

April 2, 2013

Dear Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

Since the initial appropriation of the Legacy Amendment proceeds, and as promised to voters, the Legislature has utilized a public vetting process in making decisions on these funds. The mechanisms were established by the Legislature to ensure fairness and transparency and to target public funds to the highest quality projects and most effective programs. The commitment to a process that included citizen review and recommendation helped gain the support of many voters across the state when the Amendment was adopted in 2008. We encourage the Legislature to maintain the integrity of the process and adhere to the following recommendations before you this year:

1. We support and encourage legislative approval of the full annual recommendation of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) on appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, including the recommendations made on March 18, 2013. Bills S.F. 56 (Saxhaug)/H.F. 207 (Lillie) will need to be amended to reflect the most current recommendations from LSOHC. In FY14, the LSOHC's recommendations will invest about \$96 million to improve or protect 174 miles of lakeshore, purchase over 8,700 acres of land, acquire 13,143 acres of permanent conservation easements and restore or enhance 72,846 acres of habitat. We also ask that you continue appropriations on an annual basis from the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the LSOHC. They have determined that annual appropriations allow for more responsiveness to emerging issues and greater accountability to the public.

2. We support the overall package to implement the Clean Water Legacy Act (CWLA) as contained in S.F. 1051 (Cohen)/H.F. 1183 (Kahn) based on the recommendations of the Clean Water Council for funding from the Clean Water Fund. We have concerns that the council is bypassing some traditional sources of fee revenue, overly relying on the Clean Water Fund to operate certain programs, and making some private compliance costs public. But S.F. 1051/H.F. 1183 is a good platform to support the work to ensure that Minnesota's most treasured asset, our water, is clean and protected. This legislation is broadly supported and will continue efforts to protect Minnesota's treasured lakes, rivers and streams and restore those waters that do not current meet clean water standards.

The bill to implement the CWLA will provide \$185 million in FY14-15 to protect and restore our water, of which, \$22.6 million will fund monitoring and assessment, \$22.5 million will fund watershed restoration and protection strategies, \$24.2 million will fund groundwater and drinking water protection, and \$115.8 million will fund nonpoint and point source implementation activities.

3. We also encourage the Legislature to support the ongoing process of committee hearings on bills that respect the needs of the state's three distinct but complementary parks and trails

systems. When final bills are passed and signed into law, it is imperative that Minnesotans see tangible improvements to our state's parks and trails systems.

In this critical fifth year of the Amendment's implementation, it is especially important that the Legislature support legislative proposals that uphold the voters' mandate to pass on a Great Outdoors legacy for our children and grandchildren. Maintaining public confidence in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars for Amendment purposes is vital, and passage of these bills will protect that confidence.

The groups listed below are committed to ensuring that the Minnesota Constitution is upheld and that – even in difficult financial times – elected officials protect Minnesota's Great Outdoors for the long-term.

We urge you to support these important proposals to protect Minnesota's future for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Sustainability
Anglers for Habitat
Audubon Minnesota
Conservation Minnesota
CURE
Ducks Unlimited
Duluth Audubon Society
Environment Minnesota
Envision Minnesota
Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest
Great River Greening
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Izaak Walton League of America - Minnesota
Division
Lower Phalen Creek Project
Mankato Area Environmentalists
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Food Association
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota Ornithologists' Union
Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society
Minnesota Public Interest Research Group
Minnesota Renewable Energy Society
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Minnesota Valley Trust
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Permaculture Cold Climate Research Institute
Pheasants Forever
Renewing the Countryside
Save Lake Superior Association
Sportsmen for Change
The Conservation Fund
The Nature Conservancy
Trust for Public Land
Will Steger Foundation