



May 4, 2023

To: Members of the Omnibus Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, and Energy Conference Committee

Re: Please support critical investments and programs in Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, and Energy Appropriations, HF2310

Dear Conference Committee Members,

Thank you for your leadership this legislative session to put together a budget that responds to the unprecedented challenges facing our state due to climate change and provides a better future for all Minnesotans and our treasured natural resources.

We greatly appreciate the many good policy provisions and targeted investments in this bill that seek to protect our clean water and air, ensure the health of Minnesotans, and help our communities mitigate the effects of and prepare for our changing climate. This will greatly accelerate our progress toward a just and sustainable future. We are pleased to see the overall increase in funding to protect and restore these important resources.

As the Conference Committee convenes to consider differences in the House and Senate versions of the Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, and Energy Omnibus Bill (HF 2310), we bring to your attention key provisions in the House and Senate bills that our statewide coalition members believe are critical in moving Minnesota forward by protecting our climate, environment and the health of our people.

We strongly support and urge you to pass the following provisions into law:

Center People in our Public Institutions and Environmental Justice

It is imperative to center people in our public institutions and environmental justice in policy solutions and appropriations.

- **Cumulative Impacts Analysis in Overburdened Communities**
(side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R30)
Communities overburdened by pollution desperately need protection from pollution sources. This bill would require the MPCA to take into account the cumulative impacts of pollution in environmental justice areas when granting permits. We urge you to adequately fund this provision and to support the House language, making sure that new and permit reissuances are included and that permit denial is not discretionary.
- **Review of Non-Expiring Permits and Community Air Monitoring Systems**
(side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R53)
Please support the House version of this language, which includes non-expiring state individual air quality permit requirements and public input, as well as a community air monitoring system pilot program. These provisions prioritize the health of those most vulnerable to pollution, and give environmental justice communities a say in permitting.

- PFAS Provisions and Harm Reduction:**
 (side-by-side Articles 3-8, pages R43,44,49, and 60)
 PFAS chemicals, also known as “forever chemicals,” pollute our water and threaten public and environmental health. We support language in both the House and Senate bills including a nonessential use ban, information disclosure for products containing PFAS, as well as prohibition of PFAS in firefighting foam. We urge you to also support the House language to establish water quality standards for PFAS.
- Lead and Cadmium in Consumer Products**
 (side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R48)
 This language in the House and Senate bills prohibits the importing, manufacturing, selling, or distributing of enumerated consumer products with lead or cadmium levels that exceed the levels set forth in the statute. Your support of this important provision would ensure Minnesotans are protected from unsafe levels of these toxic chemicals.
- Upper Sioux Agency State Park Transfer**
 (side-by-side Article 1, page R34)
 This provision in the Senate and House bills requires the DNR to convey for no consideration all state-owned land within the boundaries of Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Upper Sioux Community. Please support the Senate language and one time funding of \$5.388 million.
- Tribal Advocacy Council on Energy**
 (side-by-side Energy Policy, page R150)
 The Senate and House versions include language that requires the commissioner of commerce to provide technical support and subject matter expertise to assist and help facilitate any efforts taken by the 11 federally recognized Indian Tribes in Minnesota to establish a Tribal advocacy council on energy. Please support the statutory language plus the Senate funding of \$4.82 million for operations and tribal grants.

Natural Climate Solutions

Natural climate solutions provide ecological and societal benefits. We are encouraged by the drive behind investing in Minnesota’s landscape. Protecting and restoring the natural landscapes that define Minnesota will help provide solutions to climate change while making communities more livable and our natural resources more resilient.

- Lowland Conifer Carbon Reserve**
 (side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R84)
 We urge you to support the House language establishing the Lowland Conifer Carbon Reserve and the House funding level of \$5 million to protect and preserve carbon-sequestering conifer wetlands.
- We support the House language and funding to **acquire peatlands, and restore the carbon-sequestering potential of state-owned peatlands.**
- Lawns to Legumes**
 (side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R140)
 We appreciate the language in the House and Senate to provide grants or payments to plant residential lawns with native vegetation and pollinator friendly forbs and legumes to protect a diversity of pollinators.
- Soil health practices program**
 (side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R145)
 We support the language in the House and Senate to establish a soil health practices program to achieve water quality, soil productivity, and climate change resiliency or carbon sequestration benefits.

- **Scientific and Natural Areas**
(side-by-side Article 1, page R27)
We support the House bill language and funding of \$6 million for maintenance and improvement of scientific and natural areas.
- **Reinvest in Minnesota Purposes Expansion**
(side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R146)
We support the strategic expansion of the Reinvest in Minnesota program and the House allocation of \$34.6 million. This program will include establishing perennial vegetation, restoring and enhancing marginal land, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas, including wellhead protection areas, grasslands, peatlands, shorelands, and forest lands in priority areas.
- **Wetlands in Wildlife Management Areas**
(side-by-side Article 1, page R36)
We support the House language and funding of \$15 million to enhance prairies and grasslands and restore wetlands on state-owned wildlife management areas to sequester more carbon and enhance climate resiliency.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**
(side-by-side Article 1, page R48)
We support the House language and funding of \$17 million for 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
- **Conservation Reserve Program**
(side-by-side Article 1, page R51)
We support the House language and funding of \$5 million for the Conservation Reserve Program State Incentive that builds on federal incentives to keep or enroll land in conservation.

Protect Ecosystem Health from Harmful Exposure to Chemicals and Toxins

- **Proper Use and Disposal Rulemaking for Pesticide Treated Seed**
(side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R157)
We support the House provisions to establish rulemaking that prohibits using, storing, handling, distributing, or disposing of pesticide-treated seed in a manner that endangers humans, food, livestock, fish, or wildlife, or that will have an unreasonable adverse effect on the environment.
- **Insecticides on Public Lands**
(side-by-side Articles 3-8, page R73)
We support the House language that prohibits the use of an insecticide in a wildlife management area (WMA), state park, state forest, aquatic management area (AMA), or a scientific and natural area (SNA) if the insecticide is from the neonicotinoid class of insecticides or it contains chlorpyrifos.
- **Non-toxic ammunition and non-toxic fishing tackle**
(side-by-side Article 1, pages R18, R40, Article 4, pages R88-R-106)
We support the House language that restricts the use of lead ammunition as well as lead fishing tackle in key areas that are critical to protecting swans and other wildlife.

Composting and the Reduction of Waste

Amid historic supply chain disruptions, the intensifying climate crisis, and rampant plastic pollution, there has never been a more important time to invest in a circular economy for Minnesotans that prioritizes reduction and reuse.

- We support the **Zero Waste Program** in the House that contains important waste reduction provisions, such as **zero-waste grants** to increase e-waste recycling. We also support the language and funding in the House and Senate to create waste prevention and reduction grants.
- We support the language in the House to create **standards for food and beverage products and packaging labeling** to encourage composting.

Champion and Accelerate a Just Transition Toward Climate Solutions

- **Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions-Reduction Goal**
(side-by-side Energy Policy, page R138)
We support the House language to create a Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions-Reduction Goal. It is imperative that the state's economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reduction goal be aligned with IPCC targets.
- **Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority**
(side-by-side Energy Policy, page R112)
Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority addresses existing inequities in financing access, promotes local jobs, and leverages historic federal and state funding to bolster climate solutions that benefit everybody. We support the House funding of \$20 million. We urge you to fully fund MNCIFA by increasing the allocation to \$45,000,000.
- **Minnesota State Competitiveness Fund**
(side-by-side Energy Policy, page R146)
This fund capitalizes upon the IJA and IRA money made available through the federal government. We strongly urge the House and the Senate to come together on the Governor's \$113,750,000 budget line to fully fund this once-in-a-generation climate program.
- **Pre-weatherization and Weatherization support**
(side-by-side Energy Policy, page R77)
We appreciate language in the House and Senate to reduce energy use in existing residential and commercial buildings, providing assistance especially to low-income people. We support the House allocation of \$50.133 million in total funding.
- **Energy Transition Grant Program**
(side-by-side RDA, page R10)
We support the Senate language to fund a community energy transition grant program to assist eligible communities to address the economic dislocation associated with the closing of a local electric generating plant, including assisting workers retraining and to find new employment.
- We support the House language to **model and monitor greenhouse gas impacts and quantify climate-related impacts from projects for environmental review.**
- **Heat pump rebates**
(side-by-side Energy Finance, page R8)
We appreciate the House and Senate language for heat pump rebates that will reduce demand for natural gas heating and are more efficient cooling systems. We support the House allocation of \$12 million in one time funding.
- **Solar on Schools, Solar on Public Buildings, Solar on Community Colleges**
(side-by-side Energy Finance, pages R2, R6)
These programs will expand public benefit from solar photovoltaic power generation and reduce costs. Please support the House funding of \$40 million for Solar on Schools and \$10 million for Solar on Public Buildings. We support the mutual House and Senate allocation of \$1.138 million for Solar on Community Colleges.
- **Distribution Energy Resources System Upgrades**
(side-by-side RDA, page R6)

We support this provision in the House and Senate that will address interconnection issues and ensure that the grid is ready to support further deployment of renewable energy and storage technologies.

- **EV Rebates and Grants for EV Infrastructure**

We support these provisions in the House and Senate that provide critical steps for electrifying our economy and adding capacity for EV infrastructure.

- **EV School Buses**

We support the House and Senate language and the House allocation of \$14 million in total funding for EV school buses.

- **Electric Panel Upgrade Grant Program**

We appreciate the House and Senate language to establish a residential electric panel upgrade grant program to provide financial assistance to owners of single-family residences and multifamily buildings to upgrade residential electric panels.

- **Buildings Policy**

We support the House language to create an **Existing Building Goal** to reduce energy use in commercial and residential buildings by 50 percent by 2035, as well as **Commercial Building Energy Codes** that move toward achieving the 80 percent reduction in annual net energy consumption by 2036. We also support the House and Senate language to create **Sustainable Building Guidelines** and to require **Energy Benchmarking**.

We thank you for your leadership and consideration. We look forward to passage of historic legislation providing a significant boost to protect our Great Outdoors and catalyzing significant new investments and actions to speed our just transition to a healthy and carbon neutral future. The people and resources of our great state are relying on you to make this a reality.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the organizations listed on the following page.

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

Clean Water Action Minnesota

CURE

Environmental Justice Coordinating Council (EJCC)*

Eureka Recycling

Friends of the Boundary Waters

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Friends of the Mississippi River

Izaak Walton League W.J. McCabe Chapter*

Land Stewardship Project

League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region*

Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

Minnesota Trout Unlimited

Minnesota Well Owners Organization

MN Division of the Izaak Walton League of America

MN Interfaith Power & Light

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Resilient Cities and Communities*

Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC*

Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Vote Climate

**Denotes non-MEP member organization*

Updated 5/11/23