

Representative Chris Swedzinski
Centennial Office Building, Second Floor
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Patty Acomb
Centennial Office Building, Fifth Floor
659 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF249 Recommendations from The Nature Conservancy

February 24, 2025

Chair Swedzinski, Lead Acomb, and members of the Committee,

The mission of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC is a leading conservation organization working in all 50 states, over 70 countries, and whose solutions-oriented work is grounded in science. As an organization working to tackle challenges facing climate and biodiversity, as the committee considers HF 249, we write to provide science-based recommendations that should be considered when further refining bill language to ensure Minnesota's forests remain healthy and vibrant for future generations while providing increased benefits for carbon sequestration.

According to the best available science, it is inaccurate to define woody biomass as "carbon-free" as is done in this bill; however, woody biomass can be a valuable tool in a net-zero economy, so long as the biomass used fits within specific stipulations (i.e. using mill residuals, removing hazardous fuels to reduce fire risk, or thinning as part of resilient forest management or invasive species control), the market is right-sized to mitigate climate impacts, and evaluation of the life-cycle analysis and cumulative impacts that accounts for local context, land use change, and opportunity costs.

Specific practices can lower the carbon intensity of woody biomass for energy production and provide important co-benefits for ecosystem function. We appreciate the bill author's distinction in using biomass that is a by-product of timber harvested for nonenergy purposes which can decrease overall carbon dioxide emissions when the biomass is used to replace coal/other fossil fuels.

While some biomass energy can be part of a net-zero future, climate benefits must be measured based on a full lifecycle analysis. Timber harvested exclusively for energy production is not an efficient use of resources and leads to less carbon sequestration in forests and increased carbon emissions. Forests are facing significant threats, especially from forest pests and extreme weather events. It is more important than ever to ensure our forests are managed carefully for industry products and climate benefits. We look forward to working with the author to further refine the language as this bill moves through the process.

Sincerely,



Jim Manolis, Ph.D.
Director of Forest Strategy and Stewardship
The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota