



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.

- **Section 54:** Adds “**natural carbon sequestration and climate resiliency**” to list of qualities for which the DNR forestry professionals may advise those who own forest land.
- **Section 55:** Adds “**carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation**” to definition of Forest Resources.
- **Section 56, 58, 90:** Adds “**natural carbon sequestration**” to list of qualities for which the forests should be managed and acknowledges the important role forests play in mitigating climate change.
- **Section 69:** Requires **non-toxic (lead-free) shot** on wildlife management areas in a farmland zone.
- **Section 85:** Maintains supply of Minnesota’s drinking water by prohibiting **bulk transport of water** further than 50 miles from where it is appropriated.
- **Section 86:** The level of **groundwater recharge to the aquifer must be considered** when determining whether consumptive use of groundwater is sustainable for permitting uses.
- **Section 93:** Requires the **DNR Commissioner to establish carbon sequestration goals in public and private forests in Minnesota**. To achieve these goals the commissioner must identify sustainable forestry strategies that increase the ability of the forest to sequester atmospheric carbon while enhancing other ecosystem services.

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*