

March 20, 2024

Dear Chair Hawj and Chair Lillie,

**We are writing to share strong support for the City of Rochester project under consideration** via the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) recommendations that are included within the Legacy Bill (HF 4124/SF 5116): **Silver Lake Dam Fish Passage Modification** funded at \$2.368M.

This project aligns well with the aims of the Lessard-Sams and Legacy amendment to restore and enhance aquatic habitat in Silver Lake and the south fork of the Zumbro River by modifying the existing low-head dam in Rochester. The project ranked second among all projects reviewed by LSOHC, scoring 92.4 out of 120 points. The project benefits include:

- Opportunity to safely remove a costly and aging structure for long-term financial and environmental benefit;
- Improved water quality, with cooler teams, more moving water, and higher dissolved oxygen;
- Improvements will benefit two threatened mussel species, 10 additional native mussel species, and smallmouth bass;
- Increased connectivity in the South Fork Zumbro River network; and
- Allows more water recreational opportunities.

This project has been on the City of Rochester's previous state bonding request list from 2020-2022, a list voted on and approved by our City Council. Our city council remains engaged and is aware of the Lessard-Sams grant potential funding for the project.

We also have had strong resident engagement on this project. A public information session with over 100 people was held on April 6, 2022. In March 2019, an open house about the project showed a 79% support response and 248 online survey responses resulted in a 83% support rate for the project overall. In October/November of 2020, a virtual Open house was held that had another 300 online survey responses and a 75% support rate. Survey results along with materials used during the public engagement efforts can be found here: <https://qr1.be/T8H6>

We look forward to providing any additional information or to answer any questions.

Thank you for your support!



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cc: Rep. Rick Hansen, Chair, House Environment & Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee