

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

FILE NUMBER: H.F. 1493
Version: First committee engrossment
Authors: Lillie and others
Subject: Parks and Trails Fund Appropriations
Analyst: Janelle Taylor

DATE: April 15, 2009

This publication can be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please call 651-296-6753 (voice); or the Minnesota State Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529 (TTY) for assistance. Summaries are also available on our website at: www.house.mn/hrd.

Overview

Section

- 1 Parks and trails fund appropriations.** Technical.
- 2 Natural resources.** Appropriates \$9,399,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$21,257,000 in fiscal year 2011 from the parks and trails fund to the DNR as follows:

\$6,749,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$14,807,000 in fiscal year 2011 is appropriated to:
 - (1) connect people to the outdoors by providing access, conservation education, and interpretative services through a number of activities, including enhanced marketing, increasing the number of park naturalists and interns (through the new Minnesota Naturalist Corps established in section 5 of this bill), and expanding access to visitor centers;
 - (2) accelerate natural resource management, restoration, and protection activities, including: restoring state park lands; managing invasive species; and conducting prescribed burns;
 - (3) accelerate facility maintenance and rehabilitation, and energy conservation, including upgrading facilities; improving access for visitors of all ability levels; and enhancing trail surfaces; and
 - (4) accelerate facility energy conservation, including installing solar energy equipment at various locations.

Requires the commissioner to contract with the Minnesota Conservation Corps in completing these activities for at least \$1,600,000 in the biennium.

\$1,000,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$2,000,000 in fiscal year 2011 is for grants for solar energy projects in metropolitan and other regional parks and trails meeting certain criteria. Establishes priorities to be used in evaluating projects, including placing priority on projects that would be visible to park or trail visitors and demonstrate the use of solar energy.

\$1,650,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$4,450,000 in fiscal year 2011 is for grants to metropolitan and other regional parks and trails meeting certain criteria for acquisition, restoration and maintenance under the parks and trails grant program established in section 7 of this bill.

Requires the commissioner to undertake a ten year strategic state parks and trails.

Requires the commissioner to develop a logo to be used in signage required of projects and programs receiving funds from the outdoor heritage, clean water, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage funds.

Requires the commissioner to submit a report on the expenditure and use of the money appropriated to the legislature by March 1 of each year and establishes criteria for the report.

- 3 **Metropolitan Council.** Appropriates \$7,500,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$14,600,000 in fiscal year 2011 for metropolitan regional parks and trails to be distributed under the metropolitan area distribution formula established in section 6 of this bill.
- 4 **Legislature.** Appropriates \$23,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$15,000 in fiscal year 2011 to the Legislative Coordinating Commission to establish and operate the new Office of Public Accountability for Constitutionally Dedicated Funding currently proposed in H.F. 1086, and \$28,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$28,000 in fiscal year 2011 to the legislative auditor to conduct restoration audits (a proposed requirement in H.F. 1086).
- 5 **Minnesota Naturalist Corps.** Adds § 84.992.

Subd. 1. Establishment. Establishes the Minnesota Naturalist Corps under the control of the commissioner of natural resources.

Subd. 2. Program. Requires the commissioner to develop a program for the corps and specifies requirements for the program.

Subd. 3. Training and mentoring. Requires the commissioner to develop and implement a training program for corps members and requires that each corps member be assigned a state park naturalist as a mentor.

Subd. 4. Uniform patch. Requires uniforms worn by members to have a patch identifying them as corps members and that the program was funded by the clean water, land, and legacy amendment.

Subd. 5. Eligibility. Requires corps members to be permanent residents of the state, be participating in an approved college internship program, and have completed at least one year of postsecondary education.

Subd. 6. Corps member status. States that corps members are not employees of the state and exempts them from employment benefits and unemployment benefits

under certain circumstances.

Subd. 7. Employee displacement. Requires the commissioner to certify that the assignment of corps members will not result in the displacement of currently employed or seasonal employees and prohibits the department from terminating, laying off, or reducing hours for any employee for the purpose of using corps members.

6 Parks and trails fund. Amends § 85.53.

Subd. 1. Fund established; purpose. Technical.

Subd. 2. Metropolitan area distribution formula. Establishes a formula for disbursing funds appropriated from the parks and trails fund to the Metropolitan Council as grants to the system's implementing agencies as follows:

- (1) 45 percent according to an existing formula (40 percent based on use; 40 percent based on operation and maintenance expenditures; 20 percent based on acreage);
- (2) 31.5 percent based upon the relative share of the most recent metropolitan area population estimates;
- (3) 13.5 percent based upon the relative share of nonlocal visits according to the most recent user survey; and
- (4) ten percent as grants for land acquisitions within the approved master plan boundaries (the Metropolitan Council is required to provide \$2 of park bonds for every \$3 of state funds granted).

7 Parks and trails grant program. Adds § 85.535.

Subd. 1. Establishment. Requires the commissioner of natural resources to administer a grant program to provide grants from the parks and trails fund to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

Subd. 2. Eligibility. Requires a park or trail to meet certain requirements in order to be eligible for grants under this section.

Subd. 3. Priorities. Establishes priorities for trails projects, including connectivity, opportunities for commuters, and safety.

Subd. 4. Match. Requires a nonstate match of 25 percent of the total eligible project costs.

Subd. 5. Rule exemption. Provides an exemption from rulemaking in implementing the section.