

April 16, 2025

Senator John Marty  
Chair, Senate Finance  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3235  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Eric Pratt  
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Finance  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2217  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty and Senator Pratt:

I am writing to supplement testimony given in the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee regarding the Senate Omnibus Environment and Natural Resources Budget and Policy Bill (Senate File 2077), as amended. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would like to thank Chair Hawj and the Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee for their work to assemble this bill, which reflects strong support for the DNR. Below please find DNR's comments on both budget and policy items in the bill.

### **Budget Items**

We appreciate the inclusion of many of the Governor's budget recommendations. We would like to specifically thank Chair Hawj and his committee for the inclusion of:

- DNR operating adjustment at the same overall level as the Governor's recommendations. With a careful eye to the health of dedicated funds, we would like to continue to work with the Senate on potential impacts to the Game and Fish Fund balances.
- Ground water use and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) surcharge increase proposals from the Governor's budget.

Additionally, we support the inclusion of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) recommendations for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriations contained in Article 2 and the appropriations for the Community Grants Program contained in Article 3.

We are, however, concerned that the bill does not include some critical pieces of the Governor's budget recommendations, as follows:

- Proposed state park permit fee increases are omitted from the bill. These fee increases are necessary to keep pace with rising costs, and without this additional revenue, the DNR will be forced to make publicly visible reductions to state park services. Park permit fees were last increased in 2018.
- The bill omits funding for legal costs, which will force costs to be paid from programs and services in areas that are already stretched by General Fund pressures.
- The bill also does not include funding for public safety preparedness that is necessary for our conservation officers to be available for general public safety needs and protection of state assets.

Furthermore, we are concerned about General Fund reductions included in the bill. These include:

- Reductions to funding for private forest management work that is critical to effective forest management and climate change mitigation across the state.
- Reductions to chronic wasting disease (CWD) response funding proposed in this bill will reduce our ability to effectively mitigate the disease.

Lastly, we look forward to working with the Senate to manage pressures on Game and Fish Fund, which contains a structural deficit that will necessitate fee increases in the near future.

### **Policy Items**

We appreciate the inclusion of several DNR related policy issues including:

- DNR Policy Bill language including provisions related to burbot, invasive carp, and PWI technical correction
- Lands Bill
- Continuous bass season

DNR does have concerns with several policy provisions in the bill and we would like to continue work with the Senate on these items. These include:

- The Foraging Task Force language in the bill gives a majority voice to consumptive users of public lands while excluding the voices of those who use public lands for non-consumptive purposes. We would like to work with the Senate to ensure that all voices have a seat at the table.
- The timber sale extension language included in the bill appears to address issues related to a limited number of permit holders. The DNR has permit extension processes to deal with these situations and would oppose the language as drafted.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this bill. We look forward to working with the Senate as the bill moves towards finalization.

Sincerely,



Sarah Strommen  
Commissioner

CC: Senator Foug Hawj, Chair, Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee

Senator Steve Green, Ranking Minority Member, Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee