



DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Duluth Area Fisheries Headquarters
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*Delivered by
Ed Barbo 8/2/18*

July 25, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

MN DNR Duluth Area Fisheries recently received an email inquiry from Judy Gibbs regarding several anonymous landowner complaints in the Magney area regarding the property at 10013 West Skyline Parkway and its potential impact to Stewart Creek.

I inspected this property on July 16th and found the following:

- 1) The pasture on this property is fenced off 50 feet back from Stewart Creek. The 4 horses present are not allowed within the 50 foot buffer adjacent to the stream. This riparian buffer was well vegetated, with no sign of excessive erosion, and stable streambanks. The current pasture management exceeds the protective standards required under the MN Water Quality Buffer Initiative, which allows for grazing all the way to the waters edge.
- 2) The horses were not allowed access to drink water from the stream as claimed in the complaint, but are watered near the barn from a well source.
- 3) The lower wooded section of the pasture closer to the stream was very lightly used, with good vegetative cover throughout and little manure present in this area.
- 4) The manure piles closer to the barn are at least 300 feet from the closest point on the stream. While this entire property slopes down to the stream, there was no evidence of manure washing directly into the stream, or of manure running off from storage areas towards the stream. This was immediately following a number of larger rain events in the area, so if this was occurring, there should have been significant evidence of manure movement at the time of my visit.
- 5) There was no evidence in the stream of excessive nutrient loading. Typically stream reaches with high loading will have significant algae growth on stream substrates, which was not present adjacent to the pasture area or downstream of this site.

- 6) There was no evidence in the stream of excessive sediment loading in this area. Riffles were relatively clear of fine sediments, which is important for trout egg incubation. If high runoff of sediment was occurring from the pasture area, there would be a much higher proportion of fine sediment in the riffles downstream of this property.

One of the complaints claimed *"Stewart Creek is a Trout stream and impaired by E. coli as a direct result of the Barbo's horse business."* While Stewart Creek is on the MN Impaired Waters List for E. coli, this statement is not based on fact. According to MPCA, it is not yet clear what sources the bacterial loading is coming from, which could include human (failing septic), pet (dogs and cats), livestock, and wildlife waste. In a primarily undeveloped wooded watershed such as Stewart Creek, wildlife waste has a high likelihood of being a primary source. Future E. coli source studies are being planned by MPCA for Stewart Creek, which should be very helpful in answering the source question.

Stewart Creek supports a healthy stable trout population, and I believe it will continue to do so under the current management practices on this property. It is my professional opinion that the current use of this site is not posing a risk to aquatic life or stream habitat.

Sincerely,



Deserae Hendrickson
MNDNR Duluth Area Fisheries Supervisor

cc: Tom Estabrooks, MPCA
Rhonda Adkins, MPCA
Judy Gibbs