



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Box 25

500 Lafayette Road

St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4025

Phone: (651) 259-5109 E-mail: lisa.joyal@state.mn.us

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Correspondence # ERDB 20140001-0001b

Chris Hartzell
Dakota County
14955 Galaxie Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124

RE: Mississippi River Regional Trail - Spring Lake Park Preserve, Dakota County

Dear M. Hartzell,

I was contacted in May 2013 by Deric Deuschle of SEH, Inc. regarding the proposed Mississippi River Regional Trail through the Spring Lake Park Preserve (see enclosed email). As a consultant for Dakota County, Deric had reviewed the Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System for potential impacts to rare features. Based on this review, Deric had recommended that a botanical survey be conducted and was requesting my concurrence. I responded with an email (enclosed) that concurred with a botanical survey and recommended avoidance of any Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairie.

My understanding is that the current alignment of the proposed trail includes a bench cut through a portion of the bluff. Although no state-listed species have been found in this area, the native prairie is a rare natural feature that merits consideration in management decisions. The purpose of this letter is to explain in more detail the importance of the Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairie and our reasons for recommending avoidance (for a more complete review of the proposed project please refer to the enclosed Natural Heritage Letter).

Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairie is a native plant community that is vulnerable to extirpation within Minnesota. In the mid-1800s, eighteen million acres of prairie covered Minnesota. More than 99% of this native prairie has been destroyed. Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairies are confined in Minnesota to bluffs along the Mississippi River and its tributaries in southeast Minnesota. The northernmost occurrences are in Dakota and Washington County. In Dakota County, only 7 sites mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey included Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairie, and most of these prairies are small and have a great deal of tree and brush encroachment, including those in Spring Lake Park. This makes it especially important that the few remaining Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairies remain intact. Additionally, I encourage the county to take steps to restore the Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairies in Dakota County Parks with brush clearing and prescribed burning. The DNR has a great deal of experience in restoring these kinds of prairies and we have found they respond well to restoration activities. If you would like assistance, feel free to contact Hannah Texler, the DNR Central Region Plant Ecologist, at 651-259-5811.

The DNR appreciates the effort that Dakota County has expended on plant surveys and on the avoidance of the documented rare species. We encourage the County to extend their conservation efforts to the rare habitats found along the Regional Trail. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Joyal
Endangered Species Review Coordinator

enc. Deric Deuschle Request for Input
DNR Response to Request
DNR Natural Heritage Letter

cc: Hannah Texler, Deric Deuschle, Samuel Turrentine