



# Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

March 23, 2023

VIA E-MAIL ONLY  
jenny.nash@house.mn.gov

Representative Fue Lee, Chair, and  
House Capital Investment Committee

Re: **HF 751** – Request for **\$4 million** for Scientific and Natural Areas Program  
Scheduled for Committee Hearing, Monday, March 27, 2023

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members:

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (FMSNA) is a Minnesota non-profit, tax-exempt [“501(c)(3)”] corporation organized to protect and enhance Minnesota’s Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs). SNAs are the “crown jewels” of Minnesota’s state land base, protecting some of Minnesota’s rarest and most sensitive plant and animal species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support of HF 751, which presently contains an appropriation of **\$2 million for the SNA program:**

“... to acquire land to make improvements and betterments of a capital nature to scientific and natural areas ...”

We are concerned that **this language is too vague**, which may allow too much money towards “improvements and betterments of a capital nature” – and not enough money toward SNA acquisitions.

For the reasons stated below, we respectfully request that the SNA appropriation be **doubled to \$4 million, with the second \$2 million directed towards SNA acquisitions only.**

## Background – “The SNA Plan”

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources adopted the Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Strategic Land Protection Plan (the “SNA Plan”).

The SNA Plan states on page 27: “By the end of the 21st century (2099), the state aims to protect, approximately 300 SNAs statewide comprising about 325,000 acres (about 0.6 % of the state). This means designating **136,000 more acres of SNA over the next 85 years**, or an average (mean) of **1,600 additional acres of SNA per year**. This is based on establishing SNAs on about **10% of the high priority conservation areas** across the state. This also assumes that the additional SNAs include lands already in state ownership.” [Emphasis added.]

### **SNA acquisitions are at a virtual standstill.**

#### **A. Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr Administration (January 3, 2011 through January 6, 2019):**

From the beginning of the SNA Plan (2014) through the end of the Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr Administration (January 6, 2019) - 5 years - only 3,025 SNA acres were added to the program.

In summary, the Dayton/Landwehr administration fell **4,975 acres short** of the 1,600 SNA acres/year goal over 5 years = 8,000 acres

#### **B. Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration (January 7, 2019 to March 23, 2023):**

From the beginning of the Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration (January 7, 2019) to March 23, 2023:

1. **No new SNAs have been established**, via a signed Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order.
2. Only **one 6-acre parcel** was added to any existing SNA (via signed Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order): St. Croix Savanna SNA, on January 13, 2020. (Total acreage of this SNA, including the 6-acre addition, is 154 acres.)

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3. The Walz/Strommen administration is **6,394 acres short** of the SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 acres/year over 4 years = 6,400 acres.

## Summary

Since the Scientific and Natural Areas Plan was adopted (2014) through the present date, the SNA Program is **11,369 acres short** of its SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 SNA acres per year. This is not counting the lack of SNA acquisitions during the first 3 months of 2023.

Again, we respectfully request **HF 751 be amended to double the SNA acquisition investment from \$2 million to \$4 million, with the second \$2 million allocated to SNA acquisition only**. This will help to reduce the severe SNA acquisition shortfall.

On behalf of FMSNA, I **thank you** in advance for your kind consideration. Please contact me any time, if you have questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

*Thomas E. Casey*

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