



Dear:

I am writing to ask for your support in protecting our Minnesota water resources, particularly the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. I am not a political person, not a lobbyist and not a school teacher with an assignment for my students.

As a member of a group called Friends of Pool 2, a non-profit, grass roots organization, I have become interested in what the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers mean to Minnesota and particularly to the people in the Twin Cities.

Pool 2 starts at Lock and Dam #1, commonly called the Ford Dam and flows south as far as Hastings. It also includes the lower Minnesota River. Much of Pool 2 is national park and managed by a number of agencies. It is enjoyed by thousands who float, fish, swim, hike and camp along the shores or relax on the sandy beaches of islands south of St. Paul. And you are right in guessing that recreational boating on both rivers is a huge plus to the land of 10,000 lakes. River boaters always say that on the river, you don't go around in circles; your boat can take you along the beautiful forested shores through the metro area, into silent sleepy backwaters or all the way to the Gulf.

Friends of Pool works to enhance the recreational river experience and advocate for informed and conscientious river governance. We have discovered that many of the folks who make decisions about the two rivers have never actually been on the river, just drive by it or over it. Maybe we can fix that. From a bridge it's pretty hard to see the work Pool 2 members do to maintain Lifejacket Loaner Stations. But you can see where the rivers join and the change in the water colors as the silt and sediment from the farms along the Minnesota travels to the Gulf of Mexico.

It is also a pathway for the commercial barges that haul materials in and out of our area. As a kid growing up near the Mississippi banks, I remember watching the lines of barges, two abreast, hauling coal to the old coal burning power plants in St. Paul and Minneapolis. We also waved at the two boats pushing long, silent, covered barges hauling grain and soybeans down river to ocean ports, then shipped to places like China.

Last summer from the river, I saw the piles of scrap iron in yards south of St. Paul. That's one industry few talk about but it is a necessary business, one that depends on the river as much as the coal barges. One mission of Friends of Pool 2 is to educate the public about the river and how necessary it is, not just for recreational boaters or fishermen, but to the businesses and farmers of the upper Mississippi basin.

It is important that groups like Friends of Pool 2 speak directly to folks like you who propose legislation because you have the power to keep our rivers and water safe from poor water management practices. You fund research to better understand aquatic invasive species, such as the Asian carp now starting to appear in the Upper Mississippi.

There are many problems in managing and protecting our waters. Some of these problems like sediment are going to take decades to fix and others like shore erosion from watercraft are easier to take care of now. Storm water is something no one likes to talk about either, but every rain washes trash, leaves and pollutants into the rivers. Who is going to champion cleaning up storm water?

So I am asking you to watch for the opportunity to make a difference in good water preservation. Don't rely on anecdotal evidence, one story at a time. Watch the science, the facts and then make your decisions. This is not a partisan issue; it's a human issue. Help the groups that promote safe boating, repair and replacement of infrastructure like locks and dams, and think big, not about just one issue, but how these problems are interwoven with what we need now and what we want for the future.

Finally, thank you for reading this letter. I hope your day is full and satisfying.

Regards,