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February 23, 2022

Senator Carrie Ruud  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3233  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Ruud and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the more than 135 cities, counties, businesses, non-profits and individuals that comprise the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails organization, we are writing to ask that as you consider [SF 2766](#) that you take this opportunity to rectify a longstanding oversight by including the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota in the lottery-in-lieu funding formula.

Regional parks and trails play an essential role in Minnesota's recreation systems. They serve as a bridge between the local park around the corner and our outstanding state parks as a close-to-home option that serves the local community and visitors from throughout the region. These regional facilities exist throughout the state. Yet, the current formula for divvying up lottery-in-lieu funds fails to recognize or support the regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota.

Regional parks and trails have existed outside the metro area for decades, but they were not truly recognized until after the passage of the Legacy Amendment in 2008 and subsequent discussions shed light on the fact that Greater Minnesota's regional parks and trails were being ignored. In 2013, the Legislature created the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, which has been tasked with developing a system of regionally designated facilities in the 80 counties not served by the Metropolitan Council. Since then, more than 67 facilities have been designated through a rigorous evaluation process.

When the enabling legislation for the lottery-in-lieu funding passed in 2000, it dedicated 22.5% of the available revenues to state parks and trails and 22.5% of the available revenues to metropolitan parks. Perhaps because there was no organization advocating on behalf of the 80 counties and hundreds of cities outside the metro area, the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota did not receive funding. This oversight should be remedied as SF 2766 moves forward.

As introduced, this bill would increase the amount flowing to the lottery-in-lieu accounts by 25%. A portion of that increase should be captured for Greater Minnesota to remedy this two-decade-long oversight. Please include funding for the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota in the lottery-in-lieu formula.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please contact either of us. We would love to work with you to ensure that Greater Minnesota's parks and trails continue to thrive and grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Anderson".

Ben Anderson  
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails  
Stearns County, Parks Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gina Hugo".

Gina Hugo  
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails  
Sherburne County, Parks Coordinator