

LOCALNEWS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

An Anderson Barging worker helps set fabric over rocks on the Rat Root River as part of the riverbank stabilization project.

Riverbanks stabilized on the Rat Root River

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

Spawning walleye may return to the shores of the Rat Root River, as a shoreline stabilization project is nearly complete.

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday heard a report from Koochiching County Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitzsch stating the Rat Root Riverbank Stabilization Project is “essentially finished.”

The project, which started in September, involved the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club, the Koochiching County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Hummitzsch’s department, and was funded from multiple grants. The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage

Council provided funding for a larger Rat Root River walleye project, which is intended to restore the traditional walleye spawning run through different efforts. Stabilizing the shoreline and controlling erosion on the river was one of these efforts.

Using rock, fabric, fine gravel, and “bio-D” blocks, which are made of coconut husks, Hummitzsch said, they were able to protect the site and allow vegetation to grow. The project also involved planting 600 cuttings of willow and dogwood in the “bio-D” blocks, he said, which will help vegetation to grow. The total project cost came in at the bid price, he said.

The sportfishing club still wants to add a couple

docks to the site, Hummitzsch said, so he’ll work with club members to make sure that gets done properly.

“They have the docks that used to be at Pat Roche landing, they’re on land somewhere, so we’ll see what kind of shape they’re in,” he said. “But we’ll work with them and go forward with that in the spring.”

Spring will also reveal how the improved shoreline handled its first Borderland winter, Hummitzsch said.

“It’s great, I hope the ice is gentle to it,” he said.

In other business, the county board approved the cost of \$1,251 to update the Koochiching County multi-hazard mitigation plan. Sheriff Brian Jespersen said the cost proposed by

the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission was \$24,400, and after \$23,149 in funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the state of Minnesota, \$1,251 was needed to cover the final costs.

According to the proposal, the plan is required by the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 to be updated every five years. The plan’s intent is to “reduce the actual threat of specific hazards by limiting the impact of damages and losses.”



Sheriff Brian Jespersen

Board sets next work session to consider cuts

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

The International Falls School Board will continue discussions next week about potential cuts the district faces as its enrollment declines.

A special work session is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. Tuesday in the library at Falls High School. No action will be taken during the meeting.

In October, the board began considering spending adjustment options to offset the loss of about \$425,000 in state funding.

Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson earlier told The Journal the general education funding formula is student driven and the Falls’ numbers continue to decline. Since the school year began Sept. 2, the district’s enrollment has decreased by 67 students from last year. Fewer students means less state funding and the loss of about \$425,000 is a number Nelson said he fears could increase.

“The present economic scenarios in our area are dictating some needed changes or adjustments that (Independent School) District 361 will need to consider,” he said during last month’s special meeting. “The downward slide

of student enrollment from last school year will need to be monitored closely in the next four to five months.”

Reducing staff and eliminating two non-revenue producing sports teams are among the proposed options. Nelson this week told Journal he plans to present additional information Tuesday.

“I do have new material that will be brought forth,” he said. “I will save details for the meeting.”

Nelson said the purpose of holding meetings early in the school year allows the district to address costs before final decisions need to be made next spring.

“The district is no longer in an arrangement where fund balances will grow,” he said last month. “The present district offerings and activities cannot be sustained and still keep revenues over expenditures..We need to start throwing some of these (ideas) out there.”

The superintendent stressed no action will be taken Tuesday. Instead the meeting will serve to inform people and allow them to ask questions.

“It shouldn’t take more than half an hour or so,” he said. “We will review present enrollment numbers and a couple additional items I want to present.”

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