

City of Hinckley
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August 18, 2017

Representative Jason Rarick
431 State Office Bldg.
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Grindstone River Dam

The City of Hinckley is asking for your support in encouraging the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to replace the dam on Grindstone River within the Hinckley Aquatic Management Area (AMA) and not remove it as they appear ready to do based on the enclosed letter dated August 2, 2017. The current dam has been in place since 1931 and is deemed to be in "poor" condition by its most recent inspection by dam safety engineers. The City would like to see the dam replaced, not removed. We will be in attendance at the public meeting mentioned in the attached letter to voice our concerns over the DNR plans, which we would like to share with you now.

Removal of the Grindstone River Dam is in direct contradiction to the City's Comprehensive Plan which states, "A fundamental goal of the City is to preserve and protect the environmental features of the community including sensitive habits or ecosystems of the natural environment. To the extent possible, natural features should be enhanced and treated as an amenity". Removing the Dam would drain the reservoir behind it which has been a part of Hinckley since the first Dam was built on the river in 1870. For the next twenty four years the dam was instrumental in the economic growth of Hinckley as a logging town, until the Great Hinckley Fire of 1894 destroyed the saw mills. A hydroelectric dam was built in 1908, providing electricity to the City of Hinckley for the first time. The current dam was built in 1931 and the reservoir has provided outdoor recreation opportunities for the residents of Hinckley for over a century. A boat launch and fishing pier were installed over the years and to this day receive consistent use throughout the year. While swimming lessons are no longer taught on site, many Hinckley residents fondly remember learning to swim in the reservoir.

The Dam also provides flood control for the City. Grindstone River runs through the north side of the City of Hinckley. While heavy rains will always swell the river over its banks, the dam adds a level of flood control that aids downstream properties and infrastructure. One of the City's primary sewer lift stations is within 200 feet of the river, and, while the lift station is elevated and capable of handling

current expected flood levels, removing the dam would put the lift station at a greater risk of flooding. Should the lift station fail due to flooding, untreated sewage would be released into the environment.

In December of 2010 the DNR awarded the City of Hinckley a \$232,500 State Park Road Account Grant. This summer the City and Pine County completed improvements to Dunn Ave North, for improved access to Grindstone River Dam and the reservoir. The grant covered the construction cost of the road improvement, the City paid for the engineering cost, which to date is over \$50,000.00. The City questions why the DNR would spend money improving a road to a recreational area and then remove the feature that makes it a recreational area? Furthermore, the City believes that removal of the Grindstone River Dam is not consistent with Minnesota State Statute 162.06, Subdivision 5, which authorizes funds for "...the reconstruction, improvement, repair and maintenance of county roads, city streets and town roads that provide access to public lakes, rivers, state parks and state campgrounds...".

The City of Hinckley is opposed to the proposed removal of the Dam across the Grindstone River, which has stood in various forms for 147 years. The dam has been an integral part of Hinckley's past, helping it grow as a logging town, providing the first electrical power to Hinckley in 1908, and most recently providing outdoor recreational opportunities to Hinckley residents and visitors. The paving of Dunn Ave North has increased traffic to the Dam by making the area accessible year around as opposed to the dirt road access that was impassable for much of the winter and spring. We look forward to working with you to help support our efforts to repair or replace the Grindstone River Dam in the City of Hinckley, or explore other options to maintain a reservoir suitable for both recreational use and wildlife habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Zeman", written over a horizontal line.

Don Zeman
Mayor
City of Hinckley

Cc:

Senator Amy Klocbuchar
Senator Al Franken
Congressman Rick Nolan
Governor Mark Dayton
Lt. Governor Tina Smith
Senator Tony Lourey
Representative Jason Rarick
MN DNR- Commissioner Tom Landwehr
MN DNR- Director James Leach
MN DNR- Hinckley Area Fisheries
MN DNR- Jason Boyle
City Council