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Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee  
Chair Representative Mike Sundin  
417 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: MDA Governor's Supplemental Budget Recommendations

March 22, 2022

Dear Chair Sundin and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment as the Committee considers HF4366, the Governor's supplemental budget proposal for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). We are pleased to see attention to the topic of soil health in the Governor's proposal, which would fund a soil health financial assistance and adoption under MDA, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in addition to establishing a soil health cost-share program under BWSR.

Science tells us we have a high potential to increase carbon storage through natural lands, including croplands, in Minnesota. Soil health practices will help store carbon and mitigate the effects of climate change while providing benefits for water quality and quantity. There is an urgent need for these activities to expand to a meaningful scale, which will require farm operations of all types and sizes to have support to implement and expand soil health practice adoption.

The proposed investments are needed, but may not be accessible to all types of operations or meet the needs and opportunities of Minnesota's farmlands where significant gains can be made. Ensuring a wide variety of soil health practices and services can be eligible for financial support will enhance the pace and scale of practice adoption that will accelerate the carbon sequestration and water quality gains that soil health can deliver.

Additionally, stakeholder participation is necessary to develop a comprehensive plan to expand soil health practices across the state for all types of farming operations. Such a process should also encourage and leverage private sector involvement and investments alongside state and federal investments in soil health, yielding further benefits for climate and water.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rich Biske  
Resilient Waters Director  
The Nature Conservancy