

5-8-15

Letter to Isohc

Dear Mr Johnson, Ms Smith & Associates of Isohc,

I live a mile and a half from the West branch of the Knife River in Lake County. I have lived in the same spot for almost 23 years. I saw the living, active beaver ponds on county land south of my property 3/4 of a mile and the lush habitat it created. I observed the diversity of wildlife disappear shortly after those dams were removed some 10-15 years ago. I and many others like me miss the habitat and lives it sustained. I currently monitor the Knife River as a volunteer for Lake County Soil & Water. I am a member of the Advocates of the Knife River Watershed although I am not a biologist as are most of the other members. I am a concerned, aware, self educated and experienced citizen. I am writing because I am appalled that you are still funding money to LSSA in large amounts for them to create an environment for steelhead to thrive.

First, the idea that the Knife River has to sustain steelhead is becoming absurd in the face of global climate change...it will become ever more apparent that LSSA cannot reduce the temperature of the water or clean the sludge of settled clay and muck off the bottom of the river - only major enough rain/flood events can do that - which when they happen, also alter and destroy habitat for a long time - for a number of species. Sometimes a river never recovers from that kind of flood event.

Two, the beaver have been being trapped out and dams destroyed for the past 15 years and their absence has already created multiple negative situations: 1) for wolves who have had to widen their circle of prey to include domestic animals such as dogs & livestock. Wolves have to rely on beaver for up to 50% of their winter diet. 2) Beaver dams control flow to the river as well as enhance the ability of the land to retain water for aquifers and wetlands, which are of major ecological importance to 45% of all wildlife either seasonally or year round or for mating purposes and food sources. 3) Deer population is low - wolves have to broaden their field of potential diet. 4) Logging has led to less riparian zones for the river and more erosion to cause higher turbidity and less shade, thereby warmer river temperatures. Large beaver ponds actually cool the water and can create a safe place for fish to winter when the ponds are deep enough.

I have lived here and observed life by the Knife for 22 years. Before beaver dams were destroyed there were Moose here. It was not surprising to see them or their tracks. They have been gone since the dams were removed years ago. When we had beaver, there were 3 ponds back there with ducks, geese, loons, turtles, beaver of course, otters, fish galore. Now there are no beaver ponds and the habitat is gone along with all the life it sustained before. Many years ago, the Knife River had plenty of water in it all year and now it gets down to a trickle at times.

Lately, I see less and less life in the river itself. I see no food for any fish. I see a muddy bottom covering the rocks. Spending thousands and thousands of dollars trying to rid the watershed of all beaver as LSSA wants to do will not fix any of that.

People are so easy to sway with fuzzy non-data & mostly speculation --- but I guess the most predictable and typical method is with lots of money or the promise of money. Are the rest of us who love balance, diversity and a healthy ecosystem just supposed to sit back and let a group promote one non-native fish species that has no long term chance (based on rising temperatures due to global warming) to the detriment of all other life?

This is not the way to ecological balance and restoration in the Knife River Watershed. We need to stop killing the beaver and perhaps it can restore itself in time. Better yet - bring beaver back in and let them go back to where they got bombed out of in the first place so they can fix it. They know what to do. They're awesome to watch work and they get far too little credit for all the good things they do. In general, beavers are the keepers of the watershed, not the destroyers. Perhaps our group will look to funding from you or some other source for large amounts of money to *actually* restore the Knife River Watershed in the way nature intended it to be after LSSA spends your money "restoring" it for the pleasure of the anglers only club. I will continue observing the Knife River for evidence of LSSA's success which to me will only be demonstrated by the river boiling over with steelhead beginning immediately upon total beaver removal, their version of river bank mitigation and introducing massive quantities of stocked steelhead to fish for (& then let go again.) Also, non-native steelhead breed with native ones - and is the result of that a desirable game fish?

Thanks for your consideration of this information and these experiences I've relayed and realize these scenarios have played out and been experienced by many others here, like me.

It is too late to do anything about beaver dams now perhaps, but I hope this letter may serve to dissuade future money going towards a one species promotion at the expense of all others.

I hope you may find time to address these issues in a return letter to me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Mary Klausen, Two Harbors MN