

## Minnesota briefs: DFL legislator takes job as Lake Superior Zoo's new executive

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 26 August 2017 15:33 -

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State Sen. Erik Simonson, DFL-Duluth, was named the new chief executive of the Lake Superior Zoo. Simonson, 49, will retire from his position as assistant Duluth fire chief, but will retain his position at the Legislature, according to a zoo statement.

Simonson said he felt someone from the community should lead the zoo — “someone with a network of relationships that could advance the plan for our zoo,” the statement said. He said he believes his continuing role at the Capitol will serve the city and the zoo, which is preparing for a \$15 million upgrade. Simonson will begin his job next month.

Pam Louwagie

## OTTER TAIL COUNTY

### Proposed casino faces further scrutiny

Otter Tail County commissioners last week voted to request a full environmental impact statement (EIS) for a proposed casino on Star Lake.

The White Earth Band of Chippewa is planning to build a Shooting Star Casino and Resort on about 270 acres near Dent, in a rural area of the county. The project includes a gambling facility, hotel, restaurants, conference center and RV park.

Federal law gives the band the right to build a casino on about 15 acres of trust land set aside during treaty settlements long ago, but the county has the power to approve other aspects of the project.

Wayne Johnson, the County Board's vice chairman, said the casino is a complex proposal involving the federal, state and county governments as well as a sovereign tribal nation. An application for a dredging and filling permit on the trust lands is pending with the Army Corps of Engineers.

"It's a unique situation," Johnson said, noting that the casino has stirred emotions on both sides of the issue.

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After the county sets the scope of the EIS and gets responses from the tribe, the board will have a maximum of 280 days to make a decision on its portion of the project, Johnson said.

JOHN REINAN

RENVILLE COUNTY

Heavy rain temporarily closes county parks

Heavy rain earlier this month that led to significant flooding has forced Renville County to shut down five of its parks until water recedes and damage is repaired.

The county closed Anderson Lake, Beaver Falls, Mack Lake, Skalbekken and Vicksburg parks after rain washed out some areas and downed trees. As of last Thursday, only Skalbekken and Vicksburg had reopened.

In places across southern and central Minnesota, more than 1 inch of rain fell within 24 hours Aug. 16-17. The Redwood Falls area recorded a record 8 inches in 24 hours — the largest

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24-hour precipitation total in Minnesota since 2012, according to the state's Department of Natural Resources' [Climatology Office](#) . Renville County had more than 6 inches of rain in some spots in the 24-hour period, according to the [National Weather Service](#) [Nati](#)

County officials said last week that they hope to reopen the closed parks by Labor Day weekend. For updates, go to [www. renvillecountymn.com](http://www.renvillecountymn.com) .

KELLY SMITH

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