



# Minnesota Herpetological Society

PO Box 130366, Roseville, MN 55113

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January 30, 2023

Dear Kara Josephson,

I am writing in my capacity as the Conservation Committee Chair of the Minnesota Herpetological Society to express support for current efforts related to the elimination of commercial turtle harvest in Minnesota. The Minnesota Herpetological Society is one of the largest and oldest herpetological societies in the country and has a long history of supporting amphibian and reptile conservation and research in Minnesota and beyond.

Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes and turtles play an important role in keeping Minnesota's waters clean and aquatic ecosystems functioning. Many of Minnesota's turtles are omnivorous, and readily feed on dead and dying plant and animal material, which keep Minnesota's lakes and rivers clean.

Turtles are long-lived organisms that are relatively slow to reach maturity. In addition, turtles have evolved over hundreds of millions of years to rely on very high levels of adult survivorship to sustain their populations. With few natural predators, turtle populations are not adapted to handle many of the anthropogenetic threats they now face. Threats such as harvest, road mortality, and invasive species (including disease) have resulted in turtles being one of the most imperiled groups of vertebrates in the world.

We must act now to reverse the current crisis facing Minnesota's turtles. MHS supports efforts to conserve Minnesota's turtle fauna, including those outlined in S.F. 612, and on behalf of our members and Minnesota's turtles, we thank the committee for its support on this issue.

Sincerely,

*Christopher E. Smith*

Christopher E. Smith, M.Sc., CWB®  
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