

ATTACHMENT A

**Public Comments Received on the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal
Environmental Assessment Worksheet
August 26, 2011**

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Box 25
Attn: Randall Doneen
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

To whom it may concern:

We are writing this letter in response to the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Project EAW currently being proposed by NSP/Xcel Energy. My wife and I have lived immediately across the road (15070 Pete's Point Road SE or formally known as Chippewa County #40) from this dam since the early 1970's. We have witnessed all of the floods in this particular area from 1969 to present. We can tell you that each major flood event has been different in terms of river behavior; 1969 upper and lower river levels indistinguishable over the dam and calm on the surface, 1997 very high water levels yet a distinguishable dip where water goes over the dam to 2001 which was similar to 1997 but the river was much more turbulent and noisy. After each flood event the water depth immediately across the road from our driveway went from 4-6 feet deep in the early 70's to barely 2' deep today when water flow levels are "normal for this time of year due to the mud and silt that has filled in. The dam does act as flow control during high water events and slows down the effects of flooding downstream. Because of all the twists and turns in the river downstream of the dam it seems that the water level below the dam backs up faster than water going out of its banks above the dam. We're not Army Corp of Engineer hydrologists but it does seem that the dam acts as a control valve for controlling flow.

We have canoed, gone boating and fishing and swimming in this river from the general area of the dam upstream to Memorial Park in Granite Falls. When water levels reach that or slightly lower than the top of the dam the huge submerged granite boulders and the numerous mud flats make it very difficult to navigate our way upstream unless you know the lay of the river bed. It is easy to catch a sand bar or mud flat and capsize a canoe. It is even easier to wipe out the lower unit on an outboard motor if you aren't aware of the boulders strewn throughout the river bed and they're really bad in the general vicinity of the old Riverside Sanitarium. I did so and it was costly. We do not agree with the EAW statements made that "recreation" will be wonderful from the Minnesota Falls dam site to Granite Falls. In our opinion, the river will not

be navigatable nor doing so accomplished in a safe manner. The artist's rendering showing the dam out and rock rapids in its place is very misleading. It's dangerous. We already had a fatality this year downstream on a tributary feeding the Minnesota River and that person was an experienced kayaker. Leaving the pool behind the dam will provide calmer water, less potential to hit obstructions and, in our minds, a safer environment for summertime recreation. As for fishing recreation we rarely see fishing above this dam via boat or shore fishing over the past 40 years. The real fishing activity is below the dam in the rapids; and the game fish do come from upstream. What keeps the unwanted fish species from migrating upstream if the dam is taken out? And then they only get as far as the dam in town anyway; we don't understand the priority here. Should the dam be removed will the adjoining property owners to the current river boundaries have the authority to prevent trespassers from camping out on the newly created shoreline? Over half of the current pool view in front of our home will become a mud flat that will over grow with some sort of vegetation and the concern here is noxious weeds.

The EAW describes the low-flow conditions to be lowered by 14.5' at the dam location; right in front of our house! We've seen the river lowered at least 5' when the ethanol plant put their intake structure into the river further upstream in 2006. The mudflat that existed for approx. 6 weeks was an eyesore. Take a look at the attached pictures to see what a 3' drop looks like. We can't imagine what a 14' drop will look like! The wet mud stunk when the wind was directly out of the southwest blowing straight across the river into our faces. In the summertime we could always count on the cooling effect of a "sea" breeze where we live because of the mist coming off of the dam. This EAW does not take into account the issue of unpleasant odor from mud flats or sand bars during low flow periods or after a major flooding event let alone the cooling effect that it provides in the summer for the surrounding area. **This EAW does not clearly address the aesthetic effects to neighboring property and property values if this dam is removed. How does a property owner recover the diminished value on property due to the unpleasant aesthetics of a mud flat view with weeds and buck brush growing abundantly? Every time there is a flood event after the native grasses and trees are planted it'll all get scoured out and pile up somewhere down stream; in our opinion. Fresh mud flats will exist after a flood and the potential for odors have us concerned.**

Having lived near this dam for nearly 40 years we have observed the ice going out each spring. The river ice above the dam has always broken loose in the middle third of the river first. Ice floes have usually been anywhere from 18"-24" thick. As the floes go over the dam the ice breaks into smaller slabs or chunks and moves downstream around the bends without jamming or damming up. We do not recall ice dams in the spring and strongly feel the Minnesota Falls dam attributed to breaking up the ice slabs that aided in flow downstream each spring. With the dam removed we can envision ice slabs 300-500 feet long (they are that long when they reach the dam)

plowing straight ahead into neighboring shoreline downstream and damming up in the area where the river makes a 160 degree turn. **Who clears the ice dams out and who pays for that? What flooding potential exists upstream due to water backing up due to an ice dam? What about damage to property as a result? You also have a Magellan Pipeline immediately above that area. Can you dynamite ice with a petroleum pipeline directly above it? We don't believe that environmentally it makes any sense or would be wise to do! Once again the EAW does not address this concern very well if at all.**

This EAW addresses the domestic wells located in the vicinity of the dam removal project with some of them being impacted by a lower river water level. Our well is 502' deep with practically all of it being bored in granite rock. It is fed by fissures in the bedrock. Our water quality is virtually soft (less than 10 grains hard), no rust or other undesolved minerals. The static water level of our well is approx. at the same level as the Minnesota River. It may be just coincidence on static level of our well and the river water level but hydraulically the water is being pushed upward from someplace. If blasting is employed to remove the existing dam will this impact the fissures in deep rock bored wells in terms of water supply and quality? Our well and one other are within 500' of this dam. Who pays for the affects of well water quality and quantity interference? I'm very aware of the Well Interference Resolution process. It is a slow and burdensome process for the domestic well owners that are directly impacted, in my opinion. Most domestic well owners in this area, ourselves included, do not have the luxury of a back up water source nor any rural water utilities close by. We're on the wrong side of the river at this point for such a luxury. This problem really gets magnified in the wintertime. What assurances do the domestic well owners have that their water resources are protected and any interference potential will be handled quickly? **The EAW does not clearly identify potential concerns and what will be done. It only identifies the wells in the area that may be affected and we take this information as a "heads up" you could be impacted.**

For the past 3 years we have been made aware of general public meetings in our area put on by local environmental groups like CURE, Hawk Creek Watershed, game and wild life groups and etc. whereby a guest speaker is a DNR representative from Fisheries Division, that talks about all the wonderful aspects of improved fishery habitat and fishing recreation by having the dam removed. We do not recall in any of these meetings (except for Xcel Energy's public information meetings) where a DNR Dam Safety Division spokesperson was available to discuss the issues concerning the existing dam safety and then very little was mentioned at that. Why is that? Where does a Fisheries Division employee have the authority to speak publically about a dam removal project or to make statements that property values will not be impacted and that the scenery/aesthetics of the area will return to its natural beauty and be better than it is now? It just seems that there is a hidden agenda on what the DNR really intends to do here from a fisheries

standpoint and at the expense of someone else. Who in the DNR is in charge of controlling/screening these public statements/press releases? We as neighboring property owners to the dam find out about these meetings by reading about what was said in the local newspapers. The Minnesota River Valley is protected by the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byways ordinance. Isn't removing this dam going to have a dramatic negative impact on the scenic aesthetics of the Minnesota River Valley? The dam has been in place for over 100 years; it's part of local history. Who knows what this area looked like over 100 years ago? **Can a state agency just make these changes and say that it's within their authority to do as necessary? Don't these changes to scenery need legislative action if an ordinance already exists? References are made in the EAW that permits by other agencies will be required. Are these other agencies (EPA, MPCA, Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA and etc.) going to follow and respect the same concerns raised in this EAW or do they just do what they're going to do anyway?**

Also, the City of Granite Falls originally started developing just a few hundred feet away from the Minnesota Falls dam site. Why isn't there any historical background or historical preservation mentioned in this EAW? Someone needs to read the Granite Falls history book written and published by Carl and Amy Narvestad.

A great deal of effort was put into this EAW concerning the fishing habitat from the Minnesota Falls dam back upstream into Granite Falls. What about the other wildlife in the immediate area? We have observed numerous mammals and fowl over the years in this immediate. Most folks don't realize the beaver, muskrats, river otters, abundant white tail deer population, wild turkeys, bald and golden eagles that didn't seem to exist in the late 60's around here, bob cat and lynx and the pesky coyotes. **This EAW does not address the other wildlife species, except for fishing, and does not indicate what impact a change of the water pool behind the existing dam will have on these critters.**

Several businesses and the City of Granite Falls rely on the pool of water either as a water resource for supporting their business or dilution of sanitary sewer effluent. Lowering the water level or pool behind this dam eliminates any potential for continuing to use the river in low-flow conditions without these businesses spending a lot of money to alter intake systems. The low-flow condition will also lead to stagnant water areas that can become breeding habitat for mosquitoes, resultant odors from stagnant waters and etc. We are very dismayed at the seemingly indifference by state agencies on the impact to businesses like Granite Falls Energy on removing this dam and the negative impact to these local business that needs this water resource to survive. Ownership of this dam, on a public river, needs to have public ownership in our

opinion. We don't fault Xcel Energy for wanting to eliminate a future liability and can understand their dilemma.

Public comments made at environmental group gatherings in the past have led to an abundance of rumors that with the dam out a public landing or dock will be put in for recreational fishing. We are not in favor of any public access activities adjacent to our property. We've had far too many instances of trespassing, trash dumped by trespassers on our property, bon fires built on our property adjacent to the river shoreline, vehicles parking in our driveways and on our front lawn. We will fight any proposal of that sort!

Conclusion:

We respectfully request that an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) be conducted to more thoroughly address the concerns mentioned above and to provide more time and thought into public ownership and a compromising dam design that will satisfy the needs of all. Our legislature cannot dawdle on getting involved in this matter in securing finding and directing and/or assisting local governmental entities that are concerned and willing to take ownership with appropriate state support. Our concerns/desires as adjoining property owners are:

- Maintain the water pool above existing dam at same levels.**
- Negative impact to aesthetics and diminished property value not defined.**
- Ice out concerns (both up and down stream) if dam is removed not addressed.**
- Well interference potential to domestic wells is not clearly addressed.**
- No wildlife studies other than fishing are addressed in this EAW.**
- Critical historical information of the immediate area is missing in this EAW.**

Compromising dam design considerations could be:

- 1) Leave the dam in place and shore up upstream and downstream side with granite rock/boulders.**
- 2) Modify the existing manmade spill gate area with a rock rapids design that will serve as a fish ladder for desirable fish species to migrate upstream for spawning as long as a low flow condition doesn't trap them in stagnant pools up stream and they die anyway.**

Perhaps a wehr design which removes 1 or 2 feet of the dam top to channel water flow more towards the middle of the stream would make the existing dam safer.

3) A total rock rapids that maintains the pool elevations that have existed for the last century and eliminates the hydraulic roller below the dam.

If the urgency of this EAW is truly focused on dam safety concerns then why weren't the urgent issues of safety made clearly and publicly known to adjoining property owners up and down stream back in 2004 when Xcel was notified of these concerns by DNR Dam Safety folks and immediate action taken at that time?

Sincerely,



Robin W. & Karon R. Spaude

15070 Pete's Point Road SE

Granite Falls, MN 56241

Home phone number: 320/564-2207

Enclosures: 3 pictures

R Sprude "TAKEN FROM FRONT DECK"
FALL 2009



R Spade "Taken from our front deck."
Summer 2010



R Spaulde "River lowered 3'-4' while GTE intake
structure was installed upstream."
FALL 2006



Randall Doneen
Environmental Review Planning Director
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

July 18, 2011



Subject: Minnesota Falls Dam Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Mr. Doneen

My name is David Reimer and I am the owner of Granite Run Golf Course located near Granite Falls, Minnesota. The golf course will be impacted by the removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam. I have enclosed herewith correspondence dated September 26, 2009 previously supplied to you personally which addressed my initial concerns with respect to the removal of the dam. Those concerns have not been abated based on my review of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate my continuing concerns and the negative impact on golf course operations in the event of the dam's removal.

The initial efforts of BARR Engineering was to include the study of the effect of the lowering of water levels above the dam through a scheduled lowering of water levels in the fall of 2009. This study was not completed due to high water levels. As a result, no determination was made as to the effect and your assessment worksheet makes reference to the fact that lowering of the holding pond used by Granite Run Golf Course may occur. The water permits for water from the Minnesota River and the adjoining holding pond are a critical element to the operations of the golf course. No other viable alternative to include wells or rural water currently exist. If this holding pond does not retain adequate water supplies I will be forced to pump water directly from the Minnesota River to the golf course throughout the summer months.

By my calculations the culvert for the holding pond (886' MSL) will be approximately 10 feet higher than expected water levels (875MSL) @ 600cfs and approximately 15 feet higher than maximum lowering water levels (870MSL) @ 600cfs per your report. In addition, accessible water levels will move approximately 100 feet away from the existing culvert. Closer access is not possible because of steep slopes along the Minnesota River adjacent to the holding pond. These changes in water levels give creditability to my concerns regarding the viability of the holding pond and safety and vandalism concerns as relate to pumping water directly from the Minnesota River during summer months. The adequacy of my existing pumping equipment is also a concern due to increased distances and elevations from the holding pond or directly to the golf course if the holding pond is no longer viable.

Upon review of local editorials, county and city commission meetings and community discussions, the local community is opposed to the removal of the Minnesota Falls dam. The dam has been an engine for industrial, recreational, residential and tourism development in the Granite Falls community for over 100 years. The removal of the dam should only be considered after an environmental and economic assessment of it's benefits compared to the unlikely event of any damage that may result upon it's failure. I therefore request a full environmental study to include a complete assessment of the effects of it's removal on the businesses, municipalities and residents which it serves.

Very Truly Yours

David L Reimer
Granite Run Golf Course
PO Box 194
Granite Falls, MN 56241
(320-564-4755)

Enclosure

CC:
Senator Gary Kubly

Mr. Tom MacDonald
BARR Engineering
4700 West 77th St.
Minneapolis, Mn 55435-4803

September 26, 2009

Subject: Minnesota Falls Dam

Dear Sir:

My name is David L Reimer and I am the owner of Granite Run Golf Course located along East Highway 67 near Granite Falls, Minnesota. I acquired the golf course in January 2007 from its members. The golf course has been in existence since 1928 and is the only course serving the Granite Falls community.

The purpose of this letter is to express my concerns regarding the lowering of the Minnesota River above the Minnesota Falls Dam and the Dam's possible removal.

Granite Run Golf Course obtains water for purpose of irrigation from two primary sources both subject to water permits obtained from the Minnesota DNR. The first source is a shallow reservoir of approximately 15 acres in close proximity to the Minnesota River (Approximately 30 feet from the River's banks). The second source is the Minnesota River. Ideally, as was the case in spring 2007 and 2009, the Minnesota River rises enough that water naturally flows into the shallow reservoir through a ground culvert until full at which time we close and seal the culvert. The water retained in the shallow reservoir is then pumped to a small holding pond on the golf course and subsequently disbursed to the golf course through an irrigation system. When spring Minnesota River water flows are not sufficient to replenish the small reservoir, we are required to pump water from the Minnesota River into the small reservoir and pump it to the holding pond on the course. This was the case in the spring of 2008. As a point of reference, we pumped approximately 6.4 million gallons from the River and small reservoir to the golf course in 2007 and 2008 and will pump approximately 9 million gallons in 2009 because of the extremely dry conditions this summer.

The clubhouse is served by a deep well of approximately 500 feet which generates approximately 3 to 5 gallons per minute and would be woefully inadequate to meet our irrigation needs.

Our irrigation water source described above is located between the dam located at Granite Falls and the Minnesota Falls Dam.. It is apparent to me that the removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam and subsequent lowering of spring water retention will require me to pump all golf course water needs from the Minnesota River rather than rely on natural increased water levels behind the dam and replenishment of the small reservoir in the spring. Furthermore, the River shoreline will obviously recede from it's current proximity to the small reservoir which will require me to extend pumping equipment into the river channel at obvious safety concerns to boaters, canoeists and other river users.

Of even greater concern is the affect on water retention capabilities of the small reservoir. I am not a hydrologist but it seems to me that soil conditions comprised of granite and gravel type materials are not conducive to water retention. As the water levels of the Minnesota River are reduced, it is conceivable to me that the small reservoir described above could possibly leak and/or drain into the Minnesota River. Any attempt on my part to pump water into the reservoir would be mitigated by this natural occurrence in that the reservoir is at a higher sea level than the river channel. Your intent to study the affects of the lowering of the Minnesota River during the winter months will not in my judgment be conclusive as to the affects on the small reservoir because of freezing conditions. The total freeze up of the small reservoir during the winter months and any subsequent water loss will not become apparent until well after the conclusion of your study. The size of the small reservoir makes it cost prohibitive in terms of trying to seal the small reservoir even if Minnesota DNR would grant approval.

On a similar note, there is a similar water reservoir located adjacent to the Minnesota River, East Highway 67 and Memorial Park near Granite Falls which I believe would be similarly affected. This is an extremely attractive area of the Minnesota River valley and the affect of lowered water levels as to the scenic beauty of the area must be assessed.

I do not believe the implications of the possible removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam can be fully assessed during the winter months and during a period of short duration. I recommend that a full environmental study be conducted to assess the implications of lowered water levels not only as it relates to Granite Run Golf Course but the entire Granite Falls community. This dam has been in operation for some 100 years and Granite Run Golf Course relies on resulting water levels while at the same time not jeopardizing the safety of other users. I can assure you that without an adequate long term and cost effective source of water for maintaining the golf course, it will simply have to be abandoned at considerable economic loss to myself and the Granite Falls community.

I would be happy to give you a tour of the golf course and its water and irrigation practices at your request. I can be reached at 320-564-4755 or at the address below.

David L. Reimer
Owner
Reimer Investments LLC
D/B/A Granite Run Golf Course
5522 E Highway 67
PO BOX 194
Granite Falls, Mn 56241

CC: Jim Sehl
Minnesota DNR
Yellow Medicine County



July 20, 2011

Randall Doreen
EAW Project Manager
Environmental Policy and Review Unit
Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

RE: Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Project

Dear Mr. Doreen:

We are writing in response to the EAW regarding the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal. We live at 1113 Prentice Street, Granite Falls, MN 56241 and our back lot line is on the Minnesota River bank.

We have serious concerns about the water levels upstream of the dam if the dam is removed. Agriculture and related ag businesses is the economic engine that keeps the economy of southwest Minnesota going. Agri-businesses such as Granite Falls Energy (GFE), which produces ethanol, would be negatively impacted by removal of the dam. Because of lower river levels, GFE would have to install a new river water intake system at a cost of approximately \$2,000,000. Granite Run Golf Course has an irrigation holding pond near the river that fills during high water flow. They are concerned the pond will not hold water once the dam is removed and river levels are dramatically lowered.

The City of Granite Falls owns and maintains Memorial Park which is on the banks of the river. Memorial Park was built as a WPA project in the 1930s and has a beautiful stone entrance and shelter house. The park offers camping sites, children's playground, walking trail and much more. The park has a boat ramp on the shallow side of the river which is the only boat ramp we know of between the Minnesota Falls Dam and the Granite Falls dam. The boat ramp is used frequently by people using the park as well as many local boating and fishing enthusiasts. The park also has a large pond of water on the south side of Highway 67 which is fed from the river through a culvert under Highway 67. The pond would most likely drain out entirely if the dam is removed and we have low river flow. This pond is a favorite of Canadian geese, especially during spring and fall migrations.

The Yellow Medicine County Museum is at the bend of the river just upstream from Memorial Park. The shoreline along the museum parking lot is the most popular fishing site that we know of. This area would most likely become a mud flat if the dam is removed. The museum is a beautiful setting where you can see the river in two directions as it makes its turn to the east. The full river channel is what makes this setting so attractive. The museum has several hundred visitors annually.

Since a major flood in 1997 the City of Granite Falls initiated a major flood mitigation project to protect the city against future flooding. To date the city has spent approximately 15 to 20 million dollars on flood mitigation. Several homes and businesses were bought out and either removed or torn down. This included several businesses on Prentice Street which runs above the river in downtown Granite Falls. The flood protection plan included building a very attractive flood wall much of which overlooks the river. Removal of the dam would alter the aesthetic beauty of downtown Granite Falls due to exposed mud flats being present with various vegetation growth.

We have reviewed table 2 on page 10 of the EAW which estimates river level lowering if the dam is removed. During low flow the estimated lowering at the Highway 212 bridge is 1.3 to 3.6 feet, upstream at the pedestrian bridge the estimated lowering is .3 to 2.0 feet. We realize that these are estimates, however, we do have actual data when the river was lowered in November, 2006, to accommodate Granite Falls Energy's installation of their river water intake structure. At that time stop logs were removed at the Minnesota Falls Dam and the river lowered about 5 to 6 feet at the dam. The result was a 3 to 4 foot lowering of the river at our home. Our next door neighbors, Doug Henning, 1125 Prentice Street, and Carl Ims, 1135 Prentice Street, both had their pontoons in the river behind their homes in November, 2006. The river levels at their docks always maintained a depth of 3 to 4 feet even during low flow. When the Minnesota Falls Dam was lowered 5 to 6 feet their pontoons were sitting on a mud flat totally out of the water, in fact, there was no water level for several feet behind their pontoons. As part of this environmental assessment we are requesting that a maximum drawdown at the dam be required before approval is given to remove the dam. This would provide a clear picture of what the river channel would look like if the 14 foot high dam is removed.

We feel that it would be in the best interest of all the stakeholders that if the dam is removed it be replaced by an engineered rock rapid system that would maintain the water elevation relatively close to the existing pool behind the dam. The rock rapids would be a natural elevation change to allow fish migration upstream. By maintaining the water levels there would not be a negative impact on Granite Falls Energy, Granite Run Golf Course, Memorial Park, adjacent landowners or the City of Granite Falls.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dick Wambeke
1113 Prentice Street
Granite Falls, MN 56241
Phone: 320-564-3608



Janet Wambeke



Yellow Medicine County Historical Society
HWY 23 & 67 – PO Box 145
Granite Falls, MN 56241
Phone: (320) 564-4479
ymchs@mtvwireless.com

Yellow Medicine County
Historical Society


MN Dept of Natural Resources

Dear Mr. Randall Doneen;

An EAW is being done on the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal. I am writing in regard to such. After reading the report some concerns and suggestions come to mind. Please let me try to explain.

1. The museum is located on the banks of the Minnesota River near the Hwy 212 bridge on the south side of the river in the county of Yellow Medicine. It was built there for the beauty of the river to enjoy. According to pages 6 and 10 that area will be affected with the water level lowered causing the area to convert to other wetland rather than flowing river.
2. The proposed area being considered is now 123.6 acres of water surface which after the dam removal would be decreased to 86 acres of water surface, impacting transportation, parks, residential and limited commercial use, page 6.
3. Also on page 6, reference was made to the interfering with the habitat of the brown bullhead, which is exclusive to the upstream of the dam, and to the species that are exclusive below the dam as is after 100 years of existence.
4. Of interest was the statement that the concrete contains no reinforcement steel allowing that material to be used in bank restoration; page 17. Could not that material be used to do a rock rapids at the dam site to help maintain some higher level of water that is now be experience there, also allowing the migration of fish to and fro?

In closing it is the request of the Yellow Medicine County Historical Society that the least amount of interference is done to our locale and the health of the river can be encouraged.

Sincerely,

JANE REMIGER
Chair of the Society



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

July 26, 2011

Randall Doneen, Environmental Review
MN Dept. of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul MN 55155

RE: Minnesota Falls Dam Removal
Granite Falls, Yellow Medicine and Chippewa Counties
SHPO Number: 2011-2731

Dear Mr. Doneen:

Thank you for consulting with our office during the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the above referenced project. Please note that in addition to the EAW requirement, this project will need to meet the requirements of the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act and the Minnesota Historic Sites Act.

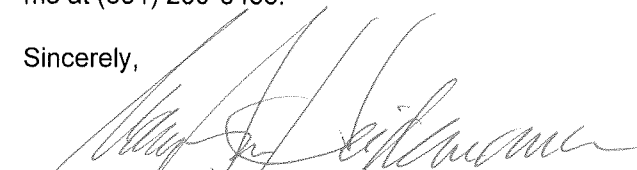
This area has a high potential for archaeological sites. It appears from comments in the draft EAW that investigations conducted to date are helpful in determining what additional work needs to be done. But we have not received any report for review and therefore cannot provide substantive comments at this time.

Similarly, reference is made to a State Historic Preservation Office concurrence regarding the National Register status of this site, and we can find no record of this in our files. If you have the pertinent report or record of concurrence, please send it to us.

In addition, please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36CFR800, Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the protection of historic properties. The EAW makes reference to a Corps of Engineers permit needed for the project. If so, we need to hear from the Corps as the responsible federal agency. Our preference would be to perform a joint state/federal review, rather than a series of reviews for the same project.

Please send us the missing materials mentioned above, along with your contact at the Corps of Engineers. Meanwhile, if you have any questions regarding our comments on this project feel free to call me at (651) 259-3456.

Sincerely,


Mary Ann Heidemann, Manager
Government Programs and Compliance

cc: Dave Radford, MN DNR
Brad Johnson, Corps of Engineers



From: [Mark Herwig](#)
To: [Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: Minnesota Falls Dam comment
Date: Wednesday, June 29, 2011 11:07:55 AM

I would like this dam removed. Removing this dam would improve conditions for aquatic fish and wildlife species by restoring the natural flow of the river. Removal will also enhance recreational use. Thank you.

Mark Herwig
1958 Florence St.
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

CURE's position on the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal

Whereas: The CURE Board has been asked to publicly state its position regarding the issue of the removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam, and

The mission of CURE is to focus public awareness on the Upper Minnesota Watershed and to take action to restore and protect its water quality, biological integrity and natural beauty for all generations, and

The current Minnesota Falls Dam is aging, a liability to Xcel Energy and a safety hazard to the public, and

The current dam is an impediment to fish migration upstream, the flow of the river and the river's general health and integrity, and

There is no clearly marked area for portaging around the current dam, and

There is momentum building for Xcel Energy as owner of the dam to address this situation by removing the dam and letting the river return to its pre-1905 state, and

CURE believes that this action of removing the dam would improve the biological integrity, water quality and natural beauty of the river,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the CURE Board supports the plan offered by Xcel Energy to remove the dam and let the original rapids on the river at Minnesota Falls return to their natural state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That CURE recognizes that other parties both public and private have vested interests in the plan for dam removal and the restoration design of that section of the Minnesota River; That CURE will continue to be a part of these ongoing discussions, but will continue to speak first on behalf of the river, CURE's mission and membership; And that, CURE hopes that in the final analysis, the dam removal and riverscape redesign can restore the health and integrity of the river, be attentive to safety, and serve the other community and business special interests.

Adopted by the CURE Board of Directors at their regular monthly meeting on January 27th, 2011_
Duane Ninneman, CURE Board Chairman



Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners

415 9th Avenue, Suite 102, Granite Falls, MN 56241
Courthouse Telephone: 320-564-5841
Courthouse Fax: 320-564-3670
Website: www.co.ym.mn.gov

Commissioners:

Greg Renneke – District 1 Dick Wambeke – District 2
Gary Johnson – District 3 Ron Antony – District 4
Louis Sherlin – District 5

Yellow Medicine County is an Equal Opportunity Employer

August 9, 2011

Randall Doneen
EAW Project Manager
Environmental Policy and Review Unit
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
MN Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

Re: Minnesota Falls Dam Removal EAW

Dear Mr. Doneen:

This letter is in response to the EAW for the proposed Minnesota Falls Dam removal near Granite Falls. The Minnesota Falls Dam is located in both Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties. The Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners would like to provide the following comments regarding the proposed removal of the dam.

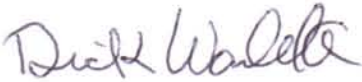
The County Board has serious concerns about the water levels upstream of the dam if the dam should be removed. Businesses such as Granite Falls Energy (GFE) Ethanol Plant would be negatively impacted by the removal of the dam. Because of lower river levels, GFE would need to install a new river water intake system at a cost of approximately \$2 million. Granite Run Golf Course has an irrigation holding pond near the river that fills during high water flow. They are concerned the pond will not hold water once the dam is removed. Page 2 of the EAW states that the ... “dam no longer serves... its purpose to impound water used for cooling in NSP’s Minnesota Valley Generating Plant”. Although NSP no longer uses the ponding created by the dam, GFE and Granite Run Golf Course do. The MN DNR is aware of the importance of the water ponding created by the dam as the DNR was involved with the permitting of GFE’s water intake just few years ago.

The Yellow Medicine County Museum is at the bend of the river between the Minnesota Falls Dam and City of Granite Falls Hydroelectric Dam. The County Museum is located in a beautiful setting that is also a favorite location for fishing. Page 5 of the EAW states that under typical normal low flow conditions, the upstream water surface area is expected to be reduced 36.6 acres if the dam is removed. The EAW also states that this affected area is expected to convert to other wetland types and shoreland. With the removal of the dam we believe shoreline along the Museum, as well as in other areas, will become a mud flat with the eventual growth of undesirable vegetation. Removal of the dam and the creation of these new shorelines would alter the aesthetic beauty of the County Museum and other impacted properties as well. In addition to aesthetics, the alteration of the river level and shorelines will also have a negative impact on property values for both homeowners and businesses.

The Yellow Medicine County Board is requesting that a drawdown of the river take place before approval is given to remove the dam. A drawdown was done in November, 2006 as part of the GFE water intake installation. This drawdown resulted in significant impacts to the shoreline and aesthetics of the area. A drawdown of the river before approving the removal of the dam would give a clearer picture of the impacts created by the dam's removal.

The County Board feels that it would be in the best interest of all stakeholders that if the dam is removed it should be replaced by an engineered rock rapids system that would help maintain the water elevation relatively close to the existing pool behind the dam. The rock rapids would provide a natural elevation change to allow fish migration upstream. By maintaining the water levels with a rock rapids there would not be a negative impact on Granite Falls Energy, Granite Run Golf Course and other property owners in the impacted area.

On Behalf of the Yellow Medicine County Board,



Dick Wambeke
Board Chair

Randall Doneen
EAW Project, Environmental Policy and Review Unit,
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

RE: Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Environmental Assessment

August 24, 2011

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Project. The comments herein are submitted on behalf of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter. The Sierra Club is a non-profit environmental organization with several thousand members in Minnesota. We participate in the administrative process to encourage environmental health and sustainability, long term wildlife and habitat protection and biodiversity goals.

The Sierra Club fully supports the removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam on the Minnesota River. It is beneficial to the health of rivers and aquatic wildlife to remove dams. Dams are barriers to fish movement, disturbing and often harming important and sensitive aquatic species. Dams alter the sensitive chemical, physical and biological processes of river ecosystems. They change the way the river flows, reduce or increase water levels, block the flow of important nutrients and change water temperature and oxygen levels. Removing this dam will benefit the Minnesota River ecosystem.

Sincerely,

The Sierra Club North Star Chapter
2327 East Franklin Avenue, Suite 1
Minneapolis, MN 55406-1024

Annah Gardner
AJGardner@stthomas.edu

Lois Norrgard
lnorrgard@lnmn10.com



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

520 Lafayette Road North | St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4194 | 651-296-6300

800-657-3864 | 651-282-5332 TTY | www.pca.state.mn.us | Equal Opportunity Employer

August 24, 2011

Mr. Randall Doneen
Environmental Review Planning Director
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

Re: Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Mr. Doneen:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Minnesota Falls Dam Removal Project (Project) located in Granite Falls, Minnesota. The Project consists of the removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam located on the Minnesota River. Regarding matters for which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has regulatory responsibility and other interests, MPCA staff has the following comments for your consideration.

Description (Item 6)

Dam Removal - If the beneficial re-use site for the dredged material is on upland, then the MPCA believes that a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Work in Public Waters permit would not cover that activity. Rather, the acreage of the beneficial re-use site should be added to the acreage of the Project's other land-disturbing activities and be covered under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Construction Activity.

Post Dam Removal – Please discuss the likelihood that the scour hole located immediately downstream of the present dam will fill in and if the scour hole has been a popular fishing location or have other significance for fisheries.

Solid wastes, hazardous wastes, storage tanks (Item 20)

The response only addresses equipment operation during the Project. The need remains to address oversight and handling of spills during fueling of equipment.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this project. Please provide your specific responses to our comments and notice of decision on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement. Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this EAW, please contact me at 651-757-2508.

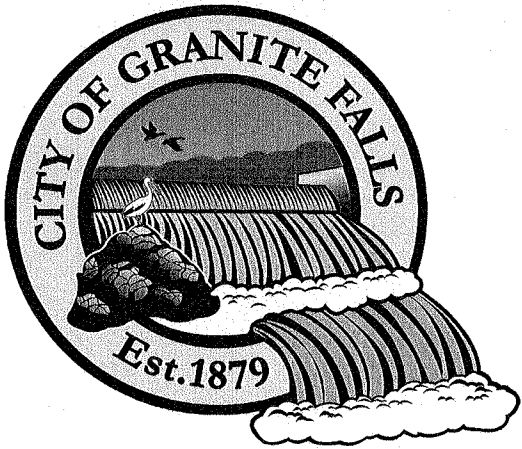
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Kromar".

Karen Kromar
Planner Principal
Environmental Review and Feedlot Section
Regional Division

KK:mbo

cc: Craig Affeldt, MPCA, St. Paul
Judy Mader, MPCA, St. Paul
Randall Hukriede, MPCA, Willmar



City of Granite Falls

641 Prentice Street
Granite Falls, MN 56241-1598
Phone (320) 564-3011 FAX (320) 564-3013
7-1-1 or 1-800-627-3529 Voice, TTY, ASCII
www.granitefalls.com

Office of City Manager

August 24, 2011

Mr. Randall Doneen, EAW Project Manager
Environmental Police and Review Unit
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road

RE: Minnesota Falls Dam EAW

Dear Mr. Doneen:

Please be advised that at the August 15th meeting of the Granite Falls City Council discussions continued relative to Northern States Power Company planned removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam, and in particular the EAW. The City Council has serious concerns relative to the affect on river levels that would be impacted by removal of the dam. Tracey Olson, General Manager of Granite Falls Energy LLC (GFE), as well as several GFE board members have met and discussed with the City Council the proposed removal of the dam and the direct economic impacts this project would have on GFE. GFE commissioned an engineering study that reviewed various options relative to an existing river intake structure used by Granite Falls Energy. At its present location, this structure will be directly impacted by removal of the Minnesota Dam. Of the options addressed in the study, reconstruction of the existing intake structure was recommended; however, there are clear economic impacts to Granite Falls Energy should this option be pursued. A cost of approximately \$2 million would need to be expended to install a new river intake structure.

The report completed by Bolton & Menk presents a compelling argument of the negative economic impacts to Granite Falls Energy as a result of the removal of the Minnesota Falls dam. The Granite Falls City Council is extremely concerned as to the economic viability of Granite Falls Energy in light of this additional unanticipated expense. Without belaboring the point, Granite Falls Energy has provided a positive economic impact to our region by creating demand for local goods and services, providing much needed employment opportunities, stimulating additional local investment, and generating tax revenue for the city, Chippewa County and the Yellow Medicine East School District.


In light of the information presented by Granite Falls Energy LLC, the Granite Falls City Council respectfully requests that Northern States Power Company closely examine other alternatives relative to the Minnesota Falls dam that, at a minimum, would maintain the current pool elevation and shoreline. One idea presented at previous meetings, could involve the construction of an engineered rock rapids if the Dam is removed. This rock rapids would preserve the GFE river intake structure while at the same time allow fish migration upstream and minimize impacts to the shoreline.

While this letter speaks in terms of Granite Falls Energy, there are clearly more wide-spread impacts associated with the removal of the Minnesota Falls dam, including but not limited to the Granite Run Golf Course, which relies of river water for irrigation, the Yellow Medicine County Museum, as well as the city-owned Memorial Park. Both the museum and park are located adjacent to the Minnesota River. Their close proximity to the river encourages shoreline fishing that would certainly be negatively impacted by reduced river levels associated with removal of the Dam.

In order to fully analyze the impacts as the result of removal of the Minnesota Falls Dam, the Granite Falls City Council respectfully requests that a drawdown of the river take place before approval is given to remove the dam. The EAW notes that there will be a direct affect on normal flow conditions including the upstream water surface area. These flow conditions will clearly impact the shoreline as well as the aesthetic features now present along the Minnesota River.

The City of Granite Falls has formed a task force consisting of representatives from Yellow Medicine, Chippewa County, state legislators and City officials to continued dialogue with Northern States Power Company, Granite Falls Energy as well as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in the hopes that a more creative solution can be identified with respect to the future of the Minnesota Falls dam.

Sincerely,


David Smiglewski
Mayor, City of Granite Falls

jt

From: [Mike Enstad](#)
To: [Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: "Minnesota Falls Dam Removal EAW"
Date: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 1:33:02 PM

As an adjacent landowner to the Minnesota Falls Dam site I would encourage the removal of the dam to reduce the severity and frequency of the flooding that occurs on our property.

Thank You,

Mike Enstad
1137 9th St
Granite Falls, MN 56241
320-905-1938

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802 Prentice Street
P.O. Box E
Granite Falls, MN 56241
(320) 564-4810

YMC ABSTRACT CO., INC.

August 26, 2011

Randall Doreen
EAW Project Manager
Environmental Policy and Review Unit
Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St Paul MN 55155-4025



RE: Removal of Minnesota Falls Dam

Dear Mr. Doreen,

As residents of Granite Falls, and owners of a home in the residential area of Prentice Street which has a back yard bordering on the rock riprap lining the bank of the Minnesota River, and a business located on the same street in the downtown area with windows overlooking the famed suspension footbridge, we have a very real interest in any project that will affect the Minnesota River.

Our main concern is the water level in this stretch of the river from the Minnesota Falls Dam to the Granite Falls Dam. We feel that maintaining the reservoir is important for economic reasons as well as continued scenic enjoyment and quality of life. We were offered a snapshot of what lower levels would look like when the river was lowered during the construction and installation of the water intake system for Granite Falls Energy in November, 2006. Without providing notice to upstream residents, the level at the Minnesota Falls Dam was dropped around 5 feet. This resulted in my small pontoon and that of my neighbors which had been floating in 3 feet of water, to be deposited on a mud flat that extended many feet from pontoon to water. This would seem to be in conflict with river level estimates should the Minnesota Falls Dam be removed. One would hope that an opportunity would exist to do a maximum drawdown in determining the future water levels.

Granite Falls Energy, an ethanol production facility owned by corn producers and other local investors, placed a water intake system at this dam in 2006. The cost of this was several million dollars, and it is my understanding that they worked hand in hand with the Minnesota DNR in determining the placement of this system. Removal of the dam would necessitate relocating this system, a costly venture that would negatively impact this business, thus this community. Granite Run Golf Course also draws water to irrigate the local golf course from a pond that is filled by flowage from the Minnesota. If they lose this source they may very well lose their business.

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Memorial Park and the Yellow Medicine County Museum, also located along this stretch, are enjoyed by many. Boats are launched at the ramp at the Park, and it is not unusual for us to look out our windows at home and see people fishing, or just boating and enjoying the wide stretch of water that residents and visitors have known as the Minnesota River in this area for over one hundred years.

At work, almost daily, I look out my window and see visitors or travelers parking and walking to the suspension bridge spanning the Minnesota River downtown. Without fail, they cross the river on that footbridge pausing with camera in hand to photograph the scene. When time permits a short visit, they invariably exclaim the beauty of this area, and the good fortune of those able to call Granite Falls home.

Even as we recognize the danger of living and working along the river, and are mindful of the recent loss of a life in a tragedy at the Minnesota Falls Dam, it is our concern that the removal of the dam, without some other method of holding water levels along this stretch, will place all these things in jeopardy and have a negative impact on the economy, as well as quality of life, of this area. Therefore, it is our hope that the dam, if removed, be replaced with a rock rapid system engineered to maintain water at present levels.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Imes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Carl Imes
1135 Prentice Street
Granite Falls MN 56241
(320)564-1305