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December 7, 2009

***For Immediate Release***

## Reinvest In Minnesota - Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM-WRP) MOU Signed

Duluth -- Representatives of local, state and federal conservation agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formally outline their roles in administering one of the largest wetland restoration programs in the nation.

The Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve-Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) partnership MOU was signed today at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Annual Meeting and Trade Show. MOU signees were leaders of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and MASWCD.

The RIM-WRP, has been recognized nationwide as a model partnership that optimizes state and federal funding to restore critical wildlife habitat on privately owned lands while improving water quality, reducing flood damage potential, providing economic assistance to landowners, and providing other environmental and economic benefits.

"Thousands of acres of wetlands have been restored through this partnership, thanks to the efforts of private landowners, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, BWSR and NRCS staff, as well as Ducks Unlimited and many other conservation advocates," said William Hunt, USDA NRCS State Conservationist.

"Getting each project on the ground requires a combination of administrative and technical duties, and this MOU clarifies the roles of the three main partners so that we can continue working together as effectively as possible," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director. "The MOU also will serve as a guidance document to encourage all partners to continue making RIM-WRP one of the premier wetland restoration programs in the Nation."

LeAnn Buck, MASWCD Executive Director, said "Signing this MOU at the MASWCD Annual Meeting is a great way to acknowledge our past conservation collaborations at the local, state and federal level and to continue to enhance our future conservation efforts throughout Minnesota.

In 2009 the partnership combined \$16 million in state dollars through the RIM Reserve program with \$25 million in federal dollars through WRP to fund 138 applications to restore more than 13,500 acres of wetlands and adjacent habitat throughout the state.

Funding sources include capital investment funds and recommendations of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.. These funds have leveraged USDA NRCS funding through the WRP. Competitive rates are offered to landowners for easements and 100 percent of the restoration costs are covered by the partnership. In addition technical assistance is jointly provided by local SWCDs, NRCS, BWSR and partner groups, agencies and organizations, like Ducks Unlimited, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Pheasants Forever, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

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