April 22, 2021

Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

Re: HF 1076 / SF 959 – House Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our coalition of more than 70 environmental and conservation organizations and the Minnesota residents we represent, thank you for the hard work and attention to our natural environment and the current and future generations who depend on it. We especially appreciate your work during this challenging year and difficult set of weeks. We know many aspects of our state laws and society need to be transformed and our investments refocused to address racial inequities and better serve our communities.

The recent United Nations report *Making Peace with Nature* outlines how three interwoven crises: the climate crisis, ecosystem destruction and pollution, put our collective future in peril. Already in serious jeopardy is a stable climate for our people and agricultural economy, clean and safe drinking water for people across Minnesota, and the health of pollinator populations that bring us food – to name but a few.

We appreciate that this bill that seeks to limit pollution, improve human health, ensure our water supply, restore ecosystems, prevent further environmental injustice and address climate change. The many crises we face – whether racial injustice, rebuilding our economy from a pandemic, protecting public health or confronting the climate crisis – our solutions must address these problems together. Thank you. We fully support HF 1076.

Outlined below are measures for which our coalition would like to highlight particular support.

**Article 1: Environment & Natural Resources Appropriations**

We SUPPORT the following provisions:

- **Funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts** (SWCD’s): Our farmers depend on Soil & Water Conservation Districts to provide technical support, education, and information on funding sources. Unfortunately, SWCD funding levels wildly vary across the state. Requiring a small fee on certain housing filings is a step toward equitable and consistent funding for Soil & Water Conservation Districts regardless of zip code.

- **Establishing a Soil Health Cost Share Program**: An appropriation of $1 million is for this Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) proposal.

- **Funding for Pesticide-Treated Seed Disposal rulemaking**.
Articles 2, 3: ENRTF Appropriations

We SUPPORT the following provisions:

- We appreciate Chair Hansen and the House Environment Committee’s early action on the ENRTF package from last year, and including both that proposal and this year’s proposal in this bill. While we would prefer that ENRTF legislation move independently, these are important projects, also supporting hundreds of jobs to protect and restore our environment. The FY 2021 funds, over $60 million, will become unavailable and revert back to the corpus of the Trust Fund if the package is not passed by the legislature by June 30. Thank you for moving these packages.

Article 4: Pollution Control

We SUPPORT the following provisions:

- **Section 9, 10, 31: Requires cumulative impacts analysis** of new or expanded projects seeking permits on communities living in environmental justice areas.

- **Section 41**: Requires labeling accuracy regarding compostable products.

- **Section 42**: Prohibits food packaging that contains PFAS.

- **Section 46**: Carpet Stewardship program.

- **Section 47**: Requires pesticide-treated seed rulemaking for safe disposal. This section requires the Pollution Control Agency to conduct rulemaking to provide for the safe and lawful disposal of unwanted or unused seed that is treated or coated with pesticide. Pesticide-treated seeds in ethanol production were the cause of a large-scale environmental disaster in Mead, Nebraska earlier this year.

Article 5: Natural Resources

We SUPPORT the following provisions:

- **Section 16**: Allowing cities to have local control over pesticide regulations. This option could help protect pollinators including the rusty patched bumble bee.

- **Section 19**: Adds “natural carbon sequestration” to list of qualities for which the Forests for the Future program is managed.

- **Section 30**: Prohibiting the use of neonicotinoid insecticides or chlorpyrifos in a wildlife management area, state park, state forest, aquatic management area, or scientific and natural area. A DNR study testing white-tailed deer spleens for neonicotinoid pesticides show the presence of this pesticide in deer throughout our state, even deep in our forests, and at levels known to impact fawn survival.

Chlorpyrifos is a pesticide known for its damaging effects on the human nervous system, posing especially elevated risks for children as their brains and nervous systems develop.
Article 6: Water and Soil Resources

We SUPPORT the following provisions:

- **Section 2**: Establishing a Lawns to Legumes program to increase pollinator-friendly habitat.

- **Section 5**: Establishing a soil-healthy farming goal that at least 30 percent of Minnesota farmland implement cover crops, perennial crops, no-till, or managed rotational grazing by 2030 to boost farm income, build soil health, prevent or minimize erosion and runoff, retain and clean water, support pollinators, and increase farm resiliency. Long term perennial crops and managed rotational grazing also enable some long-term storage of carbon in the soil.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. Please support the House version of SF 959.

Sincerely,

Steve Morse
Executive Director

and the signing organizations on the following page
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
Audubon Minnesota
Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability
Cannon River Watershed Partnership
Clean Water Action Minnesota
CURE (Clean Up River Environment)
Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary*
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas
Friends of the Mississippi River
Humming for Bees*
Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters Minnesota
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region
Lutheran Advocacy Minnesota
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Herpetological Society
Minnesota Ornithologists Union
Minnesota Well Owners Organization
MN350
Pesticide Action Network
Pollinate Minnesota
Pollinator Friendly Alliance
Sierra Club – North Star Chapter
Vote Climate

* indicates not a member of MEP