



April 18, 2022

**Re: County Input on SF4043: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

Dear Chair Ingebrigtsen and Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee:

**On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), a voluntary association representing all 87 counties, we appreciate the opportunity to offer comments to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund legislation.**

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund often includes funding for interesting and useful projects that counties support and that seeks to develop beneficial methods to environmental challenges. The funding included in Subdivision 10 of the A-2 amendment funds action on aggregate mapping, forest inventory, septic systems, and noxious weeds.

I would like to specifically address the additional grant dollars for replacement of failing septic systems in the A-2 amendment, Section 2, Subdivision 10, (k), which directs the money through BWSR and has unique income and funding thresholds.

Counties have long worked with the MPCA SSTS Low Income Grant program to help landowners update septic systems. That program is funded by Clean Water Fund and allows local governments to implement the grants to best address the needs of residents.

The 2021 budget bill used this same language establishing a second low-income septic grant program through BWSR. This funding has complicated administration and funding of these projects. It requires coordination with a second state agency, and local government staff must track a second allotment of dollars with different spending criteria for the same purpose. It creates unnecessary, additional administrative work to accomplish the goal of helping low-income resident replace.

The additional funding for this purpose is worthwhile, but it should be directed to the MPCA SSTS Low-Income Grant Program for use in accordance with those criteria.

**Again, thank you for your consideration of our perspective.** Should you have any questions about the information provided above, please don't hesitate to contact me, 651-246-4156, [bmartinson@mncounties.org](mailto:bmartinson@mncounties.org).

Sincerely,

Brian Martinson, Policy Analyst  
*Association of Minnesota Counties*