



September 23, 2019

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Attn: Mark Johnson
95 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Pigs Eye Island Building Habitat Project

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for taking time to talk with Ramsey County and the Army Corps of Engineers on Monday, August 26th for additional clarification regarding the project background, project coordination / involvement, and project schedule.

Project Background:

The St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) in cooperation with Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department have developed the Pigs Eye Islands Continuing Authorities Program Section 204 Beneficial Use of Dredged Material feasibility study over the course of the last three years. The recommended plan was developed to address the following objectives in Pigs Eye Lake:

1. *Improve aquatic habitat* – Create depth and habitat diversity in Pigs Eye Lake. Increase acreage of aquatic vegetation. Incorporate structural habitat features to promote fisheries.
2. *Improve the quantity and quality of habitat for migratory bird species* – Create suitable habitat for migratory birds such as dabbling ducks within Pigs Eye Lake.
3. *Maintain or enhance the quantity of shoreline habitat* – Protect existing floodplain forest and marsh habitat along the shoreline of Pigs Eye Lake from wind and wave erosion.

Project Coordination/Involvement:

The Parks department reached out to the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Saint Paul District in October 2012 to identify a need for developing a feasibility study within Pigs Eye Lake. Late 2014, the Parks department was made aware funding for the study would be available in 2015. The study was initiated in January 2015 and the feasibility phase began immediately to identify the project scope, objectives, coordination, stakeholders and process for developing the feasibility study with integrated Environmental Assessment (EA).

To ensure there was successful project coordination, regular interagency coordination and sub work group meetings consisting of several federal, state, and local agencies were established to review and discuss all project components identified within the Feasibility Study. Additional groups such as Tribal groups, Friends of Pool 2, Friends of the Mississippi River and the Friends of Parks and Trails were also included within the development of the feasibility study process.

The Feasibility Study with integrated EA was prepared in accordance to local, Minnesota Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and was finalized in May 2018.

If efforts to comply with both MEPA and NEPA processes, there was a concurrent State and Federal public comment period for the Feasibility Study with integrated EA. 30-day public notices for both the State and Federal review were listed on the EQB website. In addition, Ramsey County also used other channels such as newspaper, website, and social media to inform the public of the 30-day public review notices to ensure the public had an opportunity to review and comment. All comments received from both 30-day public comment periods were reviewed and were included in an EA Record of Decision. The EA Record of Decision was included in Appendix A-Correspondence section of the finalized May 2018 Feasibility Study.

Project Clarification Responses:

In June 2019, the County received an inquiry from the City of Saint Paul and in July 2019, the County and ACOE received inquiries from Saint Paul resident Mr. Tom Dimond for additional project clarification regarding public coordination and project intent. In June 2019, Ramsey County submitted a response letter to the City of Saint Paul and in July 2019 both Ramsey County and ACOE submitted a response letter to Mr. Tom Dimond. Additionally, both Ramsey County and ACOE reached out to Mr. Tom Dimond to provide additional clarification by phone and/or in-person meeting. We understand that Mr. Tom Dimond recently spoke to the LSOHC about his concerns with the project and feels like he and citizens weren't given the opportunity to weigh in on the development of the project. As outlined above, the project has followed all state and federal public involvement requirements and the project teams has gone to extraordinary measures to ensure all viewpoints from key stakeholder groups were accounted for. The thoughts and opinions of project stakeholders were crucial components of the final project design.

Project Schedule – Next Steps:

Several components will be addressed further within final design for specific design components of the islands, vegetation design and management, and construction processes for implementation. Ramsey County is planning to run a concurrent process to complete a master plan amendment for the Pigs Eye Lake section of Battle Creek Regional Park along with final design measures. This master plan amendment will address sequencing of natural resource improvements for the Pigs Eye Lake Island building project, other natural resource activities, and future environmental clean-up activities for the Ramsey County section of Pigs Eye Lake and surrounding land area. Additional public involvement opportunities for the Pigs Eye Lake island building project will be completed as part of the master plan amendment and is anticipated to be informative only and will consist of an open house to illustrate final design outcomes as part of the master plan amendment process.

The anticipated project schedule is listed below:

1. Battle Creek Regional Park master plan amendment (Pigs Eye Lake section) – September 2019 – Summer 2020
2. Final Design - September 2019 – Summer 2020
3. Public Open House – Spring 2020
4. Project Construction – Fall 2020
5. Complete Construction - Summer 2022

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 651-363-3786 or email me at scott.yonke@co.ramsey.mn.us. Additionally, all project information including the full Feasibility Study can be found on the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation website at:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/parks-planning-projects/pigs-eye-lake>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott A. Yonke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Scott" and last name "Yonke" clearly legible.

Scott Yonke, PLA | Director of Planning and Development

Ramsey County

Parks and Recreation Department

2015 North Van Dyke Street

Maplewood, MN 55109

651-363-3786

www.co.ramsey.mn.us