

To: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

Subject: Support for West River Dairy Expansion in Stevens County

Dear MPCA Review Team,

My name is Kevin Koehl, and I am writing to express my support for the proposed Riverview Dairy expansion in Stevens County. Projects like this represent an important opportunity for rural communities in western Minnesota to strengthen their agricultural economy while supporting responsible production practices.

First, the expansion would contribute positively to local job growth. Dairy operations of this scale require a wide range of skilled and semi-skilled employees, including positions in herd management, animal care, equipment operation, maintenance, and transportation. These jobs provide stable employment opportunities in rural areas where maintaining a strong workforce is critical to long-term economic stability.

In addition to on-farm employment, dairy expansion supports value-added agricultural processing in our region. Riverview is constructing the Stevens Milk Plant near Morris, a facility that will process approximately four million pounds of milk each day and produce products such as non-fat dry milk and skim milk powder. This plant alone is expected to employ dozens of people and represents a significant investment in Stevens County's agricultural infrastructure. Facilities like this keep more of the value of agricultural production in our region while creating skilled manufacturing jobs tied directly to Minnesota agriculture. The West River Dairy Expansion will compliment this plant as well.

The project also supports the broader production agriculture system that is central to Stevens County. Dairy operations create strong demand for locally produced feed crops such as corn silage, alfalfa, and small grains. This demand provides reliable market opportunities for area farmers and encourages diversified crop rotations. When livestock and cropping operations work together, they strengthen the overall resilience and profitability of the local agricultural economy.

Another important benefit is the value of dairy manure as a nutrient resource. When properly managed, manure serves as an effective organic fertilizer that improves soil fertility and supports crop production. When applied under nutrient management plans, manure returns nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and organic matter back to the soil. This helps reduce reliance on commercial fertilizers while improving soil health and productivity for local farmers.

Agricultural investments of this scale also strengthen the local tax base and rural infrastructure. Economic activity generated by expanded agricultural operations contributes to counties, townships, and school districts. The addition of employees and

their families support local schools, housing demand, and small businesses. Maintaining strong school enrollment and vibrant rural communities depends on continued economic activity, and agriculture remains a foundational driver of that activity in Stevens County.

I appreciate the MPCA's role in ensuring that agricultural development occurs in a responsible and environmentally sound manner. With appropriate oversight and modern management practices, I believe the West River Dairy expansion can provide meaningful economic and agricultural benefits to Stevens County while meeting environmental standards.

Thank you for considering this perspective during your review process.

Sincerely,

Kevin Koehl

Local Resident for 52 years

Hancock, MN 56244