

House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division  
407 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

May 1, 2020

Chairman Hansen and Committee Members:

We write to oppose the inclusion of Article 1, Section 2 of the delete-all amendment to HF4554, which would spend Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Critical Habitat Funds for onetime Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) incentive payments to be issued by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

The intent of the RIM Critical Habitat Private Sector Matching Account is to protect critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitat through acquisition or improvement of land for wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, aquatic management areas, state parks, and state forests. These funds are leveraged by donations from Minnesotans through the Critical Habitat License Plate program.

This account can only be accessed by providing equal private matching funds, which the amendment to HF4554 does not require for the proposed incentive payments. As stated in Minn. Statutes 84.943, Subd. 3, appropriations “may be expended only to the extent that they are matched equally with contributions from private sources or by funds contributed to the nongame wildlife management account.”

In addition, while CRP is a very worthwhile program that provides an important option to landowners to achieve conservation objectives, we do not believe RIM Critical Habitat funds should be used to fund short-term conservation easements as provided through the Conservation Reserve Program. The critical habitat funds should be used as intended to achieve long-term conservation outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
Ducks Unlimited  
Izaak Walton League- Minnesota Division  
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association  
Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Pheasants Forever