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Melrose, Minnesota 56352

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February 26, 2019

Becca Nash, Director  
Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources  
65 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Ms Nash

On behalf of the City of Melrose, we would like to express our support and commendation to your organization for its efforts to be stewards of the LCCMR mission. Attached to this letter is our proposed Phase I of the Sauk River Dam Removal and Rock Arch Rapids Replacement project. We are providing you an updated work plan, budget and supporting graphics and resolution to complete Phase II.

We feel this phased approach is the best solution to the recent about face by the MN DNR relating to their suggested Rock Arch Rapids project. In order to receive permitting for this project, the DNR is now requiring Melrose to draw down Melrose Lake by up to seven feet. This notice was given to the City of Melrose on November 14, 2018. This draw down would eliminate Melrose Lake and return the entire lake into a river again.

The original plan was to construct a rock arch rapids with associated stream restoration downstream as well as keeping the water reservoirs at the current levels. As you can see, this is a significant change impacting over 100 residential lake front properties. We have created a compromise that prepares for the future removal of the Melrose dam after the dam becomes a hazard.

The proposed phased approach includes the eventual removal of the dam but prepares for that by a first phase of downstream improvements that help to restore habitat and improve the overall ecology to the watershed. Attached is the modified Phase I plan that has been developed.

2.

Additionally, it outlines what Phase II could look like. Phase I moves the river channel north allowing for a future removal of the dam and future habitat restoration. The City is committed to completing this phased project. Without Phase I, it is extremely unlikely any sort of future habitat restoration will occur. Attached is a resolution that the Melrose City Council has passed to support the phased approach in addition to a copy of the phased plan we are working with.

Phase I will cost approximately \$1.4 million, which is far less than the complete project which was originally proposed. We acknowledge the efforts of the SWCD and DNR; however, Melrose disagrees with their approach to an all or nothing project, especially when we were given less than 90 days to react to the DNR's requirement to lower the reservoirs by nearly seven feet and ultimately eliminating the entire Melrose Lake. We feel this is a strong compromise and meets the original intent of the application and will ultimately lead to a healthier environment.

This letter is intended to provide additional details as to why the plan has changed and why Melrose made a very tough decision in such a short amount of time. We do hope that a future application for a Phase II is supported by your organization once it is truly needed.

Regards,

**CITY OF MELROSE**



Michael M. Brethorst, MS, ICMA-CM  
City Administrator

c: Senator Torey Westrom  
Melrose City Council  
WSB Engineering

Attachments: 7

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# Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Stearns County SWCD  
110 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South – Suite 128  
Waite Park, MN 56387

Tel. (320)251-7800 ext. 3  
Fax. (855) 205-6907  
[www.StearnsCountySWCD.net](http://www.StearnsCountySWCD.net)

February 21, 2019

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
Attn: Mark Johnson, Executive Director  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
State Office Building, Room 95  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Johnson:

This letter is to update you on the Stearns County SWCD Sauk River Dam Fish Passage proposal that was recommended for funding by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC). Due to design changes and technical recommendations by the DNR and Stearns County SWCD, the City of Melrose is no longer willing to remove the existing dam on the Sauk River. The City of Melrose did propose a phased plan which would leave the dam in place, but the DNR and the Stearns County SWCD did not feel like that would result in habitat benefits or follow the original intent of the application submitted and approved by LSOHC. Considering the above information, the Stearns County SWCD is withdrawing our request for the \$737,000 OHF recommendation by the LSOHC.

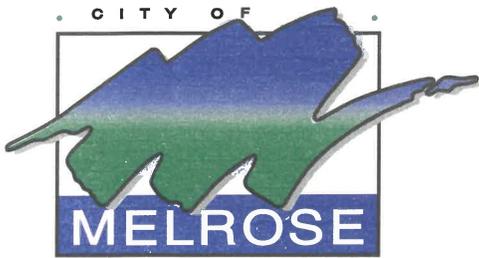
The Stearns County SWCD will continue to work with the City of Melrose to educate and encourage dam removal that will improve fish passage and natural resources on the Sauk River. If the City of Melrose makes a future determination to move forward with an appropriate project, we hope to have an opportunity to pursue dedicated LSOHC financial assistance again.

The Stearns County SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff would like to thank you for your support of our efforts to protect natural resources in Stearns County.

Feel free to contact our office at 320-251-7800, extension 3, if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Chuck Uphoff  
Chair, Board of Supervisors



February 22, 2019

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
Attn: Mark Johnson, Executive Director  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
State Office Building, Room 95  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Johnson

On behalf of the City of Melrose, we would like to express our support and commendation to your organization for its efforts to be stewards of the Outdoor Heritage Council mission. We wanted to provide some additional insight from the perspective of the City of Melrose regarding the Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Sauk River Dam Fish Passage proposal. You recently received a letter from the SWCD withdrawing their request for funding for this project.

They state in the letter that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and SWCD did not feel like that our phased approach would result in habitat benefits or follow the original intent of the application submitted. Yes, it is correct Melrose is no longer willing to remove the Melrose dam. What was not stated, is the DNR stated that since the original application has been submitted and approved, the DNR is now requiring Melrose to draw down Melrose Lake by up to seven feet. This notice was given to the City of Melrose on November 14, 2018 and we had to decide by March 1, 2019.

This draw down would eliminate Melrose Lake and return the entire lake into a river again. The original plan was to construct a rock arch rapids with associated stream restoration down stream as well as keeping the water reservoirs at the current levels. As you can see, this is a significant change impacting over 100 residential lake front properties.

We have created a compromise that prepares for the future removal of the Melrose dam after the dam becomes a hazard. The proposed phased approach includes the eventual removal of the dam, but prepares for that by a first phase of downstream improvements that help to restore habitat and improve the overall ecology to the watershed. Attached is the modified Phase I plan that has been developed. Additionally, it outlines what Phase II could look like.

2.

Phase I moves the river channel north allowing for a future removal of the dam and future habitat restoration. The City is committed to completing this phased project. Without Phase I, it is extremely unlikely any sort of future habitat restoration will occur. Attached is a resolution that the Melrose City Council has passed to support the phased approach in addition to a copy of the phased plan we are working with.

We are actively working with the LCCMR to modify our tentative award to reflect this new phased approach. Phase I will cost approximately \$1.3 million, which is far less than the complete project. We acknowledge the efforts of the SWCD and DNR; however, Melrose disagrees with their approach to an all or nothing project, especially when we were given less than 90 days to react to the DNR's requirement to lower the reservoirs by nearly seven feet and ultimately eliminating the entire Melrose Lake.

This letter is intended to provide additional details as to why the plan has changed and why Melrose made a very tough decision in such a short amount of time. We do hope that a future application for a Phase II is supported by your organization once it is truly needed.

Regards,

**CITY OF MELROSE**



Michael M. Brethorst, MS, ICMA-CM  
City Administrator

c: Stearns County SWCD  
DNR  
Melrose City Council  
WSB Engineering

Attachments: 2

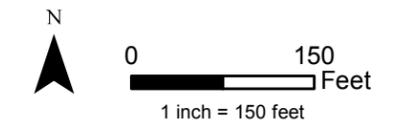
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-  Fishing Bench
-  Canoe Launch
-  Native Trees & Shrubs
-  Streambank Restoration
-  Boulder Clusters
-  Toewood Bench
-  Channel Restoration
-  Riffle Enhancement
-  Rock Deflector



**Sauk River Restoration  
Concept Plan - Phase I**  
City of Melrose, MN  
Sheet 2 of 6



Ecological and Water Resources  
1035 South Benton Drive  
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379

RECEIVED

FEB 06 2019

CITY OF MELROSE  
MELROSE, MN

February 1, 2019

City of Melrose  
Attn: Michael Brethorst  
225 1<sup>st</sup> St. NE  
Melrose, MN 56352

Dear Mr. Brethorst,

This letter is in response to your e-mail message to Amanda Hillman, dated January 15, 2019. Your request for a formal statement regarding permits associated with the Melrose dam is better directed at myself or Jason Boyle, the DNR State Dam Safety Engineer, than by the River Ecology Unit staff. Each permit or project is unique onto itself and the watercourse (and watershed) that is affected. Therefore, it is pertinent to receive a permit application including a set of design plans before a project can be properly evaluated. As you know, the DNR has not received an application for a dam rebuild or modification as that is not being considered at this time. We cannot decisively determine what type of structure will or won't be permitted without a permit application to review.

There are a number of considerations when permitting dam related projects among which include safety, capacity and environmental impacts. I spoke with Jason Boyle about concerns that might be raised regarding the Melrose dam as it is currently constructed. His comments are as follows:

"The current Melrose Dam relies on gate operation to pass the design flood event. We have experienced at least two incidents in the past 10 years [statewide] where a dam failure occurred and gates were not opened. Therefore, we encourage designs that do not rely on gate operation, and have practiced that approach in our designs for large dams owned by the State.

The design flood event for a Class II dam is recommended to be the 1000-year event (guidance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency). The current capacity of the Melrose Dam is not sufficient to safely pass the 1000-year design flood event.

Minnesota rules require that dam projects involving public waters be in compliance with prudent, current environmental practice throughout its existence and that the project represents the minimal

impact solution to a specific need with respect to all other reasonable alternatives. We have many other rules and statutes that are applied in making a permit decision.”

We are willing to sit down with you to discuss permit details related to dam replacement. Early coordination is key in the permitting process. If you have questions or comments regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me by telephone at (320) 223-7844 or via e-mail at [Nicola.blake-bradley@state.mn.us](mailto:Nicola.blake-bradley@state.mn.us) at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Nicola Blake-Bradley  
DNR Area Hydrologist

CC: Tim Crocker, District Manager  
Jason Boyle, State Dam Safety Engineer  
Ian Chisholm, River Ecology Unit  
Luther Aadland, River Ecology Unit  
Amanda Hillman, River Ecology Unit  
Neil Haugerud, River Ecology Unit  
Eric Altena, Area Fisheries Manager  
Dan Lais, Regional Manager

*Equal Opportunity Employer*

## RESOLUTION NO. 2019-16

### RESOLUTION COMMITTING TO PHASE II OF THE MELROSE LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

**WHEREAS**, the City of Melrose on January 3, 2019 approved Phase I of the Melrose Sauk River Dam / Melrose Bridge Project; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to maintain the currently bridge replacement schedule, while ensuring the river downstream is sufficiently prepared for the eventual removal of the dam, the City has determined that a phased approach is necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, Phase I will allow for the design of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE Bridge to be a single span bridge over the Sauk River verses a design that requires a pier to be in the middle of the Sauk River immediately downstream of the Melrose Dam spillway. Without the phased approach, significant modification will be required to the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE bridge and County Road 65 in the future to accommodate the dam removal. Having Phase I completed at this time allows the bridge to be designed appropriately to accommodate the future removal of the dam;

**WHEREAS**, Phase I includes improvements downstream of the existing dam which includes a channel realignment of the Sauk River, stream bank restoration, habitat improvement, removal of hazardous structures, and adding recreational features like a canoe launch; and

**WHEREAS**, Phase II will allow for the future modification to the Melrose Dam and upstream improvements including improved habitat, shoreline, fisheries, environmental and recreational amenities in the Sauk River Watershed. Phase II may include but not limited to a full stream restoration of Melrose Lake or a modified rock arch rapids or similar concept. The exact features of the plans will be determined at a future date, once it is known when the Melrose Dam must be removed and depending on the applicable state regulations, guidelines and recommendations in place at that time; and

**WHEREAS**, Phase I will allow the City of Melrose to prepare for and cost effectively comply with the Department of Natural Resources requirements for designing a water feature to replace the current dam that meets the 1000 – year event guidance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Minnesota rules require that dam projects involving public waters follow prudent, current environmental practices throughout its existence and that the project represents the minimal impact solution to a specific need with respect to all other reasonable alternative; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the City Council of the City of Melrose, that following due diligence and review, hereby declare the intent to implement a Phased approach to improve the water quality, habitat, soils and over all safety of the Sauk River, Melrose Dam and Melrose Lake at such time as factors require the removal of the Melrose Dam.

Adopted by the Melrose City Council on February 21, 2019.