

Co-Chair Rep. Josh Heintzeman
House Environment and Natural Resources
Policy and Finance Committee
2rd Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Co-Chair Rep. Peter Fischer
House Environment and Natural Resources
Policy and Finance Committee
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 4, 2026

Re: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) Community Grant Program Report

Co-Chairs and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee,

As the Committee considers the Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund (ENRTF) Community Grant Program Report (Department of Natural Resources, 12/12/25), we write as community organizations to share our support for the timely implementation of the ENRTF Community Grant Program.

We are pleased to see the report detail programming that seeks to meet the statutory directive to “expand the number and diversity of recipients who benefit from the environment and natural resources trust fund, especially in communities that have been adversely affected by pollution and environmental degradation” (Minn. Statutes, chapter 116X).

Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116X, Section 5 establishes the Environment and Natural Resources Community Grants Advisory Council to “*Advise the commissioner on developing forms and applications and reporting for grants awarded under the grant program; Review proposed grant program policies and budgets for the upcoming year...*” We believe expedient efforts should be made to appoint the first Advisory Council as soon as possible so that the role of the Council to advise the commissioner will be fulfilled. Input from the Advisory Council will be important to informing how the program should evolve while maintaining appropriate controls. The charge of the Advisory Council is to make recommendations on how to improve the process.

Additionally, the implementation plan, Appendix A of the report, includes estimated timelines for issuing requests for proposal (RFPs), with the first RFP not slated to be published until the 1st quarter of FY27 (July 1 – September 20, 2026).

With urgent needs and opportunities around the state, we would like to see a timeline to initiate the RFP process sooner and get resources into communities around Minnesota as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Conservation Minnesota
COPAL
Environmental Initiative
Freshwater
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Public Policy Project*

*Rainbow Research, Inc.
Region 9 Development Commission
Resilient Cities & Communities
Sharon Nordrum, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
The Nature Conservancy
Trust for Public Land*