



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

3A
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: February 24, 2026

Title of Item: Letter Acknowledging Spongy Moth Treatment in Aitkin County

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	Action Requested: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested
	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Only

Submitted by: Dennis (DJ) Thompson	Department: Land
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Presenter (Name and Title): Dennis (DJ) Thompson, Land Commissioner	Estimated Time Needed: 5 Minutes
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Summary of Issue:

The attached letter is part of Minnesota Department of Agriculture's congested area plan that needs to be signed and returned to the local Flight District Standards Office (FSDO) of the FAA. The letter itself is simply an acknowledgment that the County Board has received notification that spongy moth treatments will be occurring in Aitkin County.

Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:

Recommended Action/Motion:

Sign letter acknowledging MDA's 2026 spongy moth treatment in Aitkin County.

Financial Impact:

Is there a cost associated with this request? Yes No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted? Yes No *Please Explain:*

Spongy Moth Management Is Proposed In Your Area

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) in collaboration with federal partners has identified areas in Aitkin County that need to be managed to slow the spread of spongy moth in Minnesota.

What is spongy moth?

Spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is an invasive insect that is a significant threat to the economy, environment, and human health. Spongy moth has caused billions of dollars in property damage and defoliated millions of acres of forested land. Spongy moth caterpillars can feed on over 300 tree species, including some of Minnesota’s most common trees.

How is spongy moth managed?

In 2026, the MDA is proposing mating disruption management by applying an organic product via low flying aircrafts to the tree canopies. Applications generally begin early in the mornings, with planes often flying in the area for several hours.

Mating Disruption (MD)

Mating disruption halts the spongy moth mating process by saturating an area with female pheromones which prevent adult males from finding adult females to mate. The MDA utilizes a mating disruption product called SPLAT GM-O (Specialized Pheromone and Lure Application Technology Gypsy Moth-Organic). SPLAT GM-O is harmless to humans and animals. All the ingredients in SPLAT GM-O are listed by the EPA as safe.

How many acres in my county are proposed for management?

The MDA is proposing to manage spongy moth in three areas totaling 5,470 acres in Aitkin County.

See Appendix 1 for a map of management locations. An interactive map of management activities is also available online at www.mda.state.mn.us/spongymothmanagement

Table 1. 2026 Aitkin County proposed spongy moth management.

County	Area Name	Acres
Aitkin/ Carlton	HAUGEN	5,514 (5,398 acres in Aitkin County)
Aitkin	MCGREGOR	59
Aitkin/ Carlton	WRIGHT	7,001 (13 acres in Aitkin County)

Figure 1. Spongy moth caterpillar. Bill McNee, WIDNR



How do community members and I stay informed?

With high visibility aerial management of spongy moths, communication with the public is key to success. The MDA uses several methods to inform residents of spongy moth management and how it affects them.

- **Public Meetings/Open Houses**

The MDA hosts several virtual or in-person public meetings, typically in the month of March to inform citizens about the proposed project.

- **Postcards**

The most significant communication tool the MDA uses are postcards. All residents with addresses within a management area receive at least one outlining what spongy moth is, the MDA's management proposal, and ways to learn more about the program.

- **Text/Email Alerts**

For the most up-to-date information on spongy moth management activities the public can sign up to receive text messages and emails that provide specific information on management timings in their area. The public will be able to subscribe by visiting www.mda.state.mn.us/spongymothmanagement

- **Press Releases**

The MDA also issues press releases to advertise public meetings and announce upcoming treatments.

- **Listserv**

To keep local government informed on MDA activities, all relevant local government leaders are added to a local leader listserv. This listserv is an opportunity for local leaders to learn more about spongy moth activities, receive updates, and see what the MDA will be sharing with residents. If you would like to be added to our listserv, please let us know.

- **Cooperation**

The MDA works closely with local government communication staff to help publicize spongy moth management activities on their websites and social media before and during treatments.

More Information

www.mda.state.mn.us/spongymoth

Key Contacts

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Spongy Moth Treatment Coordinator

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Figure 2. A forest edge in July showing the defoliation of leaves. If spongy moth caterpillars were not present the trees would have full dark canopies of leaves.

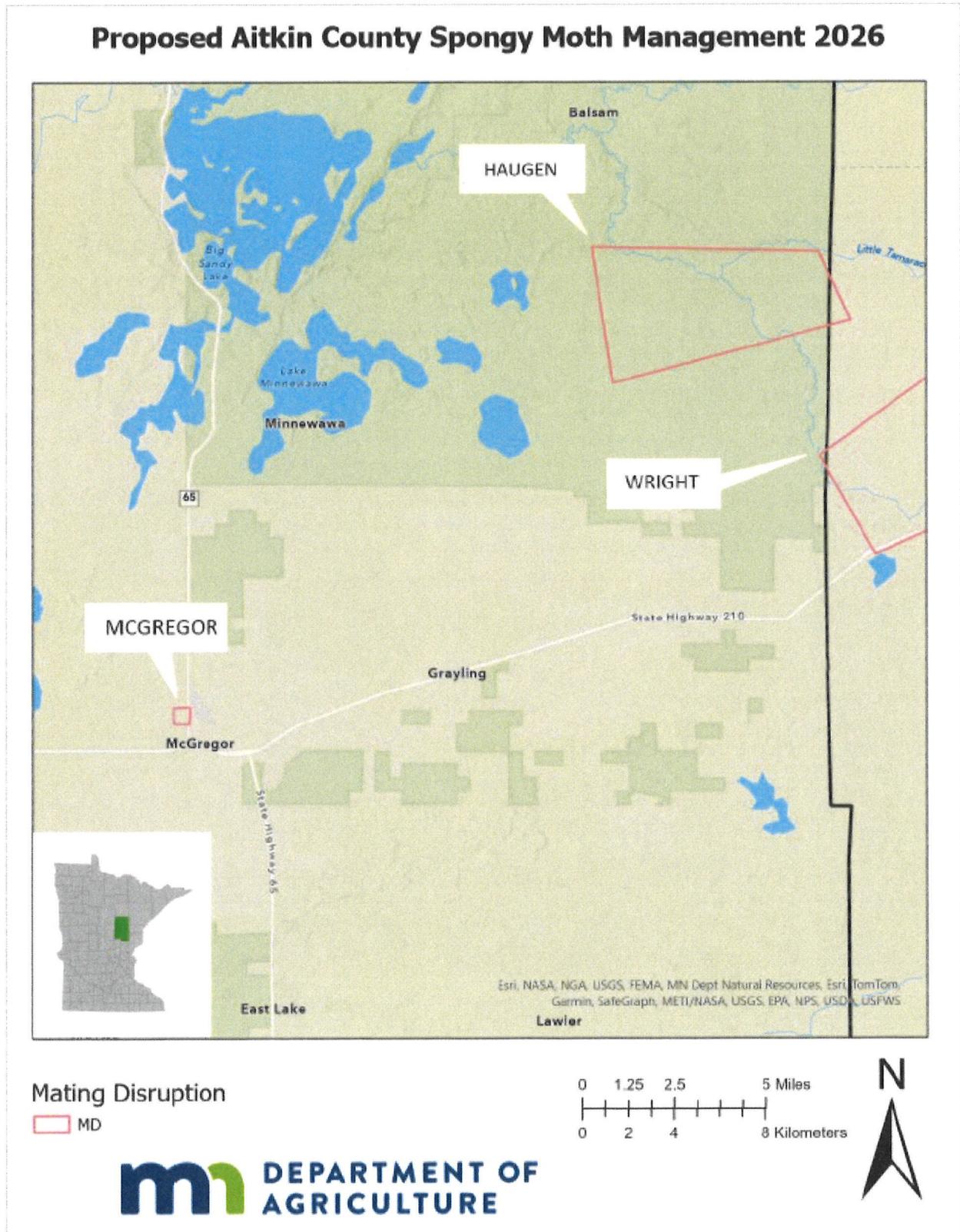


Appendix 1

Proposed Activity

Number of management areas: 3

Figure 3. 2026 proposed spongy moth management areas in Aitkin County.





AITKIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Aitkin County Government Center
307 2nd Street NW, Room 310
Aitkin, MN 56431

February 24, 2026

Al's Aerial Spraying
c/o Mike Schiffer
3473 Shepardsville Road
Ovid, MI 48866

Dear Mr. Schiffer,

This letter is to provide written documentation of Aitkin County Board of Commissioner's awareness for aerial application by Al's Aerial Spraying, for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Cooperative Spongy Moth Program treatment projects, occurring in 2026. Al's Aerial Spraying has been contracted by the USDA-Forest Service for the aerial applications of mating disruption to reduce colonies of the spongy moth, *Lymantria dispar*, an invasive species.

We understand Spongy Moth Slow-the-Spread mating disruption treatment project will occur at three sites in Aitkin County. Approximately 5,470 acres are scheduled for aerial treatment in June/July of this year.

Al's Aerial Spraying will carry out this project in cooperation with, and under the authority of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the USDA-Forest Service, and the Spongy Moth Slow-the-Spread Foundation, Inc.

The Aitkin County Board agrees that proper and sufficient public notification of the treatment project has occurred and that the aerial operations are needed and wanted with the intent to slow the spread of spongy moth in our area.

Sincerely,

J. Mark Wedel
County Board Chair

cc: Kimberly Thielen-Cremers, MDA