

Record of Rainy Headwaters-Vermillion River 1W1P Public Hearing

**at Minnesota North College – Vermilion
& at Seagull Lake Community Center
& online via Zoom**

January 26, 2024

The Policy Committee Chair, Ann Sullivan opened the Public Hearing Session at 10:15 a.m.

Chair Sullivan explained the purpose of the public hearing, summarized the water planning process, and that those that wanted to make a comment for the record could do so. Each person that chose to make a comment would have 5 minutes to speak – stating their name, address, and share remarks.

PUBLIC COMMENT 1: Jeff Hrubes (in person at Minnesota North College, Vermilion), Clean Water Specialist from Board of Soil Water Resources stated Policy Committee has done outstanding work. In addition, the Advisory Committee has done good work coordinating among themselves and with agencies. The water plan process was coordinated well done and developed a very good plan. Phil has done good work and Anita from North St Louis have been helpful with MOAs. Very good process and plan and commend the group for good work.

PUBLIC COMMENT 2: Biz Clark (in person at Seagull Lake Community Center), resident from Poplar Lake at 130 Poplar Lake Lane, Grand Marais stated that the plan is built on voluntary compliance. Being aware of the status of septic systems, shoreline properties, and maintaining shoreline best management practices. Who is going to monitor voluntary compliance since a major aspect of the plan is measuring outcomes? Who did what? Who had septic systems inspected? Who is planting buffers on shoreland properties? All are things that property owners can do to improve water quality.

PUBLIC COMMENT 3: Doug Lande (attending through online Zoom), resident at 9262 Hwy 2, Isabella stated that he is concerned about mining effluent and PFAS chemicals and he wrote a letter during the 60-day public comment period. He would like to see a link in the plan to Amara's law which addresses PFAS chemicals.

PUBLIC COMMENT 4: Carrie Raber (attending through online Zoom), Planning Director from Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and covering for Chris Parthun who was involved in the plan development. She stated it is a well written plan and commends planning partners for a good job, specifically calling out and providing thoughtful considerations that address drinking water protection in the watershed. Their comments were late as their main contact has been out. They appreciate our consideration of them. She provided them in writing to the steering team after the deadline for public comments.

This is a unique area where a large number of residents rely on surface water as well as groundwater for drinking. Therefore, the nature of her comments are calling out distinctions between the two systems and criteria for protecting those that are greater risk. There are four items MDH would like addressed.

1. Page 64- clarify the statement to consider additionally that the East Two River is an important drinking water supply tributary contributing to the Tower-Breitung Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA)

2. Page 88- change instances of “well head protection plans” to “private well head protection plans” to eliminate confusion between the two since State Wellhead Protection is a state regulatory program for public drinking water sources.
3. Page 88- add detail about private wells: that there are more than 3,500 private wells in planning area that range between 3 to over 1,000 feet deep reflective of variable nature of bedrock and course textured soils. Important to note differences in variety of wells and variety of contaminants that can occur. Nitrate isn't a big problem in this area, but they are for shallow wells less than 50 feet deep. Arsenic is a naturally occurring contaminate and is more prevalent in the watershed than in other parts of the state with 9% of the 753 samples collected in the watershed exceeding the standard for arsenic.
4. Pages 90-91, and on page 88 -noting the distinction protecting surface water and groundwater drinking water sources through land use management especially in areas of sensitive geology, areas with highly vulnerable DWSMA, or other areas of high pollution sensitivity identified by the DNR Pollution Sensitivity of Near Surface Materials information or dataset.

PUBLIC COMMENT 5: Kathy Bogen (attending through online Zoom), resident at 271 Loon Lake Road in Grand Marais. Thanked the previous speaker for bringing up topic of surface water. Reiterated that it is a unique area, with bedrock, where wells are impractical for most people. Neighbors along the lake draw surface water for drinking, it is sanitized but is an important drinking water source.

After asking if there were further questions from each location and hearing none, Chair Sullivan closed the public hearing at 10:31 a.m.