



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Rock Island District

PUBLIC NOTICE

Sponsor: Jake McCorkle
P.O. Box 543, Lakeview, Iowa 51450

Issued: July 14, 2023
Expires: August 12, 2023

Corps Project Number: CEMVR-RD-2023-0865
Proposed Project: Blair Wetland Mitigation Bank

WETLAND COMPENSATORY MITIGATION BANK PROPOSAL

This notice is issued in accordance with the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule (the Mitigation Rule) described in the Federal Register dated April 10, 2008 (33 CFR Parts 325 and 332).

1. **Project Location:** The proposed site is located approximately 4-miles west of Rockwell, Iowa and consists of five parcels within Section 29, Township 88 North, Range 33 West, Calhoun County, Iowa. See attached location maps. Latitude 42.242185, Longitude -94.432381.

2. **Bank Objectives:** The fundamental objective of compensatory mitigation is to offset environmental losses resulting from unavoidable impacts to waters of the United States (WOTUS) authorized by Department of the Army Permits. Other primary objectives include restoring hydrology and native vegetation to 91.03-acres of emergent wetland and establishing a tall grass prairie buffer in order to protect the restored wetlands.

3. **Project Description/Bank Establishment:**

A. The bank sponsor proposes to complete activities on 195.44-acres of property owned by the prospective bank manager (Brice Blair) and a private landowner. The bank sponsor has a purchase agreement with the private landowner that will be executed upon the approval of the Mitigation Banking Instrument (MBI). Mr. Blair and Mr. McCorkle will manage the bank site jointly, though, Mr. McCorkle will act as the sponsor and signatory for the project. Approximately 91.03-acres of emergent wetland will be restored, and 91.04-acres of tall grass prairie buffer established through this project, which will result in the generation of approximately 112.26 compensatory wetland mitigation credits.

B. The wetland mitigation work plan will focus on two wetlands, a main basin (Wetland 1) and a smaller basin to the north (Wetland 2). In both basins, existing drainage tile will first be plugged and/or removed. This will be followed by the construction of berms/embankments to prevent loss of hydrology. Several outlet control structures will also be constructed to provide the ability to drawdown each basin for maintenance purposes or to safely pass flood flows through each wetland.

C. Finally, each wetland will be revegetated with an emergent wetland seed mix and a wet/mesic prairie seed mix. Plant communities will be established using proven vegetative management techniques including herbicide treatments, mowing, inter-seeding, and periodic prescribed burning. Additional items including detailed hydrologic and hydraulic modeling as well as supplementary field tile investigations will be completed prior to the submission of the draft MBI.

4. **Service Area:** The proposed wetland mitigation bank will be in the Upper Des Moines Service Area.

5. **Bank Need/Technical Feasibility/Ecological Suitability:**

A. The Upper Des Moines Service Area contains both the northern and western portions of the City of Des Moines, which includes growing suburban areas. There is a projected continual need for emergent wetland credits within this service area. As a part of the Mississippi Flyway, this project will also restore important ecological habitat and nesting grounds for migratory birds in an area where many natural wetland complexes have been removed or altered. Locally, this restoration will remove 191.07-acres from agricultural production and create a treatment system for 238.41-acres of agricultural land before continuing into the watershed.

B. The technical feasibility of the bank is correlated to the success of restoring hydrology to the area. Based on a review of available information for the site, it is presumed that the area once consisted of a prairie pothole wetland. The presence of hydric soils and the concave nature of the site as depicted on LiDAR images is indicative of, and provide confidence that, wetland hydrology can be restored and maintained. The historical nature of the wetland, presence of organic soils, and the restoration encompassing the majority of the historical wetland make the site an ideal candidate for this project.

6. **Long Term Management:**

A. The sponsor is responsible for long-term management of the bank such that it achieves and maintains the functional performance level described. The sponsor shall maintain the bank in accordance with the provisions of the recorded conservation easement. Consistent with the recorded easement, the sponsor will adaptively manage the site to control pest, weed, or invasive species as required by state and federal law.

B. In order to maintain a native plant community and ensure that the structures (embankments and outlet structures) are maintained, the sponsor will conduct annual site inspections. If these inspections find deficiencies, appropriate measures will be taken to correct the deficiencies. It is foreseen that these corrective actions could include invasive species control through herbicide treatments, spot mowing, winter mows and/or periodic burns, outlet maintenance, outlet structure maintenance and embankment maintenance. Inspection of the site and any corrective actions will be conducted by the sponsor. Issues that may arise will be handled on a case-by-case basis, as each incident may require different techniques to remedy and new management techniques may develop over the monitoring period of the bank.

7. Sponsor Qualifications:

A. Both the sponsor and their consultant (Bolton & Menk, Inc.) have extensive experience in restoring wetlands in both Iowa and Minnesota. The sponsor currently manages the McCorkle Wetland Mitigation Bank and McCorkle Stream Mitigation Bank. Bolton & Menk is currently managing 14 wetland banks and one stream bank in various stages from permitting to monitoring.

B. Mr. Blair owns a drain tile company and has constructed restoration projects in the past. Mr. Blair's company will be the contractor, completing all aspects of the construction. Mr. McCorkle will complete the vegetation management with guidance from Bolton & Menk's team of wetland scientists.

8. **Water Rights:** No Federal, state, or local agency has regulations governing water rights for this type of project at this location.

9. **Agency Review:** Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps is participating in this matter as the chair of the Interagency Review Team (IRT), which consists of the Corps, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The project would require Section 404, Clean Water Act authorization prior to the proposed construction. If approved, the proposed bank could provide wetland credit for future, Section 404, authorized projects that require compensatory mitigation. Formal authorization of the bank proposal occurs through Corps approval of an MBI.

10. **Historical/Archaeological:** Based on a review of historic and current aerial photos, topographic maps, and available cultural resource databases, it is the opinion of the Corps that the permit area may have the potential to contain historic properties, which may be potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Corps will require the applicant to submit a Phase I archaeological survey and geomorphological evaluation report covering the permit area. Geomorphological investigation must extend at least 50-centimeters below the proposed depths of soil disturbance or to a depth below which no possibility of historic properties exists. The applicant, in addition to this Phase I report, may be required to conduct additional Phase II test excavations to evaluate sites for eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP, as well as other studies, site avoidance, or data recovery as may be the case.

11. **Endangered Species:** This proposal will be coordinated with the USFWS. Any comments USFWS may have concerning Federally listed threatened or endangered wildlife, plants, or their critical habitat will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

12. **Who Should Reply:** The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, state, and local agencies and officials, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered in determining whether to approve the proposed bank. Received comments will be distributed to the members of the IRT.

Comments should be submitted on or before the expiration date specified at the top of page one. Comments should bear upon the adequacy of plans and suitability of locations and should, if appropriate, suggest any changes considered desirable. Any person may also request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the designated comment period of the notice and must state the specific reasons for requesting the public hearing.

13. Reply to the Corps of Engineers: Comments or questions concerning this notice may be directed to Daniel Lange via phone (309/794-4209), email (Daniel.s.lange@usace.army.mil), or by writing to the following address: US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, ATTN: Daniel Lange - RD, Clock Tower Building - Post Office Box 2004, Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004.

14. Complete Prospectus: The complete prospectus can be found on our public website at: https://ribits.ops.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=107:278:::RP,278:P278_BANK_ID:6646. Hard copies are also available by request.

Abigail A. Steele

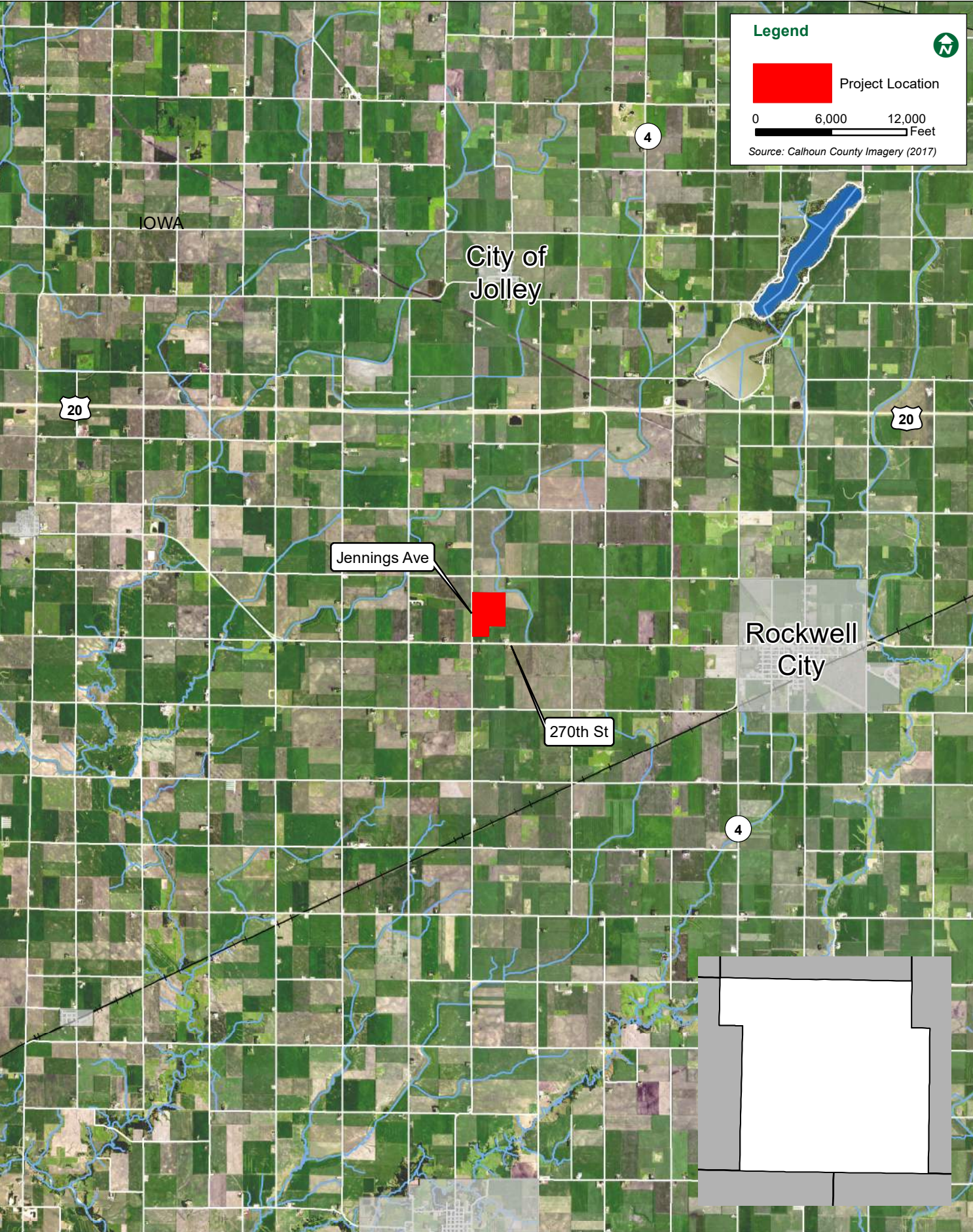
Attach
Plan

Abigail A. Steele
Chief, Western Branch
Regulatory Division

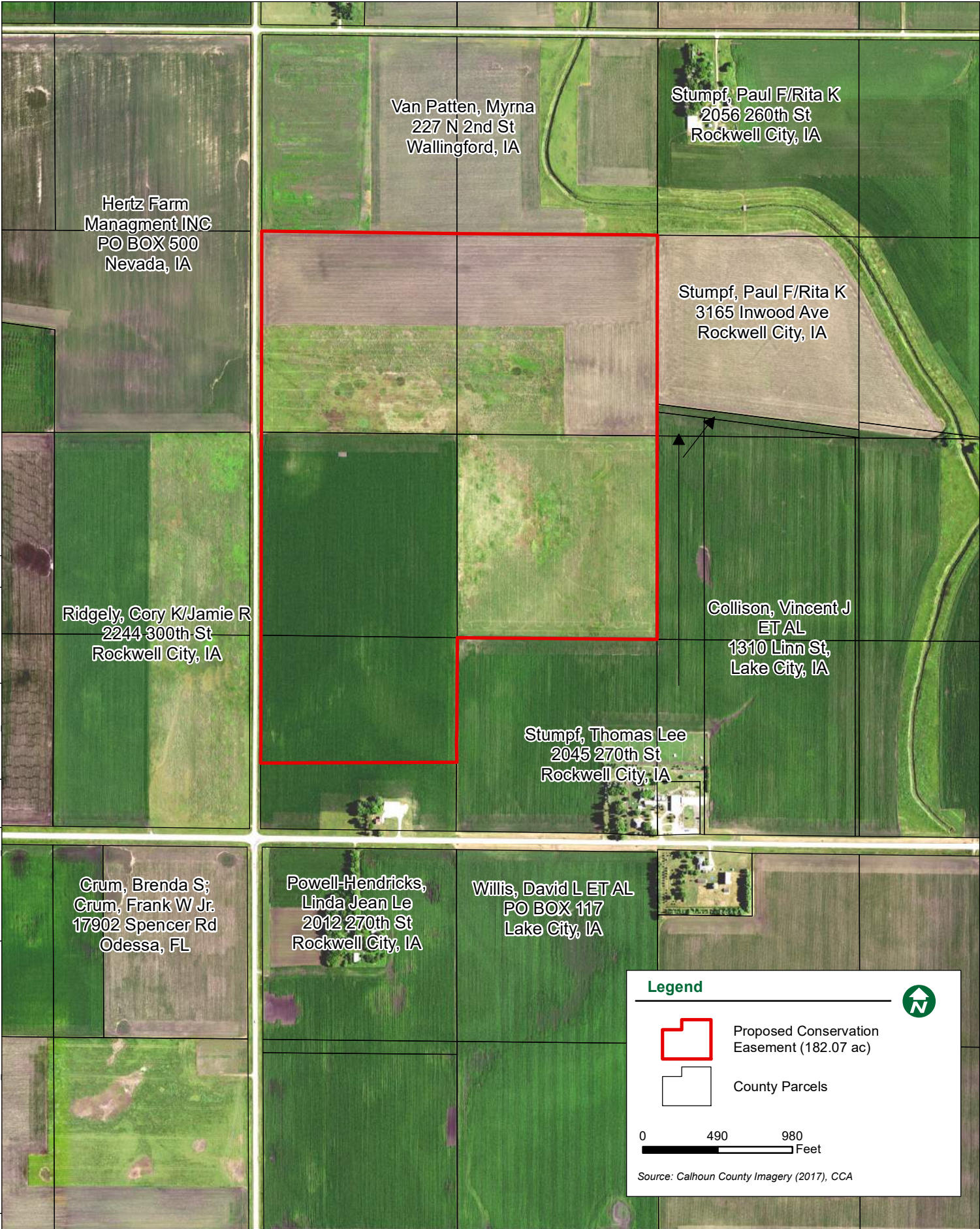
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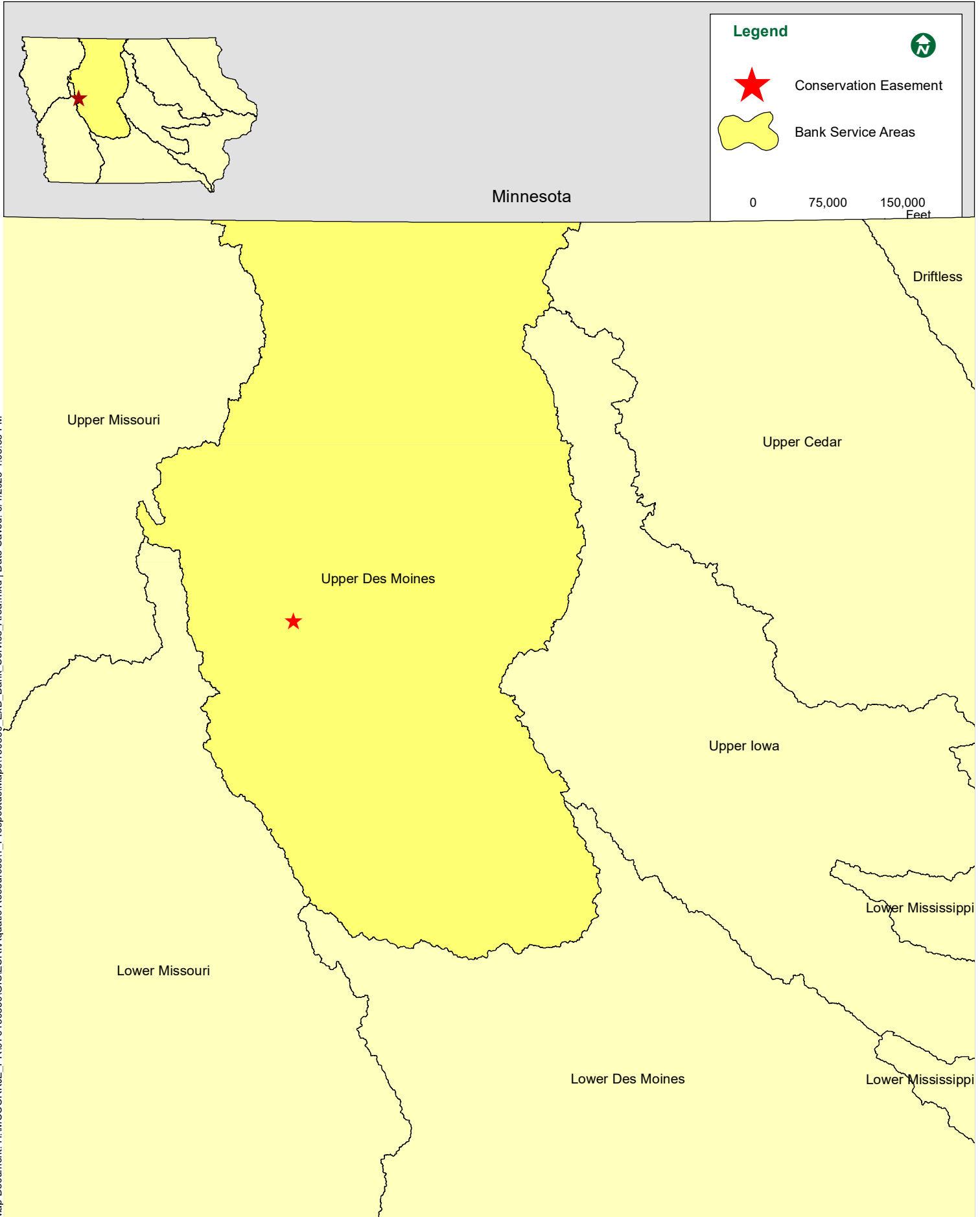
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Legend



-  Conservation Easement (182.07 ac)
-  Emergent Wetland Buffer (2.05 ac)
-  Tall Grass Prairie (91.04 ac)
-  Emergent Wetland Boundary (88.98 ac)
-  Open Water

0 700 1,400 Feet

Source: Iowa WMS Imagery (2017),