

June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Benjamin Bejeck  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
332 Minnesota St, Suite E 1500  
St Paul, MN 55101

Alyssa Bloss  
Carlton County SWCD  
808 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Carlton County, MN 55718

RE: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project #MVP-2024-00865-BCB – Hay Creek (COMPO) Culvert  
Replacement  
Carlton County, Minnesota  
Section 401 Water Quality Certification

Dear Benjamin Bejeck and Alyssa Bloss:

This 401 Water Quality Certification decision (Certification) is made by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) under authority of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, or CWA (33 USC 1251 et seq.), Minn. Stat. chs. 115 and 116 and Minn. R. chs. 7001.1400 to 7001.1470, 7050, 7052, and 7053.

**Project description:**

The MPCA has examined the application and other information furnished by the applicant, Carlton County Soil and Water Conservation District, for the permanent discharge of fill material into 41 linear feet of Hay Creek for the replacement of three culverts with a single aluminum box culvert with riprap placement at inlet and outlet. There are 16 linear feet of temporary impacts associated with the stream diversion during construction of this project that will be returned to pre-construction conditions at completion of the project.

The proposed project is to replace a culvert along Hay Creek in Carlton County. The existing crossing, composed of 3 culverts, a 4.5-foot round CMP, a 3.5-foot round CMP, and a 5-foot concrete culvert, will be replaced with a single 20-foot 6-inch span by 7-foot 3-inch rise by 22.5-foot length embedded culvert placed on an aluminum invert and filled with 2-feet of cobble and coarse aggregate interspersed with larger boulders to improve passage of trout. A total of 19 linear feet of riprap will be placed at the inlet and outlet of the proposed culvert. Proposed riprap reflects an increase of 9 linear feet at the inlet when compared to the initial application from 2024. The increase in proposed riprap is due to the need for additional grading and scour/erosion prevention at the culvert inlet. Stream diversion during construction will cause 16 linear feet of temporary stream impacts which will be returned to pre-construction conditions at completion of the project. The project also includes a floodplain culvert and associated riprap above the OHWL.



**Decision:**

The MPCA certifies the referenced project and has determined that it satisfies the antidegradation standards in Minn. R. 7050.0265. The MPCA has examined the application and other information, including the antidegradation assessment information required under Minn. R. 7050.0285, and bases its decision on the evaluation of this information and the relevance to water quality considerations. The MPCA believes that there is reasonable assurance that the activity will be conducted in a manner that will not violate applicable water quality standards provided that the applicant complies with the conditions listed below.

1. Before any land disturbance at the site, the applicant must ensure that all aquatic resources (wetlands, ditches, lakes, or streams) in the vicinity of the construction area that are not authorized to be impacted by the project are clearly identified. This may be done through demarcation of those resources on plan sheets or through typical methods of marking boundaries in the field, for example construction staking or the use of silt fences along boundaries.
2. No work may take place in water during the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries work exclusion dates without the written permission of the DNR area fisheries manager. These dates can be found the *Best Practices for Meeting DNR General Public Waters Work Permit GP 2004-0001* (Chapter 1, page 3) or by contacting the DNR area fisheries office.  
[https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries/management/dnr\\_fisheries\\_managers.pdf?20231121-02](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries/management/dnr_fisheries_managers.pdf?20231121-02)

3. All equipment used in water must follow DNR Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) BMPs and be inspected and cleaned ahead of use in the water. More information on BMPs and identification of AIS may be found here: [Clean In Clean Out | Minnesota DNR](#)
4. It is the applicant's responsibility to fully comply with all MPCA rules governing waters of the state, including MPCA rules governing wetlands (Minn. R. 7050.0186), which require a permittee to provide compensatory mitigation for a project's unavoidable permanent impacts to wetlands and streams, including those that are not subject to federal jurisdiction under section 404 of the CWA.
5. The applicant must ensure that the authorized activities do not exacerbate any existing impairments of a CWA 303(d) listed impaired water. Prior to beginning any authorized activities, the Applicant must first identify whether their project area is in, or near, any impaired waters and waters with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - approved total maximum daily loads. When working in, or near, impaired waters, the Applicant must deploy redundant BMPs as necessary to ensure the authorized construction activities will not exacerbate existing impairments. The following MPCA webpage contains more information and search tools available to determine which waters in Minnesota are impaired: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/minnesotas-impaired-waters-list>. The applicable water quality standards are in Minn. R. chs. 7050, 7001.
6. The applicant must install in-water BMPs to the extent practical and feasible, to minimize TSS and sedimentation for any work conducted below the ordinary high-water level as defined in Minn. Stat. § 103G.005, subp. 14 of any water or within the delineated boundaries of wetlands.

The applicant must document the in-water BMPs to be used during the authorized work prior to disturbing any land at the site; this documentation may be stand-alone or part of an Erosion Control Plan, Construction Plan, or other relevant construction document. This documentation is not required to be submitted to the MPCA but must be kept on-site during active construction by the contractor until the project is complete. Proper installation of BMPs is required before conducting the authorized in-water activities and must be properly maintained until the project is complete. This includes maintenance of in-water BMPs along with the establishment and maintenance of any erosion prevention, sediment control or site stabilization features included in the project plan or this certification. While conducting the authorized work, the permittee must visually monitor the BMPs to ensure that the BMPs are working as intended to reduce TSS or sedimentation. If the project activities cause an observable increase in TSS or sedimentation as described in Minn. R. 7050.0210, subp. 2, outside or downstream of the authorized defined working area, then the project activities must immediately cease and any malfunctioning BMPs must be repaired, or alternative BMPs must be implemented. This Certification does not authorize the violation of applicable water quality standards outside or downstream of the defined work area. Minnesota water quality standards are defined in Minn. R. chs. 7050, 7001.

Information on types of BMPs that may be suitable for in-water work is located in the DNR Manual titled *Best Practices for Meeting DNR General Public Waters Work Permit GP 2004-0001*, located at: [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt\\_section/pwpermits/gp\\_2004\\_0001\\_manual.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/pwpermits/gp_2004_0001_manual.html)

7. The applicant or its contractor must perform daily visual inspections to observe turbidity levels, weather, and stream conditions to ensure required BMPs are correctly deployed and functioning as intended. These BMPs must be installed and maintained in a manner that ensures sediment and debris do not leave the work site.
8. The permittee must stabilize all exposed soil areas whenever any construction activity has permanently or temporarily ceased on any portion of the site and will not resume for a period exceeding 14 calendar days (Minn. R. chs. 7050, 7001).
9. No additional fill or excavation in the stream is approved outside of the planned features. Any proposed change to the quantity of hard armoring or in-stream features must be submitted in writing to the MPCA for approval prior to installation.
10. Trees and excess soils from bank grading that are being stockpiled on site must be stored in upland areas and secured with BMPs that prevent sediment or debris from entering the stream.
11. To the extent practicable, construction and temporary diversions should be staged in the manner that causes the least amount of impact to the stream including both size and duration of impacts. Approved temporary impacts to aquatic resources must be returned to original conditions. This includes timing and staging that allows for exposed soils to be quickly stabilized throughout the project area.
12. A Stream Diversion Plan (SDP) is required for removal and replacement of culverts or bridges. Prior to construction, stream diversion water procedures must be in place to ensure that discharge points are adequately protected from erosion and scour. In addition, the SDP must address erosion prevention and sediment control, comply with water quality requirements, and meet in-water best construction practices. The MPCA reserves the right to add additional conditions if necessary to accommodate and address specific design requirements and to maintain water quality standards (Minn. R. chs 7050, 7001).
13. All practicable BMPs must be used when in-water work is being performed to ensure minimal disturbance and sediment pollution to the creek. If the project's activities cause an observable increase in TSS or sedimentation as described in Minn. R. 7050.0210, subp. 2 outside of the authorized impact area, then the project activities must immediately cease and any malfunctioning BMPs must be repaired, or alternative BMPs must be implemented. Approved temporary impacts to aquatic resources must be returned to original conditions. This Certification does not authorize the violation of applicable water quality standards outside the defined work area. Minnesota water quality standards are defined in Minn. R. ch. 7050.
14. The applicant must provide: a) a copy of the Certification; b) documentation of any required best management practices (BMPs) under the above conditions; and c) any written demarcation

of waters to any primary contractor responsible for completing the project's authorized activities. The applicant must also ensure that there is a mechanism in place requiring each primary contractor to provide the same information to all subcontractors, at any level, responsible for fabricating or providing any material for the project or performing work at the project site. In addition, copies of these documents and any other relevant regulatory authorizations related to impacts to waters must be available at or near the project site for use by contractors and staff responsible for completing the project work and must be available within 72 hours when requested by MPCA staff.

15. The applicant must allow representatives from the MPCA to inspect the project site and the authorized activity to ensure that the project is constructed, and BMPs maintained, in accordance with this Certification.
16. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all requirements of this Certification are met.
17. This Certification includes and incorporates by reference the general conditions of Minn. R. 7001.0150, subp.3.
18. The applicant must inform the MPCA of any proposed additional water quality impacts this project may have, before they occur, to determine if further review or authorization is required. This includes any additional dredging, excavation, fill, additional structures, and temporary impacts not shown in the final plans or expressly authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Section 404 permit or the Section 401 Certification from the MPCA.

A Section 401 Certification does not release or limit the applicant from obtaining all necessary federal, state, and local permits, nor does it limit more restrictive requirements set through any such program. It does not eliminate, waive, or vary the applicant's obligation to comply with all other laws and state water statutes and rules through the construction, installation, and operation of the project. This letter does not release the applicant from any liability, penalty, or duty imposed by Minnesota or federal statutes, regulations, rules, or local ordinances, and it does not convey a property right or an exclusive privilege.

This MPCA decision is made, in part, on the applicant's representations that environmental review under the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board's Rules, Minn. R. ch. 4410, is not needed for the project or, alternatively, that all necessary environmental reviews and related decisions have been completed. If environmental review for this project is needed and has not been completed, the MPCA does not have legal authority to issue a Certification. In that situation, the MPCA reserves the right to make a Section 401 Certification decision when the environmental review process is completed.

The MPCA reserves the right to revisit or revoke the Certification due to new or additional information, updated information, changes in technology, or any other changes that could render the project as incompatible with Minnesota's water quality standards. If you have any questions regarding this Certification, please contact the MPCA 401 program at [401Certification.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:401Certification.pca@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,

*(Type e-Signature)*

Benjamin Bejcek  
Alyssa Bloss  
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June 16, 2026

*This document has been electronically signed.*

Maggie Wenger  
Supervisor  
Agency Rules Unit  
Resource Management and Assistance Division

MW/XX:kj

cc: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (electronic)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (electronic)  
Tom Hovey, DNR (electronic)  
Brianna Speldrich, DNR (electronic)  
Chris Holm, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa (electronic)  
Josh Schrope, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (electronic)  
Robert Deschampe, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
Agatha Armstrong, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
April McCormick, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
Marie Spry, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
Toby Stephens, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (electronic)  
Luke Warnsholz, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (electronic)  
Darren Vogt, 1854 Treaty Authority (electronic)  
John Coleman, GLIFWC (electronic)  
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (electronic)  
Jordan Donatell, MPCA  
Bill Cole, MPCA  
Brandon Smith, MPCA  
Brandon Montgomery, MPCA  
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