

Date, 2026

VIA EMAIL

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

Will Bomier
St. Louis County
4787 Midway Rd
Duluth, MN 55811

RE: MVP-2012-05161-ARC – Bridge #54 CP 0040-778354
St. Louis County, Minnesota
Section 401 Water Quality Certification

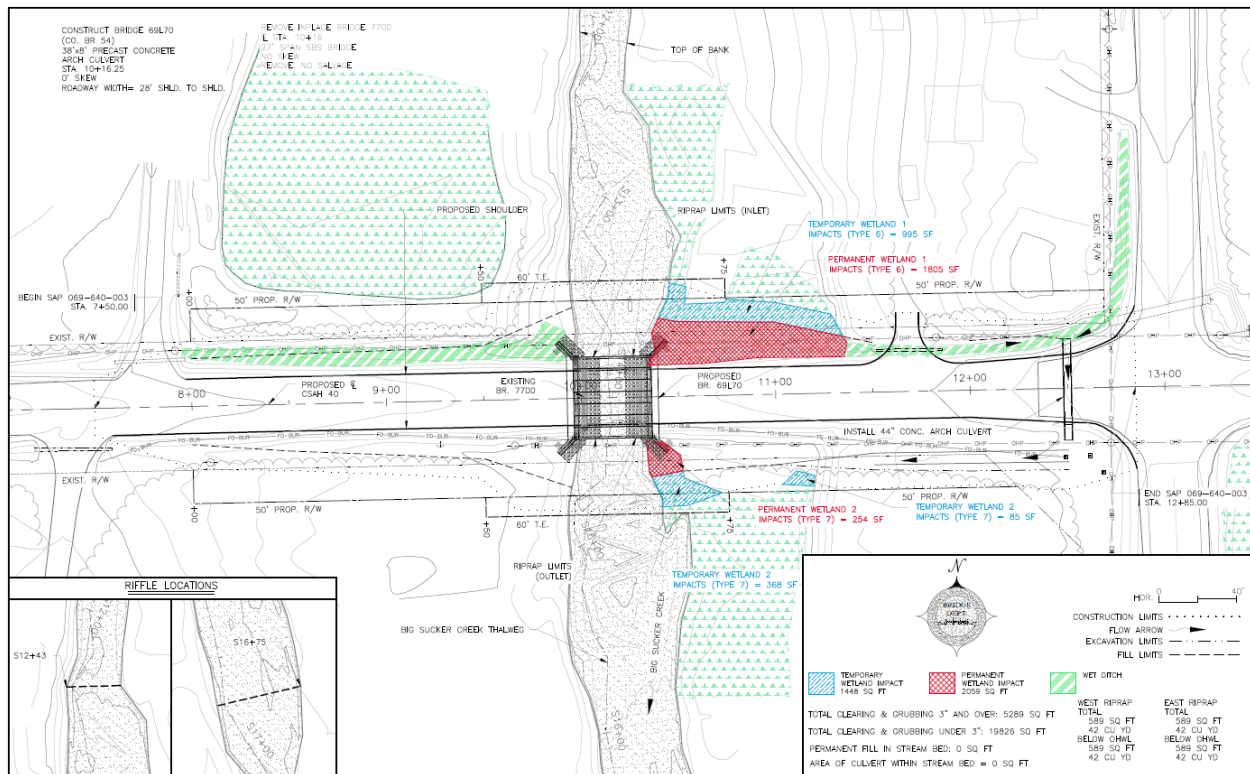
Dear Andrew Chambers and Will Bomier:

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, St. Louis County, for the permanent dredge and discharge of fill material into 0.05 acres of wetlands and 56 linear feet (ln ft) of Big Sucker Creek. The applicant is proposing to replace a bridge crossing Big Sucker Creek.

Bridge #54 is a 27-foot steel span bridge conveying traffic along East Pioneer Road over Big Sucker Creek that has reached the end of its service life. The applicant is proposing to remove the existing structure and install a 38'x8' reinforced concrete arch culvert with an open bottom. Rip rap will be placed approximately nine feet upstream and downstream of the new culvert to protect the wingwalls. The road shoulders will be slightly widened and flattened near the culvert to meet safety standards, resulting in some wetland fill.



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
3. All equipment used in water must follow DNR Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) best management practices (BMP) 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 install in-water BMPs to the extent practical and feasible, to minimize total suspended solids (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

6. Minn. R. chs. 7001 and 7090 require any activity that will disturb one acre or more of land to first acquire a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System (NPDES/SDS) General Construction Stormwater Permit from the MPCA for discharging stormwater during and after construction activity. Both the owners and operators of construction activity disturbing one acre or more of land are responsible for obtaining and complying with the conditions of the NPDES/SDS General Construction Stormwater Permit prior to commencing construction activities. Sites disturbing less than one acre within a larger common plan of development or sale that is more than one acre also need permit coverage. A detailed stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), containing both temporary and permanent erosion and sediment control plans, must be prepared prior to submitting an application for the NPDES/SDS General Construction Stormwater Permit. In addition, any project that will result in over 50 acres of disturbed area and has a discharge point within one mile of a special or impaired water is required to submit its SWPPP to the MPCA for a review at least 30 days prior to the commencement of land disturbing activities. If the SWPPP is out of compliance with the terms and conditions of the NPDES/SDS General Construction Stormwater Permit,

further delay may occur. For more information, please visit:
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/construction-stormwater>.

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. The applicant must ensure earthen material used to construct or improve temporary or permanent dikes or dams, including cofferdams, or any roads, is contained in a manner that will prevent earthen material from eroding into the water. All best management practices (BMPs) must be properly installed to ensure compliance with state water quality standards. The applicant must completely remove temporary structures and restore original bathymetry or contours within 12 months of project completion (Minn. R. chs. 7050, 7001).
10. 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.
11. To the extent practicable and known, work should be conducted during low water times of the year to avoid excessive impacts of erosion and scour from high flows.
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. The permittee must not conduct bridge demolition activities that use explosive devices to implode or collapse a bridge or any portion of a bridge into any water (Minn. R. chs 7050, 7001).
14. Staging of all portions of the existing structure to be removed must be done in the manner that has the least impact on the water resources and all demolition materials to be removed and disposed of offsite must be stockpiled securely in an upland area away from any Waters of the State (Minn. R. chs 7050, 7001).
15. During demolition of spans over the water, all practicable methods and BMPs shall be deployed to prevent debris from directly entering any Waters of the State. For approach spans over land, all practical methods and BMPs shall be deployed to prevent excessive dust or debris particles from indirectly entering Waters of the State, including removal of piers and other supporting infrastructure (Minn. R. chs 7050, 7001).

16. The applicant must provide: a) a copy of the Certification; b) documentation of any required 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.
17. 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.
18. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all requirements of this Certification are met.
19. This Certification includes and incorporates by reference the general conditions of Minn. R. 7001.0150, subp.3.
20. 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.

Andrew Chambers
Will Bomier
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Date, 2026

Sincerely,

(Type e-Signature)

This document has been electronically signed.

Maggie Wenger
Supervisor
Agency Rules Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

MW/JP:kj

cc: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tom Hovey, DNR
Kim Boland, DNR
Chris Holm, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Frank Villebrun, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Grace Leppink-Walz, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Josh Schroepe, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Elise McKeever, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Nicole Walker, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Kelsy Federico, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Robert Deschampe, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Agatha Armstrong, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
April McCormick, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Marie Spry, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Toby Stephens, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Margaret Watkins, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Krishna Woerheide, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
Jake Sorenson, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Brady Rudh, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Eric Krumm, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Brandy Toft, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Craig Tangren, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
401 Certification, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Luke Warnsholz, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
Darren Vogt, 1854 Treaty Authority
John Coleman, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
Esteban Chiriboga, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
Shania Nordby, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Noah Saperstein, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Jordan Donatell, MPCA
Bill Cole, MPCA
Brandon Smith, MPCA
Brandon Montgomery, MPCA
Amy Adrihan, MPCA