



**CONSERVATION  
MINNESOTA**

March 22, 2023

Chair Hansen and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

**We write today to ask for your support of HF 1862 (Hansen), repealing burdensome and unnecessary county approval requirements on state's land acquisition process.**

At Conservation Minnesota, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love. The state's acquisition of public lands is central to this goal, ensuring that every Minnesotan can access and enjoy the Great Outdoors, now and into the future.

As described by the Department of Natural Resources, land acquisition enables our state to bolster recreational and natural resources opportunities. By purchasing new public lands, Minnesota can conserve native prairies and grasslands, consolidate and improve access to state land, protect and restore trout streams, enhance outdoor recreation, and expand existing resource management areas. Ultimately, land acquisition is a vital tool for permanently protecting our environment and our access to it.

Over time, land purchases have helped our state build a culture of conservation and outdoor recreation. Minnesota is synonymous with its environment, and time spent outdoors is practically vital to being a Minnesotan. Our public lands; our state parks, trails, forests, scientific and natural areas, wildlife management areas, public water access sites, and easement areas form the foundation of this environmental tradition, and none of it would be possible without acquisition.

We can be proud of our public lands, but we should also be cognizant of our remaining challenges in conservation. Climate change and overuse have placed significant stress on ecosystems in Minnesota, both on existing state lands and beyond. In order to provide continued protection and access to our Great Outdoors, we need to maintain an efficient system for further acquisition.

Unfortunately, current statute places unnecessary and burdensome red tape on our state's land acquisition. Section 97A.145 requires the state to receive county board approval for select land acquisition, despite this acquisition already being subject to legislative oversight. This requirement adds an additional hurdle and delay to a process that should be efficient and responsive to growing environmental and recreation needs. As an organization, we believe that local communities should be adequately compensated for tax revenue reductions associated with land acquisition, but we do not believe that they should have veto power over voluntary land purchases conducted by the state.

HF 1862 (Hansen) helps provide greater efficiency and effectiveness in state land acquisition by repealing Section 97A.145, removing red tape in Minnesota's conservation efforts. In doing so, this legislation helps ensure that our state can adequately protect our environment while expanding outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations. *We respectfully urge your support.*

Sincerely,

**Nels Paulsen**, Policy Director +1 (608) 469-5299

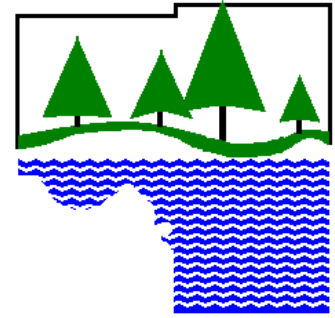
[nels@conservationminnesota.org](mailto:nels@conservationminnesota.org)

**David Pelikan**, Policy Associate +1 (262) 685-7265

[david@conservationminnesota.org](mailto:david@conservationminnesota.org)

# ITASCA COUNTY

Courthouse  
Administrative Services  
123 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-2600  
Office (218) 327-7363 Fax (218) 327-2848



March 22, 2023

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

Sent Via Email

RE: Opposition to HF 1862 – Removing County Approval for Certain Land Acquisitions

Chair Hanson and Committee Members,

Over the past few years Itasca County has been working diligently with our local DNR staff to improve the lines of communication, better understand each other's position regarding potential land purchases by the DNR and the effect on the local tax base and ultimately having more positive outcomes on DNR land decisions.

Historically, Itasca County had become increasingly concerned with the sheer volume of DNR acquired land and the poor PILT or lessor property tax reimbursements. As we know, all Minnesotans enjoy the recreational opportunities afforded on public land, but certain costs exist at a local level even on public land – primarily search and rescue or accident response costs. In addition, we must maintain a balance between public land with less property tax revenue and private land ownership.

HF 1862 is seeking to remove County approval for certain land acquisitions. Itasca County is very concerned for the greater potential of additional land purchases by the DNR and dwindling our tax base even further with absolutely no input from the County Commissioners.

Itasca County is desirous of a productive relationship with the DNR in all areas of land management and land acquisition for the benefit of all Minnesotans; removing our ability for input and certain levels of approval is counterintuitive to that ultimate goal. We oppose HF 1862 as written and any language that further erodes local input or local decision authority.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett Skyles".

Brett Skyles, Itasca County Administrator

**Equal Opportunity Employer**