

January 23, 2023

To: Chairman Hansen and Members of the House Environment Committee:

We write to you to share our support for passage of House File 389. This bill restores the distribution of lottery in lieu tax to the natural resource, and fish and wildlife conservation purposes originally intended. As well as aligning with the voter's expectations for use of these funds.

We worked during our respective terms in the legislature to ensure these funds would be available to support the future of Minnesota's natural resources. This restoration will do exactly that.

As former members of the Minnesota House and Senate Environment Committees, we appreciate and thank you for your important work for the conservation of Minnesota's natural resources and environment.

Respectfully,

Mark Holsten, Former Representative and
Chairman Minnesota House Environment Committee

Jane Krentz, Former Senator and Chair Minnesota Senate Environment and Natural Resources
Committee

Bob Lessard, Former Senator and
Chairman Senate Environment Committee

Bob Milbert, Former Representative and Member House Environment Committee



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January 23, 2023

Rep. Rick Hansen
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Hansen and members of the committee:

On behalf of the more than 135 cities, counties, businesses, non-profits, and individuals that comprise the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails organization, we are writing to ask that as you consider [HF389](#) that you take this opportunity to rectify a long standing oversight by including the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota in the lottery-in-lieu funding formula.

Regional parks and trails play an essential role in our recreation systems throughout Minnesota. They serve as a bridge between the local park around the corner and Minnesota's outstanding state parks as a close-to-home option for both the community and visitors. These regional facilities exist throughout the state, yet the current formula for divvying up lottery-in-lieu funds fails to recognize or support the regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota.

Regional parks and trails have existed outside the metro area for decades, but they were not truly recognized until after the passage of the Legacy amendment in 2008 and subsequent discussions shed light on the fact that the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota were being ignored. In 2013, the Legislature created the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, which has been tasked with developing a system of regionally designated facilities in the 80 counties not served by the Metropolitan Council. Since then, more than 74 facilities across the state have been designated through a rigorous evaluation process.

When the enabling legislation for the lottery-in-lieu funding passed in 2000, it dedicated 22.5 percent of the available revenues to state parks and trails and 22.5 percent of the available revenues to metropolitan parks. Perhaps because there was no organization advocating on behalf of the 80 counties and countless cities outside the metro area, the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota did not receive funding. This oversight should be remedied as HF389 moves forward.

As introduced, this bill would increase the funds flowing to the lottery-in-lieu accounts by 25 percent. A portion of that increase should be captured for Greater Minnesota to remedy this decades long oversight. Please include funding for the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota in the lottery-in-lieu formula.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please contact either of us. We would love to work with you to ensure that Greater Minnesota's parks and trails continue to thrive and grow.

Sincerely,

Ben Anderson
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails
Stearns County, Parks Director

Gina Hugo
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails
Sherburne County, Parks Coordinator

Chair Rick Hansen
House Environment Finance Committee
407 State Office Building
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 389

January 23, 2023

Chair Hansen and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity for our organizations to comment as it pertains to dedication of the lottery-in-lieu-sales tax. The dedication of in-lieu-of-sales tax funds on lottery games was passed by the legislature in 2000 and became an important funding source to benefit the state's natural resources. Specifically, the 6.5% in-lieu-of-sales tax collected on lottery ticket sales is deposited in Department of Natural Resources accounts and benefits Minnesotans' opportunities to access the outdoors. These accounts include the Game and Fish fund and Natural Resources fund, which support bedrock activities like management and protection of fish and wildlife resources, enforcing game and fish laws, providing access to lakes, rivers and streams, and state, regional and local parks and trails, and the Minnesota Zoo, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, and Duluth Zoo.

The in-lieu sales tax dedication was reduced during a time of budget deficits, significantly decreasing in-lieu sales tax revenues toward the funds and their respective purposes. As we look to the future and the growing pressures on Minnesota's outdoors, reinstating the lottery-in-lieu dedication will enhance the state's ability to meet those growing needs and pressures, and support the economic activity outdoor recreation provides to our state.

We applaud the efforts to advance this proposal. A time of financial health for the state is a timely opportunity to return to the intended use of these dedicated funds so we can better invest in our future. This proposal will benefit Minnesotans who enjoy the outdoors, who support the maintenance of fish and wildlife habitats and water quality, who visit the state's zoos, and enjoy local parks and trails.

We appreciate your leadership on HF 389 and encourage the committee to advance this effort to restore funding toward activities that will have a direct impact on the lives of Minnesotans.

Thank you for your effort on behalf of Minnesota and our natural resources.

Audubon Minnesota
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Ducks Unlimited
Izaak Walton League – Minnesota Division
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Pheasants Forever
Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society
The Nature Conservancy
Trout Unlimited
Trust for Public Land