



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

420 NORTH POKEGAMA AVENUE, GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA 55744-2662

February 10, 2022

Mayor Greg Hagy
City of Cohasset
305 NW 1st Avenue
Cohasset, MN 55721

Dear Mayor Hagy,

RE: Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Huber Engineered Woods Project

On behalf of the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA), please accept these comments with regard to the referenced EAW pertaining to the Huber Engineered Woods (HEW) project.

GREDA supports the timely advancement of this project not only because of the positive economic impact it will bring to our area, but because the project will not adversely affect the environment.

The addition of this project, with the indirect and direct jobs and tax base it will add, comes at a critical time in our area's history. The HEW project will benefit the entire region, particularly Itasca County, which has met Federal economic distress criteria for several years. It will begin to reverse a very troubling trend that saw manufacturing employment, led by paper and forestry products, decrease by 51.9 percent between 2000 and 2019. After starting out the 21st century as the second largest employment sector in the County, manufacturing it is now the sixth largest of the eleven industry sectors.

According to the EAW, a 2019 DNR study of sustainable levels of harvest indicates that the estimated HEW aspen harvest, which will be 75% of their feedstock, represents only 30% of the aspen excess capacity. Furthermore, the overall net growth of all species is outpacing natural mortality and harvesting and with the projected HEW harvesting of 400,000 chords per year, Minnesota forests will still be in a net growth position.

GREDA believes that the EAW meets all of the requirements for the environmental review and that adequate mitigation measures are identified to address any potential environmental effects. GREDA believes that the EAW data is supported by scientific fact and that it is adequate to determine, based upon the criteria in Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, that the HEW project does not have the potential for significant environmental impact and therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed project.

Sincerely,

Rob Mattei
Executive Director