

Co-Chair Rep. Peter Fischer
House Environment and Natural Resources
Policy and Finance Committee
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Co-Chair Rep. Josh Heintzeman
House Environment and Natural Resources
Policy and Finance Committee
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 16, 2026

Co-Chairs and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee,

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund benefits current citizens and future generations by providing long-term, consistent, and stable funding for projects to protect, conserve, and enhance Minnesota's "air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources." Minnesota voters overwhelmingly endorsed this strategy when they voted to continue sending a portion of the state lottery proceeds to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) with 77% approval in 2024. Since 1991 ENRTF has provided over \$1.1 billion to 1,700+ projects benefiting every county in the state.

Our organizations are proud to support the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund Appropriations Bill, HF3426, which continues this special Minnesota tradition of environmental stewardship.

This bill contains the recommendations of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), a body of 17 members comprised of citizens and legislators who spend significant time reviewing proposals from across the state to inform the legislature on the best way to direct ENRTF dollars toward cleaner water, healthier forests and prairies, world-class hiking and biking trails, cutting-edge natural resources research institutions, opportunities for enrichment and environmental education programming, and abundant fish and wildlife.

In addition to advancing the recommendations of the LCCMR, we urge the committee to include the annual appropriation from the ENRTF to the Community Grant program. This program created by the legislature in 2023 and operated by the Department of Natural Resources serves as a new tool to increase the ability to "expand the number and diversity of recipients who benefit from the environment and natural resources trust fund, especially in communities that have been adversely affected by pollution and environmental degradation" (Minn. Statutes 116X.03).

Tying together both the LCCMR recommendations and the fiscal year 2027 appropriation to this program was agreed to among the co-chairs of the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee; the Chair of the Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee; the co-chairs of the House Ways & Means Committee and the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee during the 2025 Special Legislative Session. As the DNR is now poised to launch this program after extensive preparation and planning, we - and the millions of Minnesotans who voted to establish it - look forward to having next year's funding available on schedule to meet the program goals.

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund helps entities from all over Minnesota to protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota's natural resources, including small towns to large urban cities, counties and watershed districts, Minnesota colleges and universities, non-profits, federal and state agencies, and more.

Thank you for your support of HF3426 and continued support of the Community Grants appropriation.

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations,

Alliance for Sustainability
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Austin Audubon Society
Brainerd Lakes Audubon Society
Central Minnesota Audubon Society
Climate Land Leaders
Conservation Minnesota
CURE
Ducks Unlimited
Environmental Initiative
Environmental Justice Coordinating Council
Freshwater Society
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Mississippi River
Great River Greening
Initiative Foundation
Land of Lakes Bird Alliance
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society
Minnesota Valley Trust
Minnesota Wildlife Federation
MN350
Northeastern Minnesota Bird Alliance
Northern Waters Land Trust
Pheasants Forever
Prairie Lakes Audubon Chapter
Public Policy Project
Rainbow Research
Sharon Nordrum, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
St. Paul Bird Alliance
The Nature Conservancy
Trust for Public Land
University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
Urban Bird Conservancy
Wilderness Inquiry
Zumbro Valley Audubon Society

4/15/26

Dear Mr. Strohmeier,

Please accept the following written testimony and evidence as a formal public handout for the permanent legislative record regarding HF3426.

FORMAL STATEMENT OF OBJECTION

- 1. OBJECTION: Extension of Project 2020-006**
- 2. Location: HF 3426, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 10 (Extensions)**
- 3. Action Requested: Remove the \$75,000 carryover/extension for ML 2021, First Special Session, Ch. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09(n).**

2. OBJECTION: Repeal of MN Statutes § 116P.17

Location: HF 3426, Article 2, Section 6 (Repealer)

Action Requested: Strike the repeal of Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 116P.17.

I am writing to formally object to the \$75,000 carryover/extension for ENRTF Project 2020-006: This project is under active investigation and lacks verified legal access. And also to object to the repeal of statute 2024, section 116P.17.

OFFICIAL TESTIMONY: FISCAL RISK & OVERSIGHT FAILURE

1. ACTIVE OLA SPECIAL REVIEW

Project 2020-006 is currently under active Special Review by the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) for administrative misrepresentation. Correspondence dated Dec 11, 2025, confirms the OLA is treating this investigation as "confidential or protected nonpublic" under MN Stat. § 3.979 (See Exhibit D), proving an open review with the Special Reviews Division of the OLA.

Submissions to the OLA include documented evidence of County lack of transparency regarding potential Open Meeting Law violations regarding the administration of this grant, disregard for transparency regarding lack of legal access and other issues. These governance failures underline the risk of granting further extensions without a full audit of past performance.

2. SWORN ADMISSION OF NON-READINESS (Case No. 12-CV-22-376)

Despite "Project Readiness" certifications, the County cannot verify legal access. In February 2024, Scott Williams (Chippewa County Land and Resource Manager and creator of the work plan for said project) admitted under oath:

"I talked to the township to see if there was any paperwork anywhere. Couldn't find anything. ... [Surveyors] were unable to find anything either.." (Transcript p. 90-91 / See Exhibit C). This statement was made under oath over two years ago, with no documented evidence of legal access presented since.

I acknowledge that Ms. Nash from the LCCMR has stated that these are conditions that may be satisfied throughout the process of the grant, however the County has known for at least two years that this access does not exist, per their own statement under oath as well as the data search results as shown below.

3. EXHAUSTED DATA SEARCH: NO LEGAL ROAD ORDER

Formal inquiries to all relevant authorities (Sparta Township, Chippewa County and State of Minnesota) have failed to produce a valid Road Order for 50th Ave SW, the only access for this project.

State of Minnesota (MNDOT): Responded to a formal data request confirming that all available records have been searched and no "Turnback Order" or legal transfer existed in the provided documents (available upon request) giving the road to the Township or County.

Chippewa County Admission: In correspondence with Senator Lang's office, the County stated they "do not have jurisdiction" over the road (See Exhibit F). Chippewa County data requests also did not reveal a road order or turnback order of any kind.

Sparta Township (Road Authority): Failed to respond to formal inquiries from myself and also legislative follow-ups from Senator Andrew Lang's office per assistant Bethany Lee (See Exhibit G).

4. DE FACTO ABANDONMENT & PRIVATE CONTROL

Per personal observation and historical records, the southern half of the access route has been physically chained and signed as "Private Property" since 2009. The township road authority has acquiesced to this private control, rendering the 2020 Work Plan factually invalid. This chain and sign remain even as of today, even as property owners have questioned road status publicly, the township and county have continued to allow the property to be treated as private.

5. MATERIAL MISREPRESENTATION & FRAUD PREVENTION

The 2020 Work Plan (and thus the 2026 extension request) contain materially false information regarding property access and title marketability. By claiming a public road exists where no Road Order or Turnback Order can be produced, the County appears to have made a repeat misrepresentation to obtain state funds. This violates the new fraud prevention standards being established in this 2026 legislative session.

6. INVALID BASIS FOR EXTENSION (LITIGATION STATUS)

The previous extension for Project 2020-006 was granted based on "pending litigation." However, all litigation concluded in October 2025. There has been no reported progress on the project in the 6 months since, indicating the project is stalled due to a lack of legal access, not legal proceedings.

7. OBJECTION TO STATUTORY REPEAL (SECTION 6)

I formally object to the repeal of Minnesota Statutes § 116P.17. Given the active OLA review of land acquisition discrepancies in this very bill, now is the time for more statutory oversight, not less.

Removal of Financial Guardrails: This statute requires the DNR Commissioner to provide professional oversight and approval for land acquisitions funded by the ENRTF.

Transparency Risk: Repealing this oversight, especially while the OLA is investigating land acquisition discrepancies within this very bill, is a move in the wrong direction. State land deals require more rigorous financial auditing and professional approval, not less.

In light of recent high-profile instances of grant fraud and administrative oversight failures across Minnesota, the State must move toward more rigorous financial guardrails, not fewer.

Continuing to fund Project 2020-006, a project that lacks the fundamental legal requirement of marketable title, is a poor use of taxpayer dollars and a disservice to the integrity of the ENRTF.

Furthermore, repealing the protective oversight of Section 116P.17 in the current economic climate is a move in the wrong direction; it removes the very transparency and professional auditing that prevent misappropriation before it occurs. I trust that this Committee will act as a responsible steward of our state's resources by maintaining these statutory protections and denying further extensions for a project that is not ready for public investment. I am providing this information with the trust that you will do the right thing to protect both the Trust Fund and the rights of Minnesota landowners.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Starbeck

952-457-7445

mstarbeck21@gmail.com

7043 50th Ave SW

Montevideo MN 56265

DETAILED LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS

Exhibit A (Obstruction Photo): Photo of the "Private Property" signage and painted-over sign. The township minimum maintenance sign was painted over by landowners and a private property sign placed on top and a chain over the roadway for over a decade.

Exhibit B (current map from GLO site): map shows roadway ending at the 7049 driveway, before the chain shown in exhibit A. <https://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/glo/index.html>

Exhibit C (Court Transcript): Sworn testimony from Scott Williams admitting lack of documentation and acknowledging the minimum maintenance sign gone.

Exhibit D (OLA Verification): Correspondence confirming the active OLA Special Review, both directly with myself as well as Senator Lang's assistant, Bethany Lee.

Exhibit E (Township lack of reply): Emails with Senator Lang's assistant to Sparta Township and confirming they refused to reply.

Exhibit F (County Admission): Emails with Senator Lang's assistant stating the County admits "no jurisdiction" over the road.

Exhibit G (MNDOT Data Response): Official response from the State of Minnesota confirming the results of a comprehensive records search. The absence of a Turnback Order in this production is de facto evidence that no legal transfer of the route has occurred. I can provide all docs given by them upon request.

Exhibit H (Evidence Binder): I have created a large and Comprehensive Research binder on the road status- this document clarifies that there is no such road order creating a public status on the only available access for this potential project. I am happy to provide this for you (available digitally upon request).

Attachments Below:

Exhibit A



Copy for OCR Readability:

Sign states: PRIVATE PROPERTY NO TRESPASSING on the eastern side of 50th Ave SW, facing south, just south of the driveway at the 7049 address. There is also a chain across the roadway. These have existed since 2009.



Copy for OCR Readability:

This is the former "minimum maintenance" sign. It was painted over in 2009 with a sign stating PRIVATE PROPERTY NO TRESPASSING placed on top by the private owners. This southern portion of the proposed access has been under the control of the property owners since 2009. The township has acquiesced and allowed this blockage and signage for 17 years.



Exhibit B

Copy for OCR Readability:

This is a copy of the current map from the General Land Office Historic Plat Retrieval System showing that 50th Ave SW terminates at the driveway for the 7049 address and does not continue to the property proposed for the park with this grant (which would exist at the shown waterway at the bottom of the map).

WILLIAMS Cross by Mr. Kluver / Redirect by Mr. Stermer

1 A. No, I wouldn't have denied it. No.

2 Q. Okay. Are you, is the county - is the county's position
3 that they're - they want to see these claims resolved
4 prior to purchasing the - the property?

5 A. That - that's our directive from our county attorney,
6 that it has to be settled before we would close.

7 Q. Okay. All right. So, would you - would you agree that
8 it was - it was good, advantageous for the county for
9 Bob to have brought these claims out now before you had
10 purchased the property?

11 A. I - I guess I don't - I don't really have an answer. I
12 don't know that.

13 Q. 'Kay. All right.

14 MR. KLUVER: I have nothing further, Your
15 Honor.

16 THE COURT: Any redirect?

17 MR. STERMER: Just a few questions, Your
18 Honor. Thank you.

19 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. STERMER:

21 Q. Do you know anything about the, did you research, when
22 you researched the property, the - the access road to
23 the property?

24 A. We - we understood it to be a township road and we
25 actually have a county employee who used to work for a

WILLIAMS Redirect by Mr. Stermer

1 maintainer and he maintained that road for the township,
2 all the way down to the turnaround and back out. So, we
3 believed it to be a township road. We talked to - I
4 talked to the township to see if there was any paperwork
5 anywhere. Couldn't find anything. We went back to old
6 aerial photos, looked at the bridge abutment that's in
7 the river, so we - we know that that was old 212. We
8 were unable to find any transaction that moved it from
9 state to township. We also hired Bonnema surveyors out
10 of Willmar. We - we've done that in the past for other
11 kinda road issues where they'll do some research for us.

12 Q. Uh-huh.

13 A. They were unable to find anything either that talked
14 about the transfer from state to the township or
15 abandonment. Usually, ya know, there's an abandonment

16 --, do you know for how many years, you mentioned that
17 Q. Yep. township had maintained that - that road?

18 A. -- process. We didn't find any of that. So, we still
19 believe that it is township road. It was maintained as
20 a township road and that's kinda that's as far as we
21 went with it.

22 Q. Were you aware that Mr. Starbeck told the township board
23 member that there was no use using that road, nobody
24 uses it anyway, don't maintain it anymore? Did you know
25 that Mr. Starbeck told that to the county, or not the

Joy D. Kack
Official Court Reporter
(320) 269-7774

Court Trial
Court File: 12-CV-22-376
Appellate File: A25-0154

WILLIAMS Recross by Mr. Kluver

- 1 maintenance road, correct?
- 2 A. That's the way we - what we believe, yes.
- 3 Q. Yeah, but it's, isn't it posted with mi- - as it a - as
- 4 a minimum maintenance road?
- 5 A. It was. The sign's gone.
- 6 Q. 'Kay. Why, who would take the sign down?
- 7 A. I - I'm not sure who took the sign down.
- 8 Q. Okay. Was - was that, do you know if that sign, well.
- 9 If, does anyone - does anyone use that road?
- 10 A. The people that access that property I'm assuming do.
- 11 Q. Yeah, but you've never seen them use that road, correct?
- 12 A. I have not, no. No.
- 13 Q. Yep. Have you ever seen anyone ever use that road?
- 14 A. I've used it.
- 15 Q. Okay. And when's the last time you used that road?
- 16 A. Before any of this started. (Chuckle.) I haven't been
- 17 down there since.
- 18 Q. All right.
- 19 A. Since the lawsuit.
- 20 Q. Okay. All right.
- 21 MR. KLUVER: I have nothing further, Your
- 22 Honor.
- 23 THE COURT: Any redirect?
- 24 MR. STERMER: Nothing further, Your Honor.
- 25 THE COURT: All right. You - you're excused.

Joy D. Kack
Official Court Reporter
(320) 269-7774

Court Trial
Court File: 12-CV-22-376
Appellate File: A25-0154

Exhibit C

(pages 90-91, 93 from Chippewa County Court Testimony in case 12-cv-22-376) with sworn testimony from Scott Williams, writer of the work plan for 2020-006 and Chippewa County Land and Resource Manager.

Copy for OCR Readability:

Page 90 lines 21-25

Q. Do you know anything about the, did you research, when you researched the property, the — the access road to the property?

A. We — we understood it to be a township road and we actually have a county employee who used to work for a

Page 91 lines 1-21

maintainer and he maintained that road for the township, all the way down to the turnaround and back out. So, we believed it to be a township road. We talked to — I talked to the township to see if there was any paperwork anywhere. Couldn't find anything. We went back to old aerial photos, looked at the bridge abutment that's in the river, so we — we know that that was old 212. We were unable to find any transaction that moved it from state to township. We also hired Bonnema surveyors out of Willmar. We — we've done that in the past for other kinds road issues where they'll do some research for us.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. They were unable to find anything either that talked about the transfer from state to township or abandonment. Usually, ya know, there's an abandonment —

Q. Yep.

A. — process. We didn't find any of that. So, we still believe that it is township road. It was maintained as a township road and that's kinda that's as far as we went with it.

page 93 lines 3-7

Q. Yeah, but it's, isn't it posted with mi— as it a — an a minimum maintenance road?

A. It was. The sign's gone.

Q. 'Kay. Why, who would take the sign down?

From: Theisen, Katherine (OLA)
<Katherine.Theisen@state.mn.us>
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2025 4:15 PM
To: Bethany Lee <bethany.lee@mnsenate.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Follow-up on Request for Oversight Review...ENRTF Project 2020-006

Bethany,

Thank you for the email. OLA's work on the issue to which you referred has not yet been completed. As a result, pursuant to *Minnesota Statutes*, 3.979, subd. 3(b), all data related to the complaint are confidential or protected nonpublic. Please encourage Ms. Starbeck to contact OLA directly if she has additional information she wishes to share with us. She may contact me directly or my team via our intake email (ola.complaints@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,

Katherine Theisen | Deputy Legislative Auditor | Special Reviews Division

OLA | OFFICE OF THE
LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Room 140 Centennial Bldg, 658 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-1229 | Fax: 651-296-4712 |
<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/>

From: Bethany Lee <bethany.lee@mnsenate.gov>
Sent: Friday, December 5, 2025 2:29 PM
To: Legislative Auditor (OLA)
<Legislative.Auditor@state.mn.us>
Subject: Follow-up on Request for Oversight Review...ENRTF Project 2020-006

EXHIBIT D: CORRESPONDENCE PROVING ACTIVE OLA REVIEW

1. Email from Katherine Theisen to Bethany Lee (Assistant for Senator Lang) 12/11/25
FOR OCR READABILITY:

Bethany,

Thank you for the email. OLA's work on the issue to which you referred has not yet been completed. As a result, pursuant to *Minnesota Statutes*, 3.979, subd. 3(b), all data related to the complaint are confidential or protected nonpublic. Please encourage Ms. Starbeck to contact OLA directly if she has additional information she wishes to share with us. She may contact me directly or my team via our intake email (ola.complaints@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,

Katherine Theisen | Deputy Legislative Auditor | Special Reviews Division **OLA | OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR**

Dear Ms. Starbeck,

Thank you for contacting the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) with your concerns regarding Chippewa County's Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) grant. Please allow us time to review the information you provided. OLA leadership and the special reviews team will discuss your complaint and contact you once we have determined what steps, if any, OLA should take regarding your complaint.

Please review the attached data practices notice to learn how OLA will handle the information you provided. After reviewing the document, **please respond to the following questions by 11/25/25.**

1. Do you authorize our office to disclose your identity (or the identity of your company, nonprofit, or organization) to the subject of your allegation during our inquiry or review?
2. Do you need your identity (or the identity of your company, nonprofit, or organization) to be private or nonpublic in order to provide information related to your allegation?

You might also wish to review our website for more information about OLA's [authority, jurisdiction, and process for investigating allegations](#). We appreciate your time and interest in government accountability.

EXHIBIT D PART 2: Email to myself from the special review division. 11/25/25
FOR OCR READABILITY:

Dear Ms. Starbeck,

Thank you for contacting the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) with your concerns regarding Chippewa County's Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) grant. Please allow us time to review the information you provided. OLA leadership and the special reviews team will discuss your complaint and contact you once we have determined what steps, if any, OLA should take regarding your complaint.

Please review the attached data practices notice to learn how OLA will handle the information you provided. After reviewing the document, **please respond to the following questions by 11/25/25:**

1. Do you authorize our office to disclose your identity (or the identity of your company, nonprofit, or organization) to the subject of your allegation during our inquiry or review?
2. Do you need your identity (or the identity of your company, nonprofit, or organization) to be private or nonpublic in order to provide information related to your allegation?



MN_OLA_Co... 12/10/2025



to me ▾

Dear Ms. Starbeck,

Thank you for providing additional information regarding your complaint . For your awareness, OLA's work on your complaint has not yet been completed. As a result, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 3.979, subd. 3(b), all data related to the complaint are confidential or protected nonpublic. I (or a member of my team) will notify you once OLA's work has concluded. We appreciate your continued patience.

Sincerely,

Special Reviews Division

OLA | OFFICE OF THE
LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Room 140 Centennial Bldg, 658 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN
55155
651-296-4708 | Fax: 651-296-4712 |
<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/>

EXHIBIT D PART 3: Another email from OLA Special Reviews Division confirming work is not complete. Dated 12/10/2025.

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Dear Ms. Starbeck,

Thank you for providing additional information regarding your complaint. For your awareness, OLA's work on your complaint has not yet been completed. As a result, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 3.979, subd. 3(b), all data related to the complaint are confidential or protected nonpublic. I (or a member of my team) will notify you once OLA's work has concluded. We appreciate your continued patience.

Sincerely, Special Reviews Division

OLA | OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

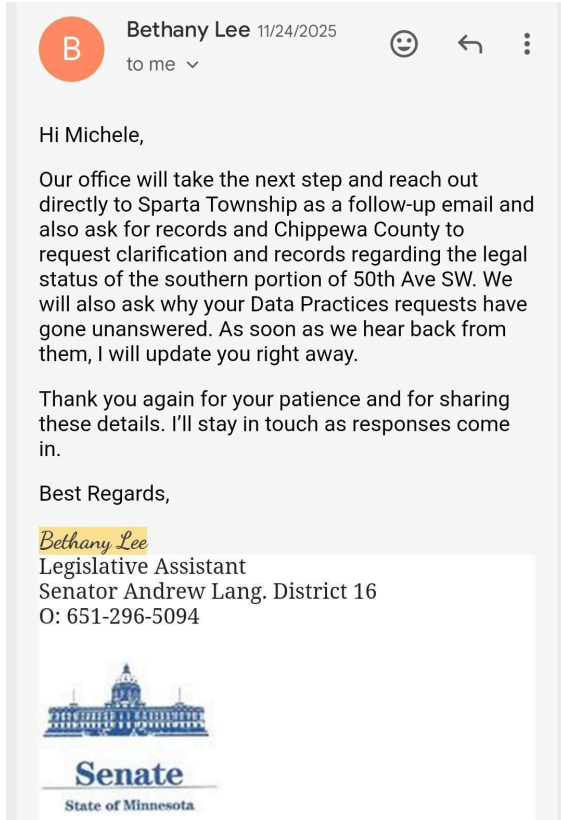


EXHIBIT 3 PART 1: Email from Bethany Lee, Senator Lang's Assistant confirming she will reach out to Sparta Township 11/24/25

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Hi Michele,

Our office will take the next step and reach out directly to Sparta Township as a follow-up email and also ask for records and Chippewa County to request clarification regarding the legal status of the southern portion of 50th Ave SW. We will also ask why your Data Practices requests have gone unanswered. As soon as we hear back from them, I will update you right away.

Thank you again for your patience and for sharing these details. I'll stay in touch as responses come in.

Best Regards,

Bethany Lee Legislative Assistant Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

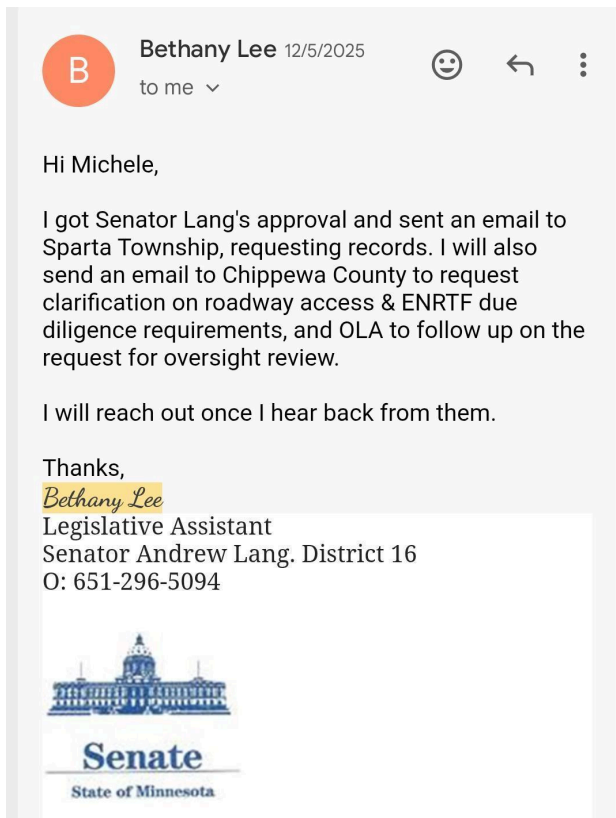


EXHIBIT E PART 2: Emails from Senator Lang's Office showing they sent requests to Sparta township for these records. This email went without a reply from Sparta township. 12/5/25

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Hi Michele,

I got Senator Lang's approval and sent an email to Sparta Township, requesting records. I will also send an email to Chippewa County to request clarification on roadway access & ENRTF due diligence requirements, and OLA to follow up on the request for oversight review.

I will reach out once I hear back from them.

Thanks,

Bethany Lee Legislative Assistant Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

Hi Richard,

My name is Bethany Lee, and I am reaching out on behalf of Senator Andrew Lang's office regarding the road status connected to the property involved in ENRTF Project 2020-006 for a constituent (whose cc'd on this email).

We were informed by Kandiyohi County that the Township is the proper authority to determine the status of this roadway. A constituent has raised questions about whether the road is classified as public, private, vacated, or otherwise, and we would appreciate any clarification the Township can provide.

Could you please let us know the official status of this road and whether any recent or pending actions have been taken regarding its classification? Any documentation or guidance you can share would be extremely helpful.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance. We appreciate your work and look forward to your response.

Best Regards,

Bethany Lee

Legislative Assistant
Senator Andrew Lang, District 16
O: 651-296-5094

* her email had an error labeling Kandiyohi county but was corrected to Chippewa County.

EXHIBIT E PART 3: Email from Senator Lang's Assistant to Richard Enevoldson, board member for Sparta Township. This never received a reply.

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Hi Richard,

My name is Bethany Lee, and I am reaching out on behalf of Senator Andrew Lang's office regarding the road status connected to the property involved in ENRTF Project 2020-006 for a constituent (whose cc'd on this email).

We were informed by Kandiyohi County that the Township is the proper authority to determine the status of this roadway. A constituent has raised questions about whether the road is classified as public, private, vacated, or otherwise, and we would appreciate any clarification the Township can provide.

Could you please let us know the official status of this road and whether any recent or pending actions have been taken regarding its classification? Any documentation or guidance you can share would be extremely helpful.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance. We appreciate your work and look forward to your response.

Best Regards, Bethany Lee Legislative Assistant Senator Andrew Lang, District 16



EXHIBIT E PART 4: Bethany Lee confirming still no response from township. 12/9/25

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Hi Michele,

Thanks for the update. I am still waiting for a response from Sparta Township. Unfortunately, they are not responding quickly.

Thanks for your patience,

Bethany Lee Legislative Assistant Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

Hi Michele,

First, does this email help at all? This is the language I sent to Sparta Township.

"Hi Richard,

I'm writing to follow up on my November 20 email regarding the legal status of the southern segment of 50th Avenue SW in Sparta Township.

Our office has not yet received a response, and the constituent who originally submitted the Data Practices request on October 29 has also been unable to obtain any acknowledgment from the township. Because this roadway is tied to an ENRTF-related county action, confirming its legal status is becoming time-sensitive.

If the township does not have any records related to these items, please confirm that in writing.

Minnesota Statutes § 13.03 requires a timely response to public data requests, and we appreciate your attention to resolving this matter. Please let me know when we can expect a reply."

Thanks,

Bethany Lee

Legislative Assistant

Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

O: 651-296-5094

EXHIBIT E PART 5:

Email Bethany Lee sent me with the exact copy she sent as a follow up to Sparta Township after no reply.

FOR OCR READABILITY:

Based on the image labeled **EXHIBIT E PART 5**, here is the text of the email from Bethany Lee:

Hi Michele,

First, does this email help at all? This is the language I sent to Sparta Township.

"Hi Richard,

I'm writing to follow up on my November 20 email regarding the legal status of the southern segment of 50th Avenue SW in Sparta Township.

Our office has not yet received a response, and the constituent who originally submitted the Data Practices request on October 29 has also been unable to obtain any acknowledgment

from the township. Because this roadway is tied to an ENRTF-related county action, confirming its legal status is becoming time-sensitive.

If the township does not have any records related to these items, please confirm that in writing.

Minnesota Statutes § 13.03 requires a timely response to public data requests, and we appreciate your attention to resolving this matter. Please let me know when we can expect a reply."

Thanks,

Bethany Lee Legislative Assistant Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

- The County was notified on **October 27** that the State Court of Appeals upheld the District Court's denial of the prescriptive easement claim. **Robert has 30 days to appeal this decision to the Minnesota Supreme Court.** The County will not take any action on purchasing or negotiating the property for the ENRTF project until all legal avenues are closed.
- The County clarified that they do **not have jurisdiction** over the road in question. **Sparta Township** is the proper authority to determine the road's status. **I am reaching out to the Township to request clarification and will share any information they provide.**
- The County Assessor's Office received the classification materials and is reviewing them. They will follow up directly with the landowner involved.
- The ENRTF Project 2020-006 currently has funding through **June 30, 2026**. It is unknown whether LCCMR will approve a project extension.

Let me know if you need us to follow up on anything else. We are happy to help!

Best Regards,

Bethany Lee

Legislative Assistant

Senator Andrew Lang, District 16

O: 651-296-5094

Exhibit F- Email to me from Senator Lang's assistant confirming Chippewa County confirmed they do not "have jurisdiction" over the road in question. (PARAGRAPH 2)

FOR OCR READABILITY:

The County clarified that they do not have jurisdiction over the road in question. Sparta Township is the proper authority to determine the road's status. I am reaching out to the Township to request clarification and will share any information they provide.

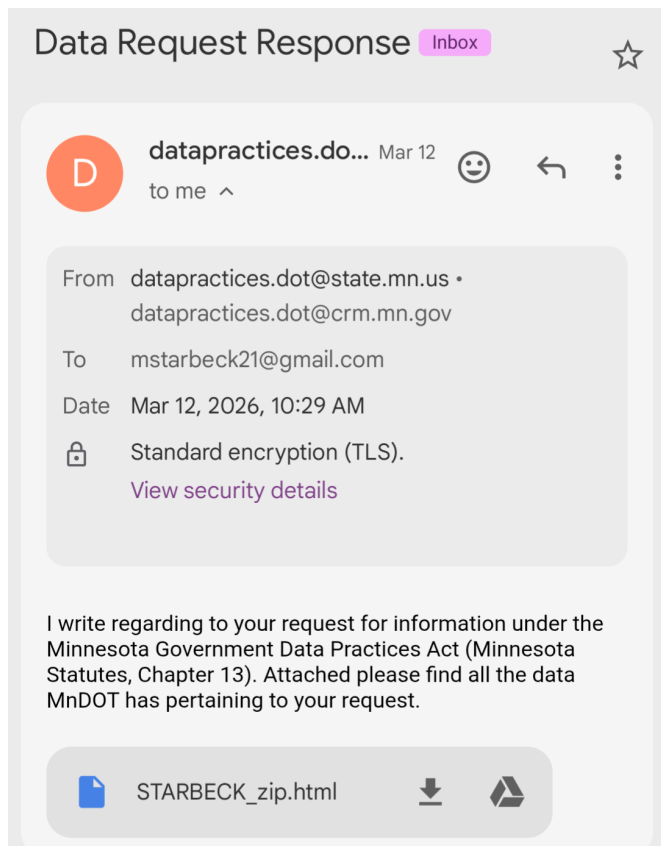


EXHIBIT G: Official response from the State of Minnesota confirming the end of available results of a comprehensive records search. The absence of a Turnback Order in this production is de facto evidence that no legal transfer of the route has occurred. I can provide all docs given by them upon request.

FOR OCR READABILITY:

FROM datapracitices.dot@state.mn.us

3/12/26

I write regarding to your request for information under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13). Attached please find all the data MnDOT has pertaining to your request.

Exhibit H

I have a large binder with road documentation dating back to the original deed signed by Ulysses S. Grant. At no point in the research with the township, county or state or my in depth private research has a road order or turnback order or any kind been produced. I am happy to provide this entire document at your request.