

**PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY AND DNR RESPONSES  
CONCERNING THE NOVEMBER 2017 UPDATED DRAFT EIS  
FOR THE KOHLER GOLF COURSE PROPOSAL**

January 2018

The department's webpage for the proposed Kohler Golf Course project <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/eia/kohler.htm> includes links to all public comments (oral, written, emailed, and letters) received during the November - December 2017 public comment period, as well as the comments received on the Draft EIS in July and August 2016. The department has summarized and categorized these public comments and provides responses, including reference to specific locations in the document where any changes have been made based on comments and/or new information.

1. **Comment:** General opposition to the project and to the department granting any approvals for the project.

**Response:** The department acknowledges that there is substantial public opposition to the project, to the issuance of permits, to the use of state park lands for the proposed access road and proposed maintenance facility. The EIS discusses the degree of controversy in Section 6.

2. **Comment:** General support for the project.

**Response:** The department acknowledges that there are many people who support the project, especially related to the potential economic effects of new development, jobs, and tourism.

3. **Comment:** Objection to the use of the term "preferred alternative" in the EIS.

**Response:** The department recognizes that the use of the term "preferred alternative" was misleading in that there was a perception that the department had chosen a "preferred alternative". The term "preferred alternative" was referring to Kohler's chosen alternative and the department has changed the wording from "preferred alternative" to "current proposal" in the final EIS.

4. **Comment:** Objection to the use of the terms such as "may" and "will likely" in describing potential impacts of the proposed project.

**Response:** The EIS includes many definitive statements of environmental effects, including effects on: air quality, stormwater, groundwater, floodplains, upland communities, wetlands, surface waters, the Black River fishery, invasive species, demographics, property values, economic, tax revenue, traffic, and aesthetics.

Several changes have been made to potential environmental effect descriptions in the final EIS. For example, on page 18, the statement "The soils on the site *may* present challenges..." was changed to "The soils on the site present challenges..." (Note that italics are added here

for emphasis.) Another example is on page 40: “Secondary impacts from tree clearing and grading activities *can* alter the local hydrology...” was changed to “Secondary impacts from tree clearing and grading activities *will* alter local hydrology...” A final example is on page 71: “Habitat value *will likely* diminish...” was changed to “Habitat value *will* diminish...”

It should be noted that any analysis of the potential effects of a proposed project or activity involves varying degrees of uncertainty. The terminology used to reflect this uncertainty was selected based on the nature of the available information and the professional judgement and expertise of subject-area specialists within the department.

5. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not adequately investigate and analyze the “no action” alternative.

**Response:** None of the Project impacts would occur if the Project is not completed. Section 4.1 of the final EIS has been edited to more clearly state this. Section 5 of the EIS includes description of the existing environment, which would not change with the No Action alternative.

6. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not address potential impacts of chemicals.

**Response:** Section 5.1.6.1 of the EIS addresses nutrient and pest management as it relates to golf course management, potential impacts to ground water, and potential risks. Section 5.1.9 discusses potential secondary impacts to wetlands and Section 6.2.2 again discusses potential impacts to groundwater.

7. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not address potential impacts of the project on Important Bird Areas (IBA) and stopover habitats for migrating birds.

**Response:** EIS Section 5.1.13 provides information relative to IBA and stopover habitat and addresses likely impacts of the change in cover and land use to migrating and resident birds. Section 6.2.4 also discusses habitat losses due to tree removal.

8. **Comment:** Concern that the department did not study the impacts to wells from groundwater pumping for the golf course operations.

**Response:** Section 5 includes modelling of groundwater pumping.

9. **Comment:** Concern the term “maintenance facility” reflects just one building being proposed on state park land for maintenance.

**Response:** Section 3.1 of the EIS describes the maintenance facility and the amenities and operations that are proposed.

10. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not address impacts related to a north access alternative.

**Response:** Section 4.2 of the EIS describes the various alternatives that were considered. As described therein, Kohler chose access from the south after considering the larger easement and new Black River crossing that would be required if access were from the west and to avoid the traffic impacts to the residential subdivision if the access route came from the

north. Additional information is available in Kohler's Practicable Alternatives Analysis that was submitted with their wetland fill permit application.

11. **Comment:** Concern with the precedent of allowing an easement on state park lands for the project.

**Response:** Section 6.4 of the EIS addresses the potential for precedent.

12. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not address impacts related to fertilizer use and potential for increased algal blooms in Lake Michigan.

**Response:** Section 5.1.11 of the final EIS has been updated to include a detailed discussion of nearshore water quality and algae blooms in Lake Michigan based on long-term monitoring at Kohler-Andrae State Park, as well as cited research studies. As noted, the department does not anticipate that the proposed project would result in blooms of toxic blue-green algae, or increases in the nuisance algae *Cladophora*.

13. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not adequately address the impacts of crowds and traffic during major events.

**Response:** The department recognizes that thoughtful planning is critical to reduce the potential of significant disruption to park and golf course users during major events. There are no immediate plans for special events at this time. Without additional details regarding those prospective events, any further analysis than what has been completed would be based only on speculation.

14. **Comment:** Concerns about the proposed traffic circle.

**Response:** Section 5.2.11 of the EIS describes the existing traffic, the traffic study, and states that it is unknown how the proposed roundabout would affect traffic entering or exiting the golf course.

15. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not include an inventory of habitat and wildlife at the proposed maintenance facility site.

**Response:** EIS Section 5.1.13 presents habitat and wildlife information on the Kohler property and Kohler-Andrea Park property.

16. **Comment:** Concern that the DNR wrote the EIS with only Kohler Company information.

**Response:** Pursuant to Chapter NR 150, Wisconsin Administrative Code, the department is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of an EIS. Any part of an EIS may be prepared by an applicant, the department, a consultant to the applicant or department, or another state, federal, tribal or local agency. In preparing an EIS, the department may rely on an EIR provided by an applicant, documents prepared or relied upon by other agencies, or any other source of relevant information.

In preparing the EIS, the department relied on its expertise, public scoping comments, the Kohler Company's Environmental Impact Report, and additional information provided by Kohler in response to specific requests by the department. The department also conferred

with other agencies, including the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

17. **Comment:** Concern that filling wetlands will result in flooding on Old Park Road.

**Response:** The analysis of floodplain changes found floodplain elevation increases of no more than 0.01 feet, as indicated in final EIS Table 5, Section 5.1.7.

18. **Comment:** Concern that the DNR is ignoring or altering environmental regulations in allowing the project.

**Response:** Section 6.4 of the final EIS discusses the potential for precedent and states that regulatory decisions will follow the applicable legal requirements which are described in Table 1 of Section 2.

19. **Comment:** Concerns about filling rare wetlands on state property.

**Response:** Impacts to wetlands have been evaluated through the permit process.

20. **Comment:** Concern over inadequate mitigation of rare wetlands.

**Response:** EIS Section 5.1.10 discusses the laws and standards regarding wetland compensatory mitigation. As stated therein, final decisions on the approved mitigation method and credit requirements will be coordinated by the department and the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

21. **Comment:** Concern about impacts to archaeological resources.

**Response:** Section 4.2 of the EIS describes each alternative's proximity to burial mounds and Section 5.2.11 provides additional information and the coordination involved during the archaeological review.

22. **Comment:** Concern that alternative locations for the clubhouse, parking lot and practice range that would minimize wetland impacts were not considered.

**Response:** Section 4.2 of the EIS describes the various alternatives that were considered. Additional information is available in Kohler's Practicable Alternatives Analysis that was submitted with their wetland fill permit application.

23. **Comment:** Concern that there is no plan to prevent herbicide and fertilizer laden runoff from reaching wetlands.

**Response:** EIS Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4, discuss nutrient and pest management while Section 5.1.6.1 describes best management practices to minimize potential adverse impacts to waters of the state.

24. **Comment:** Concern that the EIS does not discuss specific potential impacts to rare plants.

**Response:** Threatened and endangered resources are discussed in EIS Sections 5.1.14 and 6.2.4. Additionally, certain details on endangered resources may have been redacted to comply with state law as further described in the "To the Reader" section of the EIS.

25. **Comment:** Concern that a finding of “no significant adverse impact” for this project is inappropriate.

**Response:** Under Chapter NR 150, Wisconsin Administrative Code, the Department does not make findings of no significant adverse impacts.