

COMMENTARY

CR 42 devastation begins

**By Steve Eisele,
president of the Lake Carlos
Area Association**

Well everyone, the devastation has begun. Trees, bushes, rock walls and whatever else was County Road 42 is now history. We are on the front-end of the destruction of the most historic and scenic lake drive in the area. It is almost worth the drive just to see it.

Congratulations to the Public Works Department and a majority of the county commissioners. Construction of the new road from south of Bug-A-Boo Bay Restaurant north to the Carlos-Darling bridge is under way. The first phase alone of this \$3 million project will cost \$1,726,460.81.

We welcome improvements to a road surface quality last seen in the days of covered wagons and which we have endured for 15 years, but we are in tough financial times. Where does this money come from? When will this county spending end? Why wouldn't the county board accept our repeated suggestions capable of saving taxpayers \$1 million?

The lake associations and private property owners opposed the scale and rationale for this project, terming it a "superhighway" that was overbuilt, overpolluting, high speed and destructive to local property owners and businesses.

Opposing us loudly and with great exaggeration and distortion were the Douglas County commissioners and the Public Works Department, best exemplified by Mrs. Bales' fictional and untruthful letter, "The Truth About the Highway Project," left in local bars and grocery stores.

But give credit to the Lake Carlos Area Association, its members, generous private supporters, and our sister lake associations and members. Our strong legal fight

forced these public officials from hiding. Local press coverage, and our legal actions spotlighted the project inconsistencies loudly and clearly enough to draw a response couched mainly in ridicule. Rarely do the leaders of such ill-considered projects come front and center to take ownership of their grandiose ideas. You have now heard elected officials and those supervised and hired by these officials make two years of strong endorsements of the Highway 42/11/34 superhighway project as a "must do."

There can be no doubt that these folks have taken strong leadership and ownership of the project, complete with promises of low speeds, less lake pollution than now exists, safer roads, room for walkers and bikers, and dozens of other glossy points.

They now own the overbuilt project before us all. We have been invited to judge them on their promises and their results — we accept. Last year we stated the project was not a one-way street — we were mistaken. The one-way street leads to the doors of Public Works and Douglas County commissioners. They own the idea and the results not just today but going forward. The lake associations will try to assist the DNR in monitoring the project. But this project will put huge pressures on the lakes and environment as asphalt, concrete and block replace the trees and beauty of this lake drive.

We fought this all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court. When you have an opportunity to drive over this future superhighway through residential lakeshore areas we wonder if your impression might just be — "so now I understand why the lake association fought so hard!" You may wish we had fought harder, and so will we.