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Representative Rick Hansen
407 State Office Building
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 28, 2023

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

As the Committee reviews the Governor's budget recommendations for the Pollution Control Agency, we write to share our support for proposed investments in programs that will benefit people and nature and support communities across the state.

We are particularly pleased to see the proposed \$173,880,000 one-time and \$1,120,000 ongoing per year investments for Resilient Communities Grants and Technical Assistance. This program will equip cities and communities with financial and technical assistance towards planning and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. These built and natural infrastructure projects will provide multiple benefits that touch all Minnesotans' lives, including water quality improvement, water quantity benefits, air quality improvements, and stormwater and flood mitigation.

As this committee considers investments that can address climate change and make Minnesota more resilient, we encourage you to include these investments among a suite of other natural climate solutions such as strategic land protection, water storage, floodplain protection, and tree-planting in forests and communities around the state.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota

Molly Jansen
Government Relations Specialist
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February 28, 2023

To: House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
From: The National Wastes and Recycling Association (NWRA)
Through: Douglas Carnival, McGrann, Shea, Carnival Law Firm

RE: MPCA Budget Request for Solid Waste

A. \$16.9M for Solid Waste Grants: Of the \$16.9M in funding, nearly \$13M would go to MPCA for non-specified projects that would receive solid waste grants.

- 1) What are the specific projects that the MPCA will spend the \$13M on?
- 2) Do these projects impact existing solid waste facilities?
- 3) Will the MPCA conduct the analysis required per Minn. Stat. 115A.551, subd. 6, which requires a thorough analysis of impacts on existing public and private sector business before the funds are given to the applicant? Currently, MPCA is requesting funds for solid waste projects that impact private sector investments and clearly, the MPCA is not doing this analysis.
- 4) How can the state ensure a thorough review, competitive grant process and equitable distribution of these General Fund dollars? Doesn't this funding allow the MPCA to pick winners and losers?
- 5) Will the state continue to invest in incinerator-based systems given some of these facilities' financial status, the impact of the Carbon Free by 2040 and their being eliminated as a renewable energy source?

B. \$4.2M for PFAS Treatment/Source Reduction: Our industry has heard that these funds could be used for PFAS leachate treatment, but we are uncertain given the general description of the request.

- 1) Are there specific projects that have requested funding for PFAS leachate treatment?
- 2) There is already widespread, business competition to develop PFAS treatment technologies (See Star Tribune, 2/1/23). Does the state really need to infuse funding into a very competitive business environment that is already searching for solutions?

Conclusion: MPCA's budget request of \$16.9M contains \$13M in unspecified projects. These are significant funding amounts---with no transparency for what city, county or private entity are applying for these funds. We question whether the review of the project and whether an existing facility might be impacted. NWRA thanks you for your time and attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Douglas Carnival, at (612)-325-3587.

100%

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February 27, 2023

Chair Hansen and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our support for the Walz-Flanagan budget for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

If enacted, the proposed budget would make historic investments in climate adaptation and reducing pollution and its disparate impacts.

First, we applaud Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan for their at-scale investment in Minnesota's communities. Minnesota's climate is changing. Our communities are experiencing it. Our local governments are responding. However, our townships, cities, school districts, and counties could do more with the full support of our state government. The Walz-Flanagan budget for FY 2024-25 and 2026-27 will help Minnesotans get ready for our futures in seven ways.

- **Resilient Communities Grants and Technical Assistance:** This program leverages our current state surplus to make a one-time investment of \$86.94m / year in FY 24-25 to support local planning for and adaptation to expected, place-based climate impacts. Preparing now will save costs and mitigate the consequences of a warmer, wetter, less predictable state.
- **Climate Pathways Analysis:** In order to better understand how to prevent future climate damage, the state needs to better understand Minnesota's pathways to decarbonization by 2050. When paired with the 2022 Climate Action Framework this analysis (a \$500,000 investment) would give Minnesotans an evidence-based roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across all our economic sectors.
- **Climate Resources for Environmental Review:** To build for a climate-adapted future, we need to factor climate risks into our state's planning. This budget proposes one full-time equivalent position dedicated to analyzing the climate impacts of all projects that complete an environmental worksheet. These analyses require subject matter expertise that this funding would support.
- **Technical Assistance for Environmental Review:** This one-time investment of \$620,000 in FY 2024 and \$140,000 in FY 2025 would supplement the analyses and reviews described above. To make these improvements happen, the MPCA will need to hire one full-time position and contract out the creation of a Minnesota-specific GHG modeling tool.
- **Increasing Data Management and Data Quality Capacity:** In order to do both these analyses and reviews, Minnesota needs reliable, user-friendly data. This budget recommends an ongoing appropriation of \$1.98m per year to create fourteen new environmental data management and data quality jobs at MPCA. We strongly support this ongoing investment. As we make decisions that shape our futures, we need an evidence-based, data-driven approach.

- **Technical Assistance Contractor for Tribal Governments:** The Walz-Flanagan budget is proposing \$2m per year in ongoing funding for technical assistance to Tribal governments who are tackling complex environmental protection and climate resilience challenges.
- **GreenStep Cities:** For over a decade, the State of Minnesota has partnered with local governments through the GreenStep Cities program. Over 140 local governments have voluntarily participated in the program taking over 4,000 concrete actions on behalf of roughly half of Minnesotans. This budget proposes adding one full-time equivalent position and modest program costs to this successful program.

Second, we applaud Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan commitment to reducing pollution and its disparate impacts on Minnesota’s environmental justice communities. This budget addresses these needs in six ways.

- **Cumulative Impacts:** This budget invests \$715,000 in FY 2024 and \$200,000 per year ongoing for the integrating cumulative impacts analyses into the work of MPCA. These analyses are a critical tool understanding the compounded impacts of pollution on certain communities, often those where Black, Indigenous, people of color, or low-income Minnesotans live.
- **Waste Prevention and Reduction Grants and Loans:** The Walz-Flanagan budget invests \$16.94m in FY 24 and FY 25 and \$2m per year ongoing into programs to reduce and recycle waste. This proposal is a critical upstream investment that can help divert waste from both landfills and waste incinerators.
- **Industrial Facility Air Toxic and Criteria Air Emission Reduction Grants:** The budget also proposes \$6.4m during FY 2024-25 for grants to improve and staffing to monitor air emissions from industrial facilities within areas of concern for environmental justice. These investments would result in tangible improvements of the health of Minnesotans who are already most impacted by pollution.
- **Accelerating Pollution Prevention at Small Businesses:** This \$1.79m investment in FY 2024 and \$40,000 per year ongoing grant program would support Minnesota’s small businesses who decide to replace higher polluting equipment with lower emitting equipment.
- **Air Compliance Equipment Maintenance:** This \$40,000 per year investment in air monitoring equipment maintenance is an essential, ongoing part of reducing air emissions and protecting public health.
- **Increase Joint Initiative Funding:** To better understand and improve these health impacts, this budget proposes \$400,000 per year ongoing for a joint project with the Minnesota Department of Health to review, track, and communicate about air quality impacts in areas of concern for environmental justice.

Finally, the Walz-Flanagan budget invests in developing the environmental workforce of the future through two key programs.

- **Minnesota GreenCorps Investment:** The budget proposes \$1.95m per year in the Minnesota GreenCorps, a program to implement locally designed environmental projects, especially in areas of concern for environmental justice.
- **Environmental Career Pathways:** The Walz-Flanagan administration is proposing \$540,000 per year ongoing to support the ten new student worker positions and one new recruiter position. The program is designed to develop the environmental protection workforce that state agencies will need for decades to come.

Taken together, these are significant investments in protecting the people and places we love. Please include these proposals in your committee budget this year.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Aurora Vautrin

Aurora Vautrin

Legislative Director

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