Bill 13: Keeping Water on the Land (SF3044)
Minnesota State Senate 3-8-22
Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee
Testimony on behalf of **S.F. 3044**
Chair Senator Ingebrigtsen and Committee Members,

My name is Jim Stark. I am the Director of the Legislative Subcommittee on Water Policy. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss SF 3044 with you today. This bill comes out of a stakeholder process from the Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy. Many of you probably have not had contact with the subcommittee so allow me to give you a short introduction.

Because water is important, complex, controversial, and costly, the development of water policy needs to be undertaken thoughtfully. The Subcommittee reviews water-policy issues that affect Minnesota and proposes legislation. During the interim, the subcommittee held hearings to explore water issues important to the state. The committee's recommendations have been developed, based on discussions among committee members, stake holders and state-agency personnel. We will discuss one of those bills today.

SF3044 provides an allocation to increase efforts and create policy and plans to reduce flood peaks in priority areas that can be used for water retention, groundwater recharge, and water-quality improvement in rural and urban areas.
Why is Water storage important? Storage in Rural Minnesota: Agricultural drainage has provided many benefits that allows farmers better access to croplands and to complete farming operations in a timely manner. Without agricultural drainage, increases in soil productivity and crop yields would be difficult and economic returns would be diminished. While drainage of Minnesota's croplands provides benefits, several environmental concerns are associated with agricultural drainage. The installation of agricultural drainage, both surface ditches and sub-surface drainage, accelerates transport of water from farm fields. There also are downstream issues with unmanaged or uncontrolled agricultural runoff that increase flooding, may affect available water recharge to wetlands, may impact migrating waterfowl population, and may degrade downstream water quality.

Urban stormwater Retention: We also need to evaluate, prioritize, and promote water retention in urban areas storage facilities (storm water ponds) Urban water retention reduces erosion, improves water quality, and increases groundwater recharge. However, the water quality impacts of stormwater capture and retention in urban areas is not well understood. There is need to assess and quantify the cumulative impacts of water storage and flood retention structures in urban areas in order to order to provide direction and policy. Research and policy are needed to ensure the quality of groundwater is not degraded as a result of leakage from these storage facilities.

A bill for an act

relating to water; appropriating money to enhance efforts to keep water on the land; requiring a report.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. ENHANCE EFFORTS TO KEEP WATER ON THE LAND; APPROPRIATION.

Subdivision 1.

Appropriation.

$..... in fiscal year 2023 is appropriated from the general fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to increase water storage in strategic locations across the state according to the plan developed under subdivision 2. This is a onetime appropriation.

Subd. 2.

Plan.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources, in consultation with the commissioner of agriculture, the commissioner of natural resources, and the Red River Watershed Management Board, must develop a plan to increase water storage in strategic locations across the state. The plan must:

(1) provide money to projects in Area II, the Red River Valley, the Greater Blue Earth River basin, and other areas of the state that are most likely to benefit from water storage projects;

(2) provide money to both existing programs and new projects that enhance flood control in a manner that comprehensively addresses the state's water storage needs;

(3) provide money to projects that improve the quality of waters of the state through research, implementation, and outreach;

(4) identify peak water storage ~~structure~~ methods and opportunities in the most critical areas of the state where this information has not already been developed.

(5) identify the most appropriate types of peak water storage ~~structures~~ for each type of landscape found in the state;

(6) facilitate completion of any necessary assessments for enhancing water storage, including cost-benefit analyses of conservation drainage management practices based on expertise from watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, and published technical information; and

(7) identify and implement methods of encouraging landowner adoption of best management practices for enhancing water storage as well as how to build those incentives into the One Watershed,

One Plan program.

Subd. 3Report By August 1, 2023, the Board of Water and Soil Resources must submit the plan developed under subdivision 2 to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees and divisions with jurisdiction over agriculture and environment and natural resources policy.