



February 24th, 2023

TO: Environment, Climate, and Legacy

FROM: Nadia Alsadi, Water Policy Associate, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

RE: SF 1324

Thank you, Senators and House Representatives,

My name is Nadia Alsadi and I am the Water Policy Associate at the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA). I am writing to you today to ask for this legislation that provides common sense measures for managing motorized recreation on our public state forests for all users of public lands, and for the protection and conservation of our prized waterways.

This bill aims to protect Minnesota's freshwater ecosystems and resources from further degradation. There are currently 49 Exceptional Use streams in the state that require cold, clear water to remain a refuge for sensitive species in this Climate Crisis. Sediment and nutrient pollution from designated routes on unpaved roads are growing problems that must be addressed in order to protect these areas and aquatic life. Similarly, there is currently no required buffer zone for water bodies on these designated routes. This bill includes buffer measurements, 300 feet for fish bearing and 15- feet for non-fish bearing waters, that are part of Best Management Practices that have been utilized by the Forest Service. By passing this bill, freshwater resources and aquatic habitats will have further protection from harmful degradation.

Given the millions of dollars in increased funding allocated to motorized recreation in the last two years, in addition to the ongoing process the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in to create 3 Statewide Strategic Master Plans for motorized trail systems; one each for All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVS), Off Road Vehicles (trucks and jeeps) and Off Highway Motorcycles, it is important that we have reasonable controls in place to protect and preserve our waters and wildlife habitats. Erosion, sedimentation, and nutrient pollution in our freshwater systems are growing concerns for both citizens and land managers. These common sense measures will support our DNR conservation officers in carrying out their responsibility to ensure our public lands are healthy and accessible. Quiet use recreationists also enjoy these natural treasures. Importantly, it will also ensure trails are only designated in host communities that want them by requiring local approval.

This bill will lessen the environmental impact of motorized recreation and will not diminish the experience of the responsible user. It is critical to preserve the resiliency of our ecosystems to allow them the best chance to thrive during an increasing climate crisis. As waters warm and habitat and biodiversity continues to be lost, we must put in place these common sense measures to mitigate the environmental impacts from motorized recreation. These measures will help protect and preserve Minnesota's Nature Tourism economy and every Minnesotan's natural heritage.

Sincerely,

Nadia Alsadi
Water Policy Associate
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy