



April 28, 2022

Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

Re: HF 4492 1st Engrossment – House Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill HF 4492 1st Engrossment. We greatly appreciate the many good provisions and significant investments made in this bill, nearly \$24 million above the Governor's recommendation.

We would like to highlight some key provisions in this bill that our statewide coalition members believe move Minnesota in a positive direction by protecting our environment and the health of our people.

First, this bill advances **natural climate solutions** that provide ecological and societal benefits.

- The bill prioritizes **peatland protection** and sets state goals to protect, restore, and enhance 25 percent by August 1, 2030, and 50 percent by August 1, 2040 of the state's presettlement peat soils that were drained for and used for agricultural purposes or pastures. Peatlands have tremendous value for carbon storage. Art. 2, Sec. 7
- The bill invests \$5 million for **native plant restoration at state parks** as part of efforts to strengthen climate adaptation measures for natural lands and waters. Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 2, ppg (a)
- The bill invests \$5 million to **enhance grasslands and restore wetlands** on existing state-owned wildlife management areas to sequester carbon and improve climate resiliency. Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 2, ppg (c)
- The bill invests \$11 million to **replace ash trees** removed due to emerald ash borer (an invasive insect), giving priority to environmental justice areas and \$1 million to **plant trees on school grounds**. Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 2, ppgs (k) and (l)
- This bill invests \$8 million for an accelerated **conservation tree planting program** that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and add resiliency to the landscape by sequestering carbon, conserving energy, and improving water quality and habitat. Art. 1, Sec. 4, ppg (i)
- This bill invests \$10 million to support the **Conservation Reserve Program State Incentive** that builds on federal incentives to keep or put land in conservation. Art. 1, Sec. 4, ppg (e)
- This bill invests \$30 million in the **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** to purchase and restore permanent conservation sites by enrolling targeted new lands or environmentally sensitive lands in federal conservation easements. Art. 1, Sec. 4, ppg (h)
- This bill continues support for the **Lawns to Legumes program**, investing \$5 million in FY 23 and \$1.25 million in 2024 and beyond, to provide grants or payments to plant residential lawns with native vegetation and pollinator-friendly forbs and legumes to protect a diversity of pollinators. Art. 1, Sec. 4, ppg (h), Art. 2, Sec. 33

- This bill invests \$5 million in the **Healthy Soil Program**. We support the creation of the soil health cost-share program and a state-wide soil-healthy farming goal of at least 30 percent of Minnesota farmland utilizing cover crops, perennial crops, no-till or managed rotational grazing by 2030. This would have many positive benefits, including boosting farm income, building soil health, preventing or minimizing erosion and runoff, retaining and cleaning water, sequestering carbon, supporting pollinators, and increasing farm resiliency. Art. 2, Sec. 34 & 36

Second, this bill **promotes composting** and the reduction of waste.

- This bill invests \$5 million to establish a **multifamily building composting pilot program** to award grants to increase composting of food wastes by residents in multifamily buildings. Art. 2, Sec. 48
- This bill protects the quality of compost by setting **standards for labeling compostable products** (bags, food or beverage products) **and packaging**. Art. 4, Sec. 7

Third, this bill takes important steps to ensure that **environmental justice is centered** in policy solutions and appropriations.

- This bill provides \$50,000 to conduct a critical **St. Louis River TMDL study** that will determine the mercury reductions needed for lakes and rivers in the St. Louis River watershed to meet the water quality standard for mercury and support the healthy consumption of fish. This study will help protect children and communities who are most vulnerable to mercury exposure and respect the cultural and economic importance of fishing in the watershed and tribal treaty rights. Art. 1, Sec. 2, ppg (f)
- This bill makes critical investments for implementation of **environmental justice, cumulative impact analysis, and demographic analysis requirements in permitting decisions**. This includes \$9.08 million from the general fund in FY 23, and additional funding from the environmental fund in future years. Members of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership have expressed support for legislation that prioritizes environmental justice communities in Minnesota, accurately defines environmental justice and where environmental justice areas are located, collects thorough information on local environmental health conditions, and considers the cumulative environmental and health impacts of pollution in permitting decisions. We strongly encourage meaningful consultation of communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities who are overburdened by pollution as this bill moves forward so that those most impacted by pollution can actively participate in identifying and advancing solutions to address environmental injustice. Article 2, sections 55, 56, 61-63, 66, & 68
- This bill prioritizes the health of Minnesotans, especially those who are most vulnerable to pollution, by investing \$5 million for development of a **statewide air quality monitoring program**, and \$540,000 to purchase **air monitoring devices** to measure pollutants in ambient air and place these devices in environmental justice areas. Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2, ppgs (o) and (p)
- This bill invests \$2.335 million to **replace residential lead service lines**. MEP strongly supports immediate action to mitigate and ultimately eliminate the risk of lead exposure through home drinking water in Minnesota through grants for residential lead service line replacements. Lead exposure disproportionately impacts Black, brown, and Indigenous Minnesotans, children, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Getting the lead out is crucial to advancing justice for all people. We commend the program's targeted delivery to populations who face the most severe risks of lead exposure. Art. 1, Sec. 6, ppg (d), Art. 2, Sec. 76-78
- This bill **restricts cadmium and lead in certain consumer products** and includes \$74,000 in FY 23 and continuing in the base budget for compliance monitoring and testing of lead and cadmium in consumer products. Art. 2, Sec. 73

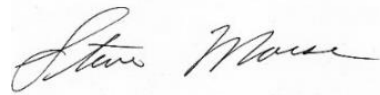
Fourth, this bill contains important **protections for swans and other wildlife**.

- This bill **restricts the use of lead ammunition as well as lead fishing tackle** that are critical to protecting swans and other wildlife. This bill supports the **Swan Protection Act** by investing \$1 million in FY 23, and in the ongoing budget base. This funding is for a lead tackle collection program that provides collection sites throughout the state where anglers may safely dispose of lead tackle. Art. 2, Sec. 25 & 85 Subd. 3.

Fifth, this bill makes an important, long overdue **onetime repayment of \$29.055 million** to the **metropolitan landfill contingency action trust account** to restore money that had been inappropriately transferred from the account during tight budget times in years past. Art.1, Sec. 2, Sub. 3

We thank you for your leadership and for your consideration. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to support these policies and programs that protect our environment and the health of Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
Bee Safe MPLS*
Clean River Partners
Clean Water Action Minnesota
CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas
Friends of the Mississippi River
Hastings Environmental Protectors
Humming for Bees
Lakeville Friends of the Environment
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters Duluth
League of Women Voters Minnesota
Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Herpetological Society
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
Minnesota Ornithologists Union
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
Minnesota Well Owners Organization
MN350
Pollinate Minnesota*
Pollinator Friendly Alliance
Renewing the Countryside
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
St. Paul Audubon Society
Vote Climate
Wild Rivers Conservancy
*denotes non-MEP member