

EXTENSION WEATHER READY PROGRAM

Increasing the capacity of Minnesota communities to prepare for and respond to changing climate extremes.

Minnesota is already experiencing the **costs and consequences** of heavy precipitation, more frequent swings between floods and droughts, and rapidly warming winters. Effective management of these climate-related risks is essential to the well-being of Minnesota's residents, industries, landscapes, cultures, and economy. The **Extension Weather Ready Program** (HF1853) will expand the ability of Extension to provide needed **education, research, and technical assistance** to the state's land and resource managers, agricultural sector, and communities to effectively plan for, manage, and adapt to changing weather and climate extremes.

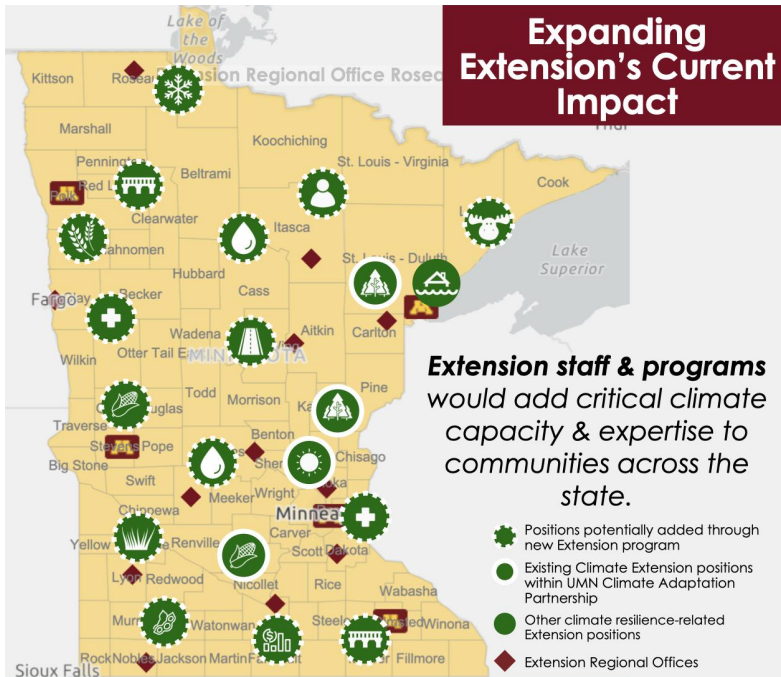
Leveraging Existing Infrastructure to Enhance Climate Preparedness and Resilience

University of Minnesota Extension's mission is to **discover science-based solutions, deliver practical education, and engage Minnesotans** to build a better future. Working in close partnership with communities, land and natural resource managers, agriculturalists, planners and the public and private sectors, Extension is uniquely positioned to provide **trusted, durable and localized capacity, data and tools, and technical assistance** to communities across the state. From urban to rural and city to township, Extension has a reach and impact in every county in Minnesota.

This **dedicated weather and climate Extension program** will leverage Extension's existing statewide organizational structure and resources to help ensure Minnesotans are not only prepared to 'weather the storm', but that the state is **uniquely positioned to take advantage of historic federal funding opportunities** that would improve critical physical infrastructure like roads and bridges, accelerate adoption of climate-smart agricultural and natural resource management practices, protect vital habitat, and improve health outcomes for Minnesotans.

What will this bill do?

The Extension Weather Ready Program will **enhance the State's climate resilience** by adding **critical capacity**, providing **essential localized data** and **planning tools**, and **offering technical assistance and education** to help Minnesotans prepare for and respond to our changing climate.



This program will **support an integrated network of up to 20 existing and new Extension positions** across the state with diverse climate expertise to develop and deploy effective strategies in climate and adaptation science, planning and infrastructure design, water resource management, climate-smart agriculture, forestry, architecture and engineering, economics, and emergency management and public health.

The expansion of the Extension Weather Ready Program program will:

- **Add capacity and expertise** by placing critical climate Extension positions across the entire state.
- **Bring research to practice** through dedicated Extension staff able to assist in the interpretation, and application of localized climate data and research.
- **Accelerate the timeline between planning and implementation** by offering timely support that will make it easier to apply for and increase competitiveness of grant applications to federal and state programs making historic investments in climate-smart practices – from farms and forests to roads and riverways.
- **Improve understanding of Minnesota's climate risks and effective responses** by advancing research and evaluation of climate resilience strategies.
- **Demonstrate national leadership** by expanding a dedicated climate program that is unique in its scale and structure across Extension nationally.

Investing in Extension's capacity to support communities to prepare and build resilience to changing climate extremes will help ensure Minnesota has thriving and resilient residents, natural and built environments, and economies.



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March 1, 2023

Chair Rick Hansen
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Hansen and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our support for Rep. Acomb's bill to provide the University of Minnesota Extension (Extension) with funding to help farmers and others prepare for and adapt to extreme weather (HF1853). This investment in ensuring that good data is used to inform on-the-ground decision-making will help make our members more resilient going forward.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. This past summer, Minnesota faced the second year of severe drought conditions that stunted the growth of conventional and specialty crops, dried up water sources for livestock and deteriorated pasture used for haying and grazing. Despite recent snow events, 60 percent of the state is still abnormally dry.

Farmers are coming up with creative ways to remain resilient, while actively working to mitigate and even reverse the worst effects of climate change. Extension is a good partner in this work and helps farmers make better-informed management decisions for their farm. Better and more accessible information about extreme weather will help inform our members' decisions about installing drain tile, planning crop rotations, or choosing traits to breed for in livestock.

Farmers depend on the weather, and the science informing projected trends is changing quickly. Funding for Extension to help make sure this data is used to inform management practices will help producers remain resilient to future disruptions like this summer's drought. We thank Rep. Acomb for her work on this issue and appreciate the committee's consideration. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047. Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farm families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Wertish". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "G" and "W".

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union



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Representative Rick Hansen
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House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 1, 2023

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share support for HF1853, which would fund the University of Minnesota Extension Service Weather Ready program to enhance the capacity for Minnesota's working lands and communities to respond to climate change impacts. This program would build critical scientific capacity and establish a strong foundation for extension and outreach services that support climate preparedness and adaptation across the state.

Science affirms that nature is a significant tool to be leveraged to meet the state's carbon sequestration goals and build community resiliency. This program would provide outreach and technical assistance to farmers and private landowners that support their operations as working lands face more frequent and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. This would be the first program of its kind nationally and will position the state to leverage federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and other federal programs.

As this committee considers investments that can address climate change and make Minnesota more resilient, we encourage you to include the investment in this program alongside a suite of other natural climate solutions.

Thank you for considering HF1853 and your work on behalf of Minnesotans and nature.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota

Molly Jansen
Government Relations Specialist
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota

100%

100% Campaign
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February 28, 2023

Chair Hansen and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our support for Rep. Patty Acomb's House File 1853.

House File 1853 is a bill that invests in the University of Minnesota Extension Service's efforts to support farmers, land and resource managers, and local communities that are preparing for extreme weather.

This work is timely, relevant, and in-demand. Agricultural leaders, land and resource managers, and local elected leaders are continually planning for our future. These preparations help communities manage our land, water, wildlife, and agriculture systems. They support the creation of more resilient and sustainable buildings. They help us mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters. To do this planning effectively, community leaders need reliable assistance from trusted sources.

The U of M Extension can provide this. It's a well-regarded system that's already in relationship with key stakeholders across the state. With additional staffing, the Extension will be better prepared to serve communities with the rigorous, science-based expertise that the University of Minnesota is fully qualified to provide.

Please support House File 1853.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Aurora Vautrin

Aurora Vautrin
Legislative Director
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