RE: Results of Archaeological Survey in association with Sand Creek Re-Meander Project of Coon Rapids, Minnesota.

Dear Mr. Janke:

In October 2019, the Coon Creek Watershed District contracted with Nienow Cultural Consultants, LLC (NCC) to complete a Phase I archaeological survey for the re-meander of Sand Creek near Coon Rapids, Anoka County, Minnesota (Figures 1 through 4). The project area is located within Sections 11 and 12, Township 31N, Range 24W. All aspects of the project were overseen by Jeremy L. Nienow, Ph.D., RPA who has a 2019 license to complete Phase I Archaeological Survey within the state of Minnesota (19-040).

Prior to archaeological survey NCC conducted a literature review at both the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). This review identified no previously documented sites within the project area, however, one known site was reported within two miles. The site, 21AN170 is a Pre-Contact (9500BP-1650AD) scatter of stone tool flakes located on upland terrain within 300 meters of an unnamed stream and surrounded by wetlands. This information was used to direct the methodological approaches used within the project area.

Survey work was completed on October 17-18, 2019 and was conducted by Jeremy L. Nienow, Ph.D., RPA with survey assistance from Alex Hedquist (Hedquist Archaeological Consulting), Alison Hruby (ARH Consulting), Anastasia Walhovd (Makoons Consulting), Fred Sutherland (Sutherland Relics & Rust), Laura Koski (Zooarcheo Consulting), and John Strot (John’s Archaeological Consulting). The survey focused on areas where ground disturbance would include tree cutting, soil stripping and piling, and creek excavation to increase the Sand Creek’s meander along the trials. All survey work was completed using standard methods laid out by both the OSA.
and SHPO archaeology manuals. Methods for this project included surface and creek bank survey and shovel testing.

Surface survey was completed on both sides of the creek within the project area and included carefully observing exposed soil areas (primarily along walking trails). Within the eastern portion of the project area, waders were used to walk in the creek and carefully observe the creek banks on either side, with a focus on location where bank cut back was indicated during an initial client meeting. No prehistoric cultural materials were identified during surface or creek bank survey.

A series of 55 shovel tests along four transects following the Sand Creek shorelines in areas of terrain not recently cut by the Sand Creek were investigated (Figures 5 through 10). These shovel tests were spaced approximately 15 meters apart and were typically dug 80 to 100cm below ground surface unless the water table was encountered before this depth. Each test was documented in terms of soils color, texture, and stratigraphy via notes and photography. Locational data for each point was collected with a handheld GPS device and used to create a GIS database and project map.

The typical soil profile for the project area had Very Dark Brown 10YR 2/2 sandy silty loam down to 25cm with bands of Dark Yellowish Brown and Dark Brown 10YR 4/4 and 3/3 silty sand between 25-55cm representing various alluvial, low and high energy, flood events. Below 55cm lighter color Grayish Brown to Very Pale Brown 10YR 5/2 to 7/3 sands were common.

No prehistoric artifacts were documented or recovered during shovel testing. However, a multitude of modern materials were noted but not kept within shovel tests and surface survey. Modern artifacts identified on the surface while traveling between shovel tests included: tools; sports equipment (aluminum bat and golf balls); bicycles and bicycle parts; personal items (combs for example); and various containers (glass and plastic) dating from the 1980s to present. Similar dated artifacts from the 1980s to present were identified in the shovel tests including container glass, metal wire, a 1.5” screw, whiteware ceramics, and an Airsoft pellet. These artifacts were found in the upper 30cm of dark loamy sand and silt covering the majority of the project area. Very few artifacts were found below 30cm except for a few reported plastic fragments likely brought there by roots or rodent activity.

Some fragments of asphalt and other modern materials were identified below the surface between 30-100cm in shovel tests to the east of Sand Creek Drive NW and Olive Street NW (STP 35-39). These materials likely denote filling in this area for previous construction. No other areas of consistent fill were noted in the project area. These materials could relate to earlier road construction and grading events with nearby housing developments circa 1957 based on aerial imagery (Figure 11).

To summarize, in October 2019, the Coon Creek Watershed District contracted with Nienow Cultural Consultants, LLC (NCC) to complete a Phase I archaeological survey for the re-meander of Sand Creek near Coon Rapids, Anoka County, Minnesota. All aspects of the project were
overseen by Jeremy L. Nienow, Ph.D., RPA. Archaeological survey included both surface and exposed creek bank survey as well as standard interval shovel testing. A total of 55 shovel tests were completed within the project area primarily associated with areas where project disturbance activities will take place. Although modern materials were identified in both surface and shovel test survey, no prehistoric materials were recovered. *No archaeological sites were recorded during the survey and Nienow Cultural Consultants does not recommend an additional archaeological survey at this time.*

With any project there is the chance of unanticipated discovery. Should archaeological materials surface during any future construction, it is advised a professional archaeologist be consulted. Minnesota Statute 307.08 protects unplatted cemeteries (including burial mounds) and issues guidelines for dealing with unexpected finds. Should human remains be encountered during earth moving activity, all work must stop and local law enforcement must be called. If you have any additional questions or future project work, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jeremy L. Nienow, Ph.D., RPA
Principal and Owner
Nienow Cultural Consultants LLC

Attachments: Figures 1-11

Enclosed: Jump drive with all project photographs and project documentation.
Figure 1: Location of Project Area in Coon Rapids, Minnesota
Figure 2: Project Area and Proposed Ground Disturbance Areas (provided by client).

West half (starting at Olive Street) is where re-meander will take place.

East half is primarily creek bed stabilization.

Staging and piling area is concentrated adjacent to west side of Olive Street on south side of river

(in area of documented previous filling and disturbance)
Figure 3: Photograph of Existing Conditions within Project Area During Shovel Testing.

Figure 4: Photograph of Exposed Creek Bank in Eastern Portion of Project Area.

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Figure 5: Western Project Area showing Shovel Test Transects and Surface Survey Areas.
Figure 6: Eastern Project Area Showing Shovel Testing at Creek Bank Stabilization Point and Exposed Creek Bank Survey.
Figure 7: LiDAR Image of Western Project Area with Transects and Survey Areas.
Figure 8: LiDAR Image of Central Western Project Area with Transects and Survey Areas.
Figure 9: LiDAR Image of Eastern Project Area with Transect and Survey Areas.
Figure 10: Example of Shovel Test Documentation from Project Area.

Figure 11: Aerial Image of Sand Creek circa 1957.