

January 29, 2021

Dear Chair Hartwell & Council Members of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to request an extension of the Bois de Sioux Watershed District's \$2,440,000 award for the Mustinka River Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridor Rehabilitation. The Mustinka River Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridor Rehabilitation project is one of the initial phases of the larger Redpath Impoundment Project, and is being actively developed and permitted.

Currently, habitat on the Mustinka River is limited by an Army Corps of Engineer straightening project that took place in the 1950's. Straightening the channel impacted the stream's biology, caused significant erosion, and contributed to downstream flood events. In 2011, the Bois de Sioux Watershed District identified an opportunity to provide off-channel flood storage and rehabilitate the Mustinka River by establishment of a M.S.103D601 project. Since that time, \$12,764,425 has been spent acquiring the vast tracks of land required for the project in addition to developing the final design and working toward completion of the complex environmental permitting. These funds were committed by the Bois de Sioux Watershed District, the Red River Water Management Board, and the State of Minnesota through the Flood Hazard Mitigation program.

The nature of largescale flood impoundments and stream restorations is such that the District can't complete a final design until permitting is done; permitting can't be complete until all lands are acquired, and it is highly beneficial for lands to be acquired voluntarily, without forced condemnation. Our nine board managers serving the Bois de Sioux Watershed District believed it was not in the best interest of the District to condemn lands in order to acquire them – instead, they worked diligently to meet the needs of contributing landowners, ensuring that local benefits were paired with regional and statewide benefits. The voluntary acquisition of the project footprint took a great deal of time and long hours working with landowners – but this also gave us time to work more closely with the DNR, to ensure that the environmental components of the design matched their current priorities. We are very excited to announce that all required lands have been purchased.

We are now working on a dam safety permit, and anticipate that it will be complete in April of 2021. We expect to have our public waters permit approved in June of 2021. Our design plans are at 95% and will be finalized at the completion of permitting.

In 2021 and 2022 the District will be actively pursuing funding partners for the construction of the Mustinka River Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridor Rehabilitation project. This effort will leverage LSOHC funds to the maximum extent possible and it is our goal to begin construction in 2022. We have recently been awarded an additional \$800,000 through the State of Minnesota's Flood Hazard Mitigation program, and will qualify for nearly \$2,000,000 in funds through the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion program. We will also pursue additional funding through the Red River Watershed Management Board and Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Although our plans for construction are aggressive and we do not intend to slow down this pursuit, this project is very complex, and we would appreciate the extension of a more conservative deadline, to June 30, 2025.

Thank you for your consideration,



Linda Vavra
Board President



Jamie Beyer
Administrator



Chad Engels
District Engineer