

Dear Rep. Hansen and Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee:

RE: HF 387 – Eliminating Commercial Turtle Harvest and Selling Licenses.

My name is John Moriarty. I have been a Natural Resources Manager and Herpetologist in Minnesota for over 30 years. I am also the author of Amphibians and Reptiles in Minnesota. I have been involved with turtle conservation at the state, regional and national level.

Commercial Turtle harvesting has been a major factor in turtle population declines across the country. A number of states have already banned the commercial harvest of turtles. The increased harvest over the last few decades is due to increasing demand from China for turtles as food.

Minnesota has addressed turtle trapping in the past by restricting seasons and stopped the issuing of new licenses. During a senate hearing to make those changes, then Senator Bob Lessard announced to the commercial turtle harvesters in the audience that “this is the initial step and we will eliminate commercial harvesting in the future”. This is a good time to complete the process.

An additional reason to stop commercial harvesting is because of the risk to humans from eating contaminated turtles. Previous MN PCA studies found very high levels of contaminants, including mercury and PCBs, in turtles. This is to be expected since many harvested turtles are over 20 years old and have been consuming contaminated fish and other food for a long time.

Thank you

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