

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS

CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project

State Project Numbers: SAP 074-628-004 and SAP 074-600-001

Prepared by: Steele County, Minnesota

May 15, 2026

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1.0 STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Steele County, Minnesota, is issuing these Findings of Fact and Conclusions (FOFC) for the CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project to document its decision regarding the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The proposed project includes realignment of approximately 3,305 linear feet of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 28 around Beaver Lake and improvements to Beaver Lake Park, including a relocated boat landing, parking reconfiguration, beach and picnic enhancements, pedestrian facilities, and associated park amenities.

Preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required for this project under Minnesota Rules part 4410.4300, subpart 27.B, for projects that will cause impacts to one acre or more of wetlands within a shoreland area. Steele County, Minnesota, is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) for environmental review of this project.

Steele County's decision in this matter shall be either a negative or positive declaration of the need for an EIS. An EIS must be ordered if it is determined that the project has the potential for significant environmental effects.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

Steele County, Minnesota, acting as the Responsible Governmental Unit, prepared an EAW for the CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410. The EAW was developed to evaluate potential environmental effects and to determine whether preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is required.

The EAW was certified on February 24, 2026, by Ronald Gaines, Steele County Public Works Director, and filed with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) on March 3, 2026. Notice of Availability was published in the EQB Monitor on March 3, 2026. Legal notice was published in the *Owatonna People's Press* on March 12, 2026. The EAW was also made available on the project website and at the Steele County Public Works Department.

A public open house was held on March 19, 2026, to present the project and receive public input. The public and agency comment period was extended and closed on May 1, 2026.

During the comment period, three regulatory agencies—the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Minnesota Department of Agriculture—and five members of the public submitted comments. All substantive comments were reviewed and considered. Written responses to comments are included in Attachment B.

3.0 FINDINGS OF FACT

3.1 Project Description

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

The project area is located in Berlin Township, Sections 21 and 22, T105N–R21W, Steele County, Minnesota, surrounding Beaver Lake, the only lake in Steele County. Existing conditions include a curved segment of CSAH 28 with limited sight distance adjacent to a heavily used public park, beach, and public boat access.

3.1.2 Proposed Project

The proposed project includes roadway realignment to improve safety, roadway geometry, and sight distance; relocation and improvement of the public boat access; parking reconfiguration and expansion; pedestrian circulation improvements; beach and picnic upgrades; and installation of park amenities. The total project area is approximately 11.3 acres.

The project will remove 51 trees and plant 91 trees, resulting in a net gain of 40 trees. Total impervious surface will increase from approximately 3.26 acres to 5.62 acres. Approximately 0.35 acres of green infrastructure is included where soil and groundwater conditions allow.

3.2 Environmental Resources and Effects

3.2.1 Wetlands and Water Resources

The project will permanently impact 2.18 acres of degraded fresh wet meadow wetlands. Impacts were minimized through design refinements developed in coordination with the Technical Evaluation Panel, reducing impacts from an originally proposed 2.34 acres. Wetland replacement will be provided through purchase of 4.36 credits from an approved Minnesota wetland bank, satisfying the 2:1 replacement ratio required under the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act.

Beaver Lake is a 97-acre high-quality lake identified as a Tier One priority resource in the Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. Stormwater management includes a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, erosion control measures, perennial shoreline vegetation, and permanent treatment practices designed in accordance with the MPCA Construction Stormwater Permit.

3.2.2 Fish, Wildlife, and Sensitive Resources

Natural Heritage Review identified the potential presence of state and federally listed species, including bats and migratory birds. Tree clearing will be restricted to appropriate seasonal windows. Replacement plantings will incorporate a diverse native species mix to support habitat and pollinators.

3.2.3 Cultural Resources

A Phase II archaeological evaluation determined that site 21SE0057 is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The project design avoids impacts to the site, and consultation was completed with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office in accordance with Section 106 requirements.

3.2.4 Air Quality, Greenhouse Gases, and Noise

Construction-related greenhouse gas emissions are estimated at approximately 344.24 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent and represent a short-term impact. No long-term air quality impacts are anticipated. Construction-related noise will be temporary and managed through standard construction practices and applicable local requirements.

3.2.5 Transportation

Average daily traffic on CSAH 28 is projected to increase modestly from approximately 600–800 vehicles per day to 700–1,000 vehicles per day. These volumes do not meet thresholds requiring a Traffic Impact Study. The roadway realignment will improve safety and visibility for both motorists and park users.

3.3 Findings Regarding Criteria for Significant Environmental Effects

Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, subpart 7 requires consideration of four criteria in determining the need for an Environmental Impact Statement.

3.3.1 Type, Extent, and Reversibility of Effects

Environmental effects associated with the project are limited in scope, well-defined, and either temporary or effectively mitigated through wetland replacement, stormwater treatment, vegetation replacement, avoidance of sensitive resources, and regulatory permitting. Steele County finds that the type, extent, and reversibility of effects do not indicate the potential for significant environmental impacts.

3.3.2 Cumulative Potential Effects

No related or reasonably foreseeable future projects have been identified that would result in significant cumulative environmental impacts when considered with this project. Applicable watershed-scale plans and regulatory programs address cumulative concerns.

3.3.3 Mitigation by Ongoing Public Regulatory Authority

Environmental effects are subject to mitigation and oversight through ongoing federal, state, and local regulatory programs. Required approvals and permits documented to date include those identified in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 – Agency Approvals and Permits

Unit of Government	Permit / Approval	Status
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources / Local LGU	Wetland Conservation Act (Notice of Decision)	Issued
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit	Required
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit	Required, if applicable
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Natural Heritage Review	Completed
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 Consultation	Completed
Minnesota Department of Transportation	State Aid Project Review and Approval	Ongoing

3.3.4 Anticipation and Control Through Environmental Studies

Environmental effects are well understood and have been evaluated through the EAW, wetland delineation and Technical Evaluation Panel review, Natural Heritage Review, archaeological investigations, stormwater modeling, and watershed planning documents. Steele County finds that these studies provide sufficient information to anticipate and control environmental effects without preparation of an EIS.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the Findings of Fact, the EAW record, and evaluation of the criteria in Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, subpart 7, Steele County determines that the CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects.

A **Negative Declaration** on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement is therefore appropriate.

Appendix A- Public Involvement: EAW Comment Period

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EQB Monitor, March 3, 2026

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board sent this bulletin at 03/03/2026 12:00 PM CST



Weekly announcements and environmental review notices

Volume 50, Number 9

March 3, 2026

Announcements

City to City conversation on Pollinators Workshop

Learn details about how two Minnesota cities participate in pollinator-friendly programs and learn how to make your city more pollinator friendly at the City to City Pollinators Workshop. This workshop is geared towards city officials, staff, and volunteers.



Date: Thursday, March 12

Time: 12:00 – 1:15 p.m.

[Register on Teams](#)

Minnesota Environmental Review Climate Calculator v1.2

The Minnesota Environmental Review Climate Calculator has been updated! Based on user feedback, the calculator's functionality has expanded to include quantitative mitigation, expanded wetland land types, and alternative calculation methods for some emission sources. The new version and accompanying documentation are available on EQB's [Climate assessments webpage](#).

Join us for a training on the calculator's latest updates:

Date: Monday, March 16

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Join [via Teams](#)

Additional trainings will be announced at a future date. If you have any comments or questions on the calculator or the training sessions, please email [Stephanie Aho](#).



Environmental review project notices

EQB publishes environmental review notices provided by responsible governmental units. For more information on a project undergoing environmental review, click on the individual project links below. You can also find information about active projects in your community on the [Environmental Review Projects Interactive Map](#).

Watten Ponds 2nd Addition

Location: Shorewood, Hennepin County

Process: Petition

Step: Environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) needs decision

Responsible governmental unit decision: EAW required

Responsible governmental unit decision date: February 23, 2026

Responsible governmental unit and contact: City of Shorewood, [Jake Griffiths](#), 952-960-7909

[Rethinking I-94](#)

*This project notice was published in the January 6 and February 3, 2026 *EQB Monitors* with the end of comment period listed as March 9. The comment period has been extended per the below.

Location (city/township; county): Minneapolis and St. Paul; Hennepin, Ramsey

Process: EIS

Step: EIS Scoping EAW and Draft Scoping Decision

End of comment period: March 23, 2026.

Project description: MnDOT is providing notice of the Scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for Rethinking I-94. The agency will be preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for improvements on a 7.5-mile length of I-94 between the I-35W and Hwy 55 interchange in Minneapolis and Marion Street in St. Paul.

The Tier 1 EIS will analyze the program area on a broad scale and identify a preferred design for the I-94 mainline and will identify alternatives where access changes are proposed. Potential impacts will be identified around these locations. A program of construction projects will be identified for future environmental documents.

Federal environmental review documents for this project are available as a separate document and has been published as a General Notice. Additional information about the project is available in the Scoping Document (SD), which is available as a separate document. While the SD and EAW have similar information, there are slight differences in the social, economic, and environmental content. Documents can be downloaded from the project website, which also lists locations for in-person review and methods for providing comments.

[Rethinking I-94 project link provided by RGU](#)

Location of public documents: MnDOT Metro District Office, 1500 County Road B2 W, Roseville, MN 55113

Responsible governmental unit and contact: Minnesota Department of Transportation - Metro District, [Mark Lindeberg](#), 651-775-5485

[Airlake Airport 225th Street Reconfiguration and Paving](#)

Location (city/township; county): Eureka Township; Dakota

Process: EAW

Step: EAW available

End of comment period: April 2, 2026

Project description: The project will relocate 225th Street outside the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) at Airlake Airport in Lakeville to address this incompatible land use. The project will remove the existing road and construct a new alignment which will remove it from the RPZ, improve safety, and meet design standards. Situated adjacent to the south metro communities of Lakeville, Farmington, and Eureka Township, the Airlake Airport serves both business and recreational fliers. The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) proposes this project. Eureka Township is the road authority for 225th Street. The

realignment will relocate 225th Street outside of the Primary Surface and RPZ for Runway 12-30. The project includes construction and paving of a new roadway alignment from Cedar Avenue to the south Airport entrance and a new southbound right turn lane on Cedar Avenue to 225th Street. Construction will be contained within Airport property.

Location of public documents: Metropolitan Airports Commission General Offices, 6040 28th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55450

Public meeting date, time, location: March 9, 2026, 5:00 p.m., City of Lakeville John Hennen Pavilion at Antlers Park, 20141 Ipava Avenue, Lakeville, MN 55044

Responsible governmental unit and contact: Metropolitan Airports Commission, [Bridget Rief](#), 612-726-8100

[CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements](#)

Location (city/township; county): Berlin Township; Steele

Process: EAW

Step: EAW available

Joint federal and state review: Yes

End of comment period: April 2, 2026

Project description: Steele County is proposing to realign CSAH 28 to allow for construction of a safe boat landing and parking area for access to Beaver Lake. The roadway realignment impacts a wetland within a shoreland district

Location of public documents: Steele County Highway Department, 3000 Hoffman Drive NW, Owatonna, MN 55060

Public meeting date, time, location: March 19, 2026, 5:30 p.m., Steele County Administration, 630 Florence Avenue, Owatonna, MN 55060

Responsible governmental unit and contact: Steele County, [Ronald Gaines](#), 507-444-7670

[Niron Magnetics EAW](#)

Location (city/township; county): Sartell; Stearns

Process: EAW

Step: EAW available

End of comment period: April 2, 2026

Project description: Niron Magnetics proposes to develop a portion of an approximately 63-acre site in Sartell, MN to construct a manufacturing facility in two phases with a finished square footage of approximately 287,000 square feet. The facility will produce rare earth-free permanent magnets using Niron's novel process and material.

[Niron Magnetics EAW project link provided by RGU](#)

Location of public documents: Sartell City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road North, Sartell, MN 56377

Responsible governmental unit and contact: City of Sartell, [Kari Haakonson](#), 320-258-2171

[Big Woods Business Park AUAR](#)

Location (city/township; county): Chaska; Carver

Process: Large AUAR

Step: Revised AUAR

Project description: The AUAR study area encompasses an area totaling approximately 359 acres on 17 parcels in the City of Chaska and Dahlgren Township, Carver County, Minnesota. The study area is located northwest of Chaska Boulevard and US 212. Two parcels within the AUAR study area are located within Dahlgren Township; these parcels are intended to be annexed into the City of Chaska. Two development scenarios are proposed to be evaluated in the AUAR. Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 both include Business Park (industrial/office) and Commercial land uses.

Location of public documents: Chaska City Hall, 1 City Hall Plaza, Chaska, MN 55318

Responsible governmental unit and contact: Chaska city of, [Elizabeth Hanson](#), 952-448-9200

General notices

Notices published in this section may be required under Minnesota Statute or Rule.

Rethinking I-94

*This general notice was published in the January 6 and February 3, 2026 *EQB Monitors* with the end of comment period listed as March 9. The comment period has been extended per the below.

Notice description: MnDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are providing notice of the Scoping Document and Draft Scoping Decision Document (SD/DSDD) for Rethinking I-94. The agencies will be preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for improvements on a 7.5-mile length of I-94 between the I-35W and Hwy 55 interchange in Minneapolis and Marion Street in St. Paul.

The Tier 1 EIS, which begins after scoping is completed, will analyze the program area on a broad scale and identify a preferred design for the I-94 mainline and will identify alternatives where access changes are proposed. Potential impacts will be identified around these locations. A program of construction projects will be identified for future environmental documents.

A scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for this project is available as a separate document. While the SD and EAW have similar information, there are slight differences in the social, economic, and environmental content. The public has from Jan. 6, 2026, to March 23, 2026 to review and make comments on the SD/DSDD. Documents can be downloaded from the project website, which also lists locations for in-person review and methods for providing comments: <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/rethinking-i94>

Link to additional information: [Rethinking I-94 additional information](#)

Contact: Minnesota Department of Transportation - Metro District, [Mark Lindeberg](#), 651-775-5485

Fish kill reports

Minnesota Duty Officer reports pertaining to fish kills are summarized in the following table, in accordance with 103G.216, REPORTING FISH KILLS IN PUBLIC WATERS, Subd. 2 Reporting Requirement. These reports were received via the Minnesota Duty Officer prior to the submission deadline for this edition of the EQB Monitor. They represent the raw data/information provided by callers. For more information regarding fish kills in Minnesota see the [Department of Natural Resources](#). Call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798 to report fish kills.

Date	Location	County	Waterbody	Species	Count
2/21/2026	Monticello	Wright	Mississippi River	Not specified	592

Submit a notice to the *EQB Monitor*

The *EQB Monitor* is a weekly publication announcing environmental review documents, public comment periods and other actions of the Environmental Quality Board. The *EQB Monitor* is published every Tuesday at noon. Submissions to the [EQB Monitor](#) are due by 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday one week prior to the intended publication date. Please see the [EQB Monitor schedule](#) for more details.

To submit a notice for publication:

[Access the EQB monitor submission service](#)

Questions? Contact EQB by phone at 651-757-2873 or email us at EQB.Monitor@state.mn.us.

For more information on environmental review, please visit the EQB website or contact

us at env.review@state.mn.us.



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NOTICE OF EAW COMMENT PERIOD FOR CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Location: Berlin Township;
Steele County
Process: EAW
Step: EAW available

End of comment period:
April 2, 2026

Project description: Steele County is proposing to realign CSAH 28 to allow for construction of a safe boat landing and parking area for access to Beaver Lake. The roadway realignment impacts a wetland within a shoreland district

Location of public documents:
Steele County Highway Department, 3000 Hoffman Drive NW, Owatonna, MN 55060

https://www.steelecountymn.gov/highway/future_projects_studies.php

Public meeting date, time, location: March 19, 2026, 5:30 p.m., Steele County Administration, 630 Florence Avenue, Owatonna, MN 55060

Responsible governmental unit and contact: Steele County, Ronald Gaines, 507-444-7670, ronald.gaines@steelecountymn.gov

Published in the
Owatonna Peoples Press
March 14, 2026
1524010

Date: 03/10/26

Account #: 521629

Customer: WHKS & CO.

Address: 2905 SOUTH BROADWAY
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Telephone: (507) 288-3923
Fax:

Publications:

Owatonna People's Press

Ad ID: 1524010

Copy Line: Berlin Twnsp EAW Comment Perio

PO Number:

Start: 03/14/26

Stop: 03/14/2026

Total Cost: \$87.18

of Lines: 46

Total Depth: 5.111

of Inserts: 1

Ad Class: 155

Phone # (763) 691-6000

Email: publicnotices@apgsomn.com

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For information on MnDOT projects in the area, please visit www.dot.state.mn.us/d6/projects.html

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East Side Corridor - City of Owatonna, Owatonna Township & Clinton Falls Township
CSAH 2-CSAH 43-CR 171-CR 180 Intersection Improvement - Havana Township
CSAH 28 (MN 30 to CSAH 21) and Beaver Lake Park - Berlin Township
Description: This is a joint project with the Parks Department. The first phase of the project scheduled for 2025 includes the following: The proposed plans will improve traffic and pedestrian safety, improve drainage, and restore the pavement condition. A pedestrian/bicycle trail will be constructed from South Beaver Lake Rd to North Beaver Lake Rd. The roadway will be reconstructed on a new alignment around Beaver Lake Park. Improvements to Beaver Lake Park include relocating the boat landing, providing improved parking, and more beach area. A second phase of the project is unscheduled but would include additional park improvements. Construction Dates: First Phase 2025 - 2026 Second Phase Unscheduled More information: A Public Information Meeting was held on August 19, 2024 Preliminary Plans presented at the Public Information Meeting: Projects Phasing Phase I Preliminary Project Layout Another Public Information Meeting will be held later in 2024 or early 2025 to present final plans and construction staging.

Previous Public information meetings were held in September 2021 and February 2022 to gather input on the now completed feasibility report. A Feasibility Report is published with more information: [Final Feasibility Report](#)

Public Comment Period and Open House Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

The official public comment period for the **CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements** is now open. Community members are invited to review the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) and share feedback through April 2, 2026.

View the full EAW here (link)

Please join us for an open house to learn more about the project:

- Date: Thursday, March 19, 2026
- Time: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
- Location: Steele County Administration Center, 630 Florence Avenue, Owatonna, MN 55060
 - Steele County Boardroom

You may also submit your comment online until April 2, 2026, by completing the Beaver Lake EAW Comment Form and emailing it to ronald.gaines@steelecountymn.gov.

- **Beaver Lake EAW Comment Form**
- **Project Layout**

For questions or assistance with the comment process, please email ronald.gaines@steelecountymn.gov.

Subscribe to email updates: [Click to subscribe](#)

CSAH 48 Main Street (Oak Ave to Chambers Ave) - City of Owatonna

CR 180 (School Street) and Mineral Springs Road Railroad Bridges Feasibility Study

MNDOT - US 218 (3rd St SE to MN 30) - City of Blooming Prairie

Appendix B – EAW Comments and Responses

The Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project was published by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) on March 3, 2026. The EAW was distributed on April 1, 2026, to agencies and organizations on the official distribution list, as well as additional agencies/organizations that could be affected by the proposed Project. The Owatonna People's Press published a legal notice on March 12, 2026. A public open house was held on March 19, 2026, to present the project and receive public input. The public and agency comment period was extended and closed on May 1, 2026. Reviewers were invited to submit comments via the Project website form or by mail to the Steele County Public Works Facility, 3000 Hoffman Dr NW, Owatonna, MN 55060.

During the public review and comment period, Steele County received comments on the EAW from a total of three (3) agencies, and five (5) individuals from the public.

Consistent with state environmental rules, substantive comments received are responded to in this appendix, as part of the Findings of Fact and Conclusions for the Project record. Specifically, responses have been prepared for substantive statements pertaining to analysis conducted for and documented in the EAW, including: incorrect, incomplete or unclear information; permit requirements; content requirements. These comments and responses are included in the following pages. Written comments agreeing with the EAW Project information, general opinions, statements of fact, or statements of preference were not formally responded to but are also included.

Responses to Comments

CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements

Environmental Assessment Worksheet Responses to Comments

1. Commenter – Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Ecological and Water Resources.

Comment 1 – tree removal and replacement –

The County has committed to restricting tree removal to protect roosting bats.

Comment 2 – Natural Heritage Review

A new Natural Heritage Review will be completed before the project goes to construction

2. Commenter – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Environmental Review Unit

Comment 1 – Watershed

The shore impact zone will be protected by establishing and maintaining perennial cover

Comment 2a – Stormwater BMP's

Stormwater management BMP's will be implemented on the site in accordance with the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Erosion Control and Turf Establishment Plan which are included in the construction plan set. The appropriate plan sheets are attached to this response letter.

Practices include but are not limited to, bioroll, silt fence, temporary seeding, permanent seeding, floating silt curtain, and storm drain inlet protection.

Comment 2b – Design in accordance with Construction Stormwater Permit

The plans were developed in conformance with the Construction Stormwater Permit. In situ soils which don't allow for infiltration along with seasonally high groundwater table prevent infiltration practices from being used.

Comment 3 – Beaver Lake is a high quality lake deemed in need of protection

Steele County is committed to following best management practices to maintain the high water quality in Beaver Lake. Beaver Lake is the only lake in Steele County and is cherished by all county residents and others.

3. Commenter – Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture did not have any comments.

4. Commenter – Jo Lerberg

Concern for safety is noted. Support of the project is appreciated and noted.

5. Commenter – Abby Hagen

Support of the project is appreciated and noted.

6. Commenter - Karla Christopherson

Support of the project is appreciated and noted.

7. Commenter - Nikki Busch

Support of the project is appreciated and noted.

8. Commenter – Carter Stencil

Support of the project is appreciated and noted.



Division of Ecological & Water Resources
Region 4 (South Region)
21371 Highway 15 South
New Ulm, MN 56073

April 1, 2026

Ronald Gaines
Public Works Director
Steele County
3000 Hoffman Drive
Owatonna, MN 55060

Subject: CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Ronald Gaines,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the proposed CSAH 28 Beaver Lake Park Improvements Project. The following comments are offered for your consideration.

Tree Removal and Replacement

The commitment to avoid tree removal during times that negatively impact tree-roosting bats and nesting birds is greatly appreciated. We recommend planting a variety of native species to create a space that is not overly susceptible to disease or pests that target specific hosts. DNR staff are available to help with a planting plan if requested.

Natural Heritage Review

As noted in the Natural Heritage Review Letter (MCE-2024-00157) provided on July 16, 2024, for environmental review purposes the results of the NHR are valid for one year. If project details have changed or construction has not occurred within one year, the project should be resubmitted for review before initiating project activities.

Regards,

Haley Byron Digitally signed by Haley Byron
Date: 2026.04.01 10:14:20
+05'00'

Haley Byron
Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist
117 Rogers Street
Mankato, MN 56001
507-389-8813
haley.byron@state.mn.us

cc'

Theresa Ebbenga, Assistant Regional Manager

Todd Piepho, Area Hydrologist

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March 25, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Ronald Gaines
Steele County
3000 Hoffman Drive
Owatonna, MN 55060

RE: CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements - Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Ronald Gaines:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the CSAH 28 and Beaver Lake Park Improvements project (Project) located in Steele County, Minnesota. The Project consists of Steele County proposing to realign CSAH 28 to allow for the construction of a safe boat landing and parking area for access to Beaver Lake. 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.

Watershed:

Beaver Lake is identified as a high-quality resource in the MPCA 2016 Cannon River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies Report (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-ws4-23a.pdf>). The report also states that protection efforts should be put in place to keep the quality of this lake high.

Strategies identified in the report include

- Maintain or increase perennial vegetation in watershed
- Protect or restore native riparian vegetation
- Avoid or mitigate future proposed agricultural drainage projects
- Require land in the shore impact zone to be established, maintain, or restored to native/perennial riparian buffer at the time of development of at the time of permit issuance
- Adhere/increase shoreland setbacks

Stormwater:

Comments on the Stormwater section:

- Additional discussion should be included to address the specific best management practices that will be used during construction to prevent erosion and sediment from leaving the site.
- The proposed permanent stormwater management system must be designed in accordance with the requirements of the Construction Stormwater Permit. Infiltration or other volume reduction practices should be considered before the use of filtration or other treatment practices.

Beaver Lake is a Teir One priority lake in the Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) (2020 <https://www.cannonriverwatershedmn.gov/cannon-comp-watershed-mgmt-plan>).

Beaver Lake is one of very few high-quality lakes, fully supporting aquatic recreation, aquatic life, and aquatic consumption in the Cannon River Watershed and the southern part of the state. Due to this status, Beaver Lake has been deemed in need of protection from becoming impaired. It has a very small watershed, area contributing surface water drainage to the lake, which has kept total phosphorus loading to the lake low and has preserved the high-water quality. This water quality could become degraded in the future if phosphorus loads increase or if there is a change to the hydrology. The CWMP calls to maintain or improve the water quality of Beaver Lake; to do so, total phosphorus (TP) must be reduced by 5lbs/year. This reduction goal is based on those identified in the Cannon River WRAPS (MPCA, 2016).

Every effort should be made to minimize the short term and long-term impacts to Beaver Lake, including the protection of riparian/shoreline areas and native aquatic and terrestrial vegetation and minimization of impervious surfaces.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Project. 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 actions 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 by email at Chris.Green@state.mn.us or by telephone at 507-476-4258.

Sincerely,



This document has been electronically signed.

Chris Green
Project Manager
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

CG:kj

cc: Kirsten Dieterman, MPCA
Lauren Dickerson, MPCA
Deepa deAlwis, MPCA
Nicole Peterson, MPCA
Steve Schmidt, MPCA

Kyle Skov

From: Roos, Stephan (MDA) <stephan.roos@state.mn.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2026 3:53 PM
To: Kyle Skov; Eidbo, Forest (COMM); MN_MDH_Review; Townley, Jill (She/Her/Hers) (DNR); Green, Chris (MPCA); Ness, Jenna (PUC); MN_BWSR_waterprograms; Lind, Katherine (DOT); OSA, MN (ADM); Weston, Isaac (He/Him/His) (MIAC); MN_ADM_ENV Review SHPO
Cc: Brandon Theobald
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Steele County CSAH 28 - Beaver Lake EAW

Hi Kyle,
There doesn't appear to any impact to agricultural land for this project.
The Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture has no comments.
Thanks for reaching out,
Steve

Steve Roos

Environmental Review Program Manager, Energy and Environment Section
Agricultural Marketing and Development Division

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155-2538
O: 657-201-6631
C: 612-968-7208
www.mda.state.mn.us



From: Kyle Skov <kskov@whks.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2026 3:21 PM
To: Roos, Stephan (MDA) <stephan.roos@state.mn.us>; Eidbo, Forest (COMM) <Forest.Eidbo@state.mn.us>; MN_MDH_Review <Health.Review@state.mn.us>; Townley, Jill (She/Her/Hers) (DNR) <jill.townley@state.mn.us>; Green, Chris (MPCA) <chris.green@state.mn.us>; Ness, Jenna (PUC) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>; MN_BWSR_waterprograms <waterprograms.BWSR@state.mn.us>; Lind, Katherine (DOT) <Katherine.Lind@state.mn.us>; OSA, MN (ADM) <mn.osa@state.mn.us>; Weston, Isaac (He/Him/His) (MIAC) <Isaac.Weston@state.mn.us>; MN_ADM_ENV Review SHPO <ENReviewSHPO@state.mn.us>
Cc: Brandon Theobald <BTheobald@Whks.com>
Subject: Steele County CSAH 28 - Beaver Lake EAW

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Good afternoon,

Has your agency had an opportunity to review the attached EAW for Steele County CSAH 28 at Beaver Lake. The EAW was mandatory due to wetland replacement within a shoreland district.

Please let me know your review status of the EAW. The Notification was posted on March 3rd in the EQB Monitor and a public meeting was held March 19th.

Thank you.

Kyle Skov
www.whks.com



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CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (EAW) PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM



WE VALUE YOUR THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS!

NAME: Jo Lerberg

ADDRESS: 17 N. Beaver Lake RD

PHONE NUMBER: 515-321-0681

EMAIL ADDRESS: Bojabya@msn.com

COMMENTS:

See Attached

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Unfortunately I am unable to attend tonight's open house due to a conflicting meeting but as a resident of Beaver Lake I wanted to express my opinion on the Beaver Lake Park Improvement Project. I am afraid you will hear from a number of naysayers as they are most apt to be vocal but I want you to know I am very supportive and want to thank you for efforts to improve the gem in Steele County, Beaver Lake.

My family has owned property on the lake since 1938 and family members remember activities prior to that as they are/were residents of Ellendale. We remember when Beaver Lake was an activity destination for swimming, picnicking, boating and all around fun year round. It was an affordable, family friendly and welcoming place. Unfortunately much of that has been lost as Steele County seems to have abandoned the lake and residents have forgotten that Beaver Lake is not a private lake.

I strongly support the current plan with these caveats:

SAFETY FIRST!

1. A walking path will provide safety for residents and visitors alike. The path must extend North to North Beaver Lake RD.
2. An improved beach and picnic area will make the park family friendly but to assure safety, lifeguards must be provided at a minimum on weekends. Beaver Lake for years offered Red Cross swimming lessons. I personally was certified in Lifesaving here. I would hope that this could again be possible and perhaps generate revenue to cover the cost of lifeguards. (St. Olaf Lake has lifeguards, offers lessons and has a concession stand)
3. Improved boat access is badly needed. This will no doubt increase traffic on the lake which needs to be controlled and patrolled. Currently there is little to no presence of water patrol or enforcement of regulations. It is a dangerous situation. I for one would support a maximum horsepower for motors and ban wave boats. A small lake like Beaver is more suited to fishing boats and pontoons and non-motorized vehicles. Skiers do not require excessive horsepower.
4. Improvements to Beaver Lake will benefit all Steele County residents and the cost must be shared by all. This cannot be an effort to increase the already inflated property tax bills of Beaver Lake property owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinions.

Jo Lerberg

17 N Beaver Lake RD

New Richland, MN. 56072

CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (EAW) PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM



WE VALUE YOUR THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS!

NAME: Abby Hagen

ADDRESS: 504 Park Ave W Ellendale, MN 56072

PHONE NUMBER: 5074753336

EMAIL ADDRESS: abbypaigec@gmail.com

COMMENTS:

We are very much looking forward to this much-needed improvement to the Beaver Lake public facility. As a resident of Ellendale and a frequent visitor to Beaver Lake, I believe these updates will greatly improve the safety and overall experience of spending time at this beautiful lake. Enhancements like these will help make Beaver Lake an even more welcoming and attractive place for families to gather and create lasting memories.

My family and I often walk the two-mile loop around Beaver Lake throughout the summer, as many others do. Unfortunately, the section of the loop that follows the road can be concerning, as it has no shoulder and includes several winding areas. Improvements to this portion of the route would make a meaningful difference for those who walk the loop regularly.

Creating spaces where people can gather and build connections is especially important right now. I am excited to see families enjoying the beach, courts, and picnic areas and to watch this space become a hub for community activity.

With these improvements, I also think it is important to consider ways to ensure safe enjoyment of the water. Has there been any consideration

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CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (EAW) PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM



WE VALUE YOUR THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS!

NAME: Karla Christopherson

ADDRESS: 26563 155th Street

PHONE NUMBER: 507-456-3926

EMAIL ADDRESS: karlac0905@gmail.com

COMMENTS:

I can't thank you enough for the work being done on this project, the planning, the grant requests, the meetings. We really appreciate all of the improvements that are being looked at in addition to the new road. While I think everyone agrees a safer walking path is so important, I too appreciate the addition of the pickleball courts, relocation of the sand volleyball and the beach improvements. Having these amenities at this county park are so nice. As someone who is a resident of this rural area and has to drive to neighboring communities, I know the value of having this access closer.

I have attended meetings in person in the past and have seen some of the parking improvements that were considered and really appreciate where you landed. This is going to be so much safer option for folks. Thank you

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CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (EAW) PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM



WE VALUE YOUR THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS!

NAME: Nikki Busch

ADDRESS: 126 23rd Street, Costa Mesa, CA 92627

PHONE NUMBER: 7147213614

EMAIL ADDRESS: wekwe8@gmail.com

COMMENTS:

I have spent a lot of time at Beaver lake over the years and I wanted share with you how appreciative I am with the proposed changes to Beave Lake!

I am grateful for the attention to safety with the addition of the pedestrian/bike trail. This should benefit motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

I am super excited to see the inclusion of the pickle ball courts, half-court basket ball area, volleyball court and updated boat launch with amenities!

Thank you and the team for all your time and effort on this project! I can't wait to see the changes when I visit later this year!

Sincerely,

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CSAH 28 AND BEAVER LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (EAW) PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM



WE VALUE YOUR THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS!

NAME: Carter Stencil

ADDRESS: 11255 SW 72nd Avenue Ellendale, MN 56026

PHONE NUMBER: 507-461-7571

EMAIL ADDRESS: stencilcarter@yahoo.com

COMMENTS:

This project will allow a much needed improvement to an already busy lake environment. Sure, this may promote an influx of recreational traffic to an already busy lake. However, to manage the already busy atmosphere with creating a safer transition of people and watercraft with this project, there will hopefully be less incidents at the boat landing and near the parking lot. I live north of the lake about 2.5 miles but regularly visit the beach in the summer. Shade trees next to the beach are difficult to secure on nice summer days. The idea of shade umbrellas is a must. The pickleball court will be an excellent addition to the lake as well with many individuals participating in the sport during the spring and summer months.

To have activities near the lake that would potentially mitigate traffic on the lake itself will be brilliant. Along with making the safer transition to manage if it does become busier than it already is. This project definitely has my approval.

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