

OUR VIEW

MnDOT needs to slam the brakes on Highway 34 tree-cutting plan

Detroit Lakes Tribune Editorial Board
The Minnesota Department of Transportation needs to back off on its plans for cutting down trees along the Highway 34 scenic byway between Four Corners and Osage. Just because the highway is being resurfaced doesn't mean MnDOT needs to go in and "slaughter the highway," as one Becker County commissioner put it, only half-jokingly, at a county board meeting Tuesday.

MnDOT intends to log off a substantial number of beautiful, mature red and white pines, 65 feet from the center line on both sides, as part of an \$8.9 million full-depth reclamation and repaving project on Highway 34. The project is set for 2023, but tree-cutting is tentatively set for this autumn from Four Corners to Osage. Even more trees will be sacrificed on the south side of Highway 34 along a seven-mile stretch from Snellman to the Shell River, outside of Osage. There, three-quarters of all trees will be removed, from the clear zone back to 150 feet. Removal of all those trees could damage or destroy the rare showy lady's slipper orchid population that now thrives along portions of the highway.

"The idea behind the scenic byway program is to preserve and show off Minnesota's natural features and rugged landscapes. Not every roadway right-of-way needs to be cleared out like an interstate highway."

So the plan manages to target both the state tree (red pine) and the state flower. It also violates the spirit of the state's scenic byway program, which has included Highway 34 for over 20 years. MnDOT has said the plan will make Highway 34 a safer travel route in the wintertime, as the shade from the trees can make the roadway icy. The department has also said it wouldn't need to use as much salt to clear ice and snow from the highway if it were unshaded. While safety is an obvious concern of everyone's, including ours here at the Tribune, we have yet to be convinced that the trade-off is worth it in this case. The idea behind the scenic byway program is to preserve and show off Minnesota's natural features and rugged landscapes. Not every roadway right-of-way needs to be cleared out like an interstate highway. The mature trees along Highway 34 are a big part of what makes the highway scenic, and every effort should be



Detroit Lakes Tribune file photo Highway 34 is part of the Lake Country Scenic Byway.

made to preserve them. Lake Country Scenic Byway runs along Highway 34 from Detroit Lakes to Park Rapids to Walker, with a spur to Itasca State Park, and runs through a transition area where prairie meets hardwood and conifer forests. The community appears to be strongly against this plan. We haven't talked to anybody outside of MnDOT who thinks it's a good idea. It's a mistake, and it's one that the community will have to live with for years, because that roadway will never be the same. People have been speaking openly and publicly about their distaste for this plan, and MnDOT needs to listen. We'd like to see this

whole tree-clearing plan be shelved. Let the highway construction project go on without it. It's not an essential part of repaving the highway. And then, as soon as possible, preferably during this legislative session, new special roadway standards should be put in place to protect special areas like the Lake Country Scenic Byway. The Becker County Board is considering a resolution opposing MnDOT's tree-clearing plans on Highway 34, and will hear a presentation from opponents on Feb. 15. We hope the county sends a message loud and clear to MnDOT that this beautiful stretch of roadway should be spared from the chopping block.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Line 3 pipeline project created meaningful jobs
To the Editor:
The reasons why the Line 3 pipeline project was a success are countless, but among them are the long-term benefits we are still seeing four months after oil began flowing. Back when this replacement was just a pipe dream (pun intended), projections for job creation were well in

the thousands. What we did not anticipate was a global pandemic that would put millions out of work in the months leading up to this replacement project getting started. This fact led to an even higher importance of the need for job creation – especially in areas like northern Minnesota. Amazingly, projections were met and even exceeded, with more than 5,000 skilled trade and labor union members being hired and

employed throughout the duration of the Line 3 pipeline project. Many naysayers denied this was possible and scoffed at the fact that some of these jobs would be short-term. But, despite what they say, it is because of massive infrastructure projects like the Line 3 pipeline project that thousands of families were bringing in paychecks once again. And it is because of Enbridge and Line 3 that union membership in Min-

nesota is on the rise, while nationwide, membership has fallen. We are grateful and proud for the union members and other pipeline workers who participated in the Line 3 pipeline project and helped revitalize Northern Minnesota. Our state and region will forever be changed – largely thanks to unions. -Joshua Hegge, Bagley Hegge is a Local 49 pipeline business agent.



PAID POLITICAL LETTER POLICY

The Tribune is publishing paid political letters to the editor on Opinion. The rate is 10 cents per word, with a 200-word limit. Those 200 words are the body of the letter, not the signature. Paid political letters now must be submitted online through the website modulist.news

Any election-related letters that advocate for or against a candidate, ballot measure or political party will be considered paid advertising as a political letter. Here are a few other things that are important to know: ► Payment for political letters must be made in advance. Cost is

10 cents per word. ► Writers are limited to one letter publication per 30 days — paid or not. ► All letters must include the writer's name, address and phone number for verification (only the writer's name and city are published).

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Paul Marquart
597 State Office Bldg., 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651) 296-6829 or 1-800-551-5520
rep.paul.marquart@house.mn
Kent Eken, Capitol, Room 303, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651)-296-3205 (St. Paul) or 218-584-8109 (Twin Valley.)
sen.kent.eken@senate.mn
Steve Green, 231 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651)-296-9918 or 1-888-682-7179
rep.steve.green@house.mn
Jordan Rasmusson, 291 State Office Building St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651) 296-4946
rep.jordan.rasmusson@house.mn
Paul J. Utke, 95 University Avenue W. Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3403 St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-9651
sen.paul.utke@senate.mn

Bill Ingebrigtsen, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., State Office Building, Room 143, St. Paul, MN 55155-1206
Phone: (651) 297-8063
sen.bill.ingebrigtsen@senate.mn
Tina Smith, 309 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5641
Amy Klobuchar, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
Phone: 202-224-3244
Fax: 202-228-2186
Michelle Fischbach, 1237 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 225-2165
Fax: (202) 225-1593

LETTERS POLICY

All letters are verified for authenticity, so please include a name, address and phone number. Only the author's name and city of residence will be printed, however. Letters may be edited for spelling and punctuation errors, libel, length and other factors. Letters are printed on a space available basis. The editor reserves the right to reject letters. To submit a letter, email jbeach@forumcomm.com or mail it to Detroit Lakes Tribune, 511 Washington Ave., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501.



Copyright ©2022 Detroit Lakes Newspapers
A Division of Forum Communications Company
All Rights Reserved

Telephone (218) 847-3151
www.dl-online.com
dltribune@dlnewspapers.com
classified@dlnewspapers.com



The offices of Detroit Lakes Newspapers are open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The news and sports departments can be reached during the day by calling (218) 847-3151 and asking for the appropriate person and the telephone extensions listed. After normal business hours, please leave a message on our telephone voice mail. Our publisher, editor and reporters can also be reached by e-mail if you have a suggestion or story idea you would like to share, or have a concern about a particular coverage area.

PUBLISHER
Melissa Swenson
mswenson@dlnewspapers.com
CIRCULATION MANAGER
Viola Anderson, ext. 1446
vanderson@dlnewspapers.com
MANAGING EDITOR
Marie Johnson, Ext. 1452
mtjohnson@dlnewspapers.com
NEWS EDITOR
Nathan Bowe, ext. 1455
nbowe@dlnewspapers.com
COMMUNITY NEWS LEAD
Vicki Gerdes, ext. 1454
vgerdes@dlnewspapers.com
MULTIMEDIA LEAD
Michael Achterling, ext. 1461
machterling@dlnewspapers.com



The Detroit Lakes Tribune (USPS 155-540) is published Sunday and Wednesday by Detroit Lakes Newspapers, 511 Washington Ave., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501. Periodical postage paid at Detroit Lakes, MN 56501. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Detroit Lakes Tribune, 511 Washington Ave., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Wednesday & Sunday Mail Delivery + Digital Access: \$139.88 for 52 weeks or \$78.00 for 26 weeks
All print subscriptions include unlimited digital access.
\$9.99 per month for Digital All Access.
511 Washington Ave., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501
Call: (218) 847-3151

Refunds for subscriptions are subject to the following conditions. Refunds for unused liability will be issued if the balance is over \$5.00. The remaining balance of \$5.00 or less will be credited to our Newspapers in Education Program. A subscription may be restarted within 30 days to utilize any balance remaining on the account per the customer's request.