



Dakota County Physical Development Division Director's Update

Date: 4/16/2024

Transportation

Refund of Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) Contributions Anticipated

The Metropolitan Council is in the process of closing out their METRO Green Line project with the Federal Transit Administration. The project holds a fund balance of \$18.6 million, including \$5.7 million in contributions from CTIB, that the Council is preparing to return to funding partners including the constituent CTIB counties. Staff is coordinating with the Metropolitan Council for a refund of Dakota County's share of the CTIB contribution, estimated at \$760,000, within the next several months.

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Environmental Resources Department

Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort Media Campaign

The Environmental Resources Department's Groundwater Protection Unit is collaborating with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the County's Communications Department to implement a communications media campaign for Dakota County's Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE) Plan. The ACRE Plan aims to reduce groundwater contamination in rural parts of the county from nitrate, pesticides, and other farm chemicals.

The goal of the ACRE media campaign is to bring awareness to financial and technical assistance opportunities available for landowners to adopt water conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their land. Outreach for the ACRE media campaign will include a graphic and tagline that will be included on all outreach materials, news releases, social media posts, demonstration videos, and radio interviews about available programming and events offered from local, state, and federal agencies. These materials will be released periodically over the next several months. Development of campaign materials was based on stakeholder input from the Agricultural Advisory Group consisting of local farmers and agricultural service providers.

The colors in the graphic below are meant to represent blue for water, gold for cropland, green for trees, and the rising sun represents future generations. The campaign's tagline is "Leave a Legacy" to highlight the importance of doing your part to protect land for future residents.



This is in alignment with [Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#) strategy 1B1 and the [Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort \(ACRE\) Plan](#) tactic 2C.

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Future of Hennepin County Waste Facility May Impact Dakota County

The [Hennepin Energy Recovery Center \(HERC\)](#) is a waste-to-energy facility located in downtown Minneapolis. It is owned by Hennepin County and burns trash to generate electricity. The HERC manages nearly 365,000 tons of a total of one million tons of trash generated annually in Hennepin County, creating enough electricity to power 25,000 homes.

In late 2023, the Hennepin County Board passed a resolution to develop a plan to close the facility sometime between 2028 and 2040. On February 6, 2024, the Hennepin County Board approved four contracts related to HERC operations with extensions through December 31, 2033. These contracts contain out clauses, with one-year notice, related to federal, state or Hennepin County Board actions that could lead to the early closure of HERC. While the facility remains open, Hennepin County is also working to reduce waste generated with development [of a zero-waste plan](#) with a goal to prevent 90% of waste being landfilled or incinerated.

If HERC closes, an estimated 255,500 (70% of 365,000) could be diverted each year to private landfills located in Dakota County. This could result in an estimated \$3.8 million annually in additional host fees to Dakota County based on 2024 host fee rates for out of county waste. Dakota County collects host fees from land disposal facilities in the county to support environmental programs such as landfill abatement, brownfield redevelopment, parks and greenways, and natural resources management. A HERC closure in nine years, for example, could also reduce the lifespan of landfills in Dakota County, primarily Waste Management-Burnsville, closing about 37 years earlier than planned, in 2073 instead of 2110.

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City of Hastings Intends to Transfer Septic System Authority to County

On April 1, 2024, the Hastings' City Council authorized submittal of a letter notifying Dakota County of the city's intent to repeal their Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) ordinance and transfer the regulatory authority to Dakota County.

Dakota County Ordinance 113 states that if a municipality decides to repeal its SSTS ordinance, it must provide written notice to the County of its intent at least six months prior to taking formal action to repeal the ordinance. The council-approved letter dated April 1 starts the six-month waiting period. The target date for program transference is October 1, 2024.

During the next six months, Dakota County Environmental Resources will work with the City of Hastings to review records and develop a plan to ensure a smooth transition. Currently, 25 septic systems within the city will be added to the Dakota County authority area once the city takes official action to repeal its SSTS ordinance. We do not expect to need additional staffing to accommodate the increased workload.

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The Confluence in Hastings Wins Minnesota Brownfields ReScape Award

The 2024 ReScape Awards Celebration on April 4 at the 1893 Historic Grain Belt Office celebrated brownfield projects *“demonstrating innovation, collaboration and exemplary results in revitalizing formerly contaminated land.”* The Confluence received the Innovation Award for a project *“employing unique and innovative approaches to redevelopment challenges in engineering, financing, legal, community outreach or other issues.”* The Hastings Economic Development and Redevelopment Authority (HEDRA) began redevelopment activities, including acquisition, investigation, and cleanup of the former manufacturing facility in 2010. Dakota County provided funding using \$85,000 from a 2009 U.S. EPA Brownfield Grant along with \$305,000 in Environmental Legacy Funds (ELF) as part of its Environmental Assessment & Remediation Program through the partnership with Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA) Redevelopment Incentive Grant (RIG) program. The County also provided technical assistance, and brownfield expertise throughout the project. The Confluence opened in September 2023. See the 2024 nominee’s video at [Winners \(mnbrownfields.org\)](https://mnbrownfields.org).

Innovative Project

THE CONFLUENCE - HASTINGS, MN



This effort supports the [2020-2030 Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#), Strategy 1C1 to “provide funding for investigation, remediation and mitigation of contamination relating to brownfield redevelopment.” and supports [Dakota County, Minnesota All-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2022](#), Water Supply Contamination Goal 1, “protect the quality of the County’s groundwater.”

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New Environmental Protection Agency Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) Limits for drinking water

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) just announced lower limits of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or “forever chemicals” at 4 parts per trillion (or about 4 drops of water in 20 Olympic sized pools) for drinking water. This new limit is specifically for the chemicals of PFOA and PFOS.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), this new guidance impacts several water systems in Minnesota including the cities of Hastings and South St Paul and possibly the Hastings Veteran’s Home. Some of these municipal wells are now above the allowable drinking water standard. The MDH and City of Hastings are not currently recommending alternative sources of water. The city has been working to secure funding for construction of two new water treatment plants to address PFAS.

MDH is responsible for the enforcement and management of PFAS limits in water systems and is working with cities to address the issue. Dakota County’s role is limited to collecting groundwater data and supporting funding for water system infrastructure. In particular, the Environmental Resources Department’s Groundwater Protection Unit collects groundwater data to share with the MDH and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The department also provides community sampling to residents on well water and works to secure grants for water treatment options to address possible groundwater contaminants.

Environmental Resources staff has also been attending the [Priority 1 Government and 3M Working Group](#) meetings to understand what is occurring in the East Metro. And, as noted in last week’s county board update, the department has also formed an internal Emerging Contaminants Workgroup to monitor and share water quality information and to have resources and information on a soon-to-be developed county webpage.

The county’s work in addressing PFAS aligns with the 2020-2030 [Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#):

- Strategy 1D, Tactic 1D1A: Research groundwater conditions, including emerging concerns, on an ongoing basis to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to reduce groundwater contamination and protect public health. See also [Summary of PFAS in Private Drinking Water Wells in Dakota County](#).
- Strategy 4A, Tactic 4A1A: Advocate for state and federal funding for county, city, and township water infrastructure improvement projects; advocate for improvement to state regulations where needs are identified.

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Parks, Facilities, and Fleet Management

Solar Eclipse Viewing Party at Spring Lake Park Reserve

On Monday, April 8th, the Parks Department hosted a Solar Eclipse Viewing Party at Spring Lake Park Reserve in Hastings. The cloud cover did not stop over 150 kids and adults from coming out for this special astronomical event! Attendees had the opportunity to build their own pinhole projector, create a UV activated bracelet inspired by Baily's Beads, and chat with Outdoor Educators to learn more about the science behind the eclipse. Safety is always a priority, so all attendees received a pair of eclipse viewing glasses.

With the cloud coverage in Hastings, the eclipse was not consistently visible, however, the NASA livestream was shown inside the Schaar's Bluff Gathering Center where attendees had the opportunity to hear from reporters across the country viewing the total eclipse. Around 2:15 P.M., there was a five second opening in the clouds

and the **eclipse was visible!** Many attendees got a glimpse thanks to the Parks team carefully tracking the sky. The crowd cheered with excitement!

Parks play an important role in connecting community and the natural world together. In the 2015 Park Visitor Survey, 70% of survey respondents indicated being somewhat to very likely to attend music, concerts, performances, and celebration in the parks. Events are a great way to attract and welcome new visitors to the parks, increase awareness of all the opportunities of the park system and add to a sense of community. Community events were one of the six service areas addressed in the Visitor Services Plan with the goal of increasing events throughout the park system, celebrating the unique aspects of each of the park/greenway units and the communities they serve (Section C, pg. 21). These events help to achieve the outcomes identified in the VSP to increase event participation while building greater awareness of the park system and welcoming new visitors.



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Administration

No Updates