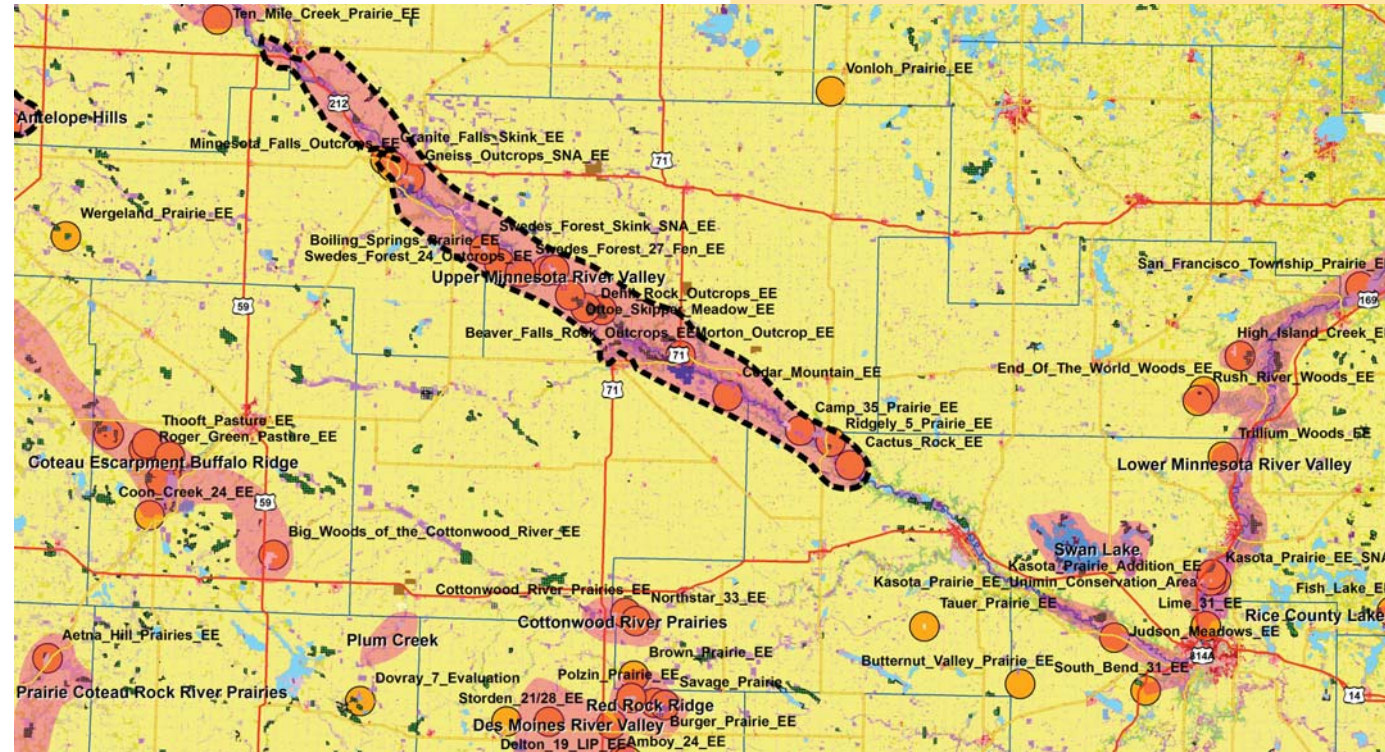


Photo from jnaithani, Panoramio



# Upper Minnesota River Valley

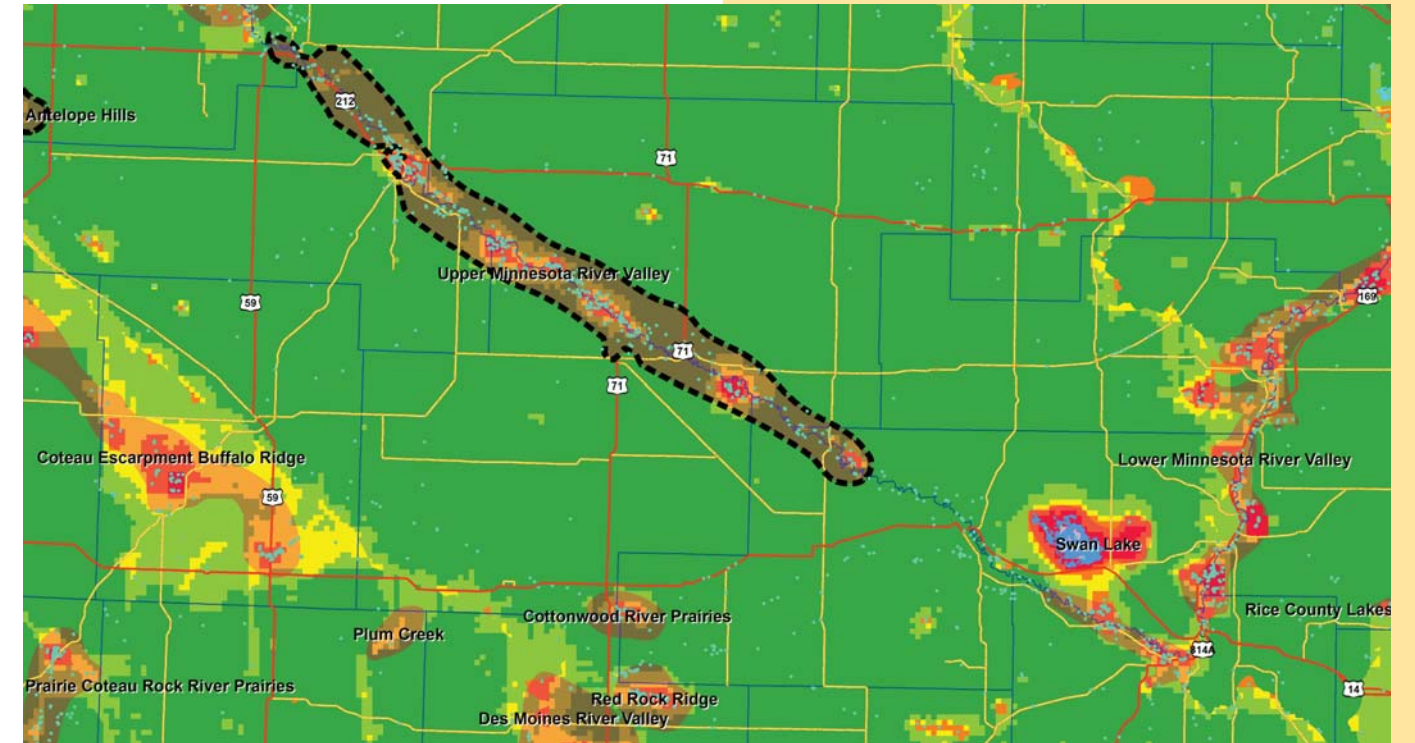
## Ecological Evaluations, Land Cover, Public Ownership



Please see Legend at the front of the Opportunity Area Descriptions for a key to this map

# Upper Minnesota River Valley

## Marxan Prioritization, Element Occurrences



**Legend**

- Profiled COA
- Conservation Opportunity Area
- Rare Feature
- County Boundary
- Large Lake

**Marxan Conservation Prioritization**

- Lowest Priority
- Low Priority
- Medium Priority
- High Priority
- Highest Priority
- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Trunk Highway
- MN Trunk Highway