SF4304 Outdoor heritage fund Appropriation and prior appropriations extension and modification

Testimony Opposing Funding for the Roseau Lake Rehabilitation Project

My name is Mitch Magnusson, and I am speaking as one of many landowners directly impacted by the proposed Roseau Lake Rehabilitation Project. I am a member of the Mn Landowners Coalition and am here to respectfully but firmly oppose further funding for this project, based on fundamental issues in the planning process that have undermined its legitimacy and its stated objectives. Today you will hear that there is a major legal case that has been filed by many of us of us landowners.

First and most importantly, three independent hydrologists have now reviewed the project and confirmed that, contrary to the project's stated intent, the affected land will be subject to flooding. This expert confirmation directly contradicts assurances previously given by the Watershed District and further demonstrates that the current approach fails to protect landowners and meet the project's core objectives.

We have already seen 3 feet of water backed up behind the (dam) and on private farmland from the weir that has been put in. They are also building dikes that are 4.5 feet taller than the private dikes that protect these private lands from flooding. Bottom line is that we are already seeing flooding from this project, and it is not even completed yet.

The Roseau River Watershed District initially assured landowners and the public that it would create stakeholder groups, including landowners in both the project team and an operating committee, to ensure meaningful participation and transparency. However, these commitments were not honored. Instead, the Watershed District advanced the project while bypassing landowner involvement in these critical decision-making bodies. This exclusion has eroded trust in the process and raised significant concerns about fairness and openness.

The lack of landowner participation has also resulted in a process marked by conflicts of interest among Watershed Board members and other stakeholders. Without independent or affected landowners at the table, decisions were made that prioritized narrow interests and failed to address the broader impacts on private property and the community. Project approvals were granted despite these procedural flaws, and as a result, the project has not met its stated goals, including effective flood control and protection of private lands.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Council to withhold funding for the Roseau Lake Rehabilitation Project until the planning process is corrected to include genuine landowner representation, address conflicts of interest, and ensure the project will achieve its stated outcomes. Thank you for your attention to these critical issues and for your commitment to responsible stewardship of public resources.