

# **Attachment 1**

## **Record of Decision**

### **Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project, Minneiska Township, Wabasha County, Minnesota EAW**

**Public Review: August 17, 2015 - September 15, 2015**

#### **List of Comment Letters or E-Mail Comments Submitted**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date received</b>
a.	Korman, Eric W.	August 13, 2015
b.	Herwig, Mark	August 14, 2015
c.	Slocum, Scott	August 17, 2015
d.	Dan and Cheryl Cutshall	August 17, 2015
e.	Beranek, Jack	August 26, 2015
f.	Bambenek, Paul	September 9, 2015
g.	Graeve, Matthew D. (TNC)	September 9, 2015
h.	Mayhew, Chuck	September 12, 2015
i.	Gates, Larry	September 16, 2015
j.	Yen, Anne	September 16, 2015
k.	Tegdesch, Elizabeth (Kevin Kain) (MPCA)	September 16, 2015
l.	Stefanski, Mary (USFWS/USWFR)	September 16, 2015
m.	Wahls, Jen	September 16, 2015
n.	Pates, Gregory (MnDOT)	September 16, 2015

**\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Korman, Eric W. <Korman.Eric@mayo.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 13, 2015 5:34 PM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project

I fully support the Weaver Bottoms project and think it is a great idea. I hunt and fish the area extensively.

Eric Korman  
406 41st Ave NW  
Rochester, MN 55901  
320-266-1423

Sent from my iPhone

**\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Mark Herwig <mefsherwig@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 14, 2015 8:51 AM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** weaver bottoms plan

I've visited weaver bottoms many times to bird watch and boat.....I support mdnr efforts to restore its ecosystem.....reduce wind fetch too to enable emergent vegetation.....migrating tundra swans will rejoice.....it would also be nice to duck hunt weaver again.....get the usacoe to do more pool drawdowns.....more bluebills and less barge traffic!

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

8/17/2015

To: Charlotte Cohn, EAW Project Manager  
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Ecological and Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55155-4025  
email: environmentalrev.dnr@state.mn.us

From: Scott Slocum  
1416 Birchcrest Drive  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110  
email: scotts002@gmail.com

Re: Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project EAW.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environment Assessment Worksheet (EAW) regarding the proposed dredging of an area in Weaver Bottoms. I am writing as a concerned citizen with a general scientific background; not as a specialist in wetland ecology or wetland management.

As I understand the project goals, they are to improve boating, fishing, and waterfowl hunting from boats in a small area adjacent to one of five boat-access points in the immediate vicinity (Anderson 2009, MN DNR 2015). The project would be funded as one part of the \$5.25 million project "DNR Aquatic Habitat - Phase V" funded in 2014 by the MN Outdoor Heritage Fund (MN DNR 2014).

As I understand the methods, the project would use a backhoe to dredge an average of about four feet of sediment from a twenty-acre area of Pool #5 that has been filling with sediment from the Mississippi and Zumbro rivers. The dredged material would be placed on a nearby, ten-acre area of farmland. Attempts would be made to relocate visible, mobile fauna from each day's work zone in both the dredged area and the placement area, but all other flora and fauna in and around the transported material would be killed. The upland portion would be seeded back to pasture, and the waters would be left to recover naturally (MN DNR 2015). In a departure from the approach of other conservation organizations working in the area (The Nature Conservancy 2015, USFWS 2010), there would not be any action taken to prevent the area from refilling with sediment. Given the certainty of continued sedimentation in the area, this project would need to be repeated periodically and perpetually into the future in order to maintain the desired water depth. There is no projection for the time interval between dredgings; it might be as infrequent as 80 years, or more frequently, depending on the rate of sedimentation, other considerations, and available funding.

I see the following problems with the EAW:

- The EAW makes misleading references to historic Goose Lake (now also known as Prichard Lake), implying that the project would be a lake restoration; it would not. It would be a temporary restoration of an area of deep water along the edge of Pool #5--an area that would then gradually refill with sediment from the Mississippi and Zumbro rivers.
- The only courses of action identified in the EAW seem to be 1) to implement the project or 2) to abandon the project in the unlikely event that it would involve the "disposal of contaminated materials" on the placement site. Another alternative that the EAW should realistically consider would be the option of leaving the area to continue to fill with sediment (and continue to be

seasonally recharged with water from the Mississippi River), and presumably to develop into a shallow, flood-zone wetland.

- The only conservation values identified in the EAW seem to be the project goals of improved boating, fishing, and hunting from boats. Other conservation values that the EAW should realistically consider include those of waterfowl habitat (distinct from the area's level of accessibility to hunters in boats) and non-game wildlife habitat (distinct from the area's levels of game production).
- The EAW does not seem to consider the high costs of equipment, labor, and fossil fuels for the proposed project in light of its limited benefits of providing only a temporary fix in a small area for an unspecified number of years.
- The EAW does not seem to include a projection for the rate of the re-sedimentation process, and thus the end date of the limited benefits of the proposed project and the date on which the process would need to be repeated (with the placement of dredged material on a new site each time).
- The EAW does not seem to consider the potential impact of dredging the area perpetually into the future.
- The EAW seems to attempt to downplay the fact that project would leave a 30-acre dead zone in its wake, each time it was repeated. Granted, the dredged area and the placement area would recover their flora and fauna within several years. But it would not be proper to overlook the grim aspects of creating such a dead zone. It would not be realistic to believe that the backhoe operators, truck drivers, and other personnel on-site would reliably and consistently clear the dredged and placement areas of submerged, subterranean, or otherwise concealed or inseparable wildlife before they pulled, piled, drained, trucked, and compacted the dredged sediments from one dead zone underwater to another underground.

Overall, I see a high cost/benefit ratio in this proposed dredging project, and I don't see a fair accounting for that in the EAW. The cost/benefit ratio of this project should be estimated in this EAW so that it can be compared by policy makers to those of alternative projects in soil-conservation, storm-water and waste-water runoff control, shoreline improvements, game and non-game wildlife conservation, game and non-game outdoor recreation, etc.

Personally and scientifically, I see the periodic creation of a 30-acre dead zone as a major drawback of the project, and I don't see a fair assessment of it in the EAW. The dredging and placement operations would be highly-destructive, and their results artificial; in contrast with the relatively harmonious, natural alternative of leaving the area to fill with sediment, and thus slowly transition to a different type of living habitat (similar to the wetlands that once surrounded historic Goose Lake).

In short, the EAW seems to be incomplete. It does not include a fair consideration of 1) alternative values and goals, 2) all environmental, financial, and energy costs, or 3) relative cost/benefit ratio.

If this EAW were complete and fair, I believe it would show that the preferred plan for areas like this along dam impoundments of the Mississippi River would be to allow sedimentation to continue, without dredging. Areas like this would continue to develop as wetlands on the food-plain, rich in wildlife, and high in environmental quality. These areas would continue to be valued by diverse interest

groups, for diverse reasons. This EAW focuses only the interests of those who would boat, fish, or hunt from boats in areas like this. That's not acceptable.

Sincerely,

Scott Slocum

## Aerial view of the project area and surroundings



## References

Anderson, Dennis. 2009. "Duck Hunters Must Get by on Nostalgia Alone." Star Tribune, December 7. <http://www.startribune.com/duck-hunters-get-by-on-nostalgia/78572362/>

MN DNR. 2014. "DNR Aquatic Habitat - Phase V." Minnesota, USA: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.legacy.leg.mn/projects/dnr-aquatic-habitat-phase-v>

MN DNR. 2015. "Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project EAW." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/weaverbottoms/index.html>

The Nature Conservancy. 2015. "Mississippi River Priority Site: Weaver Dunes--Zumbro River, Minnesota." <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/habitats/riverslakes/placesweprotect/mississippi-river-priority-site-weaver-dunes.xml>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2010. "Weaver Bottoms Habitat Project, Pool 5, Upper Mississippi River, Minnesota, Environmental Management Program." [http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Portals/48/docs/Environmental/EMP/HREP/MVP/WeaverBottoms/Weaver\\_Bottoms\\_Pool5.pdf](http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Portals/48/docs/Environmental/EMP/HREP/MVP/WeaverBottoms/Weaver_Bottoms_Pool5.pdf)

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Dan & Cheryl Cutshall <cutshall8@charter.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 17, 2015 9:11 PM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms Restoration

I and my family duck hunt and fish the Weaver Bottoms area. We feel that this restoration would be extremely beneficial for the habitat in that area. Thank you very much for taking the time to protect the future of this beautiful sanctuary.

Dan Cutshall

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Jack Beranek <beranek.jack@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 26, 2015 7:17 AM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Comment on Weaver Bottoms project

I am 100% in support for executing the project in the Weaver Bottoms. I live right on the Weaver Bottoms and have seen the degradation occur since I bought a place in 1996. The sedimentation rate is rather alarming even though I know it is a natural process. The drawdown gave a much needed boost to a moribund habitat and the positive effects are still persisting strongly today almost 10 years after the fact. I appreciate you making that happen too. I would like to see further work done similar what was done at Spring lake over near Buffalo City, WI. I know \$\$ is always an issue. Keep up the good work-We all appreciate it.

Jack Beranek  
12351 598Th St  
Kellogg, MN 55945



**\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Paul Bambenek <Paul@midwestmetalproducts.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 09, 2015 2:55 PM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project

To whom it may concern

Thank you for trying to restore the Goose Lake and landing.  
I have lived on the shore south of the landing for over 20 years.  
FYI The sediment moves up the shore to the north every spring.  
You should try to remove as much of the sediment directly south of the landing as you can.  
From what I have seen over the years the sediment left south of the landing will move north and plug the landing.

Thanks again

Paul Bambenek  
59788 127<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Kellogg MN 55945  
458-2653

To: Charlotte Cohn, EAW Project Manager  
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Ecological and Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4025  
RE: Comments regarding Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project EAW

Ms. Cohn

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the proposed Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement project. The Nature Conservancy supports the overall goals of the project, i.e. restoring and enhancing bathymetric diversity in Weaver Bottoms, but recognizes potential impacts related to the placement of the dredged material. We want to stress the importance of several mitigation strategies listed in the EAW to minimize risks to the area's important herpetofauna, and limit the potential spread of invasive species.

As recognized in the EAW, the proposed placement site for dredged material is in an important area for Blanding's turtles, a state-threatened species, and three snake species classified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. We are encouraged by the concern for these species demonstrated by the Turtle and Snake Avoidance Plan (Attachment F of the EAW), and want to stress the importance of ensuring compliance by the contractors. Awareness of these species and their importance on the part of those working on the site will be crucial to minimizing impacts. For the past three years, biologists with the Minnesota Biological Survey have been conducting inventories on snakes in the Weaver Dunes area. MBS has had biologists stationed in the area, which has done much to raise awareness among area residents. For many residents, the first response on finding a snake on their property is now to call one of these biologists. If that program continues through the period when dredging activities are occurring, MBS biologists could be a valuable local resource for the contractors operating in the area.

Any increase in activity and traffic can increase the potential for the spread of invasive species. The Nature Conservancy has placed a strong emphasis, and devoted considerable resources to controlling invasive species on our Weaver Dunes preserve, which borders the placement site. We want to emphasize the importance of steps to prevent that spread, including those outlined in MN DNR operational order 113. The DNR should also perform follow-up monitoring of the placement site to detect any new occurrences of invasive species should they occur, and be ready to assist rapid response control efforts.

Finally, we strongly recommend that the placement site be restored to a high diversity sand prairie community. As a neighbor of the Weaver Dunes Preserve, an area of outstanding biodiversity significance, the placement site is located in a unique habitat matrix of dry sand prairie and wetland areas. Restoring it to a high diversity prairie would increase the connected area of that community type, and provide additional habitat to the turtle and snake species mentioned above, as well as several ground nesting birds. Diverse and resilient prairie communities are also crucial for struggling pollinator populations.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.  
Sincerely,



Matthew Graeve  
Land Steward – Prairie Forest Border Ecoregion  
The Nature Conservancy

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Chuck Mayhew <mchuck@foldcraft.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 12, 2015 4:53 PM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Cc:** Chuck Mayhew  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project

I have been visiting the Prichard area since 1959. I have lived on Prichard lake right near HA-5 since 1986. The one thing that has been happening every year since the draw down has been dead vegetation drifting in from the south, south west building up the bottom and building out the shoreline. If you are going to spend money and time dredging you also need to find ways to stop the vegetation drift. In my opinion it will take only a couple of years to fill in what you dredge out. I hope you have a solid strategic plan that will prevent this.

Also in my opinion you should expand your dredge line closer to the shore line just north, northwest of HA-5 and continue the line further east/northeast. This is where there has been significant vegetation build over the past five years or so.

Lastly, thank you for giving this project your attention my allowing me the opportunity to comment.

Chuck Mayhew

Sent from my iPad

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** anne yen <squidmonster2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015 8:10 AM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project EAW

Greetings, I am emailing the following comments on the Weaver Bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project EAW on the behalf of Larry Gates, who does not have email access. Thank you!

Anne

### **Weaver Bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project EAW comments**

Larry Gates

15006 E County Rd 14

Kellogg, MN 55945

507-767-3202

Page 3 and elsewhere

I agree that the project will probably enhance overwinter habitat for fish species commonly found in Mississippi River backwaters. What evidence exists that this area will provide critical habitat that is currently not available in or near the Weaver Bottoms?

Does the potential exist for this to be a fish sink? If it behaves to concentrate fish in the winter, will ice fishing pressure remove more fish than if they were dispersed? Does the potential exist to create a small area that increases winterkill from low dissolved oxygen concentrations? Will oxygen levels remain higher in this area longer than in surrounding areas?

Page 4 and elsewhere

The private property where the dredged spoil is proposed to be deposited and spread is a portion of the Weaver Dunes, a rare dry prairie habitat. Large tracts of land adjacent to this private piece have been acquired and planted to prairie with locally harvested seed. If the landowner is amenable to prairie restoration, local source (collected from Nature Conservancy or Department of Natural Resources administered properties in Weaver Dunes) should be used. Do not plant Standard Mix 35-221-Dry Prairie.

Page 5 and 13

It's acknowledged that the hauling of dredge spoil from the landing to the placement site will be a significant increase in traffic. There are current concerns by residents that traffic is increasing and dust from traffic is a

problem. There has been discussion about having all or some portion of this road asphalted. An asphalt road would increase mortality of herpetofauna. Dust control, grading, gravel placement, etc., should be done to minimize concerns about increased road traffic due to the project. No activities should be undertaken (e.g. access improvements) to hasten the hard surfacing of this road.

Page 8

The ecological values of the Weaver Dunes are vastly understated.

Page 8

Are dunes, active sand blowouts, other features of the Weaver Dunes considered to be geological features?

Page 15 and elsewhere

The desired ecological outcome for the private property on which the spoil is proposed to be placed is to restore it to dry prairie. The addition of spoil and increased organic content is not necessary and is counter to the goals for the Weaver Dunes.

Page 16

The North American Racer is found in the vicinity of the dredge material placement area. It is classified as special concern.

General

If this project simply creates a place in which to concentrate overwintering fish and to make them vulnerable to angling, it should not be done. It will for the time that it operates this way create a demand for similar projects that are short-lived, expensive, and distracting from the larger issues (e.g. altered hydrology, sedimentation, locks and dams) affecting the Mississippi River.

What is the estimated cost?

How will the project be evaluated to determine hoped for outcomes?

Larry Gates

--  
Natural Science Illustrator

[anneyn.com](http://anneyn.com)

Thank you very much!

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** anne yen <squidmonster2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015 8:48 AM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver Bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project EAW

Anne Yen  
59818 124th Ave  
Kellogg MN 55945  
(646) 269-3330

My greatest concern is of the increased traffic that will result during the dredging process (60 to 70 trucks per weekday) and the subsequent public traffic that will result from the improved fishing that will supposedly be the outcome of this project. I live on 124th Ave for most of the year for the last 3 years, within 1/2 mile from where the proposed project activity will take place. I also work in Weaver Dunes. In other words, I spend nearly all of my time here when I am at this address.

In my observations, with just the local residential traffic alone, many turtle (especially hatchling) and snake deaths occur on these roads (Pritchard Rd and CR 84). Most of these local residents have a minimal awareness of the rich amphibian and reptile population that reside here. These road mortalities occur for any number of reasons: speed, not seeing small turtles or snakes, unawareness, or just the nature of driving. And as stated in the EAW, there are species of special concern that use the lands affected by the project area, as well as other species not mentioned such as Northern Map Turtles and North American Racers. The species of special concern reside across many parts of Weaver Dunes and cross Pritchard Rd and CR 84, where they are subject to road mortality by cars and trucks. So to compound the traffic, not only in the project area during the dredging process, but afterwards as a result of the project's completion from greatly increased visitation from the public, will surely impact already vulnerable amphibian and reptile populations (including the mentioned species of special concern) through road mortality for an unknown time into the future.

I feel that these issues were not addressed in the EAW. The EAW describes the traffic issues as being contained within the 1/3 mile of the proposed activity. But the trucks and the workers who need to commute there need to travel in from CR 84 and Pritchard Rd. Will they always consistently carry the awareness of turtles and snakes on the road coming to and from work and throughout the workday? Will all 60 to 70 trucks per weekday look out for these vulnerable wildlife, some of which are rare and of which Weaver Dunes is one of few remaining habitat for them? The precautions for protecting snakes and turtles at and around the work site are only temporary and limited to a small area.

And what about the ensuing traffic that will come in should this project go through and the word gets out that the fishing will have improved? Is it worth opening up a small area to improve fishing, if it will result in that at all, bringing road traffic from project start and into the indefinite future right through an amphibian and reptile rich area that is already imperiled and impacted by human activity? If you ask some of the old timers here of what has changed a lot in the last few years, they will say "more traffic". We fear at some point folks will start to say "there used to be snakes and turtles here."

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,  
Anne Yen

--  
Natural Science Illustrator

[anneyen.com](http://anneyen.com)

Thank you very much!



# 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](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) | Equal Opportunity Employer

September 16, 2015

Ms. Charlotte W. Cohn  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

Re: Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5) Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project

Dear Ms. Cohn:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5) Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project (Project) located in Wabasha County, Minnesota. Regarding matters for which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has regulatory responsibility and other interests, the MPCA staff has the following comments for your consideration.

After reviewing the Weaver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration EAW, the project dredging operation for sediment removal, will not change or alter the Type 5 wetland located in the Project boundary. However, to reduce or eliminate sediment from entering the Mississippi River, the dredging techniques mentioned in the EAW must be followed. In addition to the dredging techniques, in-water Best Management Practices, such as a silt curtain around the dredging area, must be installed.

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 651-757-2482.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Kain".

Kevin Kain  
Planner Principal  
Environmental Review Unit  
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK:bt

cc: Dan Card, MPCA, St. Paul  
William Wilde, MPCA





# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge  
Winona District  
51 E. Fourth Street - Room 203  
Winona, Minnesota 55987

September 16, 2015

Charlotte Cohn, EAW Project Manager  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological and Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

RE: Waver Bottoms Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project EAW

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5) Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Project (herein referred to as the Project).

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge) is pleased with, and fully supportive of, the Project occurring on Refuge owned lands. We thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for expending Lessard-Samms Outdoor Heritage Funds on a habitat improvement project that will benefit not only fish and wildlife but people who utilize these resources for many years to come.

The absence of a draft EAW for agency review dictates that the Refuge provide comments regarding the Project through the public comment period. The Refuge offers the following for the public record:

**Item 6.b. Project Location:** This section should indicate that the Project is taking place on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fee-title lands that are managed as part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

**Item 6.b. Project Design and Operation Methods:** The dredging section describes a backhoe on a barge with an additional storage barge on site. How will these two barges be moved? Will a pusher-boat be used? Will the landing be dredged to allow this type of equipment to float to the dredge cut or will the backhoe pull the barge(s) into position?

There is no description regarding site preparation on the private land that will be used as the dredge material placement site. It appears that trees and shrubs will need to be removed from this site. The area of clearing is shown on Figures 3 and 5. What tree/shrub species and how many will be removed from the site? When will site preparation be accomplished? If there are trees that could potentially serve as roost or brood trees for Northern Long-eared Bats, clearance for the tree removal will be needed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Office, Twin Cities Field Station as this bat is a federally listed species (threatened) known to occur in Wabasha County.

What is the timeframe for establishment of vegetation on the dredge placement site? How long will the silt fence be in place?

**6.b. Timing and Duration of Activities:** Due to the hunting pressure on Weaver Bottoms, the Refuge will require that all in-water work be completed prior to the opening of the MN Regular Waterfowl season (September 26 in 2015) and in-water work must not occur during either the MN or WI early teal season (MN did not conduct an early teal season in 2015 but WI conducted a hunt September 1-7, 2015).

The EAW does not list a year for the Project to occur.

**6.c. Explain the project purpose:** The Refuge is 261 miles long.

The benefits listed include an estimate of anglers (both summer and winter) that use Pritchard Lake Landing. It should be noted that this is also a heavily used landing by waterfowl hunters gaining access to Goose Lake and Weaver Bottoms. Over the past 10 years, approximately 30 hunters/weekend day use the landing for waterfowl hunting. Improvements to both the habitat and access would likely draw hunters that currently use the Weaver and Halfmoon Landings.

**8. Permits and approvals required:** A Special Use Permit will be required from the Refuge to conduct work on Refuge lands upon receipt of all other required permits for the Project.

It is unclear from reading the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) correspondence (Attachment E) if the SHPO reviewed the in-water site as well as the placement site. The in-water site will require review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Historic Preservation Officer for concurrence/clearance before the Project can proceed.

**11.b.iv. Water resources:** The Refuge is 261 miles long.

**12.d. Contamination/Hazardous Materials/Wastes:** The EAW states that all fueling will be done off-site or with fuel transport vehicles. Given that it is not clear as to how the barges will be moved around the Project site, if a fuel tank becomes a necessity on a barge for fueling of the backhoe or a pusher boat, a plan for overwater containment will be required.

**13. d. Fish, wildlife, plant communities, and sensitive ecological resources (rare features):** The project will be restricted to being completed prior to the opening of the MN regular waterfowl season. In-water work will also not be allowed during any early teal season held by either MN or WI.

Please contact me at 507-494-6229 if and clarification is required regarding the above comments and questions.

Sincerely,

Mary Stefanski  
Winona District Manager

## **\*Review, Environmental (DNR)**

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**From:** Jen Wahls <jenwahls1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015 2:33 PM  
**To:** \*Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Weaver bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Jen Wahls <[jenwahls1@gmail.com](mailto:jenwahls1@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015  
**Subject:** Weaver bottoms aquatic habitat restoration project  
**To:** [environmentalreview@state.mn.us](mailto:environmentalreview@state.mn.us)

Charlotte, thank you for taking comments on Weaver. Overall, I would like to see more facts and numbers to support the comments in the eaw. Maybe those come out later. Is the landowner getting paid for the deposition of dredge material? If so, how much? From page 7 please define light agricultural. Provide a list of agencies/interests/units that were contacted. Need to review local water plan as tmosthe one listed is outdated, there is a current one. There is speculation with this plan. Reptiles will be impacted with disturbed nests, hatchling will be squished due to increased vehicle traffic during the project and post based on anticipated increases in usage. Page 16 lists the unique elements of the area and that is reason enough not to do the project. There will be increased pressure on fish and waterfowl in a concentrated area. Again, based on anticipated increases there will be increased pollutants from vehicles, boat and personal watercraft. Would doing more drastic, prolonged draw downs have similar effects with less cost monetarily and ecologically? The sedimentation is related to poor land use, predominantly agricultural. An agreement needs to be drafted with the landowner that it will not be one corn and soybeans but native habitat so as to minimize the impacts to wildlife and water resources. The souls are well draining with high water tables that can quickly be altered by chemical applications that we don't yet know the total impacts of. Finallt, speculation on reduction of AIS on page 14. The spread could increase because of more users. I would like to see the science behind the increased diversity by increasing the depth by 4 feet. Regards, Jen Wahls



**Minnesota Department of Transportation**

District 6, Rochester/Owatonna  
2900 48<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Rochester, MN 55901-5848

Office: 507-286-7680  
Fax: 507-285-7279  
gregory.pates@state.mn.us

September 15, 2015

Charlotte W. Cohn, Environmental Review Project Manager  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025



RE: EAW for the proposed Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5) Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Project, Minneiska Township, Wabasha County  
US 61 CS 7904

Dear Ms. Cohn:

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) District 6 Planning has reviewed the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the proposed Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5) Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Project, in Minneiska Township, Wabasha County.

In regards to state transportation systems, MnDOT finds that:

- The EAW is accurate and complete, and that there are no potential state transportation system impacts that may warrant further investigation before the project is commenced.
- There is no need for an Environmental Impact Statement.

Thank you for providing MnDOT the opportunity to comment. If there are any questions, you may contact me or Tracy Schnell, Transportation Planner at 507-286-7599.

Sincerely,

Gregory Pates  
D6 Principal Planner

CC: Greg Paulson, Tracy Schnell, Mark Schoenfelder, Debra Moynihan, File

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