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February 16, 2022

Rep. Fue Lee, Chair
House Capital Investment Committee

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), I am pleased to express support for Governor Walz's proposal to invest \$9.9 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.

As you are aware, Minnesota has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture known as the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP). Minnesota's CREP is currently \$9.9 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.

MN CREP 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. The easements also provide significant carbon sequestration benefits on the private lands voluntarily enrolled in the program.

Why is the \$9.9 million bonding request so critical?

- **Significant federal leverage:** \$9.9 million leverages approximately \$19.8 million in federal dollars for a total of approximately \$29.7 million.
- **Protecting the most environmentally sensitive land:** Restoration with permanent protection.
- **Creating and maintaining jobs:** \$29.7 million would create or maintain approximately 276 jobs (*Assessing Economic Impacts of WRP and RIM on the Minnesota Economy*, USDA-NRCS).

Thank you, Chair Lee and Committee Members, for your continued support of water quality and wildlife habitat in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Paul Krabbenhoft
President
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts