

202 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street S.E.
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

September 23, 2010

Dear President Bruininks:

As organizations working in the interests of farmers and the environment, we were appalled by the University's recent decision to cancel the premiere of the documentary "Troubled Waters: A Mississippi River Story." This decision, and the lack of transparency surrounding it, causes us to question the University's commitment to truth-telling and academic freedom—two pillars of a public University.

The University's unwillingness to speak openly to either the news media or to the movie's funders about the reasons for the film's cancellation has led to a great deal of speculation surrounding the decision. According to multiple media reports, including the *Star Tribune*, Vice President of University Relations Karen Himle canceled the film abruptly without informing any of its nonprofit and public funders beforehand. We are deeply concerned about conflict of interest on the part of Vice President Himle, as well as assertions that outside influences may have played a role in this decision. Subsequent reasons given by the University for stopping the film from being shown included misleading statements, such as the assertion that the film's public funding required further review of the film, a position that the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources has repeatedly said is untrue, and that the University has now dropped.

As a land-grant university, the University of Minnesota should be committed to serving all Minnesotans by providing them with accurate, scientifically based information on our agriculture and the environment. According to those that have reviewed the movie—including leading UMN scientists and the LCCMR—"Troubled Waters" is fair and accurate. Whether the film's content pleases everyone is irrelevant. By withholding this film, the University is doing a disservice to the state of Minnesota. To immediately resolve this situation, the University should:

- move forward with the October 3 premiere of "Troubled Waters" at the Bell Museum and the scheduled October 5 TPT airing of the film.
- ask for the resignation of Vice President Himle if she is deemed responsible for the decision, as reported in several media accounts, and appropriately discipline others involved in making this decision, which was ethically and professionally wrong.
- implement a review of university policy to ensure transparent and conflict of interest-free decision making on the part of University administrators going forward.

We also suggest that the University plan a post-film forum at the Bell Museum on October 3, where those who have concerns about the movie can talk alongside those who felt it struck the right balance.

If the university expects to be a trusted source on these issues in the future, it must become more transparent in how it makes decisions and sets priorities. We look forward to working with the U to make these improvements, and trust that you will keep the interests of all Minnesotans in mind with this and future decisions.

Sincerely,

George Boody, Executive Director
Land Stewardship Project

Jim Harkness, President
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Paul Austin, Executive Director
Conservation Minnesota

Brad Redlin, Director, Agricultural Program
Izaak Walton League of America - Midwest
Office

David Williams, President
Southeastern Minnesotans for Environmental
Protection (SEMPEP)

Jeff Brand, President
Mankato Area Environmentalists

Glen Hill, Executive Director
Minnesota Food Association

Diadra Decker, Board Member
WaterLegacy

LeRoger Lind, President
Save Lake Superior Association

Whitney Clark, Executive Director
Friends of the Mississippi River

Paul Danicic, Executive Director
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Jack Hedin
Featherstone Farms

Jane Cleave, President
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