



Association of
Minnesota Counties



March 14, 2022

Re: Local Government Support of SF 3751 (Ingebrigtsen) - Appropriating \$10 Million to Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program (LGRWRP)

Dear Chair Ingebrigtsen and Committee Members:

The Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Inter-County Association, Minnesota Rural Counties, the Minnesota Transportation Alliance, and the Minnesota County Engineers Association are unified in our support for increased funding for the Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program (LGRWRP) such as proposed by SF 3751 (Ingebrigtsen).

The LGRWRP was created in 1996 to ensure a reliable, ecologically appropriate 'bank' of wetland credits is available at the start of each construction season. Each spring, local governments then apply to use those wetland credits when undertaking local road safety improvement projects that require wetland replacement.

The development of replacement wetlands has historically been funded exclusively by general obligation bonds. Unfortunately, multiple years of inconsistent and inadequate funding in the last decade led to near total depletion of readily available replacement wetlands. Because wetlands often take multiple years to develop once general obligation bonds are authorized, General Fund (cash) infusions became necessary to support immediate purchase of privately developed wetlands to keep road projects on schedule.

Year	Agency Capital Budget Request (in millions)	Appropriation
2008	\$8.5	\$3.48
2010	\$8.42	\$2.5
2012	\$13.1	\$6.0
2014	\$5.4	\$2.0
2016	\$10.3	\$0
2017	\$10.3	\$10.0 ¹
2018	\$16.38	\$6.7
2019	\$26.4	\$0
2020	\$26.4	\$23.0 ²
2022	\$20.0	TBD

¹ Includes \$5m from the General Fund

² Includes \$8m from the General Fund

The 2020 bonding bill took a significant step toward shoring up the replacement wetland credits by including both general obligation bonds and general fund cash. Routine funding for LGRWRP is needed.

We thank Chair Ingebrigtsen for authoring SF 3751 to appropriate **\$10 million from the General Fund for the LGRWRP**. We support this effort and would also support either full funding of the agency's request for \$20 million (\$14 million GO, \$6.0 million GF) or the establishment of sufficient base fund to ensure the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has the resources it needs to routinely plan for, design, and develop these multi-year construction projects.

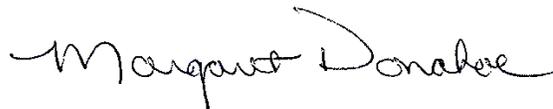
The essential local road projects that access the LGRWRP are commonly delivered by local contractors in communities throughout Minnesota, support local jobs and enhance safety. Adequate and routine funding is needed to break the cycle of depleted replacement wetlands and ensure these local projects remain on track.

We thank the Chair and committee members for hearing SF 3751 today.

Sincerely,



Matt Massman, *Executive Director*
Minnesota Inter-County Association



Margaret Donahoe, *Executive Director*
Minnesota Transportation Alliance



Todd Patzer, *President*
Association of Minnesota Counties



Joe Triplett, *President*
Minnesota County Engineers Association



Luke Johnson, *MRC Chairman*
Minnesota Rural Counties