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Representative Liz Olson, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
479 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 11, 2023

Dear Chair Olson and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

As the Committee reviews the HF2310, the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Budget bill, we write to share our support for proposed general fund investments in programs included in the bill that will benefit people and nature across the state. We are particularly pleased to see these proposed appropriations:

Department of Natural Resources (DNR):

- \$2,300,000 for nongame wildlife management (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 3,(g)*)
- \$1,566,000 for protecting and restoring carbon storage on state-administered peatlands (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 3, (l)*)
- \$4,172,000 for Private Forest Landowner Assistance, Cost-Share and Inventory (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 4, (h)*)
- \$1,600,000 for Accelerated Tree Seed Collection (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 4, (i)*)
- \$20,800,000 one-time and \$400,000 ongoing per year for Enhancing Community Forests through the ReLeaf Program (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd.4, (j)*)
- \$6,000,000 for forest stand improvement and reforestation (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 4, (k)*)
- \$6,000,000 for Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) Funding for improved maintenance (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 3 (p)*)
- \$15,000,000 for Enhancing Grasslands and Restoring Wetlands on Wildlife Management Areas (*Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 6, (f)*)

Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR):

- \$4,000,000 for the Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (j)*)
- \$17,000,000 for the Climate - Private Lands Grassland/Working Land Restoration Easements (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (l)*) and establishment of the program in Article 5, Sec. 20.
- \$7,500,000 for Climate - Private Lands Peatland Restoration for Carbon Sequestration (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (m)*)
- \$7,100,000 for Climate - Mitigation and Resiliency for Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easements (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (n)*)
- \$17,000,000 one-time for Climate Adaptation - Accelerated Water Storage and Treatment (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (o)*)
- \$3,000,000 for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (s)*)

We also appreciate that HF2310, Article 2, includes appropriations from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

In addition to these appropriations, we also offer the following reflections on proposed appropriations in the bill that we are pleased to see but hope will be further discussed with these additional considerations:

- **(MPCA) Resilient Communities Grants and Technical Assistance** (*Art. 1, Sec. 2, (k)*): The bill proposes \$40,546,000 one-time and \$270,000 ongoing per for a local government water infrastructure grant program. While this proposed appropriation is a meaningful start, we encourage the committee to consider further investments as opportunity allows. The Governor's budget request included a \$173,880,000 proposal for this program, which is reflective of the immense need in communities around the state.
- **(BWSR) \$4,000,000 for the Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program** (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (j)*) We encourage the committee to increase the amount, up to the Governor's budget request of \$9,000,000 for this program should opportunity allow.
- **(BWSR) \$17,000,000 for the Climate - Private Lands Grassland/Working Land Restoration Easements** (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (l)*) We encourage the legislature to increase the amount up to the Governor's budget request of \$22,000,000 for this program should opportunity allow.
- **(BWSR) \$7,500,000 for Climate-Private Lands Peatland Restoration for Carbon Sequestration** (*Art. 1, Sec. 4, (m)*). We encourage the legislature to increase the amount, up to the Governor's budget request of \$15,000,000 for this program.

These programs provide multiple benefits that touch all Minnesotans' lives, including carbon sequestration, water quality improvements, water quantity benefits, resiliency including flood mitigation, air quality improvements, outdoor recreation opportunities, habitat and more.

As the committee considers investments that can address climate change and make Minnesota more resilient, we encourage you to include these investments alongside additional natural climate solutions in other committee areas like Agriculture, Capital Investment, and Energy & Climate.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Minnesotans and Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

Sincerely,

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