

What Does it Take?

By Mike Tauber

I live in the woods of Hiram township on the west edge of Cass County. When I moved here from Hackensack in 1995, this area was dominated by a large forest of jack pine and was the quietest place I could find. It has been a great place to raise our kids and teach them how to live the rural life, living through and with the land.

I love this area, even with all the bugs and Lyme's disease, but our way of life is going to be made impossible shortly by the "Pines to Prairie Conversion" that has already claimed vast areas of the pines, billions of gallons of surface and groundwater, and the health of an untold number of animals and people.

I have seen neighbors struggle to endure overspraying of chemicals from aircraft, groundwater depletion and contamination, and actual dust storms. No doubt, everyone has been entirely too forgiving of the causes of these difficulties. In this case the good nature of the people of this area has worked against them. The gigantic influence of industrial agriculture has prevented local government from protecting these people and resources. Upon investigation one finds that when differences are voiced between the area people and one huge multi-national corporation in particular, the big company has always efficiently silenced opposition.

This is the reason I write to you. The State of Minnesota, through the DNR, had stopped expansion of this unsustainable abuse of public resources and neighbors by the R.D. Offutt Co. by denying water pumping permits.

While this did nothing to help those already compromised, the action did keep the misery from spreading. It appears there has lately been a reversal of opinion at the state level because workers employed by R.D. Offutt have commenced again clearing land and readying for operation of center pivot irrigators, saying water permits have been approved and development will take place.

My family, neighbors and the undersigned are all at a loss as to why RDO Co. would be awarded more pumping permits when the company has repeatedly proven it will abuse the water resources, making private profit of public resources and jeopardizing residents in the process. We ask for an accounting of how this happened, who decided to approve the permits to pump water and why.

Much hangs in the balance.