

Douglas County
Resolution No. 21-64

A resolution concerning the establishment of Otter Tail County Ditch 71 to lower the water level of Nelson Lake and the potential impact on Lake Miltona and other lakes in Douglas County, MN.

WHEREAS, Nelson Lake (DNR ID #56-0065-00) is a 396 ac protected public water with a drainage area of 4.6 square miles and no known outlet, located in the southeast corner of Otter Tail County within the Long Prairie River Watershed; and

WHEREAS, the water level in the basin has risen in the last few years to an elevation where a County State Aid Highway is being impacted and acres of private crop land and shoreline have been flooded or are eroding; and

WHEREAS, Otter Tail County has responded to a petition by residents and the need to maintain the continuity and safety of the public transportation infrastructure by initiating an effort to lower the level of Nelson Lake by six feet through the establishment of an outlet that drains to Fish Lake then on to a series of smaller lakes and wetlands contributing to Dittberner Creek and ultimately into Lake Miltona in Douglas County; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Lake and Fish Lake are impaired for water quality due to the presence of high levels of phosphorus, a nutrient often used in crop fertilizers that can lead to eutrophication in lakes and a subsequent decline in water quality, which could be transported downstream via Dittberners Creek to Lake Miltona where it may have a detrimental effect on water quality; and

WHEREAS, Lake Miltona and downstream Lake Ida in Douglas County have been identified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and listed in the Douglas County Water Plan as Lakes of Phosphorus Sensitivity Significance classified as "high quality, unimpaired lakes at greatest risk of becoming impaired" due to nutrient pollution and are therefore vulnerable to additional phosphorus inputs; and

WHEREAS, a preliminary engineer's report provided limited information on the potential impact of phosphorus transported by the proposed Otter Tail County Ditch 71 to downstream lakes while the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Douglas County Lakes Association, and other entities have indicated that additional data collection and modelling will be necessary to better assess potential downstream impacts of the proposed new ditch; and

WHEREAS, Douglas, Otter Tail, Todd, and Morrison Counties are engaged in the development of a Comprehensive Watershed Plan called One Watershed, One Plan in a cooperative effort to protect and improve water quality, increase habitat health, and improve the overall condition of the Long Prairie River Watershed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners hereby encourages the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners and the Otter Tail County Drainage Authority to engage in a more thorough analysis of any and all alternatives to alleviate the high water issues of Nelson Lake that do not include draining water to flowages that contribute to high-quality unimpaired lakes with elevated nutrient sensitivity in Douglas or other counties; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Douglas County Board of Commissioners hereby agrees with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District that a more detailed assessment of the potential for phosphorus from Nelson Lake to cause downstream impacts, that includes additional water sampling and modeling and considers mitigation strategies that greatly limit or eliminate additional downstream phosphorus loading to Lake Miliona, be conducted; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners hereby requests the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners and the Otter Tail County Drainage Authority to suspend any further action on the establishment of Otter Tail County Ditch 71 and incorporate the Nelson Lake flooding as a high-priority issue to be resolved through the multi-county Long Prairie River Watershed Comprehensive Plan effort known as One Watershed, One Plan.

Dated at Alexandria, Minnesota this 1st day of June 2021.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DOUGLAS COUNTY, MINNESOTA



Jerry L. Rapp, Chair


ATTEST

Heather H. Schlagen, Coordinator
Clerk of the Board
Douglas County, Minnesota