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WHITE BEAR/VADNAIS HEIGHTS PRESS 7A

## Water concerns may be unfounded in pipeline project

BY DEBRA NEUTKENS  
 EDITOR

ST. PAUL — Water quality worries involving the lake giving the water and the lake receiving it in a pipeline project were downplayed in correspondence from a St. Paul Regional Water Services authority (SPRWS).

Representatives from Friends of White Bear Lake, the group pushing for augmentation, and Vadnais Heights City Councilman Bob Fletcher met with the St. Paul utility's assistant general manager late last month to discuss impacts on water quality for both Vadnais and White Bear Lake.

Fletcher asked Jim Graupmann, a long-time manager with SPRWS, to outline the information he shared with the group in a letter. "I am sure other policymakers and citizens will want these facts before they make decisions on the future of the augmentation proposal," Fletcher said. "Obviously, our hope is to determine whether or not there is significant impact on future water quality of Vadnais Lake."

Graupmann assured Fletcher their No. 1 strategic goal is water quality.

"No one cares about the water quality of Vadnais Lake more than we do at SPRWS," Graupmann wrote. "With that said, we do not have many concerns about what this proposed augmentation would do to the water quality of Vadnais Lake."

The Press was provided a copy of the letter addressed to Fletcher and cc'd to Friends' members Brian McGoldrick, Harry Melander and Jim Markoe.

According to Graupmann, adding the proposed 2 billion gallons per year to the flow of river water through Vadnais Lake

has been done before. In the last few years, the utility has been diverting an average of 15 billion gallons through Vadnais and that trend is declining.

"Adding 2 billion gallons would take us up around 17 billion gallons," Graupmann said. "We took roughly that amount in 2007, more than that in 2003 and more than 19 billion gallons in 1988. We did not see a negative effect on water quality in any of these years."

In fact, continued Graupmann, the opposite is more often the case.

The highest phosphorus levels seen in the lake in recent history were in 1993 and 2010, both very wet years when SPRWS took only 14.7 and 14.2 billion gallons, respectively, from the lake, he said.

Explained Graupmann: "When you look at sources of water for the lake, we can say [the water] has come either from the surrounding watershed or the Mississippi River, through our supply system. Because 1993 was very wet, we pumped only 10.7 billion gallons from the river that year; more water than usual came from the surrounding watershed. In 2010, we pumped slightly less than 12 billion gallons from the river, and again, more came in from the watershed."

"River water is actually lower in phosphorus than water coming off the surrounding watershed. In fact, the phosphorus levels in the river have been declining. So contrary to popular belief, the water from the river is actually a better source quality-wise than runoff from the surrounding area. Therefore, taking more water from the river actually benefits the water quality."

Water quality is more than just phosphorus, Graupmann told the group, and the

DNR is doing a study this summer to look at about 30 factors that affect it. Phosphorus, he added, is a good overall indicator of quality.

Demands for water are decreasing, Graupmann noted. The peak year was 1988 when 58 million gallons per day was pumped into the St. Paul system. Last year, the number dipped below 40 million gallons per day for the first time since 1962. "We expect that trend to continue," he said. "The reasons are loss of industry, water conserving fixtures, and cultural change with a corresponding lack of lawn sprinkling."

The St. Paul utility is quite capable of supplying the water to augment White Bear Lake, Graupmann said, without harming the quality of Vadnais Lake.

"We prefer the DNR determine the

outcome on water quality in White Bear Lake with a study; however, we believe that if there is any reduction in phosphorus through a filtering system as will be required, it would be hard to conceive that water from Vadnais will negatively impact water quality in White Bear Lake."

SPRWS is allowed to pump 20 billion gallons per year from the river to serve 10 cities. Since 2010, Graupmann said not more than 13 billion gallons has been pumped in any year. One foot of water from the 389-acre lake is roughly 125 million gallons. Fletcher said he found the information extremely helpful.

"The information presented on past water usage and current trends was enlightening and will be helpful in discussions moving forward," noted the council member.

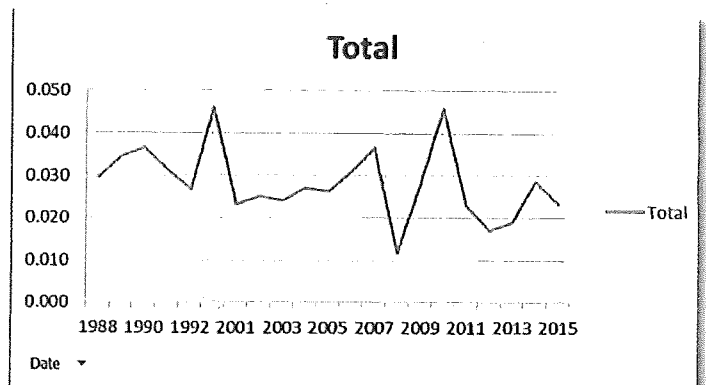


Figure 2 (Vadnais Lake Phosphorus Levels)