



Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

March 21, 2023

VIA E-MAIL ONLY

Peter.Strohmeier@house.mn.gov

Representative Rick Hansen, Chair, and
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: **Requested Amendments to HF 2348** – \$600,000 for Shooting Sports Facilities Grants
Scheduled for Committee Hearing, Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Hansen and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns about HF 2348, which would appropriate **\$600,000** from the heritage enhancement account for “shooting sports facilities grants ...”

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.

First, it is important to state that FMSNA recognizes and fully supports the Minnesota Constitution, including Article XIII, Section 12, which states: “**Hunting and fishing** and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage that shall be **forever preserved** for the people and **shall be managed by law and regulation for the public good.**” [Emphasis added.]

Second, FMSNA supports shooting sports as an important part of our national heritage. We are pleased that the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League (the “League”) states on its website: “**Safe** and **responsible** handling and storage of firearms and ammunition is the **first priority.**” [Emphasis added.] <http://mnclaytarget.com/about-us/mission/> [Last visited, 3/19/23.]

FMSNA also recognizes that the science is clear. Lead is a potent neurotoxin, for which **no safe exposure level exists.** [Emphasis added.] <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/at-home/indoor-air-pollutants/lead> [Last visited 3/4/23.]

Therefore, FMSNA has concerns that HF 2348, in its present form, could increase the proliferation of toxic lead ammunition in shooting sports facilities – adding to the adverse impacts of lead on wildlife and humans. To quote two words from the League, the use of lead ammunition is neither “safe” nor “responsible.”

Simply stated, Minnesota **taxpayers should not subsidize** the proliferation of toxic lead ammunition.

Rep. Rick Hansen, Chair
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
March 21, 2023

Therefore, we respectfully request that the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee adopt the following amendment. This amendment would require non-toxic ammunition and non-toxic ammunition education as conditions for grant approval. The proposed bill language is to add a “Section 2”:

Section 2. Minnesota Statute 86A.10 is amended to read:

87A.10 SHOOTING SPORTS FACILITY GRANTS. The commissioner of natural resources shall administer a program to provide cost-share grants to local recreational shooting clubs or local units of government for up to 50 percent of the costs of developing or rehabilitating shooting sports facilities for public use. A facility rehabilitated or developed with a grant under this section must be open to the general public at reasonable times, and for a reasonable fee on a walk-in basis, and require the use of non-toxic ammunition only. The commissioner shall give preference to projects: (a) that will provide the most opportunities for youth; and (b) that contain an educational component regarding the toxic effects of lead ammunition and non-toxic ammunition alternatives.

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
Board Chair
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas, Inc.

Please send correspondence to:
2854 Cambridge Lane
Mound, MN 55364
telephone: (952) 472-1099
e-mail: tcasey@frontiernet.net

**The following organizations and individual have signed on
in support of this letter:**

MN Division of the Izaak Walton League
Mr. Carrol L. Henderson, Minnesota DNR (retired)
The Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union (MOU)
Minnesota Herpetological Society
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)
Clean River Partners

March 22, 2023

Minnesota House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: Funding for Shooting Range Improvement Grants **Position: Support**

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (“NSSF”), I express strong support for HF2348 (Tabke) which seeks to increase funding for the Shooting Range Improvement Grants program.

As the trade association for America’s firearms, ammunition, hunting, and recreational shooting sports industry, the NSSF seeks to promote, protect, and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. NSSF has a membership of approximately 10,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, and sportsmen’s organizations. Our manufacturer members make the firearms used by law-abiding Minnesota sportsmen and women, the U.S. military, and law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Shooting Range Improvement Grant Program has been a crucial funding source to increase shooting range capacity for the general public and especially for high school clay target shooters. Expanding Minnesota’s shooting range capacity through these grants will increase opportunities during a time when the popularity and participation in the shooting sports is rapidly growing across all demographics.

Hunting, firearms and the shooting sports are part of the history, tradition and culture of Minnesota. Supporting expanded opportunities for participants to access outdoor shooting opportunities not only increases opportunities for shooting sports participants to enjoy being in the outdoors, but 11% of every firearm and ammunition purchase is dedicated to wildlife preservation and management.

For these reasons, NSSF strongly supports additional funding for the Shooting Range Improvement Grant Program.

Respectfully,



Christopher Lee



The USA Clay Target League supports HF2348.

Based in Eagan, Minnesota, the USA Clay Target League is a nonprofit corporation and the worldwide leader and independent provider of clay target shooting sports to secondary and postsecondary schools. The League's priorities are safety, fun, and marksmanship – in that order.

Nationwide in 2022, the League hosted 44,900 student athletes from 1,503 school-approved teams that were coached by more than 8,950 volunteers at more than 1,000 shooting ranges. Since the League's inception 2008, it has had 25 consecutive seasons (spring/fall not including Spring 2020 due to COVID) of record-breaking participation.

Minnesota had a total of over 15,800 student athletes from 420 teams participate at 187 shooting ranges in just two seasons last year. Highlights include:

- Minnesota has the largest number of youth clay target shooting sport participants in the country.
- Alexandria Shooting Park hosts the largest shooting sport event in the world with more than 8,000 competitors and 25,000 attendees in 2022.
- The Minnesota State High School League is the presenting partner of the Clay Target State Tournament and is the only state high school association in the country to support and recognize this sport.
- Clay target ranks in the top 10 for activity and sports participation for the Minnesota State High School League. High school clay target participation is higher than boy's and girl's high school hockey participation - combined.
- The Minnesota College Athletic Association has the largest clay target league for two-year colleges in the country.
- The USA Clay Target League is the official provider of clay target as an emerging sport starting in fall 2023 for the National Junior College Athletic Association - the second largest college athletic association in the country.
- 43% of League parents reported an increase in hunting and shooting sports participation since their child became active in the League.
- 68% of Minnesota shooting ranges participating in our League utilized state grant funding to improve and/or expand their facility.

The demand for new clay target shooting sport ranges to be built and to improve existing ranges that will increase capacity has never been higher for Minnesota.

The following pages contain results and comments from a Shooting Range Improvement & Grant Survey the League conducted in 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

John Nelson
President
USA Clay Target League
jnelson@usaclaytarget.com
612-490-1388



Minnesota Shooting Range Improvement & Grant Survey - April 13-16, 2020

Target: Shooting ranges that host Minnesota State High School Clay Target teams
Minnesota shooting range emails: 136
Survey email delivery rate: 94%
Survey responses: 52 (38%)

Introduction:

The USA Clay Target League is conducting a quick survey of shooting ranges that host high school clay target teams. This information will help the League inform and encourage state agencies and other interested parties to continue to offer grant programs that may lead to additional funding opportunities for ranges in the future.

Question 1:

Has your shooting range made improvements or expanded to facilitate participation by youth clay target teams?

Yes: 96%
No: 4%

Question 2:

What improvements have been made to facilitate participation by youth clay target teams? (Check all that apply)

Initial establishment/building of range: 7.7%
Expansion of existing range / addition of more fields: 44.3%
New/improved traps or field equipment: 69.3%
Clubhouse repair or upgrades: 36.5%

Question 3:

Has your shooting range received grant funds for building, expansion, or improvements from a state agency or other organization? (Check one)

Yes - From a state agency: 55.8%
Yes - From an outside organization (NRA, NSSF, etc): 7.6%
Yes - From both state agencies and outside organizations: 13.5%
No: 23.1%

Question 4:

Has hosting youth clay target teams led to an increase in overall non-youth participation at your shooting range?

Yes: 84.6%
No: 15.4%



Comments: If you have any additional comments regarding the importance of grant money for your shooting range, please enter them below.

It would be great if there was place to go to find all the opportunities for youth shooting sports to apply for grants and other funding for improvements / expansion of shooting ranges particularly those focused on youth.

Our club would not have been able to do all the improvements without the grants we have received.

Without the assistance of the Grants made available thru the MN DNR we would not of been able to have the upgraded facility we enjoy today.

Overall our club has been pleased with having been able to use grants to make long overdue improvements. Our biggest concern going forward is the ever increasing property taxes from the annexation of our facility into the City of Grand Rapids.

They have allowed us to upgrade our equipment & facilities which in turn has given us an opportunity to provide the area youth & community with a pleasant exposure to the world of clay target shooting.

Our club is always continuing to grow. We are always looking for additional organizations to make our club available to other shooting sports teams to participate.

Grant money allowed us to replace aging trap machines in 2 of our existing trap houses, add trap to two of our skeet fields, rebuild several trap houses, and complete building of our rifle/pistol range, which some of the high schools have indicated they would like to use in the future.

Please extend grant money to help us expand our rural range

Stewartville High School trap team has grown, in just 5 years, from 9 to 50 athletes. We are in the planning stages for our second trap house and thrower. So during our primary shooting day, Sunday afternoon, it is a challenge to get all 50 shooters scored for the day. We had 48 athletes registered prior to the Covid-19 threat.

We would like to make improvements on our club house and change one of our traps to am more efficient one.

Our Club hosts 3 High School Trap Teams at our facility. Albany, Holdingford and Upsala Teams which totals out to over 150 Students. We have been moved to purchase 6 new Pat Traps and are in need of Trap house repair to keep all houses up and running to accommodate our Students but also our Members and Non-Member adult shooters safely and efficiently.

Our club house is extremely old and in poor condition. It badly needs to be replaced. The main use for the building is storing targets for the youth teams and training for the youth teams. The local community has been unable to raise enough funds to replace it.

We would love to add more stations as well as better throwers and voice activated systems if we could get funds to help make it happen for our youth members.

The youth trap league is a "Godsend" for the trap shooting and overall shooting sports (including hunting) across the nation. It should have started 20yrs ago.



We are in the process of another trap field expansion.

I would not have added any Trap Fields if there was no funding, too expensive.

Without matching fund grant monies we probably would not have went into trap field expansion and built 4 outdoor trap fields and 1 trap house used in our winter indoor 5-stand. Still looking to do skeet and/or a more permanent 5-stand sometime in future but have to catch up on a few other things. Lots of unknowns in the future right now. A few months ago a new college shooting sports club was announced for SMSU in Marshall, MN, so the collegiate thing could be a plus for the existing ranges. we have hosted many youth shoots and fundraisers through our club, from FFA to trap team fundraisers. The parents of the students I believe enjoy the fields and we have a great bunch of people that would normally be at the range at the start of the season. Got to work more on communication to the teams outside our area so we can get more traffic to our new fields that were a direct result of being a trapshooting range matching fund grant recipient. Better times ahead hopefully. Thanks.

2022 participating clay target team map

