



Report to the Legislature: State Veterans Cemetery Study



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Potential for New State Veterans Cemeteries in Southern Minnesota

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Introduction

The following document was produced in response to a request during the 2008 MN Legislative Session to determine any potential for new State Veterans Cemeteries in southern Minnesota. The State of Minnesota currently operates a veterans cemetery located in central Minnesota near Little Falls. Fort Snelling National Cemetery, located in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis/St. Paul, provides burial for veterans and is operated by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. A second State Veterans Cemetery has been proposed in the Duluth area, and a feasibility study is under way for a proposed site near Wrenshall to determine whether or not the site is suitable for construction of a veterans cemetery according to guidelines of the National Cemetery Administration.

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA), through the State Cemetery Grants Office, provides States grant opportunities for the construction of new State Veterans Cemeteries. These grants provide for 100% of the cost of construction, plus initial basic equipment needed for operation. The State is responsible for the upfront cost of complete design of the cemetery; however these costs are reimbursed back to the State upon award of a construction contract. The State does have a long-term obligation in providing for annual operational costs of the cemetery. The State is also responsible for obtaining land for any potential cemetery. The cost of land is not reimbursable through the grant.

Why NE Minnesota (Duluth Area)?

During a triennial review by the NCA of the State's current facility in Little Falls, representatives from the State Cemetery Grants Office were asked if any other areas in Minnesota would support an additional State Veterans Cemetery. Demographics provided by NCA showed support for the NE area of Minnesota, because of the large veteran population in St. Louis County. Outside the 7 county metro area, St. Louis County has the largest veteran population in the State. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) demographics show 21,000 veterans as being "underserved" by a National or State Veterans Cemetery in the NE Minnesota area. Based upon this NCA recommendation, NE Minnesota became the focus for an additional cemetery.

NCA Demographics

The NCA determines the area of service for a veterans cemetery, whether National or State, to be a 75 mile radius. Exhibit 1 shows the service areas, as defined by NCA, for Ft. Snelling National Cemetery, the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery near Little Falls, and the proposed new cemetery near Duluth. All counties reached by the 75 mile radius are highlighted. The remaining MN Counties shown in white are considered "underserved".

"Actual" Demographic Trends

Previous demographic study indicates that over 80 percent of burials come from within a 50 mile radius of the cemetery. When a veterans cemetery option is further than 50 miles away, the majority of families chose a more local option; typically a church or city cemetery. A brief review of over 14 years of burial records at the MN State Veterans Cemetery near Little Falls indicates a great majority of burials completed at Little Falls are from a radius extending from the St. Cloud area to the Brainerd Lakes area. These findings would support the 50 mile radius theory.

"Underserved" areas in Southern MN

In studying the "underserved" counties, as defined by NCA, in southern Minnesota, these counties were further split into a SW Minnesota region and a SE Minnesota region. Exhibit 2 shows the "underserved" SW MN Counties in orange. Exhibit 3 shows the "underserved" SE MN Counties in green.

In all exhibits, counties were not split, but rather assigned based upon major population concentrations. Please note that population estimates are provided by the USDVA and are for 9/30/2010.

Findings

Both NCA demographics and “actual” demographic trends were used to determine 1) if the veteran population of the “underserved” counties might support a NCA grant for construction of additional State Veterans Cemeteries, 2) what counties and their veteran population would be served within the smaller 50 mile service area of potential new State Veterans Cemeteries, and 3) the ideal location for serving the largest number of veterans within a 50 mile service area.

SW Minnesota (Redwood Falls area)

In the 17 “underserved” counties of SW MN the estimated veteran population by 9/2010 will be 18,081. Placing a new State Veterans Cemetery in the Redwood Falls area would place the major veteran population concentrations of 14 counties within a 50 mile radius and provide a veterans cemetery option to an estimated 22,789 veterans. See Exhibit 4.

SE Minnesota (Stewartville area)

In the 6 “underserved” counties of SE MN the estimated veteran population by 9/2010 will be 14,393. Placing a new State Veterans Cemetery in the Stewartville area would place the major veteran population concentrations of 9 counties within a 50 mile radius and provide a veterans cemetery option to an estimated 28,989 veterans. See Exhibit 5.

It should be noted that the NCA would also consider the populations of at least 2 Wisconsin Counties and 9 Iowa Counties whose major veteran population concentrations fall within the 75 mile radius service area used by the NCA. Currently these out-of-state counties are not served by a National or State Veterans Cemetery. Exhibit 6 highlights this entire service area.

Conclusion

Both areas identified above in southern Minnesota have veteran populations similar to the veteran populations within the 50 mile service areas of both Little Falls (29,190) and Duluth (22,772).

On the FY09 Priority List of Pending State Cemetery Grant Preapplications, 16 of the 24 projects for the establishment of new State Veterans Cemeteries have smaller veteran population estimates than both of the areas identified in southern Minnesota.

Based on the information gathered for this study, the MN Department of Veterans Affairs believes that if the State of Minnesota has interest in moving these projects forward, support through the State Cemetery Grants Office would be justifiable.

Sources

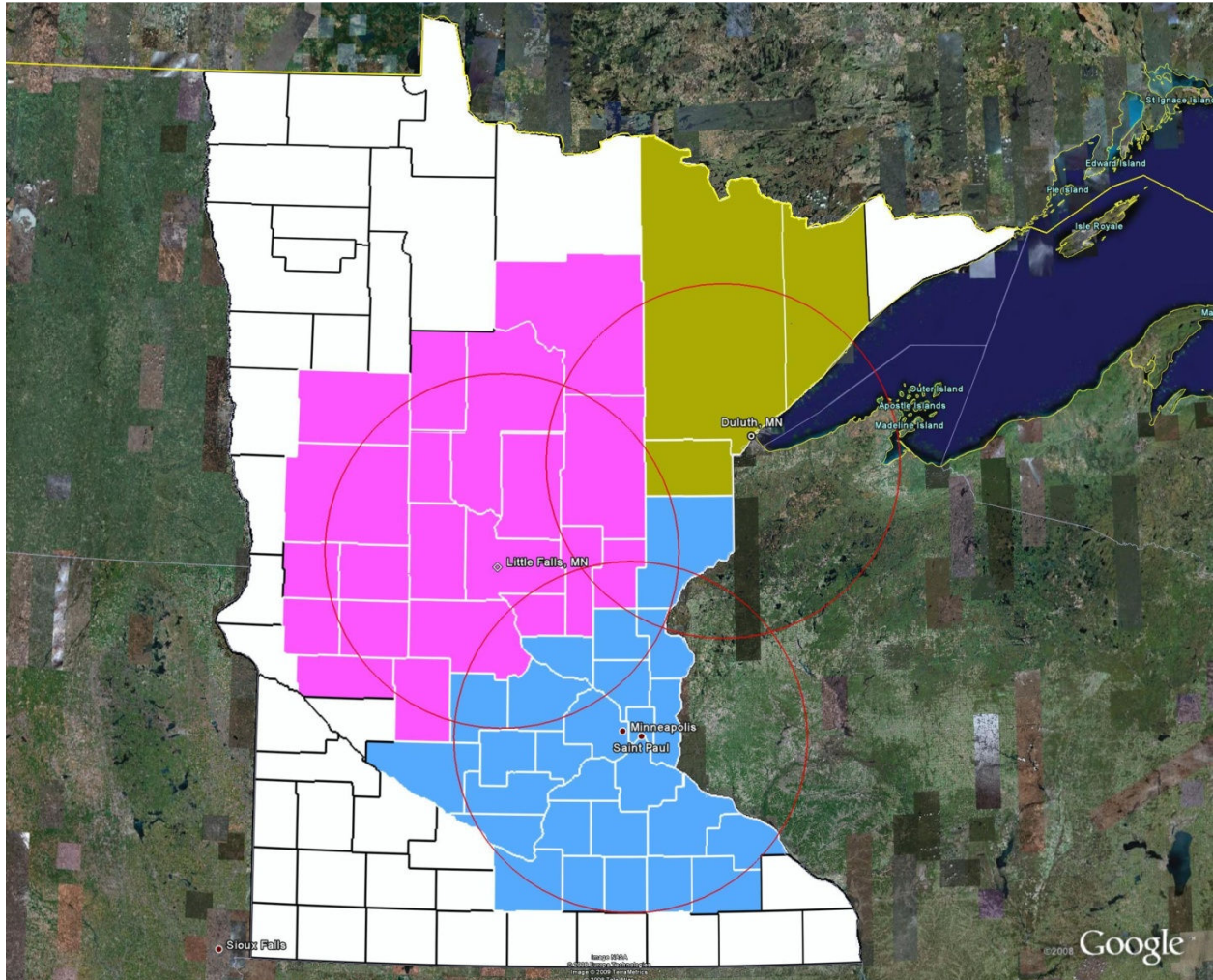
William J. Craig, *Market Potential for a State Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley*, ~1991.

Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of, “County-Level Veteran Populations by State, 2000-2030” September 2006.

Minnesota Atlas Next Generation, “2000 Census, Living Veterans Age 18+” January 2001.

Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of, “FY2009 Priority List of Pending State and Tribal Government Cemetery Construction Grant Preapplications”, September 2008.

Exhibit 1

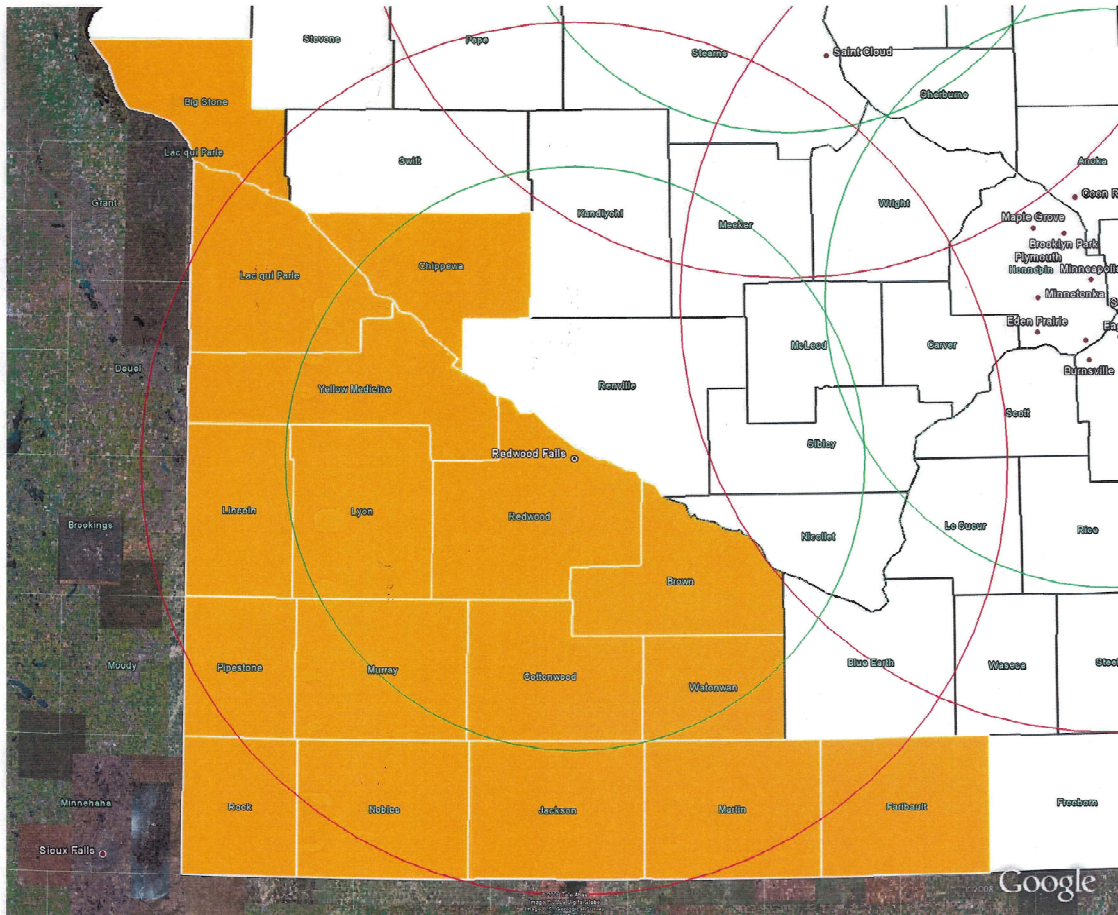


Counties not reached by the NCA defined service area of 75 miles are shown in white. These counties are considered to be “underserved”.

The “underserved” counties in southern Minnesota are:

Big Stone	Murray
Brown	Nobles
Chippewa	Pipestone
Cottonwood	Redwood
Faribault	Rock
Fillmore	Watsonwan
Freeborn	Winona
Houston	Yellow Medicine
Jackson	
Lac qui Parle	
Lincoln	
Lyon	
Martin	
Mower	

Exhibit 2

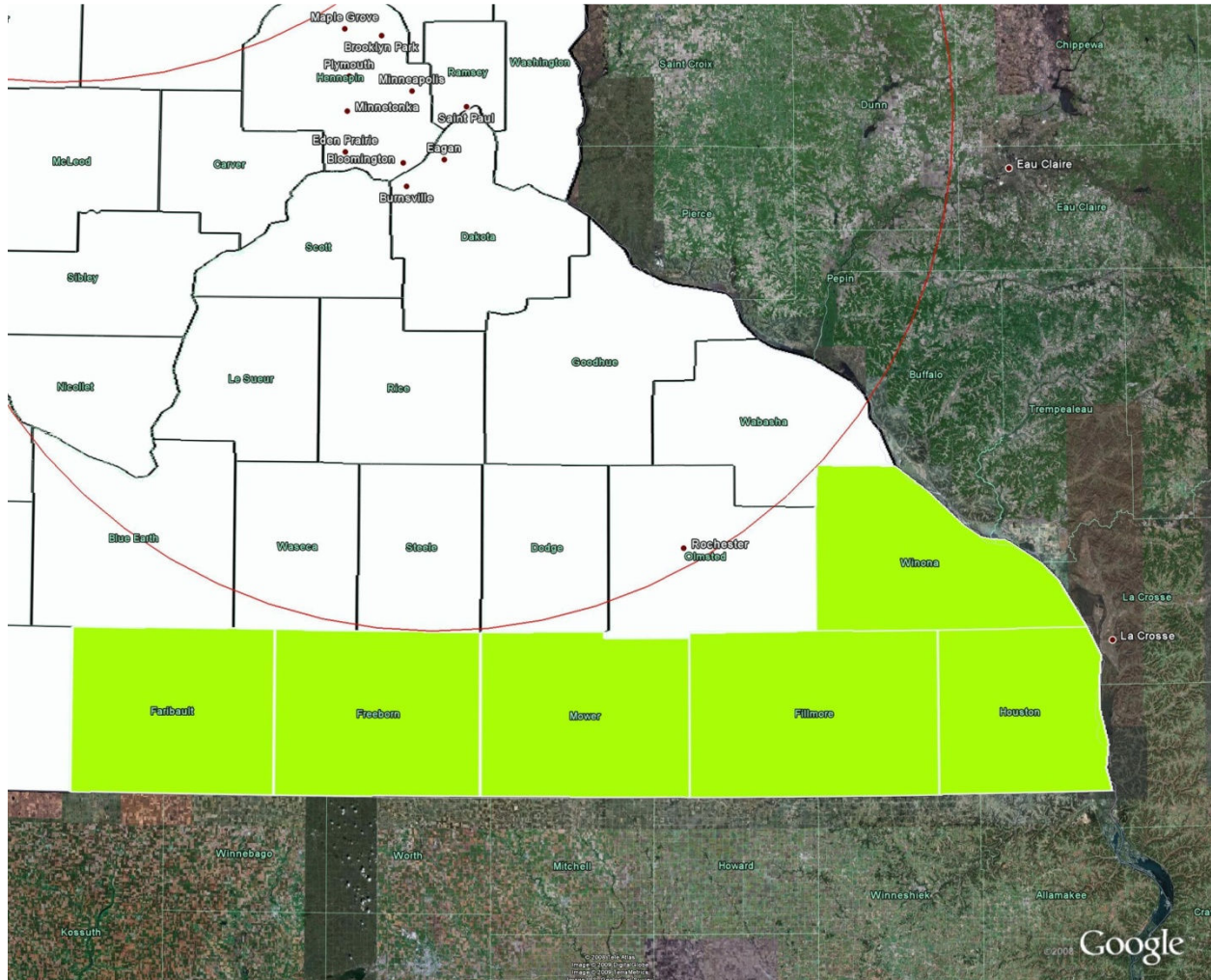


“Underserved” counties of SE MN are shown in orange.

The veteran populations for these counties as of 9/2010 are estimated to be as follows:

Big Stone	443
Brown	2,286
Chippewa	1,010
Cottonwood	952
Faribault	1,320
Jackson	993
Lac qui Parle	613
Lincoln	459
Lyon	1,692
Martin	1,822
Murray	747
Nobles	1,466
Pipestone	674
Redwood	1,353
Rock	684
Watonwan	794
Yellow Medicine	<u>773</u>
TOTAL	18,081

Exhibit 3

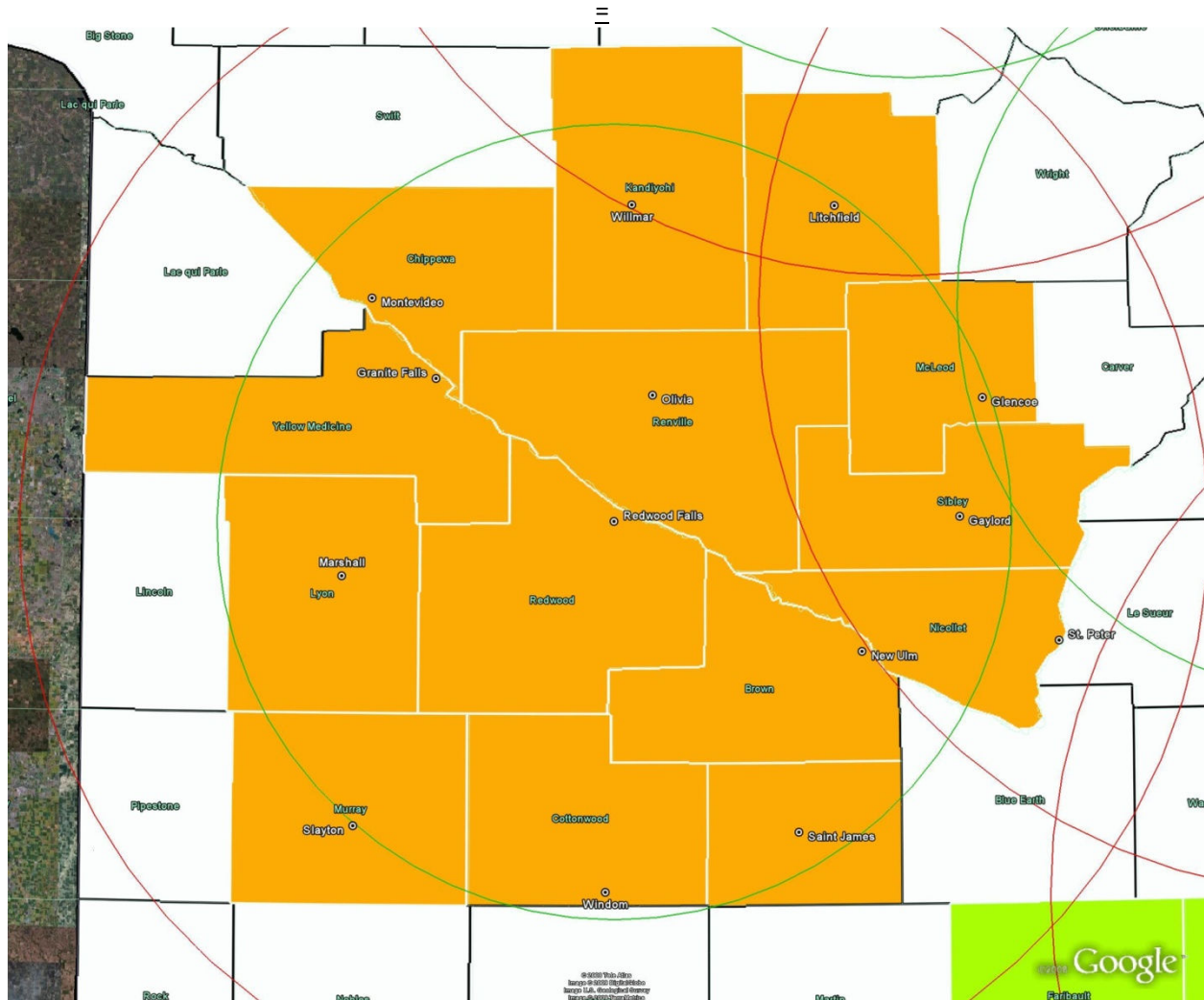


“Underserved” counties of SE MN are shown in green.

The veteran populations for these counties as of 9/2010 are estimated to be as follows:

Faribault	1,320
Fillmore	1,590
Freeborn	2,649
Houston	1,851
Mower	3,382
Winona	<u>3,601</u>
TOTAL	14,393

Exhibit 4

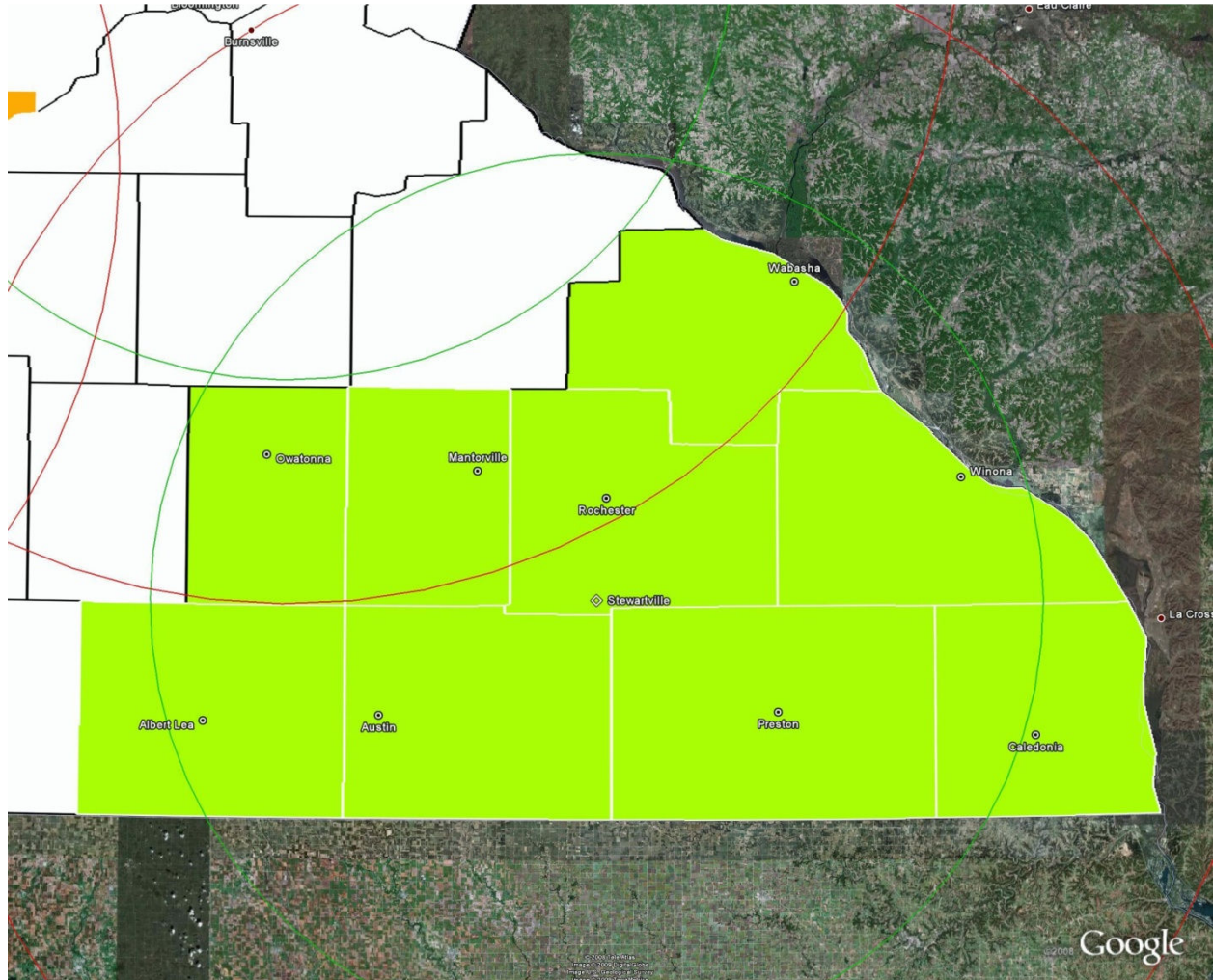


Counties in SW Minnesota within the 50 mile service area around the Redwood Falls area.

Veteran populations of orange highlighted counties are as follows:

Brown	2,286
Chippewa	1,010
Cottonwood	952
Kandiyohi	3,119
Lyon	1,692
McLeod	3,040
Meeker	2,106
Murray	747
Nicollet	2,193
Redwood	1,353
Renville	1,425
Sibley	1,299
Watonwan	794
Yellow Medicine	<u>773</u>
TOTAL	22,789

Exhibit 5

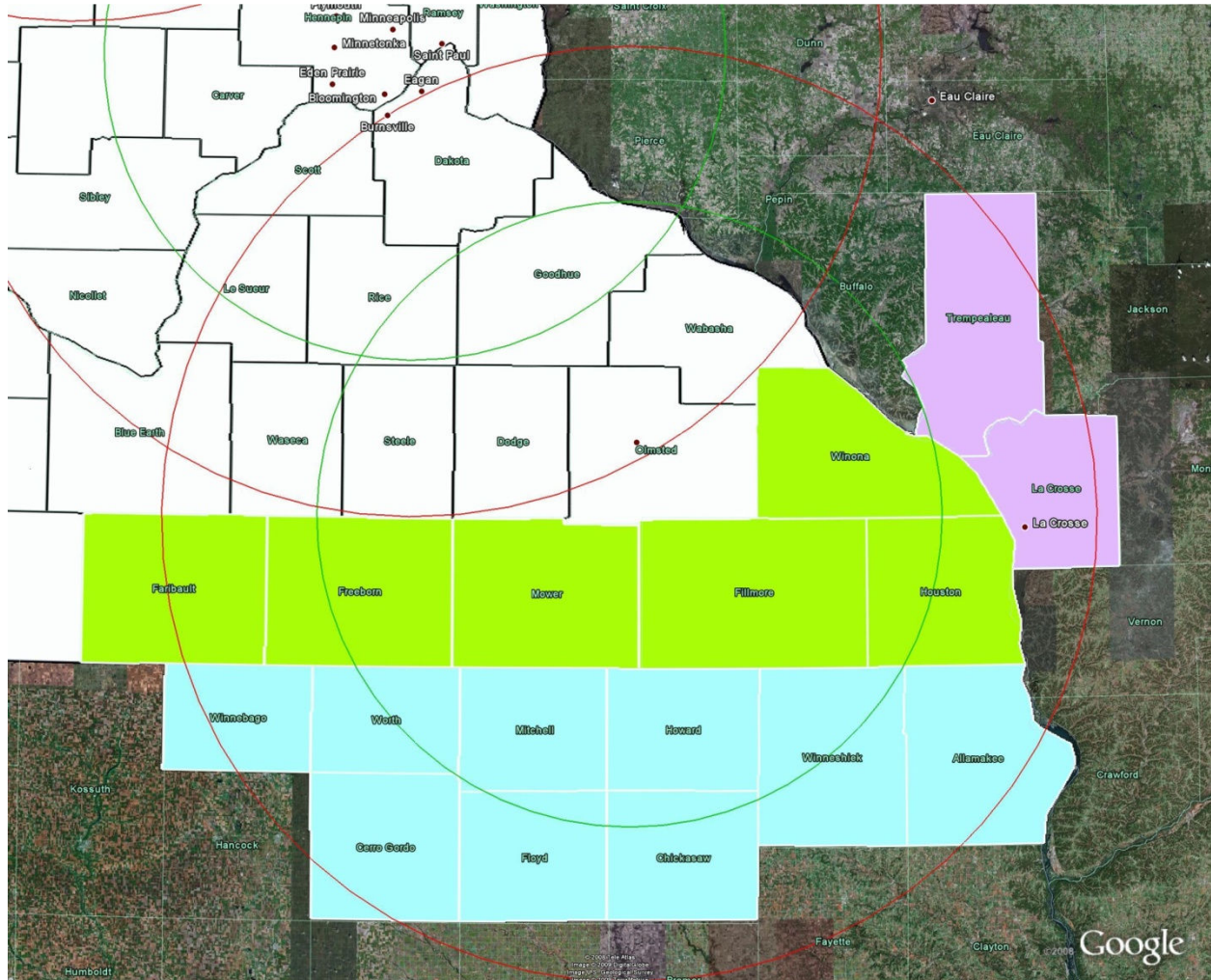


Counties in SW Minnesota within the 50 mile service area around the Stewartville area.

Veteran populations of green highlighted counties are as follows:

Dodge	1,459
Fillmore	1,590
Freeborn	2,649
Houston	1,851
Mower	3,382
Olmsted	9,854
Steele	2,785
Wabasha	1,818
Winona	<u>3,601</u>
TOTAL	28,989

Exhibit 6



The veteran populations of the highlighted counties would be used by the NCA to determine priority for a grant opportunity in SE Minnesota. The veteran populations of the highlighted counties are as follows:

MN Counties 14,393

Faribault	1,320
Fillmore	1,590
Freeborn	2,649
Houston	1,851
Mower	3,382
Winona	3,601

Iowa Counties 12,466

Wisconsin Counties 11,555

Total Veteran Population 38,414
(Highlighted MN, IA, WI Counties)