

April 30, 2020

To: **House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division**

The Honorable Rick Hansen, Chair  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Dan Fabian, Republican Lead  
287 State Office Building  
St Paul, MN 55155

From: John Jaschke, MN BWSR Executive Director

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Re: Support for HF4554 provisions and testimony on HF4554DE1

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HF4554 and the delete-all HF4554DE1.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) supports the following sections of HF4554DE1 and thanks you for their inclusion:

- Article 2 Section 1: Establishment of a soil and water conservation fund in the state treasury is part of the Governor's recommendations. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are the local unit of government with the express statutory charge to work with private landowners to plan and implement public benefits via various soil and water conservation and management practices. However, they do not have the ability to independently raise revenue to support implementation of land and water treatment practices and programs at a level necessary to achieve the broad goals of clean water, clean air, and abundant fish and wildlife habitat. The creation of the soil and water conservation fund account creates a mechanism for deposit of future capacity funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide greater stability and predictability to meet their statutory responsibilities. There are no known potential sources of deposits into the account, nor expenditures from the account. The account is established for future decisions on both deposits and expenditures. This provision is budget neutral.
- Article 2 Section 51: A modest allowable increase in SWCD supervisor compensation. This provision has the potential to expand participation in these local elected offices. This provision is budget neutral.
- Article 2 Section 69: The peacetime emergency extension of the deadlines for making local land use decisions under Minnesota Statutes, section 15.99. This statute has a 60-day timeline that sets a default approval window of 60 days for certain local government land use decisions if action to approve/deny or deem an application incomplete is not made by county and city officials. With local planning and zoning staff working from home or diverted to other COVID-19 tasks, applications may not have been received and recorded to initiate the subsequent proceedings to accomplish public notice and other usual steps. This provision is budget neutral.

- Article 3 Section 2 Subdivision 8(b): ENRTF appropriation for pollinator and beneficial insect strategic habitat.
- Article 1 Section 3 and Article 3 Section 2 Subdivision 18 (b) paragraph 1: Extension of past OHF and ENRTF funded MN CREP Outreach and Implementation appropriations. There have been past intermittent federal delays in the MN CREP timeline caused by the Federal Farm Bill expiration and delayed Congressional renewal and start-up. Lining up these provisions to match federal funding streams would allow MN to use already appropriated funding to take full advantage of committed federal conservation funds. These provisions are budget neutral.
- Article 3 Section 2 Subdivision 18 (c) paragraph 2: ENRTF appropriation extension for Lawns to Legumes. This provision provides start-up program timing flexibility and is budget neutral. Lawns to Legumes is a popular pollinator habitat creation program with matching contributions from landowners and a demonstrated need for additional funding.

If you or members have questions or desire more information please feel free to contact me or Assistant Director Angie Becker Kudelka.