



April 5, 2022

Via E-Mail Delivery

Senator Tom Bakk, Chair  
Senate Capital Investment Committee  
328 State Capitol  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Sandy Pappas, DFL Lead  
Senate Capital Investment Committee  
2205 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Governor's Bonding Recommendations (SF4413)

Dear Chair Bakk and Lead Pappas:

Thank you for your work this session and for hearing SF4413 (Bakk), the Governor's bonding recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature.

Our organizations represent the marine, boating, and fishing industries in Minnesota. The boating and recreational industries are important to Minnesota, bringing \$3 billion in economic benefit to the state each year. That's why we are supporting two provisions included in the Governor's recommendations -- \$20 million for updating fish hatcheries at the DNR and \$110.8 for DNR capital upgrades including funding for Public Water Accesses (PWAs).

**Fish Hatcheries**

Governor Walz has recommended \$20 million (\$10 million in bonding and \$10 million General Fund) to repair and upgrade the fish hatchery system at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR operates four cold water and 11 warm water fish hatcheries around the state. The Statewide Fish Hatchery system supports stocking walleyes in 900 lakes throughout the state. These lakes today would offer little or no walleye fishing were it not for regular stocking.

The Statewide Fish Hatchery system was constructed mostly in the 1950s before the need to fight disease and invasive species was a problem for the state. The most urgent needs include:

- Biosecurity updates to fight against fish disease and aquatic invasive species
- Antiquated water piping and technology control systems
- Employee safety related concerns
- Energy efficiency updates

The DNR conducted feasibility studies in 2018 and 2019 on four hatcheries. The studies found that the DNR needs at least \$60 million to address the immediate needs of the fish hatcheries. The most

urgent fish hatchery in need of updates and repair is in Waterville. SF3759 (Ingebrigtsen) was introduced in the Senate this session and the legislation appropriates \$60 million in funding to the DNR to repair and update fish hatcheries.

The Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$2 million for fish hatcheries in 2014 but since then there has been no additional direct bonding appropriations for the facilities. The DNR has invested \$6.3 million in asset preservation funding since 2012 in an effort to make the most critical repairs to the state's fish hatcheries. We believe the need is urgent for the Minnesota Legislature to invest bonding funds this year.

**Public Water Accesses (PWAs)**

Minnesota is ranked #1 in the U.S. for the number of boats per capita according to the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Census Bureau. Minnesota also ranks #2 in the country for the number of boat owners according to the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA, 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesotans enjoyed our state's recreational opportunities in record numbers. As a result, it is critically important that the state improves crumbling public water accesses (PWAs) across the state.

The DNR maintains 1,691 state public water access sites. The typical lifecycle is around 15-25 years, according to the DNR. In addition, most of the state's PWAs were constructed before the passage of federal ADA legislation and prior to the state's focus on stopping the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS).

SF3760 (Ingebrigtsen) was introduced in the Senate to provide \$37 million in funding to repair and update the state's PWAs. In 2012, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$2 million in for a direct appropriation for the Grand Marais PWA. Over the past decade, the DNR has invested an average of \$2.8 million each year for deferred maintenance and critical repairs. This is not enough to keep up with deferred maintenance costs and as a result we are requesting additional bonding funds to address deferred maintenance and reconfigure and replace older PWAs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments to you. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Holsten  
Executive Director  
MN-Fish Coalition

Jill Sims  
Great Lakes Policy Engagement Manager  
National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)

C: Members of the Senate Capital Investment Committee  
Sarah Strommen, DNR Commissioner