



Re: SF 550 / HF 1265 - Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Appropriations Bill

May 16, 2017

Dear Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and their hundreds of thousands of Minnesota members, we would like to highlight some issues in the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Appropriations Bill (HF 1265) that are of great concern and interest for the environment and conservation communities.

We appreciate the extensive work of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources committee and countless others to advance conservation projects across the state. HF 1265 as it stands now, however, undermines the promise and potential of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund by:

- I. Deleting Funding for 22 Projects Recommended by the LCCMR committee; and
- II. Introducing No Net Gain of Public Lands language that thwarts landowner choices and conservation goals.

### **Deleted Funding for 22 LCCMR Committee – Recommended Projects**

This bill completely eliminates funding for 22 of 68 projects that have been evaluated and selected for funding by the citizen members and legislators of the LCCMR committee, in order to give over \$18 million to the CREP (the Conservation Reserve Easement Program). While CREP is a highly popular program with broad bi-partisan support, it has traditionally been funded through bonding. Minnesota State Law requires that the revenue from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund be used to supplement, not replace, existing funding:

Minnesota State 116P.03 TRUST FUND NOT TO SUPPLANT EXISTING FUNDING;  
APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) The trust fund may not be used as a substitute for traditional sources of funding environmental and natural resources activities, but the trust fund shall supplement the traditional sources...

HF 1265's shift of \$18 million from the ENRTF for CREP subverts the will of the voters because it severely shortchanges the breadth of what the trust fund can do and significantly undercuts the work of the citizen who participated in the Commission's process. The deletion of 22 projects will be felt across the entire state.

- Out of 8 recommended projects in the Air Quality, Climate Change and Renewable Energy category, 6 are eliminated. These projects would not only help Minnesota move toward green house gas reduction goals, but would continue to position Minnesota as a leader in economically important areas of renewable energy, technology and agriculture:
  - Solar Cells Manufacturing Research
  - Community-Scale Energy Storage Guide for Renewable Energy
  - Extraction of Solar Thermal Energy in Minnesota
  - Generation, Storage and Utilization of Solar Energy
  - Geotargeted Distributed Clean Energy Initiative
  - Develop Solar-Powered Robots for Weed Control in Agricultural Fields
  
- Out of 9 recommended projects in the Environment Education category, 6 are eliminated. (Notably, one of the deleted projects, “Workshops and Outreach to Protect Raptors from Lead Poisoning” is particularly troubling in light of a provision in the Environment and Natural Resources Conference Committee Amendment to eliminate the DNR’s existing authority to regulate lead shot. Lead shot is harmful to many species, including Bald Eagles.)
  
- Land acquisition also suffers disproportionately under this bill. HF 1265 deletes the LCCMR’s recommendation for \$4.5 million for Scientific and Natural Area “Acquisition, Restoration and Citizen Science Engagement,” as well as \$2.5 million for land acquisition for parks and trails. Minnesota’s 160+ Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) contain rare plants and animals, along with imperiled habitat of exceptional scientific and educational value. These cuts will result in dozens of lost jobs, and, importantly, the loss of some of Minnesota’s most precious natural resources.

If this kind of raid is allowed to happen this year, during a time of budget surplus, it could well happen again in subsequent years, further undercutting the intent of Minnesota voters.

**No Net Gain of Land North of U.S.Highway 2** (Section 3, Pages 29-30, Lines 19.16 – 30.2)

This provision allows a county board to adopt a “no net gain of state lands” policy. Such a policy would thwart:

- 1) a landowner’s options for selling their land due to the loss of a potential buyer;
- 2) a landowner’s conservation incentive to sell land to the DNR, knowing that other state land in the same county must be sold;
- 3) Minnesotans’ present and future state-wide conservation goals; and
- 4) the will of Minnesota voters, who adopted two constitutional amendments to establish the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment funds, which are dedicated, in part, to acquisition of land for conservation purposes.

We ask you to oppose the raid of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and support any amendments to

- a) restore the LCCMR committee's original recommendations; and
- b) remove the No Net Gains provision.

Thank you for your consideration.



Steve Morse  
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Alliance for Sustainability

Audubon Minnesota

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy

CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)

Duluth Audubon Society

Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Friends of the Mississippi River

Izaak Walton League – Minnesota Division

Land Stewardship Project

Lower Phalen Creek Project

Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota

Mankato Area Environmentalists

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Native Plant Society

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

MN350

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

Pesticide Action Network

Pollinate Minnesota

Renewing the Countryside

Save Our Sky Blue Waters