



Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

March 24, 2023

VIA E-MAIL ONLY
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Senator Sandra L. Pappas, Chair, and
Senate Capital Investment Committee

Re: SF 2600 – Request for **\$4 million** for Scientific and Natural Areas Program
Scheduled for Committee Hearing, Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Dear Chair Pappas and Committee Members:

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (FMSNA) is a Minnesota non-profit, tax-exempt [“501(c)(3)”] corporation organized to protect and enhance Minnesota’s Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs). SNAs are the “crown jewels” of Minnesota’s state land base, protecting some of Minnesota’s rarest and most sensitive plant and animal species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Summary of Request

Only **six (6) acres** have been added to the Scientific and Natural Areas Program, via a Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order, during the 4+ years of the Governor Walz/Commissioner Strommen administration.

The Scientific and Natural Areas Program is **11,369 acres short** of its SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 SNA acres per year. (This is not counting that no SNAs have established, via a Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order, during the first 3 months of 2023.)

Therefore, we **respectfully request** that the SNA appropriation be **doubled to \$4 million, with the second \$2 million directed towards SNA acquisitions only.**

Background – “The SNA Plan”

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources adopted the Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Strategic Land Protection Plan (the “SNA Plan”).

The SNA Plan states on page 27: “By the end of the 21st century (2099), the state aims to protect, approximately 300 SNAs statewide comprising about 325,000 acres (about 0.6 % of the state). This means designating **136,000 more acres of SNA over the next 85 years**, or an average (mean) of **1,600 additional acres of SNA per year**. This is based on establishing SNAs on about **10% of the high priority conservation areas** across the state. This also assumes that the additional SNAs include lands already in state ownership.” [Emphasis added.]

SNA Acquisitions are at a Virtual Standstill

A. Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr Administration (January 3, 2011 through January 6, 2019):

1. From the beginning of the SNA Plan (2014) through the end of the Governor Dayton/DNR Commissioner Landwehr Administration (January 6, 2019) - 5 years - only 3,025 SNA acres were added to the program.
2. In summary, the Dayton/Landwehr administration fell **4,975 acres short** of the 1,600 SNA acres/year goal over 5 years = 8,000 acres

B. Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration (January 7, 2019 to March 23, 2023):

From the beginning of the Governor Walz/DNR Commissioner Strommen administration (January 7, 2019) to March 23, 2023:

1. **No new SNAs have been established**, via a signed Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order.
2. Only **one 6-acre parcel** was added to any existing SNA (via signed Commissioner’s SNA Designation Order): St. Croix Savanna SNA, on January 13, 2020. (Total acreage of this SNA, including the 6-acre addition, is 154 acres.)

3. In summary, the Walz/Strommen administration fell **6,394 acres short** of the SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 acres/year over 4 years = 6,400 acres. (This is not counting no SNA acquisitions during the first 3 months of 2023.)

Present bill language is vague

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support of SF 2600, which presently contains an appropriation of **\$2 million for the SNA program:**

“... to acquire land to make improvements and betterments of a capital nature to scientific and natural areas ...”

We are concerned that **this language is too vague** – and may allow too much money towards “improvements and betterments of a capital nature” – and not enough money toward SNA acquisitions.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request that the SNA appropriation be **doubled to \$4 million, with the second \$2 million directed towards SNA acquisitions only**

Restated Summary

Since the Scientific and Natural Areas Plan was adopted (2014) - through the present date - the SNA Program is **11,369 acres short** of its SNA acquisition goal of 1,600 SNA acres per year. (This is not counting no SNA acquisitions during the first 3 months of 2023.)

Therefore, we respectfully request **SF 2600 be amended to double the SNA acquisition investment from \$2 million to \$4 million, with the second \$2 million allocated to SNA acquisition only**. This will help to reduce the severe SNA acquisition shortfall.

Thank you

First, we thank **Senator Morrison** for her leadership as chief author of SF 2600 – and we thank **Senators Dibble, Hoffman, Abeler, and Mohamed** for signing on as co-authors.

*Senator Sandra L. Pappas, Chair
Senate Capital Investment Committee
March 24, 2023*

Finally, we thank Chair Pappas and Committee Members in advance for your kind consideration for adopting our requested amendment to add an additional \$2 million for SNA acquisitions.

Please contact me any time, if you have questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

Thomas E. Casey

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