



Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Chair Representative Frank Hornstein
545 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 30, 2022

Dear Chair Hornstein and Committee members,

On behalf of our member organizations, I strongly urge you to support HF 4313, the Highways for Habitat bill. At a time when pollinators and other species, vital to the natural systems we all depend on, are faced with destruction, Highways for Habitat is a commonsense step to safeguard and restore critical habitat, improve erosion control and water filtration, and contribute to highway safety. By establishing native plants, shrubs, and tree buffers along our state highways, Highways to Habitat will help make Minnesota an oasis for pollinators.

Pesticides, habitat destruction, and climate change have caused precipitous declines in the insect and bird species that are the backbone of our ecosystems. The collapse of these species is no isolated event - it threatens the broader web of plants and animals we rely on for survival. As we continue to grapple with the climate crisis, one of the chief factors in building our resilience is how swiftly we act to provide habitat for our species to recover and adapt.

Our roadway corridors provide an opportunity for a step forward. Highways for Habitat would introduce priority locations on state highways for Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) plans to preserve and enhance roadsides with vegetation. Managing roadsides under an IRVM plan reduces the use of pesticides that are toxic to wildlife (and in some cases, humans) and shores up the land against drought, flooding, and wind erosion.

Funded by a variety of federal and state sources, an IRVM plan can secure the following benefits:

- helps at-risk monarch butterfly, bumble bee and migratory bird species recover and helps avoid additional federal listings, permitting and regulation
- filter and protect water quality
- reduce soil erosion and rejuvenate soil health
- block agricultural pesticide drift
- improve air quality
- moderate climates and absorb carbon
- increase visual appeal
- provide living wind and snow breaks
- contribute to highway safety
- provide wildlife travel and migration corridors
- provide habitat for birds, pollinators and other small wildlife

This program will enable Minnesota's roadways to not only transport people, but to allow pollinators to survive, spread, and prosper. Decades of destruction have brought many of these species to the brink of disaster. With Highways for Habitat, we'll help them step back toward recovery, and help ourselves build a healthier, greener, and more resilient Minnesota future.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:

A.C.E.S. (Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability)

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Citizens Climate Lobby

Clean Water Action Minnesota

Friends of Minneapolis Wildlife

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Hastings Environmental Protectors

Izaak Walton League – Minnesota Division

Lakeville Friends of the Environment*

Land Stewardship Project

League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region*

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light

MN350

Pollinate Minnesota*

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Renewing the Countryside

Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC*

St. Croix Chapter of Wild Ones Native Landscaping

Vote Climate

WaterLegacy

**denotes non-MEP member*