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Agriculture and Rural Development Committee  
Chair, Senator Torrey Westrom  
Minnesota Senate Building 3201  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee  
Chair, Representative Mike Sundin  
417 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Conference Committee on HF4366

May 6, 2022

Dear Chair Westrom, Chair Sundin and Conference Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment as the committee considers policy and investments related to soil health in your omnibus bills. We appreciate both the House and Senate propose soil health investments under the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The House does so in Article 1 Section 2, Subd. 2 (m), with \$6.725 million for soil health financial assistance in the form of equipment and technology. The Senate does so in Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 5 (h) at \$50,000 through a new Agricultural Best Management Practices Grant program. We recommend the committee establish the Agricultural Best Management Grant Program for soil health and direct a minimum of \$5 million in general funds for soil health practices.

The proposed investments by the House are needed but may not be accessible to all types of operations or meet the needs and opportunities of Minnesota's farmlands where significant gains can be made. Ensuring a wide variety of soil health practices and services would be eligible for financial support will enhance the pace and scale of practice adoption that will accelerate carbon sequestration and water quality gains that soil health can deliver. Additionally, stakeholder participation is necessary to develop a comprehensive plan to expand soil health practices across the state, which should also leverage private sector and federal involvement and investments, yielding even greater benefits. We believe the Senate version language in Article 3, Sec. 2 accomplishes this.

Research shows we have a high potential to increase carbon storage through natural lands, including croplands, in Minnesota. Soil health practices will help store carbon while providing benefits for water quality and quantity. There is an urgent need for these activities to expand to a meaningful scale, which will require farm operations of all types and sizes to have support to implement and expand soil health practice adoption.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rich Biske".

Rich Biske  
Resilient Waters Director  
The Nature Conservancy