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Agriculture must be supported, and projects like the proposed expansion of West River Dairy are important to the strength and future of rural Minnesota. Dairy farming is a vital part of our economy, our communities, and our food system. If we want agriculture to remain strong for the next generation, we need to support responsible growth opportunities like this one.

Based on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet, this project appears to have been carefully thought through with meaningful attention given to manure storage, water use, stormwater management, and land application. The covered liquid manure storage basins, clay-lined basins, water storage basins, and pumping limits tied to river flow conditions all show that this expansion is not being approached carelessly, but with planning and accountability.

Agriculture is already under enough pressure from regulations, costs, labor challenges, and public criticism. When a farm is willing to invest, grow, and follow the environmental review process, that effort should be recognized and supported. West River Dairy's expansion represents a major investment in agriculture, local jobs, and the rural economy of west central Minnesota.

I support this project and encourage the MPCA to allow it to move forward. Minnesota should be a place where responsible agricultural expansion is welcomed, not discouraged. Supporting this project is one way to support farmers, rural communities, and the future of agriculture in the state.