



MINNESOTA DEER HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

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BUILDING OUR HUNTING & CONSERVATION LEGACY THROUGH HABITAT, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY.

March 21, 2022

Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen

Chair

Minnesota Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee

St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Written Testimony in Support of SF 3020 for Committee Hearing on March 22, 2022

Dear Chair Ingebrigtsen:

I am writing today on behalf of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA) to submit testimony in support of SF 3020 that will be heard in Committee on March 22, 2022. One of MDHA's foundational tenets is to work to improve habitat for deer and all wildlife. This bill to incentivize participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and in conservation easements under the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program is exactly the type of habitat legislation that MDHA believes is necessary for Minnesota's deer and wildlife.

Far too often when people think of deer habitat in Minnesota, they only think of the forested north woods. Yet in the farmed areas of the state, grasslands provide essential habitat for deer. Deer like to utilize the early successional vegetation and native warm-season grasses, legumes and forbs of CRP and other properly managed grasslands throughout the year. These habitats offer critical areas for fawning, bedding, escape cover, food and travel. With respect to fawns, CRP provides excellent spring and summer fawning cover. As predator populations increase, good cover has never been more important for the earliest stages of a whitetail's life. The grasses, legumes and forbs of early successional habitat and grasslands also supply excellent food sources for deer.

In addition, CRP and effective grassland management creates outstanding edge habitat, which is needed by deer. The linear edges of CRP tracts are used as travel corridors. These corridors connect larger patches of suitable habitat within a landscape dominated by fields of row crops. Deer are more likely to move through these corridors or pathways than across open, harvested crop fields.

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Minnesota, like other Midwestern states, has lost hundreds of thousands of acres of CRP over the past decade. It is vitally important that we stem this tide of habitat loss and SF 3020 can play an important part in improving habitat for Minnesota's deer and other wildlife.

MDHA appreciates having the opportunity to comment on this bill and looks forward to continuing to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Craig L. Engwall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Craig L. Engwall

MDHA Executive Director