

DITCH 23 Public Hearing

The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners is holding a **public hearing at 7PM on June 1, 2015 at the Government Services Building, 515 Fir Avenue, Fergus Falls**. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss and consider the findings of the Ditch Viewers' Report of Benefits for county Ditch 23.

Affected property owners have been notified by the county via direct mail of this meeting, and supporting documentation is provided on the county website. The affected watershed encompasses portions of six townships and affects several hundred property owners. If you are a property owner on Star Lake and did not receive a direct mailing from Otter Tail County concerning this subject, you may want to contact the Otter Tail County Auditor's Office to insure your address information is correct in their files.

The SLPOA's "Cliff's Notes Version" of this is as follows. Ditch 23 is currently a non-functioning agricultural ditch (established in 1906) which used to drain water from Star Lake to Dead Lake. It is located on the southeast shoreline of Star Lake along Beaver Dam Road in the vicinity of the intersection with 380th Street. This section of Beaver Dam Road is in Dead Lake Township. *This issue may potentially affect all Star Lake Property Owners.*

The county process identifies the specific parcels of land that would benefit from this ditch, determines a monetary value of that benefit, and assigns a percentage of ownership of that benefit for each property. This is relative because while the county is the ditch authority it has no budget to pay for ditch maintenance. Any costs associated with the repair or maintenance of a ditch then is spread amongst the benefitting property owners. Otter Tail County is conducting these "Redetermination of Benefits" on all county ditches and it appears to be an on-going long term process. At this time, we are not aware of any decision of the part of the county to actually do anything with the ditch, though it is reasonable to assume that will likely happen.

The county has provided specific information on this for each parcel affected and that is posted on the Otter Tail County website. It is a huge file and somewhat difficult to read. To assist you we have also posted the document on the SLPOA website. You will need your tax ID# or parcel identification number (PIN) to find your information. Col. AN will provide you an example as to what this "may" cost you "if" a \$10,000 assessment were made. This is an EXAMPLE ONLY.

As mentioned earlier this ditch is currently non-functioning. There has been no estimate of cost for repairing the ditch, though it would seem a relatively simple project as it's a short ditch. A reopening of this ditch would establish a secondary drain from Star Lake to Dead Lake. Dependent upon plan specifics and costs, this could be a good thing.

SLPOA members attending the 6/1 meeting should remember the purpose of this hearing is to review and discuss the Redetermination of Benefits study. It's doubtful there will be much discussion of any proposed plan specifics. The SLPOA Board will be there and will be following this situation as it develops. Watch for further updates on this issue via the SLPOA website.