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OPINION

“CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;”

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

Editorial

Investing in Big Rice Lake

Funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been critical to many area projects

Kudos to the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Fund for the organization's significant investment in the future of Big Rice Lake, as we report this week. Few lakes in northern St. Louis County have been as important historically to the sustenance of both people and wildlife. The once-spectacular wild rice crops that grew here drew hundreds of ricers and tens of thousands of ducks and geese annually to this spectacular 2,000-acre lake tucked away in the Superior National Forest.

It was an enormous natural resource and we hope it can be once again, thanks to the \$845,000 that the Outdoor Heritage Fund has approved to undertake a planned restoration.

We recognize that the funding is no guarantee that the lake can be turned around. As officials from the Department of Natural Resources have acknowledged, it was their previous management efforts, which sought to stabilize water levels, that appear to have tipped the balance in favor of pickerel weed, thereby making the lake far less hospitable to wild rice.

Fortunately, DNR officials didn't simply shrug and walk away from this important resource. Instead, they have spent the last several years developing and implementing potential solutions, which are finally beginning to show promise.

The recent grant from the Outdoor Heritage Fund will now allow the DNR to get the lake's pickerel weed under control, allowing for the eventual return of wild rice.

The timing of this is critical. While it's not entirely clear how long wild rice seed can remain viable, most seeds lose vigor the longer they sit in dormancy. We know that some of seed is still out there, buried in the sediments, and could germinate once favorable conditions return.

That's key, since most rice lakes have their own

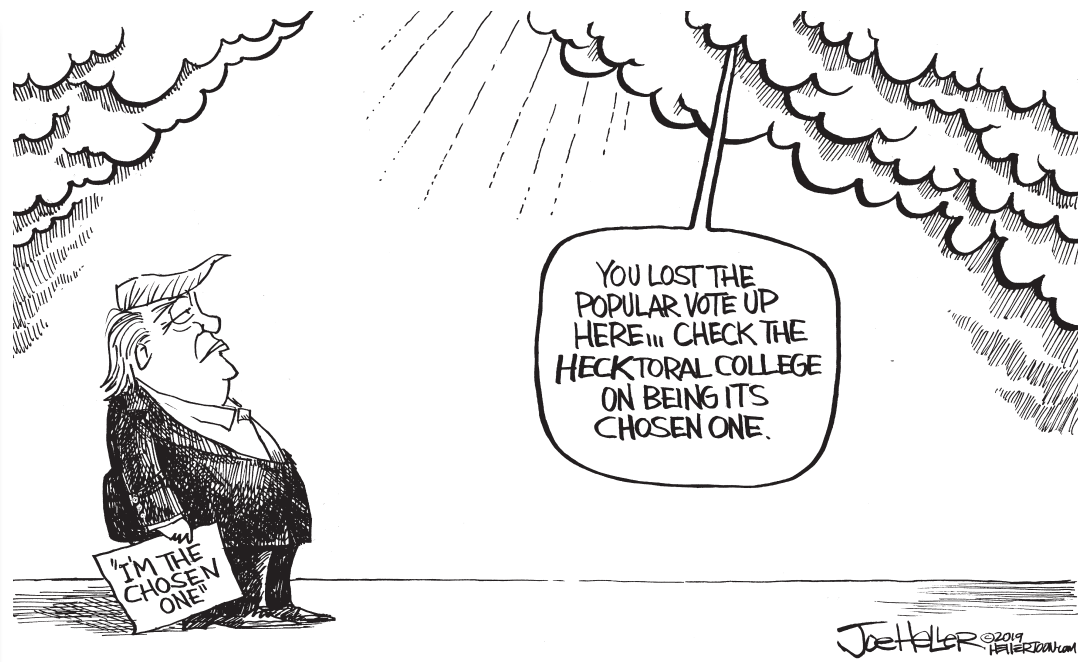
unique strain, and Big Rice was famous for producing not just abundant rice, but some of the highest quality wild rice anywhere in the world.

Simply reseeding the lake with rice from elsewhere is a far-less desirable option. By taking aggressive steps now, it may still be possible to save the Big Rice Lake genotype for the future.

It's a worthy project, designed to restore a natural resource that is iconic to the state's outdoor heritage. It is investments such as this that have prompted us to reconsider the value of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment, approved by the state's voters in 2008. We opposed that amendment at the time, preferring to leave such investment decisions under the control of the state Legislature. But over the years, we've seen the benefits that have accrued to our region from passage of that amendment, and we recognize that most of those investments would have ended up on the chopping block in a Legislature too often consumed by other matters.

Minnesota voters showed that they truly care about the future of the state's natural resources and want to see them protected for both current and future generations. The small addition to the state's sales tax may have gone unnoticed by Minnesotans when making their purchases at a retailer, but the impact of those dollars in the development of trails, habitat, watershed protection, and so many other projects, has certainly been apparent. The prospect of restoring Big Rice Lake to its former value as one of the state's premier wild rice lakes, is just one more example of the importance of this unique funding stream to the state's outdoor heritage.

If this investment yields the benefits we all hope for, it will be a remarkable turnaround and prove, once again, that Minnesota's voters made the right call in 2008.



Letters from Readers

Greenwood doesn't need the insults

Concerning the Cook Hospital's financial woes featured in last week's *Timberjay*, I was disappointed but not surprised that the Hospital Board Chairperson hurled out a new version of an old trope: "We're carrying Greenwood Township on our back." This is in reference to Greenwood's not belonging to the Cook-Orr Healthcare Tax District. Maybe this scapegoating is just a sign of the times, after all, we listen to it every day on the national level with diminishing returns. In Minnesota, we certainly can and should do better than that.

For the record, the vast majority of Greenwood residents take care of their medical needs in Ely, Virginia and Duluth. Additionally, Greenwood, along with the townships of Breitung, Vermilion Lake, Eagles Nest, Kugler and the City of Tower make up the Tower Area Ambulance Service. The Service provides excellent responses, works closely with the Virginia Ambulance Service and is working toward a future that includes Advanced Life Support with paramedics.

The last time the issue of sneaky midnight State legislation forcing Greenwood and a few other townships into the Cook-Orr Healthcare Tax District came to light in 2015, Greenwood put the question directly on the survey that helped develop our Comprehensive Plan. Not to join prevailed by 481 to 84. Similar opposition was expressed by the other irrationally targeted townships, including Vermilion Lake Township. A report then by the St. Louis County Auditor stated that if Greenwood had belonged to the Hospital Tax District in 2015, it would have meant an additional property tax of \$99.16 for every \$100,000 in property valuation. It's worth keeping in mind that once a city or township joins a tax district, hospital or school, for example, there is no getting out or partway payment. Just ask Kabetogama Township. They tried unsuccessfully for years to get out of the Cook-Orr Hospital tax district.

The Cook-Orr Hospital and its board need to focus on the financial challenges that are outlined in the *Timberjay* article and skip wasting time on insults. Greenwood Township won't vote to join.

**Lee Peterson
Greenwood Twp.**

Poisoning the future not a fair price to pay for a paycheck today

Some who have seen my recent letters have asked if I'm retired. No. I'm still working, part time in California and remotely from here in Ely via Internet. At the age of 63, my goal is 30 hours a week or less. With a current staff of nine, we provide the educational background, training and writing skills to draft each environmental report for my review, signature and transmittal.

Others have asked what it is that we do. We provide environmental testing of all sorts: indoor air quality, soils contaminants, pre-demolition hazmat testing (primarily lead, asbestos and PCBs), water quality field testing, and management of remedial projects. We have been retained by most of southern California's major studios, property managers, universities and school districts.

The work is fun, sometimes exciting, often rewarding, and occasionally... heartbreaking. The Boundary Waters issue fits that last description. I enjoy all of the friends we've met and known since purchasing a home here in 2004. Most of these folks are also intelligent and kind. But some of them have bought into the idea that hard rock mining can be performed here without harm to the environment, even though there is no historical or actuarial evidence to support that notion. In the end, all such mines in the past have meant permanent, profound contamination to surface water, groundwater and soils.

Like most Americans, I also have a deep love and concern for our people, our wildlife and our national wilderness areas. And I've seen EACH of these decimated by mines such as the ones currently proposed (I was a union miner in the 1970s and

1980s). Heavy metals poisoning in children is real, it is under-reported, and the effects, including tremors, learning disabilities, cancers and other diseases may go undetected or improperly diagnosed for decades.

That's the primary reason I and others continue to express opposition to these mines, even as I, at least, maintain adamant support for union wages, the growth of tourism, and other non-mining alternatives.

Poisoning our children's children's children with heavy metals and toxic chemicals is not a fair price to pay for a temporary paycheck. I'm sorry. It's not.

**Duane Behrens
Ely**

Impressed to see real journalism in a small town newspaper

I've subscribed to the e-edition of the *Timberjay* for the past couple of years, as part of my plans to eventually move to the area. I have to say I'm continually impressed at how you and your staff are doing real journalism at a small-town paper.

**Bob Nemzek
El Rancho, N. Mex.**

Time to move to the 21st Century

Defying logic, the Greenwood Town Board refuses to allow installation of a computer that all can use in our town hall. More than one supervisor states that they have never heard of such a need. A Blandin Foundation grant would pay for most of the costs involved in the project.

I know many property owners and visitors experience outages with Frontier's internet service. The town hall computer would be on fiber and provide a viable solution for all.

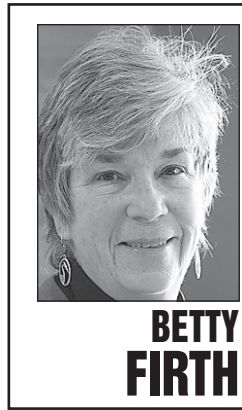
If you support our township's participation in this program, please email every one of our township supervisors and copy our town clerk. Their contact info is on the Greenwood Township website. Time to move our township into the 21st century.

**Steve Rodgers
Lake Vermilion, Tower**



It's increasingly clear: It's time to step up for the country

When I consider the political situation in this country, I am astonished, angered, and frustrated, like many others. In spite of the reported approval ratings of Donald Trump, I find it hard to believe that many people really admire him or approve of his irresponsible, narcissistic, erratic



BETTY FIRTH

But then I never thought he could get elected. Those who care about the philosophical and functional integrity of America are appalled at his attacks on average Americans, minorities, immigrants, education, the environment, health care, unions, and

the legal and judicial system. If you hold it dear, he has probably attacked it.

In spite of the evidence of the reigning of ignorance, greed and just plain insanity at the highest levels of our government, I am heartened by the voices that I hear around me. I was particularly impressed by the collection of voices in the letters to the editor and the editorials in the Aug. 23 issue of the *Timberjay*. Sometimes I question whether my own letters and articles

accomplish anything beyond an outlet for my voice, like Lucy, shouting into the wind. Am I just preaching to the choir? Will those with a different viewpoint even bother to read it? These writers who took the time to compose their thoughts and send them in definitely make the case for it being worth the bother. Collectively, they provide a very articulate commentary about key issues that they value as citizens, areas where they believe we're going seriously astray, and the

need to stand up and be counted.

Tim Duff urged us to pay attention, get angry about what's happening in our country, and take action to effect change. Tim Munkeby wrote about the appalling and ill-advised federal cuts to education with many states, including Minnesota, following suit. He points out that funding education is an investment that pays off 16:1 in multiple ways to strengthen our country. He

See **STEP UP...**pg. 5

Letters from Readers

Congress must act to trim Trump spending

The Trump administration wants to lower interest rates to stimulate the economy and weaken the value of the dollar to encourage foreign trade.

The problem is that the government needs money to meet its increasing financial obligations. The first ten months of fiscal 2019, government spending rose eight percent, but receipts only grew by three percent. It has also depleted its cash balance by a quarter of trillion dollars and, more importantly, the deficit for fiscal 2019 will exceed a trillion dollars. Estimates for foreseeable years are sustained deficits of a trillion dollars or more each

year. These deficits will have to be financed through issuance of Treasury securities.

In order to market this volume of Treasuries, interest rates will be pushed higher to attract investors needed to purchase the bonds. Treasury interest rates are a benchmark interest rate for municipal bonds, mortgages, corporate borrowing and other forms of borrowing. These higher interest rates will result in a slowing of U. S. economic growth.

Higher government interest rates are necessary to entice investors, many of whom already have a large percentage of their portfolios in Treasuries. High interest rates seemingly would attract foreign investors, espe-

cially in those countries which have sovereign debt yielding negative interest rates.

The administration, however, is also seeking to weaken the value of the dollar. The U.S. dollar currency index, with a basis of 100 established in 1973, measures the dollar against a “basket” of six world currencies and reflects the value of the dollar in the global markets. The index at present is 97, indicating that the dollar has depreciated three percent. The administration wants the index number to go lower so that a weak dollar will give foreign currencies more buying power for U.S. products.

In another words, foreign buyers can obtain a more favorable exchange rate for their local

currency conversion to U.S. dollars than prior to the “weakened” dollar. Hence, they can acquire more value or product in U.S. purchases, and provide a greater stimulus to the U.S. economy.

The prospects of a weakening dollar, however, would be a deterrent for foreigners to purchase U.S. Treasuries. The conversion rate from a foreign currency to dollars for the purchase of Treasuries might significantly decrease during the security’s holding period. Consequently, when the proceeds from the investment are converted back to the local currency, there may be a significant monetary loss in the transaction, making the investment risky for

foreign participation.

The bulk of U. S. Treasuries are bought by domestic investors and institutions. A significant increase in the amount of U.S. debt will push interest rates higher causing the market price of the outstanding Treasury issues to decline, lowering the liquidity value of a portfolio. When liquidity values decline, portfolios often sustain monetary losses to meet redemptions and obligations to their beneficiaries.

If Congress does not soon exercise fiscal constraints, the United States economy is very likely to deteriorate into a recession.

**Gerry Snyder
Ely**

STEP UP...Continued from page 4

exhorted us not to feel helpless but to be aware, speak up, and educate our politicians.

Harold Honkola pointed out that the middle class was built by the unions’ right to collectively bargain. With union membership and strength declining, corporate practices have created ever-widening income inequality with escalating levels of wealth for the very few. He urged us to recognize the importance of working together in cooperative social action to bring about change.

Steve Wilson wrote about just such an action, when 28 DNR wildlife managers joined forces in an unprecedented action to object to a new DNR policy that would enable and prioritize timber harvesting over wildlife in Wildlife Management Areas. They were given a gag order, but that didn’t apply to Steve nor to us.

Marshall Helmberger went after the many-lay-

ered Trump fabrications about how well the economy is doing. In fact, punitive tariffs have made U.S. goods more expensive, increased the trade gap substantially, and slowed growth globally, possibly leading to recession. Huge corporate tax cuts and excessive increased military spending have pushed the deficit to a trillion dollars, double that of the Obama administration.

So why am I reiterating what was already published? It’s very easy for us to read or hear information that is upsetting, grumble about it, and move on to our daily activities, for we all have to keep our lives on track. So, I’m repeating these salient points about a few of the issues to urge us to grab hold and do something. We can’t individually address everything, but we can choose what speaks to our minds and hearts (and our outrage) and do something about it. Cooperatively, we can

have a broader and deeper impact.

I have often wondered how any Republicans can feel anything but mortification about the catastrophe in the White House. Their willingness to stick to a party line has definitely won victories for them, big business, and the wealthy over the years, but the current situation is beyond understanding. Finally, some Republicans are speaking out. Former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld, who has declared his candidacy for the presidency as a Republican, characterized Trump as unfit and “too unstable to carry out the duties of the highest executive office.”

Former Congressman Joe Walsh, now a conservative talk show host, just announced he is running. He said that Trump is unfit, and that Republicans should have stepped up. “The country is sick of this guy’s tantrum. He’s a child.” Walsh has been

compared to Trump with similar rantings. He says he now recognizes how wrong he was and apologizes. Not the most sterling character, but at least there is some breaking of ranks.

Rick Wilson may be the loudest and most visible opponent of all things Trump. He is well-known as the conservative political strategist and negative ad-maker who has successfully counseled political candidates, state parties, SuperPACS, and national campaign committees as well as corporate and government clients across the nation and the world. He has a regular column in *The Daily Beast*, has been published broadly and is a frequent guest on CNN, MSNBC, NPR, and the national networks. A friend handed me his book, *Everything Trump Touches Dies*, and I reveled in his castigation of Trump, the damage he has done to the country, and the Republican Party for supporting him. His broad

command of vituperative adjectives which he strings together with ease is truly impressive and warmed the cockles of my progressive soul even though I overdosed on his venting before I’d read half the book. However, I thought that this guy would get people’s attention on the right when he claimed that the conservative movement had abandoned its principles for the worst president in American history. He has very different political views than I do, but he’s doing something to clean up the mess, lobbying for a return to sanity in American politics.

So, what can we do, those of us who don’t have the ear of a vast listening or reading audience? Well, what do you care about? What are you angry about? Do that...write letters, call politicians and candidates, support organizations with your money and your time.

What if a small group of rural citizens decided to get together and figure out

how to get people talking about the significance of the bedrock democratic values in their lives? What if they decided to listen to what people are concerned about? Wait, that actually has happened. The Northern Progressives meet monthly for presentations and discussions of critical issues at the Crescent Bar in Cook. North of the Divide is a group committed to breathing awareness into Democratic values and Democratic solutions. door knocking on all the doors they can reach, and presenting a forum on Oct. 12 in Ely.

Knowledgeable presenters will speak on key issues of income inequality, health care, climate change, and jobs and economic development, with time to listen to your concerns. Stay tuned for more details. What can you do? Join in. Help out. Meet some terrific people at Sulu’s in Tower on Sept. 4 at 6 p.m.

SCHOOLS...Continued from page 3

► Hired Kris Winkleman for the Cafeteria Aide (cashier) position.

► Called back Cathy Braun to fill a vacant para-professional position.

► Hired Kristine

Marshall for the Early Childhood Family Education and School Readiness Coordinator and Teacher position for the 2019-2020 school year.

► Hired Ruth Griffin for the long-term substitute

position.

► Hired Jennifer Stouffer for the Early Childhood Family Education Assistant position.

► Hired David Brown for the bus driver position.

► Hired Madeline Swenson for the Media Generalist position.

► Approved a lane change for Brenda Check-Olson.

► Accepted the resignation of Richard

Kovall from the part-time Cafeteria Aide position.

► Approved the Computer Science Principles course as an Advanced Placement course.

► Approved cooper-

ative agreements for volleyball and girls swimming with the Krekelberg Home School for the 2019-2020 season.

TWIN METALS...Continued from page 4

issued new mineral leases to Twin Metals back in May of this year.

Twin Metals, which is owned by the Chilean mining giant Antofagasta, has promised to release a mine plan later this year. It must still go through environmental review and permitting but, according to the *Star Tribune*, the company is already working with state officials on pre-development work. That’s the work that the *Star Tribune* is calling on the governor to end.

“It makes sense to halt work now,” writes the paper. “Twin Metals is the likeliest beneficiary of keeping any damaging science from the aborted study under wraps. Unlike PolyMet, another Minnesota copper mine, the proposed Twin Metals mine is actually within the BWCA watershed, a reality that dramatically amplifies concerns about potential pollution.”

Concerns about the Trump administration’s secrecy were only intensified by Agriculture

Secretary Sonny Perdue, who was in Minnesota earlier this month for Farmfest. Perdue oversees the U.S. Forest Service, which conducted the study. When asked about the controversy, Perdue said he has no plans to release any of the science that Forest Service had gathered during the roughly 20 months the study was ongoing. And he suggested that it was the state of Minnesota that was ultimately responsible for ensuring the safety of the Twin Metals mine.

The secretary’s comment didn’t sit well with the governor. “It’s outrageous that Secretary Purdue is refusing to accept any responsibility for a mining project in the Superior National Forest,” said Walz, in a statement issued to the *Timberjay*. “As Governor, I have a responsibility to ensure that mining projects in Minnesota don’t move forward unless there is a rigorous environmental review and permitting process. This is especial-

ly the case for a project that is so close to the Boundary Waters. The manner in which we do our work can either bolster or undermine the trust Minnesotans have in governmental decision-making. Cancelling the Forest Service’s environmental

review and refusing to release the information gathered during the study undermines public trust in the process. The Forest Service should complete the study.”

It’s unclear what impact the recent newspaper editorial will have,

but it signals the distinction that many Minnesotans are making between the planned PolyMet mine, which the *Star Tribune* has generally supported, and the Twin Metals project. Former Gov. Mark Dayton, who supported the PolyMet project, was

outspoken in his opposition to the Twin Metals proposal and had ordered state agencies not to assist the company in advancing the project.



Adult Day Services Offered

Cook Hospital 10 Fifth Street SE, Cook MN 55723



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- ◆ Socialization and exercise for individuals
- ◆ Assistance with getting to medical or therapy appointments
- ◆ Health monitoring i.e. blood pressure and blood sugar monitoring
- ◆ Assistance with showers
- ◆ Veteran foot care
- ◆ Community shopping outing once weekly
- ◆ Create crafts, activities, and so much more!

If you or a loved one are 18 years of age or older and interested in what Adult Day Services offers or have further questions just give **Jessica Steventon** a call at **218-666-6240**

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