

April 21, 2020

Dear Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division,

The undersigned organizations and individuals support continued funding of the popular Lawns to Legumes program for the following reasons:

As the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) notes on their website:

“This program is a collaboration between Blue Thumb, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Minnesota residents to establish residential pollinator habitat to support at-risk pollinator species. A key focus: protecting the newly-named state bee, the Rusty Patched Bumblebee. Lawns to Legumes focuses on promoting four planting types. Some require more time, space, money, or maintenance than others, but we believe there is a project for just about everyone.

“Minnesota is home to more than 450 native bee species. Pollinators also include butterflies, moths, beetles, hummingbirds, and flies. All play a key role in pollinating many food crops and native plants, but populations have significantly declined worldwide in recent years. Population decline can be attributed to habitat loss and lack of related nutrition for pollinators, as well as pesticide use and pathogens.

“The program aims to protect the federally endangered state bee, the Rusty Patched Bumblebee, and other at-risk pollinators. Even relatively small plantings of native flowers can help pollinators by building and connecting important habitat corridors.”

Pollinators provide crucial services at the foundation of our food chain that are of tremendous economic benefit to agriculture and are essential to the well being of our environment.

In addition and as published on April 17, 2020,

“Governor Tim Walz today issued Executive Order 20-38, which expands allowable outdoor recreational activities. The changes will allow Minnesotans to continue to enjoy the outdoors close to home while following social distancing guidelines.

“Executive Order 20-38 allows Minnesotans to engage in a range of activities, including golfing, boating, fishing, hunting, and hiking, as long as they follow new outdoor recreation guidelines. These guidelines include maintaining 6-foot social distancing, avoiding crowded areas, and staying close to home.

“It’s important for us to stay active and enjoy the outdoors while preventing the spread of COVID-19,” said Governor Walz. “This measure will allow Minnesotans to take advantage of more opportunities to get outside, while still doing their part to keep their neighbors healthy.”

The Lawns to Legumes program not only promotes and expands much needed healthy habitat for pollinators, and while the order does not specifically mention Lawns to Legumes, we feel it fits in perfectly with the governor's executive order by promoting healthy outdoor activity that is close to home and can easily be done with the appropriate social distancing.

Lawns to Legumes supports businesses large and small as grant money will continue to be spent on all the necessary supplies for the pollinator friendly plantings that will be installed if this continued funding is granted.

Good for the environment including agriculture; good for the well being of Minnesota families; good for main street businesses and good for our vitally important pollinators that sustain us but only if we sustain them.

Please vote yes in support of continued funding of the very popular Lawns to Legumes program.

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Humming for Bees

Land Stewardship Project

Minnesota Pollinators

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

Pesticide Action Network

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Save Our Sky Blue Waters

St Croix Oak Savanna Wild Ones

Xerces Society

Patricia Hauser

Jeff Dinsmore

Margot Monson