

Pete Hrodey,

Thank you for your consideration and review of these comments and for the opportunity to weigh in on the process.

As the last round of public comment has been open, the Township has received a surge in public questions and comments regarding the proposed Lamprey barrier on the Sucker River. The project was brought up at a regularly scheduled Township meeting and much discussion continues to be on the forefront for the majority of Burt Township residents who cherish our "Nature in Abundance." As a Township Board we are tasked with advocating for our constituents and in this instance, we feel compelled to take further action in response to a groundswell of public concern. In order to best respond to and advocate for our constituency, we thought it only appropriate to pass on the concerns in written form and request further information from the pertinent agencies as to best inform the public.

Although we have not had the opportunity to thoroughly review the entirety of the Environmental Assessment, there are still questions and concerns we hope can be addressed and clarified for the residents of Burt Township.

The first among our concerns are, is there a protocol for contacting riparian landowners? Have riparian landowners been contacted? And if so, how? Is there any data that speaks to the potential impacts of land owners above and below the projected barrier?

From our knowledge, there is no specific description detailing how the barrier will be raised, lowered and maintained. The EA suggests an operating period of March-June. How will the barrier be accessed in March? If the access will be via a plowed road, coordination will be needed between Burt Township and Grand Maris Snowmobile Association to be certain no snowmobile trails will be negatively impacted. Will plowing access increase or decrease recreational activity? If conditions do not allow for safe and effective access in March will the barrier be raised later, in April/May? And if so, will it remain raised longer into the season, August/September? How would this impact native and naturalized fish species? Similar barriers are noted being operated into September, is a barrier on the Sucker River an exception to this? If so, why?

The Township was fortunate enough to receive a coast resilience plan and much data was dedicated to showing an increase in projected precipitation and erosion. Are the models projecting surges in yearling precipitation incorporated into the models used on this project? Will increased water flows render the dam ineffectual? If stream flows or other variables contribute to the barriers failure, will the barrier be removed?

What models are used to calculate the recreational and ecological benefits of an undammed river? It would appear that such a resource is becoming increasingly rare in the Great Lakes watershed and more attention should be spent calculating the potential risks to an incredibly rare resource. To best inform the public, Burt Township would prefer to reference data that suggests installing a barrier will be a net positive in contrast to its current rare and pristine nature. We have also been given comments by Jeff Slade and hope to be included in the formal response to Mr. Slade's comments. Many of Mr. Slade's comments are cause for concern, such as the failure to include steelhead in the environmental assessment. From anecdotal experience, steelhead are a popular recreational sport fishery in Burt Township and failure to address the potential impacts to the fishery is worrying. Reference to stream connectivity is also misleading. Given the local community was intimately aware and involved with the culvert removal and bridge installation in 2023 and now that project has concluded, to suggest the installment of the dam would increase connectivity is a lie. It should be removed from the EA or further explanation is needed to explain how a barrier increased connectivity.

Much of the concern is related to the outcome if the barrier is proved ineffective. Many public resources will have been dedicated to install a dam on an undammed river, meanwhile the expressed goal of fisheries management agencies is to remove barriers when possible. This is a large leap and more needs to be shared with the public to ensure this project is thoroughly researched, planned and ultimately executed to the benefits of the watershed and community. As of right now Burt Township cannot offer our support in that the concerns outweigh the positives.

We look forward to your response and for the opportunity to discuss the project at more length.



Jon L. Babbitt
Supervisor
Burt Township

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