

**Ecological and Water Resources
2115 Birchmont Beach Rd NE
Bemidji, MN 56601**

December 16, 2019

Stephanie Buss
Stevens County Auditor-Treasurer
400 Colorado Ave, Suite 303
Morris, MN 56267

**RE: DIRECTOR'S ADVISORY REPORT ON THE PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING REPORT FOR COUNTY DITCH NO. 5
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, STEVENS COUNTY**

Dear Ms. Buss,

On behalf of the Commission of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), I offer the following comments on the Preliminary Engineering Report for the above cited project, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Section 103E.255.

The Preliminary Survey Report appears to be adequate provided the comments provided below are addressed in the final report.

Recommendations for the Final Engineer's Report:

- Of general concern in all proposed ditch improvement projects is the cumulative effect that the project may have on upstream and downstream water resources, natural resources, and property owners in terms of quantity and quality of water that is received and passed through. Project specific and cumulative impacts from ditch projects can result in downstream flooding, erosion, a decrease in water quality, and contributed to watershed altered hydrology. Describe how this project is consistent with overall state approved watershed plans for the Pomme De Terre River.
- Expand upon the project purpose, describing the need for the improvement project rather than maintenance. Explain why is an improvement project needed at this time (i.e. multi-year crop damage due to flooding, road closures due to flooding, or other structural damages)? Describe the location, frequency, duration, and extent of damages due to flooding.
- To benefit wildlife and pollinators, DNR recommends incorporating a native seed mix. The Board of Soil and Water Resources seed mix for Native Construction (32-241) or the Mid Diversity Moist Buffer South & West (NRCS 342) appear to be good choices.

- To prevent entanglement of small animals, DNR recommends use 'bio-netting' or 'natural netting' types of erosion control blankets that do not contain plastic. These are Category 3N or 4N in the 2016 & 2018 MnDOT Standards Specifications for Construction. Also, be aware that hydro-mulch products may contain small plastic fibers to aid in its matrix strength. These loose fibers could potentially re-suspend and make their way into waterways. As such, please review mulch products and not allow any materials with synthetic fiber additives.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. DNR recommends that the Final Engineer's Report be coordinated with Emily Siira, Area Hydrologist.

Sincerely,



Nathan Kestner
EWR Regional Manager

CC: Todd Larson, County Engineer
Scott Erickson, County Ditch Inspector
Jacob Rischmiller, ISG
Matt Solemsaas, Stevens SWCD
Lynda Ponting, BWSR

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