

# Minnesota's Dedicated Conservation Funds

## Protecting our Great Outdoors

© David Montgomery

### Minnesotans overwhelmingly support investment in environment and conservation.

The success of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment has earned strong citizen support. Since its initial passage in 2008, public support for the amendment has increased. In February 2017, a statewide poll found that **75% of Minnesotans support the Legacy Amendment**. Support is equally strong in rural Minnesota: 73% of Minnesotans in rural areas support the Amendment (*Public Opinion Strategies, Statewide Voter Survey, February 1-5, 2017*).

In 2024, Minnesotans for a third time overwhelmingly supported renewing the lottery dedication to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). **77% of Minnesota voters approved the ENRTF constitutional amendment renewal**. The measure passed with a majority of the vote in every county in the state.

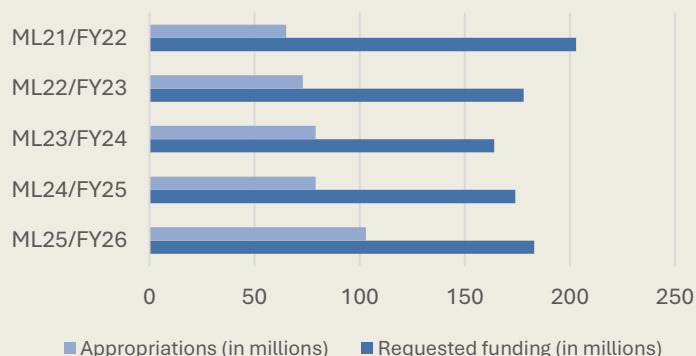


### Requests for investments in the outdoors far exceed available dedicated funds.

Minnesotans want the state to invest in environment and conservation in their communities in every corner of the state. Requests for funding through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund far exceed the investment available through these dedicated funds which are constitutionally intended to supplement traditional sources of funding, and not be used as a substitute. Minnesotans see the need for strong investment in their environment to ensure lasting conservation benefits for generations to come. **A lot more investment is necessary to meet the needs of Minnesotans.**

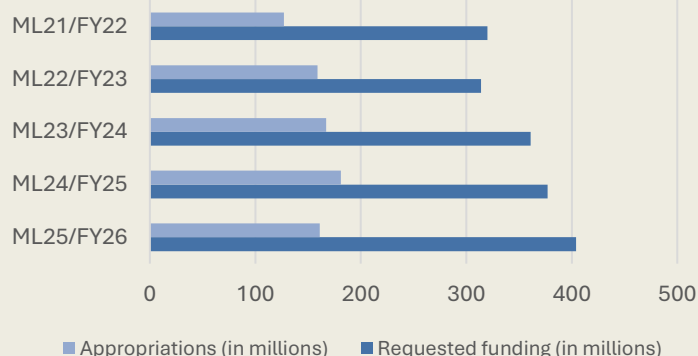
#### Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

Requests vs. Appropriations



#### Outdoor Heritage Fund

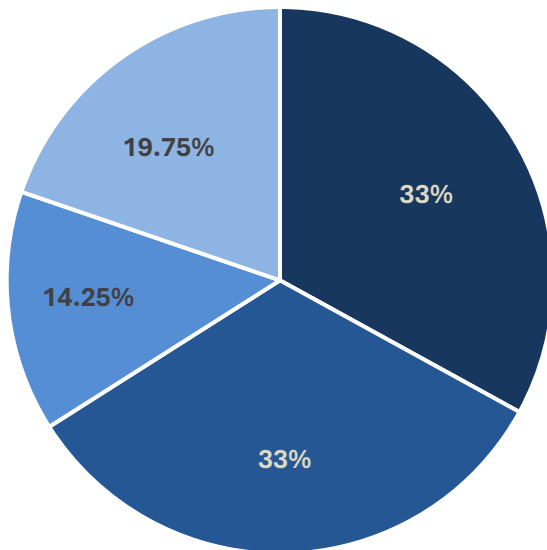
Requests vs. Appropriations



## Let's break down the two constitutionally dedicated funds.

The **Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment** dedicates  $\frac{3}{8}$  of 1% of state sales tax—approximately 4 cents on a \$10 purchase—to the Legacy account, which is then divided into four funding streams.

**Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment Funds**



- **Outdoor Heritage Funds (33%)** must go to on-the-ground habitat projects and cannot be used for research or studies. The Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council comprised of legislators and citizens with technical expertise, reviews project proposals and provides recommendations to the Legislature for appropriating annual funds.
- **Clean Water Funds (33%)** can only be used to “protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater from degradation,” and 5% must be allocated to drinking water. The Clean Water Council comprised of legislators and citizens with technical expertise, provides recommendations to the Legislature for appropriating biennial and supplemental funds.
- **Parks & Trails Funds (14.25%)** are limited to parks and trails of regional or statewide significance; funds are divided by statute between the State Park, Metro Park and Greater MN park systems; non-profits do not receive PTF funds.
- **Arts & Cultural Heritage Funds (19.75%)** are limited to “arts, arts education, and arts access and to preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage.”

The **Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund** receives **40% of the net proceeds** from the state lottery. As illustrated below, this equates to **7 cents of \$1** of a lottery ticket sale.

The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) makes annual recommendations to the Legislature for allocation of 5% of the Trust Fund comprised of project proposals from around the state.

The Department of Natural Resources makes decisions on statewide appropriations for the ENRTF Community Grants Program based on the 1.5% annual appropriation by the legislature.

### Where does a lottery dollar go?



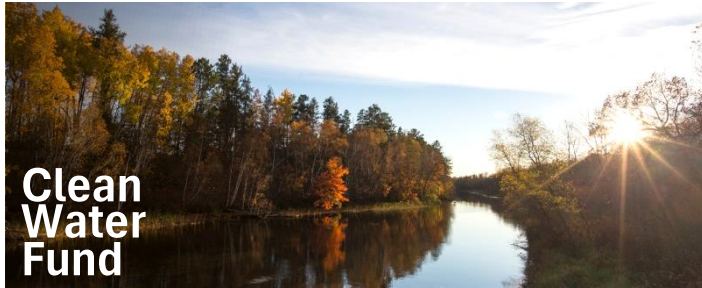


## Accomplishments and Benefits of the **Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment Funds**



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Outdoor Heritage Funds have been used to **restore over 61,000 acres of wetlands, 600,000 acres of grasslands, add over 40,000 acres of wildlife management area (WMA) habitat and public access, and provide hundreds of local grant projects through the popular Conservation Partners Program.** OHF projects have increased access to public land for all Minnesotans with projects in every county of the state. (*Legacy.mn.gov*)



© Richard Hamilton Smith

Clean Water Funds have provided critical resources to clean up pollution in Minnesota's waters and prevent degradation of other waterways in the state. Between 2010 and 2023, Minnesota's Clean Water Fund **awarded more than 4,271 grants to protect and restore Minnesota's water resources and permanently protected over 31,164 acres along riparian corridors.** (*Clean Water Fund Performance Report, Jan. 2024*)



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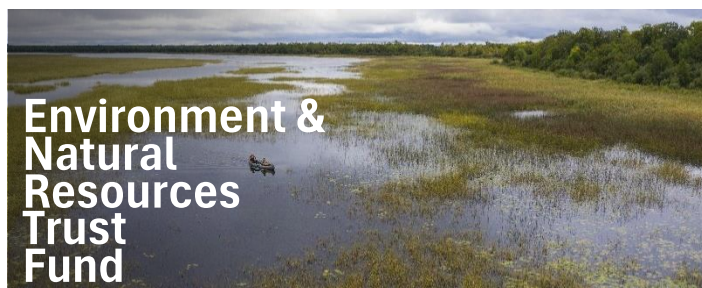
Parks & Trails Funds have **increased state park attendance by 25%, introducing new and younger audiences to the outdoors.** The Funds have resulted in over 800 projects in Greater Minnesota parks and trails, and regional parks projects in the 7-county metro area. (*Legacy.mn.gov*)



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As of 2024, the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund has **supported more than 22,000 projects in every county in the state** and benefits a broad spectrum from libraries to theater performances, and visual arts to history programs. (*Legacy.mn.gov*)

## Accomplishments and Benefits of the **Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**



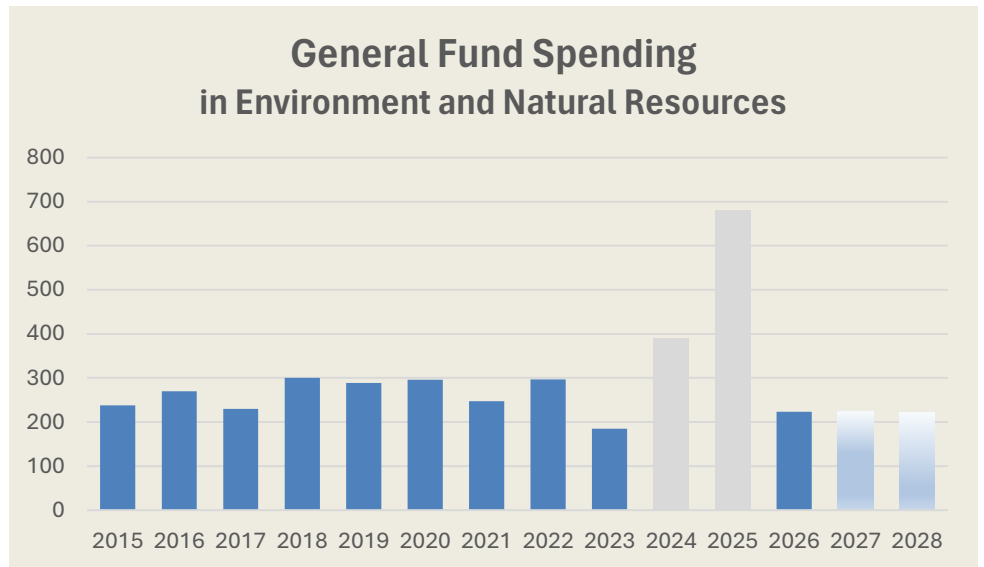
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The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund has **supported over 700 projects around the state** that have **restored and enhanced habitat** for iconic Minnesota species, **increased environmental education** opportunities for students around the state, **supported local communities**, and funded projects to **protect our bountiful waters** (*Legacy.mn.gov*).

## The Future of Conservation Funding

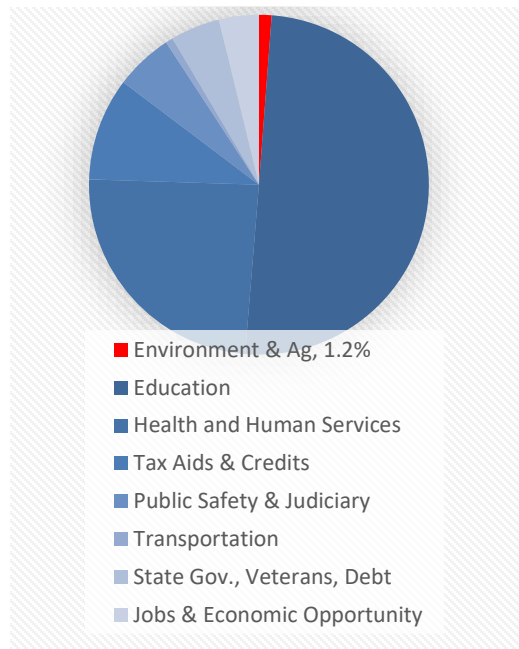
While Legacy funds and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund have provided a critical infusion of conservation funding, General Funds and bonding have remained stagnant while dedicated funds have struggled to keep up with needs they were not intended to fill.

FY24 and FY25 have been grayed out due to one-time surplus funding. FY27 and FY28 are projected values.  
Source: MMB

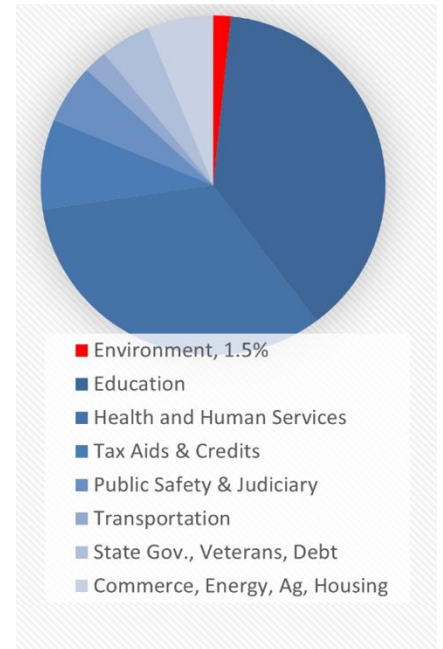


### General Fund Spending FY06-07

The last biennium before voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.



### General Fund Spending FY24-25



**Spending on conservation and environment has never exceeded 3% of Minnesota's general fund budget** and continues to be stagnant as a portion of the state budget.

This has been true even since the creation of the Legacy Amendment.

## What legislators can do to help:

- Protect and continue dedicated funds as intended by Minnesota voters.
- Ensure the dedicated funds are used as intended: to supplement state investment in conservation, restoration, enhancement and protection.
- Prevent further stagnation in general fund investment in the environment and natural resources.
- Support strong investments in conservation and the outdoors through bonding.