

Chair Rick Hansen
Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: DNR Governor's Budget Recommendations

March 22, 2021

Chair Hansen and members of the Committee:

We write to highlight The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) support for two items included in the Governor's DNR budget recommendation that would invest state general funds in activities that will help the state address climate change.

First, the Governor recommends \$1.3 million annually (\$2.6 million per biennium) for tree planting to capture carbon, an appropriation which includes both expanded tree planting and support to increase conservation-grade tree seedling production. Science demonstrates the immense need to invest in tree planting and reforestation efforts to sequester carbon in Minnesota. A recent TNC report shows 20% of carbon in the state can be harnessed through natural lands, and of all the land-based opportunities to sequester carbon, reforestation and tree planting has the largest potential to sequester the most carbon. Overall, greater investment in tree planting and forests will be needed from multiple sources to advance carbon sequestration at scale, but this general fund recommendation will help expand these critical activities.

Second, the proposal includes a \$500,000 annual appropriation (\$1 million over the biennium) to purchase light detection and ranging (LIDAR) technology to enhance DNR's forest inventory work. To have a better image of current forest coverage and the carbon sequestration potential of the state's existing forest lands, LIDAR technology will provide more accurate data while also providing a better understanding of the state's forest assets. This will help the state measure progress toward Minnesota's greenhouse gas targets—or to know when course correction is needed. LIDAR technology offers the unique ability to monitor forest biomass across large scales in a relatively inexpensive manner, and can be repeated for regular monitoring.

We commend Governor Walz and the DNR for including these recommendations and hope the legislature will favorably consider these proposals.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Manager
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota

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