

Aitkin County Environmental Services Planning and Zoning
307 Second Street NW
Room 219
Aitkin, MN 56431
Phone: 218-927-7342
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MEMORANDUM – BIG SANDY LAKE WATERSHED

DATE: March 13, 2025

FROM: Andrew Carlstrom, Environmental Services Director – Planning & Zoning Administrator

RE: Land use applications for properties in the Big Sandy Lake Watershed

It has been recently brought to Aitkin County's attention that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is in the midst of a multi-year project surveying its fee ownership lands within the Big Sandy Lake Watershed. (see attached Resolution 20250128-015)

Upon the advice of legal counsel, and to ensure Aitkin County complies with the results of the USACE surveys (both existing and pending), we may require owners of property parcels located in the Big Sandy Lake Watershed to provide documented proof that the parcels do or do not contain any USACE fee ownership interests. Confirmation may include, but not limited to, obtaining a boundary survey prepared by a land surveyor licensed by the State of Minnesota.

Currently, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners has adopted a resolution requesting that the USACE vacate and transfer its fee interests to the adjacent property owners. At this time, we are awaiting a decisive response from the USACE. Therefore, if an application contains property parcels located in the Big Sandy Lake Watershed, affected or likely affected by the USACE fee ownership lands, we will defer to the Federal Government through USACE, to make a final determination if permitting will be allowed on fee ownership lands within the Big Sandy Lake Watershed.

Lastly, if affected applicants choose to withdraw their applications at this time, they will receive a full refund of their application fees. The information we have at this time is given for the protection of current property owners, future or prospective property owners, as well as Aitkin County.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 218-927-7342 or by email at aitkinpz@aitkincountymn.gov.

The USACE Sandy Lake Dam staff can be reached at 651-290-5850.

CERTIFIED COPY OF RESOLUTION OF COUNTY BOARD OF AITKIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA

ADOPTED January 28, 2025

By Commissioner: Sample

20250128-015

Army Corps of Engineers Land Ownership in Big Sandy Lake Watershed

WHEREAS, the Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of completing a land survey of its fee ownership lands in the Big Sandy Lake Watershed. This multi-year project has brought attention to the ownership of many parcels of lake and river frontage in this area. As the survey is completed, lands previously believed to be owned by private parties are clearly owned by the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS, these ownership changes will bring many potential impacts to property owners and local governments. Questions have been asked about property value, tax base, public access to lands previously believed to be private, land use, development restrictions, water access rights, etc. These impacts are expected to be very significant;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners respectfully requests the Army Corps of Engineers to begin the process to vacate and transfer its fee interests in these properties to adjacent property owners to achieve individual private lot boundaries that are in compliance with standards outlined in the Subdivision Regulations of Aitkin County. The objective of this requested action is to reinstate all rights of lakeshore ownership to private properties that have historically been developed and occupied as private lakeshore properties while the Army Corps of Engineers retains its flowage easement rights.

Commissioner Kearney seconded the adoption of the resolution and it was declared adopted upon the following vote


FIVE MEMBERS PRESENT

All Members Voting Yes

STATE OF MINNESOTA}
COUNTY OF AITKIN}

I, Jessica Seibert, County Administrator, Aitkin County, Minnesota do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution filed in the Administration Office of Aitkin County in Aitkin, Minnesota as stated in the minutes of the proceedings of said Board on the 28th day of January 2025, and that the same is a true and correct copy of the whole thereof.

Witness my hand and seal this 28th day of January 2025



Jessica Seibert
County Administrator

