

Position Statement of Minnesota Trout Unlimited concerning the Mining of Silica Sand in Minnesota and the region.

Adopted April 14, 2012

Minnesota Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. Working to ensure adequate supplies of clean, cold water is central to our mission. Consequently, MNTU is particularly concerned over the impacts to water resources which silica sand mining operations could potentially have.

MNTU does not oppose all mining of silica sand in Minnesota. Rather, we hope to aid citizens, elected officials and governmental agencies in their efforts to understand the resource issues involved and restrict mining operations to only those areas which will have very little or no impact on ground and surface water resources in the area. In order not to jeopardize these resources for current and future generations, it is prudent to, at a minimum: (1) restrict silica sand mining operations to areas above the water table (eliminating the need for any substantial construction dewatering); (2) prohibit on-site washing of sand, including to sort the sand grains by size; (3) prohibit the appropriation of ground or surface waters for these operations; and (4) prohibit discharges of water from the operations into wetlands, streams and tributaries.

We also realize that residents and citizens have many other very legitimate concerns beyond the potential impacts to water resources. The State of Minnesota does not appear to regulate where this activity can occur, but leaves it up to local units of government to restrict. MNTU believes that local communities can make wise decisions about whether and where to permit these mining operations if they have adequate time and resources to gather and thoroughly analyze all pertinent information.

MNTU strongly supports rigorous, unbiased environmental review of all projects that may have the potential for significant impacts. We also support the right of citizens to demand good governance practices and responsive elected officials who place long term resource protection over short term gain.

Again, Minnesota Trout Unlimited is not automatically opposed to all silica sand mining in Southeast Minnesota and elsewhere. There may be many locations where mining could occur well above the water table, not require dewatering, not involve on-site washing, not otherwise affect ground and surface waters, and have rigorous, unbiased environmental review performed and findings utilized to improve projects and permit conditions. At this time we do not know whether or where any such sites exist. Furthermore, residents and citizens have other legitimate concerns which may further restrict where, and under what conditions, this type of commercial activity should be permitted.

We will continue to work with citizens to challenge proposals to mine silica sand from inappropriate sites and advocate for appropriate restrictions by local and state governments.