



Photos by Michael Achterling / Tribune

Water flows over the Buck's Mill dam along the Pelican River. Minnesota DNR officials are seeking the removal of the dam to return the river to its natural state, which would benefit the natural ecosystems of nearby rivers, lakes and streams.

COUNTY TARGETS LAST DAM ON PELICAN RIVER

Removing Buck's Mill dam would be a multi-year process

By Michael Achterling
machterling@dlnewspapers.com

With a goal of stemming erosion and improving fish habitat, Becker County commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday, Sept. 15, to approve the grant application process for the removal of the Buck's Mill dam on the Pelican River.

The grant application is the first step of a multi-year process for Becker

County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to acquire the land parcels surrounding the dam in order to begin plans to dismantle it.

"It sounds to me like they are trying to get things back to natural ways so the fish can move," said Don Skarie, District Four Commissioner for Becker County.

Becker County will be applying for nearly \$28,000 through the

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program, which is funded by the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment. The conservation grant is one of the "best value" grants in the state, which only requires 10% local funding with the rest being covered by the state, according to a Minnesota DNR official.

The preliminary plans for the dam site will include a series of rocks, similar to Dunton Locks in Detroit Lakes, that will allow for a gradual slope of the river and serve as a natural highway for fish to move upstream and downstream. The dam is

on private property just off Highway 59 south of Detroit Lakes.

Currently, fish are prevented by the dam from migrating upstream, which has led to population control issues for some species of fish as well as erosion problems along the shoreline near the dam site, according to Nicholas Kludt, Red River fisheries specialist at Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Kludt explained the dam's narrow bottle neck forces water over the structure at a much higher velocity, which has led to a blowout hole

on the downstream side of the dam with the fast water eroding the river's shoreline.

"The effect is just like when you put your thumb over a garden hose," said Kludt. "That's part of where the watershed district and the soil and water conservation district come in. They've already done some shoreline stabilization some years ago, specifically to deal with this entire problem."

The current Buck's Mill dam was constructed in 1937 and replaced the old dam and shipping locks system, which were constructed around the

beginning of the 20th Century. Kludt said that during the construction of the current dam, a man-made channel was created to guide the river's path, which hindered natural river habitat.

Minnesota DNR is also under strict regulations to maintain river and lake water levels with any project that may affect them, Kludt said. He added that Minnesota DNR has a lot of experience adhering to these regulations and the water levels of the Pelican River, and surrounding

DAM: Page A8

COVID-19 pushes DL High to full distance learning

By Vicki Gerdes
vgerdes@dlnewspapers.com

A staff member at Detroit Lakes High School has tested positive for COVID-19, which means that the high school will be moving to a full distance learning model for the next two weeks, rather than the hybrid model that had originally been approved for the start of classes at both the high school and middle school.

"We had a staff member test positive (for the virus) over the weekend," said Detroit Lakes Public Schools Superintendent Mark Jensen on Monday, Sept. 14. "No students were impacted (i.e., exposed)."

Jensen posted this message on the Detroit Lakes Public Schools Facebook page on Sunday:

As the person who tested positive had participated in workshops with several other high school staff members during the previous week, Jensen said, they simply did not have sufficient staff available to cover all of the exposed persons' duties while they were under quarantine. Therefore, the decision was made to move the high school from the hybrid model — combining in-person and distance learning — to a fully remote learning model for the duration of the quarantine period.

"As of today, we are in full distance learning mode (at the high school) for this week only," Jensen said, but added that it would "most likely"

LEARNING: Page A8

'Nice flow' to revamped middle school

By Marie Johnson
mjjohnson@dlnewspapers.com

On the heels of earlier improvements to the school's exterior as well as interior renovations on the upper level, the lower level remodeling projects at Detroit Lakes Middle School have just wrapped up.

School leaders say the building has come a long way in recent years, and with the construction nearly complete now, they can really see, enjoy, and be proud of the outcome.

"It's been years in the making that we've been working on this, and now to see it come to fruition is pretty amazing," said Principal Mike Suckert. "We're pretty pleased about it."

"I've seen a lot of transformation over the past five years," said Assistant Principal Justin Hegg. "It has a nice flow now."

The lower level

INSIDE
First day at Detroit Lakes Middle School

remodeling project has improved the flow of students during one of the school's busiest times — lunch. Moving the kitchen to the old main office area, directly across from the gymnasium, where kids sit and eat, has made for more sensible and straightforward routes between the serving room and the dining area.

In turn, moving the old office up to the front of the building, right next to the main entrance, has improved security and also made for a much lighter, brighter atmosphere, as the reception area and some of the administrative offices now boast large windows — an upgrade from the windowless quarters the staff worked in before.

SCHOOL: Page A7



Marie Johnson / Tribune

A remodel of the middle school's lower level has made the main gathering area feel more open and inviting. School and project leaders say the reconfiguration has improved student flow and enhanced safety. Construction manager Sean Vadnais, of Gehrtz Construction, said that next summer, the central stairway seen here will be dismantled and replaced with a new stairway built off to the side, "to open up that sight line even more."

SCHOOL TOURS
This photo tour of the Detroit Lakes Middle School is the fourth and final in a series of photo tours we've published over four issues of the Tribune with full tours at dl-online.com and limited photos in our print editions. The tours highlight the new updates and additions at all four Detroit Lakes Public Schools, made possible by a taxpayer-approved referendum passed in the fall of 2018.

Bringing the funk

By Vicki Gerdes
vgerdes@dlnewspapers.com

Though pandemic safety restrictions have kept the main stage of Detroit Lakes' Historic Holmes Theatre shuttered since early March, the staff of the local entertainment venue has found a way to launch its 2020 fall season — by hosting an outdoor concert.

The Holmes Theatre

will host a Concert in the Park beneath the Detroit Lakes City Park Bandshell at 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26. The featured band will be a Fargo-Moorhead favorite: Post Traumatic Funk Syndrome.

This 12-piece classic rock band includes a full horn section, says Holmes Theatre Executive Director Amy Stoller Stearns, and they play a wide variety of tunes, from the

IF YOU GO

- **What:** Concert in the Park featuring Post Traumatic Funk Syndrome
- **When:** 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26
- **Where:** Detroit Lakes City Park Bandshell, 1361 Washington Ave.
- **Ticket Info:** \$50 reserved seating (includes customized camp chair), \$25 general admission (bring your own chair). Call 218-844-7469 or visit dlccc.org/holmes-theatre.html.

1960s era up to the present.

"They'll be playing a

Holmes Theatre to host outdoor Concert in the Park Sept. 26

lot of super-fun music to help say goodbye to summer and welcome fall," she added.

"We will have areas

Though Stearns says the event was inspired by the success of the theater's annual Tuesdays in the Park summer concert series, what will differentiate this concert from the weekly live music series is that they are charging admission.

Tickets will be \$50 for reserved seating and \$25 for general admission.

"We will have areas

of the park roped off (for seating)," Stearns explained. Ticket holders will also be escorted to their seating area by theater staff.

The event will be held "rain or shine," she added, though they are hoping for optimal fall weather to maximize attendees' enjoyment.

Nevertheless, said

CONCERT: Page A7

INSIDE Reflections on voting

Elections have changed over the years
Page A5



Five for five

Laker girls record fifth soccer victory, all by shutout
Page B1



Forecast

TODAY Partly cloudy	THURSDAY Partly cloudy	FRIDAY Partly cloudy	SATURDAY Sunny	SUNDAY Partly cloudy
High: 56 Low: 39	High: 57 Low: 42	High: 60 Low: 47	High: 65 Low: 55	High: 70 Low: 58

Unlock digital at dl-online.com/activate



DAM

From Page A1

bodies, will not be affected.

“Normally, you would see pool, riffle, run, stream habitat sequencing,” Kludt said. “There, you see none of that. It’s just flatbed all the way around, so its habitat value is extremely limited in its current state.”

“If (Becker County) gets the grant, there is still work to be done to get the property,” said Nathan Olson, Area Fisheries Supervisor for Minnesota DNR. “So you’re looking at a year, maybe a year and a half to close on the sale of that property before it gets into county hands.”

Olson said Minnesota DNR has been anticipating this project for many years because of all the work going into the Pelican River, including other dam removals, and this project would be the last step in finishing that large scale revitalization.

If completed, it would allow fish to move from the Otter Tail River, through Pelican River, all the way to Big Floyd Lake just north of Detroit Lakes, a distance of more than 100 miles by car.

“(The project) has been talked about for several years and how we can improve (Pelican River),” said John Okeson, District Three Commissioner for Becker County.

Okeson said he served on Lake View Township’s board for nearly 20 years and preventing shoreline erosion was always on their minds since he had personally seen the shoreline rebuilt twice.

Mill levy increase

In other business, the commissioners unanimously approved the maximum tax levy increase for the 2021 budget cycle.

The commissioners will allow for maximum tax levy increase of 2.7%, but may end up being lower than that, Okeson said. “We can’t go above



Michael Achterling / Tribune

Water sits in an ancient river bed south of Buck’s Mill Road along the Pelican River. Minnesota DNR officials are seeking to link the ancient river beds north and south of Buck’s Mill Road to return the river to its natural state, which would benefit the natural ecosystems of nearby rivers, lakes and streams.

that,” said Okeson. “We’ve always maintained a pretty low levy increase the years I’ve been on the board.”

Over 10 years, Okeson said, the average increase

has been between 2% and 3%.

“We’ve been pretty good about keeping it level,” said Don Skarie. “There’s also been a fairly

substantial increase in property values, and new buildings, so if a person’s (property) value doesn’t go up, they’ll actually probably get a decrease in

their taxes from this.”

The next regular meeting of the Becker County Board of Commissioners will be Tuesday, Oct. 6.

LEARNING

From Page A1

extend through Sept. 25. However, if none of those who were in close contact with the person who tested positive were to test positive themselves, the quarantine may end sooner.

“We’re working through the contact tracing right now,” he added.

Because this state-mandated change in learning models took place over the weekend, the school district’s administrative team elected to suspend Monday’s classes at the high school to give the teachers a day to prepare for the shift.

“There are no classes at the high school today

(Monday),” Jenson said. Distance learning for all high school students was scheduled to begin on Tuesday, Sept. 15.

“The state gives you (i.e., each school district) five ‘pivot’ days throughout the year,” Jenson said, explaining that a pivot day is one where classes are suspended at one or more school buildings in the district to give staff sufficient time to prepare for a shift in learning models caused by coronavirus exposure.

Classes started Monday at the middle school, as expected, with teachers using the hybrid model. Classes at both Roosevelt and Rossman Elementary are set to start on Thursday, Sept. 17, with students attending classes in person. The first three

days of the week, Monday through Wednesday, were spent in family-teacher conferences. Parents were asked to bring in each student for an in-person conference with his or her teacher, and the families were then given tours so they would know their way around the freshly remodeled facilities before the start of classes.

Jenson noted that the Detroit Lakes School Board would be meeting as scheduled Monday, Sept. 21, and no special meeting had been set to discuss these changes. He added that school board members had previously given the district administration team the authority to make decisions regarding day-to-day changes in learning models caused by COVID-19 exposure.

Time for a Career Change?

HUMAN SERVICE TECHNICIAN
PCA | CNA | DSP

- Divine House Inc. is currently accepting applications for Human Service Technicians in our Detroit Lakes sites.
- Experience working with developmentally disabled or health care experience preferred but not required.
- We currently have Part-time and Full-time positions open with a variety of shifts.
- Wages Depend on Experience.

Great 2nd JOB! **FT & PT Opportunities** **Flexible Schedules** **Overnight SLEEP Positions!**

Divine House, Inc. **ALL QUALIFIED APPLICANTS RECEIVE A CALL BACK!**

EOE **Apply Online** at www.divinehouse.org, or email a resume Laura@divinehouse.org, or call 218-847-9678



A safe economic boost for Minnesota

Enbridge’s Line 3 Replacement Project will create thousands of family-supporting jobs.

This project is a \$2.6 billion private investment in the state of Minnesota—an economic boost for local communities during construction.

Tribal communities will benefit directly from \$100 million in Tribal-affiliated work opportunities—including training, contracting, procurement and hiring from Tribes.

It will bring extra county tax revenue for many years to come. And it will mean a secure and steady supply of North American oil that fuels Minnesotans’ quality of life.

We’re focused on safety. And we’re ready to get to work. Learn more at enbridge.com/Line3US.

