

# Support Needed: Making the Reading Wastewater System a Reality

We respectfully urge your support for a \$2.75 million State Bonding Bill appropriation to help fund the construction of the \$7.9 million Reading Wastewater System in Nobles County. This critical investment directly addresses an ongoing public health and environmental crisis—untreated wastewater from Reading, the largest single collection of straight pipe sewage discharge in Minnesota, continues to flow into state waterways. Without Bonding Bill Funding intervention, both human health and public waters remain at risk.

## Urgent Need for Action

Reading is a small, unincorporated community of just 93 residents (56 parcels) in Summit Lake Township, Nobles County. In 2012, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) issued a Notice of Violation for Reading's untreated sewage discharge into public waters. Over the past 13 years, Nobles County has invested nearly \$1 million for project planning, permitting, and land acquisition, because the low income community of Reading lacks the resources to plan and construct a compliant wastewater system. Immediate action is required to prevent MPCA enforcement actions in Reading, safeguard the environment, and eliminate the imminent threat to public health.

## Project Progress and Readiness

Nobles County has worked diligently alongside MPCA, Rural Development (RD) and the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) to analyze the problem and develop a wastewater system project. All engineering reports and construction plans are complete, 10.26 acres have been acquired for stabilization ponds, and the necessary permits—including NPDES/SDS—have been approved. Project Environmental Assessments are nearly complete, with final approval expected in March 2026. The project is truly "**shovel-ready**," and set to go out for bid in summer 2026 and only awaits final funding to begin construction.

## Financial Challenges and Community Impact

With a total estimated project cost is \$7.9 million, the project has secured a \$4.9M Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) and is positioned for a Clean Water Revolving Fund (CWRF) loan through the Public Facility Authority (PFA). Unfortunately, Reading property owners are unable to shoulder loan repayment for a significant share of project construction costs along with private property sewer connections, and projected wastewater system user fees. **A \$2.75 million State Bonding appropriation is essential to fill the remaining funding gap and ensure project construction moves forward.** Without additional funding, the financial burden on Reading's residents, 67.7% of whom have low to moderate incomes would be unfeasible. Without additional grant funding the 56 property owners of Reading would face assessments exceeding \$30,000 per parcel and out-of-pocket costs of up to \$4,000 to connect to the wastewater system—costs that are simply unaffordable for this community. In addition, estimated wastewater system annual operations, maintenance, and replacement costs would result in utility bills of \$102 per parcel each month.

## Conclusion: Your Support Is Critical

By approving the \$2.75 million Bonding Bill appropriation, you will help resolve a longstanding environmental and health threat, make the project financially viable for Reading's low-income residents, and uphold Minnesota's commitment to clean water and community well-being. We ask you to stand with Nobles County and Reading in delivering this vital infrastructure. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.