

# Marv Post

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency 520 Lafayette Road North St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Public Comment in Support of the West River Dairy Expansion — Riverview LLP, Morris, Minnesota

Dear Commissioner Kessler and MPCA Staff,

My name is Marv Post. I am a dairy farmer from Volga, South Dakota, and former chairman of the South Dakota Dairy Producers Association. I am writing to express my strong support for Riverview LLP's proposed expansion of West River Dairy near Morris, Minnesota.

I have spent my career working alongside producers, processors, and policymakers to grow South Dakota's dairy industry, and I have seen firsthand what a growing dairy herd can do for a state, for an industry, and for the rural communities that depend on both.

What a Growing Dairy Herd Has Meant for South Dakota

In the early 2000s, South Dakota had fewer than 80,000 dairy cows. Today that number is more than two and a half times that. That growth happened because producers, processors, and state leaders recognized that a growing milk supply is the engine that drives the entire dairy economy. Every time we expand processing, we expand milk production. With our ability to grow corn, alfalfa, and all the raw ingredients needed to feed a dairy cow, the Upper Midwest is simply a very efficient place to do that.

In South Dakota, it's safe to say that our dairy infrastructure has come back. We would not have the infrastructure that supports dairy farmers of all sizes without a thriving dairy industry. We would not have processors who look at our state and say, "If we build it, they will fill it." That infrastructure — processing plants, trucking routes, feed suppliers, veterinary clinics, equipment dealers — exists because there is a growing, reliable milk supply to sustain it. And when that supply grows, every dairy farmer benefits, whether they milk 100 cows or 10,000.

The benefits extend to crop farmers too. Dairy manure has proven to be a valuable source of locally sourced fertilizer, and we have seen the basis for cash grain improve in recent years because of the demand for feed crops from dairy farms. Milk processing capacity has grown dramatically up and down South Dakota's I-29 corridor. These represent real plants, real jobs, and real communities that are stronger because of a growing dairy industry.

North Dakota's Dairy Industry

Next door, North Dakota experienced the opposite outcome. As cow numbers declined and milk supply dwindled, processors lost the volume they needed to justify their operations. When processors close, remaining farmers lose their market, which accelerates the decline further. Today, North Dakota is home to just 17 dairy farms with approximately 8,000 cows. I would not wish that outcome on any state.

The Upper Midwest is positioned to be a global leader in the dairy industry, but only if we encourage and allow our farmers to grow.

Environmental Stewardship Goes Hand in Hand with Growth

This project has undergone a detailed analysis through Minnesota's EAW process. The expansion will operate under an Individual NPDES Feedlot Permit requiring zero discharge of pollutants to waters of the state. Responsible manure management is well known to improve soil health and reduce the potential for nutrient runoff from croplands. The water supply appears to be robust and more than sufficient to sustainably supply the West River Dairy expansion. It appears that the applicant and the agency have considered and addressed all of the relevant areas of environmental protection. Furthermore, the development of the Individual Permit demonstrates real leadership on the part of both the MPCA and Riverview, and a commitment by all parties involved to pursue

growth in a responsible manner.

#### Conclusion

We want our neighbors in Minnesota to share in the optimism and success that a growing dairy industry has brought to South Dakota. The West River Dairy expansion is exactly the kind of project that makes that possible.

I respectfully urge the MPCA to follow the facts and the science in its review of this project. The environmental review is thorough. The regulatory safeguards are robust. This project deserves to move forward so that our industry can continue to grow in the Upper Midwest — responsibly, sustainably, and in a way that benefits producers, processors, communities, and the environment alike.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this comment.

Marv Post