Executive Summary:

A second 80 acres of farmland in southwestern Minnesota near Graceville in Traverse County has been leased for five years and payment made was for 2007. The land is well suited for growing trees and last year was planted in wheat and soybeans. There are no drain tiles on the site. The landowners are enthusiastic about the project. Planning and coordination for preparation of the second site has been completed. Planned herbicide applications included one glyphosate (round-up) application prior to planting, and one post-planting application of pendulum at 1.5 quarts per acre mixed with 2.1 oz/acre of scepter immediately after planting. The initial plan calls for planting the tree slips without tilling the site, except for a small comparison area that will be tilled. Monitoring of the site through the summer is to be performed by the local landowner

Technical Progress:

9a. Identification of second 80 acre tract and negotiation of land contract:

Eighty acres of farmland has been leased in southwestern Minnesota near Graceville in Traverse County. A view of the land from Google Earth is shown at the end of this report. A five-year lease for 40 acres has been signed with a farmer who owns the land, and an additional 40 acre lease has been signed with the same farmer and his sons, who own this acreage together. The two pieces of adjacent land are separated by County road 9. The two leases began on March 2007 and extend for 5 years. Payment of was made for 2007. The land was previously planted in wheat and soybeans. The land is flat and the western tract is sloped towards St Mary Lake, which forms the western boundary. The PH of the land is largely less than 7.5, which is well suited for growing trees. However there appears to be a few isolated spots where salt levels may be elevated. The landowner warrants that there are no drain tiles on the site and that EPS is not
required to remove the tree stumps at the end of the 5-year lease. The landowners are enthusiastic about the project.

The process for land selection that EPS detailed in Milestone 1 report helped to select the land for the second 80 acre tract. Response to a radio announcement on the Linder Farm Network placed by EPS resulted in the first contact with this farmer and discussions continued over time. The agreed upon rental price was lower than that paid on the first 80 acre site because the irregular shape of the land is not optimal for large scale row crops, there is typically less rain than in the south-central part of the Minnesota, and the farmer is very interested in tree crops as a long term crop for the site. While rainfall is typically less than optimum, it is adequate for growing row crops without irrigation.

9c. Planning and coordinating year 2 site preparation:

Local agricultural cooperatives and agricultural support groups were identified in the Graceville area. Arrangements were made with a local resident for coordinating with the local cooperative on applications of herbicides for weed control. Planned herbicide applications included one glyphosate (round-up) application prior to planting, and one post-planting application of pendulum at 1.5 quarts per acre mixed with 2.1 oz/acre of scepter at immediately after planting. Plans were made to perform mid-growing season weed control with a modified mower. EPS also worked closely with the landowner who agreed to provide support as needed in site preparation and tree planting and particularly in recruiting the help of low-cost laborers. The initial plan called for planting the tree slips without tilling the site, except for a small comparison area. Wet soil conditions caused by heavy rain just prior to the planned planting stimulated us to reverse the plan. The majority of the site was lightly tilled or “scratched” in early June and a strip of 12 rows was left untilled in both fields. Monitoring of the site through the summer is to be performed by the local landowner, and by a local resident who will be paid to do the mowing as needed. Detailed soil sampling will be done before the freeze up.
Google Earth image showing the two 40 acre plots in Traverse Co., MN

Additional Milestones:
M1 – Annual Land Rental (first year); report completed, payment made.
M2 – Design & Test Planter Injection system; report completed, payment made.
M3 – Tree Slip Purchase & Tractor Purchase; report completed, payment made.
M4 – Basic Planter Design and Fabrication; report completed, payment made.
M5 – Test Planter; report completed, payment made.
M6 – First 80 acre Planting; report completed, payment made.
M7 - Tree Harvester Testing; work on completing the harvester has been delayed.
M8 – Post Planting Tending and Monitoring; report completed, payment made.
M10 – Tree Slip Purchase for Second Year; report completed.

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