



May 4, 2023

Members of the Minnesota Legislature Housing Omnibus Conference Committee

Dear Legislator:

Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) is a statewide coalition of more than 70 environment and conservation organizations. MEP and the organizations signing below are writing to share concerns about a proposal in the House version of HF 2335, the Omnibus Housing Finance and Policy bill, related to the application of the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) to the Metropolitan region. The Minnesota Environmental Partnership asks that the Senate not adopt this House provision.

This concerning language is found in in Article 6, Section 8 on Page R67 of the omnibus side-by-side document.

This provision would set a dangerous legislative precedent. MERA is considered a “bedrock” law that lets all Minnesotans challenge projects that could potentially harm the environment. We strongly support MERA and its broad application.

Our waters, species, and climate are in crisis. Public health is threatened, especially in communities of Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Now is a time to expand citizen’s rights to protect our state resources, not to narrow them. It is not the time to reduce the opportunities for Minnesota residents to engage in decisions around their clean air, clean water, and community health. Carving out exemptions to MERA in this manner would be a bad precedent, potentially leading to other groups seeking to cut out citizen participation in other areas in the future.

Any potential exception to MERA needs to be well vetted and publicly discussed, including hearings in the Environmental committees of legislature with jurisdiction in this matter. There is simply not the opportunity to have this informed discussion at this point in the legislative session.

Please do not include this House provision in the final Conference Committee Report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steve Morse'.

Steve Morse  
Executive Director

*Submitted on behalf of the organizations listed on the following page:*

Citizens Acting for Rail Safety – Twin Cities\*

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Friends of the Mississippi River

League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region\*

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

Minnesota Well Owners Organization

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Renewing the Countryside

Resilient Cities and Communities

Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC\*

*\*Denotes non-MEP member organization*