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July 13, 2020

House Ways and Means Chair Rep. Lyndon Carlson,
House Capital Investment Committee Chair Rep. Mary Murphy, and
House Ways and Means Committee Members

RE: [HF 3 - A20-0818 Delete everything amendment](#), Omnibus capital investment bill

Dear Chairs Carlson and Murphy and Ways and Means Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, I want to extend our thanks for your inclusion in the Omnibus capital investment bill of funding for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program. This important program through the Board of Water and Soil Resources is administered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts, working with interested landowners to enroll marginal agricultural land into permanent conservation easements.

We strongly urge you to increase the appropriation for RIM Reserve from the \$1 million currently in the bill amendment to the \$16.5 million recommended by the Governor. The RIM Reserve appropriation will become part of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and will secure a federal match of \$2 federal for every \$1 state. These federal dollars come in the form of landowner payments through USDA's Conservation Reserve Program. Our CREP program will help us make strides in achieving our water quality goals, through wetland restorations (which also offer water storage on the landscape), riparian buffers, and wellhead protection easements.

In addition to water quality improvements and the water storage opportunities provided by wetland restorations, the program has significant impacts on Minnesota's economy. Based on a USDA economic assessment*, a \$16.5 million state investment that brings in \$33 million federal funding would further have the following economic impacts.

- \$63.36 million in total economic output
- \$44.06 million in value added income
- 461 jobs created or maintained

Thank you for all you are doing during these trying times. A strong investment of \$16.5 million in RIM Reserve in this year's bonding bill makes sense both environmentally and economically.

Sincerely,

Roland Cleveland
MASWCD President

* References for this assessment and other USDA-NRCS IMPLAN analyses are available at:
<http://www.economics.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/implan/>.