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Date

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Lower Minnesota River Watershed District:

The Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Inc. is a non-profit organization established to protect the integrity of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, increasing public understanding and appreciation of the Refuge, conducting educational and information programs to develop knowledge of the Refuge and to stimulate public and private decisions making and action to improve the quality of the Refuge.

The activities of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (District) are important and are critical to the long-term environmental health and water quality of the Minnesota River. The plants, fish and wildlife of the Minnesota River, its bluff lands and associated wetlands depend on the oversight and action of the District. We share and applaud your work to protect, preserve and make wise use of the ground and surface waters of the Lower Minnesota Valley.

One immediate area of concern that we share is the proposed realignment and restoration of the Ike's Creek spring fed stream which feeds into the Long Meadow Lake Marsh Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to restore the geomorphology of the creek to enhance brook trout habitat and improve the creek's water quality.

To accomplish this goal, the Service proposes to remove old water control structures, culverts, stone and concrete walls and pipes that have been constructed over the past 80 years to facilitate fish rearing. The proposed action will restore fish connectivity between the Minnesota River (via the Long Meadow Lake Marsh), to the spring fed creek, while maintaining public access and enjoyment of the wildlife of the area.

We fully support this proposed action and encourage the District to provide financial, logistical and planning help to make this restoration a model of agency cooperation. The benefits to the fish, wildlife and people who enjoy the resources of the Refuge are enormous. The District has identified Ike's Creek and its surrounding environment as a high value resource area, we encourage your direct support for the Service's proposed restoration plan.

We appreciate your efforts to educate the public on the protection of Ike's Creek by creating educational/informational signage along the creek. And we appreciate your working with adjacent landowners on tools to reduce snow, silt and salt products from entering Ike's Creek.

We also support your development of rules to govern soil erosion and sediment control, floodplain and drainage alteration, stormwater management, and the development on steep slopes within the boundaries of the District. We support your identification of high-level resource areas and bluff protection efforts.

The Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Inc. look forward to working with the Service and the District to help improve the natural resources of the Lower Minnesota River Valley.



Tom Worthington  
Vice President  
Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, Inc.