

 Minnesota
Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

FD 34992

EI-16280
KB

January 7, 2009

Ms. Tamara Cameron
Chief, Regulatory Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
190 5th Street East
St. Paul, MN 55101-1638

Re: Itasca County Rail Authority Project
A Connected Action to the Essar Steel Project (formerly Minnesota Steel)
Butler Taconite Mine Reactivation, Itasca County
SHPO Number: 2005-2320PA

Dear Ms. Cameron:

Thank you for your letter regarding your assessment of cultural resource issues in the area of potential effect for the above referenced project. We have reviewed your letter pursuant to Amendment #1 to the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for the project, and to the relevant provisions of the original agreement as well.

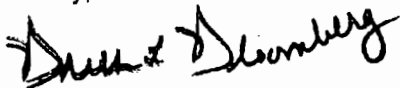
Your transmittal letter indicates that the rail line is one of four connected actions recognized by the agreements for the project. It appears to us that the rail line is the first of *five* connected actions that need to be considered. Still to be reviewed are a 10-mile access road to the facility, a natural gas pipeline, water and sanitary sewer services, and a power transmission line.

For the remaining reviews, we would strongly urge that the project sponsor develop a coordinated approach to cultural resource planning that effectively builds on previous cultural resource work. The review of the rail line has been hampered by conflicting recommendations and survey gaps among the various cultural resource studies that have been done for the area.

Based on the analysis you provide in your letter, we concur with your determination that the area of the rail line includes three National Register listed/eligible properties – the DM&N Alborn Branch Line, the GN Nashwauk-Gunn Line, and the Hill Annex Mine. Further, we concur with your determination that the project will have **no adverse effect** on these properties.

Contact us at 651-259-3456 with questions or concerns. We look forward to reviewing the remaining portions of the project under the terms of the Programmatic Agreement.

Sincerely,



Britta L. Bloomberg
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Brad Johnson, USACE
Vicki Rutson, Surface Transportation Board
David Christy, Itasca County
Tom Cinadr, SHPO