

Jeff Steiner

Please see attached in support of the West River Dairy Expansion to proceed without requiring an EIS.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a longtime resident of the Morris area with a degree in Agronomy, and I worked for many years as a Certified Crop Advisor in Stevens County, including working directly with Riverview Dairy in 1995 when the very first dairy was built. In addition, I have had the opportunity to tour Riverview's facilities on multiple occasions over the years. I am also personally acquainted with many Riverview employees and managers. Based on these firsthand experiences, I fully support the proposed project and believe the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) provides an adequate level of review; I do not see the need for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Some of the concerns expressed about manure management seem to overlook the existing regulatory framework. Facilities of this type are already subject to strict oversight through MPCA feedlot permits and detailed manure management plans. This proposal includes more than a full year of manure storage capacity and access to significantly more land for application than is required by regulation. These requirements are specifically designed to protect water quality and ensure responsible nutrient use. As an agronomist, I can attest to the superior value and desirability of using manure as a fertilizer and nutrient source for crops, both for crop productivity and for enhanced biome management and excellent soil health.

I would also urge reviewers to consider the actual long-term water monitoring data for the Pomme de Terre River watershed. Information collected over the past decade shows that water quality and biological health in the watershed has remained stable, despite agriculture being a dominant land use in the region for many years. Any concerns regarding potential impacts to the Pomme de Terre River, Drywood Creek, or Muddy Creek should be weighed against this historical data.

Furthermore, with regard to water use, it is important to note that groundwater withdrawals for projects like this are carefully reviewed and permitted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This permitting process is intended to ensure sustainable use of aquifers, and it applies equally to agricultural operations, other industries, and communities.

It is disappointing to read comments from individuals who appear to have limited familiarity with the local area and the way in which Riverview operates. The company has earned a strong reputation in our community for running well-managed facilities. Whenever I have visited, the sites have consistently been clean, orderly, and clearly operated with a

high degree of professionalism and care. In contrast, many of the small dairies I see in the area often have significant manure run-off concerns and excessively untidy facilities. The pollution potential from the 220 “small” dairies, each with 50 cows, needed to supply equivalent milk for our needs would have *significantly* more impact on our environment than what I have seen from the highly skilled operators at Riverview Dairy.

In addition to the environmental considerations, Riverview has been a strong partner for the young people in our communities, promoting modern, science-based farming practices, hosting student tours that provide meaningful learning opportunities about animal care, technology, and sustainable food production, and encouraging pursuit of higher education through scholarships, internships, and on-the-job training, and generally providing experiences that benefit countless young people exploring careers in agriculture and environmental fields.

Riverview plays a vital role in supporting the local economy. As a resident of our small community and the surrounding county, I have observed how major employers like Riverview help provide stability for rural communities by supporting local suppliers, contractors, and other businesses across the region. Many of the employees’ children attend our small independent Hancock School District and have helped sustain and grow a school that had 225 students in 2011 and now has more than 450 students!

In summary, I encourage the reviewing agencies to base their decision on the available data and the established regulatory processes. The EAW appears to offer a thorough evaluation of potential environmental impacts. For these reasons, I believe the EAW is sufficient and that a full Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Steiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeff Steiner, BS Agronomy, University of Illinois '90
Local Resident