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Chair Bill Ingebrigtsen  
Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee  
95 University Avenue W.  
3207 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Senate File 3653

March 8, 2022

Chair Ingebrigtsen and members of the Committee:

Science shows that our forests and grasslands are important natural and working lands that provide multiple benefits for water quality and quantity, habitat, recreation and tourism, carbon sequestration, and much more. These benefits are important to maintaining Minnesotans' way of life. Efforts to support the maintenance, health and sustainability of our forests and grasslands are paramount.

A recent analysis conducted by The Nature Conservancy and American Forests identifies nearly 3 million acres of Minnesota lands that could support additional reforestation or afforestation. In the face of drought-killed trees, pests like emerald ash borer, and changing forest conditions, the benefits we get from Minnesota's tree cover are at risk. It is imperative we invest in one of the state's best assets: trees. State, county, city, tribal and private lands have opportunities and needs to support forest health and tree planting.

As the Committee considers SF3653, we would like to express our support for activities included in the bill that will support the health of Minnesota's forests and tree cover through conservation planting assistance to private landowners under the Board of Water and Soil Resources, living snow fences through the Department of Transportation, and ash tree replacement grants to local units of government.

In addition to these programs, The Nature Conservancy recognizes there are many critical tools in the toolbox to sustain and grow the health of our forests and working lands by using a right-fit approach for each type of landowner and landscape. We encourage the legislature to consider the programs in SF3653 in addition to investments in the Badoura State Forest Nursery, reforestation, Forests for the Future, community tree planting, and private forest management.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla  
Government Relations Manager  
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota