



Environmental Connections

Chisago County Environmental News

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Environmental Connections

provides Chisago County residents with information and news from the Chisago County Department of Environmental Services/Zoning, located in Center City and North Branch. Funding is provided by the Solid Waste Management Fund. To contact your Chisago County Commissioner:

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Branch-A, Rush City, Rusheba Twp

Get the Lead Out for Loons!

"Tackling" the lead problem:

The Common Loon, Minnesota's state bird, can be recognized by its familiar, haunting call. Our state has one of the largest breeding loon populations, second only to Alaska. Did you know that upwards of 200 loons die each year in the State from ingesting lead fishing tackle? Loons, swans, and other diving birds scoop up pebbles from lake bottoms and use them in their gizzards to help grind their food. Lead fishing tackle closely resembles small rocks, and it only takes a *single split shot or one jig* to kill an adult loon. A bird with lead poisoning will exhibit loss of balance, weakness, tremors, and an inability to fly, eat, or care for its young. Poisoned birds generally die within three weeks after ingesting lead. An estimated 14% of loon deaths in Minnesota are directly attributed to lead poisoning.



To prevent this unnecessary death to waterfowl, anglers can use sinkers and jigs made from non-poisonous materials such as tin, brass, bismuth, steel, or tungsten-nickel alloy, which are found at sporting goods retailers and online. If your favorite bait shop doesn't offer lead-free tackle alternatives, ask for it! Check out this link for manufacturers of non-lead tackle: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/manufacturers-lead-free-tackle>.

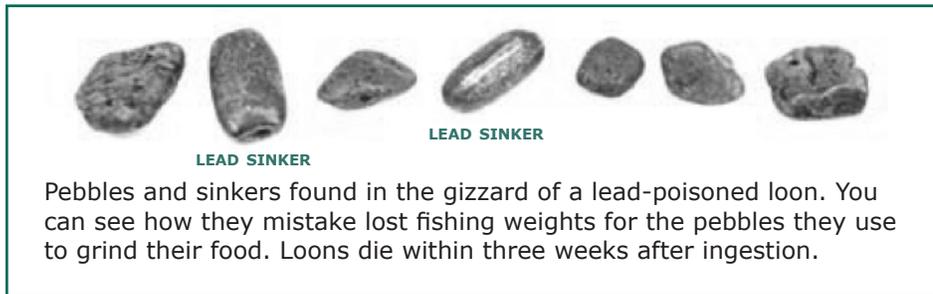
Chisago County is participating in a pilot program for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA's) **"Get the Lead Out!"** tackle exchange program. **Anglers can surrender any amount of lead tackle in exchange for a sample pack of lead-free alternatives at either the Chisago County Government Center in Center City, (Environmental Services window); or the Household Hazardous Waste Facility in North Branch.**

Minnesota lawmakers recently proposed to the House Environmental Committee a bill banning certain varieties of lead tackle. The bill prohibits the production and manufacture of small lead jigs and sinkers in Minnesota after July 2024, and by 2025, outlaws the use of lead tackle weighing up to one ounce, or smaller than 2.5 inches long. The bill gives anglers, stores, and manufacturers more than three years to make the transition to nontoxic tackle. The lead ban would not apply to larger

(continues to page 2)

(Lead Out for Loons continued from front page)

sinkers, weights, or jigs heavier than one ounce, or to lead core fishing line, larger bottom bouncers, spoons, or other tackle.



Pebbles and sinkers found in the gizzard of a lead-poisoned loon. You can see how they mistake lost fishing weights for the pebbles they use to grind their food. Loons die within three weeks after ingestion.

MPCA's "Get the Lead Out!" Campaign is being paid for with \$1.27 million in funds provided by BP (British Petroleum) as part of a 2016 settlement agreement to compensate the public for injuries to natural resources caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Over a period of 87 days – the spill dumped nearly 5 million barrels of oil in the Gulf of Mexico, where many of Minnesota's loons spend their winters.



Photo credit courtesy of Brian Lasenby - Common Loons

In addition to participating in the lead tackle exchange, unwanted tackle and fishing line can be disposed of at the County's **Hook, Line & Sinker** recycling stations. Look for the white PVC "periscope" collectors located at each boat landing or at the County's Household Hazardous Waste Facility in North Branch (hours listed below), and just drop in any of these unwanted items for safe disposal.

Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste Facility

39649 Grand Avenue, North Branch 651-213-8920 | www.chisagocounty.us



WASTE COLLECTION HOURS:

Every Non-holiday Monday Noon-7:00 PM
Last Saturday of the Month 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

- Residents can drop off unwanted household chemicals and paint free of charge!
- Small Business Hazardous Waste Services available, call for information and appointment.
- FREE home improvement products available on the reuse shelves.

Septic Grants & Loans Available

For the past 17 years Chisago County has received grant funding to help Chisago County residents with the installation or repair of their onsite septic systems. We are proud to announce that grant funds for 2021 have been approved! A family of four (4) with an income up to \$64,500 may qualify for a grant. Grant dollars are available on a first come first serve basis. Grants will be awarded up to \$5,000 for each septic system repair, upgrade or replacement. Since 2010, Chisago County has received over \$380,000 in grant funds to help homeowners with septic costs.

Loans are also available for property owners who are having problems obtaining funding. There are no income qualifications for a loan, but you must show two attempts to obtain funding which resulted in denial. The loan program can be used to cover the entire septic project from the cost of the design, permitting, tank pumping, to installation. Over \$200,000 is available to County residents through the loan program. As of January 1st, the interest rate was 1.625 % for a 10-year loan. All loans are paid back through your tax statement each year, half (1/2) due in May and half (1/2) due in October.

Both programs require your existing septic system to be failing or noncompliant in order to obtain funding. Unfortunately, funds cannot be used for new construction home septic systems.

For more information, contact Kellie Strobel, Chisago County Sanitarian at 651-213-8373 or kellie.strobel@chisagocounty.us.



Take the Reduce Your Wasted Food Challenge with Chisago County

The challenge will span 5 weeks beginning May 3rd, 2021, and you will get tools to track your wasted food at home, prevent waste, and save money. If you are interested, please sign-up here as part of the "Chisago County Team" for follow-up information:

<https://forms.gle/m9DBntURwo69QTyr7>



Trex Bench Recycling Challenge

Chisago County Environmental Services announces their participation in Nextrex recycling program for plastic bags and film packaging!

Approved plastic items will be collected for a six-month period beginning May 1st, 2021. At the end of six months, or by October 31st if 500 lbs. or 40,500 plastic film and bag items have been collected, Nextrex will award the County with a Trex bench to be placed at a county location.

Please start saving your **clean, dry, and free of food residue**, plastic film for drop off at one of two recycling bins provided by Nextrex and located at the Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 39649 Grand Ave. in North Branch; and the entrance of the Chisago County Government Center at 313 North Main Street in Center City.



Grocery bags



Bread bags



Bubble wrap



Dry cleaning bags



Newspaper sleeves



Ziploc & other reclosable food storage bags



Cereal bags



Case overwrap



Salt bags



Pallet wrap & stretch film



Ice bags



Plastic shipping envelopes



Wood pellet bags



Produce bags



Do not include: frozen food bags, candy bar wrappers, chip bags, net or mesh produce bags, mulch or soil bags. For more information on whether an item may be included please visit <https://recycle.trex.com/view/educate>.

Most clean and dry polyethylene (PE), labeled as #2 or #4 plastic film and bags are recyclable at participating retail and local drop-off locations. Trex purchases returned consumer bags and film from the majority of grocery and retail stores in the U.S. Trex's composite decking is made from recycled grocery bags and other plastic film.

These materials are not normally accepted in curbside recycling because they get caught in the machines that sort other valuable recyclables like paper, cans, and bottles. Additionally, bags are generally too dirty after their trip in the back of the recycling truck to be recycled, even if they are collected at the recycling facility.

For information please visit <https://chisagocounty.us/869/environment> or call Chisago County at 651-213-8920 ext. 5



North and South Center Lakes – Clean Water Success Story

The Chisago Lakes area is home to some of the premier lakes in the northeast metro area. There are abundant opportunities to enjoy activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing. Sometimes, this enjoyment can be hindered if the lakes become polluted. Excess nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can run off from lawns and farms into the lakes, causing them to become green in the summer with algal blooms.

Every two years, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency publishes an Impaired Waters list of Minnesota lakes that do not meet water quality standards. These standards protect our water resources for fishing, swimming, plants and animals. **In 2008, both North and South Center Lakes were added to the Impaired Waters list** as enough water quality data had been collected to support the listing.

Since that time many individuals and organizations have stepped up to improve the water quality in these lakes. Improvements do not start at the shoreline, but rather the work takes place in the entire watershed area draining into these lakes. Examples of initiatives taken include:

- Homeowners implementing practices on their own to reduce stormwater runoff issues, such as: composting grass clippings, using zero-phosphorus lawn fertilizer, installing rain barrels or directing runoff away from hard surfaces, and establishing native plants to reduce irrigation needs and provide pollinator habitat.
- Watershed residents installing over 100 urban and agricultural best management practices, including rain gardens, lakeshore buffers, rock lined channels, vegetative swales, water & sediment control basins, grassed waterways, and cover crops.
- The Center Lakes Association advocating for water protection programs through education, controlling aquatic invasive species, and encouraging homeowners to create native shoreline buffers.
- Center City and Lindström adopting water quality improvement practices in their cities, including: policy updates, best management practice installation (rain gardens, iron-enhanced stormwater filters, vegetative swales, shoreline restorations, enhances street sweeping), landowner referrals, infrastructure updates, and promoting better construction site erosion control.
- The Chisago Soil & Water Conservation District completing a water quality study, identified high priority projects, and secured numerous state and federal grants from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service to partner with landowners to install water quality improvement projects.

Collectively, it's working!

“ We are pleased to announce that North & South Center Lakes are being removed (delisted) from the Impaired Waters list. ” View the article: <https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/clean-water-fund-stories>

Without the participation of area residents and many local partners, we would not have such a huge success! Based on 2020 water quality monitoring, North Center Lake received a grade of C and South Center Lake received a grade of C+. Landowners who take the initiative to call for a site visit, install projects, and take on long term maintenance are the true champions in this feat of delisting! So - while the lakes are getting better, we still have more work to do. Each of us can make a difference and together we can accomplish great things!

For information on these projects, and many more, go to <https://www.chisagocounty.us/300/Lake-Improvement-District>
<https://www.chisagocounty.us/306/Aquatic-Invasive-Species>
<https://chisagoswcd.org>

To view the water quality monitoring results for North & South Center Lakes for 2020, visit <https://mn-chisagocounty.civicplus.com/364/Water-Resources-Annual-Reports>



What can you do to help improve the water quality of area lakes?

SIX EASY THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- 1 Manage leaves and grass clippings**
 - Recycle grass clippings 1 inch or less back onto your lawn as you mow. Over the season it's the equivalent of one application of lawn fertilizer
 - Compost excess grass clippings and leaves or use as mulch
 - Remove clippings from hard surfaces like streets and driveways
 - Leave your grass at 3 inches or higher
 - In the fall, mulch up to 3 inches of leaves into the lawn
 - Compost locally - Check your local city webpage for location
- 2 Use zero-phosphorus lawn fertilizer – it's the Law!**
 - Soils in our area are already phosphorus rich
 - Phosphorus accelerates algae growth
- 3 Reduce storm water runoff from your property**
 - Direct downspouts away from hard surfaces
 - Create a rain garden or lakeshore restoration - get help from Chisago SWCD 651-674-2333 or www.chisagoswcd.org
- 4 Use native plants tolerant to drought and winter, adapted to our climate**
 - Little blue stem, blazing star, dogwood, sedges, blue flag iris, etc
 - More information: www.extension.umn.edu
- 5 Remove invasive, non-native plants**
 - Buckthorn, reed canary grass, purple loosestrife
 - More information: www.bluethumb.org
- 6 Properly dispose of household hazardous waste**
 - Gasoline, motor oil, cleaning solvents, paint, pesticides, antifreeze and others contaminates
 - FREE Disposal at Household Hazardous Waste Facility: 39649 Grand Ave. North Branch, MN

Goose/Rush Watersheds

Last August, the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) applied for a Clean Water Fund grant from the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources to continue their conservation work in the Rush and Goose Watersheds (covering most of Nessel, Rushseba, Fish Lake, City of Harris and North Sunrise Townships). **They were awarded a \$250,000 State grant in December of 2020 and are set to begin work this spring!**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Chisago SWCD's federal partner, also has dedicated funding for these watersheds from the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI). This Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) initiative is designed to help landowners in small watersheds voluntarily implement conservation practices that help trap sediment and reduce nutrient runoff from their field to improve the overall health of our surface waters that eventually end up in the Mississippi River.

Staff has been busy pinpointing areas of concern across the watershed through a process called sub-watershed assessment. This process identifies areas that contribute to the degradation of local surface waters and the estimated cost/benefit relationship for best management practices to be implemented. There are a wide range of projects that may be eligible for funding, including gully stabilization, grass buffers, cover crops, no-till or strip till farming, pasture or native grass plantings, wetland restorations, rain gardens, lakeshore buffers, and forestry improvement practices to name a few.

Together, the Chisago SWCD and North Branch NRCS are prepared to help solve many soil erosion, and water quality issues that landowners in these watersheds may have.

For more information, visit: www.chisagoswcd.org or contact the Chisago SWCD office at 651-674-2333.



Talking Trash in Chisago County

Ever wonder where your trash ends up after it leaves your garbage can? We all make it and should have an interest in its proper handling to maintain our quality of life and reduce impacts on the environment. Here's where the stuff in your garbage cart goes:

Trash: In the "old days" people dumped anything, including bad things, in the worst possible places. Minnesota phased out dumps in the 1970s. Today garbage goes into sanitary landfills that are regulated and lined with an impermeable barrier to help keep groundwater safe.

Chisago County's trash is landfilled. Most of the County's waste ends up at the East Central Solid Waste Commission (ECSWC) Landfill in Mora. Chisago County is 1 of 5 counties that own the facility. If you live on the eastern border and are a Waste Management customer, your trash goes to Timberline Trail Landfill off Highway 8 east of Barron, Wisconsin.

The ECSWC manages two transfer stations, one in Cambridge and the other in Hinckley. At the transfer station your garbage truck tips your trash out on the floor and the operator loads it into semis to efficiently truck it up to the Mora landfill. At Mora, the trash is deposited in a "cell" which has a liner to keep the garbage contained. The landfill doesn't accept liquids, but some liquids do leak out of the trash and forms leachate, which is collected and either land-applied on site or trucked for treatment at the Metro wastewater treatment plant in St. Paul. The landfill also collects methane gas created by rotting garbage to power a generator that produces enough electricity for 1600 households, reducing

greenhouse gas emissions. Cells typically cost millions of dollars to build, but ECSWC operates on tipping fees only and does not use local tax dollars. Trash disposal in Chisago County has consistently been going up a few tons each year; in 2020 we landfilled 35.3 tons of garbage.

Recycling: Garbage haulers licensed in Chisago County must offer residential curbside recycling with no additional charge for recycling service. Commercial recycling is optional. Curbside materials collected are cardboard, paper, tin, aluminum and plastic food & beverage containers, all combined in a "single-sort" bin. These materials are then trucked to large recycling plants in the Twin Cities where it is sorted into various commodities to be sold. Only approved recyclables must be in your bin to avoid contamination. Many materials you may assume are recyclable, such as the innumerable plastics in everyday life—from blueberry containers to pill bottles, produce bags to saran wrap—are non-recyclable and all end up at the landfill, even if you put them in your recycling bin. Most grocery stores also take back plastic bags at their front doors to recycle. Outstate Minnesota is required by Statute to meet a 35% recycling goal; Chisago County's 2020 rate was 25%.

We can do better!

HHW: Chisago County started collecting Household Hazardous Waste at the Facility in North Branch in November of 2000. The purpose of the facility is to keep hazardous waste out of the landfill and our County makes that happen by keeping about 100 tons of hazardous material out of the landfill each year.

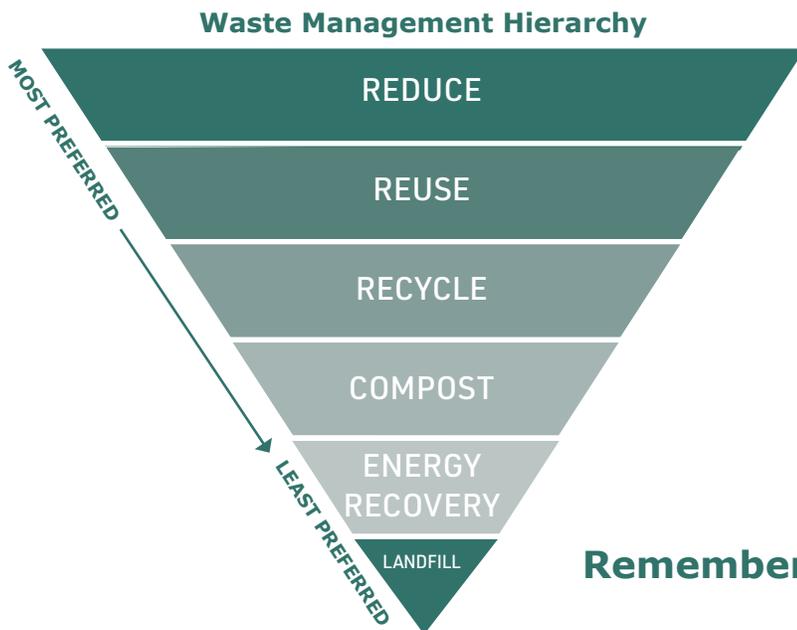
Problem Materials: The County also has agreements with private companies that offer recycling for items that cannot go into the landfill per policy or State law. These companies offer discounted recycling for: tires, appliances, electronics, and mattresses. In 2020: 90 tons of tires, 260 tons of appliances, and 43 tons of mattresses were recycled.

Organics: Most cities in Chisago County have a compost site for their resident's yard waste and brush. Chisago County also helps local schools divert food waste from landfilling. In 2020, 222 tons of food waste went to feed hogs.

Construction Debris: The County has one private Construction and Demolition Debris landfill, DKV, just east of Rush City, which accepts only building material waste. It is an unlined landfill and not permitted to take trash or hazardous/toxic materials. In 2019, they landfilled about 16 tons.

Waste Management Hierarchy:

All Minnesota counties are charged with managing waste according to the statutory "Waste Hierarchy" which prioritizes prevention over discarding. Waste reduction is at the top and the most important, so think before you buy. Reuse is up next, so re-utilize what you can. Recycling is in the middle, don't contaminate so **IF IN DOUBT THROW IT OUT**. Composting comes next, give it a try! These are then followed by Waste-to-Energy; Landfilling with Gas-Recovery (which Chisago County and the ECSWC does); and on the very bottom - straight Landfilling. Try and stick to the top of the Hierarchy and you should see your garbage volume go down and our landfill waste reduced. (Article first appeared in Spring 2021 edition of the Audubon Current)



Remember - landfills are forever!

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Innovative, sustainable, waste reduction, reuse, recycle... Help us spotlight local businesses, call 651-213-8923.

Mattress Recycling at Evergreen in Rush City

Recycling mattresses is crucial to reducing the waste that goes into landfills. Evergreen Recycling, just north of Rush City, has been recycling mattresses for over ten years and has prevented over 50,000 mattresses from being landfilled during this time!

People often ask what "really" happens to the mattresses that customers drop off to "recycle"? Some mattresses can be stripped down, and the springs reused and gain new life. However, the bulk of the mattresses that come into Evergreen are deconstructed and much of the material is recycled. For example, steel springs are shredded to reduce space and make them easier to recycle, a 30-yard roll off box will hold about 500 springs which is a 90% reduction in space. If landfilled, that would equal 3 semitrailers full of mattresses! Likewise, the same 500 mattresses after deconstruction produce one roll-off of foam which is also recycled.



Roll-off of compressed springs ready for recycling



The Evergreen mattress crew: Chad, Chris, David and Nate.



Deconstruction foam ready for market

Use this coupon to recycle mattresses, as well as other problem materials such as tires, appliances and electronics with these licensed recyclers. Chisago County provides this discount to county residents using one of these local facilities to help subsidize the cost of recycling and encourage residents to bring materials to a licensed recycler.

2021 Chisago County Residential Recycling Program for Appliances, Electronics, Mattresses, & Tires

AAA Recycling
651-238-0226
www.aaagreenrecycling.com
Pick-up only, call to schedule

East Central Solid Waste Commission (ECSWC)
763-689-4056
www.ecswc.com
Cambridge Transfer Station
4914 Hwy 95 NE
Cambridge

Evergreen Recycling
320-358-3988
53427 Forest Blvd.
Rush City

Recycling for Wildlife - (RFW)
651-304-7312
43239 Forest Blvd.
Harris

SRC, Inc.
651-462-5298
www.mytrashservice.com
6320 East Viking Blvd.
Wyoming

Steel Chick Recycling
651-269-6412
www.steelchick.com
Pick-up only, call to schedule

\$5 OFF RECYCLING

one of the following:

TV/Monitor, Tire, Appliance or Mattress

Not all items accepted at all locations.

AAA, Evergreen, RFW, SRC, or Steel Chick*

*Discount not available at ECSWC.
Limit one coupon per household.
Expires 12/31/21



DON'T "Wish-Cycle"

The practice of tossing questionable items in the recycling bin instead of in the trash, **HOPING** they will somehow get recycled.

Check with your hauler or call the Chisago County Solid Waste Administrator at 651-213-8923 if you have questions.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. When in doubt throw it out!
2. Never bag your recyclables!
3. Take control over what you and your family purchase and ultimately toss into the recycle bin.
4. Recycle what you know is clean and recyclable.
5. Encourage the use of recycled materials, buy post-consumer recycled materials - avoid single use plastics.



Deputy, Shane Carroll

Chisago County Sheriff's Office – Solid Waste Deputy

shane.carroll@chisagocounty.us
(651) 775-9985

Deputy Carroll has worked in law enforcement for over 28 years, with almost 22 of those at Chisago County within the Water Patrol, managing contract Cities, and as a Field Training Officer. He enjoys fishing in local lakes and deer hunting. He has taken over the Solid Waste Deputy position at Chisago County, and now handles solid waste and zoning violations, burning complaints, and the Unwanted Meds Program. Contact him if you have any questions on solid waste enforcement.

Unwanted Medication Collections

For the past 11 years Chisago County Environmental Services Dept. along with the Chisago County Sheriff's Office have been collecting expired and unwanted medications. Last year, the Drug Enforcement Agency disposed of a record 493 tons of prescription drugs, over the counter medications, and veterinary drugs in the United States. **Just shy of 2 tons of that medication was collected right here in Chisago County!** All drop off sites in Chisago County are located in secure locations at your local Police Departments as well as the Chisago County Sheriff's Offices. No record of an individual's medication is ever recorded and remains anonymous. All drugs and their containers are incinerated.

There are many reasons to dispose of these medications at your local drop box. Do not flush them down the sink or toilet or place them in the trash.

First, it can keep the medications from potentially poisoning pets, kids and being used illegally if thrown in the trash or left in a medicine cabinet. **Second**, each year thousands of people are hospitalized from accidentally taking old medications that were not disposed of properly. Sadly over 70,000 Americans died last year from a drug overdose. **Third**, medication flushed down the toilet or poured down the sink can seep into the ground water in a private septic system or pass through city water treatment plants and go into our rivers and lakes. The water can then go back into the community drinking supplies, as well as affect fish and wildlife.

Please do you part and check your house for old or unused medications and drop them off at any of the five secure locations today!

Needles and syringes should **NOT** be placed in drop boxes. They can be dropped off at:

Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste Facility
39649 Grand Ave, North Branch, MN.
Mondays from 12:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Please use one of the following secure locations within Chisago County to drop off your old medication(s):

Chisago County Sheriff's Office
15230 Per Road, Center City, MN.

Rush City Hall/ Sheriff District Office
325 South Eliot Ave, Rush City, MN.

Lindstrom City Hall/ Lakes Area PD
13292 Sylvan Ave, Lindstrom, MN.

North Branch City Hall/North Branch PD
6408 Elm St, North Branch, MN.

Wyoming Police Department
7665 Wyoming Trail, Wyoming MN.

Chisago County Dept. of Environmental Services/Zoning
313 Main Street North, Room 240
Center City, MN 55012

EGR WSS
Postal Customer

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 1096

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