



MINNESOTA

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Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

February 12, 2024

Re: Support of HF 3377 – Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund Appropriations

Dear Members of the Committee:

Environmental organizations across the state are dedicated to protecting the people and the places Minnesotans love. The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund has helped to further this mission, providing over \$900 million in innovative funding for natural resource management projects. We're proud to support the ENRTF Appropriations Bill, which continues this special tradition of stewardship that the ENRTF offers to Minnesota

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund benefits current citizens and future generations by providing long-term, consistent, and stable funding for projects to protect, conserve, and enhance Minnesota's "air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources," and has provided funding to nearly 1,800 projects across the state of Minnesota since 1991.

We appreciate and acknowledge the extensive vetting done by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Natural Resources. The breadth of projects in HF 3377 is critical to protecting and enhancing Minnesota's environment and natural resources. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Audubon Upper Mississippi River (formerly known as Audubon Minnesota) Friends of the Mississippi River

Austin Audubon Society Wild Rivers Conservancy

Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society Ducks Unlimited

Central Minnesota Audubon Chapter The Minnesota Land Trust

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Society Great River Greening



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Prairie Lakes Audubon Society

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

St. Paul Audubon Society

Wild River Audubon Society

Zumbro Valley Audubon Society

The Initiative Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

Rainbow Research

MN Conservation Federation

Public Policy Project – Environmental Justice
Coordinating Council



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February 13, 2024

Dear members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance & Policy Committee,

On behalf of the more than 145 cities, counties, businesses, non-profits, and individuals that comprise the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails organization, we thank you for acting on the 2024 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund bill. This legislation will help expand outdoor and recreational opportunities for all Minnesotans, fund essential research, and create jobs.

Regardless of where they live, spending time outdoors is important to Minnesotans. Local and regional parks and trails help provide opportunities to do so.

The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) recognized the importance of local parks and trails by recommending \$4.791 million for grants for local parks, trails, and natural areas. These popular grant programs offer local governments matching funds so they can build or improve parks and trails close to where people live. At a time when local parks and trails are especially vital to the well-being of our communities, these grant programs are a wise investment. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources administers these statewide programs and has a vetting process in place to ensure that the money is invested in quality projects that are ready for construction.

In addition, the LCCMR recommended funding for other important recreation-focused projects, such as grants for the Dent and Vergas spur trails, the Zumbro Regional River Water Trail, and other projects in Greater Minnesota and the metropolitan area. These types of projects will help Minnesotans engage in recreation and appreciate all the natural wonders our state offers.

Parks and trails projects will provide critical jobs in the construction sector, and many of the other projects recommended by the LCCMR will provide jobs to scientists, lab workers, and others. Passing the LCCMR bill now will help provide economic stimulus to ensure our state continues to thrive without adding to the deficit.

Thank you again for your efforts to move this important legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Gina Hugo
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails
Sherburne County, Parks Director

Joseph Tart
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails
Chisago County, Parks Director