

February 10, 2021

Dear Senators and Representatives,

Our organizations are pleased to express support for HF 99 (Hansen, R.)/SF 369 (Ruud) which includes \$15.5 million in bonding 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.

The RIM Reserve appropriation in the bill will become part of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Minnesota's CREP is currently \$16.7 million away from meeting the total state contribution of \$175 million, which in turn is in the process of making a total of \$350 million available in federal funds. This represents an overall federal match of \$2 federal for every \$1 state. The federal dollars come in the form of landowner payments through USDA's Conservation Reserve Program. Our CREP program helps us make strides in achieving our water quality goals and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, through wetland restorations (which also offer water storage on the landscape), riparian buffers, and wellhead protection easements. CREP easements also provide significant carbon sequestration benefits on the private lands voluntarily enrolled in the program.

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 \$15.5 million state investment for CREP would spur millions of dollars in additional total economic input, value-added income, and hundreds of jobs created or maintained.

A strong investment of \$15.5 million in RIM Reserve in this year's bonding bill makes sense both environmentally and economically. Our conservation organizations ask for your support of HF 99/SF 369.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Pheasants Forever
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
Ducks Unlimited
Trout Unlimited
Delta Waterfowl
The Nature Conservancy
Minnesota Rural Water Association
Friends of the Mississippi River
Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River
The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen
National Trout Center, Preston MN
Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club
Audubon Minnesota

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