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September 5, 2026

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Commissioner Sarah Strommen
Office of the Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Low water on the Woman Lake chain and the Girl Lake Rock Arch Rapids outlet

Dear Commissioner Strommen:

My wife Karen and I have owned our cabin on the south shore of Woman Lake since 1994. Our children grew up swimming off this beach. Our grandchildren, ages 6 and 9, spent every July here until this summer. I am writing because the lake in front of our place no longer works the way it has for the thirty-two summers we have known it, and because photographs of our own shoreline tell that story better than any talking point.

This year our dock does not reach usable water. The first 20 feet of the walkway sit on dry lakebed. Our boat lift, which we set in the same spot we have used for more than a decade, is high and dry. We cannot launch from our property. The swimming hole where our grandchildren stood last August is now a mudflat with exposed rocks and mats of drying weeds. The water smells different close to shore. Friends who have come to this cabin every year since the 1990s said they had never seen our beach look like this.

We are not new to dry summers. In 2021 the lake was low. That year, though, we could still get the boat off the lift, and the children could still wade in from the end of the dock. The enclosed photographs were taken from the same spot on the lawn, looking down our dock: one in July 2021, and one in August 2026. The trees, the cabin, and the angle have not changed. The water has.

What worries us is not only the inconvenience. It is that water is still leaving the chain while our lake sits near levels residents describe as historic lows. From our place we cannot measure the Girl Lake outlet, but we can see the result on our own shore. A structure that continues to pass water when inflow is scarce will keep this lake from recovering even after the rain returns. That is what it feels like from this dock.

We are asking you to do three things.

First, use your power as Commissioner to temporarily stop the water flow over the Girl Lake Rock Arch Rapids (RAR) outlet until this issue can be fully investigated.

Second, support the independent engineering review of the RAR by providing all necessary documentation required to evaluate how the old dam compares to the new RAR, especially in low-flow

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conditions, and whether its wider crest and sub-crest gaps are holding the chain below its historic operating pool.

Third, provide us with a commitment that if a problem is discovered with the RAR, that the Minnesota DNR will provide a remedy for property owners whose shorelines have been overtaken by weed growth, especially in situations where wild rice is involved (which is a protected species under Minnesota law)>

More than a thousand people have signed the petition at womanlake.org expressing their concerns about this issue. A letter from the commissioner's office that treats this only as "drought" does not match what we see on the ground.

We love this lake. We have paid taxes on this property, kept the shoreline, and taught two generations to respect it. Enclosed are the two photographs described above. I would be grateful for a written response.

Sincerely,

James Anderson

James and Karen Anderson



Copies to:

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