



April 20, 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. 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.

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. Please call me on my cell if you have any questions at 651-587-6622.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay Riggs', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jay Riggs, District Manager