

Tom Dimond
2119 Skyway Drive
Saint Paul, MN 55119

SF 3359 / HF 3627 - Pollution cleanup and natural resource restoration in our National Park

Saint Paul's Mayor and City Council unanimously support Resolution 22-69, the pollution cleanup and natural resource restoration of Pig's Eye Landfill. The area is BIPOC Majority and Economically Disadvantaged.

This area has been disadvantaged when it comes to access and use of safe, healthy, and welcoming natural resource opportunities. Our great natural resources within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area have instead been used as a place to dump waste/pollutant. The barriers that restrict public access to our natural resources need to be removed. Regional Park Plans adopted by the City Council and approved by the Metropolitan Council over 40 years ago promised that park trails, boat access, pavilion, bathrooms, and park signage would be completed within 9 years. The public is still waiting.

Extensive funding has gone into park facilities elsewhere while the BIPOC Majority neighborhoods have not seen the honoring of promises made during 50 years of Regional Park planning, and creation of our National Park and State Critical Area. Equity and equality call for immediate action to provide safe and healthy natural resources accessible for all.

Pig's Eye Lake is a Glacial Lake. It was here before the Mississippi or Minnesota Rivers in Saint Paul. The lakes, wetlands, and flood plain forests of Pig's Eye Regional Park are unique natural resources of great value. The natural resource value of wetlands has not always been understood and appreciated. Filling and destruction of wetlands contribute to a great loss of essential habitat, ponding and filtration of runoff water.

French traders called the lake's vast wetlands Grand Marais. The area was teeming with wildlife in a beautiful setting.

The area remained a largely untouched natural area until recent times. For more than a century, plans called for the whole area to be protected as a natural area for all to enjoy. While plans called for its protection, City resources were focused on creating Mississippi River Boulevard, Reserve Boulevard, Summit Avenue, Como Park, etc... Starting in the Depression the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission and City used the park as a place to dump waste/pollutant into the wetland. This continued through the 1970's.

The upside was the absolute disgust of many watching what was happening to this unique and valuable natural resource. This disgust combined with the growing environmental movement in the 1960's and 70's that called for protection and enhancement of Pig's Eye Lake Regional Park and the surrounding bluffs.

The Regional Park designation, State Critical Area designation, State Scientific and Natural Area designation and Mississippi National River and Recreation Area designation as part of the National Park System established in law the need and significance of protecting and enhancing natural resources and recreational opportunities.

We have seen great progress in many areas to protect and enhance natural resources and enhance recreational opportunities. Sadly, the BIPOC Majority neighborhoods around Pig's Eye Lake have been denied the pollution cleanup, natural resource restoration, and enhancement of recreational opportunities that others have benefitted from. More than 1 in 4 Black and Hispanic Americans live within 3 miles of a superfund site.

The resolution's unanimous support by Saint Paul's elected officials is an important first step to rectify this disparity.

MWCC testing of water discharged into the Mississippi River looked good. What was not mentioned was the MWCC practice of piping polluted waste out the back of the plant and into the park wetlands that feed the Mississippi River.

There is a Heron Rookery protected as a State Scientific and Natural Area/Sanctuary. Water and habitat quality impact the Rookery. Testing of Rookery eggs has found some of the highest pollutant levels found in the world.

Climate change has contributed to more violent storms and deluges of water. We have seen the tragic consequences. Removing pollution and restoring wetlands helps protect BIPOC neighborhoods, our parkland, wildlife habitat, and those downriver who use the river as their source of drinking water and for recreation.

PFAS is a forever chemical that threatens ground and surface water. Now the EPA is warning about 1-4 Dioxane. Highly miscible in water, the US EPA deems this synthetic chemical is a likely carcinogen. It can damage cells in the liver, kidney, and respiratory system. In 2021, the superfund site was tested for 1-4 Dioxane. The tests found 1-4 Dioxane. Cleanup of the site eliminates known and unknown threats.

"Addressing legacy pollution is not only the right thing to do, it also directly benefits nearby communities by improving public health, creating good-paying jobs, and shielding these sites from the spreading more contamination in the event of climate change fueled storms." Senator Tom Carper - Chair of the U S Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

Please support SF 3359 / HF 3627.