

April 13, 2021

Rep. Fue Lee, Chair
House Capital Investment Committee

Re: Support for Minnesota CREP in DE amendment to HF 337

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members,

On behalf of Minnesota’s CREP Coalition, our organizations are pleased to express support for the DE amendment to HF 337, which includes \$14,307,000 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 (CREP). Minnesota’s CREP is currently \$15.5 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.

Why is the \$14.307 million bonding request so critical?

- **Significant federal leverage:** \$14.307 million leverages approximately \$28.614 million in federal dollars (2:1) for a total of approximately \$42.9 million.
- **Protecting the most environmentally sensitive land:** Restoration with permanent protection.
- **Creating and maintaining jobs:** \$42.9 million would create or maintain approximately 400 jobs (based on *Assessing the 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.

Yours in Conservation,

Minnesota Association Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Audubon Minnesota
Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Friends of the Mississippi River
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance
Minnesota Rural Water Association

The Nature Conservancy
Pheasants Forever
The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen
Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club
Scott – LeSueur Waterfowlers
New Prague Sportsmens Club
LeCenter Sportsmens Club
Montgomery Sportsmens Club
Twin Lake Sportsmens Club
Fish Lake Sportsmens Club