

BUSINESS

9 T O 5

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EKSSD fined for sewer leak

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

One local entity was included on a list of first quarter enforcement cases from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. East Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District in International Falls was among several enforcement cases on the list. The EKSSD was fined \$800 for wastewater violations.

The MPCA concluded 58 enforcement cases in 34 Minnesota counties during the first quarter of 2015, with penalties from all 58 cases totaling \$346,736.

The local violation stems from a leak on County Road 46 that occurred in June or July, EKSSD Chairman Don Billig said. The leak caused City Beach to be closed for a few days while the problem was

resolved.

The EKSSD was fined because the leak wasn't fixed quickly enough, Billig said. The district had to have a contractor from Bemidji come and fix it, as there were no local contractors who would do the job.

"So one person went to the MPCA and said we should be fined," Billig said. "So the MPCA fined us."

A wastewater violation like this one is pretty rare, Billig said. After the fix, testing revealed contamination levels had receded below the legal limit. The district also has to contend with contamination coming from Canada, which it can't control.

"If we had someone in to fix it the day after the report, I don't think we would have been fined," Billig said.

According to an MPCA

release, investigations often take several months, with more complex cases taking more than a year. In rare instances, cases involve courts, but most often are negotiated settlements with the goal of complying with environmental rules.

Fines issued are targeted to match the environmental harm, economic advantage gained or environmental corrective actions. Not all investigations lead to fines or other official action.

The MPCA also has 119 ongoing enforcement investigations, 16 of which were opened as new cases during the first quarter of 2015.

The EKSSD covers the area east of Second Bridge east to Jackfish Bay, Billig said. The potential Dove Island sewer project would extend its service area east to Dove Island.

MN teens getting back to work

MN DEED REPORT

Job prospects for Minnesota teenagers have improved since the recession, with the average unemployment rate for young people ages 16 to 19 falling to 11.4 percent in 2014, according to figures from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

While the teenage unemployment rate was well above the 4 percent unemployment rate for all age groups on average in the state in 2014, the new figures are an improvement from teen jobless rates that surged to more than 20 percent during the recession. The average unemployment rate for Minnesota teens was 16.7 percent as recently as 2013.

In 2014, about 122,000 teenagers were working and another 16,000 were actively seeking work in Minnesota, according to DEED figures.

"Prospects for teenagers

finding jobs this summer are better than in recent years, primarily because of an improving economy and tighter labor market," Oriane Casale of DEED's Labor Market Information Office said in a news release. "With strong employment growth in both the retail and the accommodation and food service sectors in March, this might be a great summer for teens in Minnesota to get some work experience and earn their first paychecks."

The 11.3 percent unemployment rate for Minnesota teens ranked sixth nationally, with only Montana, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska having lower unemployment rates for the age group.

Minnesota has the seventh-highest labor force participation rate in the country for teenagers at 48.5 percent. Nationally, the teen labor force participation rate is about 33 percent.

Based on 2013 third quarter data – the time of year when teen employment is the highest – teens were most likely to work in accommodation and food services. About 35 percent of employed teenagers worked in that sector during the period.

Other major employment sectors for teens included retail trade, with 23 percent of teen jobs, health care and social assistance, with 7 percent, arts, entertainment and recreation, with 7 percent and public administration, with 5 percent.

On average, teens earned \$663 during the quarter at jobs that DEED tracks. Many employed teens worked in less formal jobs DEED does not track, such as babysitting or lawn mowing.

Relative to the overall population, teen unemployment is still high. The teen jobless rate was more than triple the unemployment rate for any age group over 25 in the state in 2014.

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Koochiching County
Maintenance Contract for County Roads and Bridges in Northome Mizpah Gemmell area.
BIDS CLOSE: **Wednesday May 20, 2015 at 2:00 pm, local time**

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS: Sealed proposals will be received by the Board of County Commissioners of Koochiching County, Int'l. Falls, Minnesota until **Wednesday May 20, 2015 at 2:00 pm, local time** at the office of the County Auditor/Treasurer in the Koochiching County Courthouse 715 4th Street Int'l. Falls, Minnesota 56649 at which time they will be opened and read publicly for the following:

Project Designation: **Northome Mizpah Gemmell area Maintenance Contract**
Scheduled contract period: October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2019

Project Location: County Roads and Bridges in the Northome Mizpah Gemmell area. Coverage area map is provided in the Request for Proposals Document.

Request for Proposals and related documents are available at:
Koochiching County Highway Department
715 4th Street;
Int'l. Falls, MN 56449
Phone 218 283 1184

Koochiching County website: www.co.koochiching.mn.us.
Go to "News" Tab or "Departments/Engineer" Tab

Cost for Request for Proposal Document: No charge.

Bidder's Bond: Bids must be accompanied by a certified check or bidder's bond made payable to the Koochiching County Treasurer in the amount of \$5,000.00.

Bid shall be plainly marked on the exterior of the containing envelope: "Northome Mizpah Gemmell Area Maintenance Contract, Letting Date Wednesday May 20, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The County Board reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive irregularities and informalities therein, and to award the contract in the best interests of Koochiching County.

Dated at International Falls, Minnesota: April 13, 2015
Joe Sutherland, Koochiching County Highway Engineer
Phone: 218-283-1186; Email: joe.sutherland@co.koochiching.mn.us

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