December 5, 2019

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Office Building, Room 95
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Landowner Opposition to Funding of Roseau Lake Restoration Project, Roseau County, MN and Request that LSOHC Deny Funding Extension to MDNR and/or RRWD

Dear Director Johnson:

I am writing as part of a coalition of tax-paying farmers in Roseau County. Multiple affected farmers/landowners, including myself and many of my relatives, do not agree with the planned Roseau Lake Restoration project. For the reasons stated in this letter, we respectfully request that you deny the extension and not approve any future funding of this project.

A professional engineer, with a background in water resources, Patrick Nortz, has reviewed the HDR Engineering Report (June 2019) [the Report] and other technical documents provided by Roseau River Watershed District. Mr. Nortz has identified several technical reasons why it is not sensible to proceed with the construction of this project. Mr. Nortz identified the following MAJOR items from his review about the project.

1. Downstream flood reduction is minimal.
2. The project cost is not justified.
3. The engineer's cost estimate is low. The assumed per-acre unit price of $750 underestimates the actual per acre cost by thousands and the overall project cost by millions.
4. Improvements to ecology and wildlife are not justified.

Additional considerations that are not addressed in the Report or are otherwise problematic are described below.

1. Impact to Thousands of Acres of Tax Generating Farmland

The local farmers understand that several thousand acres of their tax-generating farmland, including property of my relatives and me, are proposed to be taken by eminent domain or forced to agree to a flood easement in the Roseau Lake project area. The degree of impact is not appropriate for a miniscule downstream flood reduction (5 percent, per above comments).
2. **Unreasonable Take**

If the landowners agree to flood easement, they will be agreeing to increased flooding on their property created by the project. This does not make sense since taking of the land has little downstream flood reduction. We believe this project is an example of an overreach on the part of the state in taking more property purely because certain people want more land for hunting and fishing.

3. **Lack of Landowner Notification**

Most of the farmers in the project area had not been notified during the early stages of the project as to how this project will impact their land. Some of us have only been informed of the project in the past few months. As we now understand, this project has been in the planning stages for several years.

4. **Flooding will Be Worse in Roseau Lake Area**

The operation plan in the Report talks about how this project will add gates to control flow into the Roseau Lake Bottom in order to fill the lake at certain times of the year. We believe such operations will cause more frequent flooding of farmland east and south of the lake, possibly deeming the land unfarmable. Because of that, we cannot accept flood easements that RRWD has suggested they will offer.

5. **Disrespect to Landowners**

I have been on the Project Work Team for this project as a Landowner Representative. I have sat in multiple meetings run by the Roseau River Watershed District for this project. My attendance at many project meetings over the past two years feels like a waste of my time. The Roseau River Watershed District staff doesn't want to hear my concerns. They don’t seem to care about landowners.

I have heard on more than one occasion that RRWD wants to take our property by eminent domain if we don’t agree to sign flood easements or sell our property, which is very concerning to me.

Even though the LSOHC funding cannot be used for eminent domain, your approval of this money will only encourage the RRWD and the DNR to find other money to take our properties. This seems really wrong.

6. **Most Project-Area Landowners Unwilling to Sell**

Most of us in the Roseau Lake project area don’t want this project, so why does the state and the RRWD continue to push for it? And why would this committee continue to approve funding for it?

7. **Inadequate Response to Information Requests**

The Roseau River Watershed District and their engineering consultant have looked at all sorts of options for the project, but we are still waiting to see a map that clearly shows which properties will be affected by flooding after the project is completed and how much. One of our coalition members
hired an attorney and an engineer to get help. Nearly all landowners stand behind the conclusions by the engineer that this project is ill-conceived and will provide minimal additional wildlife habitat or recreational benefit. We farmers may not be engineers, but we do understand how water flows and a bit about wildlife, as we live with it every day. The attorney and engineer have made reasonable requests for essential project information and the RRWD can’t seem to provide it. At this stage in a project it makes no sense that RRWD and DNR lack such information as to the property they want, possible flooding impacts of the project on private agricultural land, and more. If RRWD and DNR cannot meet the requests for information, how do you think they will get this project done?

Again, our coalition of taxpaying landowners does not agree with the purpose and planned outcome of this proposed project. Our opposition is demonstrated with the following documents attached to this letter.

- Map showing parcels whose property owners oppose the project.
- Signatures of opposing landowners
- Typed list of opposing landowners, most associated with the signatures and mapped parcels.

We respectfully request that you deny the current request for extension and not approve future funding of this project. This project is a waste of taxpayer dollars and, if the project is built, could make thousands of taxpayer acres unfarmable.

I can be reached at 218-469-2296 if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Mitch Magnusson
Farmer/Landowner
Roseau County Minnesota

Attachments (listed above)

CC: Affected Landowners
= opposed to Roseau Lake Rehabilitation
Matt Magnusson  Brian Rice
Monica Bohmen  Sheldon Rice
Lavern Johnson  Mark Dokken
Leroy Norstibon  John Douglas
Vern Rugland  Greg Halverson
Gaydon Rugland  Greg Welin
Erik Pederson  Casey Pierson
Travis Pederson  Rachel Welin
Dean Przekwas  Andy Baroos
Dale Przekwas  Gary Przekwas
Hunter Oleray  Steve Kuien
Jason Fuller  Sheldon Larson
Erik Knutson  James Halverson
Sharien Pederson  Jean Pederson
Heather Magnusson  Chris Johnson
Burt Basset  Alex Johnson
Bob Bytaglien  Glen Holm
Tom Ostby  Yhore Magnusson
Kris Ostby  Dawn Magnusson
Lisa Pederson  Jeremy Kuien
Lynn Pederson  Pat Kuien
Dawn Knutson  
Chris Knutson  
Lewis Hayes  
Curtis Ponto  
Steve Tobin  
Mitch Magnusson