



October 4, 2021

To: Burnett and Washburn County Zoning Department Supervisors

From: McKenzie Lakes Association Board of Directors

Subject: Environmental Hazard Warning: Septic Holding Tanks

The board members of the McKenzie Lakes Association (representing Lower, Middle and Big McKenzie Lakes) are deeply concerned about an issue brought to our attention at our most recent member meeting held September 4, 2021:

Numerous cabin owners are having extreme difficulty getting their septic holding tanks pumped. A few have obtained one-time only emergency pumps, but with no promise from vendors of ever returning to pump on a regular basis. According to septic tank pumpers, the reason for declining to pump holding tanks is the economic cost to travel to outlying areas and then pump out and dispose the waste at distant sites. This situation jeopardizes our mission to maintain, protect, and enhance the quality of the McKenzie Lakes and must be remedied.

We ask that zoning departments, departments of health services, local emergency planning committees, and land and water conservation committees be made aware of the situation and work to address this serious situation. We ask that builders seeking permits be made aware of the issues. We ask that zoning departments initiate a dialogue with pumping vendors to work to resolve issues they may be having with servicing the public in specific localities. While we recognize that a long-term solution may take time to accomplish, the county must act NOW to implement a viable stop-gap resolution to ensure the health of our lakes and our citizens.

While we do not claim to have all the answers to this complex problem, we have identified the following tangible ways that the county can act.

We ask that:

- 1. The list of septic pumpers provided on the County Zoning website be updated to provide an accurate representation of the vendor, their contact information and the localities that they serve.**
- 2. Future permits for holding tanks NOT be issued if the holding tanks cannot be serviced in a specific locality.**
- 3. Washburn and Burnett County zoning modify future POWTS Maintenance Agreements for Holding Tanks to include directives that are implementable and to prevent this crisis from spreading.**

The situation is urgent. We can't risk having these tanks overflow into our beautiful lakes. We ask that you respond to inform us of actions to be undertaken to resolve the critical issues outlined above.

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