February 10th, 2023

Dear Legislators,

The Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) would like to express our support for dedicated funding for County Agricultural Inspectors in each of Minnesota's 87 counties, which are reflected in HF80, as referred to the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee and SF 1312 as referred to the Senate Agricultural Committee. We believe the Minnesota Legislature should include this funding as part of the final biennial budget.

County Agricultural Inspectors (CAIs) and local weed inspectors enforce Minnesota's Noxious Weed Law and perform critical tasks to help the state manage noxious and invasive weeds including weeds like Palmer amaranth. CAIs coordinate invasive species detection, management, and enforcement efforts with townships and municipalities, conduct investigations into invasive weed complaints and verify reports of noxious weed infestations, serve as the primary point of contact for noxious weed issues in the county, and typically serve as the lead contact for weed biological control programs.

Historically, counties and municipalities were given the responsibility to enforce the Noxious Weed Law as an unfunded mandate. As an unfunded mandate, it can be challenging for municipalities to fund invasive weed management activities, resulting in increasing infestations of noxious weeds. Dedicated funding to support CAIs would allow counties and municipalities to develop noxious weed management programs at the local level and begin implementing public education and prevention programs that are proactive instead of reactive, protecting Minnesota's resources from noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Minnesota's diverse ecological and agricultural landscapes benefit from the work CAIs do, and MISAC strongly supports funding for their roles. Thank you for your consideration of this important funding.

Respectfully,

Ariana Richardson   Alexandra Lodge   Chelsey Blanke
Chair MISAC   Co-Chair MISAC   Past Chair MISAC

Dane Huinker, Treasurer MISAC

Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) – www.mninvasives.org