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Minnesota House Ways & Means Committee

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Dear Members:

HF2310 contains unnecessary and unsupported spending regarding Upper Sioux Agency State Park. Without legislative approval, Governor Walz has already made arrangements with the federal government and a federally recognized Indian Tribe to transfer 1,200 acres of public land without public input. To happen, the DNR needs \$250,000 to free a defeasance from improvements done in the park that will be demolished at state expense. While waiting for a general fund (Capital Investment) appropriation, the DNR has allowed the visitor center roof to collapse even though the DNR received ample repair funds.

Existing legislation is also to be scrutinized and eliminate all state legislation barring a transfer to a tribe. This is cause for investigation of the DNR into its conduct in other transfers like the recent 2017 Chapter 54 Section 23 land transfer of Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site that resulted in a reduction to the general fund and violated statute 86A.055 that states this parcel cannot be sold. While there may be question of whether this property is being “sold” it will require a \$1 transaction by law. The same tribe’s government holds a 2006 resolution demanding ownership of Fort Snelling.

Between the House and Senate, the transfer costs have jumped from \$5 million to \$5.388 million without explanation; added \$1 million for DOT work already projected in DOT’s budget and unrelated to the transfer; cannot explain or identify exactly what land parcels are and are not “encumbered” by federal or other regulations; and has had no approval or representation from the State Historic Preservation Office in the Department of Administration. The Minnesota Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and does not carry any authorization related to federal action as of 2017 legislation effective March 2018; per a 2009 DNR report, MNHS abandoned interpretation of park history and incorrectly identified the historic property’s whereabouts in the park when consulted by Senator Kunesh.

There are Indigenous and Euro-American burials that are visited; this will end with transfer for more than 99% of Minnesotans. The place marks the foundation of Dakota Christian village life and the forced marches, human trafficking, and horror of more than 200 civilians at the hands of hostile Dakota.

Therefore, all references to the transfer of Upper Sioux Agency State Park, policy reviews, changes and financial earmarks, must be stricken from HF2310. It is one thing to scope the future, but another when a governor decides the future.

Language connected to the transfer of Upper Sioux Agency State Park appears at line 36.21 to 36.28 and line 246.11 to 246.27.

The park holds a deafening scream that all need to be given the opportunity to hear it personally at least once. This will never happen if the transfer remains in 2023 legislation.

Thank you,  
  
Stephanie Chappell